



THE
PRESBYTERIAN PANEL



Listening to Presbyterians

REPORT

Theological Reflection



**RESEARCH
SERVICES**

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Executive Summary

Five main findings emerged from responses to the August 2016 Presbyterian Panel survey on Theological Reflection:

Although Presbyterians are involved in a limited number of interfaith activities, **the number of types of interfaith activities in which members are involved increased somewhat between 2013 and 2016.** For teaching elders, the number stayed the same.

Learning about other faiths is something many Presbyterians see as important, and their responses to “quiz” questions about world religions suggest Presbyterians already know a fair amount. Fewer Presbyterians (though still majorities) regard interfaith bridge-building as a crucial task for the Presbyterian Church.

Grace is a crucial tenet of Reformed Christianity, for most Presbyterians. Also considered important by many Presbyterians are: the sovereignty of God, ministers and elders lead the church together, stewardship, and priesthood of all believers.

Most Presbyterians believe **Jesus is central to salvation, but** members and teaching elders disagree about how this works: The largest number of teaching elders believe that God selects certain people for salvation through Jesus, while the largest number of members believe people who commit themselves to Jesus thereby choose salvation themselves.

More Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) teaching elders than members feel that **God is involved in most aspects of their life and on a daily basis.** When asked whether they regard all of nine listed aspects of their life as a calling from God and whether they feel God’s guidance at least daily, more teaching elders than members say “yes.” More PC(USA) teaching elders than U.S. adults as a whole feel God’s guidance daily, while fewer members than U.S. adults feel such guidance.

Theological Reflection

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Overview of the Study

The August 2016 Presbytery Panel Theological Reflection survey married a few purposes: (1) assessing the impact of the work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Theological Reflection "Collective Goal Grouping"; (2) exploring complexities in Presbyterians' theology of salvation and their understanding of Reformed theology; and (3) gauging support for and interest in possible innovations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s theology of worship.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency's Theological Reflection "Collective Goal Grouping" is one of twenty-two such Mission Agency groupings. Each grouping is undergoing impact assessment between 2015 and 2017. Goals set for the collective goal grouping (hereafter to be called a ministry) in early 2015 included:

- Equip the church to reflect theologically on its identity and mission through ecumenical and interfaith engagement.
- Equip the church to reflect theologically on its identity and mission.
- Equip the church to reflect theologically on the vocation of all believers.

This survey was designed to provide baseline information with which to compare any future change in the ministry's impact. In the case of interfaith activities, it is possible to assess change, between 2013 and 2016, because the August 2016 Panel survey included a set of questions about interfaith activities that appeared—in slightly different form—in the November 2013 Presbyterian Panel survey on Interfaith Relations.

Controversy over a long-time Presbyterian Panel question about the theology of salvation also sparked the development of this Theological Reflection Panel survey. For two decades the theological questions Research Services has asked new panelists in the initial Panel profile survey have included a question about how much new panelists agree with this statement: "Only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved."

Over time, fewer and fewer panelists have agreed with this statement. Starting in 2011, both Presbyterians and non-Presbyterians began to notice this trend, with some seeing it as evidence of a growing universalism among Presbyterians. If people did not need to be saved through Christ, perhaps Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims could go to Heaven too. Others labeled the whole question of who goes to Heaven as archaic.

Staff of the Theological Reflection ministry questioned the *wording* of the question, saying it presented the question of salvation in a particularly evangelical, not theologically Reformed, way. The wording of the question, the staff argued, has forced Presbyterians who are *not* universalist to disagree with the statement because they disagree with the un-Reformed notion that people receive salvation by personally committing themselves to Jesus. This largely online discussion originated the idea of Research Services and Theological Reflection working together to explore Presbyterians' theological beliefs, over and above what Panel surveys have asked Presbyterians before.

Included in such a survey would be questions trying to: (1) disentangle how central Jesus is to Presbyterians' faith; and (2) determine whether Presbyterians agree with the notion that individual believers receive salvation when they personally commit themselves to Christ.

While the online debate about salvation was taking place, Research Services was also working with the PC(USA)'s Committee on the Office of the General Assembly on the "Church in the 21st Century" project. This project asked Presbyterians to help envision the future of the denomination by responding to a series of open-ended questions online. Many responses to these questions brought up issues related to Reformed/Presbyterian identity, theology, and tradition. The Research Services team became convinced that it might be wise to invite a representative group of Presbyterians to participate in a more detailed follow-up survey about Reformed/Presbyterian theology, possibly including the investigation of the salvation issue raised above.

An additional motivation for the Panel survey was the 2016 General Assembly's passage of sweeping changes to the PC(USA)'s broad guidelines for worship, the *Directory for Worship*. The survey included a couple of questions about these changes, which await possible approval by the presbyteries and connect with broader theological issues.

Areas of Investigation

As a measure of the ***interreligious intelligence*** and ***interfaith activities*** in the Presbyterian population:

1. How familiar are panelists with key figures and principles of half a dozen other branches of Christianity and other faiths: Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Church of the Latter-Day Saints?
2. Have panelists participated in a range of interfaith activities during the past two years?
3. What are panelists' opinions on select interfaith/ecumenical issues?

As a measure of the ***theological understanding*** within the Presbyterian population:

1. How important to panelists are a range of Reformed theological principles?
2. How do panelists interpret the meaning of salvation, and how do they view participation in the Lord's Supper with or without baptism (in light of pending changes to the *Directory for Worship* in this area)?

As a measure of Presbyterians' ***vocational discernment***:

1. How strong a sense of calling do panelists feel?
2. Across how many aspects of their life and work do panelists feel any sense of calling?
3. What steps have panelists taken to cultivate a sense of calling?

Methodology

This is a quantitative study supported with qualitative responses. That is, the survey includes mostly fixed-response questions which are assigned numeric response values, but also includes a few open-ended questions to which respondents provide responses in their own words. See Appendix A for exact question wording and detailed survey results, and Appendix B for responses to the open-ended questions.

Study Design and Implementation

Perry Chang and Joelle Kopacz, in collaboration with other Research Services team members and the clients, designed the study as Principal Investigators.

A total of 2,576 panelists (sampled and volunteer) were invited to participate in this survey. Surveys were offered in English, Spanish, and Korean, and were distributed via

both web-based and paper questionnaires. (The Spanish and Korean versions were only available as web-based surveys.) The paper questionnaire was mailed on August 16, 2016 to 1,121 panelists (sampled and volunteer) who had filled out at least one Panel survey before. A reminder postcard was mailed to all paper questionnaire non-respondents (n=1,010) on September 6, 2016. The web survey was distributed on August 12, 2016 via email invitation to 1,455 panelists (sampled and volunteer) who have either requested web-based surveys or for whom Research Services has email addresses and who Research Services continues to invite to participate in the Panel. All web non-respondents were sent email reminders on August 22 and September 11, 2016. Returns for both versions of the survey were accepted through September 29, 2016.

Sample Definition

This survey is the seventh full Presbyterian Panel survey to be completed by the 2015-2017 panelists. It consists of two nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members and teaching elders. In this particular study, a small majority of members who participated in the survey (57%) are sampled and the rest (44%) are volunteers. Eight in ten teaching elders who responded to the survey (79%) are sampled individuals and two in ten (21%) are volunteers. For additional information on the Presbyterian Panel and its sampling and distribution, please see Appendix C.

Response Rate

Research Services did not have a correct address for 10 of the 2,576 panelists (sampled and volunteer) who were invited to participate in this survey. As a result, there were 1,218 successful deliveries of the survey to members and 1,348 to teaching elders. In the end, 459 members and 750 teaching elders completed the survey. The response rate (total surveys completed/total surveys sent) is 38% for members and 56% for teaching elders.

Demographics

- **Gender:** About three in five members (59%) and two in five teaching elders (41%) who completed the survey are women. This means the gender distribution of members and teaching elders in these samples is representative of the denomination. Congregational and teaching elder data kept by the Office of the General Assembly shows that in 2015, 58% of members were women and 38% of teaching elders were women.
- **Age:** The average age of members who participated in the survey is 60, and their median age is 62. Respondents who are teaching elders are, on average, 54 years old, with a median age of 57. This group of member panelists is slightly younger than previous Panel samples (the median age for the last sample of member panelists was 63). Because the Office of the General Assembly data only provides membership age in ranges, we cannot make a direct comparison to the average age of Presbyterians as a whole; however, the median age range of Presbyterian members is 56-65. The median age of teaching elder respondents (57) is similar to the median age of teaching elders as calculated using the 2015 Office of the General Assembly statistics (56).

- **Race:** Slightly more than nine in ten members who responded to the survey (93%), and slightly fewer than nine in ten respondents who are teaching elders (89%), identify themselves as White. In this way, member respondents are similar to the overall Presbyterian population, which is 91% White. However, teaching elder respondents are somewhat disproportionately White, as only 85% of teaching elders are White, according to Office of the General Assembly records.

Sampling Error:

Determining precision of findings/margin of error is complicated by the fact that this study is comprised partially of a convenience sample. The “Demographics” section above notes where panelists are over-represented or under-represented, when compared to known estimates of population demographics based on congregational data collected in the Session Annual Statistical Report by the Office of the General Assembly in 2015 and teaching elder data reported by presbyteries to the same office.

If this study had researched the beliefs and activities of a random sample of members, the margin of error for members’ responses (using a 95% confidence interval) would be 4.7%. That is, if 46% of members in the sample responded to a question in a certain way, there are 19 out of 20 chances that the actual percentage of members of PC(USA) churches in general who would respond that way would fall between 41.3% and 50.7% (this is the confidence interval). If the study had researched random samples of teaching elders, the margin of error for their responses would be 3.7% (giving this sample a slightly smaller confidence interval).

Data Analysis

Survey results have been analyzed for demographic differences by respondents’ role (member vs. teaching elder). This analysis helps to identify patterns in responses. Results are presented as descriptive statistics.

Within these groups of respondents, replies are often broken down by theological orientation, gender, and age, using information provided by the panelists in an initial 2015 Panel profile survey. When differences between subgroups of respondents (for example, between male members and female members) are noted in the text, significance tests (including chi square or ANOVA) have indicated that these differences are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ -level, meaning that there is less than a 5% chance that there really isn’t a difference in responses between the two groups.

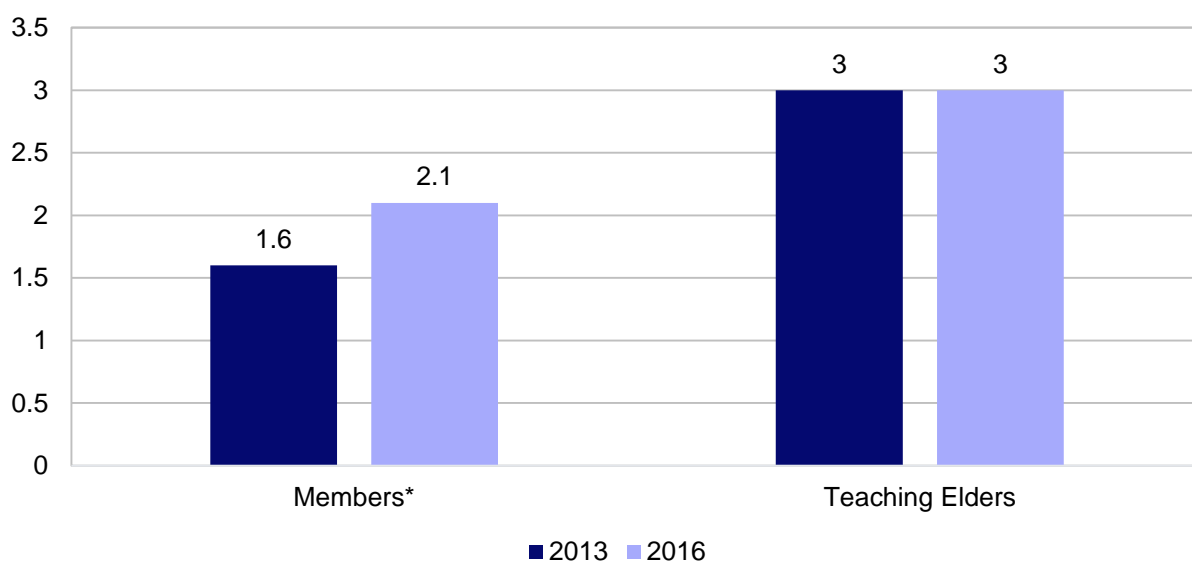
Interfaith Activities

Readers will recall that staff of the Theological Reflection Collective Goal Grouping help educate Presbyterians about opportunities to engage with and learn about other branches of Christianity and non-Christian faiths. In addition, Theological Reflection’s goals include promoting interfaith activities and enhancing “interreligious intelligence.”

With that in mind, Research Services included survey questions about: (1) Presbyterians’ involvement with various interfaith activities; (2) Presbyterians’ beliefs about the relationship between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and non-Christian faiths; and (3) Presbyterians’ knowledge about other Christian and non-Christian faith traditions. In the case of interfaith activities, recall that panelists were asked a set of questions that was similar to a set of questions asked in a November 2013 Panel survey. This means Presbyterians’ involvement in interfaith activities in 2013 and 2016 could be compared, and the impact of the work of the Theological Reflection’s Interfaith Relations staff during that time period be assessed.

Panelists were asked about their involvement in eight different types of interfaith activities during the previous two years. Members report having been involved in an average of about two of these types of activities during the past two years, while teaching elders report having been involved in an average of three types of such activities. This average for *teaching elders* (in fall 2016) is similar to their average in 2013, but by 2016 *members* have been involved in significantly more types of interfaith activities, compared with what they reported in 2013 (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Average Number of Interfaith Activities Undertaken in the Past Two Years

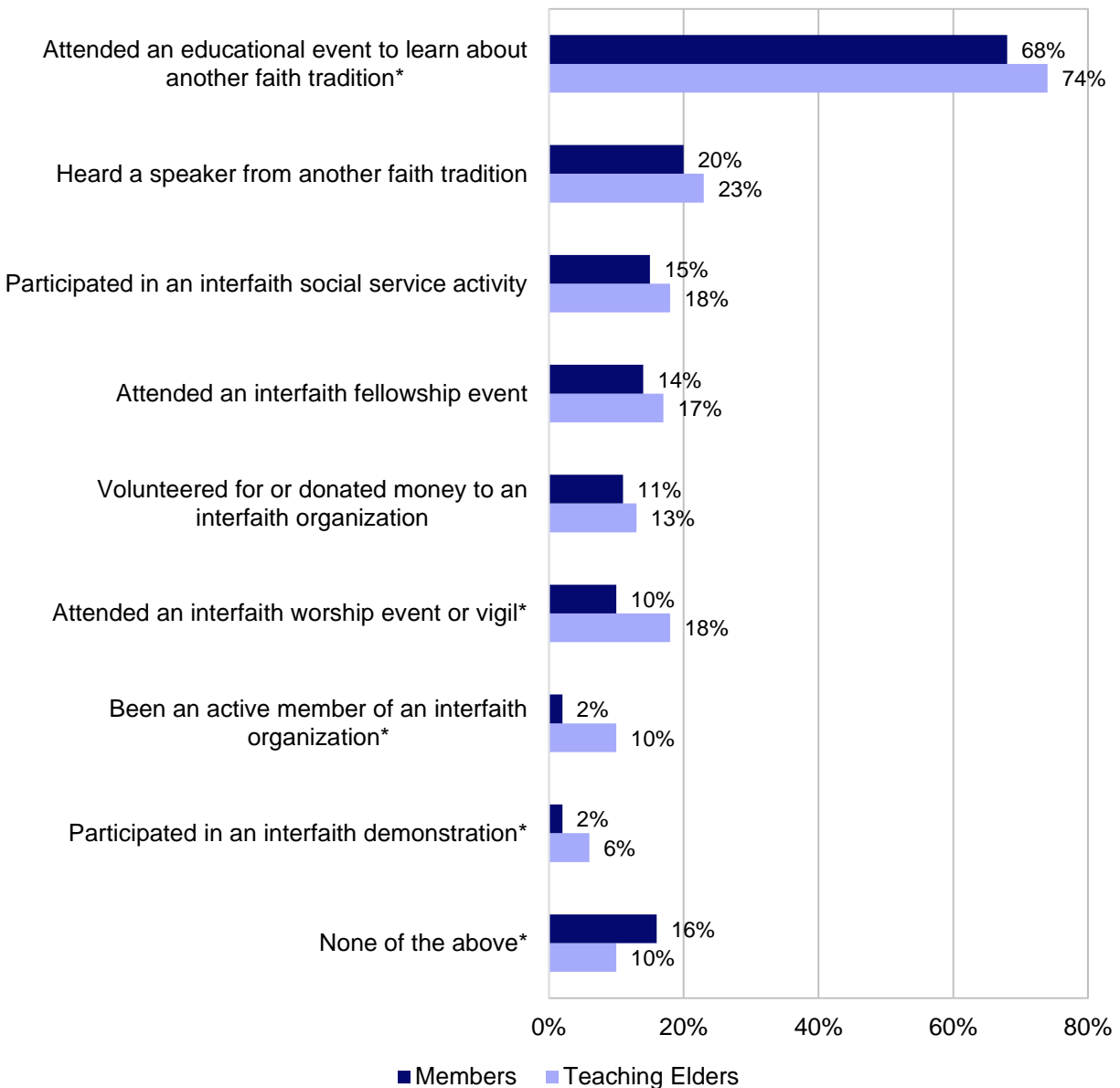


Note: In 2016 members had undertaken significantly more types of interfaith activities than they had in 2013 (* = $p < .05$). Members’ percentages for 2013 are a weighted average of members and ruling elders’ percentages (past Panels sampled these two groups separately).

Teaching elders who label themselves “moderate,” “liberal,” or “very liberal” theologically (hereafter referred to as “moderate-to-liberals”) have been involved in significantly more types of interfaith activities during the past two years than teaching elders who label themselves “very conservative” or “conservative” theologically (hereafter referred to as “conservatives”).

The type of interfaith activity that has been most common among members and teaching elders is attending a class or other educational event to learn about another faith tradition (Figure 2).

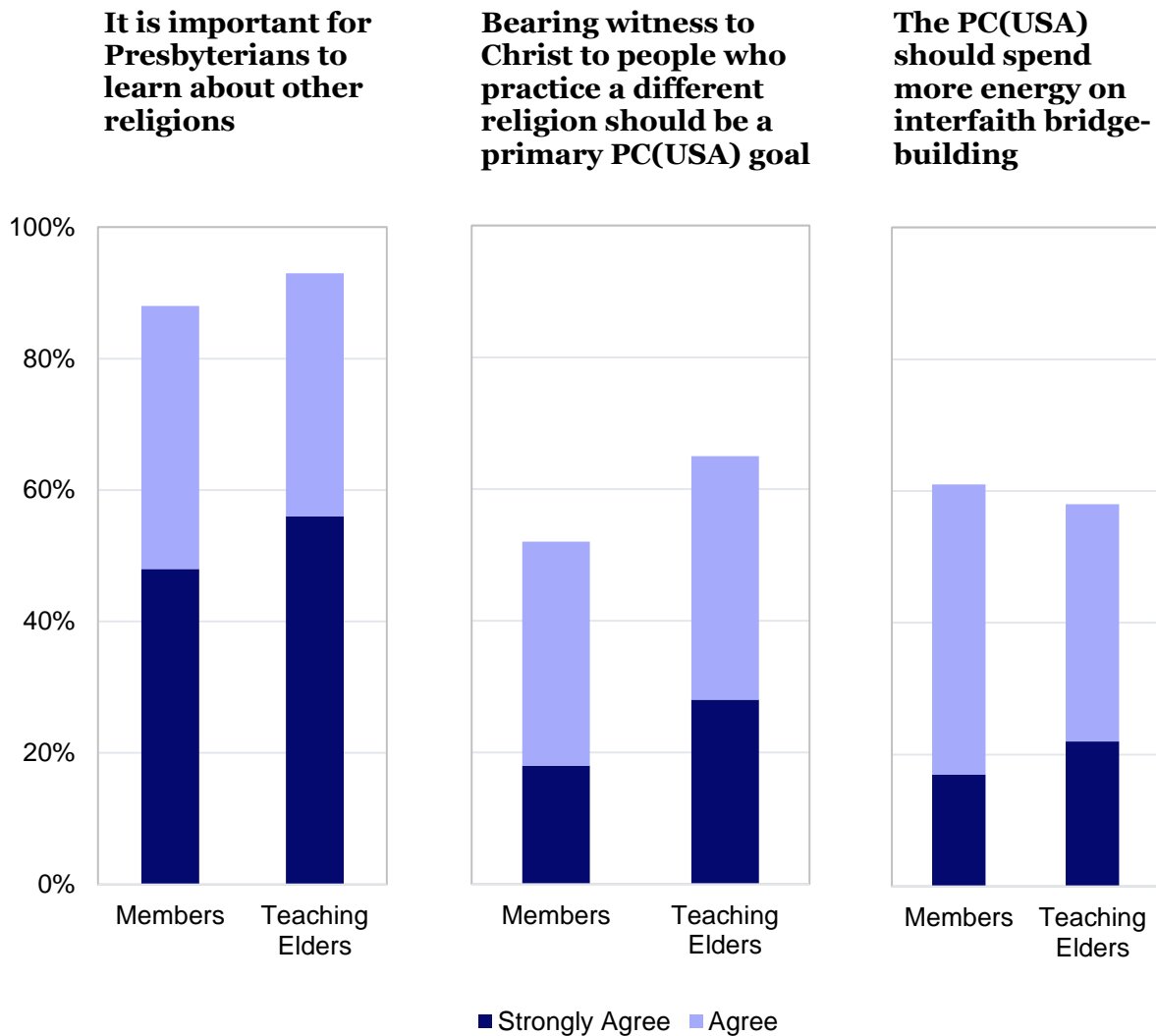
Figure 2
Interfaith-Related Activities Within the Past Two Years



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders have undertaken each asterisked activity in the past two years (* = p < .05).

Panelists were asked their opinion about three statements about interfaith relations. Learning about other religions is something most panelists identify as a priority. Fewer prioritize interfaith bridge-building and witnessing about Christ’s love to non-Christians (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Agreement with Statements About Interfaith Relations



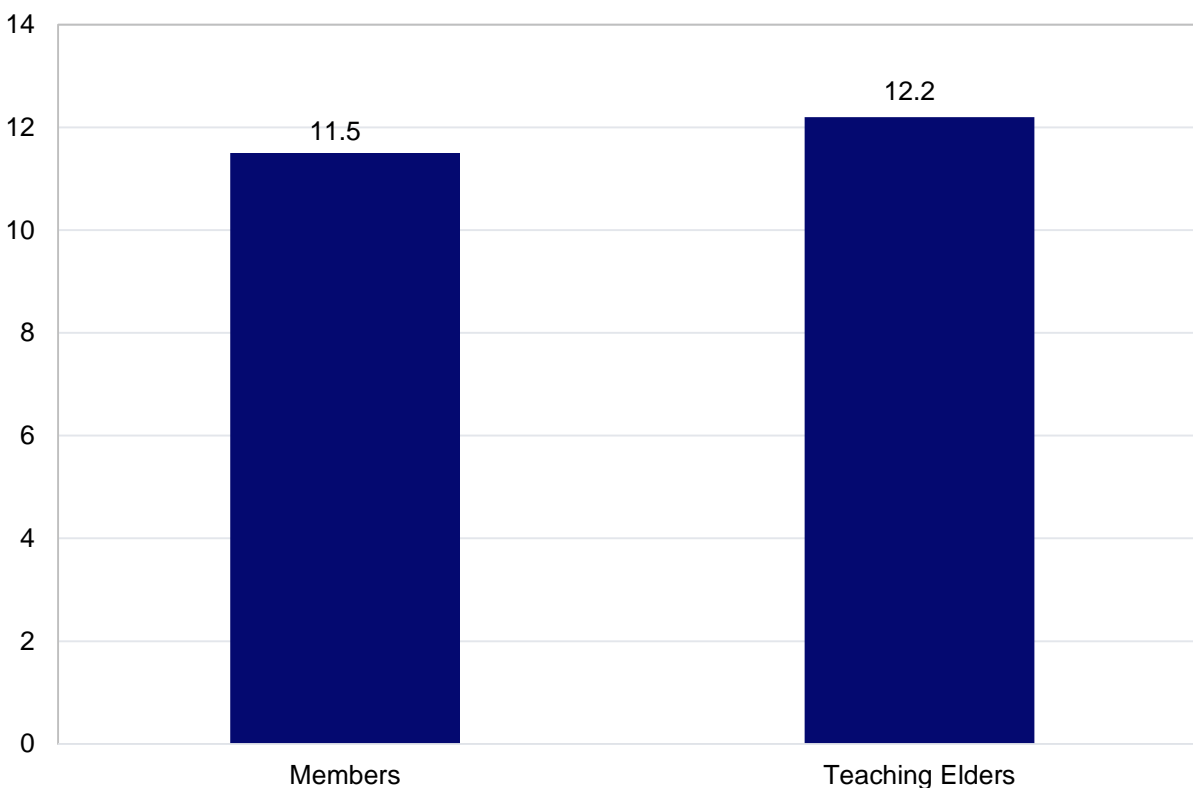
In response to a final open-ended question at the end of the survey, panelists express a diversity of views about interfaith relations. Some believe that it is essential for Presbyterians to pursue interfaith relations more vigorously, while others believe that pursuing such relations can quickly descend into universalism or even paganism.

Interreligious Intelligence

Panelists' knowledge about Catholicism and non-Christian faiths was assessed by asking thirteen informational (or "quiz") questions. These questions asked panelists, for example, to link several religious figures with specific religious traditions, to identify the religion of majorities of people in several different countries, and to name the Islamic holy book.

Teaching elders responded to slightly more of the thirteen questions correctly than members did (Figure 4). Put another way: On average, members scored the equivalent of a "B" on these questions, while teaching elders scored an "A" (members averaged 88% of the questions correct, and teaching elders averaged 94% correct).

Figure 4
Average Number of Thirteen Interreligious Intelligence Questions Answered Correctly*



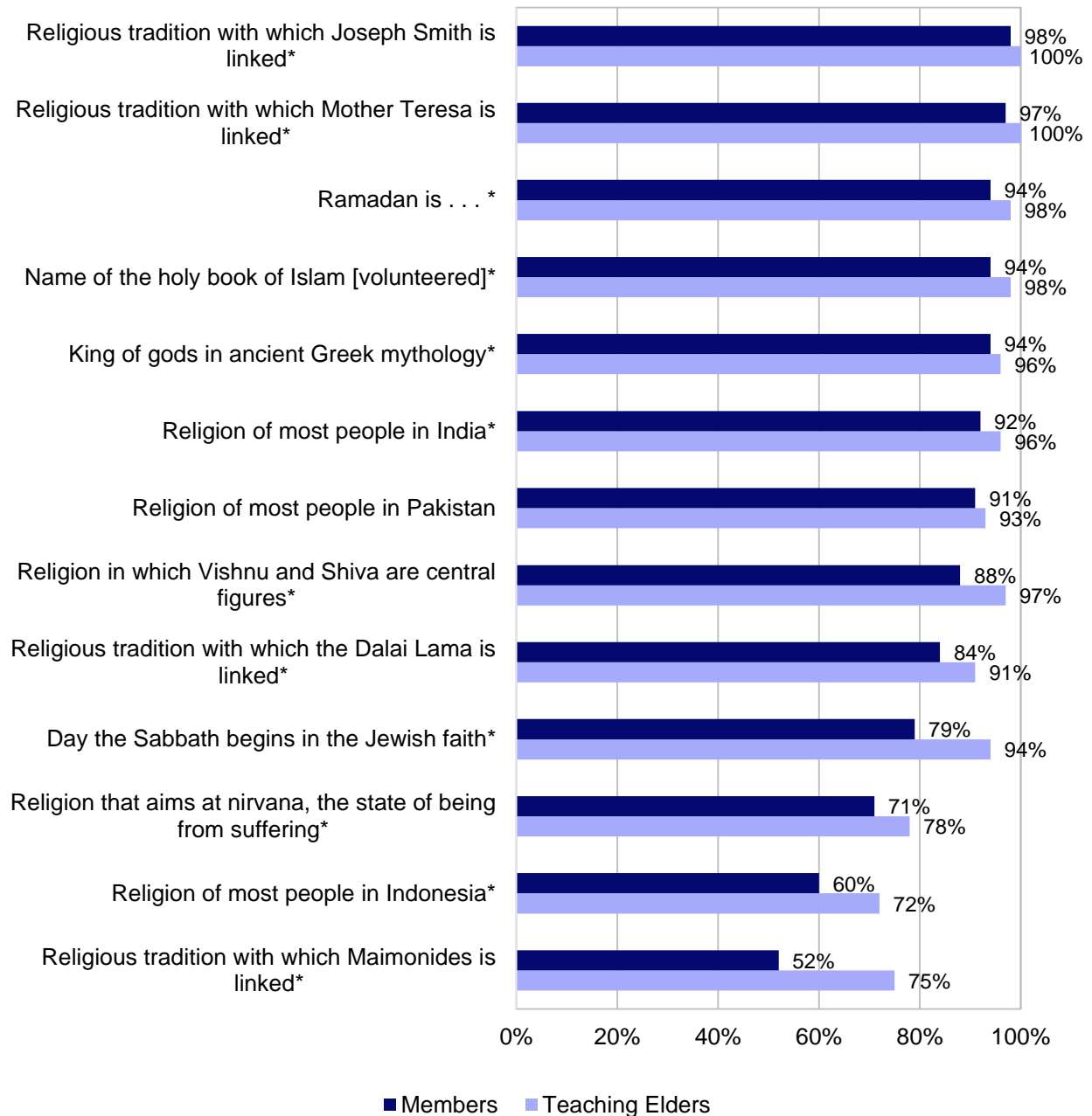
Note: Members and teaching elders responded to a significantly different number of questions correctly (* = $p < .05$).

Theologically moderate-to-liberal members scored higher on average than conservative members, and male teaching elders scored higher on average than female teaching elders. Other than these differences, member and teaching elder scores do *not* vary by age, gender, or theological orientation.

Two questions stumped the most panelists. Only about half of members (52%) and three-quarters of teaching elders (75%) know that Maimonides is linked with the Jewish tradition. Only about six in ten members (60%) and seven in ten teaching elders (72%) know that the majority of people in Indonesia are Muslim.

More teaching elders than members responded correctly to all but one of these questions (about the religion of most people in Pakistan) (Figure 5).

