

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the center of the sky, surrounded by soft, golden clouds. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a lighter yellow at the top. Below the horizon, there is a dark silhouette of a treeline or distant hills. In the foreground, a lush green field of tall grasses or wildflowers stretches across the bottom half of the image, with some small white flowers visible.

# Glorifying and Enjoying God

The people, practice and promise of  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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Glorifying and enjoying God reminds us of the ultimate goal or “chief end” of humanity. God’s love for us in Jesus Christ ignites the spark of our love for God and others. When we know this love, we glorify God and enjoy God’s presence. This is the hope of all Christians. As Presbyterians, throughout our long history, it is our goal — to glorify and enjoy God forever.

Writers: Dorothy Henderson, Karen Horst, Gordon Timbers  
Production Coordinator: Tori Smit  
Editor: Keith Knight  
Design: Tim Faller Design Inc.

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The Presbyterian Church  
in Canada



## Glorifying and Enjoying God: The people, practice and promise of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Are you curious about what Presbyterians believe?

Are you interested in joining a Presbyterian church?

Are you refreshing your memory about what it means to be Presbyterian?

This book provides an introduction to Presbyterians and The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

### What does “Presbyterian” mean?

Presbyterians get their name from the Greek word *presbyteros* which is found about sixty times in the New Testament and over one hundred times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. This word means “elder.” It refers to mature members of the community who are respected for their experience and faithfulness. The word may also designate a particular office of leadership. A “presbyterian” church is one governed by “elders.” Presbyterian churches in Canada are governed by elders who are elected by members of the congregation. But “Presbyterian” means much more than that...as you will discover.

### How to use this book

There are seven chapters. Each chapter has three parts.

- The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians
- A story of Presbyterians and their faith
- Suggestions for using the chapter

Read this book on your own or join others to discuss it in a group.

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# Presbyterians Have a Long History

## The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians

Presbyterians have a long history. This history includes

- the story of God's interaction with the world
- two thousand years of witness to Jesus Christ
- a distinctive Reformed and Presbyterian history.

### God is active in the events that form history

At first glance, you might think that our age is increasingly secular and irreligious. However, when you look for the influence of religion in current events, you find that it is persistent and pervasive. Consider the Middle East, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Nigeria. Events in these countries can only be understood fully when religious factors are known. In North America, religious questions regularly meet issues of human rights and the interpretation of constitutions. Current events and modern life are still influenced by religion.

As Christians, Presbyterians see God's hand in history whenever people and nations move into the reign of justice, healing, peace, forgiveness and the freedom that God proclaims in Jesus Christ. We seek to be partners in God's activity in history.

### Presbyterians are people of the covenant

The history of Canadian Presbyterians begins with a God who takes initiative, makes promises, and is faithful. Through Noah and his family, God made an unconditional promise for all creatures — a covenant. Through Abraham and Sarah, God promised to be with people in their life travels. When the Israelites were beaten and crying out in slavery, God sent Moses to lead them toward a Promised Land. God gave people the Ten Commandments as a guide to holy living. God continually took initiative and established or restored a covenant relationship. People throughout history waver between faithfulness and unfaithfulness, obedience and forgetfulness, but God remains constant. Through good and bad times, God is a faithful guide. We celebrate and remember this covenant.



## Presbyterians believe in Jesus, the Christ

Presbyterians are first and foremost Christians. We believe that God's greatest initiative was to become a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus, a Jew who was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, lived and taught in Palestine, was crucified in Jerusalem, was resurrected and appeared to his disciples, was — and is — God. Like the early followers of Jesus, Presbyterians declare, "Jesus is Lord."

What does it mean to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord? Jesus Christ was God's gift to us. Jesus has become our model, our guide, our teacher, our saviour, our friend. Because of his death and resurrection, we are given a life with new meaning and significance. Jesus, the Christ, frees us from self-destruction and death and sends us out to live our lives with purpose and well-being. That's where the Christian faith begins and ends — with God in Christ. It is that simple and that complex.

Like the covenant relationship established thousands of years ago, the relationship we have with Jesus is a gift. It is God reaching out to us. God asks us to have faith. God asks us to model our life after Christ's and, by doing this, we will know lasting peace and hope.

## Presbyterians are part of a reformed movement

Presbyterians also claim the names "Reformed," and "Protestant." Our denomination came out of the Protestant Reformation, a major religious movement that occurred in the early and middle years of the sixteenth century. At that point in history, the Christian Church had already divided into two main branches — the Eastern Church (Greek and Russian Orthodox) and the Western Church (Roman Catholic). In the sixteenth century, church leaders began to protest the corruption of the Christian church and seek its reform. They were called "Protestants" because they were bearing witness (Latin *pro plus testare*: to bear witness) to what they regarded as New Testament Christianity.

The chief leaders in that movement were Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Ulrich Zwingli and Thomas Cranmer. These leaders were intense, courageous, zealous, and assertive. They believed that people were put right in the sight of God by God's grace alone, a grace received by faith. God's favour was freely given and not earned by anything we might do. These Reformers believed that all people had access to God through prayer and the Bible and that God's forgiveness could be received directly without the intervention of a priest. The reformers also claimed the indwelling of Christ in the believer and stressed the sovereignty of God.

## Presbyterians in Canada

The Presbyterian Church in Canada was formed by the union of several Presbyterian churches in 1875. Many Presbyterians in Canada have their churches named after reformers, particularly John Calvin (a Frenchman) and John Knox (a Scot who was influenced by Calvin's teachings). The roots of The Presbyterian Church in Canada are Scottish (our mother church was the Church of Scotland, which is Presbyterian) but our Canadian heritage includes the work and witness of French Huguenot (Protestant) settlers who came to Canada in the 1600s. Of course, many people have come into our church from other branches of the Christian church. Presbyterian roots are also found in the United Church of Canada, formed in 1925 by the union of Congregationalist, Methodist, and some Presbyterian churches.

Today, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has almost 1,000 congregations across Canada. Presbyterians come from diverse national and racial backgrounds and worship in at least 17 different languages each week.

## Janet's Journey

Janet stood at the door waiting for her friends to walk with her to school. She smiled, thinking of the party at her new church last night. Friends from her school had been there...and their parents. Even some grandparents. Janet hadn't planned to go. After all, a party at the church...? But it had been fun and, for the first time since she arrived in Canada, Janet felt as if she really belonged.

It was three months since Janet, her brother Robbie and her parents emigrated to Edmonton from Belfast in Northern Ireland. In Belfast, Janet's family lived on a street that was a dividing line between two neighbourhoods. Catholic families lived on the streets to their right. Protestants, like Janet's family, lived to the left. Tensions were often high, something that Janet could not completely understand. Sometimes there were street fights. Sometimes there were car bombs. Their neighbourhood was not a safe place to live.

Janet remembered the exact moment when Mom and Dad decided to go to Canada. It was a Sunday morning and they were in church. Their minister was telling the story of Abraham and Sarah. "When Abraham and Sarah were living in Bethel, a terrible famine came over the land. They decided to move to Egypt where they hoped that life would be better. God had been with them in Bethel. Would God be with them in Egypt, too? Yes!" their minister said, "God is with us wherever we go." Janet saw Mom glance at Dad. Dad looked directly into Mom's eyes and then he nodded, slowly and solemnly. Mom nodded too and closed her eyes. Janet had seen them that week, sitting at the kitchen table, talking late into the night. She did not know what they were talking about, but she knew it was important.

It was hard for Janet to leave. She was excited about a new life in Canada, but she cried when she thought she might never see her friends and the streets of Belfast again.

On the last Sunday before they left, Janet and her family attended worship at Knox Presbyterian Church. She looked around at the oak pews, the choir loft, and the framed pictures of the Reformers which hung on the wall near Janet's pew. I can't believe, Janet thought with a sigh, how many years I've amused myself in the sermon looking at the pointed beard of John Calvin and those eyes of John Knox. I tried to imagine what he



was seeing. What was he thinking? I'll even miss that old row of Reformers. Then the voice of her minister broke into her thoughts. He was wishing her family a safe journey, and, he said, "I know that you will find a fine Presbyterian Church in Edmonton. After all, Presbyterians in Canada follow the same Jesus as we do in Ireland," he said, smiling.

Janet stood waiting at the front window of her home in Edmonton. Her new friends waved from the sidewalk. She grabbed her school backpack and started out the door. God would be with her as she walked to school in Edmonton just as God had been with Janet's family in Belfast and as God had been with the Reformers, with Jesus, with Sarah and Abraham.

## How to use Chapter 1

If you are meeting with others, choose from these options.

### For general discussion

- If this is the first time you have met, tell each other why you are interested in learning about Presbyterians.
- If you were invited to "describe a Presbyterian," what would you say?
- Invite a guest who is Presbyterian. Ask how he or she became Presbyterian and why they continue to be Presbyterian.

