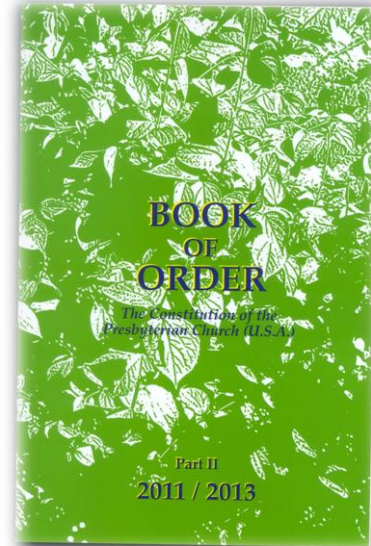


The Revised Form of Government An Introduction



In this presentation ...

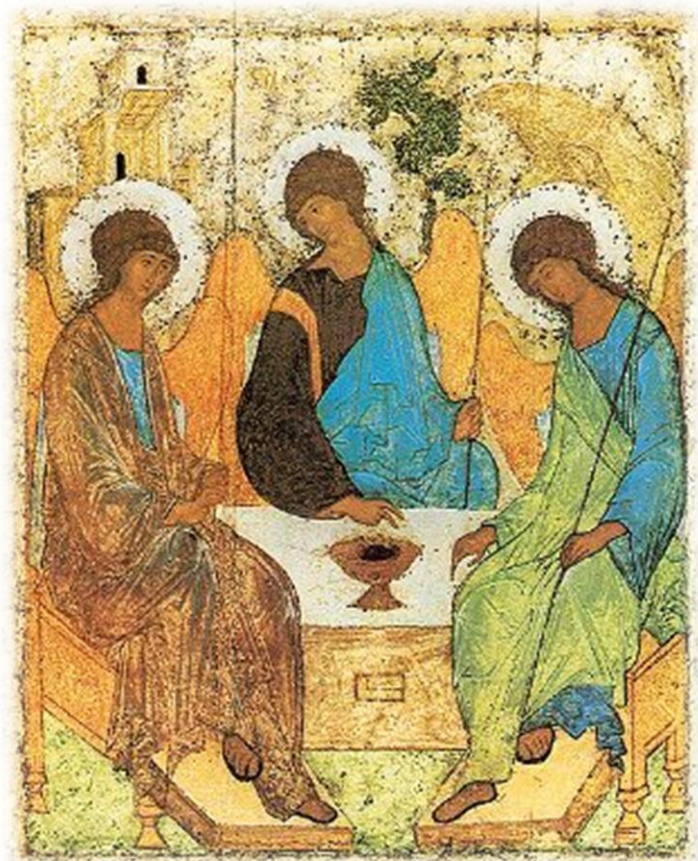
- Four key theological ideas
- Contents of the new material
 - Foundations of Presbyterian Polity
 - Form of Government
- Decisions to be made by
 - Congregations
 - Sessions
 - Presbyteries

A robust doctrine of the Trinity

- The Sending Trinity



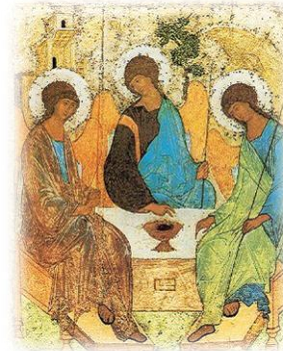
- The Communal Trinity



The Trinitarian Church



- An ecclesiology built on the Sending Trinity apprehends the centrality of the crucified Christ to every aspect of the life of the Church



- An ecclesiology built on the Relational Trinity reflects the communal character of God in the communal life of the Church

The Trinity

God the Father creates, sustains, rules, redeems
and transforms the world
through God the Son, who died
and was raised from death to new life,
by the power of God the Spirit

- *1) God's engagement with the world is an act of the whole Trinity: We cannot speak of one person of the Trinity without speaking of all persons of the Trinity*
- *2) The Church is called to reflect God's relational reality in its own life as a community*

The *Missio Dei*

God's "self-sending" into the world

- God eternally comes to the world in Christ by the power of the Spirit to transform the world according to God's intent.
- *"Mission is not primarily an activity of the Church but an attribute of God."*
- David Bosch



Eschatology

- The Doctrine of the Christian Hope
- In Christ, God draws all creation toward the future God intends - the new creation
- By the Spirit, God creates a new community of witness to the power and pattern of that new creation revealed in Jesus Christ
- The Church seeks to live in the present out of the strength of God's promised future

A Missional/Eschatological View of the Church

- The Church is called into being as a community of witness and participation in God's work of transformation
 - *"It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the Church, creating the Church as it goes along its way."*
 - Moltmann
- It is not the church that sends others in mission; we are ourselves sent by God into the contexts where God places us
- **The congregation is the basic unit of mission in the Church and has all the gifts of the Gospel necessary to be the Church**

Priesthood of all believers

- **Baptismal Calling** - Every believer is called to a ministry of witness to the love and grace of God.
- **Parity of ministry** - The ministry of believers is not different in quality or substance, but only in function
- **Ordered ministry** - The Church sets aside (“orders”) the ministries of some believers to equip and serve the ministry of the whole people of God