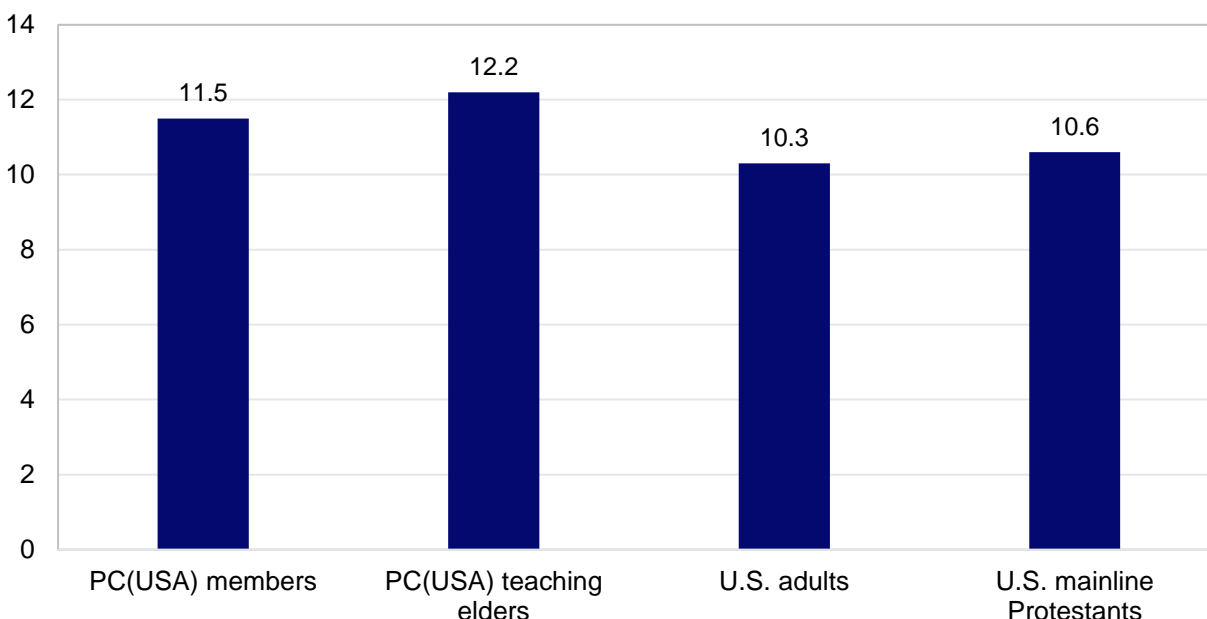
Figure 5
Specific Interreligious Intelligence Questions Answered Correctly



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders responded to each asterisked question correctly (* = $p < .05$). Mother Teresa is now known as St. Teresa.

Because the survey’s interreligious intelligence questions are from a 2010 Pew Research Center survey, it’s possible to compare how Presbyterians and U.S. adults as a whole fared responding to these questions (Figure 6). Members and teaching elders know the correct responses to significantly more of the thirteen questions than do both U.S. adults on the whole and U.S. “mainline” Protestants (Protestants from liberal-to-moderate denominations such as the Episcopal Church, PC(USA), and United Methodist Church).

Figure 6
Comparison of the Number of Thirteen Interreligious Intelligence Questions to Which PC(USA) Members, PC(USA) Teaching Elders, U.S. Adults, and U.S. Mainline Protestants Responded Correctly*



Note: PC(USA) members, PC(USA) teaching elders, U.S. adults, and U.S. mainline Protestants earned significantly different total scores on these thirteen interreligious intelligence questions. Source: “U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey,” Association of Religion Data Archives, at <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/RELKNOW.asp> (accessed on 20 October 2016).

Readers should keep in mind that the 2010 Pew survey was conducted by telephone. A follow-up survey (results not released) was conducted—like part of the Panel survey—via printed paper survey sent by regular mail. Respondents to the 2010 Pew survey replied correctly to more questions on this survey, apparently because they skipped more questions and guessed less or because they looked up some of the answers (Besheer Mohamed, personal conversation, 27 October 2016). Since the Panel survey was also *not* conducted by telephone, the actual difference between Presbyterians’ and U.S. adults’ knowledge of world religions may be smaller than the data reported above suggests. Among panelists, similar percentages of teaching elders responded to the interreligious intelligence quiz questions and the other questions. Significantly more members actually responded to the quiz questions than the other questions. It is true, however, that fewer panelists responded to a couple of the quiz questions that are apparently more difficult than responded to the other (apparently easier) quiz questions.

Theological Understanding

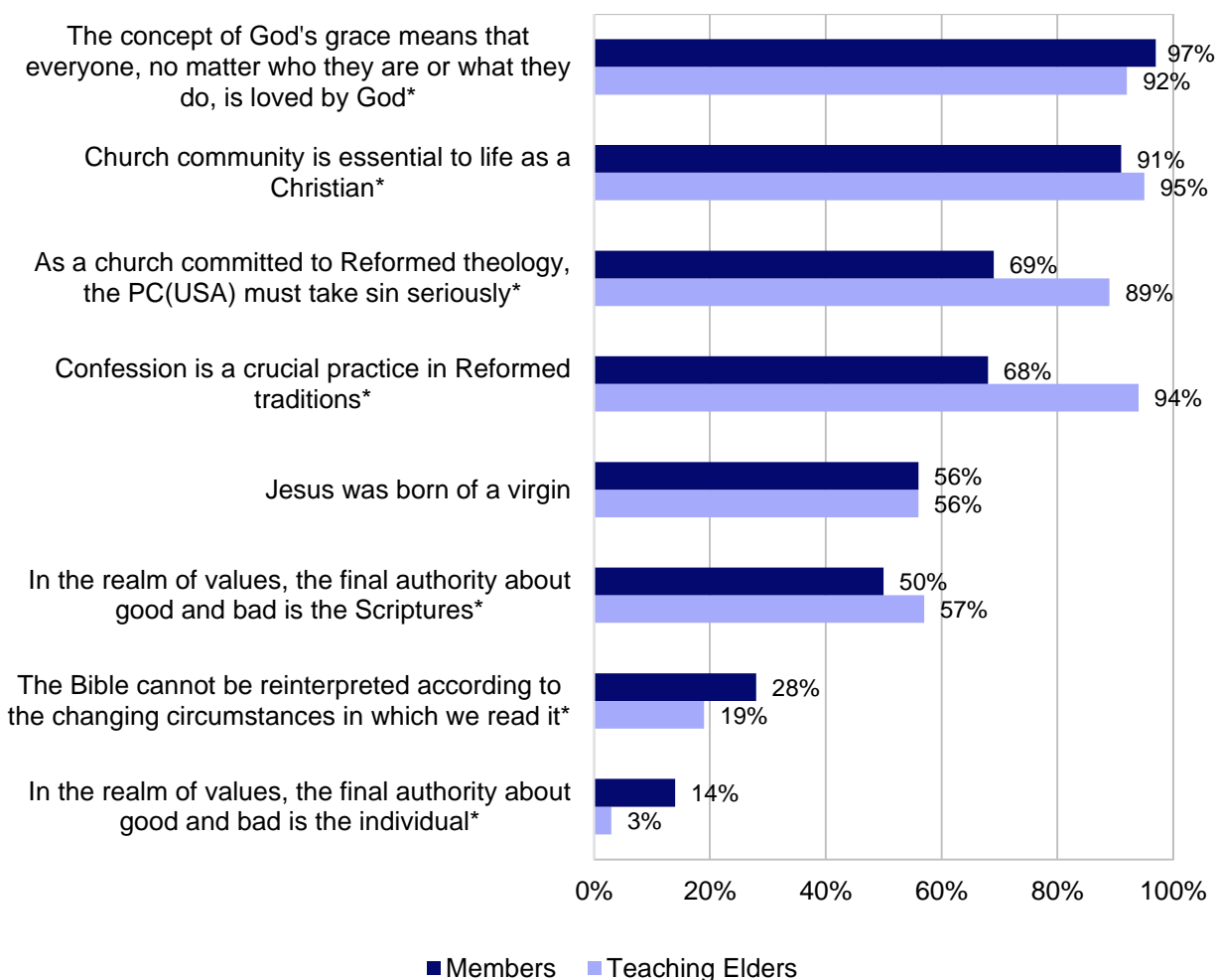
Panelists were asked how much they agree with eight theological statements (listed in Figure 7).

The two most widely supported statements endorse the Reformed concept of grace and being part of a congregation or other religious community.

Nine in ten members and teaching elders *agree* or *strongly agree* that:

- The concept of God’s grace means that everyone, no matter who they are or what they do, is loved by God.
- Church community is essential to life as a Christian.

Figure 7
Eight Theological Statements and the Percentage of Panelists Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Each Statement



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders *agree* or *strongly agree* with each asterisked statement (* = $p < .05$).

The statements the fewest panelists support stake out more fundamentalist or moral individualist viewpoints.

Fewer than three in ten members or teaching elders *agree* or *strongly agree* that:

- The Bible cannot be reinterpreted according to the changing circumstances in which we read it
- In the realm of values, the final authority about good and bad is the individual.

Readers will recall that the theological issue that helped inspire the development of the Theological Reflection Panel survey was about salvation.

One of the nine statements with which panelists agreed or disagreed dealt with the centrality of Jesus, and a separate question dealt with salvation.

The statement with which panelists were asked to agree or disagree is: Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord.

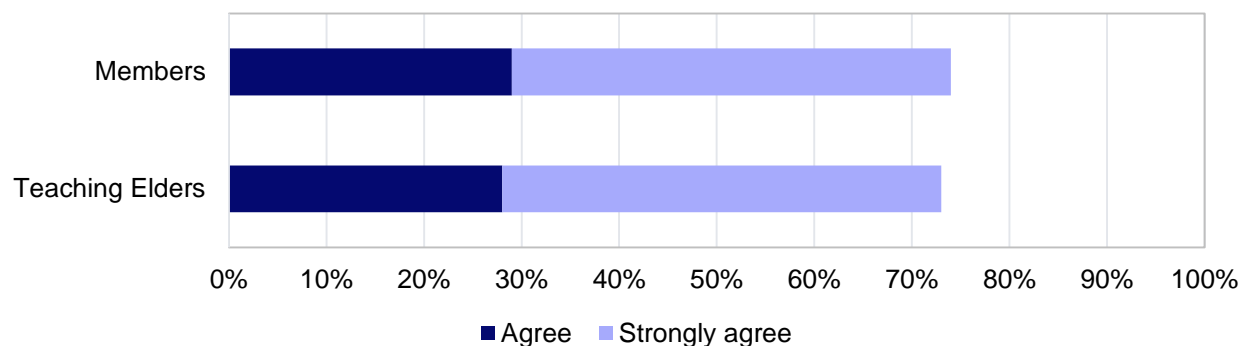
The second, broader question asks panelists to select which of these four statements reflects their view most closely:

- God chooses who is to be saved through Jesus Christ
- People choose Jesus Christ as their Savior
- God saves everyone
- Salvation is an outdated concept

Results suggest that large majorities of Presbyterians—but not all—believe that Jesus is the only Savior and Lord, and that members and teaching elders disagree about the path to salvation.

Three-quarters of members (74%) and teaching elders (73%) *agree* or *strongly agree* that Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord (Figure 8).

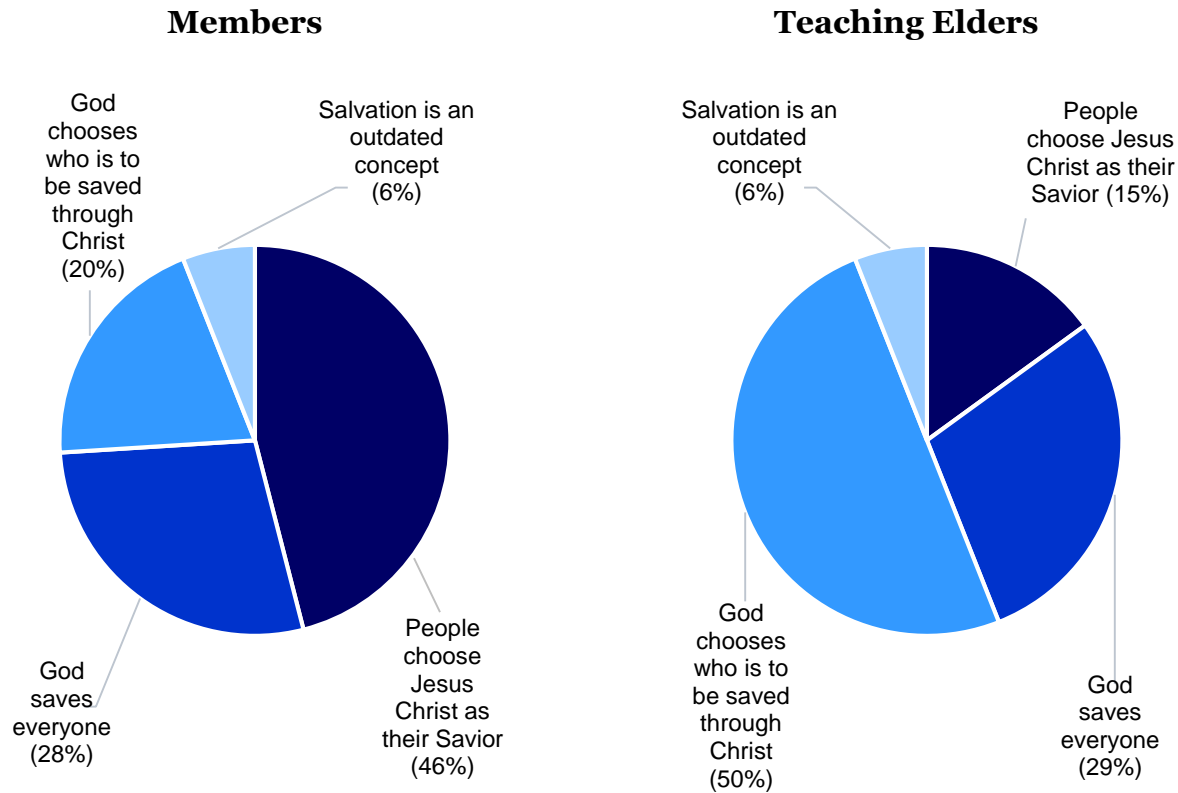
Figure 8
Panelists' Agreement with the Statement
"Jesus Christ Is the Only Savior and Lord"



More of the theologically conservative than of the moderate-to-liberal members and teaching elders endorse the “Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord” statement. There are no differences by gender or age in how panelists respond to this question.

About salvation, nearly half of members believe that people choose Christ as their Savior, while half of teaching elders believe God chooses who is to be saved through Christ. Almost three in ten members and teaching elders hold the view that God saves everyone (Figure 9).

Figure 9*
Statement About Salvation that Comes the Closest to Panelists' View



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders select these statements as closest to their views (* $p < .05$).

Further analysis shows that the interaction between theological perspective, gender, age, and responses to this question is complex:

- More of the theologically conservative members and teaching elders (compared with their moderate-to-liberal counterparts) believe that God chooses who is to be saved or that people choose Jesus as their Savior. More of the liberal-to-moderate panelists hold that God saves everyone or salvation is an outdated concept.
- Among teaching elders, more men than women believe that God chooses who is to be saved; more women than men, on the other hand, think that God saves everyone. There are no gender differences in member responses to this question.
- Members who believe that people choose Jesus as their Savior tend to be older than other members. Interestingly, teaching elders who believe this or who believe salvation is an outdated concept *both* tend to be older than other teaching elders.

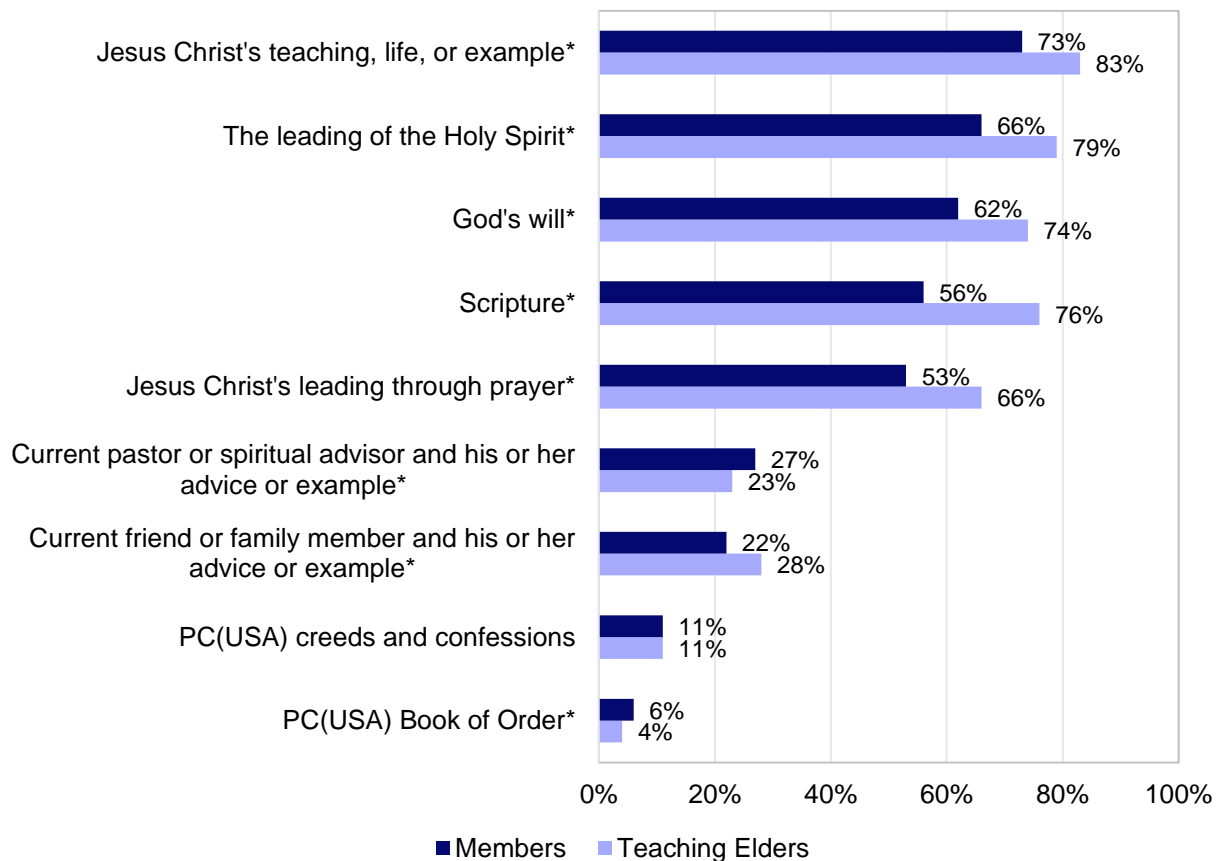
Panelists were given a list of nine spiritual resources and asked to rate how important each is for helping them make everyday decisions as Christians. This analysis will focus on the percentage of panelists who say each is *very important* to them.

The five listed spiritual resources that the most members and teaching elders cite as being *very important* to them are:

- Jesus Christ’s teaching, life, or example
- The leading of the Holy Spirit
- God’s will
- Scripture
- Jesus Christ’s leading through prayer

These spiritual resources are *very important* to significantly more teaching elders than they are to members (Figure 10).

Figure 10
Spiritual Resources that Are Very Important to Panelists in Making Everyday Decisions as Christians



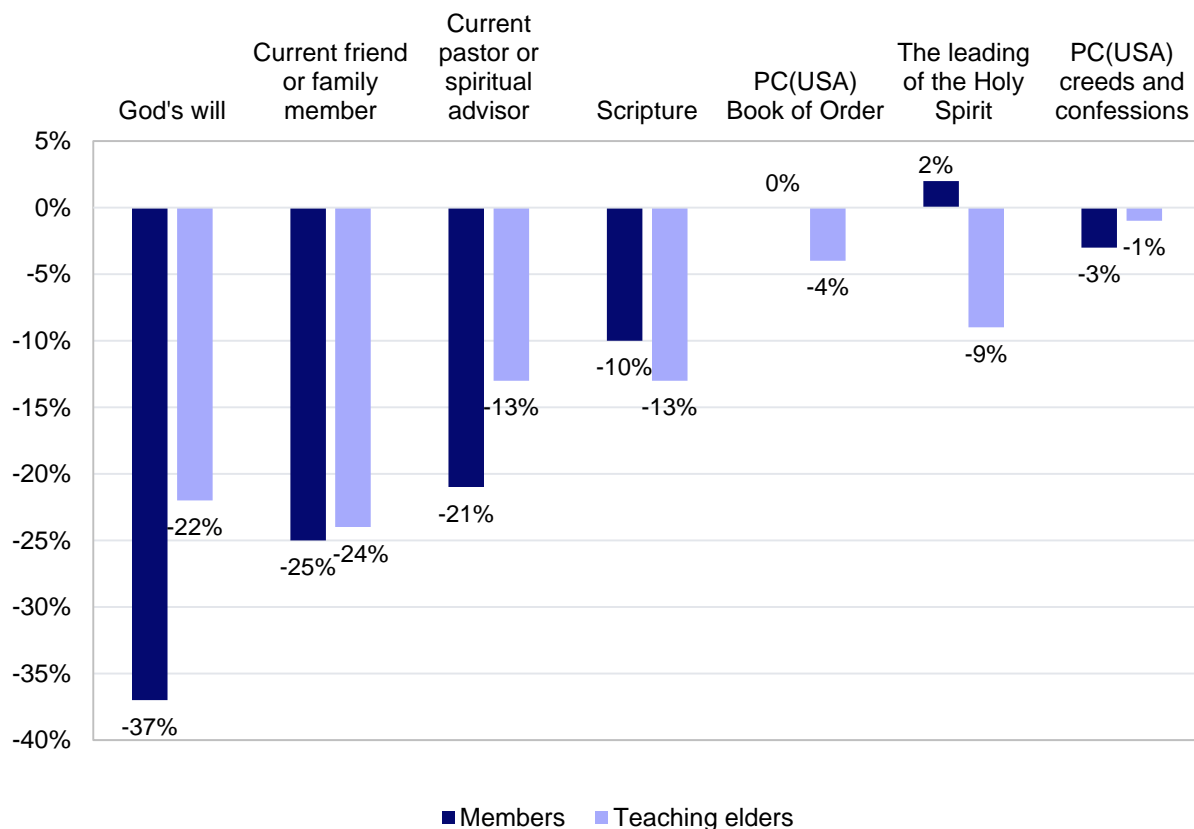
Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders regard each as *very important* to them in making everyday decisions as Christians (* = $p < .05$).

This set of questions about the importance of various spiritual resources is similar to a question on an August 2009 Presbyterian Panel survey that was partly about the PC(USA) confessions and creeds. At the time of this 2009 survey, the denomination was

considering adding the Belhar Confession to its *Book of Confessions*, and church leaders were interested in assessing how important the confessions and creeds (in general) were to Presbyterians.

This 2009 set of questions was different, however, from the one that appeared in the August 2016 survey in two important respects. First, between 2009 and 2016, Research Services shifted to presenting negative response options first (such as *not at all important*), because research shows that presenting positive options first overinflates positive responses (respondents are already inclined to select both *first* options and *positive* options). Second, in the August 2016 survey, two critical additional spiritual resources—“Jesus Christ’s leading through prayer” and “Jesus Christ’s teaching, life, or example”—were added. These were two of the five most popular response options in the August 2016 version of this set of questions. Including the two questions about the importance of Jesus Christ probably deflated how important the other spiritual resources seemed to panelists (Figure 11).

Figure 11
Change in the Percentage of Panelists Who Regard Each Spiritual Resource as *Very Important* to Them as Christians: 2009-2016

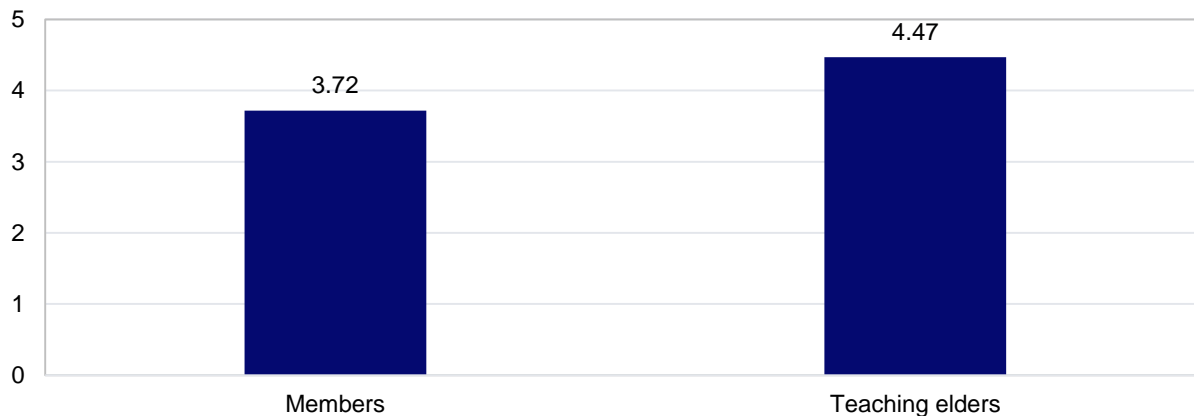


Note: 2009 percentages for members reflect weighted averages of member and ruling elder responses. All changes are statistically significant ($p < .05$) except for the changes in the percentage of members who regard the leading of the Holy Spirit as *very important* and the percentage of teaching elders who regard PC(USA) creeds and confessions as *very important*. There is no difference between the percentages of 2009 and 2016 members who see the PC(USA) *Book of Order* as *very important*.

There were three exceptions to the overall decline in the percentages of panelists who see various spiritual resources as *very important*. A similar percentage of members see the PC(USA) *Book of Order* and the Holy Spirit as *very important* in 2016 as did so in 2009. The same is true for teaching elders and the PC(USA) creeds and confessions. In the latter case, prolonged discussion of the Belhar Confession may have elevated the stature of denominational creeds and confessions in Presbyterian ministers' minds. As for the Holy Spirit, the 2009 version of the question asked about the “work” of the Holy Spirit, while the 2016 version asked about the “leading” of the Holy Spirit. It's possible this change is somehow responsible for the similarity of members' responses between the two years—as much or more so than the maintenance of any ostensible denomination-wide sense of spiritual energy. Nevertheless, it seems significant that—in terms of which listed spiritual resources more or fewer panelists see as *very important* in 2016 than did so in 2009—the Holy Spirit is the one resource that many Presbyterians continue to regard as *very important* today.

Research Services staff added up how many spiritual resources each member perceives as *very important* (in 2016), added all of these totals, and then divided this number by the number of members (to calculate an average for all member panelists). The staff then did the same thing for teaching elders. Significantly more spiritual resources — taken as a whole—are *very important* to teaching elders than they are to members (Figure 12).

Figure 12
Average Number of Nine Spiritual Resources Panelists See as Very Important to Their Decision-Making as Christians*



Note: Teaching elders regard a significantly larger number of the nine listed spiritual resources, on average, as *very important* to their decision-making as Christians than members do (* p < .05).

Theologically conservative members and teaching elders identify significantly more of these nine spiritual resources—as a whole—as *very important* than their moderate-to-liberal peers do. More of the conservative than of the moderate-to-liberal members also regard each of these resources, individually, as *very important*, with the exception of two resources: the PC(USA) *Book of Order* and the PC(USA) creeds and confessions. The same is true for teaching elders with different theological orientations, but in this case the two exceptions are “current friend or family member and his or her advice or

example” and “current pastor or spiritual advisor and his or her teaching or example.” There is no difference in the percentages of theologically conservative and moderate-to-liberal teaching elders who see their “current friend, family member, pastor, or spiritual advisor” as *very important* to their decision-making as Christians.

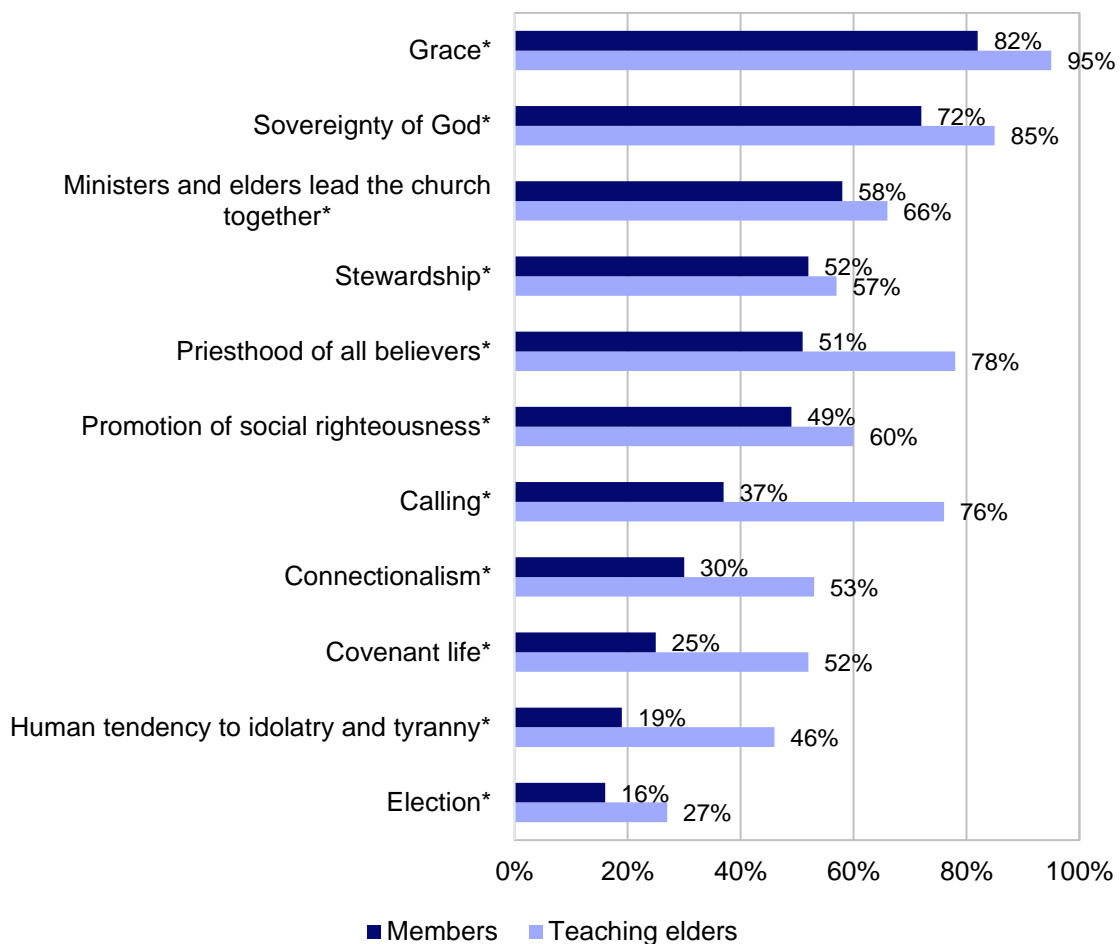
There are no statistically significant differences by gender or age in the number of these spiritual resources panelists hold as *very important* to them.