### Discuss "Presbyterians Have a Long History"

- Tell or read some Bible stories about God acting in covenant relationship with people. Here are some possibilities: Genesis 1:1-2:4; Genesis 7:1-10, 8:13-22; Exodus 19:3-8; Exodus 20: 1-17; Deuteronomy. 6:4-7; 2 Samuel 5:1-3; Nehemiah 9:17; Acts 2:29-32. What stands out for you in each story? Choose a phrase to help you remember it.
- Think about the phrase "Jesus is Lord." Talk about what it means.
- Find last year's "blue book." This is the popular name for *The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*. This book contains the minutes of the yearly general meeting of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Find, near the back of the book, the presbytery lists. Locate the presbytery in which you live. How many congregations are in your presbytery? Do the names of the congregations reflect their Reformed heritage?
- The background reading says that Presbyterians come from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds and worship in different languages. What are they? If you do not know, how could you find out? What background do you bring to enrich the Presbyterian community?

### Discuss the story "Janet's Journey"

- Years ago, many Presbyterians had an Irish or Scottish background, but this is changing. Invite group members to tell stories of their heritage. Are the words "Reformed," "Protestant," or "Presbyterian" part of their background?
- The historic roots of the Presbyterian Church are European. However, on any given Sunday worship is celebrated in at least seventeen different languages in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Look in the *Acts and Proceedings* to see if there are any ethnic churches in your presbytery.
- Gather and browse through current news magazines and newspapers. Look for ways in which religion influences events around the world. What religious tensions have we encountered in Canada? What would help to ease the tensions?
- Invite group members to discuss times when they made a major change because they thought it was the right thing to do. How did they feel God leading them in that decision?

# Presbyterians

## Recognize the Bible as the Standard for Faith and Life

### The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians

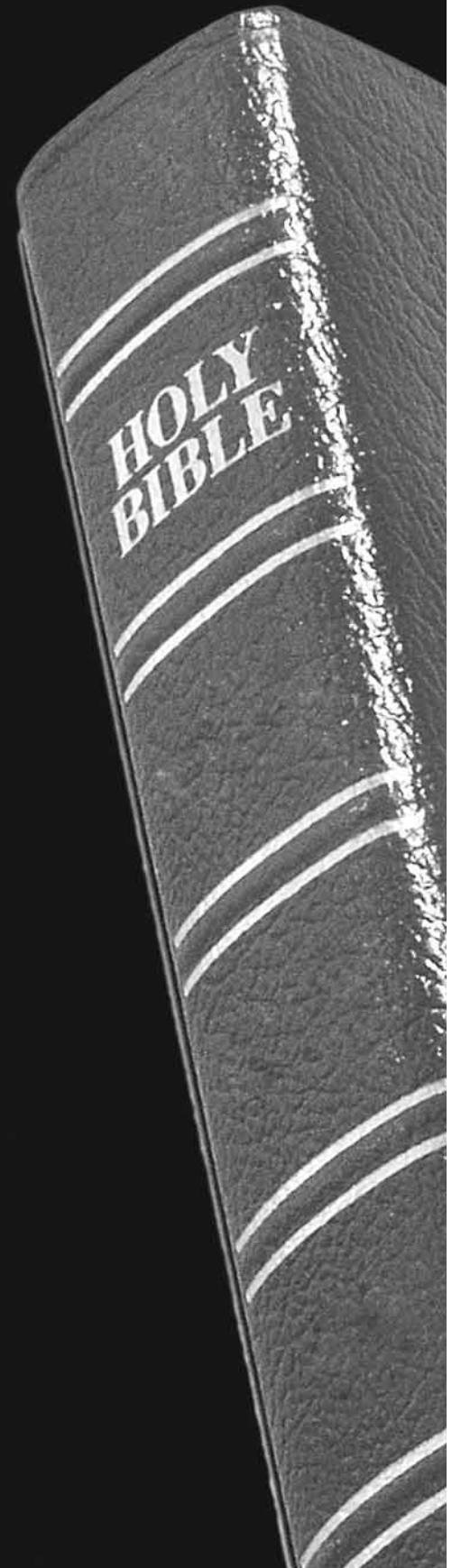
Presbyterians are people of the Bible. Many Presbyterians have been transformed by the Bible's message. Presbyterians insist on going back behind denominational loyalty and tradition to the scriptures themselves. Presbyterians share beliefs in common with other Christians, but the distinctive thing about Presbyterians is their insistence on going to the Bible to find direction, inspiration and comfort. Over time, Presbyterians have nurtured a deep respect and love of God's word.

#### What is the Bible?

Presbyterians consider the Bible to be the written word of God, an inspired record of God's self-revelation. It is the authoritative source for faith and practice. The writers of the Bible were guided and inspired by God to record events and God's instructions so that succeeding generations would know what God has done and what God requires.

This unique collection of writings is divided into two main parts. The Old Testament records God's interaction with the people of Israel. The New Testament tells us of Jesus and the growth of the early church. "The New Testament witnesses to the same God who is revealed in the Old. However, the understanding of revelation unfolds in new ways, and all scripture is to be read in the light of the supreme revelation of God in Christ... (1994 *Acts and Proceedings*, The Church Doctrine Committee, pp. 252-253).

The Bible can be viewed as a library of books. Different authors record God's participation in history and in their personal lives.



## The authority of scripture

*Living Faith*, our church's statement of Christian belief, describes the authority of scripture as follows:

The Bible has been given to us  
by the inspiration of God  
to be the rule of faith and life.  
It is the standard of all doctrine  
by which we must test any word that comes to us  
from church, world, or inner experience.  
We subject to its judgement  
all we believe and do. (5.1)

Scripture is in part shaped by its particular historical and cultural circumstances. We, too, are conditioned by our own time and culture, and we all bring to scripture our own presuppositions. "The...task is thus that of joining 'the horizon of the text' with 'the horizon of the interpreter.' This involves four major components which are constantly interrelated."

- a) We are prompted by the Spirit working on the horizons of our experience to listen afresh for God's Word witnessed to in scripture.
- b) We seek to understand the Bible in its original historical setting, recognizing the variety of material it contains. For this, a wise use of historical-critical methods is essential.
- c) We look at the biblical material as a canonical whole. The dangers of quoting isolated proof texts are well known. At this stage we look for the underlying unity and diversity, continuity and discontinuity in scripture, paying particular attention to the relationship between the Old and New Testaments...
- d) We bring the biblical materials to bear on our contemporary situation...

(1994 *Acts and Proceedings*, pp. 252-253)

## The message and meaning of the Bible

Presbyterians see the Bible as a dynamic unfolding story of God's relationship with human beings and their responses. The Bible has been, and continues to be, a subject for scholarly study and debate. At times this debate is controversial. As new light is shed upon the origin and meaning of scripture, we change our understanding of its message and how we interpret it. This can be a difficult process as we decide how the Old and New Testaments relate to each other and as we determine just what we mean when we say that "the word" is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

### Does biblical meaning change?

Think about words. Were the following words in our vocabulary twenty-five years ago — indigenous peoples, carbon footprint, social networking, micro-loans, google? Words and their meaning can change rapidly. Imagine Bible interpreters trying to understand a unique language of a different culture of two thousand or more years ago. Differences of opinion about the Bible may be disturbing, but we can still appreciate and draw upon the results of continuing biblical scholarship. We may also celebrate the diversity of interpretation, for it is in the midst of the struggle with the text that God's Spirit inspires new concepts and new ideas. Reading and understanding the Bible can be an exciting challenge. Many an unsuspecting reader has been transformed by its message. It is interesting that, after thousands of years, the Bible's message is not exhausted. It still speaks to every generation with a message, both ancient and ever new.

Presbyterians, influenced by the reformer John Calvin, emphasize the need to be knowledgeable in the faith. In Presbyterian practice, this includes the faithful preaching of God's word, Bible study and Bible reading.

## The Amazing Birth

Joe Greydove was born in a sleigh. His parents, smiling with amazement and affection, told him the story of his extraordinary birth many times. There had been no nurse in their community that year. Joe's mother worried about her unborn baby. Should she try to go south to Flin Flon where there was a hospital? But Joe's mother wanted to stay home as long as possible. Besides, where would she stay in Flin Flon until the baby was born?

One morning in late March she heard icicles dripping from the roof. The winter road would be breaking up. Soon there would be no way to get out. She packed a bag. Then she and Joe's father climbed into the truck and set out for Flin Flon. They had traveled several miles when the truck, winding between the trees, sank into a soft mush of snow. Joe's father jumped out, shoveled and pushed, but it was no use. He wrapped a robe around Joe's mother, and headed back for help. Two hours later Joe's mother heard the whine of a snowmobile and saw her husband weaving between the trees, a small sleigh tied behind the snowmobile. Her smile turned to a grimace. How would she tell her husband that her contractions had started?

Joe never heard the middle part of the story except that he was born on the sleigh on the way to Flin Flon.

