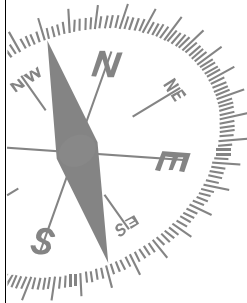


# Congregational Gathering

November 22, 2009

10:00 PM



# Agenda Items

This is an informational meeting of First Presbyterian Church of Wenatchee.

No votes will be taken today.

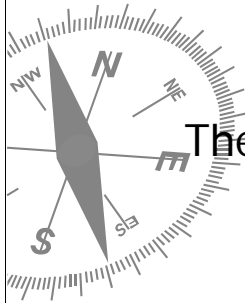
We will answer questions and provide discussion time.

We have two agenda items:

- ▶ Review of state of our denomination
- ▶ Call to a season of prayer and discernment



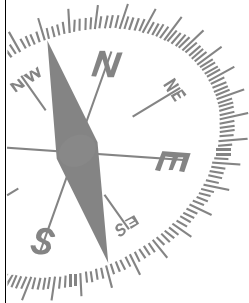
# Agenda Item #1: Review of the state of our denomination



The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

# PC USA History

The short version



## Key dates

- ▶ The fundamentalist/modernist controversy-the break of 1936
- ▶ The first of many mergers-The UPNA and the old northern mainline-1956
- ▶ The ordination of women and the PCA-1973
- ▶ The Kenyon case, ecumenism and the EPC-1981
- ▶ The great plan of union-the UPCUSA and the PC US-1983

# Key Statistics from Jack Marcum's study

## The Good:

- ▶ Attendance as a percentage of membership (from 47.6 percent to 51 percent);
- ▶ Women in ministry (a fourfold increase, from 1,010 in 1983 to 4,253 in 2008);
- ▶ Asian membership (from 57,517 in 1999 to 69,912 in 2008);
- ▶ Hispanic membership (from 27,800 in 1999 to 29,699 in 2008);
- ▶ and Financial giving (on a per member basis, adjusted for inflation, from \$677 per year to \$1,109 per year.)



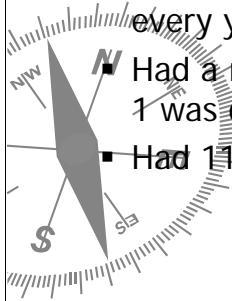
# Key Statistics from Jack Marcum's study

## The Bad:

- ▶ Membership (from 3,131,228 to 2,140,165, a loss of 31.6 percent or an average of 1.3 percent per year);
- ▶ Baptisms (child baptisms declined by 48.9 percent and adult baptisms by 63.0 percent);
- ▶ Congregations (from 11,662 in 1983 to 10,751 in 2008, a total decline of 7.8 percent, or an annual average of 0.3 percent);
- ▶ New church developments (a "ragged decline" ranging from a high of 45 in 1992 to a low of 16 in 1999, with 20 in 2008);
- ▶ Worship attendance (from a weekly estimated 1,360,000 in 1990 to 1,090,000 today, down 19.7 percent); and
- ▶ Active ministers (declined by 11.7 percent, while the number of retired ministers has more than doubled).

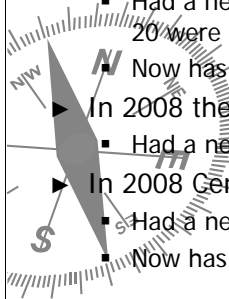
# 1984 Statistical Report

- ▶ In 1984 the PC USA
  - gained 52 new congregations, eleven of which were mergers.
  - Had a net loss of ~30,000 members (1% of the membership. The percentage of loss has increased every year since 1983).
  - Had a net loss of 23 congregations (53 were dissolved, 1 was dismissed, 21 were merged).
  - Had 11,639 congregations and 3,100,951 members