The survey listed eleven Reformed/Presbyterian principles and—again—asked panelists to rate how important each principle is to them.

Grace is *very important* to the most members and teaching elders (Figure 13). Also *very important* to majorities of members and teaching elders are:

- The sovereignty of God
- Ministers and elders lead the church together
- Stewardship
- The priesthood of all believers

Figure 13
Reformed/Presbyterian Principles Panelists See as *Very Important*

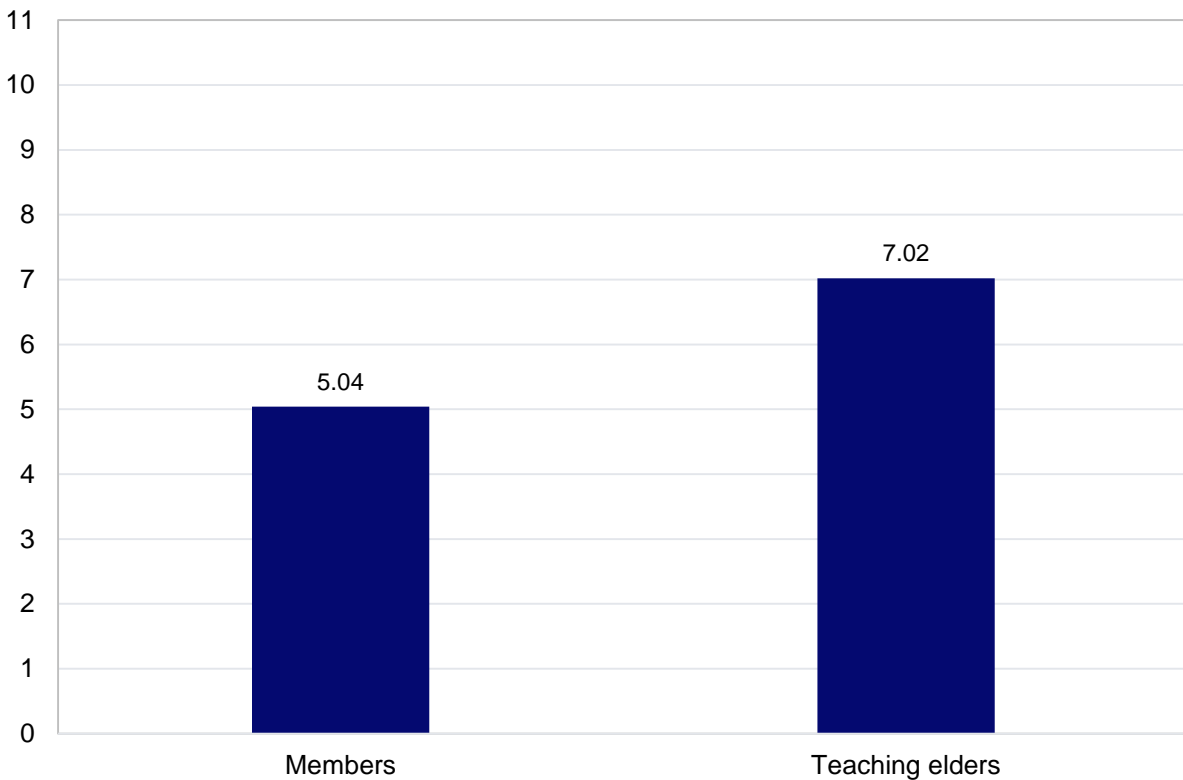


Note: Significantly more teaching elders than members view each asterisked principle as *very important* (* = $p < .05$).

More teaching elders than members also see each of the eleven individual principles as *very important* to them.

Compared with members, more teaching elders also regard these Reformed/Presbyterian principles—as a whole—as *very important*. If the percentages of members who regard each principle as *very important* are all added up, and then the sum is divided by the number of principles (eleven), the result is about five principles (Figure 14). If the percentages of teaching elders who view each principle as *very important* are added up, and the sum is then divided by the number of principles (nine), the result is about seven principles. In this way, the average number of principles teaching elders believe are *very important* is two principles more than the average number for members (Figure 14).

Figure 14
Average Number of Reformed/Presbyterian Principles Panelists
View as *Very Important* to Them*



Note: Teaching elders regard a significantly larger number of the eleven listed Reformed/Presbyterian principles, on average, as *very important* to them than members do (* $p < .05$).

Female members regard more Reformed/Presbyterian principles as *very important* to them than their male counterparts do. There are no significant differences in the average numbers of principles identified as *very important* by theological perspective or age or, among teaching elders alone, by gender.

An analysis of responses about specific Reformed/Presbyterian principles by theological orientation, gender, and age revealed a number of differences:

- Among members, more of the theological conservatives than of the moderate-to-liberals regard the following Reformed/Presbyterian principles as *very important*: calling, connectionalism, and promotion of social righteousness. More of the moderate-to-liberals see election, the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, and the sovereignty of God as *very important*.
- Among teaching elders, more of the theological conservatives than of the moderate-to-liberals believe that covenant life, election, the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, the priesthood of all believers, and the sovereignty of God are *very important*. More of the moderate-to-liberals regard connectionalism and the promotion of social righteousness as *very important*.
- Among members, more men than women regard connectionalism, the promotion of social righteousness, and stewardship as *very important*, while more women believe election and the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny are *very important*.
- Among teaching elders, more men than women believe that election, the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, and that ministers and elders lead the church together are *very important*. More women regard connectionalism and the promotion of social righteousness as *very important*.
- Teaching elders who regard stewardship as *very important* tend to be older than those who do not so regard it.

Panelists were asked to elaborate on their response about the importance of various Reformed/Presbyterian principles. Among the principles panelists mention in response that were not included in the survey list were:

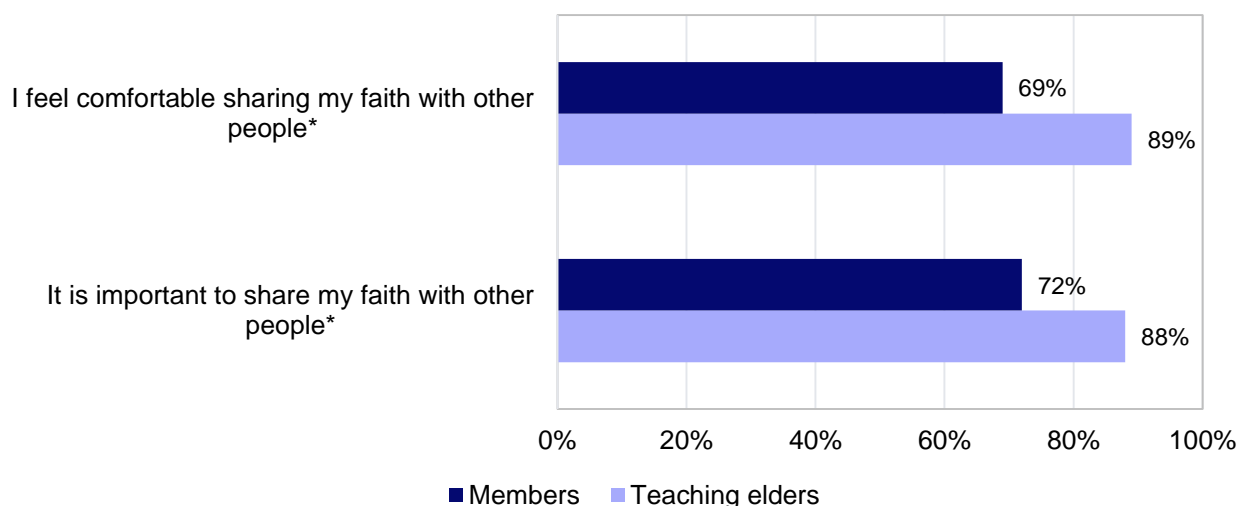
- The five “solas” (that is, *Sola Scriptura* (“Scripture alone”), *Sola Fide* (“faith alone”), *Sola Gratia* (“grace alone”), *Solis Christus* (“Christ alone”), and *Soli Dei Gloria* (“to the glory of God alone”).
- Predestination
- Reformed but always reforming

In response to a final open-ended question on the survey, panelists continue to reflect on what they believe. For example, one panelist wrote: “I am now 96 years old and less sure of what I believe than when I was younger. We are all searching, from Einstein to this paper boy.”

Evangelism

Within the context of questions about their theological beliefs, panelists were also asked whether they feel comfortable sharing their faith with other people and whether they believe sharing their faith is important. Similar percentages of members believe sharing their faith is important and feel comfortable doing so. The same is true for teaching elders. Comparing the two, however, it is clear that more teaching elders than members feel comfortable sharing their faith and believe it is important to do so (Figure 15).

Figure 15
Panelists Who *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* with Each of These Statements About Sharing Their Faith



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders *agree* or *strongly agree* with each of the asterisked statements (* = $p < .05$).

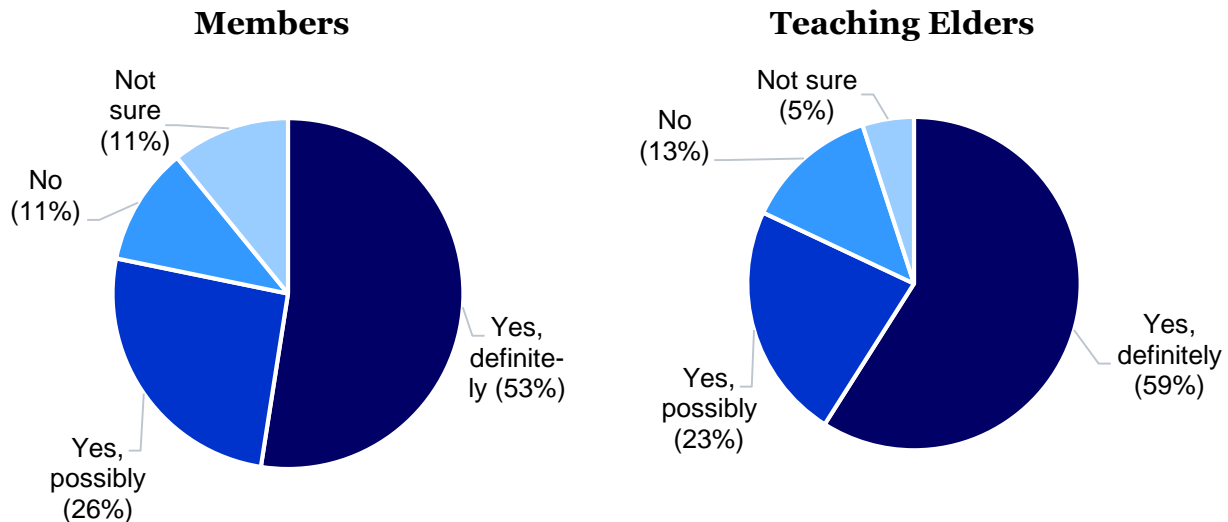
Worship

The survey examined changes to the part of the PC(USA) *Constitution* known as the *Directory for Worship*, which helps provide a theological foundation and guidelines for Presbyterian worship. These revisions were approved at the 2016 General Assembly; if the changes are to take effect, a majority of presbyteries must also approve them.

The survey asked panelists questions about this topic not to try to influence the presbyteries one way or the other, but so future church leaders might have a snapshot of denomination-wide opinions on these issues as part of their discernment.

Included in the proposed changes is a section that calls on PC(USA) congregations to permit believers who are not baptized to participate in the Lord’s Supper, but to invite them to be baptized later. When asked to respond to this approach, large majorities of members and teaching elders *definitely* or *possibly* “affirm” it. More teaching elders than members affirm it.

Figure 16
Panelist Response to Question About Whether They Affirm the Proposal to Authorize Participation of Those Not Baptized in the Lord’s Supper, Followed by an Invitation to Be Baptized Later



Among members, more of the theological moderate-to-liberals than of the conservatives affirm the new approach. Among teaching elders, more moderate-to-liberals than conservatives and more women than men endorse the approach.

Panelists demonstrate a diversity of opinion about the relationship between the baptism and Lord’s Supper sacraments in response to an open-ended question asking for elaboration. Some worry that delinking the two underemphasizes or cheapens baptism, or simply note that they have been linked historically. Others are more enthusiastic about this shift and stress that both of these Sacraments are mere signs, not causes, of an underlying phenomenon: grace. Some are even more blunt: “You’re straining at gnats. The Holy Spirit is far less litigious than us. Too many rules strangles people.”

In response to the proposed change to the *Directory for Worship* that would stress how culture-bound worship is, large majorities of both members (76%) and teaching elders (86%) believe it is *important* or *very important* to consider culture when celebrating or planning worship.

More female members than male members regard cultural contextualization of worship as *important* or *very important*. Members who believe it is important tend to be younger than members who do not see it as important.

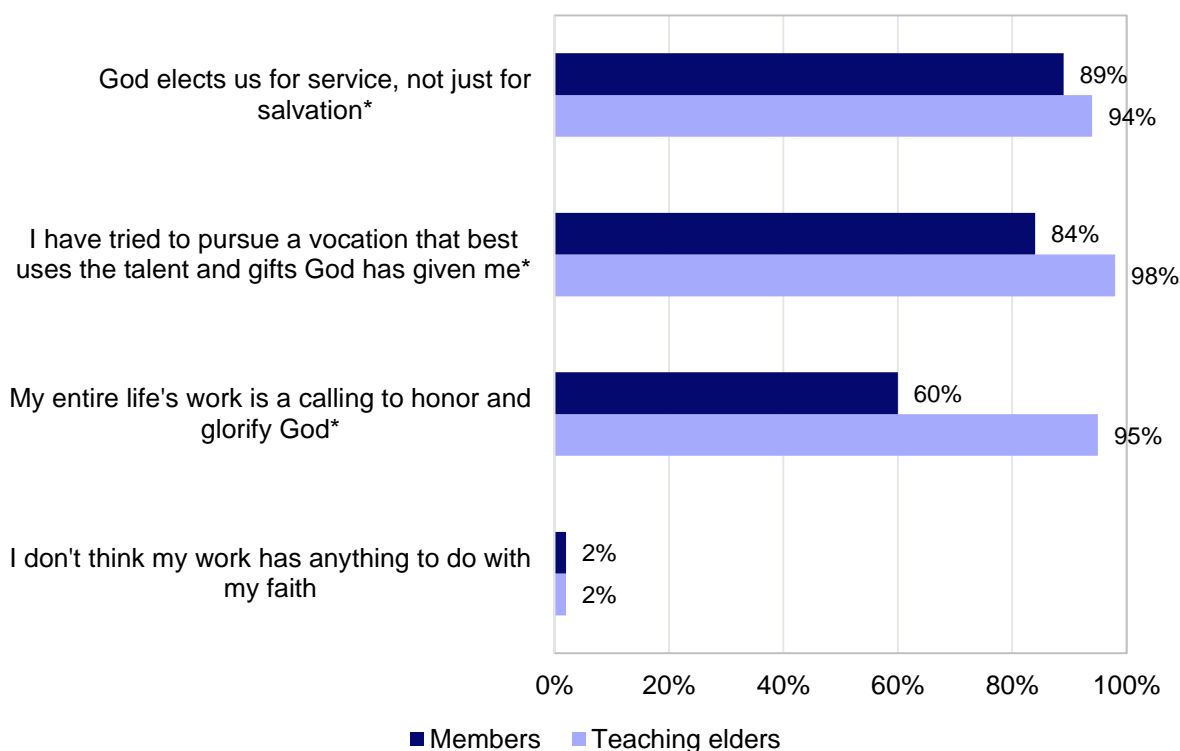
Vocational Discernment

Panelists were asked how much they agree with four statements about their calling as Christians. Large majorities of both members and teaching elders *strongly agree* or *agree* that God elects us for service, and not just for salvation, and that they have tried to pursue a vocation that best uses the talents and gifts God has given them (Figure 17).

Nine in ten teaching elders—but only six in ten members—hold that their entire life’s work is a calling to honor and glorify God.

Almost no panelists believe that their work has nothing to do with their faith.

Figure 17
Panelists Who Agree or Strongly Agree with Statements About Vocational Discernment



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching leaders *agree* or *strongly agree* with three of the each of the asterisked statements about vocational discernment (* = $p < .05$).

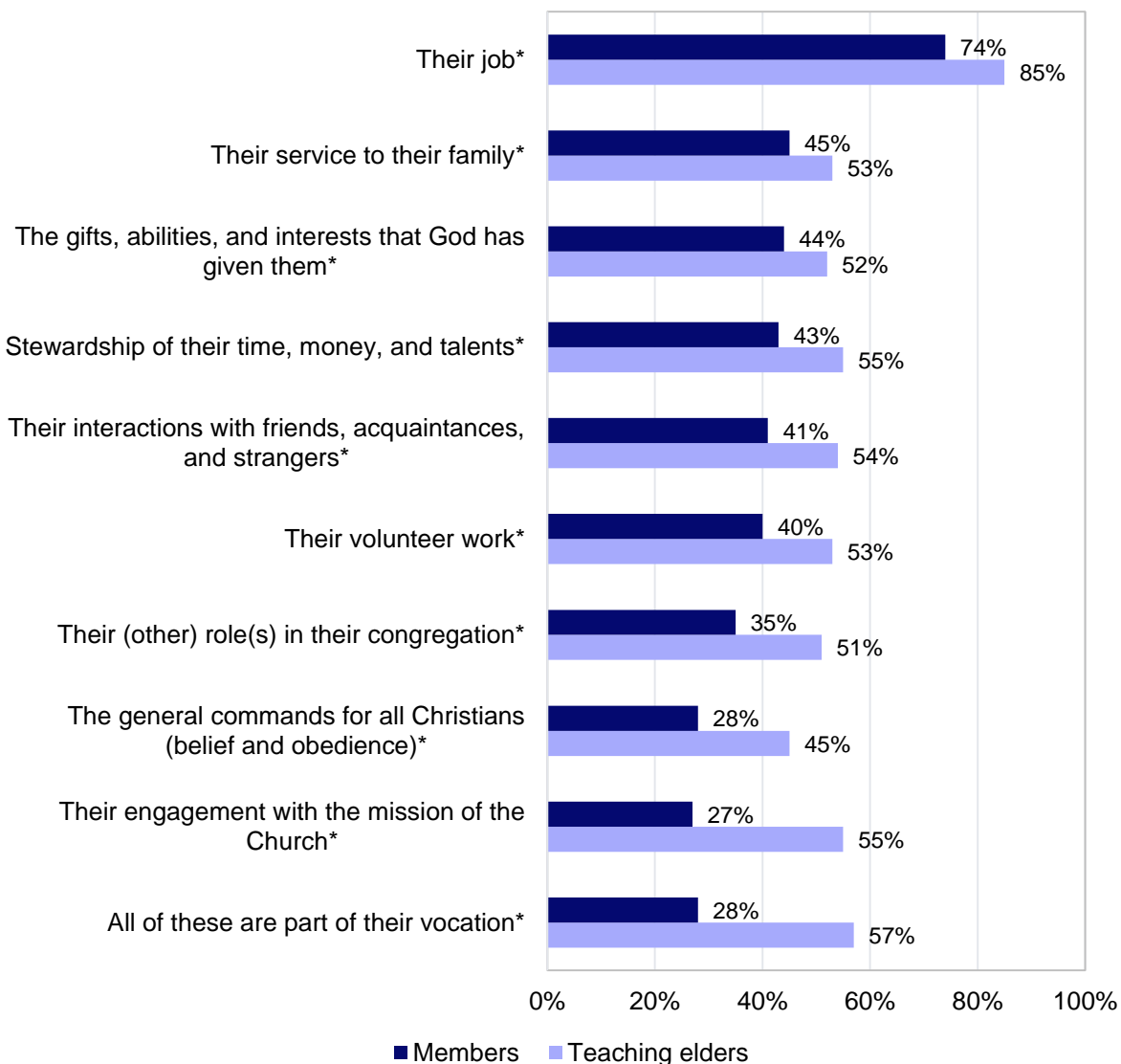
More of the theologically conservative members and teaching elders than of their moderate-to-liberal counterparts agree that their entire life’s work is a calling to honor and glorify God.

Panelists were asked whether they consider a list of nine aspects of their lives as part of their vocation (the nine aspects are listed in Figure 18).

Panelists were also given an opportunity to click on a separate box to indicate that they regard *all nine* of these as part of their vocation (and therefore to skip clicking all of the nine other boxes). Six in ten teaching elders—but only three in ten members—believe all nine are part of their vocation (Figure 18).

More teaching elders than members regard each of the nine listed aspects of their lives as part of their vocation. The aspect of their lives that the largest percentages of members and teaching elders see as part of their vocation is their job.

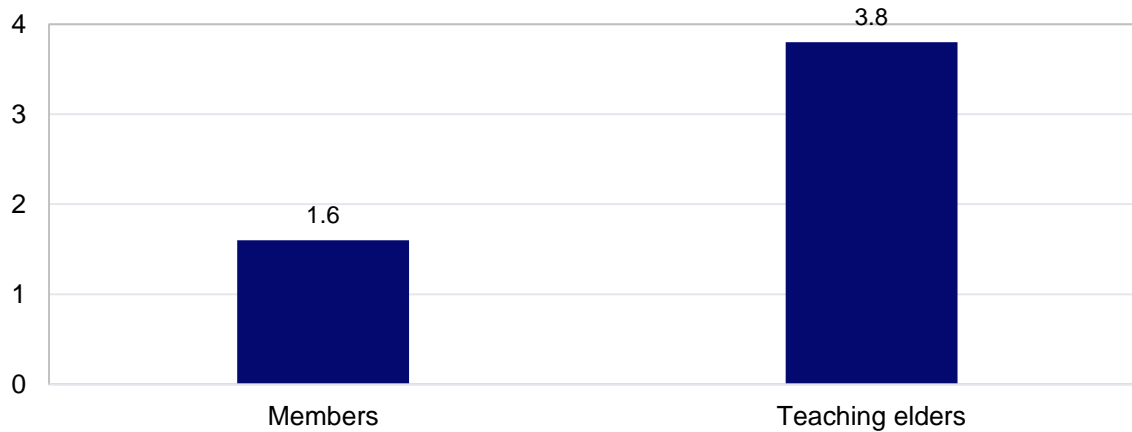
Figure 18
Aspects of Their Life that Panelists Consider as Part of Their Vocation



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders consider this aspect of their lives as part of their vocation (* = $p < .05$).

Panelists were also asked whether they had ever taken any of nine listed steps to better discern their vocation (listed in Figure 20). Teaching elders had taken on average more than twice as many of these steps as members had (Figure 19).

Figure 19
Average Number of Nine Steps Ever Taken to Better Discern Their Vocation*

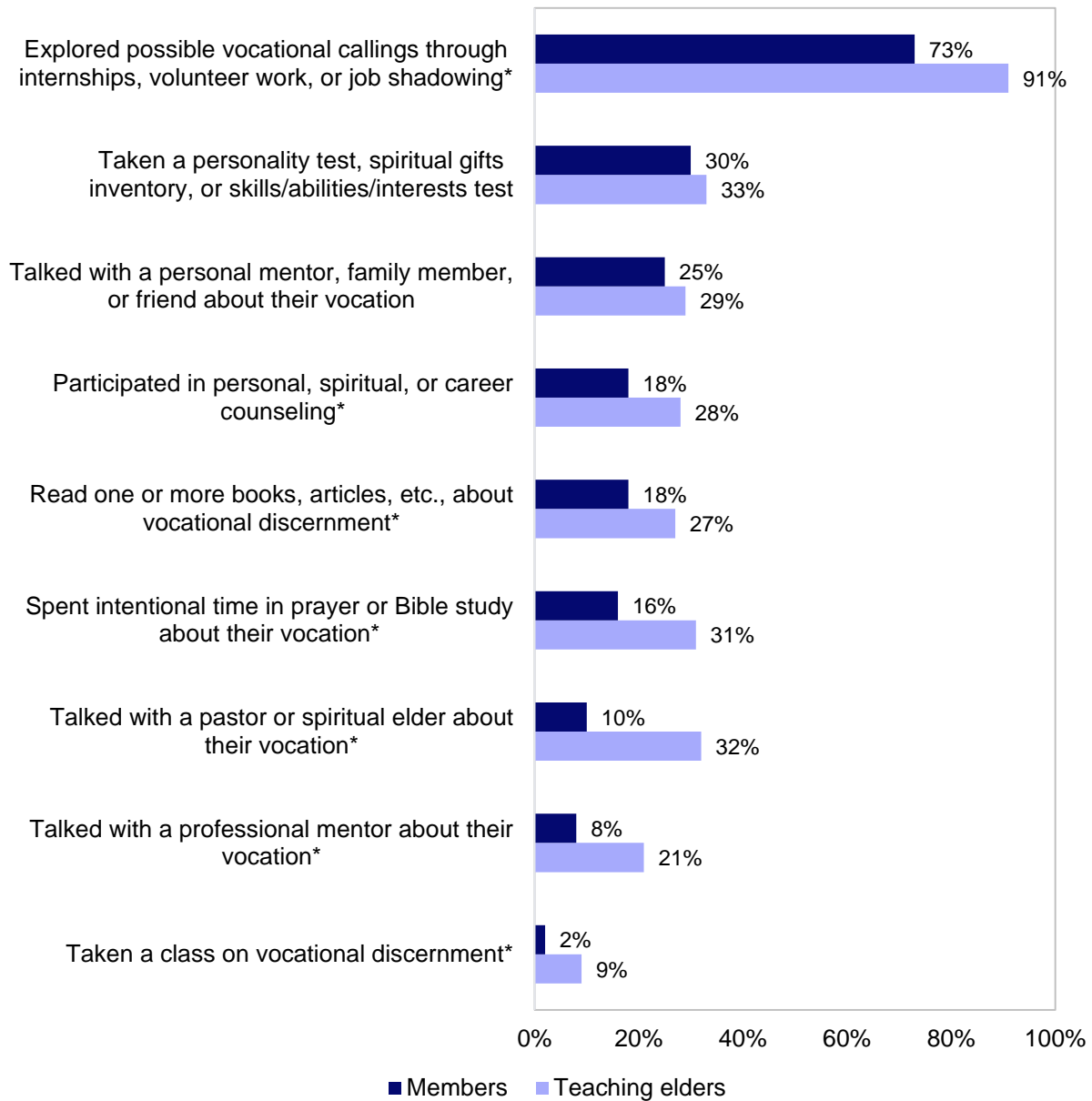


Note: Members and teaching elders have taken significantly different numbers of these nine steps, on average, to discern their vocation (* = $p < .05$).

Members who had taken more steps tended to be younger than those who had taken fewer steps. Male teaching elders had taken more steps than female teaching elders.

The most prevalent of the listed vocational discernment steps was having explored vocational callings through internships, volunteer work, or job shadowing (Figure 20). Having taken a class on vocational discernment was the least prevalent.

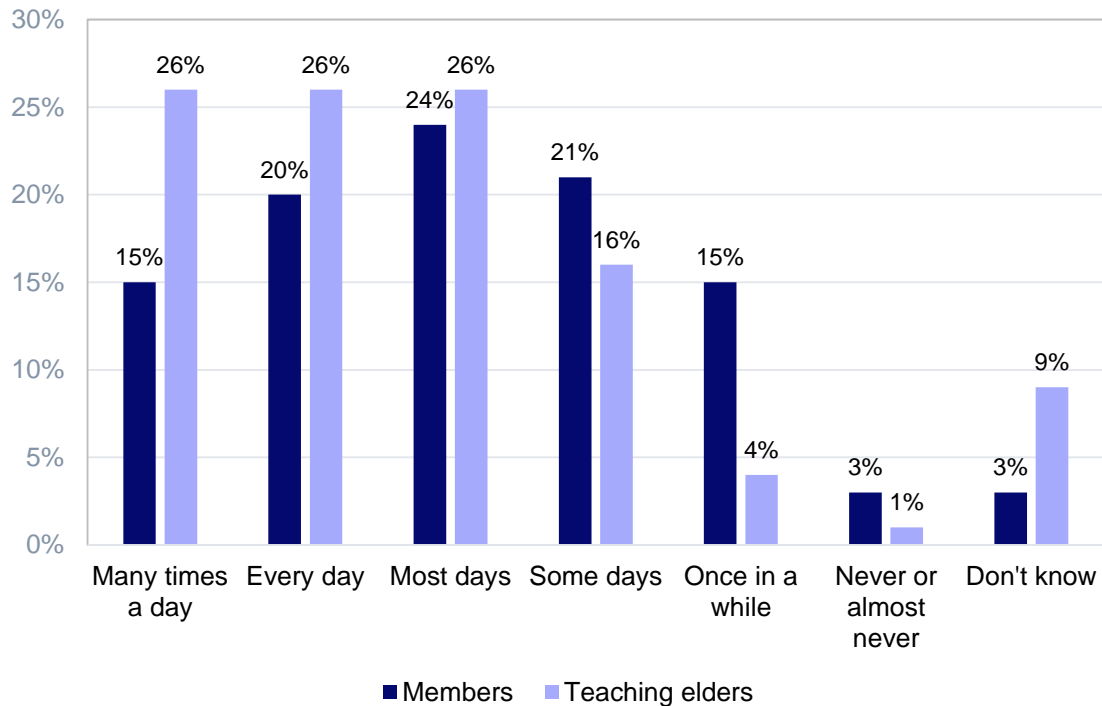
Figure 20
Steps Panelists Have Ever Taken to Better Discern Their Vocation



Note: Significantly different percentages of members and teaching elders have ever taken each of the asterisked steps to better discern their vocation (* = $p < .05$).

Panelists were also asked how often they would say they feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities. Roughly one-third of members (35%) and one-half of teaching elders (52%) feel guided at least daily (Figure 21).