After Joe grew up, was married and had a son, Jimmie, he went back to Flin Flon to work in the mine. One morning, just as he came off night shift, there was a knock at the front door. There stood the minister from the Presbyterian church around the corner. Joe was hungry, tired and needed a shower. "I'll just stay a minute," the minister said. "Our church is putting on a Christmas play next week and we're inviting all the people in the neighbourhood. I hope you can come." Then he gave Joe a small book — the gospel of Luke from the Bible.

Joe hadn't meant to go. After all, he had to work at midnight. But then he thought about Jimmie. When he was Jimmie's age, he already knew some Bible stories but Jimmie had never gone to church. Maybe he should take Jimmie to the play.

At the Christmas play, Joe Greydove remembered once again the story of his amazing birth. I'm in good company, he thought, smiling. Jesus didn't make it to Flin Flon hospital either.

Joe Greydove continued to go to church — not every Sunday, but when he wasn't working nights. But if you ask Joe what he likes best about church, he will tell you it is the Bible stories. He understands how the Israelites must have felt, wandering in the desert, tired, hungry, crying. He doesn't know what life is like in a desert, but he imagines it is wild and wonderful, rather like the bush around the community where he grew up. Joe remembers being lost in the bush. He looked up into the spruce trees, trying to find his way home. Then he saw a raven. Joe was hungry and scared, so he followed the raven until he came to a creek that led to the lake and his home. Just like following the pillar of fire, Joe thought.



Once, Joe's minister asked him if he would speak to the young people in their church about stories — the stories of his people and stories in the Bible. What did they mean to him? Joe thought about this request and almost said 'no,' but then he remembered the conversation with his minister. "Hey Joe, I really want you to do this. The Bible means so many different things to different people, but I know that you love the stories of the Bible and the stories of your people, and that is what I want you to tell the young people in our church."

When Joe arrived at the youth meeting, he noticed that his minister had hung a chart on the wall which described the different kinds of writing in the Bible. "Joe is here tonight because he loves the stories of the Bible, and I am going to turn this part of the evening over to Joe." Joe looked around at the expectant faces. He looked at his minister. Then he swallowed hard, smiled a little, and began. "Once there was an amazing birth..."

## How to use Chapter 2

If you are meeting with others, choose from these options.

### For general discussion

- Tell each other stories about the Bible. Tell about a Bible in your home. Talk about the importance of the Bible in your life.
- Arrange to visit a local Christian bookstore. Explore aids for daily Bible reading. A Presbyterian minister can help you choose one that is consistent with the theology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- Discover the recommended Bible study curricula available from The Presbyterian Church in Canada. A curriculum chart is available from The Presbyterian Church in Canada Book Room: 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 or e-mail: [bookroom@presbyterian.ca](mailto:bookroom@presbyterian.ca). Notice the variety of resources. Why are there so many?
- According to people who study adult education, some adults learn best visually (reading), some kinesthetically (movement or doing) and some aurally (listening). If you are not a reader, try "reading" the Bible by other means — go to a biblical drama, rent a biblical video, listen to music with biblical themes such as Handel's Messiah or the musical "Joseph," borrow the Bible on cassettes from your local library.

### Discuss "Presbyterians Recognize the Bible as the Standard for Faith and Life"

- Find a New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Try the following.
  - a) Start reading at the beginning of the Bible and read for several chapters. Can you read the Bible like a novel?
  - b) Read through the book of Luke found in the New Testament. What did you discover about the life of Jesus?
  - c) Read Psalm 6, Psalm 67 and Psalm 109. How do these psalms differ and compare? Do they express any of your thoughts and feelings?
- Read aloud the *Living Faith* statement about the Bible (chapter 5, pp. 14-15). What questions do you have after completing this reading?
- Look up the words 'inspiration', 'inerrant', and 'authority' in a dictionary. Apply these definitions as follows: the inspiration of scripture, the authority of scripture, and the inerrancy of scripture. Varying interpretations of these terms cause conflict among Christians. Why?
- Invite others to share a line or two of scripture that is important to them. Or, recall fragments of scripture that stick in your mind. Others may be able to help complete the passage.

### Discuss the story "The Amazing Birth"

- The story of Joe Greydove reminds us that we all have stories that tell of our special place in the family. Share some of those stories with others in your group.
- Joe was motivated to turn to the church and the Bible because of concern for his son. Talk about things that motivate you.
- Are there Bible stories with which you identify in a special way?

# Presbyterians

## Use a Presbyterian Form of Church Government

### The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians

Churches, like countries, need strong government to provide leadership.

The government of The Presbyterian Church in Canada has four levels.

#### The four levels of church government

The Presbyterian form of church government has its roots in the New Testament Church where elders oversaw the life of the early church. Presbyterian government, as we know it, evolved from the time of the Protestant Reformation.

In the Presbyterian Church there are four "courts" where most of the important decisions that affect the church are made. The word "court" may suggest images of judges and juries rather than groups of men and women trying to do the work of the church. Yet the word "court" is appropriate because these groups are called upon to make decisions that are legally binding. Members of courts are expected to listen carefully to all points of view. They "take counsel" together.

These are the names of the four courts:

Session  
Presbytery  
Synod  
General Assembly.

Our system works this way:

- The General Assembly, which meets once a year, makes decisions on behalf of the whole church. An equal number of ordained elders and ministers/diaconal ministers are commissioned by presbyteries to attend the assembly. Presbyteries follow a rotation system to decide who attends each assembly. The committees, agencies and boards of the church are accountable to the General Assembly. Each year the church elects a moderator of General Assembly.
- The eight synods in Canada are regional assemblies, comparable to provinces. Each congregation or pastoral charge is represented by one minister and one elder. Each synod elects a moderator for a one year term.
- The district assemblies are called presbyteries and are comparable to county or regional councils. Active members of the Order of Diaconal



Ministries, the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, and an equal number of elders make up the presbytery. Each presbytery elects a moderator for a one year term. There are 46 presbyteries across Canada; 44 are geographic presbyteries, which gather together congregations in an area. There are also two Han-Ca presbyteries, which gather together Korean-speaking congregations from Eastern Canada and Western Canada.

- Decisions to change the doctrine, government, or law of the church are carefully made. Any of these decisions must be approved by one General Assembly, then by a majority of presbyteries and finally by the next General Assembly. This method is called the Barrier Act, and it is a safety measure to protect the church from making hasty decisions.
- The local court is the session. It governs the local congregation. The session members (elders) are elected and ordained for life. They may provide life-long service, or term services, according to the needs of each congregation. A minister of the local congregation is the moderator of the session.

### **Representation is the important factor**

Church members are represented at all levels of church government. This fact is important to Presbyterians. Ministers, elders, members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries and lay people discuss and make decisions for the church. When an important decision is being made, many Presbyterians are involved. The church system differs from a secular form of representative democracy in that these decision-makers are not given the task of discovering what the majority of Presbyterians want. Rather, they are asked to lead the church as they search for God's will. Listening to other Presbyterians is one part of that process.

One thing is certain about the Presbyterian Church: no one person is ever allowed to make all the decisions — not even the moderator of the General Assembly. People who have been carefully selected and ordained to be either ministers or ruling elders meet together to make the decisions. And just to make certain that they never forget that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, every meeting of a session, a presbytery, a synod, or a General Assembly is opened with prayer asking God's Holy Spirit to guide the discussions.

### **Advantages of the Presbyterian Church government**

Decisions are made by the courts, but all members of the church are free to make suggestions. All members of the church can share in the prayers and the discussions that lead to a decision. Sometimes decisions made by one

court are appealed to the next court, but church members are expected to honour views that differ from their own.

Our church structure gives us guideposts for the journey of decision-making, telling us how our faith can be worked out in practical situations. The key feature of our church government is that it provides an answer to the question, "If we want to go from Point A to Point B what is the best way for Presbyterians to travel?" The results of prior experiences and deliberation are found in *The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly*. Church law is contained within *The Book of Forms*. Each elder should have a copy of this document. Presbyteries often hold training sessions to help elders understand the meaning and interpretation of the law of the church.

The records of each court are kept in order by its clerk. Clerks can be consulted by members of the church for explanations about church law ("polity"), procedure or policy.

### **"Problems" with our church structure**

Presbyterians joke among themselves that they like to do things "decently and in order". Sometimes it takes Presbyterians a long time to agree on a decision that they believe is in keeping with God's will for the church. Human frailty and sin can sometimes block the Spirit's encouragement to change. But sometimes the slowness is a consequence of giving individuals an avenue to speak, appeal or propose a new way. There are times when the church doesn't make decisions fast enough for some, but this situation most often arises from sincere efforts to do the will of God.

Yet, with all its shortcomings, the presbyterian system of decision-making is one of the best for checking autocratic power and bureaucratic rigidity. We are informed by the expertise of Presbyterians in the past, and are influenced by present day reality to formulate decisions that will affect the future.