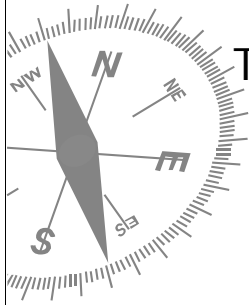


# 2008 Statistical Report

- ▶ In 2008 the PC USA
  - gained 41 new congregations, ten of which were mergers and one of which was received from another denomination. It also started 20 new Church developments
  - Had a net loss of ~69,000 members (3.1% of the membership. The percentage of loss has increased every year since 1983).
  - Had a net loss of 69 congregations (65 were dissolved, 25 were dismissed, 20 were merged).
  - Now has 10,751 congregations and 2,140,165 members
- ▶ In 2008 the Synod of Alaska Northwest
  - Had a net loss of 941 of its members, 1.6% of its membership.
- ▶ In 2008 Central Washington Presbytery
  - Had a net loss of 235 members (3.2% of the Presbytery)
  - Now has 42 congregations and 7,070 members



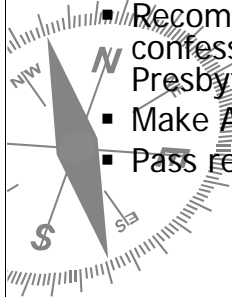
# Our Immediate History



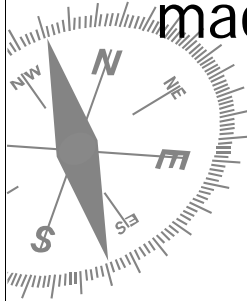
The 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

# General Assembly 101

- ▶ What is the Assembly?
  - The highest governing body of our denomination
- ▶ Who serves on the Assembly?
  - Minister and Elder representatives from each Presbytery
- ▶ What do they have the power to do?
  - Recommend changes to our constitution and confessions that have to be ratified by vote of our Presbyteries.
  - Make Authoritative Interpretations
  - Pass resolutions

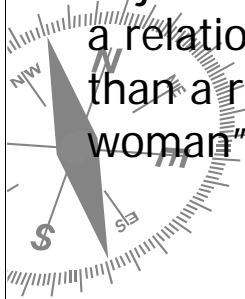


What kinds of decisions were  
made at the last Assembly?



## The Good

- ▶ A commitment to increase the number of full time missionaries that we support in the field.
- ▶ Rejecting a motion to redefine marriage as a relationship between “two persons” rather than a relationship between “a man and a woman”.



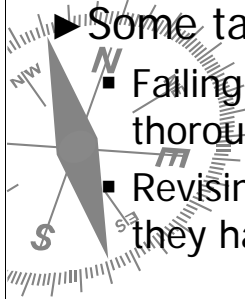
# The Bad

## ▶ A diplomatic error

- Creation of a legal defense fund for Presbyteries to use for law suits against congregations trying to leave the denomination with their property.

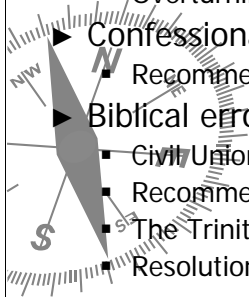
## ▶ Some tactical errors

- Failing to debate two important issues thoroughly.
- Revising an Authoritative Interpretation that they had already rendered null and void.

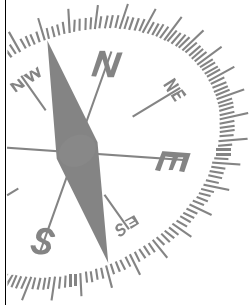


# The Ugly

- ▶ Constitutional errors
  - Legislating by Authoritative Interpretation
  - Eliminating positive AI's
  - Charging Pastors who refuse to comply
- ▶ Judicial errors
  - Overturning court cases
- ▶ Confessional errors
  - Recommending a change to the Heidelberg Catechism
- ▶ Biblical errors
  - Civil Union promotion in Pennsylvania
  - Recommended removal of G-6.0106b
  - The Trinity paper study guide
  - Resolution concerning our relationship with Jews and Muslims




# Your Session's Response

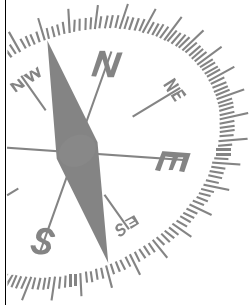


Actions of:

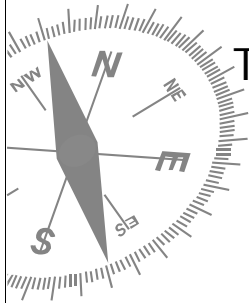
First Presbyterian Church of Wenatchee  
& Central Washington Presbytery

- 
- 6/26/01 – Confessing Church Movement statement by Central Washington Presbytery (CWP)
  - 6/26/01 – Confessing Church Movement statement by First Presb Church, Wenatchee (FPCW)
  - 1/19/03 – FPCW statement regarding abortion
  - 2004/05 – FPCW Session Statement of Faith
  - 2005 – CWP adoption of Essential Tenets (Based on San Diego Presbytery)
  - 2/28/06 – FPCW Session voted to withhold GA per capita.
  - 3/12/06 – FPCW Session passed resolution regarding PUP report.
  - 5/3/06 – FPCW letter to PCW stated clerk requesting CWP action re PUP report
  - 6/27/06 – FPCW Session formally rejected PUP report.
  - 7/20/06 – FPCW letter to congregation GA actions and PUP report
  - 8/10/06 – CWP held special meeting to deal with GA actions
  - 9/5/06 – FPCW invitation to Washington state churches to “Living It Now”
  - 9/26/06 – FPCW letter to PCW Executive re withholding GA per capita in 2007.
  - 10/9/06 – CWP voted to remit only GA per capita that is received. Contrary to BoFO.
  - 11/7/06 – FPCW letter to CWP Executive Presbyter re ordination standards and PUP report
  - 2007 – Several churches withheld GA per capita.  
(Wenatchee, Ellensburg, Rosslyn, CleElum, others)
  - 2/24/07 – CWP statement regarding ordination standards and same sex unions.
  - June 07 – CWP passed resolution regarding ordination standards.
  - 4/22/08 – FPCW sent \$1,000 to Danville Presbyterian church for legal assistance.
  - 08-09 – Session voted to send GA per capita to Presbytery for Presbytery missions.
  - 9/30/08 – FPCW Session letter to Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of PC(USA)

# Upcoming Events



# June 2010



The 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
Minneapolis, MN

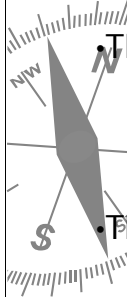
# MAJOR PIECES OF LEGISLATION

- The usual overtures from the gallery
  - Baltimore Presbytery-redefinition of marriage
  - Rewrite/eliminate fidelity and chastity clause
  - Revision of the Heidelberg Catechism
  - Adoption of the Belhar Confession
  - More than likely at least one pro-choice overture
- The New Form of Government-nFOG
- The Report of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Investigating Committee



# MAJOR PLAYERS

- The "Progressives"
  - Covenant Network
  - More Light Presbyterians
  - That All May Freely Serve
  - The Witherspoon Society
  - The Shower of Stoles Project



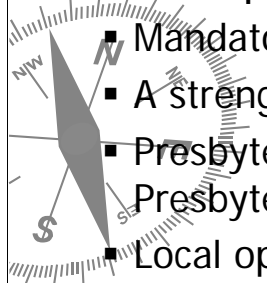
- The Evangelicals
  - Presbyterians for Renewal
  - The Presbyterian Coalition
  - The Presbyterian Lay Committee
- The Louisville Staff
  - 1,000 v. ~740

# The Main Battlefield-Content

## ► nFOG

- Regulatory versus Missional governance
- Size

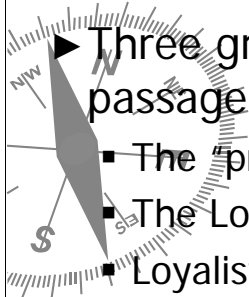
## ► The Proposed Effects of nFOG

- 
- Mandatory per capita
  - A strengthened property trust clause
  - Presbytery powers delegated to Executive Presbyters
  - Local option an effective reality

## The Main Battlefield-Steps for nFOG

- ▶ nFOG must first be approved by the GA
- ▶ nFOG must then be approved by the ratification of the Presbyteries

- ▶ Three groups are likely to lobby for its passage on the Presbytery floor:
  - The "progressives"
  - The Louisville staff
  - Loyalist moderates



# The Main Battlefield-Responses to nFOG

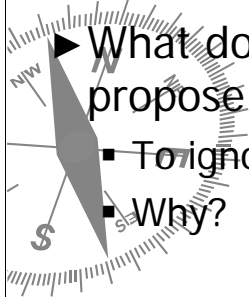
- ▶ How has the Presbyterian Coalition responded to nFOG?