Figure 21
Frequency Panelists Feel Guided by God in the Midst of Daily Activities*



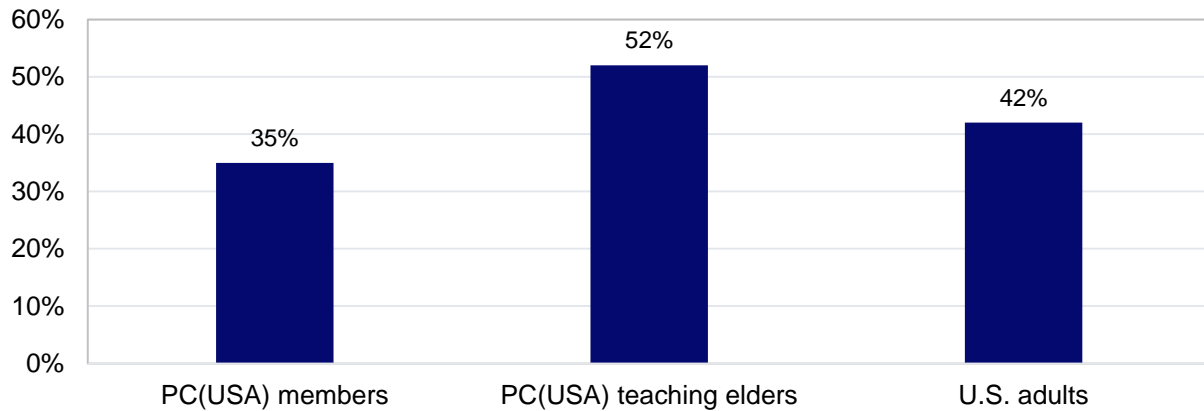
Note: Members and teaching elders feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities with statistically significantly different frequency (* = $p < .05$).

More of the theologically conservative members and teaching elders than of their moderate-to-liberal peers feel guided daily by God. Members and teaching elders who feel guided daily tend to be older than those who do not feel so guided.

Participants in the 2004 General Social Survey, a telephone survey with a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults, were asked the same question about how often they feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities.

Significantly *more* PC(USA) teaching elders than U.S. adults in general feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities at least daily, while significantly *fewer* PC(USA) members than U.S. adults feel this daily guidance (Figure 22).

Figure 22
Respondents Who Feel Guided by God in the Midst of Daily Activities at Least Daily*



Note: Significantly different percentages of respondents feel guided by God at least daily (* = $p < .05$). "GODGUIDE," in "General Social Survey: 2004," in "The Association of Religion Data Archives," at <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/GSS2004/GSS2004_Var567_1.asp> (accessed 10 October 2016).

In response to a final open-ended question on the survey, some panelists reflect on their life choices and how they feel God has called them in various ways. A female member argues that, like many other women, earlier in her life, she felt called to serve her children and families, whereas now a wider range of vocations have emerged for women. Others are quick to separate paid work and vocation from God, for example: "Vocation has little to do with a paycheck and lots to do with my use of God's gifts."

Appendix A: Survey Questions and Responses

Theological Reflection

Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016

	Members	Teaching Elders
Number of survey invitations sent	1,222	1,354
Number of undeliverable respondents	0	10
Number of surveys completed	459	750
Response rate	38%	56%

Note: A mid-cycle purge of non-respondents contributed to a larger response rate.

Interfaith Activities

For this first question, the term *other faith traditions* refers to faith traditions outside of the world's Christian churches/traditions. *Interfaith relations* refer to Christian interaction with other faith traditions.

	Members	Teaching Elders
1. Within the past <i>two years</i> , have you: (Select <i>all</i> that apply.)	n=256	n=469
Attended an educational event or class to learn about one or more other faith traditions?.....	68%	74%
Attended an interfaith fellowship event (such as a social dinner)?.....	14%	17%
Attended an interfaith worship event, prayer service, or vigil?	10%	18%
Been an active member of an interfaith organization?.....	2%	10%
Heard a speaker or speakers from one or more other faith traditions?	20%	23%
Participated in a social service activity in your local community that had interfaith participation?	15%	18%
Participated in an intentionally interfaith demonstration, march, protest, or political forum?	2%	6%
Volunteered for or donated money to an interfaith organization?	11%	13%
None of the above	16%	10%
2. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?		
a. Being witness to the good news of Jesus Christ to people who practice a different religion should be a primary goal of the PC(USA).	n=455	n=746
Strongly disagree	6%	6%
Disagree	14%	13%
Neither disagree nor agree	27%	18%
Agree.....	34%	35%
Strongly agree	18%	28%
b. It is important for Presbyterians to learn about other religions.	n=458	n=745
Strongly disagree	2%	2%
Disagree	2%	2%
Neither disagree nor agree	8%	4%
Agree.....	40%	37%
Strongly agree	48%	56%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

	Members	Teaching Elders
2. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? [cont.]		
c. The PC(USA) should spend more energy working on interfaith, ecumenical bridge-building.	n=453	n=744
Strongly disagree	5%	5%
Disagree	6%	9%
Neither disagree nor agree	28%	27%
Agree.....	44%	36%
Strongly agree	17%	22%

For the following religious knowledge questions, please answer as best you can, without looking the answers up.

[Note: The correct responses for Q3 through Q10 are highlighted in bold. In the actual survey, of course, no parts of these questions were boldfaced.]

3. In the Jewish faith, when does the Sabbath begin?	n=457	n=746
Friday	79%	94%
Saturday	20%	6%
Sunday	1%	0%
4. Is Ramadan . . .	n=456	n=742
A Jewish day of atonement	4%	2%
The Hindu festival of lights	2%	<1%
The Islamic holy month	94%	98%
5. Which of these is the king of gods in ancient Greek mythology?	n=448	n=743
Apollo	5%	4%
Mars	1%	<1%
Zeus	94%	96%
6. What is the name of the holy book of Islam? [tabulated separately]		
7. With which religious tradition is each figure linked?		
a. Joseph Smith	n=456	n=743
Buddhism	0%	0%
Catholicism	1%	<1%
Hinduism.....	<1%	<1%
Judaism	1%	0%
Mormonism	98%	100%
b. Mother Teresa	n=457	n=743
Buddhism	1%	0%
Catholicism	97%	100%
Hinduism.....	2%	<1%
Judaism	0%	0%
Mormonism.....	0%	<1%

		Members	Teaching Elders
7.	With which religious tradition is each figure linked?		
[cont.]			
c.	The Dalai Lama	n=452	n=739
	Buddhism	84%	91%
	Catholicism.....	<1%	<1%
	Hinduism.....	16%	9%
	Judaism.....	0%	<1%
	Mormonism.....	0%	0%
d.	Maimonides	n=387	n=694
	Buddhism.....	8%	4%
	Catholicism.....	2%	0%
	Hinduism.....	37%	20%
	Judaism	52%	75%
	Mormonism.....	2%	<1%
8.	In which religion are Vishnu and Shiva central figures?	n=424	n=730
	Hinduism	88%	97%
	Islam.....	4%	1%
	Taoism.....	8%	2%
9.	What religion do most people in each of the following countries consider themselves?		
a.	India	n=445	n=736
	Buddhist.....	7%	3%
	Christian.....	<1%	0%
	Hindu	92%	96%
	Muslim.....	2%	<1%
b.	Indonesia	n=431	n=722
	Buddhist.....	30%	24%
	Christian.....	4%	2%
	Hindu.....	6%	3%
	Muslim	60%	72%
c.	Pakistan	n=439	n=732
	Buddhist.....	2%	2%
	Christian.....	1%	1%
	Hindu.....	6%	4%
	Muslim	91%	93%
10.	Which of these religions aims at nirvana, the state of being free from suffering?	n=435	n=741
	Buddhism	71%	78%
	Hinduism.....	26%	22%
	Islam.....	3%	1%

Theological Understanding

11.	To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?		
a.	As a church committed to Reformed theology, the PC(USA) must take sin very seriously	n=443	n=743
	Strongly disagree	2%	1%
	Disagree	11%	3%
	Neither disagree nor agree	19%	7%
	Agree.....	50%	45%
	Strongly agree	19%	44%
b.	Confession is a crucial practice in Reformed traditions	n=443	n=743
	Strongly disagree	2%	1%
	Disagree	13%	2%
	Neither disagree nor agree	17%	3%
	Agree.....	44%	44%
	Strongly agree	24%	50%
c.	Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord	n=441	n=740
	Strongly disagree	2%	4%
	Disagree	8%	7%
	Neither disagree nor agree	16%	17%
	Agree.....	29%	28%
	Strongly agree	45%	45%
d.	The Bible cannot be reinterpreted according to the changing circumstances in which we read it	n=444	n=744
	Strongly disagree	26%	36%
	Disagree	34%	36%
	Neither disagree nor agree	12%	9%
	Agree.....	15%	10%
	Strongly agree	13%	9%
e.	The concept of God's grace means that everyone, no matter who they are or what they do, is loved by God	n=444	n=744
	Strongly disagree	1%	2%
	Disagree	1%	3%
	Neither disagree nor agree	2%	3%
	Agree.....	31%	21%
	Strongly agree	66%	71%
12.	Which statement comes closest to your view?		
	God chooses who is to be saved through Jesus Christ.....	n=438	n=729
	People choose Jesus Christ as their Savior	20%	50%
	God saves everyone	46%	15%
	Salvation is an outdated concept.....	28%	29%
		6%	6%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

	Members	Teaching Elders
13. How important, in general, is each of these to you in making everyday decisions as a Christian?		
a. Current friend or family member and his or her advice or example	n=445	n=743
Not at all important	8%	5%
Slightly important	21%	21%
Important.....	48%	46%
Very important.....	22%	28%
No opinion	2%	1%
b. Current pastor or spiritual advisor and his or her teaching or example	n=443	n=743
Not at all important	3%	5%
Slightly important	18%	16%
Important.....	49%	50%
Very important.....	27%	23%
No opinion	2%	6%
c. God's will	n=444	n=745
Not at all important	2%	1%
Slightly important	4%	2%
Important.....	26%	20%
Very important.....	62%	74%
No opinion	6%	4%
d. Jesus Christ's leading through prayer	n=442	n=742
Not at all important	2%	1%
Slightly important	8%	4%
Important.....	35%	26%
Very important.....	53%	66%
No opinion	3%	3%
e. Jesus Christ's teaching, life, or example	n=445	n=744
Not at all important	<1%	<1%
Slightly important	2%	1%
Important.....	23%	13%
Very important.....	73%	83%
No opinion	2%	3%
f. PC(USA) <i>Book of Order</i>	n=443	n=742
Not at all important	25%	22%
Slightly important	39%	47%
Important.....	24%	26%
Very important.....	6%	4%
No opinion	5%	1%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

		Members	Teaching Elders
13.	How important, in general, is each of these to you in making everyday decisions as a Christian?		
[cont.]			
g.	PC(USA) creeds and confessions	n=440	n=738
	Not at all important	13%	7%
	Slightly important	33%	34%
	Important.....	41%	48%
	Very important.....	11%	11%
	No opinion	3%	<1%
h.	Scripture	n=447	n=743
	Not at all important	<1%	<1%
	Slightly important	9%	1%
	Important.....	32%	20%
	Very important.....	56%	76%
	No opinion	3%	3%
i.	The leading of the Holy Spirit	n=444	n=746
	Not at all important	2%	<1%
	Slightly important	4%	1%
	Important.....	25%	15%
	Very important.....	66%	79%
	No opinion	4%	5%
14.	In your opinion, what is distinctive about Reformed/Presbyterian theology?		
	[tabulated separately]		
15.	How important are each of these Reformed/Presbyterian principles to you?		
a.	Calling	n=439	n=746
	Not at all important	3%	<1%
	Slightly important	13%	2%
	Important.....	41%	21%
	Very important.....	37%	76%
	No opinion	6%	<1%
b.	Connectionalism	n=434	n=745
	Not at all important	4%	1%
	Slightly important	14%	9%
	Important.....	33%	36%
	Very important.....	30%	53%
	No opinion	19%	1%
c.	Covenant life	n=428	n=745
	Not at all important	3%	<1%
	Slightly important	16%	5%
	Important.....	41%	41%
	Very important.....	25%	52%
	No opinion	15%	2%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

		Members	Teaching Elders
15.	How important are each of these Reformed/Presbyterian principles to you?		
[cont.]			
d.	Election	n=432	n=745
	Not at all important	14%	17%
	Slightly important	21%	27%
	Important.....	35%	29%
	Very important.....	16%	27%
	No opinion	14%	1%
e.	Grace	n=437	n=746
	Not at all important	1%	0%
	Slightly important	3%	<1%
	Important.....	12%	3%
	Very important.....	82%	95%
	No opinion	2%	2%
f.	Human tendency to idolatry and tyranny	n=434	n=741
	Not at all important	14%	3%
	Slightly important	22%	11%
	Important.....	34%	38%
	Very important.....	19%	46%
	No opinion	10%	2%
g.	Ministers and elders lead the church together	n=438	n=746
	Not at all important	1%	1%
	Slightly important	6%	6%
	Important.....	34%	27%
	Very important.....	58%	66%
	No opinion	1%	<1%
h.	Priesthood of all believers	n=437	n=745
	Not at all important	4%	<1%
	Slightly important	10%	2%
	Important.....	26%	18%
	Very important.....	51%	78%
	No opinion	9%	1%
i.	Promotion of social righteousness	n=437	n=744
	Not at all important	3%	1%
	Slightly important	14%	9%
	Important.....	30%	29%
	Very important.....	49%	60%
	No opinion	5%	2%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

		Members	Teaching Elders
15.	How important are each of these Reformed/Presbyterian principles to you? [cont.]		
j.	Sovereignty of God	n=440	n=744
	Not at all important	<1%	<1%
	Slightly important	3%	3%
	Important.....	20%	10%
	Very important.....	72%	85%
	No opinion	4%	<1%
k.	Stewardship	n=439	n=744
	Not at all important	<1%	<1%
	Slightly important	5%	4%
	Important.....	42%	38%
	Very important.....	52%	57%
	No opinion	1%	<1%
16.	Please elaborate on your response to the question about the importance to you of various Reformed/Presbyterian principles. [tabulated separately]		
17.	To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?		
a.	Church community is essential to life as a Christian	n=446	n=745
	Strongly disagree	<1%	<1%
	Disagree	3%	1%
	Neither disagree nor agree	6%	3%
	Agree.....	48%	38%
	Strongly agree	43%	57%
b.	I feel comfortable sharing my faith with other people	n=444	n=744
	Strongly disagree	1%	<1%
	Disagree	7%	3%
	Neither disagree nor agree	23%	7%
	Agree.....	52%	58%
	Strongly agree	17%	31%
c.	In the realm of values, the final authority about good and bad is the individual	n=440	n=742
	Strongly disagree	25%	41%
	Disagree	43%	45%
	Neither disagree nor agree	20%	12%
	Agree.....	11%	3%
	Strongly agree	3%	<1%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

	Members	Teaching Elders
17. To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? [cont.]		
d. In the realm of values, the final authority about good and bad is the Scriptures	n=443	n=743
Strongly disagree	4%	3%
Disagree	15%	15%
Neither disagree nor agree	31%	25%
Agree.....	35%	38%
Strongly agree	15%	19%
e. It is important to share my faith with other people	n=446	n=742
Strongly disagree	1%	<1%
Disagree	5%	2%
Neither disagree nor agree	23%	10%
Agree.....	54%	60%
Strongly agree	18%	28%
f. Jesus was born of a virgin	n=446	n=744
Strongly disagree	6%	7%
Disagree	6%	6%
Neither disagree nor agree	33%	31%
Agree.....	28%	30%
Strongly agree	28%	26%
18. The 222 nd General Assembly (2016) in Portland, Oregon, approved changes in the <i>Directory for Worship</i> , which will not go to presbyteries for approval. In one of these changes, the directory would no longer specify Baptism as a requirement for taking communion in PC(USA) congregations, but instead would explain that the unbaptized who wish to take communion should also be invited to be baptized subsequently.		
Do you affirm that those who are not baptized should be received and fed at the Lord’s Table, then invited into deeper relationship with Christ through Baptism?	n=445	n=743
Yes, definitely	53%	59%
Yes, possibly	26%	23%
No	11%	13%
Not sure.....	11%	5%
19. In your opinion, what does this say about the relationship of Baptism to the Lord’s Table? [tabulated separately]		
20. Another pending addition to the <i>Directory for Worship</i> describes worship as a contextual, cross-cultural, transcultural, countercultural, and intercultural event, and invites PC(USA) congregations to pray and sing with the church around the world. How important do you believe it is to consider culture when celebrating or planning worship?	n=447	n=744
Not at all important	4%	1%
Slightly important	17%	11%
Important.....	40%	35%
Very important	36%	51%
No opinion	3%	1%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

Vocational Discernment

21.	To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements?		
a.	God elects us for service, not just for salvation	n=444	n=743
	Strongly disagree	1%	1%
	Disagree	2%	2%
	Neither disagree nor agree	8%	4%
	Agree.....	54%	31%
	Strongly agree	35%	63%
b.	I have tried to pursue a vocation that best uses the talents and gifts God has given me	n=439	n=743
	Strongly disagree	<1%	1%
	Disagree	3%	<1%
	Neither disagree nor agree	13%	2%
	Agree.....	49%	29%
	Strongly agree	35%	69%
c.	My entire life's work is a calling to honor and glorify God	n=438	n=742
	Strongly disagree	1%	<1%
	Disagree	8%	1%
	Neither disagree nor agree	31%	4%
	Agree.....	35%	33%
	Strongly agree	25%	62%
d.	I don't think my work has anything to do with my faith	n=439	n=743
	Strongly disagree	67%	84%
	Disagree	19%	14%
	Neither disagree nor agree	13%	1%
	Agree.....	1%	1%
	Strongly agree	1%	1%
22.	Which of the following would you consider part of your vocation? (Select <i>all</i> that apply.)		
		n=203	n=293
	My job.....	74%	85%
	My (other) role(s) in my congregation.....	35%	51%
	My engagement with the mission of the Church	27%	55%
	My service to my family	45%	53%
	My interactions with friends, acquaintances, and strangers.....	41%	54%
	My volunteer work.....	40%	53%
	Stewardship of my time, money, and talents	43%	55%
	The general commands for all Christians (belief and obedience).....	28%	45%
	The gifts, abilities, and interests that God has given me.....	44%	52%
	All of these are part of my vocation.....	28%	57%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

	Members	Teaching Elders
23. Have you ever taken any of the following steps, at any point in your life, to better discern your vocation? (Select <i>all</i> that apply.)		
	n=252	n=605
Explored possible vocational callings through internships, volunteer work, or job shadowing	.73%	91%
Participated in personal, spiritual, or career counseling	18%	28%
Read one or more books, articles, etc. about vocational discernment	18%	27%
Spent intentional time in prayer or Bible study about your vocation	16%	31%
Talked with a pastor or spiritual elder about your vocation	10%	32%
Talked with a personal mentor, family member, or friend about your vocation	25%	29%
Talked with a professional mentor about your vocation	8%	21%
Taken a class on vocational discernment	2%	9%
Taken a personality test, a spiritual gifts inventory, or a skills/abilities/interests test	30%	33%
24. How often would you say you feel guided by God in the midst of daily activities?		
	n=357	n=638
Never or almost never	3%	1%
Once in a while	15%	4%
Some days	21%	16%
Most days	24%	26%
Every day	20%	26%
Many times a day	15%	26%
Don't know	3%	9%
25. Please use the space below for any additional comments about interfaith relations, theology, or your vocation.		
[tabulated separately]		

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to either rounding or the ability to select more than one option
n = number of respondents who replied to this question

**Appendix B: Members' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Open-Ended Question on the Distinctiveness of
Reformed/Presbyterian Theology**

Q-14: In your opinion, what is distinctive about Reformed/Presbyterian theology?

?
?
[I don't know how to answer this!]
1) Salvation by Grace through faith. 2) Seeking to understand and be understood while knowing we cannot ever completely understand. 3) Commitment to the priesthood of all believers.
1. through Jesus Christ we believe in the basic sovereignty of God and His love for us and direction of our lives. 2. The importance of inclusion - of diversity in those who will have a place in God's kingdom.
A person's salvation is "sola gratia" by the Grace of God alone
A strong movement to being open to all faiths and beliefs of one God through many religions.
Acceptance
Accepting of people of different faiths.
accepts people
All of salvation's work is on God through the Son, Jesus Christ.
all people are welcomed by Presbyterians
Allowing for differing interpretations and dissent
Allowing women in leadership positions, belief in the Scripture and Jesus' teachings as a guiding principle, looking to acting in the world in line with Christian teachings, and belief in one triune God.
Always reforming
always reforming
Always reforming
Always reforming understanding of theology and how God works in the world today.
Always reforming. Love with no boundaries
Always reforming. Open to different ideas of faith through study and prayer
An apologetic belief that Jesus, Son of God, was born of a virgin, suffered, died and rose again. The Holy Spirit dwells in me to complete the mystery of a triune God.
an emphasis on the greatness, or sovereignty of God, a unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ, a commitment to lifelong learning.
Availability of Grace all are known & loved by God
Being more open to the world around us. Thinking outside of the box.
Being saved by God's grace
Being saved by grace for good works

Being willing to accept change as our world changes. Continue as a people to have regular church attendance. Bible reading, prayer and participate in church and community activities. Being informed of Christian work around the world and supportive of these efforts.
Belief in the trinity and belief in faith Jesus Christ as our savior
Bible based beliefs/actions
<u>Choice</u> . One can disagree (agreeably!) on anything without any thought of being excommunicated
Communion for all who proclaim Jesus as lord. Baptism is a public acknowledgment of being chosen/called by name by God. ALL are welcome.
Concept of mutual forbearance on matters other than essentials Calling for both salvation and service Interpretation of scripture in light of the entirety of scripture, acknowledging the effects of historical and cultural context
Congregational decision-making
Demonstrates the evolving theology of the 20th and 21st century.
Devalued dogma with a very structured system of theology
Different
Discernment through group thinking, particularly through a session that believes in the process
Distinctive compared to other religions - our faith is based on a specific set of historical facts. If those historical events did not happen, Christianity is false. Distinctive compared to other Christian denominations - God elects who he will and we cannot do anything to earn salvation.
Doctrines of election & God's sovereignty, total depravity of human beings, God's power to transform sinners into saints through the Holy Spirit in us. Sufficiency of the work, life and death of Jesus Christ for our redemption
Don't know enough about them
Don't really know
Each individual can deal in their way with God.
Each person of the Trinity has a distinct personal relationship directly with me. God does not change - His Word is reliable and the same in Jesus and in scripture.
Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda.
Education and constant questioning
Emphasis on God's sovereignty and irresistible grace
emphasis on God's sovereignty, grace, and the need for constant reformation back to the Word of God
Emphasis on grace
emphasis on grace alone
Emphasis on sin rather than grace and forgiveness.
Emphasis on the Sovereignty of God and salvation through grace.
Equality and democracy. I cannot earn my own salvation or be responsible for someone else's. Worshipping in spirit and truth avoiding idolatry or vanity. Studying scripture not for literal history but inspiration.
Evangelical, fundamentalist beliefs, literal bible interpretations today
Everyone can interpret Scripture independent. However, this allows for apostasy such as in the PCUSA. In the Orthodox church holy tradition is considered along with Scripture. This is the teachings and lives of the saints and martyrs of the church.

Faith
Faith based.
flexibility to incorporate modern issues and approaches to knowing the truth
Focus on context in understanding rather than literalism
Focus on God's sovereign acts of grace, in his reaching out to us, and our gratitude in response.
Focus on learning, teaching and the interpretation of scripture through the lens of society in the book of confessions.
Focus on the sovereignty of God
Following Jesus's teaching is most important - those who do covenant do much wrong. We have well written choices to keep us on the right track
Freedom to study and understand our faith without imposition of another's ideas or views.
gift of grace and grace alone, no need to earn God's grace
God alone is lord of the conscience. Reformed, and always reforming.
God is accessible and the relationship is direct.
God is ever changing, therefore, my faith and beliefs will also change over time as I study, practice, and grow.
God is good and forgiving. Reading the bible is important.
God loves all. God sent Jesus to die for our sins. God's Grace gives us comfort in knowing we are saved. The choice is ours. Once saved, always saved. We are predestined from the beginning of time.
God loves us no matter what. The messages of scripture can be reinterpreted in the light of the times we live in for its guidance for living each new day.
God saves everyone, even before they are able to acknowledge God's salvation.
God, not man, is the first mover.
God's continuing action among people.
God's Grace
God's grace
God's grace and his involvement in our lives rather than focusing on sin.
God's grace and love of everyone.
God's grace is extended to the covenant community of believers
God's grace is freely given, and not earned. God is still and ever creating and present.
God's grace means everyone is loved by God
God's grace welcomes all
God's grace. Connectionalism. Priesthood of all believers. Calling
God's incredible Grace should be responded to with gratitude in the form of loving God by loving people.
God's sovereignty and grace
Grace
Grace
Grace
Grace alone and priesthood of all believers
Grace and predestination
Grace cannot be earned, cannot be bought and is given by God.

Grace freely given
Grace is an important part of it.
Grace through faith
Grow without earning it.
Have not bothered to study it to determine. Most 'reformed' theology usually takes on a more liberal direction which I oppose.
Honesty, open dialogue and the freedom to examine the meaning of faith and life.
Hopefully its sensibility. We live on one planet. We are all brothers and sisters. We must learn to get along and take care of the planet God gave us. We need a church that can help us with this mission.
Humans have been gifted with reason, with which we should discern God and chose to follow him.
I am not a theological scholar with that type of basis on which to form an opinion. I chose this tradition because it does not emphasize adhering to rigid sets of rules. Rather, it seems to direct us to act by applying the principles of Christianity and prayerfulness. Within this construct, I can seek the presence of God in my life. Insofar as my understanding of God has changed as I have aged and as society exposed new areas of understanding, I have been able to revise and grow my faith. This tradition allows for this, and I feel at home here because of it.
I am not knowledgeable enough about Reformed/Presbyterian theology to have an opinion.
I am not sure.
I attend both PC USA and PCA churches and while a member PCUSA I think they are becoming too liberal.....
I believe that it allows individuals the opportunities to serve the church in many different ways.
I do love the order and ardor of Presbyterians and the grace we extend to others, even though we believe differently.
I don't know
I don't know
I don't really know
I don't understand reform theology
I feel it demands personal responsibility from us when it comes to making faith decisions.
I find that I am drawn to the fact that the Presbyterian theology tend to derive meaning and teaching from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. I have been to many catholic services and other religious services and tend to grimace at the brimstone and fire lectures. I am happy to be included in a church that have teaches me to go out into the world and live my life to best represent my faith. I am not shoving my religious view down anyone's throat but rather share my experiences and express the love and faith I found in my God.
I have no idea
I really don't know!

I think the emphasis on the sovereignty of God and salvation by grace. I must say my real answer to who chooses who is a both/and. We can only be saved because God chooses to save us, but I believe that in God's sovereignty God makes room for our free will to choose to give our lives to God in and through Jesus Christ. Election is good news that God has taken the first initiative in reconciliation. And it is all by grace. My daughter was told by someone of a different tradition that the reformed emphasis on grace leads to a nonchalant attitude toward obedience. I said it is all grace, 24/7. Even the will to obey. God is doing it all because that's how much God loves us. And when you really start to absorb the height, depth, and breadth of such love, you want to please God and start trusting that God might know what God is talking about.
I'm a Presbyterian in transition with respect to Reformed theology. I am more interested in following the example of Jesus Christ. Connectionalism and social justice for all, no exceptions are very important to me.
I'm not sure I truly understand the term 'reformed Presbyterian'. (Embarrassed to say this - and <u>determined</u> to learn <u>immediately</u>)
Importance of confession
In comparison to what? other religions or other denominations? Centrality of The Bible as the revelation of God and his plan. Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God and means of redemption between God and humanity.
Inclusive nature - concern with present world as well as "future".
inclusiveness and its scholarship
Inclusiveness. Ministering to all regardless of their beliefs
Inclusiveness. Nonjudgmental outlook on society.
It challenges people to THINK and not follow blindly words spoken from the pulpit which may consider the Bible inerrant. It is open TO ALL, no matter the socioeconomics, gender, sexual identity, etc.
It embodies a world and life view which is helpful in daily life and thinking.
It focuses on Grace and loving each other, not rigid strictures that separate people from each other. When issues come up like accepting gays we have to re-form our ideas and love them as God does.
It has released us so that each Presbyterian can decide for himself what he truly believes & not be subject to criticism
It is always open to change.
It is constantly changing as our culture changes
It is ever changing and adapting.
It is grounded in Christs teaching of Love God / Love neighbor which is an eternal truth, but it is also, paradoxically, "always reforming" because the world is a changing place
It is less impaired by episcopal structure.
It is not old testament based and is inclusive
It is okay for us to hold different views but we understand that Jesus is the one answer and we just need to work to understand and respond to his love and guidance
It provides a framework for living. It is not dogmatic.
It's distinctive by the fact that it can be interpreted in a lot of different ways that connect to current events.
Its roots in Calvinistic understanding

It's sensitivity to reforming itself as led by the Holy Spirit into an understanding of the times and situations with which we are confronted.
Jesus is central and everything is in order.
Jesus is risen. He has overcome sin and death. My sin. My death. He loved me enough to do that. He is risen.
Justification by faith and salvation by grace
Key to our beliefs/policies
Knowing that you are already pardoned for your sins
Knowing we do not have to work for the love of God we are liberated to go into the world doing the reconciling work of God. 12. Which statement comes closest to your view? God chooses who is to be saved through Jesus Christ and (not or) God saves everyone. 'We have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.' In the fullness of time, all things in heaven and on earth will be gathered together in Christ. God's grace is beyond all understanding.
Knowledge about what we believe, theology centered on what the Bible says even when it seems illogical.
Lack of ritual in worship
Less emphasis on structure & formality
Let us apply the bible according to our times, not forgetting the basic, and adapting to the times we are living.
Local church led by elders; connected through the presbyteries.
Loving and caring for one another and others physically, emotionally, and spiritually; teaching more than preaching at our own and others, sharing the true good news
Making God's word (the Bible) accessible to everyone; it's not just for clergy. It focuses on God's saving grace through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It proclaims God's active involvement in history and life today.
Man's direct relationship with our Lord, undeserved grace, and all that I do is in response to God's call
Many branches of Christianity espouse a contract kind of relationship. Ex. If you do this, then God will do this. But in Reformed tradition we have a covenant kind of relationship. Ex. Because God loves us and has done something for us in Jesus, therefore, we may respond.
Many nations will grow toward God's blessings
Ministry of all, public confession and after that, a great deal of discord. The concepts of Sin and Confession are not owned by Reformed or Presby theology.
My church is my spiritual home and very important to me!
N/A
NA
No comment
No opinion
No preaching hell and damnation God's unconditional grace is for everyone, not just the 'saved.' Acceptance of others' beliefs. Those beliefs are 'different,' not necessarily 'wrong.'
No room for hatred, arrogance
No thoughts
Not as bat shit crazy as most religions
Not as strict?
Not even sure what it is. Jesus Christ leads me each day, so I don't pay any attention to these silly terms.