### **Will our church structure always remain the same?**

Whether or not our church structure will always stay the same is unclear. As our understanding of the faith grows clearer, we modify our practice and our rules and regulations. For example, until the 1960s, women were not ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. Under the Spirit's guidance, that rule was changed. The church, under God's leading, is always moving on to re-address important issues. As our theology moves to a deeper level of understanding, blinders are shed and scripture speaks anew. All this careful adjustment is part of the Holy Spirit's work in the midst of the community. We are Reformed and we are continually reforming.

## Something Old, Something New

Tom's two young sons were kneeling in front of the coffee table, colouring the picture of First Presbyterian Church that had been inserted into their church bulletin. Tom smiled as he listened to them argue.

"It's God's house. My teacher said so."

"No. It's Daddy's house. He built this part!"

It was Tom's construction business that eventually led him back to First Presbyterian Church. Tom had gone to Sunday school as a child, but, like many of his friends, he drifted away in his teens. Later, even though he and Sharon had two pre-schoolers, they had not "gone back to church."

When Tom received the phone call from the minister asking him to come to a meeting to discuss an addition on one of the oldest Presbyterian churches in the Atlantic provinces, old First Presbyterian, Tom was surprised, pleased, and a bit frightened by the prospect of adding a new wing onto an historic building.

The meetings with the church leaders at First Presbyterian had not been easy for Tom. Even though the men and women who made up the session — the church governing body — were convinced that they needed the addition for their growing youth program, there were also people who could not bear to have the appearance of their building altered. Maybe it is something left over from my childhood, Tom thought, but I don't want that church to change either. Still, he confessed to himself, it would be a real challenge to add a room that would look as if it had always been there.

Finally, after months of meetings, Tom was asked to accompany the minister and some of the committee members to the presbytery to obtain approval for construction. It surprised Tom that the presbytery required drawings of the new addition, estimates of cost and their projected time line for construction. It surprised him that it also had to go to the General Assembly's Church Architecture Committee for approval.



“What happens if presbytery or the committee doesn’t approve?” Tom inquired.

“Well, they would have to provide good reasons, of course,” the minister said, “but I suppose that if presbytery objected for reasons that we feel aren’t valid, we would make an appeal to the synod or even to the General Assembly.”

The appeal wasn’t necessary. The members of presbytery asked some tough questions and made some good suggestions but, in general, they were pleased with the excellent plans that Tom and the members of First Church had provided. It was Tom’s first introduction to how The Presbyterian Church in Canada is governed.

It was time for dinner. Tom stooped down and helped the boys put away their crayons. “Hey — you’re both right,” he said. “First Presbyterian Church is God’s house and your Daddy helped God build it.”

## How to use Chapter 3

If you are meeting with others, choose from these options.

### For general discussion

- Look up the word “presbyterian” in an English dictionary and the word “presbyter” in a Bible dictionary and concordance. Then look up “presbytery” in the concordance. Did this research give you new insights? Could you write a sentence to describe “Presbyterian”?
- Invite to your group the moderator of your session (your minister) and the moderator of your presbytery. (This will be a clergy or lay person from your area.) Ask questions about Presbyterian church government. Ask them to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of this way of governing. Ask them to tell stories about difficult, amusing or touching things that happened at their levels of government.
- The elders, who comprise the session, are elected and ordained to this position. Ask a minister to speak about how this happens.

### Discuss “Presbyterians Use a Presbyterian Form of Church Government”

- Some people say that the Presbyterian Church is democratic because it is ruled by representatives of the people. Some say the Presbyterian Church is theocratic because it is ruled by God through the courts of the church.  
Which do you think is the more accurate description of the Presbyterian Church as it is intended to be?
- Imagine a situation where you disagree with a decision that your session has taken. In what ways would you find the process of appeal to other courts to be a helpful one?

### Discuss the story “Something Old, Something New”

- Tom’s story of estrangement from the church is typical of many people. Discuss why this happens. Has this been part of your reality? Was it a positive or negative thing?
- Tom was surprised to learn that presbytery and a General Assembly committee wanted to see and approve their building plans. Anglicans have a bishop who oversees the well-being of clergy and congregations. Presbyterians, however, have the presbytery. In what way might it be seen as an advantage to have a group of people overseeing clergy and congregations? Are there disadvantages?

# Presbyterians

## Celebrate Baptism and Communion

### The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians

There are two acts of Christian worship — word and sacrament. Word and sacrament complete each other. The two sacraments observed in The Presbyterian Church in Canada are baptism and communion.

#### Defining a sacrament

Sacraments are “visible expressions of the Gospel given as means of entering and sustaining the Christian life” (*Living Faith* 7.5.1). In the Presbyterian tradition, sacraments are firmly fixed at the heart of Christian faith and life. You will notice that baptism only takes place within the context of the worshipping community. Likewise, communion is celebrated with a community of believers.

#### Baptism

As a sacrament, baptism is more than a rite of dedication. It is the symbol by which we celebrate what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Presbyterians believe that, in baptism, we are united by the Holy Spirit with Christ and incorporated into the family of God, which is the holy, catholic church. Baptism can be celebrated in any Christian church. There is no need to be rebaptized in a Presbyterian church. It is a public, not a private, confession of faith made in the presence of other members of the faith community. The congregation assumes responsibility to nurture and encourage the baptized person’s commitment to Christ and his or her participation in the church.

#### Baptism may occur at any age

Youth and adults are baptized in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. They profess their faith in Jesus Christ and vow to follow his way in all of life. Infants brought by one or more parents or a grandparent are also baptized. Parents profess their faith and take vows to nurture the child in the Christian life. The congregation receives and blesses the person being baptized and promises to support and encourage personal growth in Christian faith. Throughout the Old Testament it is



clear that children were part of the covenant and shared the promises in the agreement made between God and the Jewish people. The New Testament shows a similar understanding of the place of children of believing parents within the family of God. It is worth noting that we believe God's grace is not dependent upon our actions. God's saving love would not be denied to unbaptized children, but the sacrament is a visible expression of that love. The sacraments convey what they symbolize: the love and forgiveness of God that strengthens and guides us — and this can happen at any age.

### The water of baptism

Ministers baptize with water in the name of the Triune God. We share this trinitarian theology with all Christian churches. The service of baptism speaks of baptism as a sign and seal of our union with Christ and with his church. Signs are things that can be seen, such as the water. A sign symbolizes and witnesses to God's act of salvation. Baptism is a symbolic presentation of Christ's death and resurrection to new life in which we participate. It is also a seal, a mark of authority guaranteeing promises. In baptism, the baptized person is united with Christ, and becomes a member of Christ's church. This promise is declared in Galatians 3:27 and Ephesians 4:5.

### Communion — The Lord's Supper

"The Lord's Supper is Christ's gift to the church. It is also our grateful response. Before there were books of worship or formal creeds, and even before the New Testament was written, the first Christians met on the Lord's Day to read the Scriptures and letters from the apostles and to celebrate the Lord's Supper"<sup>1</sup>

### What happens at communion?

"The order for holy communion is a series of simple actions: we receive the gifts of bread and wine; we give thanks to God; we break the bread and pour the wine; we share the food and drink with each other"<sup>2</sup>

### The meaning of communion

*Living Faith (7.7)* says that communion is a time to remember Jesus. The Holy Spirit unites us in Christ at communion. The Lord's Supper is a joyful mystery, which represents Jesus' sacrifice. This meal deepens our union with Jesus and each other, and strengthens us for service. The Lord's Supper is also a time of thanksgiving. We pray for the world. We celebrate Jesus' victory over death and anticipate the joyous feast we shall have in the coming kingdom.

### Who is invited to communion?

The Presbyterian Church in Canada offers an open communion — that is, any member of any branch of the Christian church is welcome to the table. In 1987, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church invited congregations to issue an invitation to baptized children of faith to come to communion. A study and re-examination of the place of children within the covenant community has led to an openness in many congregations for the inclusion of children at the Lord's Table. It is estimated that, in 2003, about half of the Presbyterian congregations in Canada include children in the invitation to the table.

1. *Public Worship: Something We Do*, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1994, p. 23.
2. *Ibid*, p. 25.





## God's Gift

John Wong pulled into the narrow driveway beside his townhouse. He stood for a moment looking at the little garden he and Mary had planted. Glancing up the street at the dry lawns, he shook his head and sighed. It had been, the radio announcer said, the longest stretch without rain in ten years. I'll have to water those drooping tomatoes before we go out, John thought.

He and Mary had a meeting at the church after supper. On Sunday their baby was to be baptized and they were going to discuss baptism. "I'm not sure that I understand what baptism really means. Do I understand communion either... I mean, really understand it?" John had asked Mary.

"Our minister gave us these pamphlets to read," Mary reminded him.

