

**INTRODUCTION**

- A. ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH & LIFE** (*Westminster Confession & R.P. Testimony* chp.31, *On Synods and Councils*; see *Larger Catechism*, 123-133; *Shorter Catechism*, 63-66; see *Directory for Church Government (Constitution)*; *Form of Presbyterian Church Government (FPP)*; outlines & audio of sermons at [reformedvoice.com](http://reformedvoice.com))
- B. REQUESTS FOR ISSUES, TOPICS, PASSAGES, ETC.** (send to [oswegorpc@hotmail.com](mailto:oswegorpc@hotmail.com) or cell, 517-630-6325)
- C. PRESBYTERY VISITATION: THE PRESSING QUESTIONS**

**I. PRESBYTERIAN: TERM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT** (Episcopal; Congregational, Independent)

**II. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

- A. CHRIST IS THE ONLY INDIVIDUAL WHO RULES OVER ALL HIS CHURCH** (“the only King and Head of the church”; Eph.1:20-23; 5:23; Col.1:18; see Mt.16:18 with Eph.2:20)
- B. ONLY TWO PERMANENT OFFICES: ELDER & DEACON** (Phil.1:1; 1Tm.3:1f,8f /1C12:28f; Eph4:11)
  - 1. *Apostle: eyewitness of resurrection* (1Cor.12:28; 15:7,3-9; Acts 1:22; note: 1Cor.15:8, last of all)
  - 2. *Prophet: new revelation* (1Cor.12:28; 14:1f,26,29,30; see Jer.1:1f; see Eph.2:20; Heb.2:1f; Jude 3; 1Cor.3:10f)
  - 3. *Evangelist: first wave* (Eph.4:11 with Acts 21:8; 8:26f,40; 2Tm.4:5; see 1Cor.12:28 w/Eph.4:11)
  - 4. *Teacher* (1Cor.12:28; Eph.4:11; 1Tm.5:17; 4:12f)
  - 5. *Elder (person)*; Ex.3:16,etc.; see Dt.1:9f; Phil.1:1; 1Tm.3:1f; 5:17; Tt.1:5; 1Pt.5:1,2f)
  - 6. *Overseer (work)*; Tt.1:5f,7marg; Acts 20:17,28marg; see 1Pt.5:1,2f; Prov.27:23)
  - 7. *Deacon* (Phil.1:1; 1Tm.3:8f,11; see Acts 6:1-6)
- C. A PLURALITY OF ELDERS IN EACH CONGREGATION** (“session”, Ps.107:32; Acts 2:33f; see Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil.1:1; Tt.1:5; see 1Pt.5:1; also *plurality* of Deacons, Acts 6:3; Phil.1:1)
- D. THREE WITNESSES: INWARD CALL & POPULAR ELECTION & OFFICIAL ORDINATION** (1Tm.3:1f & Acts 1:23; 14:23 w/6:3f; Dt.1:9f & Dt.34:9; Acts 6:6; 13:2f; 1Tm.4:14; 5:22; see Dt.19:15; Mt.18:16)
- E. ELDERS HAVE AUTHORITY TO RULE** (Heb.13:7,17,24; 1Th.5:12f; 1Pt.5:1-5 w/Eph.5:22f (see *LC,SC* on 5th commandment); e.g., Acts 15:4f; 19f; 30,31; also Mt.18:17f; Num.15:32-36)
- F. PRIVILEGE TO SEEK HELP FROM THE BROADER BODY OF ELDERS** (presbytery, synod: “the courts of the church”; 1Tm.4:14; see Lk.22:66; Acts 22:5; see Acts 15:2f; Dt.17:8f; see Mt.18:17f)
- G. AUTHORITY OF THIS BROADER BODY TO RULE** (see Acts 15:28f; including *visit*, see 30f,36f; vs. *OEA*)

**III. SURVEY & CONTRAST OF HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

(note: exceptions and inconsistencies)

- A. EPISCOPALIAN** (*none* of the above principles; higher *offices* and *individuals* vs. higher *courts* and *plurality* of officers; i.e., CATHOLIC; ORTHODOX; ANGLICAN, EPISCOPAL, METHODIST)
- B. CONGREGATIONAL** (*not II.E*; *congregation* rules with Elders *consent*; i.e., CONGREGATIONAL, BAPTIST)
- C. INDEPENDENT** (*not II.F,G*; local government *only*; i.e., BAPTIST; yet “associations”; see “dedications”)
- D. PRESBYTERIAN** (*II.A-G*; *plurality* of Elders and hierarchy of *courts* vs. EPISCOPAL; *Elders* rule vs. CONGREGATIONAL; *Courts* rule *also* vs. INDEPENDENT)

**IV. THANK GOD FOR A CHURCH WITH FULL BIBLICAL GOVERNMENT!**

- A. KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOVED AND CARED FOR!** (Eph.4:11,12; 1Cor.12:28; 1Pt.5:4,1f; see Heb.13:17,20; 1Th.5:12f; 1f,11; Acts 20:17,28f; see 2Cor.4:15; 11:28f; Gal.4:19; Jer.23:2f; Ezk.34:16)
- B. REMEMBER THAT YOU HAVE A PLACE TO GO FOR HELP!** (Mt.18:17; 1Cor.6:1-7; Deut.17:8f; see Acts 15:2f; Prov.11:14; 15:2; 24:6)
- C. CONTINUE TO HONOR GOD BY SUBMITTING YOURSELVES TO YOUR ELDERS IN THE TEACHING, PREACHING, SACRAMENTS, DISCIPLINE AND GOOD ORDER IN THE CONGREGATION!** (Heb.13:17,20; 1Th.5:12f; 1Cor.16:16; 1Pt.5:5,1f; 1Cor.14:40; see Dt.17:12f)
- D. MAKE YOUR NEEDS & DESIRES KNOWN TO YOUR ELDERS. WE LOVE YOU AND ENDEAVOR TO USE OUR AUTHORITY TO BLESS YOU!** (Heb.13:17; 1Th.5:12f; 1:7f,11; 1Pt.5:1f w/Eph.5:22f)
- E. GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR THE RICH BIBLICAL HERITAGE HE HAS GIVEN US AS A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH!** (Heb.13:7,17; see 2Tm.3:14-17)
- F. CONTINUE PRAYERFULLY TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES SO THAT YOU WILL GROW IN YOUR UNDERSTANDING, APPRECIATION & BENEFITTING FROM YOUR PRIVILEGE OF PARTICIPATING IN A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH!** (2Tm.3:14f /Phil.3:12-16; Eph.4:11-16; 2Pt.3:14f)

Discussion question:

Brethren, what shall **we do?** (see Acts 2:37f)