Not much fundamental. All Christians need to work together.
Not rigid and stuck in 'how its always been done'. Tradition is good but only if there is meaning behind it.
Not Sure
Not sure
Not sure
Not sure
Not sure
Not sure anymore - We seem to be moving away from Biblical truths
Omnipotent God leading to conclusion of predestination
Open mindedness
open to other interpretations of scripture, open to values found in other religions
Openness, awareness, and understanding
Origins in Calvin; a model of church organization and leadership
Our belief in grace, and in being the elect.
Our commitment to always being open to God's voice and our willingness to be constantly reforming. Our emphasis on lay and clergy being equal is an important distinction as well.
Our Confessions; the sovereignty of God, priesthood of all believers
Our focus on a redeeming triune God who is wrathful but full of grace.
Our system of governance Openness, acceptance
Our worship and running of the church is done together as a community and the importance of helping others, doing good service to those that need help.
Participatory nature of Presbyterianism
People study the scripture and are informed by the teachings of Calvin and Knox as they seek to understand and follow Jesus.
Personal and direct access to God.
Placing the Bible in its historical context
Polity
Polity; that the Elders through Session manage the church for Jesus Christ
Positive and uplifting. Joyful. Celebration of God's love....for all....even non-Christians.
PRAYER AND THE GRACE FO GOD IS FOR ALL
Predestination
Predestination.
Reformed and always reforming Social justice
reformed and ALWAYS reforming- that we take scholarship seriously- that we are educated and respectful of all faiths
Reformed and always reforming. To me this means I should be open to new thoughts, ways, and people. Easier said than done. But I hope and pray that with God's help that my life will be an example of Christian love daily
Reformed and always reforming. It changes as led by Holy Spirit.
Reformed and always reforming. Reliance upon interpretation of Scripture by means of individual discernment.
Reformed and always reforming; ability of the church to adapt to culture changes in the world

Reformed and reforming
reformed has become reforming!
Reformed I view as 'not fixed on dogma'. Presbyterian I view as a form of communal government, that mixes, guides, and filters a 4-dimensional flow of information and being.
Reformed theology is not wedded to strict interpretations of previous centuries. While retaining our received wisdom, it is free to follow where the God who 'was, is and will be' is leading us in new directions and continually revealing Godself to us.
Reformed theology provides for a priesthood of all believers. We are all recipients of his salvation and Grace. It is freely given and not "earned".
Reformed theology to me gives each person room to use their conscience in their interpretation of their. Beliefs. Guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit to work out our faith. Reformed and ever Reforming.
Reformed, always reforming
Reformed/Presbyterian theology is distinctive to me in terms of equalitarianism; from the perspective of church leadership (elders & ministers) to the acceptance fo all believers, Presbyterian theology encompasses a position of inclusion.
Reformed: The direct line to God Presbyterian: Not so distinctive from others.
Regeneration is the work of Jesus Christ alone (as applied by the Holy Spirit), not the cooperation of humans and God and not the result of humans first meeting a condition (like faith) before regeneration takes place.
Reinterpretation of scripture with changing circumstances & times
Relating how cultural relevance then and now relate. How many scriptures are miss interpreted to be used against todays culture (masturbation) ie.
relies on a personal relationship with God and can be always changing due to circumstances and new knowledge.
Removes rigidity...ever reforming is being open to letting God not man lead me....we humans don't know everything though we sometimes act like we do.
Role of the laity
Salvation by grace and priesthood of all believers
Salvation by grace through faith!
Salvation comes through Christ alone.
Salvation is freely extended through God's grace.
Salvation is from grace, not earned; priesthood of all believers in Christ
salvation through grace
Save by grace, always reforming
Saved by God's Grace
Saved by grace not works.
Scripture as sole authority. Priesthood of all believers. Christ chooses me, not vice versa.
scripture+reason+social justice+spirit
Self governing of churches. Belief we can access trinity directly
SHOULD BE reforming constantly

Sound basis in scripture and confessions, BUT reformed always reforming. Decent and orderly church polity and worship. Ability to connect through presbyteries etc. dialogue and reform through Gen Assembly. Welcoming policies toward gay ordination, same gender marriage. Orientation toward justice issues, not blind allegiance to scripture or personal salvation and conformity of views. Presbyterians do not park their brains at church door. Diversity within PCUSA, Koreans, African Americans, Hispanics, sister churches in Cuba. Participation with Muslims, Jews. Strong Pres Women and supergreat new hymnbook!!! Hymnbook terrific balance of old, contemporary
Sovereignty of God Grace is a gift from God and not a certainty Human tendency to idolatry and tyranny
Sovereignty of God / Grandeur & Misery of Humankind / Uniqueness of Jesus Christ / Church as a missional-covenant community / Holy Spirit / Final Consummation / Faith-Hope Love
Sovereignty of God grace of God despite human frailty
Sovereignty of God, Grace Alone, Faith Alone Scripture Alone; Shared leadership/parity;
Sovereignty of God. Reality of sin & human frailty. Jesus Christ = savior of world & head of Church. Scripture as unique, authoritative witness to Christ. Leadership by councils of the spiritually mature; skepticism of individual human authorities. Emphasis on each member's gifts and calling/vocation to serve within the Body of Christ. Responsibility to live out that vocation in society and to be a good steward/manager of God's resources entrusted to the Christian. Social activism/engagement - as opposed to cloistered living. Two sacraments: baptism, Lord's Supper.
Teaches both the heart and the mind
That each person derives his own interpretation of the Bible through his own reading of scripture
That God chooses those who are saved. We don't choose to believe.
That in order to be saved, all we need to do is ask. There is no need to do good works, although that is highly recommended.
That it is a theology that has room for doubt, for questions, and for growth through those. As a denomination that places emphasis on education and learning, it is a place where all can push the boundaries of their faith and the faith of their fellow Christians in a safe, nurturing environment that sees the value in the struggle of growth.
That it is bible based. Sermons should be based on Scripture and how it still pertains today.
That it is reformed.
That Jesus is the head of the church. We are also forming to do his work. That we strongly believe that in a group the Holy Spirit moves us to the will of God.
That Scripture is God's Word revealed, constantly revealing. We are saved by grace through faith; we can't earn our salvation.
That the Bible is the authoritative word of God, but it was written by men. Though inspired by God, the Bible contains all of the fear, hypocrisy and traditions at the time it was written. Because man is flawed, therefore, the Bible has to be interpreted with knowledge and discernment. Ultimately, it comes down to grace. Our faith is good, but faith without good works is empty. Grace from the triune God and our seeking truth and doing good is what I find distinctive. The polity plays a big part, as well.
that the people lead the church
That though we are thoroughly depraved because of our sin, Jesus loved us so much that He died for our sins on the cross and rose again in heaven at our Father's right hand. Along with the Holy Spirit, they guide us in our lives as we seek to follow Jesus on this earth.
That we are a reformed church & always reforming

That we are all born into sin. And forgiveness comes through the Holy Trinity.
That we are constantly reforming and evolving
That we are saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ who died for our sins. That we are all part of the priesthood of believers and can come directly to God through prayer and in worship with our fellow believers. That we are called through worship to go out into the world to spread the Good News about Jesus Christ, and to demonstrate the Kingdom of God here on earth.
That we depend on the grace of God for our salvation, the Holy Trinity is at work in our lives, and the following of the Scriptures as a guidebook
That we have a direct relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
The 5 solas, the TULIP doctrines, and especially 'reforming and always reforming according to the Word of God.'
The ability to continually study, and reflect to discern the meaning of the scriptures in this time and place.
The ability to question.
The 'anything in moderation' mentality of Presbyterians
The Bible as inspired word of God. We are saved by grace alone. God is sovereign.
The Bible as the infallible rule of faith and practice.
The Book of Confessions
The Book of Order as our guide.
The call to witness in the world to justice, love, peace; to be engaged in the world; to study scripture
The centrality of God. Our knowledge of God through the life of Jesus. The importance of the mind (and education) as well as the feelings in our faith. The importance of putting faith into action, especially in addressing the world's needs.
The church is a corporation ruled by church officials and the members of the church for the betterment of all
The concept of God's grace
The concept of Grace
The concept of predestination.
The concept of the individual being responsible for their own choices: freedom to choose.
The concept of the priesthood of all believers (not unique to Presbyterians, but still important to me), the PC(USA) leadership structure and philosophy, and the focus on social justice.
The concept of the trinity.
The concepts of election and irresistible grace.
The continual search for more personal understanding of God
the difference between the Reformed Presbyterian theology and PCA theology is the belief of the scripture as the word of God
The distinctive theology of the PC is the educated search into the context of what was going on at the time when the scripture was written. Although inspired by God, scripture is limited by man's understanding, leading to misinterpretation of God's word by exclusion instead of LOVE & Grace.
The educational aspect
The egalitarian approach to leadership and participation in worship
the election of believers

The emphasis on learning about other faith traditions, building bridges with other faith traditions. Bible study, community involvement, strong historical support for public education and social justice.
The emphasis on the sovereignty of God.
The emphasis upon God's sovereignty and our utter dependence upon His grace. The PCUSA GA declared the Book of Confessions null and void in Detroit. I have significant qualms about Belhar. Otherwise I would have ranked it 'important' though Scripture is of prime importance. The Holy Spirit leads only according to Scripture - any other leading is from some other spirit. The BOO is no longer consistent with Scripture.
The fact that it is reformed and continues to reform in the context of human progress.
The fact that we believe that we are reformed and are still reforming. It encourages people to think, question and grow.
The five Sola's.
The form of government and the traditional liturgy
The Grace of God is for <u>all</u> ! God chooses us! The Trinity and the importance of all three.
The hierarchy of leadership
The Holy dinner and we focus on Jesus and the Holy spirit.
The idea of reformed and continually reforming.
The idea that 'reformed' is an ongoing event.
The importance of studying and interpreting Scripture for its relevance to today's world.
The intellectual intensity and seriousness with which it tries to understand Christian teachings and apply Christianity to life. It doesn't rest on simplistic absolutes or vague generalisms.
The love of God through the Holy Spirit, belief of Jesus Christ as the Savior
The main thing I understand about Reformed / Pres. Is that the bible is standard for belief & practice
the openness to questions, discussion, thoughtful consideration
The opportunities to discuss theological issues with others .
The order and organization of the church and its government seem to make it unique among other Christian religions. When folks confess that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior and trust in Him, and are willing to support the church wherever they are, then they are welcomed in the PC(USA). There are no hoops to jump through, no 'dues' to pay, no 'works' to be done prior to membership. Once a member, they are invited to be good stewards of the time and talent and financial resources that God has blessed them with. It is hoped this stewardship would be done through the church.
The possibility of interpreting for oneself a path to God and God's leading in one's life.
The priesthood of all believers
The priesthood of all believers, we are all called to spread the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ not just the ordained clergy. And we are responsible for praying for and on behalf of others.
The quest for growth and change is part of it ('reformed and reforming'). There is a good balance between guidance of the church community and individual conscience. There is room for differences of opinion and practice, even as we worship and work together. There is search for truth with sincere reliance on scripture while accepting the presence of uncertainty and ambiguity. Using your brain along with your faith is honored. There is trust that God is working in our work.
The recognition that evil is a reality and the options for salvation are provided

The respect shown to individual thinking
The role of God the Father, 'reformed and reforming'
The sacraments of baptism and communion are important to me.
The sovereignty of God.
the teaching of God's Grace
The theology is not so distinctive as it once was. Many Presbyterians do not believe in predestination as in the past. It is the form of governance and the willingness to accept continued reform that are important.
The Triune God has acted for the reconciliation of humanity and by grace has entered human history to complete reconciliation. By the Spirit, we are awakened to the grace of God to be restored to relation with the Father through the mediation of the Son. The church lives as a body led by its head, Jesus Christ. The Bible is its witness to the One who is the Address of God to us. Through the work of the local church, we are nurtured into the life of God to share God's fellowship and mission in the world.
The understanding of God's unlimited sovereignty, and God's grace which is the only way that we can be saved.
Theologically educated teaching elders Emphasis on an educated laity
There is a certain emphasis on learning and growth. The phrase 'reformed and ever reforming' is important to me and helps me explain Reformed theology.
There is an openness to all people. That comes from the teachings of Christ. Kindness and Love are given freely and always a helping hand ready. And a genuine concern for God's children.
There is room for different viewpoints as long as we agree on our core beliefs. & Ever changing, ever growing.
They are same.
This theology takes the word of God very seriously as well as sin, salvation, the Holy Spirit, scriptural obedience and love. The present tendency to downplay the clear teaching of scripture in order to conform to the popular culture (abortion, homosexuality, etc.) are clearly against the teaching of the word of God.
Tolerance and inclusiveness.
Too Liberal
TULIP
Very open to accepting and loving all people
We are allowed to agree to disagree on various issues, although I think today's society is trying to take that away. Nowadays, if you disagree with someone, you're labeled a 'hater' and they may even want to excommunicate you. I also think it's distinctive that women can hold all leadership positions. Predestination is also distinctive.
We are always reforming to the times and culture around us and in the world.
We are loved unconditionally by our Creator. That we are able to experience the love and forgiveness of God directly, without mediation of a priest. We are expected to reflect God's love on all humanity and all creation.
We are open to changing interpretations of scriptures and the continuing unfolding of knowledge of the universe informing our theology
We are reflective and consider current conditions and behaviors in forming belief statements that uphold Christian beliefs and standards.
We are reformed and ALWAYS REFORMING. God has not stopped speaking to us and I feel that our theology has the potential for us to keep listening and evolving.

We are saved by grace alone.
We are saved by grace through faith.
We are saved through the grace of (God) (Jesus Christ dying for our sins)
We believe that all people deserve to have a seat at the Table, but we still honor Jesus Christ as our host.
We did not choose God, but God chose us.
We follow our Christian faith and help others to find their way to Jesus Christ. We also accept other faiths as legitimate expressions of faith and try to both learn and teach in a accepting interfaith process.
we have free will we are forgiven, we are saved by grace - not by anything we can do, we welcome all.
We interpret the Bible based on current times
We're saved by our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We are not saved by good works alone.
We reform our theological understanding and spiritual/ministry practice with new information and experience. In our connections system, our commitment to one another transcends differences in belief.
We should be concerned about peace and social justice.
Welcoming to all believers
Well, we have TULIP, with which I struggle to a certain degree. We have the brilliance and model of Calvin, but I like the theology of other reformers too (Wesley, for example). Presbyterians (PCUSA) have a solid emphasis on the importance of growth and understanding of scripture through the rigor of study, something I have found to be less true in other protestant expressions of faith. This is one of the things that keeps me Presbyterian (rather than, say, TULIP).
We're open to other opinions.
Willingness to continue to learn how God reveals him/herself to us
Wow - that's a pretty small space for such a big question! -Openness to new inspiration from Holy Spirit about Bible. Recognition of human frailties so power is divided, with no "papal infallibility" equivalent
You are encouraged to have a personal relationship with Jesus rather than having clergy in position between us. We pray directly to God &* confess directly, not with a clergy intermediary. Personal Bible Study is encouraged. No empty rituals.

**Appendix C: Teaching Elders' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Open-Ended Question on the Distinctiveness of
Reformed/Presbyterian Theology**

Q-14: In your opinion, what is distinctive about Reformed/Presbyterian theology?

We are saved by grace through faith and the centrality of Jesus work on the cross and his resurrection.
God gave us capacity to faith, but it includes (and in no way excludes) thinking, questioning and seeking.
Grace God's Sovereignty
The sovereignty of God
Emphasis on God's sovereignty and grace, the centrality of Christ and a high view of Scripture
That in theory it is always being reformed, always open to change and the guidance of the Holy Spirit
Emphasis on authority of Holy Scripture and Lordship of Christ
Reformed- focus on God's plan and power to enact it in the world Presbyterian- unique governance style that takes human nature into account to avoid authoritarianism or the rule of the many
God alone is Lord of the conscience and the priesthood of all believers.
The sovereignty of God, covenant theology, TULIP, grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ alone, for God's glory alone.
Distinctive from other religions: Christ as lord and savior, humans as created and sinful, bible as witness to god's revelation. Distinctive from other Christian traditions: unconditional election, emphasis on God's sovereignty, priesthood of all believers, church is a continuation and fulfillment of OT people of God, tradition and church being renewed by the Word, the marks of the church, infant baptism, real spiritual presence of Christ in communion, presence of Christ through preaching event and through the practice of discipline.
God's providence, covenant theology
It's primary emphasis on the Word of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and in the incarnation of Jesus Christ; its affirmation of salvation by grace alone, through faith, not dependent upon works. *note that the earlier question about 'grace' meaning the God loves everyone...grace and love are instrumentally different. Does God love all? Absolutely. But grace is a gift...given BECAUSE of love. Imo, a poorly-worded question. God loves because of God's character and nature. Grace is an expression of that love, not equivalent to it.
High view of the goodness of creation and the sovereignty of God. Strong sense that God is made known through nature. Sense that human goals are not the measure of God's will for all creatures. Think of sin as idolatry (granting something else the status of ultimacy in our lives).
Centrality of Scripture as guided by the Holy Spirit.
An emphasis on grace and the idea that a tradition of thoughtful discernment and a community of shared practice are important.

A Priesthood of all believers, with personal experience and interpretation tested and refined within the community of faith coupled with a deep engagement between scripture (giving due consideration to context and ancient cultural biases) and culture. Reformed and always being reformed by the Holy Spirit, we approach the test of faith and discernment with gratitude and humility, always seeking to follow Christ and setting the law of Love and the great commission as our canons within the Canon. We are a big tent faith, where hospitality and grace compete with, but should never succumb to domination by, doctrine and orthodoxy, which are human constructs however faithfully they are developed. Increasingly, post-modern reformers are moving away from centuries of elaborate systematic theologies and returning to simple basic principles reflected in Jesus life and ministry and the prophetic traditions that clearly shaped him. Reformed people do not check our brains at the door, but enjoy the conversation between observed life--including the sciences--on one hand and scripture and tradition on the other. We are at our best when we are less concerned about what we or others are 'saved from' and concentrate on what we are 'saved for'. We reject plagiarism, but also accept responsibility to grow in faith and obedience to the law of love.
All things represented by the Nicene & Apostles Creeds.
Grace, priesthood of all believers, Presbyterian polity
Power goes both ways: Decisions at the top are endorsed by Presbytery, and presbyteries can seek the G.A. and Synods for help.
reformed and always reforming
God's sovereignty. Our response to God's action (grace, salvation, love) in service to others.
Priesthood of all believers Connectional polity
The Body of Christ seeking to be a place where all are welcome and self choosing of leadership.
5 Solas
It seems less distinctive from others than I used to think it was. I see more similarities between Presbyterian than I do differences (between Christian denominations - not between Christianity and other faiths.) I see Christians of all stripes putting an emphasis on the sovereignty of God, authority of Scripture, and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, for example.
Sovereignty of God Church reformed, always being reformed.
Emphasis on God's grace
The idea that we are always being reformed by the Holy Spirit - and therefore may realize from time to time that we need to change our practice or opinion. It is also fairly distinctive that our polity requires that we do almost all things by group (committee, governing body, congregation, etc.), which I interpret as a strong theological statement of community.
Predestination and value upon grace above works.
We believe in the Triune God - Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Salvation is by God's grace not by any works that we have done. The love of God, faith and salvation are gifts from God. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and has all that is necessary for our salvation. We cannot understand God's Word except by the help of the Holy Spirit.
Priesthood of all believers Polity structure Emphasis on learning Emphasis on constant reformation
Sovereignty of God Total depravity
Emotionally informed. Rationally formed. Consistent with Biblical teachings.
Our communal interpretation of scripture in light of current circumstances, tradition, prayer and humility.

The emphasis on God's will and love
The reformed understanding of human depravity/sin reminds us that neither the church nor the Christian community is to be glorified but God. We are simultaneously sinners and saved, who need continual conversion; and this should mean that we stand in solidarity with all of humanity rather than seeing ourselves as set apart.
성경 말씀을 삶의 기준으로 삼는다. [Make the Bible a standard of living.]
God reaches out to us. God acts first to love us. Transformation of individual and society happens in this world and time.
God's Sovereignty and his grace
Who gets to participate - by which I mean, everyone gets to participate. Reformed theology has a strong historical focus on each person's responsibility to interpret Scripture for themselves, as part of an interpreting community. The priesthood of all believers is also crucial - everyone is equally responsible for following Jesus as disciples. We also have a strong history of direct democracy and representational democracy, whereby the assumption is that the Holy Spirit moves in the community and the community moves in response, rather than more common Christian authoritarianism.
The concept of God's Grace and our faith. God's Sovereignty.
Grace
Guilt. Grace. Gratitude. Calvinian. Incredible history
To lift scripture up as an authority over tradition.
Grace of God and salvation through Jesus Christ.
being a place of moral discourse; taking into consideration the culture and history as scripture is understood and interpreted; Jesus is a living God and therefore present in newness as the Holy Spirit guides us
God is sovereign over all. We have all fallen short of God's best intention and desire for us and we are in need of God's love and grace. We are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God, sanctifying us in our faith journey and making us more like Christ. We are gifted and called to serve God as part of the Body of Christ. We are called into community and called to demonstrate the richness of God's intention for all of humanity in the way that we love and serve one another. We are called to love God with our whole selves: body, mind, and spirit. As part of God's majestic creation we are called to be good stewards of this earth, its resources, and one another. We are shaped to be a servant people, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and ready to lay down our lives in service to our neighbor.
The emphasis on God's grace, sanctity of the Scriptures, and the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit.
emphasis on grace and Priesthood of all believers
Its history.
Our understanding that we are called and saved by God, through Jesus, and that every individual person can have a personal relationship with God without any human intermediary.
It is Inquiring Reformed and always reforming
That gratitude for God's grace is to be lived in daily life as seen in working for God's peace, mercy and justice for others.
priesthood of all believers, reformed and always reforming, sin, unconditional election
An emphasis on God's grace, through which God redeems creation and elects humans as God's partners.

What is distinctive is our belief that God is sovereign--that God initiates a loving relationship with us and sustains us in that relationship.
God's grace and love are gifts.
The real emphasis on the priesthood of all believers; the understanding that reformation is not a one-time thing, but an ongoing process.
Sovereignty of God Election Covenant Theology Our theology causes us to value intellectual rigor and to honor the perspectives of those without theological training. This is a wonderful balance. Our commitment to the priesthood of believers (and our specific understanding of God's call) causes us to seek consensus in all that we do. I believe that, as a result of our theology, we greatly value minority viewpoints and enjoy of church of equals.
ecclesia reformata reformanda; open hearts/minds; ecumenical discussion & cooperation; ardor and order; Trinitarian; Presbyterian polity; confessional; connectional; joyful and graceful; serving people with energy, intelligence, imagination and love; aiming to further the peace, unity and purity of the church all at once; missionary emphasis to meet human needs at home and abroad; trusting a connectional system for mission work; balancing social action and spiritual depth. (Did you really want to give us 500 words? I'm a preacher. You ask and you'll get a sermon. :-)
Reformed and always reforming, recognizing idolatry,
Authority of Scripture, Trinity, Jesus fully God and man and Jesus' atoning work on the cross, salvation by grace through faith, all of our life is to reflect the Lordship of Christ, share the Good News with the world
We are 'saved' totally by the grace of God.
Focus on sovereignty of God. Inclusion for all of God's children. The Bible as God's inspired word.
we are in a continual state of reforming our understanding of God and the world are us.
Openness to the contemporary movement of the Holy Spirit, a realistic view of the depravity or humanity, holistic understanding of the scripture (it is the best commentary on itself) and our polity.
It continues to re-form.
Grace alone, the action of God though the two sacraments including the particular spin of infant baptism, the sovereignty of God, the transformative power of the Holy Spirit through the scriptural witness, the self-revelation of God through Christ, The establishment of a lasting covenant through the work of Christ, the irresistible nature of grace and the intractable nature of sin, the preservation of the church through the intervention and intentions of the Spirit, the priesthood of all believers not based on category but on calling.
God is the first mover
Safe space to live in the tension, listening to each other for the Spirit, applying critical thinking and sound theology leading to moving together guided by the Spirit as the body of Christ--this core process keeps us reformed and reforming and is reflected in our PCUSA constitution.
As we share in God's mission, we realize that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.
That we are reformed and always reforming.
Reformed and always reforming. Sovereignty of God.
Deep humility, lifelong learning/exploring/questioning, desire for compromise and willingness to find ways that different voices can be held together, a belief that the means matters, God's sovereignty, grace-grace-grace

The understanding that God acts first, offering love and forgiveness and asks for our response. We have a very strong understanding of the sovereignty of God. We believe in the governance of the church being shared between pastor and elders. We believe that we are called to worship and to serve. Christian action is important.
Doctrine of Scripture (only Scripture) Sovereignty of God Doctrine of grace in Jesus Christ Cultural mandate
That we are the 'church reformed, always reforming according to the Word of God.' We are trying all the time to be better at being the Body of Christ, even though we realize that we will never be perfect. At our best and living out our theology, we are not afraid to ask questions, to learn more, to use our minds to understand God better every day.
Very little that is applicable in today's world.
Confessional Theology aimed at redemption through Jesus Christ
That God knows us, chooses us, and calls us to himself, even before we know God.
Informative, articulate and community focused.
Sovereignty of God over all of creation brings hope. Election is a unique stance. Freewill is honored. Priesthood of all believers and shared decision-making is unique. Baptism as the sign and seal of our first vocation. God's grace that forgives us and sets us free to be who we were intended to be. Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and the savior of the world.
sovereignty of God
Grace assures we are loved by God unconditionally.
Grace alone.
That our giving God glory is the starting point of our life and all its possibilities. Knowledge of ourselves and all else is revealed in that giving of glory. The Spirit makes life and it's questions transparent, even if we don't get answers as we would conceive them.
The sovereignty of God over all life.
Our historical polity with its theological distinctives, our understanding of human sinfulness and God's providence.
Irresistible grace
I love our emphasis on justification by faith, through grace. We don't have to work for God's love - we have received it in Jesus Christ. Our service to the Lord and the world is a response to that love.
(1) Emphasis on God's abundant grace (2) To be chosen means to be called (3) The law as guidance on how to live a life grateful to God
It has the ability to re-form to address the context of the world around us.
God is Lord of the conscience. Justice is love made concrete. God welcomes us together - the act of generosity and hospitality is crucial. We welcome the world with that power.
The leading of the Spirit in community. The notion that we are always reforming.
The Sovereignty of God, the efficacy of the cross, the primacy of Scripture, and the 'corporateness' of its polity.
Reformed, always reforming; openness to new ideas/other ideas and understandings; ordaining females; governance; priesthood of all believers
priesthood of believers, 2 sacraments, salvation by faith, by grace, upon God's Word incarnate in Christ, great commission, Body of Christ, use of our gifts to serve God vocationally everyday
The emphasis on the fullness of God's grace which has nothing to do with our earning of it. Our gratitude for this grace is lived out in through our attempts to live as Christ would have us live. By the Spirit we are empowered to live beyond the ability of our own efforts.
salvation by grace
Sovereignty of God, Scriptural base, Christ centered, Vicarious Atonement

Emphasis on Sovereignty of God, salvation by grace through faith, the leadership of the church as sinners seeking God's will together, commitment to God's kingdom
Emphasis on communal discernment and mutual accountability
We are saved by grace through Jesus Christ and God is sovereign, so we do not always understand the big picture, but we trust that all things work together for good for those who are called according to God's purpose.
Our commitment to both the church catholic and the leadership of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.
하나님의 주권을 강하게 인정한다. [Strongly recognize the sovereignty of God.]
If we all put money on whether God or humans will get their way in the end, the Reformed folks will always bet on God.
Reformed and always reforming, guided by the Spirit in our daily context
The primacy of the Scriptures (sola scriptura), grace, faith, and above all, the Lord Jesus Christ
Reformed but always being reformed = openness, willingness, expectation God continues to reveal thus change in our understanding is mandatory
It's fluid - always reforming.
God's inclusive grace given in Christ, once for all. Also, our church structure based on community.
Priesthood of all believers--we all have gifts to serve the kingdom. Reformed and always reforming--we are always a work in progress. The connectional church--we don't do our work, nor do we ever have to, alone.
포용주의와 연결주의가 다른 교단에 비해서 더욱 너그럽다. [Inclusiveness and Connectionalism are more tolerant than other denominations]
Emphasis on God's sovereignty, which has implications for God's initiation in creation and redemption. Our collaborative-style of governing, which is rooted in our theology of total depravity. We also have a healthy intellectual tradition that is a resources as contemporary Christians in a post-Christian world.
God's grace and sovereign will. God's covenant of faithfulness.
Leadership of the church
Priesthood of all believers, ministry in daily life, sovereignty of God, communion of saints, covenantal relational with God and one another through Jesus
The emphasis on divine sovereignty.
God's initiative in the relationship with humanity. Saved by grace through faith for service. Our good deeds are how we say thank you to God's grace and not how we earn it.
Systematic understanding of the teachings of the Bible reflecting the truth of God.
The place the Scripture holds in our beliefs. The emphasis on the grace of God. The Lordship of Jesus Christ.
That God's grace is never determined by *my* actions. I cannot earn grace, nor can I ever do something terrible enough to stop God loving me.
Always reforming because of God's grace
God's sovereignty,
Sovereignty of God. Saved by grace. Priesthood of all believers. Centrality of Scripture. Good works as a thankful response.