"I'll try to read them before we go," John said, bending down to the baby who sat propped in her small chair, chewing on a blue teething ring. John ran his finger down the side of her soft, plump cheek. "I sure hope this babysitter is good," he worried.

"She has excellent references. I think we have the best possible babysitter," Mary replied.

Later, after tucking the baby into bed and giving final instructions to the babysitter, Mary and John left for the church. "A night out!" Mary said and they both smiled. "Funny..." Mary said, "I told the babysitter we are going to a baptism preparation evening at the church, and she wanted to know why the baby had to be baptized."

"Oh, yeah? Well, what did you tell her?"

"I said that, in our church, baptism is our way of saying 'We belong to Jesus' and we want to raise our child to know and love God. The congregation promises to help us. We don't need to baptize our baby to 'make her O.K. with God.' It's our way of saying that we know that God does wonderful things for us."

"Amazing. I don't think I could have answered so well."

"Well, you didn't read the pamphlets," Mary answered with a grin.

After the meeting was over, Mary and John pulled into the drive-through of their favourite coffee shop. For a half hour they sipped coffee and talked in the quiet of their parked car.

"You know," Mary said, "before tonight I had never made such a strong connection between baptism and communion. Had you?"

"Well, no, I guess not," John replied, "but if baptism is the beginning of a new life in Christ, it makes sense that, in communion we are fed and nurtured in that life. It's such a responsibility, really...making the right decisions for a child."

"It is an awesome thing," Mary answered slowly, "but the baby has been a real gift to us. A gift from God."

John thought about the water of baptism, the bread and wine of communion, the baby, the new babysitter, and the parched tomatoes.

"A gift from God," John repeated. "Well...time for home," he said, switching on the ignition. "Hey! It's raining!"

## How to use Chapter 4

If you are meeting with others, choose from these options.

### For general discussion

- Both baptism and communion involve a confession of faith. Some confessions are ancient texts of the church. If you had to make up your own confession, what would you say? Try to complete the sentence, "I believe..." at least three or four times.
- View *Gifts of God: The Sacraments*, a short DVD produced by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Discuss the images and words used to describe the sacraments. How does this DVD expand your understanding of the sacraments?
- Tell stories of your baptism or first memories of communion.

### Discuss "Presbyterians Celebrate Baptism and Communion"

- After reading this background material, what was new for you in understanding baptism?
- Read some biblical references about baptism and discuss the meaning conveyed in these passages: 1 Corinthians 6:11; Romans 6:3-11; Mark 1:8; Acts 16:29-34; Galatians 3:27-28.
- If you were baptized as an infant, you won't remember the day any more than you remember the day of your birth. Both events are important. What can parents and congregations do to celebrate, remember and interpret baptism to children?

### Discuss the story "The Gift"

- What might Mary and John plan as a celebration for the baby's baptism? What might the church do to celebrate a new member?
- Discuss ways to celebrate the anniversary of a baptism.
- Consider the ways in which preparing and celebrating communion is similar to the preparations and rituals built into our celebration of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

# Presbyterians

## Thrive in Community and Serve Others

### The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians

Children in many Presbyterian churches sing this song:

“I am the church! You are the church!  
We are the church together!  
All who follow Jesus, all around the world!  
Yes, we’re the church together!  
The church is not a building,  
The church is not a steeple,  
the church is not a resting place,  
The church is the people!”

(Words for “I Am the Church,” Avery and Marsh,  
used by permission. © Hope Publishing, 1972. All rights reserved.)

The word “church” brings many images to mind. When we think of the church as people — loving, caring, serving, welcoming, helping, supporting — the church is alive, dynamic, active and responsive. Christ has chosen to live in and through the church, giving direction and purpose to our activity. Christ is alive in the world in the actions of Christian people.

### Worship builds Christian community

One easily recognized action of the church is worship. People at worship are active. In worship we express our commitment to God and enter into a conversation with God that affects how we see ourselves and how we relate to others.

Worship in every Presbyterian church includes praying, singing, Bible reading, listening to a sermon, giving offerings and receiving a blessing. We may also share a handshake of peace or celebrate baptism or holy communion. The style of worship may vary from church to church, but the one constant thing in all our worship is that we do everything in the name of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God.

Worship services are public events. Anyone may come. Congregations usually print “bulletins” that provide an outline of the order of service for public worship giving the hymn numbers and Bible readings. They may also include the names of anthems and solos, a sermon title and any prayers or texts that the congregation says



together. You might also find announcements about the congregation's work and the names and telephone numbers of people who could provide information or assistance. The bulletin can be taken home for further reference. Many congregations use bulletin covers prepared in our national church office. The front cover picture and accompanying printed text provide information related to the Sunday of the church year or about an aspect of the work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. While Presbyterians do not have to use a prayer book or service book, *The Book of Common Worship* is a Presbyterian resource for worship that is used by many worship leaders. Congregational responses are usually printed in the bulletin.

We come to worship with varying needs and expectations and from a variety of experiences. We all have our own preferences in music, and some sermons or scriptures "speak" to us more than others. Sometimes our prayers are well-formulated, and other times we seem less coherent. Often worship brings a powerful awareness of God's presence. Worship, though, is always the offering we bring to God, whether we bring it in confident faith or in honest searching. Through our experience of worship we come to see our life and our world differently as we are challenged in new ways and strengthened to serve the world in Jesus' name.

### **Who is the minister?**

Most Presbyterian congregations have a minister — either male or female — who is ordained (set apart) to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. The minister administers the sacraments of communion and baptism. He or she is responsible for the conduct and content of public worship and for preaching. An elected group of women and men (the session) is responsible for appointing the organist and other leaders, whether voluntary or salaried. These may include readers, liturgists, praise leaders and musicians. Congregations may also employ professional church workers or members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries to provide leadership training, and education in the faith, and to participate in the worship services and other congregational activities.

Presbyterians, however, believe that each Christian — every member of the church — is called to ministry. Certain people may be trained and set apart to specialized forms of ministry, but we all have the privilege to minister as we share our faith, our resources, our time and our gifts in the name of Jesus Christ. In this way we remain true to our Reformed principle of a priesthood of all believers. Much of this sharing is done in and through the life and work of the congregation we have joined. This association gives us a place in which to

worship, learn and serve, and it also gives us people with whom to do these important things. Participation within a congregation gives access to other involvement in the broader work of regional (presbytery, synod) and national committees and agencies.

Congregations encourage everyone's participation in ministry by including lay people of all ages as worship leaders, by providing microphones, hearing aids, large print hymn books and Bibles, and by making places of worship accessible to persons with physical challenges.

### **Community is built as we serve**

The early Christians did not think of their worship as ending at their dismissal; they took their faith with them into every aspect of their lives. Their worship was translated into work and witness, and the church grew.

Like these early Christians, we also gather together to be strengthened by our fellowship. In our worship there is opportunity to hear God speaking through scriptures, prayer, music, the sermon and sacraments. The same connection to God can happen as we offer food to a hungry person or listen to a child who has something to tell. Worship and witness are interrelated. One leads to the other.

In congregations, people of all ages learn to care for each other and try to demonstrate that God's wondrous love is meant for everyone. This means that Presbyterians are active in work and worship beyond their own congregation's activities. You will find Presbyterians involved in leading scouts, on community boards, in service groups. You will find Presbyterians running thrift shops, leading school associations, repairing appliances for seniors. You will find Presbyterians writing letters for Amnesty International, giving to Presbyterian World Service & Development, joining international coalitions. You will find Presbyterians in politics, in economics, and working to change unfair social structures. Presbyterians are socially engaged. We work in partnership with God, reflecting God's intention for justice, peace and love.

### **The Presbyterian Church in Canada supports worship and service**

Agencies and structures within our denomination support worship and service. People at the national office of The Presbyterian Church in Canada can provide suggestions. This office is located at 50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, Ontario, M3C 1J7 Tel. (416) 441-1111 or (800) 619-7301, Fax (416) 441-2825), [www.presbyterian.ca](http://www.presbyterian.ca). The building has ample parking and is wheelchair accessible.

## Thea's Purple Project

It was Friday evening. Thea usually had lots of energy, but tonight she was tired. She and her husband were finishing the supper dishes when Thea noticed the red light on her answering machine. She switched on the message and recognized the voice of Allison who shared with her the teaching of the Grade 7 church school class at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

"I'm terribly sorry to spring this on you at the last moment," Allison said, her voice cracking with laryngitis, "but I wonder if you would teach for me on Sunday."

Thea sighed. Of course she would help. After all, Allison had taught for her when she had the stomach flu. Thea thought back over the past week. There had been the usual family responsibilities, her work, the board meeting for the community justice office, the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper at the church. What a mountain of sticky plates she and the Grade 7 class had washed! Thea poured herself a cup of lemon tea and sat down to rest.

