

# The Presbyterian Church

**Origin & History:** Presbyterianism is a branch of protestant Christianity that believes and adheres to the Calvinist theological tradition. The roots of the Presbyterian Church trace back to the 16th-century. Since the colonial period, Presbyterianism has had a strong presence in America. Reformed churches were first established in the early 1600s with Presbyterians shaping the religious and political life of the newly established nation. The only Christian minister to sign the Declaration of Independence was Reverend John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian.



**Who:** John Calvin (1509-1564), a French lawyer and reformer. Calvin trained for the Catholic priesthood, but later converted to the Reformation Movement and became a theologian and minister.

**When:** Founded in early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Estimated to be in 1536

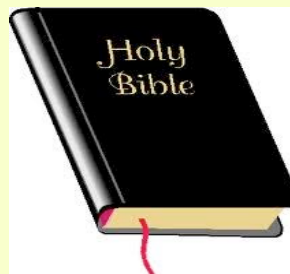
**Where:** Originated primarily in England and Scotland, and eventually spread to across the globe and has become one of the largest Protestant denominations. In America the first presbytery was organized at Philadelphia in 1706, the first synod 1717; the first General Assembly was held in 1789, convened by Rev. John Witherspoon, the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence.

**Total Members/Followers:** Worldwide estimated at 40-48 Million

**Deity:** One creator and Lord of all existing eternally as the Triune (Trinity) of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost)

**Jesus:** The eternal Son incarnate, full God and fully man. Conceived and born of the Virgin Mary. Was crucified, died and rose again, ascended into heaven and will come again as written in scripture.

**Sacred Text:** Scripture alone in The Holy Bible is inspired and infallible, the sole, final rule of faith. The standard protestant canon of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books)



## Core Beliefs:

**The Good News – God’s Plan For Salvation:** Forgiveness of sin (by God) and personal salvation is entirely by *Grace* alone, as gracious free gift from God, through *Faith* alone (*sola fide*) in Jesus Christ who died for our sins. We can do nothing to earn or even prompt this gift. Good works are the result of true faith but in no way save us or produce our righteousness before God.

**Death and Eternal Life:** Presbyterians believe in the traditional idea of an immortal soul that spends eternity (life forever) either in a literal place of blessedness called heaven (with God) or a literal place of torment called hell (separated from God). Upon dying, the souls of believers go immediately to be with Christ in heaven. The souls of the unbelievers suffer eternally, separated from God in hell.

**Baptism:** Baptism is not necessary for salvation but is a sign of the new covenant of grace for adults and infants.

**Five Points of Calvinism:** Humans are so sinful that they cannot initiate reconciliation with God. 2. God chooses who will be “saved” (salvation is predestined). 3. Christ died specifically to save those whom God chose. 4. God infallibly draws Christ, those whom He chose, and 5. Those He predestined will never fall away from the faith and therefore cannot lose their salvation.

## **Presbyterian Sacraments**

Presbyterians believe in two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that they are genuine sacraments, that is, instituted by Christ Himself; visible signs which actually confer the blessing or grace of God when appropriated in faith. We do not believe that the blessing is inherently present in the sacraments, but that they are rather the signs and seals of the blessing they represent.