The notion of connectedness and connectional living out of faith, in particular in worship and discerning God's will/word. That being said, I think our denomination talk a lot about this but doesn't live it, or even understand what it means when it comes to life and life with those with whom we disagree or feel uncomfortable.
The leadership of the Holy Spirit moving in our congregations, councils and members.
Justification by faith The priesthood of all believers.
Education through understanding scripture as a way to better know God's heart in Christ by the power of the Spirit. Presbyterians are the second most educated denomination in the world, therefore this is a strong distinction from the thousands of other denominations.
That is it reformed and always being reformed; more specifically a certain level of commitment to the unknown, and uncertainty. Being reformed means humility is central, because it fully acknowledges the presence and active nature of the living and present God
T.U.L.I.P. High view of scripture God's sovereignty Saved for service
God is always the subject of the sentence. The human being is not.
God's sovereignty and grace
Emphasis on God's sovereignty
Rooted in a grace-filled, Spirit-led foundation based on Scripture and Tradition coming out of the Reformation.
The concept that we can determine God's will in certain circumstances corporately, rather than on the authority of one person or group of people.
Election for service
Reformed and always reforming. Looking for ways to be the church today. Grace is the 'biggie.'
By God's grace we can move beyond our own guilt about our mistakes. Out of gratitude for God's free gift, we strive to make the world a better place for all humanity.
Everything begins with God.
The focus on God's will in our lives, and our thoughtful and prayerful interpretation of the way of Jesus and the guidance of Scripture. None of this is black and white. The role of the community of faith is also distinctive. I like that our tradition is not individualistic.
Calvin's doctrine of the visible and invisible church.
God loves everyone. Grace is a free gift. Presbyterians exercise their own conscience in making decisions.
The uniqueness of Jesus Christ, that we are a people who are always being informed and reformed through the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is a religion that focuses on heart and mind.
God's grace, God's sovereignty, the notion of election in Jesus Christ
Grace
Emphasis on God's grace and God's love for every person and the entire creation; understanding of the work and person of Jesus Christ; the leading of the Holy Spirit and the priesthood of all believers
Depravity of humans and grace of God.
There are two major tenets to Reformed Faith which are the authority of Scripture and the Sovereignty of God. Additionally, the Reformed faith believes that we are always reforming.
Focus on God's grace and the Sovereignty of God that (should) lead us to humility in the face of so much that is up to God rather than us.
God is sovereign over all
sovereignty of God, total depravity, and they need to always be reforming

We believe in a sovereign God operating in the realm of grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
Sovereignty of God & how God moves us. Nothing we do will earn our salvation. It is out of God's grace & mercy that we are reconciled back to God and others.
That we stand between Roman Catholicism and Baptist traditions, seeking to bring the 'ends' to the middle. We confess our brokenness (sin) and depend on God's never-failing love (grace). There is always that openness to change (reformed and reforming).
Our polity and Calvin's systematic theology
God's sovereignty as he exercises his good and perfect providence.
Understanding of the sovereignty of God.
'Election for salvation AND service' (closely related to the priesthood of all believers). All God's people have gifts to share for the good of all.
The sovereignty of God.
God is Sovereign overall and chooses us to be in relationship with God's self. God's love, providence, grace and mercy forms, sustains and redeems us through Jesus Christ.
Grace and Gratitude
Emphasis on the sovereignty and grace of God.
Always reforming.
Emphasis on grace, while being realistic about human sin/shortcomings
Covenantal relationship with God
Cultivating the grace of God in daily living, in and out of the sanctuary, sharing it in our relations in the world and with creation. This theology leads to a praxis where sanctity is not separation but communion with all through Jesus, our common savior, Lord of the Church who also commission us in life to share the good news and build a better tomorrow, especially among those who are poor, forgotten and fragile in society.
The emphasis on God's sovereignty, and grace. It is not our decisions or worthiness, but God's gracious and loving choice which saves us and makes us God's children. The acknowledgement that sin and evil are real and powerful in our world and in each of our lives (total depravity), but yet God loves us still. I lean toward a universalist understanding of salvation, but see that as being in line with the 'good hope for all' as it is called in our confessions. Our ecclesiastical understanding of the priesthood of all believers and leadership of elders and ministers also is a way of expressing our belief that God works through humans in community, not isolation. Our love for one another is our response to God's love for us.
Prevenient grace
Grace and election for service.
The reformed understanding places discernment of God's will in the collective judgement of the faithful. God's Word and Will is best understood and interpreted by the group of believers, rather than by an individual telling others what to think and do.
An emphasis on grace, and on the intellect as part of our response to God.

It focuses on God's grace and sovereignty as the starting point; emphasizes human salvation by God's grace alone, through Christ alone, appropriated by faith alone; balances an understanding of the Bible as God's Word written, with an awareness that the Holy Spirit worked through human writers who also reflect the times and places in which they lived, so faithful, responsible study and interpretation of the Scriptures are very important. God's reign is over all creation, fallen though it is, so Christ's disciples are called to live fully in obedience to God and showing love for neighbor. So politics, social issues, questions of war and peace, and etc. are also areas where Christians live out their calling to follow Jesus Christ. Salvation is accomplished by God in and through Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. How God will apply that salvation, and its limits, we do not know-- we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus with joy, in word and deed, and leave the results to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit calls all kinds of people to faith, and equips them to serve God in the priesthood of all believers. The Church looks to the new heaven and new earth-- whatever they will ultimately be like-- as our great hope, and lives and works under the reign of God-- witnessing to God's grace, holding God's justice/righteousness as a measuring stick to society in every time and place, serving as biblical conscience to society and government. All that people have come from God; Christians are to be aware especially that we are not owner, but stewards, of gifts, abilities, riches, property, etc. We offer them as we pursue the reason for our lives: to glorify God, and enjoy God forever.

Uniqueness of Christ Authority of Scripture Atonement through the cross

Always open to new leading of God's Spirit.

The fact that on my own power and effort I am incapable of obedience and perfection. I need God's Spirit to guide and empower me to live into God's will. I need Jesus' grace to forgive my sins.

Grace

The whole system feels very distinctive to me. I'm grateful for the knowledge of our own fallenness and the way God's grace comes to meet us in that place. The fact that we are living in the not-yet of the Kingdom of God, reacting with gratitude to what God has done, but knowing that it is not yet complete. I love that Reformed Theology gives me the space to say that God works in ways beyond my own understanding and limits.

God's acts. Simply put, God's grace offered to all through faith in Jesus Christ. God chooses us, we do not choose Him. However, God/Christ fully expects us to participate in and with the work He has done on our behalf through Jesus Christ. We do this through discipleship.

Strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God which leads to a wide understanding of God's grace in Christ. Strong understanding of humans as bearing the divine image and also being marred by sin. Strong emphasis on the whole of life being under God's sovereign rule - and therefore all of life is worship. Strong understanding of relationship with God being not just individual, but also being a part of a covenant community. Strong emphasis on careful, systematic thought and theology. A governance system that seeks to balance local individuality with global connection.

Human beings are incapable of saving themselves; Jesus Christ is unique in life, death and love, and alone has made a way for humans to be reconciled to God; God is sovereign; all followers of Jesus are his ministers

Grace without condition

Calvinism pushes out into the world - vocation.

Grace and gratitude for the sovereign mercy of God. We can Biblically proclaim salvation while relying on God to work and lead people to faith in Christ. We are definitely engaged 'in' the world and hopefully we do not become too much 'of' the world.

priesthood of all believers, save by grace alone, people of the Book, decently and in order, live as children of the light (Eph. 5:8)

Reformed theology encourages the development and constant reexamination of one's encounter with God throughout life. There are few 'standard answers' and there is a realistic approach to all of the inconsistencies in life. By dialog with other believers, study, prayer, worship, and involvement in mission; ours is a living faith that can mature and change over time to make us more faithful servants of God's ways with other people and the care of all creation.
The sovereignty of God, held above all other theological premises.
Reformed and always reforming gives freedom of the Spirit to constantly be at work in us.
the sovereignty of God
The sovereignty of God; the grace of God; emphasis on the Word of God; priesthood of all believers
the sovereignty and grace of God
God's initiative and incarnation. The ability to say yes to faith is the gift of God (election), whose grace was demonstrated by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus.
Total depravity Unconditional election Limited atonement Irresistible grace Perseverance of the saints
how we understand grace
Integration of critical thinking, study of Bible and theology, assessment of the times, and cultural adaptation of understanding. The empowerment of all as ministers/servants. Embrace of diversity. Ecumenical/interfaith relations. Reformed and always reforming.
Belief in the sovereignty of God, gratitude for God's grace, acknowledgment of the role of sin in human life, emphasis on service, belief that god is active in human history, centrality of the Word spoken and read, taking Scripture seriously but being open to variety in interpretations
emphasis upon God's sovereignty and grace
God's initiative in saving us in Christ Jesus; priesthood of all believers; commitment to education and to mission.
The importance on God's Sovereign
Sovereignty of God and God's covenant with us
As the book 'Being Presbyterian in the Bible Belt' succinctly puts it: We do not operate according to the formula: 'If I do X, then God will do Y.' (E.g. If I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior, then God will save me.' The formula that we as Reformed Christians operate by is: 'Because God has already done X, out of thanksgiving for that grace, we therefore do Y.' (E.g. Because God has already saved me/us/the world in the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, out of thanksgiving for that grace, we therefore: share, bless, love, forgive, welcome, and include. Another great line from that book: 'The ONLY answer to the question of 'when were you saved?' is: 2,000 years ago.'
The GOVERNANCE of God over all of life - sovereignty of God. The guilt of humankind - all are sinners. The grace of God in and through Jesus Christ. GRATITUDE as the primary focus of our life in response to God's grace.
Grace Christology Polity/Connectionalism
Historically: centered on the witness of Scripture of OT and NT. Today: not much anymore
Sovereignty of God, election, covenant, stewardship, falseness of creation
The Sovereignty of God with the concomitant acknowledgement of the limits of human understanding
God's grace and our gratitude as the basis for the life of faith.
The Great Ends of the Church; that we are enabled to make decisions guided by scripture, the Holy Spirit and our conscience.

priesthood of all believers importance of grace God's sovereignty reformed and always reforming
God's salvation in Christ is offered through his grace...it is sufficient for the world and effecient for the elect (God in Christ and only God gives the gracious gift of salvation).
We believe that God is sovereign of all life and all truth, and we humbly confess that we miss God's Mark in belief as well as practice.
Sovereignty of God; election, importance of Scripture, covenant theology
Our commitment to an informed and educated clergy and laity. The priesthood of all believers. Government by elected representatives. Central place God's Grace occupies in our orientation toward the world.
Centrality of grace.
The primacy of God's sovereignty, providence, and grace; the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures; the covenant community as necessary vehicle of spiritual growth and discipleship, and of care for those who have been hurt and abused by the world; the church invisible that transcends time and space; worship that emphasizes the preaching of the Word and celebration of the sacraments; parity of believers and leaders in the church (ruling elders and teaching elders); and a life pattern of stewardship that gives to others in proportion to one's own consumption.
emphasis on God's sovereign grace
the 'always reforming' part
The sovereign love and mercy of God expressed in grace, and our response of gratitude expressed through all aspects of our life. The necessity for God's grace first, because of our human tendency toward broken relationships with God and with our neighbors. The revelation of God's grace in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The guidance of the Holy Spirit in revealing God's grace and urging our response of gratitude toward others and toward God. Our understanding that God calls some to witness to the good news of God's grace and mercy to the rest of the world that God loves. That we are called to witness through community.
The insistence on a thinking faith is central for me. Interpretations of scripture, doctrine, tradition, and practice should all be shaped by shared wisdom; past and present
no answer
polity, understanding of theology through confessions and history, understanding of ordination, participation in the world toward justice and peace.
Reformed theology is constantly engaged in the Word of God and the events of the world - the intersection of the two and seeking God's will within both the heavenly and earthly realms. We continue to study the languages and customs of the Bible so that our understanding of culture and languages is fully engaged for interpretation of the Word in this day. We seek to follow God through the leading of the Holy Spirit, comparing where we think HS might be leading and the Word and the needs of this world.
Placing weight on God's gracious sovereignty over human responsibility; discernment through gathered bodies; importance of Scriptural study informed by original language & historical understandings; awareness of unintended influence of corporate systemic Sin and self-interest.
a direct relationship with our Trinitarian God and fellow believers
emphasis on idolatry of church and culture simple living covenant grace and gratitude vocation
Sovereignty of God Salvation by Grace through Faith
Sovereignty of God

We understand ourselves to be reformed and always reforming, and therefore profess that we should be open to change through the leading of the Holy Spirit, confirmed through the communal discernment of a body of believers - both pastors and elders. We emphasize God's superabundant grace that transcends all of our human failings and poor choices and individual and communal sin, not to minimize the gravity of our sin, but to understand God's nature as the one who tirelessly pursues us, who never runs out of patience to forgive us, who never stops calling us back.
Always reforming, not just reformed.
Total depravity; Unconditional election; Limited atonement; Irresistible grace; and Perseverance of the saints. The sovereignty of God. The confessional nature of the church. An emphasis on salvation through Christ alone. An emphasis on confession and repentance, and the grace which is offered through Christ alone.
Emphasis placed upon God's sovereignty; stewardship of the mind (education), and election
Our belief in the sovereignty of God
Emphasis on God's sovereignty and grace.
Our emphasis on the freedom of God: God is not limited in any way, except as God chooses.
Attention to the Holy Spirit's leading, who is always reforming the church.
There is nothing completely distinctive about Reformed theology. Doctrines of God, creation, sin, and grace are included in non-Reformed theologies as well. We emphasize God's sovereignty and election, our sinfulness, and our need of grace given to us through Jesus Christ. What is truly distinctive is our understanding of church leadership in ordained offices and polity matters.
Our theological task is to discern where God is active today and what God is doing today. We are also provided the parameters of belief by the community in which we are involved
Grace. The understanding that God chooses to be God for us.
We are able to consider the context, then and now.
It is Biblical, thoughtful, centered in God's grace and seeks to live the life of discipleship in ways that reflect God's will in the world.
Our Confessional nature that both states what we believe at the moment while remaining open to the movement of the Spirit to help us see more completely. This is most perfectly captured in the Westminster Confession (6.175) 'All synods or councils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as help in both'
The sovereignty of God, who in love seeks to reconcile all humanity and calls us into a covenant relationship with God and others (the elect). Our response to God's gracious acts in Jesus Christ should be one of gratitude, reflecting God's grace in our relationships with neighbors even the least of these.
That we can be continually reformed, for we will always see dimly.
It is rooted in scripture, nurtured by the Holy Spirit, and ever evolving.
What is historically important is a reliance upon the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit, an informed understanding of Scripture built upon a specific tradition of faith, and know most importantly that Jesus the Christ is the head of the Church which is the Body of Christ. Moreover, we celebrate our faith and life in worship and regular celebration of the Sacraments-baptism and The Lord's Supper. There are certainly many more traditional aspects of Reformed and Presbyterian theology. Suffice it to say in my opinion we as a denomination have strayed far away from our faith and tradition. We love to say, 'Reformed and always reforming;' yet, we forget to include as guided by Scripture and lead by the Holy Spirit.

The idea that faith is not stagnant. We are reformed, but always reforming.
Our openness to God's work of salvation and our belief in total depravity giving us a sure sign of God's grace and our freedom.
Scripture alone Faith alone Grace alone Christ alone Glory to God alone
It challenges us to submit our lives to God's Word again and again so that we might know and experience God's grace and mercy and blessing through Jesus Christ.
Grace
We recognize that we're unworthy and that there's nothing we can do apart from Christ to be worthy. It is only through his saving death on the cross that we will overcome our sinfulness when we die. We are also governed by the people decently and in order.
An overriding emphasis on the greatness of God that is the starting point of theological reflection. Also a constant reference to Scripture, reading it always in the light of Jesus Christ, 'the one sufficient revelation of God.'
It is not dependent upon the teachings of previous church leaders and is open to all: gender, race, etc.
without giving you a lecture... I'd point to the first question of the Heidelberg catechism -- and its emphasis on the grace of God and the sovereignty of God. Our lives are a thankful response to the free gift of grace extended to us. Q. 1. What is your only comfort, in life and in death? A. That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of his own blood has fully paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil; that he protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit his purpose for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.
We are willing to change. . . eventually.
The provident sovereignty of God.
That we can pray directly to God without going through in intermediary. That we can read scripture in our own language.
Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, through Christ alone, as taught in Scripture alone. The priesthood of all believers. Salvation is both from our sin and for God's service. The Triune God is the Initiator, Sustainer, Mediator, and goal of our salvation. The sovereignty of God. The depravity of humankind.
Calvin's understanding of the sacraments. Our book of confessions as an interpretation of scripture.
reformed and always reforming. Trusting in God's guidance through the movement of the Holy Spirit. Faith lived out in community.
Reformed and always reforming. It is alive as God is also alive
'God, alone, is lord of the conscience.'
Trusts group decision-making to discern God's will. God alone is Lord of the conscience. Always seeking to be reformed. Commitment to social justice. Humility - we don't claim to be the only church with all the answers.
Focus on the 5 solas, which has led us historically to make God's concern for and primary purpose to bring all peoples to himself in Jesus our main focus
The beauty of diversity in people and expressions of God's love as faithful people live out their faith in the world
Salvation by faith through grace, the priesthood of all believers

<p>Emphasis on Christ as the head of the church, God participation in human history, idolatry as sin, justification/sanctification, the mind as God's gift, church order as mission and ministry, preaching on the word of God at the center of worship, life of disciple, and simplicity in worship and lifestyle.</p>
<p>To me, what is distinctive is an understanding that our relationship with God derives from God's initiative and not our own. I also think that an understanding of salvation as God's re- newing and re-creating all that was intended as good is unique. We are not as anthropocentric as other faith traditions.</p>
<p>Reformed theology takes human brokenness seriously while trusting in the providence and sovereignty of God. Who are we to limit God's redemptive grace and expansive love? Our theology fits hand-in-hand with our polity - the priesthood of all believers, that God calls each of us to particular ministry and endows us with gifts to fulfill our calling, is reflected in the equity of church leadership and structures. And- our belief that the Spirit is still at work, forming and reforming us into the people God would have us be, in and through democratic processes of debate and discernment.</p>
<p>Not necessarily the theology itself, but the way in which it is lived out in our denomination: the priesthood of all believers. Also, the emphasis upon compassion and social responsibility, upon history (creeds) and how they help us interpret the present times. And our connectionalism is also distinctive.</p>
<p>Authority of Scripture, Trinity, Creation/Providence/Sovereignty, Grace, Humanity's Original Righteousness and Fall into Sin Jesus Christ: Incarnation of the Eternal Word, His Atoning Work, Salvation by Grace through Faith Election for Salvation and Service, understanding of Covenant, understanding of Sacraments, Sanctification and the Work of the Holy Spirit, Priesthood of All Believers</p>
<p>God acts first, we respond. God chooses us.</p>
<p>That we are reformed & always reforming!</p>
<p>That God is sovereign over all -- the world and the church. The nature of God's sovereignty is best understood through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, what is sovereign or preeminent about God is grace. The scriptures of both Old and New Testaments are the witness to this. Our lives are to be lived in grateful response to God's grace. As people transformed by God's saving love, we are part of God's transforming work in the world.</p>
<p>Thoughtful, well-informed scholarship</p>
<p>God is Sovereign, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer & Lord of all. As such God controls all things - even whether or not we will be saved. we do not choose God, God chooses us. God is love and acts through love. Even when we sin, God is willing to claim and forgive us. We live in a covenantal relationship with God and are connected to all who follow reformed traditions. We understand there are two sacraments, baptism and the eucharist as well as two commands: Share the good news of God's love as witnessed in Jesus Christ with all the world and love our neighbors as ourselves. The latter is to be acted out through acts of justice and mercy.</p>
<p>the priesthood of all believers</p>

The Sovereignty of God, which honors the freedom of God to do as God wills. Secondly, the fallen nature of all humanity which has resulted in being estranged from God and the only One who can reconcile humanity and God is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no salvation without the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, and it is through his death that the wrath of God has been satisfied and we are welcomed by our faith in Jesus into the Kingdom of God. When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, he infuses us with the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live for the glory of God. Humanity under the power of the Holy Spirit will NOT live as people of the world, but will be transformed by the work of God and there will be evidence that those who are redeemed by God are children of God. Those who are called, are made holy, for without holiness, no one will see God. God is holy and pure, and without a second birth, a spiritual birth, there is no welcome to be where God is. In my opinion, the PCUSA is no longer Reformed and probably ought to turn in their Presbyterian Card, for they do not hold to the teachings of Calvin and the Reformers, but have gone after strange gods, believing there is no need for transformation after confession of faith and no need to walk in holiness of life.
Reformed; always reforming.
Sovereignty of God, severity of the Fall, grace and salvation in Jesus Christ, Jesus' return and the coming of the Kingdom of God in all of its fullness.
Grace alone
Sovereignty of God, Authority of Scripture, human depravity, Salvation by grace, Election and perseverance of the church, obeying the great commission.
Saved by grace not only from something but for something, i.e., from sin for service to God.
The Authority of Scripture The Priesthood of all believers Justification by grace through faith Working together with other churches and faiths Treating all equally regardless of religion, race, sex, etc.
Communal ecclesiology manifest at baptism; egalitarian and broad-based leadership manifest in democratic process; beautiful balance between recognition of sin and claiming God's abundant grace; continual intellectual rigor in all matters of faith and life.
Always reforming/changing according to God's revelation and our growing and progressive understanding of that revelation.
We are saved by grace through faith
Discernment of God's word and will comes from the wider wisdom of more people who are guided by God's Spirit.
Everything begins with God.
Sovereignty of God who calls us individually into a saving and serving relationship by faith through the grace of Jesus Christ. Through this relationship the individuals and the church is called to reform and to be reformed.
The glory of God
It focuses on God's self-revelation to and redemption of human beings
The absolute sovereignty of God.
The emphasis on being called by God to both salvation and service is key!
Sovereignty of God Justification by Grace through faith Total Depravity Importance and scripture and the confessions
Emphasis upon the sovereignty of God, salvation by God's grace through faith and the authority of scripture as a guide to faith and life.
The Solas Predestination
The emphasis on community and grace.
relevant, honest, open, scriptural truths

Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Sovereignty of God; Election for service and salvation, Covenant Life, Stewardship that seeks proper use of gifts, Human tendency toward idolatry and tyranny; the life of the mind as the service of God; central role of The Word of God; Emphasis on Grace as well as the Third Use of the Law
The sovereignty of God.
Honesty about the broken nature of the world and call to participate in the good work of the Holy Spirit and God in the community
The grace of God as revealed in Jesus Christ
The humility of recognizing perpetual human fallibility, and the confidence of God's grace being sufficient for us all. Our polity which reflects that core theology; no one is more holy and no position more sacred. We are all servants of our risen Lord and each is called according to his or her own gifts. The sacrament of baptism in which we recognize that God initiates our call to be Jesus' disciples (vs. 'I found it' theology which puts the initiative in human hands.) The sacrament of communion in which Christ is truly present as the host of the Table, and the Spirit truly in our midst, but not through any change in substance of the elements. The focus in worship on the Word rightly proclaimed. While we believe the Spirit is present we do not form a service to lead to 'feeling' the Spirit. Service to others is how we live our lives as followers of Christ, though this is hardly unique to Reformed theology.
Election
Triune God's sovereign mercy and mystery of salvation mediated through Christ and Holy Spirit through Body of Christ--human sinfulness in absolute need of grace--interplay between authority of Scripture and authority of Reformed Creeds and Confessions--worship as balance of proclaimed Word, sacrament, prayer, praise and confession of sin along with evangelism and service
It's all God.
That God's grace cannot be earned but is given freely to all who ask and that that grace goes before us.
God loves us first. We respond to the love in how we live our lives. We have elders.
sovereignty of God, salvation by grace, priesthood of all believers, Reformed by always reforming, engaged in social justice in our world, connected
Our understanding that God always acts first. Our actions are in response to God's doing.
We don't need to look for God, God already is with us.
Not individualistic but communal, individual AND corporate repentance and forgiveness of sins, reformed always reforming
Grace! Grace! Grace!
The intellectual and spiritual pursuit of seeking to know God better, knowing that God has already claimed, knows and loves us.
Reformed theology centers on God's grace, and an understanding that we (the church) are always reforming by the Word of God through the leading of the Holy Spirit. And, of course, Jesus.
Sovereignty of God; centrality of Jesus Christ; high view of Scripture interpreted through lens of experience, scholarship, history; priesthood of believers; sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper....actually not all that much is truly distinctive...we have more in common with fellow Christians than we do differences
God's sovereignty Election to service and salvation
Focusing everything on the Sovereignty of God. God initiates everything, thus each godly human action is a response to the inward wooing of God.

<p>God alone is sovereign. God alone is God - Triune - Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. God calls us to live in relationship with God and one another, in obedience to God's commands to love God and love one another. We live our lives in gratitude in response to the knowledge of God's grace and love for us in Jesus Christ. We sin and fall short of what God intends for us and are in need of God's grace and mercy. God forgives us in Jesus Christ and we are called to forgive one another and be reconciled to God and one another. God created us and all of creation. Everything we have comes from God. We live our lives in obedience to God and in faithful stewardship of the gifts we have been given. The Holy Spirit moves among us, the Body of Christ, and guides us in our common life together. The sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, which we share as a community of faith, are signs and seals of God's covenant relationship with us.</p>
<p>God's Grace Our interpretation of scripture Priesthood of all believers</p>
<p>Our emphasis on the grace of God who is sovereign in love for the whole creation.</p>
<p>Our willingness to make adjustments as we grow in understanding of what it means to be a person of faith; a child of God in a world that is every more inter-connected.</p>
<p>We understand the God is sovereign over all things, and that Christ alone is Lord of the conscience. We take scripture seriously but not literally. Most importantly, we do not have a list of doctrines (boxes to check) that make us reformed; we do not have a litmus test; rather, we ask God in Christ to lead us through scripture, the gathered community, and the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>the sovereignty of God, the high view of Scripture, the calling out of the elect, the responsibility to bear witness to Christ in word and deed, the understanding that worship is a lifestyle, not an isolated act an openness to the movement and guidance of the Holy Spirit an appreciation of the confessions</p>
<p>God's providence and sovereignty. Salvation through grace by faith. Priesthood of all believers. God alone is Lord of the conscience. Predestination.</p>
<p>The sovereignty of God as Creator of Heaven and Earth, and the sacrifice of God's Son, Christ Jesus as Savior to all the world's peoples who embrace him.</p>
<p>Our understanding that God loves and chooses us before we can ever love and choose God.</p>
<p>God's sovereignty, especially as understood with regard to salvation.</p>
<p>Sovereignty of God 5 Solas Covenantal influenced theology Christocentric hermeneutics</p>
<p>The mystical union of the believer to Christ</p>
<p>God is Sovereign, and cannot be controlled, guided or advised by humans. 'My ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts.' God speaking through the prophet Isaiah. God can choose anyone to be God's representative, so God can, and does choose people whine the world would not consider important. Since God might choose someone the world deems insignificant, it is imperative that as Reformed Christians, opportunities for education, meaningful employment, and opportunities for economic growth should not be discouraged or denied to anyone, regardless of wealth, social status or professed religion.</p>
<p>The understanding that God chooses us to live with God forever before the foundation of the world, and that when we live in trust (faith), we are then called to live out that faith in community.</p>
<p>Coming together in a community that celebrates the sacraments and reads scripture together, trusting in the presence of God with us.</p>
<p>God initiates, we respond.</p>
<p>We serve a sovereign God, whose grace/love are for everyone, right now, no matter what.</p>

The centrality of our ever evolving understanding of God's revelation to us through Word and world ('reformed and always reforming') as well as structural and theological divergences from the Catholic faith concerning sacraments, access to God (through personal prayer, confession, and full participation in the sacraments), emphasis on faith over works, etc.
grace
The sovereignty of God; the goodness of creation; the reality of both Sin and Evil; the concept of imago Dei; the priesthood of all believers; the incarnation of Christ; the effectiveness of Christ's work on the cross; the reality and meaning of Christ's resurrection; the certainty of Christ's return; the certain hope of the realization of the New Covenant promises in their fullness
Democratically led, always reforming, historical theological, well thought out.
The historical results
saved by grace
The sovereignty of God and the gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ.
It emphasizes that we are called to be the body of Christ despite difference, to work with others in revealing God's light, and to confess together as the body.
God's action in Jesus Christ: Grace Our response in faith: Gratitude heads as well as hearts involved in faith
Sovereignty of God & Grace together
The church is not to be shaped by culture. The church is to shape culture.
The ability to ask critical questions and wrestle with the reality of spiritual doubt. Being able to use our whole self - not 'check your brain at the door.' And the ability to develop and even change our understandings of how God works throughout continued critical reading of scripture and the leading of the Spirit.
Grace alone through faith alone by Christ alone revealed in Scripture alone through the work of the Holy Spirit. God chose to save the elect.
We encourage members to worship God with our whole being. All are encouraged to study Scripture and follow as their own conscience and the Holy Spirit leads them.
The idea of all of us, through community discernment, better see God & therefore better understand our calling to serve better
The varied methods of God's self-revelation.
The centrality of grace. Ecumenism Social and political witness
Emphasizes God's sovereignty and salvation by grace through faith.
That PCUSA theology is based in the wisdom of the community, as led by the Holy Spirit, and that this foundational belief underlies our polity. That PCUSA theology is broad enough that I can affirm that the word in print (which, as a translation is an interpretation) witnesses to the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ; that I can affirm myself as a Follower of Jesus, when the term Christian is abused in the media; that I am part of a faith community in which I observe the Holy Spirit at work; and that I can still respect other Presbyterians whose beliefs may differ somewhat from mine.
Intentionality to be instruments of God's grace.
The priesthood of all believers.
The importance of reason, the value of Biblical understanding in its historical context and contemporary application, God's grace for humanity, the centrality of Jesus as Savior and the call to follow his teaching, the need to actively live out faith in daily life and not just wait for heaven.
Grace. God makes the decisions. WE follow.