The next day, Thea settled in her favourite chair with her Sunday school materials. Mmmm...first Sunday in Lent. Will the kids realize that? Of course, they celebrated the beginning of Lent with the pancake supper this week...but how could she help the 12-year-old children in her class understand Lent? I know that Lent is a time to re-examine and reaffirm our identity as people baptized into Christ's body, the church, and I know that Lent leads us to Easter, Thea thought. I know that purple is the colour for getting ready and our church uses purple all through Lent as a sign that we are getting ready for Easter.

Then Thea had a quick flash of an idea. Why not combine those three thoughts — we celebrate being God's people — Lent moves toward Easter — purple is the colour of Lent. "Now I know what to do," Thea said. "I have a big piece of heavy paper upstairs. We'll draw a calendar of this and next month. We'll mark on 40 days — the 40 days of



Lent. Then we'll talk about the things we can do in Lent to express our care and concern for others. Every time we think of something to do together as God's people, we'll glue a square of purple paper on one of the days of our calendar. I wonder how many we could fill by Easter. Every Sunday we'll read the stories leading up to Easter. Then we'll talk about more 'purple projects' we can do during the week."

"We might be able to provide something for the food bank," Thea said. "The staff told me they need fruit juice. Maybe we could collect cans of grape juice. Purple juice." Thea chuckled to herself.

Thea was beginning to feel new energy. Maybe I could even wear that new purple blouse I bought last week. I wonder if the kids would get excited about wearing purple t-shirts all through Lent?

And she ran upstairs to look for construction paper. Purple, of course.

## How to use Chapter 5

If you are meeting with others, choose from these options.

### For general discussion

- Consider the amount of time you devote to worship in a month. When you attend worship, what factors influence your decision to attend? What factors affect your decision not to attend?
- Invite to your group someone from the church who will discuss how he or she sees worship encouraging them to serve others.

### Discuss "Presbyterians Thrive in Community and Serve Others"

- Using a bulletin from a Presbyterian church review the order of service. Circle words and phrases you do not understand and ask about them. Sometimes people in the church forget what it is like to be new somewhere. It is helpful to know what information is not clearly expressed in the church bulletin. Use *Public Worship: Something We Do*, published by the Presbyterian Church in Canada, to clarify worship in the Reformed tradition.
- Tell someone about an experience when you were inspired or strengthened in a time of worship.
- Some people say they can feel close to God on the golf course or while walking in the woods. What helps them feel that way? What is missing in this type of worship?
- What would you describe as the two most pressing needs in your community? How could the local church respond?
- Obtain an up-to-date copy of the *Social Action Handbook* available for download at [www.presbyterian.ca/files/webfm/ourresources/justiceministries/SocialActionHandbook2010web.pdf](http://www.presbyterian.ca/files/webfm/ourresources/justiceministries/SocialActionHandbook2010web.pdf). Explore the range of issues that The Presbyterian Church in Canada has studied through the years. What issues do you think the denomination still needs to consider?

### Discuss the story "Thea's Purple Project"

- Why do people respond in service? What do you think motivates Thea?
- Thea and her Sunday school class will be thinking of many ways they can serve in their community. What options for service are available for you in your community? Which can be done in a group setting, and which can be done at home? Which require a long-term commitment, and which can be supported with a short-term commitment? Which excite you and engage your imagination?

# Presbyterians

## Practice Stewardship

### The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians

#### Giving is a response to God

Stewardship is a person's response to God in Christ. God has given generously to us. We, then, give to others. Presbyterians practice whole-life stewardship, using time, ability and money for the advance of God's kingdom. We are stewards of God's mysteries and stewards of creation. How we spend our money and time are strong statements about us. As Presbyterians, we aim to let our words and actions "shine before others that they may see these good works and give glory to God" (Matt. 5:16). Presbyterian congregations stress the mission of the church and recognize our need to give and the pleasure we receive by giving.

#### Giving money to the church

During public worship Presbyterians are invited to make an offering (including a financial offering) to God. This act of worship links our praise of God to concern for others.

Offering envelopes allow us to plan our giving, to receive income tax receipts, and to support regularly and faithfully the church's ministry. Cheques are made payable to the local church. Many congregations provide envelopes for visitors, and some use Pre-authorized remittance (PAR) for regular contributors. If you have questions about the offering, ask a greeter, an elder, the church treasurer or the minister.

Local churches may use offering envelopes in different ways. Some use one envelope and divide the money among a variety of needs in a manner decided by the congregation at an open meeting. Other congregations provide a list of needs on the envelope and leave it up to you to fill in the amount for each area. Separate envelopes may be provided for special occasions and specific projects.

#### How much should I give?

Many people wrestle with this question: "How much money should we give in our offering to the church?" The Old Testament provides examples of tithing — giving one tenth. Many people abide by the principle of giving one tenth and even more. Time and again, they testify that this practice has brought them much blessing and satisfaction.



The New Testament makes few direct references to the tithe. A guideline of a minimum of 5% has been suggested by the General Assembly as a goal.

“It seems appropriate to suggest that Canadian Presbyterians be encouraged to give ‘the modern tithe’ or five per cent of gross annual household income in support of the ministry and mission of the church (the 106th General Assembly approved a similar recommendation calling for the biblical practice of proportional giving and a minimum goal of offering five per cent of income). This level of giving will help people to put God first in their lives. In response to the generosity of God and with an attitude of gratitude people will be encouraged to grow in their givings to five per cent and beyond...” (1994 *Acts and Proceedings*, p. 334).

The amount of five percent takes several factors into consideration. It recognizes that our tax dollars contribute to the well-being of society by helping to fund social, health and educational programs. It takes into account that Canadian Presbyterians contribute to various other charities that help to meet the needs of poor and hurting people. It also invites people to think of proportional giving — giving a specified portion of income. Obviously, the giving patterns for people at various points of the income scale could be quite different. Those who have more resources are able to give more.

### Principles of Christian giving

- Our giving is an act of worship that symbolizes the giving of our whole self.
- We give out of gratitude for all that God has given us.
- We give as a response to God’s grace, not to earn God’s grace.
- We give intentionally and regularly, of our own free will.
- We give proportionately, according to how God has prospered us.
- Our giving is a priority. Our gifts come ‘off the top.’ They do not come from what is left over. They rank among the essentials in our budget.
- We give joyfully and find that, in so doing, we are blessed.

### What is *Presbyterians Sharing*?

*Presbyterians Sharing* is the mission and ministry fund of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This mission, given by Christ to the church, is supported by allocations (suggested support) from local congregations.

### *Presbyterians Sharing*

- participates in international mission partnerships
- supports mission personnel serving in many countries
- starts new congregations in Canada
- participates in native, refugee, chaplaincy, inner-city, urban, town, rural and remote ministries in Canada
- serves the church courts
- offers education and support for theological students
- encourages evangelism and stewardship
- facilitates education for the faith, mission and worship
- inspires Youth in Mission
- provides communication and financial services
- engages in justice ministries

Congregations may hear about these ministries from their minister or invited guests. When international staff visits Canada, they, too, tell of the ministry supported by *Presbyterians Sharing*. Ask your local Presbyterian church for the current brochure outlining the *Presbyterians Sharing* budget. Most church offering envelopes have *Presbyterians Sharing* marked clearly on one side of the envelope.

### What is Presbyterian World Service & Development?

Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D), our church’s development and relief agency, offers Presbyterians an opportunity to

- work in partnership with church and community groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America who are making long-term improvements in preventive health, non-formal education, and income generation
- respond to emergencies until long-term improvements can be made
- help Canadian Presbyterians learn about global issues and find ways to respond.

Money given to PWS&D is above and beyond money assigned to local needs and *Presbyterians Sharing* and is often matched by the Canadian International Development Agency.

### We think of others when we give

Money given to The Presbyterian Church in Canada is used across Canada and in partner churches around the world. Throughout the years, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has accomplished amazing things with God’s help. We have shared the good news of Jesus’ love. We have built hospitals, established schools, fed hungry people, and helped to set free oppressed people in all parts of the world.

## Cheryl's Two-Minute Talks

Mavis picked up her copy of *Presbyterian Record* and flipped through it. Her eye caught an article about baby boomers. What on earth are baby boomers, she wondered, as she folded back the page. Baby boomers, the writer said, are people born between 1946 and 1964. According to the article, baby boomers in the church expect accountability and information. Oh, I guess that makes my Cheryl a baby boomer all right, Mavis thought. Mavis glanced over to the dining room buffet where a framed photo of Cheryl stood beside a pot of mums. Last year, Cheryl had returned to her home town after several years of living in another province. It had pleased Mavis that Cheryl, a single mother, had chosen to come back to her home town to work as an accountant. And it had both pleased and surprised Mavis when Cheryl expressed interest in attending the Presbyterian Church where she had grown up.

Cheryl had only been attending Central Presbyterian Church for a few months when she was asked to be on the Stewardship and Finance Committee. "I wonder how Cheryl will make out on that committee," Mavis worried. "After all, she's a newcomer."