- Written a paper in opposition exposing its flaws

- ▶ What does Presbyterians for Renewal propose as a response to nFOG?

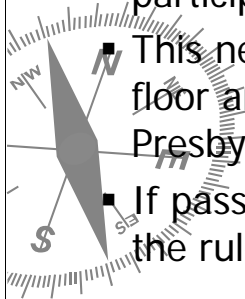
- To ignore it-neither to support it nor oppose it

- Why?



## PFR's Strategy-Realignment

- ▶ A 17<sup>th</sup> Non-geographic Synod that is exclusively evangelical
  - Under the rules of the Book of Order, this requires at least three Presbyteries to participate in the proposal.
  - This new Synod would have to pass on the GA floor and then be ratified by vote of the Presbyteries.
  - If passed, this new Synod would be subject to the rules of either nFOG or the current BOO.



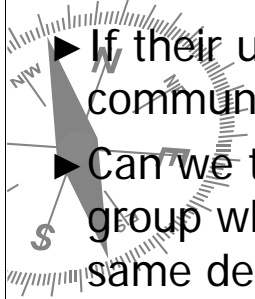
## Why would nFOG be better for PFR's proposal?

- ▶ Creates more flexibility
- ▶ Creates a "life boat" for evangelical churches
- ▶ Can be sold as a third way that keeps evangelicals in and still gives the progressives what they want.
- ▶ They will use the fact that evangelical churches will want to leave if nFOG passes as a means to push for the 17<sup>th</sup> Synod.



## Issues with PFR's proposal

- ▶ Will evangelicals consent to the conditions of nFOG in order to get a 17<sup>th</sup> Synod?
- ▶ Why would progressives and others consent to a 17<sup>th</sup> Synod once nFOG has passed?
- ▶ If their ultimate goal is to make a new communion, why an intermediary step?
- ▶ Can we truly say we are not with the other group when we are still technically in the same denomination?

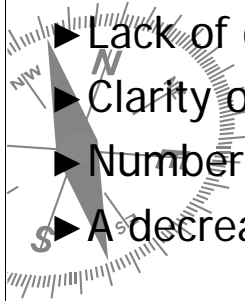


## The Main Battlefield-the EPC investigative committee

- ▶ What are they investigating?
  - To see if the EPC is recruiting PC USA congregations to join her ranks.
- ▶ Will any EPC representatives be allowed to state their side of the story?
  - It is highly unlikely because the BOO does not allow for this possibility.
- ▶ Does this decision have to be ratified by vote of the Presbyteries? Yes

## The Main Battlefield-GA process and voting power

- ▶ Representation numbers by Presbytery
- ▶ Sheer volume of material
- ▶ Lack of commissioner training
- ▶ Clarity of overtures and votes on them.
- ▶ Number of lobbyists per voting delegate
- ▶ A decreasing number of evangelical voters



## Conclusions from these data

- ▶ God is hearing our prayers!
  - Our list of potential responses is narrowing
  - The battlefield is becoming clearer
- ▶ These trends suggest a future for the PC USA that looks very much like nFOG
- ▶ These trends suggest a future for the PC USA that does not include a corresponding relationship with the EPC.



## What shall we do?

- ▶ Pray for the Lord to reveal His will to us
- ▶ Pray that the Lord's will would be done, whatever that is.
- ▶ Pray that we would be the most gracious Christian witnesses in the Presbytery as we confront these issues.
- ▶ Pray that God would unite this Church as one in His will for us