In a confessional and humble attitude, we have faith in the grace of our Lord, Jesus, and we uphold the motto, Ecclesia reformat, semper reformanda. Justification by grace
Reformed theology begins more as a philosophical approach that begins with the sovereignty of God which then frames the rest of Reformed theology. As the BoO denotes, this includes, 'Related to this central affirmation of God's sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition: The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation; Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God; A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation; and The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.' In actuality, the whole new Foundations section of the BoO outlines our core theology that forms and informs our practical theology.
God is sovereign, sin is real.
Always re-evaluating scripture through experience and social crisis. We are open to the wind of the Spirit moving us in new directions.
Salvation by Grace through Faith, The gift of the Bible God's Authority and activity in human life.
Doctrines of election and total depravity
Approach to scripture and its interpretation.
we are all connected, we do not have all the answers, God's grace prevails. All of us have missed the mark ...
Grace based; connectional, liturgical, Biblical grounding, proclamation of the word, sovereignty of God, theology of call, life in community, priesthood of all believers, reformed and ever reforming
Its emphasis on Jesus Christ as the revelation of God.
respect of the ability to interpret scripture in light of tradition and current conditions....
Irresistible Grace. That we can neither earn nor lose God's love, and therefore our lives are to be marked by gratitude, not fear.
Always reforming
The sovereignty of God
Scripture Alone
Reliance on God's Grace. Grace abounds, and in response, we are called to live our lives in gratitude for the grace of God's blessings through lives of devotion and service.
We believe that God's will can be discerned through voting. Thus, when a council of the church (session/Presbytery/GA) votes on an issue we are discerning God's will. There are other distinctive things, but that is the biggest difference.
Two areas of Reformed Theology that are distinctive: 1) our doctrine of Jesus Christ and 2) the doctrine of our union with Christ.
Sovereignty/freedom/initiative all belong to God; God initiates, people respond. Sin is universal; confession and repentance are called for. Grace: We cannot deserve God's favor, but God chooses freely to save people through Christ. God calls people to a life of obedience, gratitude, faithful stewardship, and social engagement. God gives people different spiritual gifts to be used for the common good. Our tradition is skeptical of individual, personal authority; we prefer conciliar leadership, shared among the spiritually mature, who are recognized as ruling/teaching elders.
I need to give this some thought.

<p>Triune nature of God as Being in Community Sovereignty of God Authority of Scripture Incarnation/Mission of Jesus Christ (Nicene Creed; Formula of Chalcedon) Created Nature of Humanity--created in the Image of God as Beings-in-Community (male/female, progeneration reflecting essential qualities of God; created in perfect freedom but falling willfully into sin/alienation from God). Total Depravity of Humanity, meaning not that we always do all the bad we can do but that we can do no lasting good in & of ourselves, as the good is only that which is ordained, informed and empower by, and to the glory of God. Specifically, there is nothing we can do of ourselves to accomplish reconciliation with God. Salvation is a free gift of God, offered by grace, through faith, in Christ alone, according to Scripture. Yet we are not deterministically programmed--while God is the initiator of salvation, we can refuse. The later 'Double Predestination' view ignores the Reformers' willingness to embrace the mystery of grace by the inward work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is God's Elect One for Humanity, and all who are in Christ are elect in Him. It's not Santa's 'naughty & nice' (or any other) list. The interaction between God's sovereignty and omniscience (foreknowledge as we use it is an insufficient concept--time is a construct that God transcends) and human will & responsibility, is beyond our conceptual ken. We are elect in Christ; we are free (but not sovereign) in our choices; we are fully responsible for our choices. We are elect in Christ for salvation and service. This is seen in our covenantal relationship with God, ourselves, the church, humanity and the created world. As the elect of Christ, we comprise His Church--His called out people: called out of the world and into worshipping, serving community; equipped and sent into the world for mission & ministry--not some but all--the priesthood of all believers. In our worship and sacraments, we seek to know and honor God as revealed in the Scriptures, chiefly in Jesus Christ. As Calvin wrote, 'Where Scripture leads us, there we must needs be follow; where Scripture ceases, there we must stop.' BOO Six Great Ends captures and elucidates our Great Commission. Stewardship of all creation extends to all, is incumbent upon all. Finally, in our polity, we are neither congregational only (though we do covenant in congregational community) nor are we episcopal only (though we do willingly place ourselves under authority and accountability). Chiefly, due to the awareness of our own pride and weakness, we determine to vest power in groups rather than in individuals. This is the core of our connectional identity: that we worship, work and order ourselves in mutual accountability and deference to Scripture, doing all, decently and in order, and all to the Glory of God and the advance of His Kingdom.</p>
<p>The emphasis on the sovereignty of God and the necessity of God's grace to our faith.</p>
<p>Posits God as the initial actor in redemption, understands God's rule to be both provisionally present and still future</p>
<p>The priesthood of all believers and the openness to reforming through the movement and revelation of the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>Our understanding of salvation (the restoration of all creation) as the sovereign act of God is promised to humanity by means of the covenant of perpetuity made with Abraham and ratified by God alone</p>
<p>Sovereignty of God, importance of worship, role of the sacraments in the life of the community, Jesus/grace, role of the laity</p>
<p>The emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God. That God always acts first. Salvation by grace alone. Importance of stewardship. Election of elders to lead church. Always reformed according to Word of God.</p>
<p>Views on election and sin, Calvin's cultural imperative, high view of sacraments without them becoming truly sacramental theologically</p>
<p>Reformed/Presbyterian theology has at its heart a basis in scripture. John Calvin's assertion of sola scriptura, scripture alone informs our understanding of all else. We believe in the sovereignty of God and the doctrines of grace included in 'TULIP'</p>
<p>Connectionalism</p>

Sovereignty of God, God continually working through history and us, meaning we are being reformed.
Omnipotence of God, forgiveness and grace after repentance, priesthood of all believers, the Bible as whole counsel of God and sufficient to understand Jesus's role in salvation
focus on God's sovereignty; God's reign
Emphasis of the supremacy of God's Grace and the totality of our sin.
The emphasis on grace and covenant; not something earned, something freely given by God
Its ability to see how scripture is speaking to the current context of society. The way that we are able to reform and grow in our understanding of faith and see the ways in which God is challenging us to be relevant and present with God's world now.
importance of salvation not depending on works.
The widely varying definitions of basic theological concepts and how many different views come together to refine one another in the church.
sovereignty of God in all things, and the grace of God in election through Jesus Christ.
all are able to be led by the Holy Spirit - works with individuals and in community ⁷
That we live and believe in the priesthood of all believers.
Reformed, always reforming
Being open to change, people and loving all.
Orderly, thoughtful, respectful, grace-filled, loving
sovereignty of God
God's sovereignty which manifests through the life and death of Jesus Christ in spite of sinful nature of humanity.
reformed, always reforming (improving, getting clearer)
Grace abounds
Focus on God's grace, and gratitude in response. Recognition of human innate propensity to err -- 'original sin' in traditional language. Responsibility to live in socially responsible ways in recognition of the above two points.
truth in order to goodness
God's grace reaches out to us before we do anything.
(In order): 1. the Sovereignty of the Triune God 2. which is revealed through Jesus, the Christ, in whose life, death, and resurrection 3. are manifest God's surpassing grace towards all of God's creation 4. therein both revealing and fully responding to the ubiquity of sin (as sin, not 'bad stuff' or 'evil' or any other simulacra of sin) 5. and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, empowering human beings to respond to God in gratitude and hope 6. in all aspects of existence (natural and social) 7. as we discern God at work in all of those aspects of existence 8. and anticipate the consummation of all things into their doxological purposes 9. foretastes of which we experience in scripture faithfully interpreted, sacraments rightly observed, and the church missionally engaged 10 in its pursuit of an egalitarian political, economic, and social ethic.
God's grace displayed in creation and the renewing work of Christ as this is applied by the Spirit. I trust in God's work in all places where the Spirit is drawing people toward God and toward the renewal of all creation.
Emphasis on the sovereignty of God Scripture as basis for theology and teaching Priesthood of all believers
The sovereignty of God and God's grace. That we choose God is by God's grace. Our sanctification is by God's grace.

in today's world where people without learning the faith seek black and white scenarios of belief and practice. Reformed theology in its true sense requires we study and we actually are expected to think. Hence the need for mutual forbearance. This is so different from most of today's approach
The prevailing power of God's Grace. That this Grace is a freely given gift from God that cannot be taken away.
reformed and always reforming - combination of intellect and heart in faith
All are encouraged to read, think about, discuss, discern and live; no one human authority prescribes what is Presbyterian theology.
Emphasis on the validity of BOTH old and New Testaments, and of course election
Polity (namely Rule by elders, parity of clergy and ordained laity, orderly approach), form of government (namely representative government), Creedal (namely confessional, ecumenical), Missional (Great Ends of the Church), deep roots in French Genevan (Calvin) and Scottish theologians, values both social gospel and proclamation gospel, values use of the mind as adequate service to God, election of the saints.
In your opinion, what is distinctive about Reformed Presbyterian theology? Only 500 words, then three points: Sola gratis; ecclesia semper reformanda, semper reformanda; and the model that Christian life is best lived out when we understand that what we do is a response to what God has done for us. Sola gratis, grace alone, means that there is nothing we can do to deserve our Salvation. It solely relies on God's graciousness. When we confess this, it gives us the ability to do things not fearing the results but that we trust that God's will get us through the darkest valley. This doesn't mean that we all can do whatever we want but when we misinterpret doctrine, and we will pivot our beliefs with a process of confession and forgiveness, and reconciliation that allows us to have better relationship with others and with God. Ecclesia semper reformanda, semper reformanda means the church is always to be reformed. When we live out of the first doctrine, we open the earthy church as chaos of change. Therefore, there must be a regulator doctrine which balances this. Notice the Latin word, reformo, means reform, not alteratio, which means change or alternate. We are not the changed Church or the alternative Church (although the current branding might work well with the millennial generation). Reformed has a sense of restoring back to a pure sense. This is not to say that to make church great again where we have go back to the prejudices of the old, but go to a genuine confession. This confession is found in Scripture: Matthew 22:36-40, John 3:16, John 15:13, Galatians 2:20, and Romans 12:1 among others. The divine love is a self-sacrificing love that creates, sustains and redeems life which is embodied in the story of Life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Once Dr. Rick Nutt in one of his classes spoke about the uniqueness of the Christian reformed faith by saying: in most religions, salvation is a quid pro quo with God, which is I do something good, God loves me; I do something bad then God doesn't and I have to do something to atone for my sin. But our Christian reformed faith is saying that Jesus Christ died for our sins and God has already done all that needs to be done. We do not do works where our actions make us righteous, but our right actions come out of authentic thankful response to what God has first done for us. That's the model of our Christian life. Whew, that was a lot with 62 words to spare.
Its organizational structure of church leadership, with pastors, elders, and deacons.
God the creator's love to the world in Jesus Christ. Invitation to follow him in life of faith, worship, fellowship, attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, and discipleship
Sovereignty of God, our brokenness and God's grace
the serious view of Scripture, the mysterious presence of Christ both in the sacraments and in our daily lives, and the focus on God's grace as our only means of connecting with God and living
Reformed, always reforming. Emphasis on community of faith.

That people of good conscience are able to disagree and still worship together.
'... always being reformed...'
Our confessional tradition
The emphasis on personal experience with God.
That God is approachable, that his grace is sufficient, but that he is also just, which means that we need to be obedient servants, rather than our own bosses in life.
The strong focus on the sheer grace of the sovereign God revealed in Jesus Christ. By God's loving power, Christians have been called to an active, engaged obedience to reflect our gratitude for God's loving gifts. No part or moment of our lives is exempt from God's gracious lordship, so we have the opportunity to constantly seek God's will and joyfully follow it by the power of the Holy Spirit. While nothing that we do is without the taint of sin, we are called to joyfully and courageously reflect the hope and love of God to the world around us in words and actions. Due to God's work on our behalf, we have hope of an eternal future in fellowship with God in Jesus Christ.
God being at work in our lives and loving us long before we recognize it or if we never recognize it.
sovereignty of God, grace as a gift freely given, the invitation to live a life of gratitude in response to God's grace,
It is the responsibility and privilege of every Christian to seek God's Will, Calling & direction through prayer, Bible study, and conversation with other Christians. We do not abandon the task of interpreting what is faithful and leave it to anyone else to 'tell us what is right'. Also, it is important to remember that each of us is included in those who have fallen short of the Glory of God, and Christian humility is vital. Order of authority: God (Creator, Christ, Spirit) then holy scripture, then the witness of the church through confession and constitution. We seek to be faithful to God, but we do not blindly follow other people's ideas.
Emphasis on God's sovereignty Rejection of magic Insistence on grace Being guided by but not captive to history Covenant theology, where covenant is understood as offered by God, not earned by us
Our shared experience
The sovereignty of God, centrality of Scripture, and salvation through God's grace in Jesus Christ. Grace alone, faith alone, scripture alone.
A strong doctrine of sin and an equally strong doctrine of grace. Dignity of work. Accountability to God through one's peers, lay elders, rather than through a priest who is set over his congregation.
Sovereignty of God
Reformed and always reforming. Sovereignty of God. Priesthood of all believers.
Emphasis on God's sovereignty in all of life
1. We are all called to be disciples. 2. God alone is Lord of the conscience. 3. The Word is learned and experienced through reading scripture, in community worship, and in service to others. 4. Our connectional church keeps us accountable to God and one another, and allows us to discern God's will in a powerful and unique way.
Sovereignty of God; saved by grace; always being reformed;
reformed and always reforming
Our focus on the sovereignty of God, and the ultimate grace of the One Who is sovereign--- and that grace is revealed through the incarnate presence of God through Jesus
God's initiative and sovereignty
That God calls all people. That God interacts directly with people and communities. That we are reformed and always reforming.

Its understanding of God and of humanity. We can do nothing to influence or improve ourselves to be more 'acceptable' in God's eyes. Traditionally we use the term, salvation, which is solely dependent upon God's grace. Westminster Catechism teaching that our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy God forever is unique. Sola Scriptura. Contemporary Christian Rock is not capable of fulfilling Reformed for worship requirements.
The Reformed Church constantly being reformed
We are reformed and always reforming.
Its emphasis on God's sovereignty, salvation by grace through faith, a lifestyle responsive to God's Lordship and love, Biblical revelation, humility; its evangelical calling, concern for justice, ecumenical openness and an ecclesiology recognizing deep connections between churches.
Our insistence upon God's sovereignty and grace
Grace/Gratitude
Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior and I know him thru the Scriptures of OT & NT and through the leading of the Holy Spirit.
The commitment to critique all human traditions and ideas, including those in the bible.
Focus on sovereignty of God; participatory ecclesiology, with government by elders; idea of reformed and always reforming; Centrality of Scripture, with Holy Spirit being the interpreter; Understanding of election being work of God in Jesus Christ; grace; idolatry as central sin; ongoing sin in life of believer, thus humility about one's 'progress' in faith; importance of Christians shaping community according to God's will; effort to balance head and heart, personal relationship with Christ and social transformation.
We are connected. We believe in the sinfulness of humanity and God's undeserved grace given freely to all who seek it. We believe God's work in the world is active, not static. Our Christian faith is meant to be lived and enacted. We believe the will of God continues to be revealed to humanity through the Holy Spirit and grows and develops over time.
Grace and Gratitude - moves us to faith and faithful action. That and always being open to being reformed.
Grace

As Reformed Christians, we believe in the one eternal God, creator of all things known and unknown, and who extends beyond the limits of time and space. God is the reason for our existence, the purpose for our lives, and the object of our worship. God's nature is clouded in mystery; incomprehensible to our frail human minds. And yet God so desired to be in relationship with us that God chose to be revealed to us in three distinct persons, all quite different, but each very much the same. As human beings we are inherently blinded by sin, often broken and unable to achieve redemption and reunification with God on our own. In response to our helplessness, God has provided us with an opportunity for salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ. He showed us the way through his earthly life and offered atonement for our sins through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave. It is by grace, through faith, that our lives are renewed and our reconciliation complete. Not by our own merit, but by God's alone. We believe in a personal God who is active in our lives. That God is ever present with us through the Holy Spirit, guiding our actions, calling us to service, and preparing us to realize the promises made through Jesus Christ. Our church is influenced by the Spirit in all that we do, and as individuals we profess our faith through the encouragement of that same Spirit. God did not leave us alone to find our way, but gave us his Word in the Holy Scriptures. That Word, which became incarnate in Jesus Christ, is inspired by God and opened to us through the Holy Spirit, and is an authoritative and trustworthy guide for our lives of faith. Those Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are God's Word to us, and we believe that the confessions of the church are historic witnesses of that Word. The sacraments we celebrate, Baptism and The Lord's Supper, are visible signs of God's love and grace. Our participation in those sacraments enables us to respond to that grace and helps us to acknowledge God's presence in our lives. The sacraments are more than mere symbols, for they serve to affirm our continuing relationship with Jesus and our ongoing desire to follow in faith. Reformed believers know that God has called us together as the Church to be the visible manifestation of the body of Christ. As Christians, this call is one of service and obedience. Because of this call, the church has a responsibility to exemplify the Gospel, to preach the Word, to serve others in Christ, to evangelize to the lost, to live by scripture, and to teach by example.

It calls us to think and interact with God. We are his people and he loves us and wants the best for us. He calls us in different ways to serve him and when we reach out it is the workings of the Holy Spirit. We follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit through our own personal relationship with God/Jesus through prayer, scripture, meditation, teachings of the church and of Pastors and leaders of the church. We see how history has changed us and made us who we are and what God wants us to be in his glorious kingdom.

A sound blend of faith seeking understanding, and a healthy regard for both sides of that. Reformed and always reforming -- the good news is the same, but how we interpret it and apply it changes over time as we receive new understanding and discernment. Presbyterian/Reformed theology is also guided by our confessions. And also, its system of governance is distinctive -- dual leadership of governing and teaching elders; full representation. An emphasis on the sovereignty of God over all people and creation itself. Coming out of its confessions, the Reformed/Presbyterian connections with and commitment to social justice.

The Sovereignty of God is perhaps the most or one of the most important and distinctive features of Reformed Theology. From this doctrine flow our views on Election, Soteriology, Grace, and human nature. Without recognizing the Reformed perspective on God's sovereignty, we may be reformers, but we are not Reformed. Education has also been a hallmark of the Reformed tradition, and Presbyterianism in particular. For this reason, I applaud efforts to understand the world and faiths around us. Indeed, without such understanding, the nascent church would never have been able to effectively preach to the people in Corinth, in Jerusalem, and elsewhere in the ancient world. My concern with focusing so much on other faiths is that we have not first done our homework on our own faith. Precious few cradle Presbyterians remain and, while older generations may have been schooled in Reformed Theology as part of Sunday School and worship, we may no longer assume anyone knows the fundamentals of our faith. We may not be assured that congregations comprised of former Baptists, Catholics, and Methodists are now presently filled with Presbyterians. The sovereignty of God is an essential tenet of our faith. Without understanding it, the former Baptist does not understand why they may be free from the anxiety of repeated invitations to God to come into their heart. God calls in our tradition. God saves in our tradition. God reforms in our tradition. My eyes literally grow teary as I write these words because, sure in this knowledge, I have lived my life. I can think of no greater comfort than that, in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, borrowed so freely and earnestly from Paul, 'I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.' I buried my surrogate father with these words. He had lived through the founding and the dismantling of a Presbyterian congregation of which he had been a charter member. Yet his faith remained strong because God is sovereign. God is immanent and yet unsearchable. Do we truly believe that even a quarter of what, relatively speaking, is an educated church population knows what is the Heidelberg Catechism? To me, God's sovereignty and the difference between a Baptist and a Presbyterian are nowhere more visible than in Galatians 2:16. Shall it be read that we are justified by faith 'in' Jesus Christ or by faith 'of' Jesus Christ--by Christ's faith? If we are to be Reformed, we should know the answer. And we should know the answer before we know, as your survey asks, that Maimonides is Jewish or that Shiva is a Hindu goddess. The latter you can learn in any of the roughly 4,100 universities, colleges and community colleges in this nation. The former--who will teach that??? The preacher would leave the question to end, but I will say 'Us. We must.' Because it is also a tenet of our faith that we go and make disciples.

God's grace and God's sovereignty

The sovereignty and providence of God

Reformed and always reforming. Emphasis on scholarship, Biblical and otherwise. God manifests through all of life. Sovereignty of conscience.

We allow questions and recognize we don't have all the answers. Constantly reforming. Connectional nature of the church. Greater emphasis on community and social justice than individual salvation.

A belief in the sovereignty of God.

Illumination through prayerful study of Scripture and openness to discussion through the leading of the Holy Spirit

Commitment to education, alignment with the enlightenment, parity of clergy and laity, representative form of government, commitment to representation and due process, elegance in ordination vows and fundamental principles

God's gracious initiative saves humans (saved by grace alone). The centrality of Scripture for the life and ministry of the Church.

Distinctive, historically, or distinctive as lived out today on the ground? There's less of the latter. Of the former, what's distinctive, i.e., not shared by other traditions, isn't what's most important (since, e.g., the creed is shared by all). Perhaps then the focus on the primacy of God's grace, as a pastoral doctrine of comfort. Also, that church authority lies in the community.
The absolute sovereignty of God.
emphasis on God's sovereignty and grace and our response of holiness
The sovereignty of God and God's grace
Grace is a free gift
Our faith is a gift from God, and is initiated by God. We have free will and can choose to receive this gift of faith.
The communal accountability and finding the voice of the Holy spirit in dialog as well as the willingness to seek our calling for this time and circumstance.
That we are all priests.
Our theology of the sovereignty and grace of God.
Salvation by grace. (TULIP)
Sovereignty of God and centrality of Christ as Lord and Savior. The first psalm I learned as a child was Psalm 100: it is God that hath made us and not we ourselves. The first verse of Scripture I learned was John 3:16. The second was the Shema. We are called to worship God, praise God, give thanks to God in all times and places, and enjoy God, marveling in what God has created and done for us. God alone is Lord of the conscience and our understanding of God's word is inspired by the Holy Spirit through councils and deliberative and discerning processes. Christ is to be encountered as Word in Scripture, interpretation, and Sacrament. We affirm that there are different ways of being church; our polity places emphasis on order and shared decision making. Throughout our lives we respond to God's grace and love, perfecting that which begins in baptism. This means that we are always seeking to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God, open to being transformed and reformed. At our best we are open to the wisdom of other traditions, particularly other Christian traditions, and open to acknowledging our commonalities first and foremost. We should be beyond the debates of the 16th century. It is in the nuances that our uniqueness can be discerned.
Taking both grace and evil seriously; systematic theology; ongoing writing of confessions and creeds; reformed, always reforming; right-relatedness and shalom.
Predestination, unconditional election
The concept of God's grace and love toward us. There is an emphasis on polity; education; confession and being a connectional church.
It is connected to all people. It is always reforming, never stagnant but believes in the God of constant love, mercy, justice and discipline.
Emphasis on God's sovereignty, predestination, equality of presbyters.
Emphasis or at least tolerance of reason in approach to spirituality. Personal nature of relationship with God
An emphasis on God's gracious action and Christian faith, life, and worship as our grateful response
We take 'ecclesia reformata semper reformanda' seriously.
Sovereignty of God; centrality of Jesus Christ; continuing work of the Holy Spirit; election to service; taking sin seriously; salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; authority of scripture
Sovereign grace of God
The application of inspired biblical truth to contemporary situations/opportunities.

<p>Double depravity--honesty about our sin The sovereignty of God's grace--God's choice to be our God and be gracious Scripture as a central, authoritative witness to God in Jesus Christ. Election/Predestination--God chooses us in Jesus Christ We publicly confess our sin, God's grace and election, and our call to be witnesses in covenantal community We share governance We believe in and work for social justice The Book of Order is about reconciliation We believe in the priesthood of all believers, expressed through ordered functions We believe education and self-reflection/awareness leads us to know ourselves, others and God We believe that the Sacraments show us God's grace in being For Us even without our prior knowledge or consent The importance of the proclamation of The Word, bearing witness to the Word made flesh, as attested in the words of Holy Scripture, interpreted and taught by words for the edification of the church and the transformation of the world.</p>
<p>Inclusiveness. Jesus' example was one of acceptance. (i.e. the sick, the poor, those rejected by society, women, even those from other religions.) This is what Reformed theology should be.</p>
<p>The sovereignty of God.</p>
<p>1) God alone is Lord of the conscience. 2) Becoming a mature Christian. 3) Word and Sacrament held equally. 4) Balance of power with lay and clergy. 5) The Church is Reformed and always reforming. 6) We are saved by God's Grace. 7) Jesus is known by many names throughout history and the world. 8) Educated clergy. 9) Scripture in the language of the people. 10) Where two or three are gathered in Christ's name, God is in their midst. 11) Humans are partners with God and hold Creation in trust for perpetuity. 12) Humans of every kind are called into ministry. We are all given Divine gifts to be used for the benefit of the whole body. Inclusive language is important for expressing an expansive experience of the Divine/human encounter. 13) Confessions, along with Scripture bear witness to God's activity in the world. Science and Religion are both important tools for understanding and discernment; to make life better for the whole created order. 14). Silence or neutrality are not options when life and death are at stake. In the end God.</p>
<p>The emphasis on grace through faith.</p>
<p>That it is constantly reformed and being reformed through the leading of the Holy Spirit in community with other Christians.</p>
<p>the priesthood of all believers living an 'examined' life reformed and always reforming</p>
<p>Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Graciosa</p>
<p>Election- with a heart open to the Holy Spirit and a mind to wrestle with the questions. Also, balanced government.</p>
<p>Our connection to the world with the understanding that all are called to serve.</p>
<p>The Sovereignty of God, the prominence of Grace, the Revelation of Jesus Christ as the Word through Scripture</p>
<p>the sovereignty of God</p>
<p>The ability to be your own decision making but knowing that God is behind all that you doing.</p>
<p>God is sovereign</p>
<p>The absolute sovereignty and goodness of God and at the same time the acknowledgement that human beings are free to choose, not coerced or somehow pre-ordained to do what they do.</p>
<p>Emphasis on grace via confession, God's initiative in all things and the believer's response to it, recognition of the pervasiveness of sin but always moderated by grace, importance of study and learning (plus the inspiration of the spirit) in the preaching of the word</p>
<p>combination of personal faithfulness and action for social justice</p>
<p>Emphasis on Scripture; ordination and parity of elders and ministers; connections like church; sovereignty of God</p>

That reform is a continuing reality.
Grace through Jesus Christ, guidance and empowerment by the Holy Spirit, and God's initiative in all of it
How we govern ourselves, priesthood of all believers, continually reforming
Grace
Our 'bottom up' structure, which is most reflective of the Priesthood of All Believers. That all people have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit. That faith/ salvation is implemented by God, not human persons.
The careful balancing of clear affirmations of what the church believes with what membership in the church requires believers to affirm.
Its insistence that the triune God is the subject/actor in the creation and salvation story of the world, and not merely the object of our worship and speculation.
The sovereignty of God
Our actions, at God's behest, toward others are motivated by thanksgiving, as opposed to fear. Scripture being central and the inspired word of God. The Holy Spirit inspiring us to interpret and utilize scripture in light of today's world. Joyful worship, centered around the Word. Always bring reformed through the guidance of the Spirit. Corporate confession. God's loving grace extended to all through which we are justified. Once one accepts that saving grace, one is sanctified for service and salvation.
The priesthood of all believers--giving everyone a voice, valuing the contribution of each part to the whole.
The gravity of sin and its continuing consequences.
When we say 'reformed and always being reformed according to the word of God and the power of the Spirit, and back it up with prayerful, thoughtful discernment, and in community take stands, make statements, and otherwise attest to what we believe in the long arc of history and tradition and in the present time.
God's sovereignty
Sovereignty of God Sin Grace
Sovereignty of God Priesthood of all believers Blessed Mystery of God Connectional theology Inclusion and pursuit of new Confessions
God is the one who provides salvation and there is nothing I can do about it. This is a concept that provides great relief to me.
Emphasis on sovereignty of God and limitations of humanity. Importance of scripture interpreted in context and through experience. Commitment to liberal education and learning for thinking Christians. Priesthood of all believers - no clergy - ordination to function.
Sola scriptura
the constant struggle to discern and be faithful to God's will through study of scripture and remaining open to the movement of the Holy Spirit
Emphasis on God's work, glory and power, not ours.
ordination of women, corporate and individual elements of worship like prayer, confession, and forgiveness, 2 sacraments - something happens there/grace is received - you can come to the font or table dirty and sinful in order to be made clean. Reformed Always reforming is huge to me, because my Catholic colleagues are the opposite. Canon law for them NEVER changes. Ahhh! Scripture alone faith alone.... works are nice and help show our faithfulness, but are not required. These are the things that stick out for me.
Grace
DOCTRINE OF GRACE
Emphasis on God's Providence

Grace
God's sovereignty
the belief in the sovereignty of God
Grace of God through Christ that works in us by the power of the Spirit
It is where we put the exclamation points - Grace! God's love! Our call to be a part of God's work! Scripture & Sacraments!
Grace by faith alone. Priesthood of all believers
Through Jesus, God elects his chosen to salvation by grace through faith. Salvation is in God's provident control, yet some will deny/defy through sin.
The grace offered to us through Jesus Christ and our response to that unconditional grace; an open communion table (ref: !18 & new Book of Worship)
Sovereignty of God (Jesus is Lord). Saved by grace alone through faith alone as revealed in scripture alone.
Scripture, learning, discernment and grace
Reformed and always reforming - not happening. The church is becoming increasingly irrelevant
Emphasis on sin and grace. His focus on Jesus X as Lord. Emphasis on Education. Emphasis on ecumenical involvement they sovereign grace of God in Christ. Emphasis on connectionalism
RIPIT is Protestant, Reformed, inspired by the Bible, and the good news for those who learn "High" view of God's sovereignty
Salvation through faith by grace alone. Priesthood of all believers
that god takes initiative in our salvation. Authority of scriptures. Salvation through Christ, faith as means of justification
Providence of God in all of life. Social engagement - church not isolated from society
The reformed tradition has many distinctive characteristics I personally feel the proclamation of God's grace to a hurting world is important. I love question #2 of the Heidelberg Catechism which reminds us of our guild, God's grace and that our response should be gratitude
God & creator is sovereign. Jesus Christ is God incarnate. The Holy Spirit is God's way of speaking to us.
Taking sin seriously. Role of conscience in decisions. Role of education
Polity is distinctive, but also the belief in the sovereignty of God over all creation. God made us in God's image, and gave us responsibility to care for God's good creation (something we are not doing very well)
that grace is predominant
Our theology provides a flexible set of tools and terms allowing very different people to communicate and build bridges regardless of ethnic, national or political persuasions.
Emphasis on the sovereignty of God.
We live in a covenant of grace with God, where by ours sins/brokenness are made whole through the loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ
The seriousness of sin and the wonder of God's grace through Jesus
Confessional positions - most out dated!
Emphasis upon the grace of God - the Sovereignty of God
god is still reforming us & God's not finished with us yet. Or as our UCC friends would say "God is still speaking"
That God alone is Lord of the conscience
I believe it is the idea that God is God, and we are not. Grace & Gratitude are the content of Christian

The centrality of God's sovereignty, and the way this belief is lived out in our traditions theology and polity.
Understanding of God's grace
the Christian life as a response of thanksgiving for God's saving grace through Jesus Christ and empowerment for faithfulness through the Holy Spirit
Sovereignty of God. It is God who saves us and not we ourselves. Church government by groups of elders (teaching & ruling)
Our form of church polity is our openness in the sacraments. Our commitment to healing, reconciliation & justice across divisive lines of race, gender, age, ethnicity
Reformed theology is not stagnant but changes as we continue our journey
Reformed and always reforming declares an open mind and open heart. It's important to seek diligently to follow God exactly; however, we can look at the church's past and see multiple misinterpretation. We must seek god's direction daily - we cannot foresee the futures questions
Saved by grace. Love God, Love neighbor. See through Holy Spirit, scripture
Emphasis on grace through faith in Christ. Authority of Scripture. Polity - representing government
The God who has revealed himself in the Hebrew and Christian scripture as triune and sovereign, creature, sustainer of all things. Even though he is revealed in nature, he has revealed himself perfectly in the person of Jesus Christ who has called the new covenant church to make him known to the world.
Justified by grace alone. Priesthood of all believers. The church reformed & always to be reforming according to the Word of God
We are always being reformed by the grace of God.
Our understanding of Grace
God's sovereignty. Our actions emerge from our reaction to God's grace
The Doctrines of the Sovereignty of God is central. God is in charge of the universe. God's plans rather than human schemes will prevail.
Emphasis on sovereignty of God. Reformed & always reforming. Priesthood of all believers
Emphasis on grace, election, governance though elders, covenant
Sovereignty of God - Solideo gloria. Person & work of Jesus Christ. Power and influence of Holy Spirit. The Scriptures of OT/NT. Power of Grace. Faith's influence. Confessions church
it was as close to Christianity as I can accept, however, if the liberal General Assembly continues to change, our denomination is DOOMED! LOST FOREVER.
Every matter in life and death and beyond is a faith issue. Everything begins and ends in and with God
God's election for salvation & service
We respond to God's initiating love. Our faith is not voided by our failures. Governing bodies and structures are often wrong and mostly corrected by time. Governing bodies and gov'ts exist to serve churches / individuals not the other way around as is now the case
God alone is Lord of the conscience. Our lives are responses of thanksgiving to God. Jesus is God's word
All of our being is in spite of our humanity, to be directed to God's work and call in our lives. The Christian life is a journey whereby hopefully, we grow in faith, devotion, and commitment to God. God is at work within us to bring about his purpose and plan for us.
Priesthood of all believers incarnated in our polity. God alone level of the conscience. Belhar Confession
We are open to the transformation of God's spirit. "Being reformed"
Focus on grace and building the Kingdom of God here and now.