Several weeks later, when Mavis walked into church, she noticed a new pie-shaped chart by the front door. It was bright and eye-catching, but what did all the numbers mean? Cheryl slid into the pew beside her mother, a sheet of paper in one hand and the colourful chart in the other. Mavis lifted an eye brow in question, but Cheryl just shrugged and whispered, "You'll see."

When it came time for the announcements, the minister called Cheryl forward to discuss stewardship and finances. Cheryl walked to the front of the church and propped the chart on an easel. "Hello," she said, smiling with confidence. "Although I grew up here in Central Presbyterian, I have just returned after 15 years. I've been invited to work with the Stewardship and Finance Committee of this church and I want to talk about money. This chart shows us that..." Then Cheryl talked for two minutes about money that is given to an inner city project through *Presbyterians Sharing*. "If you are like me," Cheryl concluded, "you will be asking: 'Why are we involved with this project?' Well, that's what I'll talk about next week."

It was the beginning of many two-minute talks that Cheryl and other members of the committee gave over the next year. They talked about giving to local mission projects. They explained the difference between *Presbyterians Sharing* and Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D). They passed out a brochure that explained the narrative budget of



their congregation. They kept the congregation up-to-date on how well they were meeting their stewardship goals. They shared stories of joyful giving. They explained how the offering envelopes work and how people could sign up for pre-authorized remittance through their bank accounts if they wished. They read stories from *Presbyterians Sharing* and PWS&D bulletin inserts and the Stories of Mission that tell how the church's money is spent. Stewardship and money were celebrated at Central Presbyterian.

One day, Mavis was pruning the roses which grew along her back fence. Her neighbour, Bob, who was a member of Central Presbyterian, was pruning his back hedge.

"Hi!" he called out to Mavis. "Say, we've really appreciated the leadership your daughter Cheryl has given around money and stewardship this year."

"Isn't she great!" Mavis replied, swelling with pride.

"You know what I like best about her little talks?" Bob asked. Mavis shook her head. "She really seems to enjoy giving them," Bob said with a laugh. "It's quite contagious. For the first time in my life I realized that I have a need to give. In fact, I really want to give."

Bob and Mavis continued to talk a few minutes until Bob said, "Well, I'd better keep working at this hedge before the sun goes down. But, say...if you're planning on snipping off any of those roses, I would love one for my desk at work."

"It would be my pleasure," Mavis said as she carefully chose the biggest and best.

## How to use Chapter 6

If you are meeting with others, choose from these options.

### For general discussion

- Look at the offering envelopes used in your church. How are they organized? Why are they set up this way?
- Is your congregation on the PAR (Pre-authorized Remittance) plan? What might be the advantages of such a program?
- Our money gifts are not our only offering to God. Our time and our abilities are also linked to our Christian witness. Colossians 4:5 reminds us to "conduct yourselves wisely...making the most of the time." How would a consideration and application of this directive affect your weekly schedule?
- Look at the most recent set of *Presbyterians Sharing* and PWS&D bulletin inserts. What story catches your interest?

### Discuss "Presbyterians Practice Stewardship"

- If a person living in a refugee camp came to visit your church, what do you think that person would have to say to you? Would that person find that congregational budgets reflect social involvement?
- Regular use of church offering envelopes provides a way to support ministry at and beyond the local congregation. Respond to the following statement, "Through the offering we begin to discover that living is giving and giving is living."

### Discuss the story "Cheryl's Two-Minute Talks"

- What was the "secret" to Cheryl's success? List reasons why people responded positively to Cheryl's two-minute talks.
- Are the members of your congregation informed regularly about the mission and ministries of the congregation, and how much they cost? Are they encouraged to participate with gifts of time, money and prayer?
- Think of a variety of ways your church could share their stories of mission and ministry with the congregation and community. Pick one or two to try.

# Presbyterians

## Engage in Ecumenical and Global Partnerships

### The beliefs and practices of Presbyterians

Presbyterians are involved in several types of ecumenical and global partnerships. Here is a brief description of some of them.

#### Mission partnerships

The study of Christian missions — called missiology — is fascinating. Such study shows how the church spread from the area called Galilee, throughout the Roman Empire and then to all nations over the last two millennia. It is a story of expansion, going forth, taking the gospel to new lands. Canadian Presbyterians (like most other Christians) used to think of mission as a one-way street, wherein we had something to offer somebody or some church in a foreign land. Today, our carrying the gospel forth is stated in these words: “Our mission, in a world of many nations, peoples, denominations and faiths, is to learn from one another and work together for the healing of the nations” (*Acts and Proceedings*, 1994, p. 231). *Living Faith* expresses our mission statement in these words: “We should not address others in a spirit of arrogance implying that we are better than they. But rather, in the spirit of humility, as beggars telling others where food is to be found, we point to life in Christ” (9.2.1). This means, for instance, that we do not refer to ourselves as “having a mission in Nigeria or India.” Rather, we say, “We are partners with The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and partners with the Church of North India.”

#### Our mission is a joint endeavour

Much of the work of mission in other parts of the world happens ecumenically. To be a Presbyterian is to belong to a large family that extends beyond our congregation and denomination to include membership in The World Communion of Reformed Churches, an international body of Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed, Waldensian, Uniting and United Churches. This body consisting of 227 member churches in 108 countries representing 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide works together to promote economic, ecological and gender justice around the world. WCRC was born in June, 2010 through a historic merger of The World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council combining a long history with



roots in the 16th-century Reformation led by John Calvin, John Knox, Ulrich Zwingli and many others, and the earlier reforming movements of Jan Hus and Peter Valdes.

WCRC unites churches in many ways relevant to the world by promoting partnership of men and women in leadership, fostering theological innovation and strengthening our common understanding, raising the voices of churches on contemporary critical issues and providing consultations to strengthen member churches' witness and outreach.

Our denomination is also a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) in their joint global projects. The WCC is a fellowship of 349 churches in more than 110 countries and territories in all continents from virtually all Christian traditions and representing over 560 million Christians including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. The WCC emerged from the worldwide missionary movement recognizing that in mission the church found its unity. Today the WCC seeks unity, a common witness and Christian service and calls all churches leaders to remember that the only reason for the church's existence, and the only hope it has for continuing to exist, lies in Jesus Christ.

The Canadian Council of Churches is a network through which members meet to pray, learn about each other, reflect, and choose common actions. Within the council there is a Commission on Faith and Witness which engages the churches in theological study to foster greater understanding of the faith they hold in common and to provide an ecumenical witness to the mission of Christ in the world. The commission develops theological resources to support the wider work of the council and co-ordinates churches' participation in interfaith dialogue (including the Canadian Christian Jewish Consultation and the National Christian Muslim Liaison Committee). The commission also includes a committee focusing on the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

There is also a Commission on Justice and Peace which is a forum for consultation, coordination, planning and co-operation in matters of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation. It works with churches and various ecumenical groups. From time to time, the Canadian Council of Churches also undertakes special projects

and initiatives, such as the Biotechnology Reference Group, formed by the governing board of the council in May, 1999 to serve as clearinghouse to gather and exchange information on biotechnology issues.

## **We work in resource development**

Joint curriculum development is another example of the way we work ecumenically with other churches. From time to time we develop curricula with The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church of America, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and the Moravian Church in America.

We also work together with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, American Baptist Churches U.S.A., Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Church of the Brethren, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church on Evangelism Connections, an ecumenical organization that strives to frame evangelism, hospitality and church vitality in a 21st century context and provide shared resources toward that end.

The Consultation on Common Texts, an ecumenical body interested in texts used in worship, includes representation from our denomination. This group produced the Revised Common Lectionary, a resource used by many of our ministers and congregations. We could not have produced this resource on our own. It has become a link between denominations, local congregations and Christian preachers.

## **We work together in social justice**

Within Canada, the denomination is involved in social justice initiatives covering the major topics of our day. Our membership in Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives enables us to address issues such as human rights, refugee issues, global economic reform, Aboriginal rights, international advocacy issues, HIV/AIDS advocacy, all on a broad ecumenical platform. Presbyterians have always felt that by pooling "...our resources with other churches" we can "...create an impact far beyond our relatively modest means." (*Acts and Proceedings*, 1994, p. 397)

## **We work together in international relief**

Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D) is one of 15 church-based member agencies that are part of Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). It is a uniquely Canadian and ecumenical institution, established in 1983 as a practical way for Canadian farmers to share their abundant harvests with vulnerable people around the world. Today, CFGB's members represent almost all Christian denominations in Canada, working

together to respond to hunger around the world and improve the ability of communities to grow their own food.

CFGB serves as the main fundraiser for its members, collecting grain and cash donations from farmers, the church community, federal government and Canadian public, and depositing funds into member accounts or a general account accessible by all members. For each project, one member is responsible for managing it with CFGB and the overseas partner implementing the response. Members use their CFGB funds to support both projects they are leading and projects led by other members. All donations directed to CFGB projects are matched.