The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity

- **Chapter One** - The Mission of the Church
- **Chapter Two** - The Church and Its Confessions
- **Chapter Three** - Principles of Order and Government

The Mission of the Church

- F-1.01 God's mission
- F-1.02 Lordship of Christ
- F-1.03 The Calling of the Church
 - Church as the Body of Christ
 - Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic
 - Church called to proclaim the Word,
administer the Sacraments,
nurture the community of disciples through
ecclesiastical discipline
 - Great ends of the Church
- F-1.04 Openness to the Spirit

The Church and its Confessions

- Mostly the contents of Chapter II in 2009/2011 Book of Order on the Confessions
- Two additions:
 - Reflection on the confessions as attempts to articulate the truths of the gospel imperiled by their times
 - *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei* (“the Church reformed, always being reformed according to God’s word”)

Principles of Order and Government

- F-3.01 - Historic Principles Of Church Order (1789)
- F-3.02 - Principles of Presbyterian Government (1797)
- F-3.03 - The Nature of Foundational Statements
- F-3.04 - Contents of the Constitution

The Form of Government

- **One:** The Congregation and Its Members (former concerns of chapters 5 and 7)
- **Two:** Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, and Certification (formerly chapters 6 and 14)
- **Three:** The Councils of the Church (formerly chapters 9-13)
- **Four:** The Church and Civil Authority (formerly chapter 8)
- **Five:** Ecumenicity and Church Union (formerly chapters 15-17)
- **Six:** Interpreting and Amending the Constitution (formerly chapter 18)

1. The Congregation and Its Members

- G-1.0101 - Mission of the Congregation
- G-1.0301 - The Meaning of Membership
- G-1.04 - Categories of Membership
 - No “Inactive Member” category
- G-1.05 - Congregational Meetings

2. Ordered Ministry, Commissioning, & Certification

- Ordered Ministry - replaces “office”
 - **Deacons:** The Ministry of Compassion and Service
 - **Ruling Elder:** The Ministry of Discernment and Governance
 - **Teaching Elder:** The Ministry of the Word and Sacrament
- G-2.0104b = new language of Amendment 10-A, adopted by presbyteries in 2011
- Preparation for Ministry (G-2.06)
- Ordination (G-2.07)
- Ruling Elders Commissioned to Particular Pastoral Service (G-2.10)
- Certified Church Service (G-2.11)

3. Councils of the Church

- “Councils” rather than “governing bodies” - the church’s name for the gathering of its leadership to make theological decisions
- Work of Councils organized around Reformed Notes: proclamation, sacraments, covenant community
- Mandates functions, not structures
- 219th GA restored the requirement that councils have a “committee on representation” but did not list a required membership

4. The Church and Civil Authority

- Most of the contents of G-8.0000 in 2009/2011 Book of Order are here.
- G-4.0203 = “Property trust clause” of 2009/2011 Book of Order G-8.0201
- Moved language about mandatory reporting from G-6.0000 in 2009/2011 Book to G-4.03 in 2011/2013 Book

5. Ecumenicity and Church Union

- Definitions of
 - “Correspondence” (G-5.0201)
 - “Full Communion” (G-5.0202)
 - “Ecumenical Statements” (G-5.0203)
- Joint Congregational Witness (G-5.03)
- Union councils (G-5.04)
- Joint congregational witness with other churches (G-5.05) - replaces “union” and “federated”

6. Interpreting and Amending the Constitution

- G-6.02 - Advisory Committee on the Constitution (moved from G-13.0112 in the 2009/2011 Book of Order)
- Process for amending Book of Confessions and Book of Order remains the same

Decisions Congregations Need to Make

- Determine the quorum for congregational meetings. (G-1.0501)
- Determine the period of minimum notice for a congregational meeting (G-1.0502)
- Determine whether the congregation wishes to adopt *Robert's Rules* as parliamentary authority.
- Determine the size and composition of the congregational nominating committee (G-2.0401)

Decisions Sessions Need to Make

- Whether to keep a list of inactive members (G-1.04)
- How will you prepare people for active membership? (G-1.0402)
- How will you examine those elected as deacons and ruling elders? (G-2.0104b)
- What term will the session clerk serve? (G-3.0104)
- Develop a manual of operations, including a sexual misconduct policy and a process for financial review. (G-3.0106, 3.0113, and 3.0205)
- Obtain property and liability coverage (G-3.0112)
- Determine the quorum for session meetings. (G-3.0203)

Decisions Presbyteries Need to Make

- What titles and terms shall we use for temporary pastoral relationships? (G-2.0504b)
- Shall the presbytery permit interim/ associate succession?(G-2.0504c)
- Who will preside at presbytery in the absence of the moderator? (G-3.0104)
- What term will the stated clerk serve? (G-3.0104)
- What plan will we use to determine how many commissioners each session should elect?(G-3.0301)
- What mechanisms and processes will we use to serve as pastor, advisor, and counselor to teaching elders and congregations? (G-3.0307)
- What mechanisms and processes will we use to guide, nurture, and oversee the process of preparing to become a teaching elder? (G-3.0307)

A change of mindset

Can we learn to approach our polity not as a set of rules but as a description of our common life?

Can we change the pattern of creating a rule to address every uncertainty, and learn to apply the broad principles of our polity with creativity and flexibility?