



Why Stay in the PC(USA)?

Twelve Reasons

from the Issues Ministry Team of *presbyterians for renewal*

“All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ by Almighty God. Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for mission in the world...for the establishment and extension of his Kingdom.”

“In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope and that the Church, as Christ’s body, is bound to his authority and thus free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God.”

These words are from the opening page of our Book of Order—unaffected by the will of any dissident or the action of any General Assembly. This is who we are ordained to be as members of the Body of Christ within the PC(USA).

Some are questioning staying in the PC(USA). We do not minimize the problems in the denomination, and therefore we understand why some consider leaving for “greener pastures.” Even so, **PFR finds compelling reasons to continue gospel ministry within the PC(USA)** based on Scripture, present reality, and our hope in Jesus Christ.

Twelve of these reasons are offered here. No attempt has been made to list them in order of importance. We invite you to weigh these before the Lord.

- 1. God has placed an evangelical witness within our denomination.** If you are considering leaving, remember there are many like-minded and evangelical people with you still in the PC(USA). If you leave, you are abandoning them and weakening the evangelical witness that remains.
- 2. This is a good time to be an evangelical in the PC(USA).** The Peace, Unity, and Purity Task Force report invites and provokes an evangelical witness through intentional presbytery participation, careful and thorough examination of candidates, and the exercise of the Bible’s call to speak the truth in love.
- 3. We are not here by accident.** We need to faithfully labor where we’ve been called and sent. In many different ways, God has called each of us to be part of the PC(USA). Is God now calling you to leave? Do you have God’s permission to leave your present post and go to another? Only you can answer this through fellowship with Christ in prayer.
- 4. Theological and moral problems are not new.** See the Apostle Paul’s letters and Revelation 2-3. Yet, I Corinthians, as an example, is addressed, “To the church of God that is in Corinth.” Though Paul urges the exercise of discipline, he never suggests that some should leave a flawed church.
- 5. Church history instructs us that some of the greatest and most important controversies over theological and moral issues took time to be resolved.** We are called to maintain our convictions with patience and with hopeful endurance, trusting God to bring resolution in his time.
- 6. Sessions still control all finances of the local congregation (including *per capita*) and are free under our constitution to exercise faithful stewardship.**

7. **The PC(USA) affirms and encourages women in leadership and in all forms of ministry, affirming this as nothing less than God's intent for the growth and well-being of the church and our witness to the whole gospel.**
8. **Networks of support and nurture for smaller congregations are a reality in the PC(USA).** Further, there are many opportunities for smaller congregations to work together in mission and witness, and God is using these for renewal.
9. **The PC(USA) is itself a mission field, and the fields are ripe for harvest.** When our eyes are on Jesus Christ and our lives are focused on proclaiming him, there is excitement in being on the front line for the Kingdom of God. Why would we leave a mission field, especially one we know quite well?
10. **A fresh missional focus is growing in the PC(USA)** as can be seen in the Presbyterian Global Fellowship, in the work of PC(USA) mission organizations, and in thriving congregations which reach out locally and globally. God is at work in our midst and there is excitement in being part of that work!
11. **Fresh winds are blowing in our seminaries, including new models of training offered by evangelical scholars, pastors, and congregations.** These hold great promise for the future, both immediate and long-range.
12. **We remain free to preach and teach Jesus Christ, his atoning sacrifice, the reality of the Resurrection, and the truth and authority of the whole Word of God.**

On that first Easter morning, some of the disciples, forgetting the teachings of Jesus, left Jerusalem in despair *too soon*. (Luke 24:13ff.) But all was not lost. Their greatest hope was about to be fulfilled beyond their wildest dreams! We pray that no one will leave the PC(USA) too soon. If you are considering leaving the PC(USA) now, please consider these questions:

- Through prayer and discernment, do you sense God calling you to leave?
- Are you being restricted from preaching Jesus Christ and fulfilling the ministry the Lord has given you? Will you experience greater gospel freedom through different affiliation? Why?
- Can you envision that God wants to use you in the redemptive and transforming work of Jesus Christ in the PC(USA)?

It is our hope that these reflections will help you as you prayerfully consider the way forward in God's call and in God's love. Our website (www.pfrenewal.org) will carry further elaborations of these and related issues throughout the coming weeks and months.

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