PWS&D is one of the founding members of Canadian Churches in Action (CCA), a coalition formed in 2005 of ten Canadian churches involved in development and relief activities around the world. CCA members are all members of CFGB, who collaborate under CCA to carry out non-food responses to disasters and access additional sources of funding from government agencies. In addition, CCA is spearheading an HIV and AIDS initiative in Africa, through which churches are working together to address human rights and gender issues in the context of HIV and AIDS education.

PWS&D is also a member of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, an international network of more than 100 churches and relief agencies working in long-term development and humanitarian assistance. The ACT network enables PWS&D to respond to disasters through church channels in countries where PWS&D does not have direct partnerships established. Members of the alliance work together for positive and sustainable changes in the lives of people affected by poverty and injustice through coordinated and effective humanitarian, development and advocacy work.

PWS&D is also a member of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, which brings together ten Canadian ecumenical coalitions seeking to effect social change through advocacy, education and research programs in: ecological justice, economic justice, energy and extraction, human rights, just and sustainable livelihoods, and indigenous peoples. PWS&D is particularly involved in the Global Partnerships Program, which links 21 partner organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, eighty local grassroots groups across Canada, and countless other organizations, churches and individuals seeking to respond to God's call for respect for the earth and justice for its people.

## **We share theological education**

We share theological education with other Christian denominations. Knox College is part of the Toronto School of Theology and students there as well as at the Vancouver School of Theology study under Anglican, United, Roman Catholic, and Presbyterian scholars. In Presbyterian College in Montreal there is also a significant sharing of resources with the United and Anglican churches and with the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University.

## **We help you build global partnerships**

The Experience Mission program supports Presbyterians from across Canada to engage in mission first-hand through visits to Canadian and international mission partners. More than an ordinary journey, a mission trip is also a spiritual journey that can transform your life. As you share in the mission of the church people grow in faith through new connections and understanding, learn new skills and how best to serve others. Mission groups visit work supported through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing and Presbyterian World Service & Development and develop a deep understanding of what our denomination is doing together in Canada and around the world. In recent years congregations have visited partners in Malawi, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Taiwan, Eastern Europe, and India. Congregations have also hosted people from our partner churches in Malawi, India, Taiwan, and Nicaragua. These intercultural experiences help broaden our understanding of how we can be like Christ in the world and support others working to do the same.

## **We participate in local ministerial groups**

Congregations from different denominations often work together in a local region. The clergy may gather regularly to plan events, discuss local concerns, or study and pray together. Working together is a powerful Christian witness in our communities.

## **We have much in common with others**

As Presbyterians we are increasingly aware that we have much in common with other Christians. We have a common calling to serve Jesus Christ in the world by sharing the gospel in ways that are healing and life-transforming. Our denomination continues to explore opportunities for cooperative work that are more effective and efficient than working alone. Most importantly, such cooperative efforts express to others that all Christians are the body of Christ. In working together we communicate to those with whom we come in contact that Jesus is Lord.

## Richard's Dinner Party

They were a diverse group of people. There was no doubt about that. Richard was a bit nervous as he pulled the van out from the curb. It was the second day of the General Assembly meeting and Richard's congregation was hosting over 400 commissioners. It had required months of planning and organization.

Back in April, Richard had received a phone call. "We wondered," the committee chair person said, "...if you would consider acting as host for our international visitors to the General Assembly?"

"International visitors?" Richard asked. "I didn't know we would have international visitors."

"Oh, yes. They vary from year to year. The perspective of people from other countries is important to us. Besides, having Christians from around the world with us reminds us not to make our decisions in isolation of other world citizens."

Richard pulled the van into the parking lot of La Belle Cuisine restaurant. He walked around to the side door and once again greeted his guests one by one — MacDonald Kadawati from Blantyre Synod in Malawi, Catarina Morales from Guatemala, Doug Welch from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Sandy Sneddon from the Church of Scotland, Samuel Ayete-Nyampong from Ghana and Chang Te-Chien from Taiwan.

It was an interesting dinner, Richard said later. Bits of conversation rolled around in his head for months.

"...this cup of tea is likely linked to the world's largest tea company...dominates the world trade..."

"...back home we celebrate communion with other Christians every four..."

"...new and difficult regulations for the world money-market..."

"...I would say that we are stumbling under our debt load and there seems to be no solution..."

"...hope you appreciate all this open space in Canada. I can hardly believe..."

"...I hear that The Presbyterian Church in Canada is inviting African evangelists next..."

"...hard to say which is the greater crisis, the economy or dumping hazardous waste in..."

"...minimum wage is so low and, sadly, it is the women and the little children who are really suffering. Although I must say that many sick and needy are..."

The meal was over. Everyone had enjoyed the Pot de Crème which completed their dinner. The waiter brought tea and coffee.



"I sure hope this is fairly traded tea and coffee, or I'm in trouble," Richard said with a grin.

"Fairly traded? What's that?" someone asked.

"Our church sells it," Richard answered. "A family from our congregation went to the Dominican Republic on vacation a few years ago. When they came back they told us about a few large coffee growers who had pushed small farmers on to poor land in the mountains. In order to survive, the farmers were forced to promise future crops to the buyers at half their market value. As you can imagine, this made the farmers very angry. They organized into co-ops which now have over 700 members. One of these co-ops now sells fairly traded coffee, tea, nuts, chocolate and sugar in Canada. Farmers now get an income that is reflective of the true value of farm labour."

"Has it worked?" someone asked.

"You bet," answered Richard. "In Canada, retail sales of fair trade certified products surpassed \$200 million a year in 2009. As of 2010 there were 827 Fair Trade producer organizations in 60 countries around the world. Can you believe it?"

Richard ushered his guests through the restaurant door and helped them into the van. Who is the real guest, Richard wondered. We learn from each other that we're all guests on this planet.

## How to use Chapter 7

If you are meeting with others, choose from these options.

### For general discussion

- Tell the group members some new things that you learned from reading pages 27–29.
- Discuss size and wealth. If a partner is larger or wealthier, what dynamics might occur in a partnership? How could one make an unequal partnership work?

### Discuss "Presbyterians Engage in Ecumenical and Global Partnership"

- Go onto the web and read more about each of the organizations mentioned above or write to the Canadian Council of Churches, 159 Roxborough Drive, Toronto, ON, M4W 1X7, Canada, and to the World Council of Churches, PO Box 2100, 150, Route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. ACT and WARC have the same Geneva address. Ask for information about their vision and work.
- Describe types of cooperative church work that could happen in the area where you live.
- Discuss with an elder or minister the cooperative work that is already happening in your region.
- If someone in a local Presbyterian Church has gone on an educational tour, invite him or her to speak to your group.

### Discuss the story "Richard's Dinner Party"

- The informal conversation among people from around the world had a profound effect on Richard. Share with other group members a time when you had a similar experience.
- Why was Richard surprised to learn that there were international guests at the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly?
- What is the value of having international guests visit Canada?
- Find out more information on fair trade and why it provides a better alternative for farmers in the south. Discuss the problems with the current trade rules and the free trade market model. Who benefits? Who loses out?

You can call TransFair Canada at 1-888-663-3247 and they'll tell you where you can buy Certified Fair Traded products close to home. Some companies will even deliver to your door, anywhere in Canada. If you have access to the internet, take a look at [www.transfair.ca](http://www.transfair.ca) for more information and interesting links.

# Resources about The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Inquire about all resources at The Book Room  
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1J7  
Tel. (416) 441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301  
Fax (416) 441-2825; e-mail: bookroom@presbyterian.ca

## Books

- *The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly*  
The minutes of the General Assembly; produced yearly; contains reports on church business, international and national mission, church doctrine, camping, theological education and many other aspects of the Church's life and work.
- *The Book of Common Worship*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto, Ontario, 1991.  
A resource book for worship in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- *The Book of Forms*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Don Mills, 1993.  
Outlines the principles and laws of the Church.
- John Congram, *This Presbyterian Church of Ours*, Wood Lake Books, 1995
- *Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief*, Wood Lake Books, 1984.  
A contemporary confession of faith for The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- John Moir, *Enduring Witness*, Eagle Press, 1987.  
The history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- *Called to Witness, Profiles of Canadian Presbyterians*, Vol. I, II, III.  
A supplement to *Enduring Witness* by John Moir.
- *Public Worship: Something We Do*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1994

## Pamphlets

- *Presbyterians Are...*  
*People Who Worship*  
*People Who Follow Jesus Christ*  
*People Who Share*  
*People Who Pray*  
*People Who Care About Justice*  
*People Who Serve*  
*People Who Grow in Their Faith*
- *Faith Commitment: A Matter of Choice*
- *Membership Commitment: Turning and Returning*

## Videos

*Gifts of God: The Sacraments*  
13 minutes, 2010, study guide