

Presbyterianism and the PCA

Presbyterian Form of Government – how we believe the visible church is organized.

- a. It parallels somewhat a democratic form of government where the people elect their representatives, but then these officers rule over them.
- b. We realize that no one denomination has the lock on truth. Each denomination tries to organize itself on what it feels is Biblically true. With that as our perspective, we feel that the Presbyterian system best follows the teachings and examples of the New Testament.
- c. The most important idea in Presbyterian polity is that each local church is governed by a group of elders called a "Session" through whom Christ rules.

Acts 20:17, 28

Acts 21:17,18

I Tim. 3:1-7

Titus 1:5-7

The word for "bishop" or "overseer" in the above verses are used interchangeably with the word "presbyter" or "elder"

Elders are elected by the people, but examined and ordained by other elders (I Tim 4:14)

There is a distinction between a teaching elder and a ruling elder. (I Tim. 5:17)

- d. Each local church also has deacons (called the "diaconate") (Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:1-7). These men are also elected by the people, and their primary function is that of mercy and service.
- e. There are no higher offices than elders. However, elders do come together from other churches in representative numbers to form councils and make decisions that are binding on all other churches represented (Acts 15:2; 16:4,5)

A regional council is called a "presbytery"; Chicago is part of **Northern Illinois Presbytery**. It meets four times a year, and is composed of all Teaching Elders and a representative number of Ruling Elders from each church in the Presbytery.

The council for the whole denomination is called **General Assembly**. It meets once a year, and is similarly composed of Teaching and Ruling Elders.