Priesthood of all believers - we all need to follow calling of Jesus and take steps towards maturity of faith together.
Reformed and always reforming...being open to change and growth.
Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda! Reforming as we continually see the expense of God's love
Knowing that we are always being transformed into God's image. Reformed, and always reforming.
Balance of Scripture, tradition & reason. Ongoing reformation (reformed and always reforming). Reliance on God's GRACE
The sovereignty of God. The actuality of Scripture. The value of a consistent and coherent systematic theology. Confessions of Faith
The recognition that God is always about to do a new thing through us, and that nothing in this world, except for God, is immutable
the profound love of god in Christ, steadfast and unfailing. The movement of the Holy Spirit through Scripture. The church inclusive is the body of Christ at work
We are saved by grace through faith, not by anything we can achieve or earn for ourselves
It's ability to be Reformed, yet always reforming to take the gospel to an evolving world
Grace by faith alone. Priesthood of all believers
God's sovereign grace in response to our helplessness in sin so that we respond in gratitude to God's love rather than in fear of God's wrath
God - Faith, sin, Holy Spirit - created all things & in god we are created! Sin. Sin is our rebellion against God who created us for a purpose - glorify God & enjoy him forever. Solution - God sent O's only son to die for our sins, believe & faith is XT alone, gives us Salvation
Openness to change. Ecumenism. Belief in a loving God
A tradition of interpreting scripture and tradition through the lens of history, reason, science, intuition and faith. Approaching God and faith with the humility of a creature who is before the Creator.
Confession Bible - Scripture come first - Calling Election
The sovereignty of God as mediated through the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all things...Election...covenant order according to God's word...Stewardship of God's reaction and transformation from idolatry
I like the principle of the Reformed Church of France: croire, c'est cussian (to believe means to think). Our theology is open to debate and dis-together. Understanding how God's kingdom here and now we can live in this new reality.
Sovereignty of God
God created - respects truth in tension
The sovereignty of God in all creation & life & history. Reverence for scripture. God is revealed as Triune. God is shown as love & grace & law especially in Jesus Christ. Guidance of tradition
Primary of Scripture, salvation by grace alone, sacraments as signs and seals of God's promise. (true) church marked by work (preaching) and sacraments
Sovereignty of God as a primary emphasis
It is very weak and divides more than lends confidence
God chooses who is to be saved through Jesus Christ
Salvation of grace
Reformed church always reforming without changing God's word to fit human whims.
We have a historic emphasis on the sovereignty of God, and we express our theology with ardor & order.
Direct access to God through Jesus, Bible in my own language
Grace

Priesthood of any believers
I think that's changing - Our core aligns with other protestant theologies. But a willingness to confront issues & change perspectives is somewhat stronger - so "Always reforming" is a key point.
Reformed and always reforming according to God's word
That it is a living, moving consideration - vital rather than static
Priesthood of all believers
The acknowledgement that we - who have been created in God's Image - are fallen creatures. We cannot heal our own brokenness. But, God in God's grace reconciled the relationship - healed the brokenness in and through Jesus Christ. When we accept him as our Savior & Lord we are adopted as God's children and have an eternal inheritance in and through Him.
God alone is Lord of the conscience. Sovereignty of God. Ecclesiology - polity
It's unique combination of emphasis on God's call, human sinfulness, salvation in Christ, and God's graceful activity on our behalf
Predestination
Insistence on God's sovereignty over a fallen but redeemed world. God elected to save us in Jesus.
Grace is a cornerstone of Reformed Theology. I think we struggle with the "head vs heart" dynamic - we tend to favor the head over the heart, structure and process over risk and action.
Priesthood of all believers
God is sovereign over <u>all</u> . God saves a sinful humanity through covenant. Through the work of Jesus I am invited into that covenant.
Reformed, always being Reformed
"always reforming" & accepting & inclusive
Reformed, <u>always</u> reforming. Openness to new ways of understanding God / God's work
Reformed / Presbyterian theology is distinctive in that it attempts to express in orderly form, the major truth's about God, faith, son & holy spirit and God; (illegible) to his creation & humanity. My "theologies" are by comparison sloppy.
The core distinctive of Reformed theology are solus Christus - Salvation of Christ Alone, the doctrine of Scripture and the doctrine of Grace
God alone is sovereign. Christ is the son of God. Salvation through Christ alone. The priesthood of all believers
the sovereignty of God, as known through the free, electing grace of Jesus Christ
1. That God's intentions for us are best discerned in community. 2. that Faith is a <u>gift</u> of the Spirit. 3. That Grace is unmerited.
Jesus is the only bridge to the father & necessary for salvation
government
Sovereignty of God' s high view of Scripture
Based on God's revelation in the Bible rather than on Church doctrine
God's sovereignty and provision
Our republican form of church government that emphasis salvation by grace through faith
Sovereignty of God
God's sovereignty, which means God can, and should surprise us. Reformed and always reforming, which means we must always be learning and changing. Great ends of the church, which lead us into engaging persons and society
the double emphasis on sin & redemption. That indeed, we are fallen, but God in Christ, on God's own doing, has lifted us
God's grace for all who come to Christ
Reformed in the past, being reformed in the present, will be reformed in the future. That is to say "Reformed theology is ongoing journey".

Our understanding of Grace
Emphasis on covenant
<u>Always</u> reforming
God's glory, goodness, grace
Five Solas: Through Christ alone; glory of God alone; through Scripture alone; by faith alone; by grace alone.
We claim certain truths - grounded - grace - but always admit we may be wrong
Sovereignty of God, Christ alone is Lord of the conscience. Grace through faith. Covenant. Grace covenant confirmed by faith. Sacraments, 1 baptism, Lord's supper. Engage society & practice faith within that society. Acknowledging we are 1 expression of the Church for the only one.
Emphasis on the sovereignty of God, total depravity of humankind - the inability to earn or merit our salvation, emphasis on stewardship in all areas, covenant promises / community
God's initiatives in reaching out to humanity
Saved by grace - responding to God's grace with love.
Our focus on the sovereignty of a gracious god, and our willingness to involve our whole selves (head, heart, experience, worldly knowledge) in our pursuit of J.C.
That god is sovereign. That Jesus Christ is the only Savior. That the Bible is God's word. That Salvation is by grace through faith alone.
The covenant of God's grace, trumps the adherence to the Law (through faith--(in Christ))
Jesus invites one to surrender their Free will for His will. Then, He equips the surrendered to live His will.
Confessional statements and confessions
We keep explore scripture to see how we address issues of today.
Doctrine of election, sovereignty of God, and our response to God's grace in our stewardship
We take seriously that God is Sovereign both in soteriological "election" as well as in the day-by-day happenstance of human life.
The sovereignty of God
The concept of grace and the sovereignty of God, Sola Fides, Sola Scripture, Sola Ecclesin
Grace "you are accepted"
All truth is God's truth, our ecumenical & interfaith - interreligious commitments to all - global vision
goodness of God's creation; human sinfulness; human stewardship of God's creation; importance of lifelong learning about scripture, creation, self; God's intimate concern about human life - how we live, how we treat others; leading of the H.S. in all aspects of life; in exhaustible riches of scripture
That it is always being reformed
We are saved by grace & faith in J.C. - a gift of God
Sin taken seriously as the human problem, i.e. turning away from God. But <u>most</u> important is God's grace (in JC) as the solution.
*emphasis on grace & divine sovereignty. *pervasiveness of sin *confessionalism *connectional *anti-idolatry *3rd use of the law *word & spirit "biunity" *Calvin's teaching on communion as prenatological event of Christology
god's revelation to us through Scripture through creation, other people - representative government
it affirms the providence of God; god acts in grace, love and mercy and we respond
An emphasis on grace. God's sovereignty, freedom of conscience and ecumenical commitment
It is always reforming - allows & encourages growth, maturity, & change. Take scripture seriously & the leading of God's Spirit
God, not I, is in control.

God's grace precedes any and all of our actions, whether we act in accordance with God's will or not.
Importance of both "lay" and clergy - equality of leadership - no one person like the Pope, who inherits power to make theological decisions
Reformed & always reforming, union with Christ, called - Salvation, services
the sovereignty of God and Jesus Christ is Lord and head of the church
We are always in progress of becoming what God wants us to be. Grace theology emphasized!
Sovereignty of God
Sovereignty of God; the belief that nothing is beyond Q's control or person. God's providence is central as well.
Nothing distinctive since strict Calvinism is no longer followed - my faith is influenced by all branches of Protestantism (& Catholicism)
Reformed theology is distinctive in its emphasis on scripture as the word of God and its emphasis on Grace in that salvation is the free gift of God for those who trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
Grace - God moves towards us in love even before we are aware. The Holy Spirit gives us faith, helps us respond to God's love in Jesus Christ. We don't earn it, we receive it & respond to it
Our understanding of the priesthood of believers that leads to our use of Ruling Elders to lead the church community.
Authority of Scripture and sovereignty of God
Total depravity, Doctrine of Grace, Unconditional election. Our understanding of the sovereignty of God, the Trinity, the human / divine nature of Christ, Justification by grace through faith
Providence of God. Power of corporate sin. Grace's response is gratitude. Confessions from across time & space. All vocations are / should be a calling
The distinctiveness is centered around the process of theological reflections, in relation to Scripture (the revealed Word) and, what it means to God's people as covenant witnesses
The Bible is the authoritative Word of God and we believe that our faith is always reforming according to & as we hold it up to scripture.
Priesthood of all believers, scripture alone, reformed and always being reformed
The head/heart pull - the leading of mind and spirit
The claim that God through the Spirit continues to change hearts and understandings of scripture.
Scripture always fresh - not dynamic because always reforming
Barth's conception of Jesus' election. Sovereignty & grace as first principles
Salvation by faith alone through Scripture
emphasis on divine sovereignty, grace of God, providence, authority of scripture
In Reformed Theology we teach a system of confession and forgiveness to liberate the sin sick soul. However, it is only one aspect of our faith. There is grace that is beyond our action.
We know that we are a work in progress shaped by the presence of a loving God
Sovereignty
God as sovereign in all creation - and God's grace & mercy as shown in Jesus Christ
1. Open to change/Reform as led by the Holy Spirit. 2. Confession as part of Worship
Incarnation means God <u>accommodates</u> to creation (embodied in stuff of this world) yet redemption always <u>relativizes</u> every culture it inhabits.
It is God's sovereign will/love that guides us and continues to re-form us. We are, in and of ourselves, unable to choose the good; it is God's grace that empowers us to do so. God's actions, through Christ's faithfulness, that has saved us. The Holy Spirit binds us to Christ and guides us in sanctification
Reformed / Always Reforming - forward thinking: seeking god's will: work for today

Confidence in God. Recognition of the brokenness of sin. Embrace of all of life (secular & sacred) as God's domain.
Unconditional love
Solas (5)
The motto sola scriptura
the church as a transformer of society
Sovereignty of God, centrality of SOLAS, TULIP calvinisms
Our lives are lived in gratitude for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Our purpose is to glorify god & enjoy god forever (not worry about whether we or anyone else is "going to heaven").
Emphasis on God's sovereign love of providence & grace, most fully revealed in Jesus Christ restoring human relationships with god and with one another, saving us from our ever present sin.
1) Sovereignty of god. 2) Authority of Scripture. 3) Open communion. 4) Saved by Grace of God through Jesus Christ. 5) One baptism. 6) Priesthood of all believers
Grace - if only people really got it - practiced it to others
Changing and always changing
Dynamic, continuous, on-going interaction among my life, God's will, and current events as guided by scripture, Holy Spirit, and current events
We are saved by grace through faith in Christ's atoning work on the cross
Sovereignty of God
God acts, we respond - and God acts with Love and grace
Reformed, always reforming in the larger context of contemporary world view.
Sin is the depraved condition of us as sinners that need to be saved. God unconditional love is paramount to our spiritual dealing. Jesus atonement justifies us in salvation for clarification in eternity. God's grace is the irresistible natural God's acts to redeem and reconcile us. and Paul is persevering in truth and faith no matter what happens for will of God.
The priesthood of all believers (and the resultant polity)
Karl Barth tried to answer this very question. He wrote church dogmatics. His thoughts and opinions could not fit in this space!
Sola scripture, election, obedience, grace, faith
Emphasis on God's sovereignty
God's GRACE! We are saved by grace!!
Sovereignty of God; faith, grace alone, Christians, scriptures alone
Our reliance on God moving in our lives
*Emphasis on the sovereignty of God. *Frank acceptance of the reality of human sinfulness *Radical emphasis on the Grace of God in Jesus Christ *Strong serve of the calling of humanity to live lives of faithfulness in this secular world *Embrace of science the intellect
god is sovereign, Trinity Godhead (Son Holy Spirit), following example, importance of Scripture, preaching, always reforming, the importance of the sacraments of the Lord's Supper & Baptism
Sovereignty of God (not me/us)
the full "semper" motto to include the part about always turning to Christ!
It's focus on God - its understanding of scripture and Christ is alone, Lord of the conscience
The covenantal life that we live out together before God. We don't operate as individual churches but as a part of something much larger. We are always listening to God's voice in each new moment & in each ne experience.

Sovereignty of God, priesthood of all believers, elect, covenant life, recognizing humanity's tendency to idolatry & tyranny calling God's people to work for transformation & reconciliation
The abundance of grace, the respect for "other" and the provision of a framework that provides order and spirit.
Center being Triune God, Scripture, continued revelation, GRACE Reformed & always reforming. Confessions are guiding examples of faith in action as a particular time. Since God continues to be revealed - we cannot put God in a box - we must be open to God's Spirit in Community of Believers & thoughtful study & reflection.
Saved by God's grace, not our works or faith
God through Jesus Christ has revealed Himself. We are destined by God to receive God's leading because I (we) are only stewards of the life and he destined us for.
that grace saves us from ourselves and reconnects us to God
A focus on Scripture as the witness to Christ
Very little - we are reformed and reforming always reforming
That humanity is saved by god's Grace first through JC in faith. But that God's love extends to all through JC & his church
Being a connectional church and election of our leadership
* Grace alone, faith alone, scripture alone. * Importance of scripture & rich engagement through study, prayer & preaching. * Representative, connectional system of governance
Grace, faith as a gift; centrality of the Word
Change acknowledge and understanding grow
Leadership structure - democratic / connectional reformed and always reforming - openness also the tradition
Reformed theology affirms God's sovereignty and humanity's sinfulness, and at the same time demonstrates God's mercy and grace
God's radical grace sufficient for our great need - always & forever.
Reformed and always to be reforming
Emphasis on Sovereignty of God
God alone is fond of the conscience. We are created by God to be theologically thinking people
Each individual has access to God without need for the benefit of a mediator such as a priest/pope
Justification of salvation by grace and faith
reformed & always reforming
Distinctives: of Reformed Theology. 1) Liberty from all form of tyranny and oppression. 2) Grace and graciousness. 3) Authority of "the Word of God" (dogma or Liberating word) 4) Transforming faith. 5) Priesthood of all believers
Sovereignty of God and Salvation of Grace in Jesus Christ
The belief in the sovereignty of God
Church reforming according to the Word of God
Abundance of grace & need of forgiveness
Sovereignty of God, God chooses us not vice-versa, priesthood of all believers (people) in all vocations, irresistible grace (ultimately)
More tolerant. Kinder, Forgiving emphasis. Consider God's grace
God's sovereignty not ours
Sovereignty of God; saved by grace through faith; "ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda"; election of officers by the congregation; the right to dissent; attention to the content and life of the mind...

Appendix D: Members' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Open-Ended Question on the Importance of
Various Reformed/Presbyterian Principles

Q-16: Please elaborate on your response to the question about the importance to you of various Reformed/Presbyterian principles.

“Promotion of social righteousness” is the only principle that differs from the denomination to which I was a member previously
?
A calling has more depth than a job or contract. Grace is what we should be all about all the time. Without stewardship there would be no church.
A person can become a committee member or elder and session member to aid in the decisions for the church
A, B, C, D & F unclear as to definition of
Actions speak louder than words. I believe in deeds and grace rather than proclamations of holiness.
Aided by the Holy Spirit and the people of God (church) nurtures my faith in Jesus and helps me to transform belief into action. Work with God as copartner to bring His kingdom to our earth.
all church members have certain responsibility
All of these are very important to me, but I am probably a bit more sensitive to some rather than others, due to my role as chair of a presbytery nominating committee. Particularly regarding the Book of Order, joint governance by ruling and teach elders, etc.
all of these things are important, but above all acting in ways which affirm our call to love God and love neighbor.
All of us have sinned, but God's love and grace are available to all. All people have God-given gifts and are called to use them in God's service. But no gift is more important than any other.
All should be about what God through Christ has done and is doing.
All these principles are important to the Christian walk.
All these principles are important, some more important or impactful, than others. Of all those listed, I find the Sovereignty of God to be paramount. I also believe Church leadership is called, not sought, and thus leading a Covenant life provides a flesh and blood example to not just the youngest among us but to everyone around us.
Allows for varying opinions on scripture
Allows me to be a child of God all my life...so I can fall and get up.... know I'm not perfect but with God's help will keep trying faith is a lifelong learning experience and PCUSA is a means...
As a church community, we need to be open to others but also have a clear focus on how to do it.
As a LIFELONG Presbyterian....I must have missed the definition of Election...but if it means that God elects us or we elect God, then I don't feel that is the way it works. I believe that God is in all, through all, and above all. I believe that in life and in death we belong to God.
As a Presbyterian and a deacon, all of the principles are important to know about the Presbyterian faith.

Because of God's grace we are called to be stewards of His gifts to us.
Belief in grace trumps all.
Biblical teaching & study is the most important to me.
Both are important but in no particular order
Calling - We are called as Christians to be the disciples of Christ. Grace - We are saved through our faith in Jesus Christ even though we are sinners
Calling to faith and service is important. We must work to find what is the Christian approach to our daily life and thinking. The Bible gives some guidance but we must work at faith and service. I do not think God tells us what to do or think. When we understand the size of the universe(s) and that fact that we are but a speck in the universes I do not think we are central in God's creation.
can't do it
Connectionalism has virtually disappeared from the PCUSA. I have attended every GA since 1987 yet last 2 years, especially in Portland, found few people to connect with - maybe 30 or so - and only about 10% of delegates shared my Reformed/Presb principles. I marked social righteousness so low both because PCUSA seems to care about their definition of it to the exclusion of everything else and because PCUSA leadership and I have very different definitions. What is the social righteousness in condoning the killing of children before birth? We idolize 'choice' and human autonomy. Scripture is ignored.
Connectionalism, grace, ministers and elders lead church together and sovereignty of God most important to me
Didn't know what connectionalism was.
Don't know what is meant by b & c. I leave d to God, & God is loving/grace. So don't worry about it. G & h are needed to check f. Stewardship of God's world is very important to me.
don't know what social righteousness is
Each item is important to me. Ranking them is difficult. While I do not reflect on election very much, I do believe it is a concern when many folks accept the principle without study, reflection, or prayer.
Each of us decides and behaves according to their beliefs and principles and respect for leaders.
Elders are ministers too!
Election: This principle seems to me to be the product of human logic. It defies the greater principle of God's all-encompassing love and grace.
Even though God never changes our culture does. We embrace change and look to God's word for guidance.
Following Grace in all we do.
For me the idea of calling, stewardship and the priesthood of all believers serve as the most important Reformed theological principals. They show our commitment to building a better world and following Jesus' call to us. They show how we are part of a church that emphasizes equality between lay and clergy in a way that is important and real.
God is above all. These principles are those of the Reformed tradition. One of my favorite quotes is: God is like the top of a mountain. There are many roads up the mountain.' I truly believe this. How we get up the mountain is individual preference.
God is the All powerful. Knowing and loving Him is what All nations will do.
God is the creator of the universe. We are called into a covenant-contractual relationship. God acted and we must also choose Christ. Grace is Amazing. God is sovereign, yet we have choices. We live in a world of sinners. We are sinners, and our job is to share the good news of Jesus.
God's grace and mercy make my life livable. God's call and claim give me purpose and hope.

God's grace freely given.
Good to have guiding principles.
Grace - without it none of us would have a chance to reach the gates of heaven
Grace and social righteousness are paramount principles
Grace extended to us by God. Use them extend grace to our fellow humans. Jesus "God with us" our Emanuel and example
Grace is a gift from God. Stewardship is a way to give back to God of our time, talents and money.
Grace is crucial, because we have all 'sinned and fallen short.'
Grace is important because we cannot be worthy or earn Gods love. We need to consider all people as Gods children and therefore should be the focus of our concern and love
Grace is of utmost importance in the reformed faith; we can't be without it. I grew up in a denomination that thought social righteousness was not important, so now as a Presbyterian, I believe in it.
Grace is very important, but I am finding many ministers are very lacking in this.
Grace!
Grace... it's all about the love, baby!
having grown up in a non-denominational church dependent on ministerial charisma as leadership principal, I appreciate the systematic style & liturgy in my church
I adhere to the principles but fail to carry through
I am not a theologian. For me grace is all around if I slow down enough to see it and breath it in.
I am not sure what the various principles are
I am simply a follower of Christ and Presbyterian allows me freedom of how to follow.
I am thankful to be held in a covenant relationship by God through Jesus' work on the cross. I take seriously my stewardship of time, talents, gifts and my body for the Kingdom.
I answered on my current beliefs, not necessarily those of Reformed/Presbyterian principles.
I answered the questions with what I thought was important
I base my decisions on the teaching of the bible not on some goofy term generated by someone who is getting paid too much for doing nothing.
I believe all aspects listed are important in leading a committed Christian life, but God's grace is imperative to understanding that as imperfect as I am in my walk, by God's grace I am still loved and accepted.
I believe all believers have direct access to God, no need for human mediator; ministers and elders have been set apart to lead the church seeking God's will for a particular congregation - not without sin themselves, but should earnestly seek God's will for the mission of the local church
I believe all of these are theological principles of Reformed/Presbyterian faith. And I definitely choose to be a member of a PCUSA in large part because of the theology.
I believe faith leads us to act on behalf of Jesus Christ and in his name, in this life. I'm much more interested in this life then what happens after I die.
I believe God's grace is critical to me. I cannot earn God's blessing it is given freely to me although I am unworthy to receive it.
I believe I said all I have to say.
I believe in being called to lead. I believe strongly in acting as the hands and feet of Christ in the world

I believe in God the Father Almighty and His Son, Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilot, was crucified, dead and buried, the third day He arose from the dead.
I believe people are called, if they will listen. They should follow their calling. The church should be led by a combination of teaching and ruling elders to avoid one person having too much influence in the running of the church. We all are, or should be, committed to telling the world about Jesus. As Christians, we should follow the teachings of Jesus, including helping those in need (social righteousness).
I believe that each of us are called by God to serve each other using our own special gifts. However, we are all so different and have different ideas on who God is and how he works. I believe that we all receive God's grace - it is a gift given to us unconditionally by God who loves each of us.
I believe that God gives grace to everyone
I believe that God's grace, through Jesus Christ, is the core of my belief. The rest of the principles stem from that.
I believe that those principles that emphasize group accountability are more important, and (paradoxically) that the idea of connectionalism is today less important in its traditional sense. I have come to this conclusion out of frustration with PC(USA) and the heterodoxy found in so many of its churches. When self-avowed atheists are teaching elders in good standing, I see no connectionalism. When the GA's organizers see no problem with having a Muslim pray to Allah at the start of a Christian meeting, I see no accountability. And, when I see our presbyteries grasping and litigating for the properties of departing churches who wish to join another branch of Presbyterianism, I see a mockery of the idea of connectionalism and a shame of avarice as bad as the outrages happening in the splintering Episcopal Church. I am ashamed for our denomination.
I believe that through God's grace, we will be accepted into Heaven. By following Jesus' teachings and fully accepting Jesus as God's son and our teacher, we will be eligible for that acceptance.
I believe that ultimately god evaluates everyone based on them as a person or individual and their actions, not what religion they are - so if a reformed pres is a good, god loving person and the principles are sound then they will be judged accordingly
I believe the average person can be as good and holy as the pope. Don't have to go through a priest to get to God. The natural result of God wanting us to love others is social justice.
I believe the body of Christ is a beautiful, diverse body, and I have been blessed and fed by many traditions. But I personally have experienced the freedom and joy of God within the Presbyterian tradition and feel that all of these principles reflect that sovereignty and grace, as well as the reality of our need for that grace. By emphasizing the sovereignty of God and grace, the reformed tradition leads to a very democratic approach both in recognizing our own sinfulness as well as the gifts of leadership residing in all types of people. And that we share in the work of Christ together, equally. We are to live our discipleship in the world, but not be of it. But we should not think that our efforts are what brings the kingdom of God. We pursue social justice because that is what Christ does. But it is his work.
I believe these Reformed themes intertwine. For example, stewardship is part of covenant life, promoting social justice, etc.
I believe those of the LGBT community were created by god just as I am --promotion of social righteousness and priesthood of all believers
I believed in the reformed/Presbyterian principles.
I consider myself much more to be a Christian than a Presbyterian

I did not join a church until I was 20-21. I have always been grateful that Presbyterian had been the church I chose. The democracy within our church's organization, the emphasis on Jesus's teaching, emphasis on helping <u>all</u> people (good or bad) is important to me.
I do not know what is meant by the principles of 'Human tendency to idolatry and tyranny' and 'Promotion of social righteousness.'
I don't know - I am not informed or educated about subject thoroughly
I don't know that much about those principles in their Reformed/Presbyterian context. Am not educated on our formal doctrine.
I don't know what social righteousness is
I don't understand any of the principles well.
I don't understand the question
I don't worry about reformed correctness. The Catholics have some good ideas.
I embrace Reformers principles but I embrace more building bridges, tearing down barriers between denominationalism & divisions between different faith traditions
I enjoy being responsible for my individual choices but being connected with the organized Church.
I feel it is important to understand the Reformed Presbyterians
I feel stewardship of time, talents, and treasure is very important in my life as a Christian. I have been blessed beyond my deserving, and my faith leads me to share that blessing with those around me.
I feel strongly that each one of us can 'access' God and we do not require that relationship to be mediated by professional theologians (as in the Catholic church, for example). Professional theologians are obviously critically important, though, in that they help us identify, understand and deepen our relationship with God and our spirituality.
I follow the bible
I grew up as a member of E of England (Elementary School & Church). I love the Presbyterian Church and the opportunities it has given me to explore these principles and learn (Some Sundays I miss the Liturgy of C of E!!)
I grew up with these principles
I have a hard time believing election, but a lot of principles follow from that, which makes them less relevant to me
I have insufficient knowledge to answer this question
I have learned my lessons about Reformed principles from my family and my church.
I have never heard the term connectionalism
I have nothing more to say on this at this time.
I listed the ones that I felt most important under the "very important" column; the ones I was unfamiliar with under the "no opinion" category
I love clergy and lay persons working together to lead the church; clergy teaching us the principles and allowing us to perceive our calling, and to practice what we have learned.
I love that our church is led by itself and its members and the decisions of our daily operation and even the selection of our Pastor is all done by members and not by an outside party (ie Presbytery, PCUSA etc.)
I love the Presbyterian Polity I feel that it gives everyone a chance to be a part of the church and to serve God. Freedom of conscience and the encouragement to learn from pastors and leaders that have had training.

I question if these principles have influence over my actions and beliefs and opinions of church administration and ministry.
I sense that valuing the connectional aspect of the Presbyterian church has slipped in recent decades. Our self-referenced culture and American individualism is winning out. I'm sad to observe that collective efforts (especially in mission and funding) by presbytery and GA are disappearing in favor of projects and endeavors reflecting individual enthusiasms. Sustained, collective action is taking a back seat. I became a Presbyterian as an adult and appreciated the strong denominational connections - I see that they keep us on track as a group.
I think supporting other believers is very important and extending grace as God has extended us grace. We are all called to be the ministers of Christ.
I think the most important principles to me is that everyone has a role in the church and that the leadership should be cooperative.
I think we are called by God to minister to each other, in ways that are unique to each of us, according to our strengths and weaknesses. None of us are perfect but God is working in us to be better people.
I value communities of faith being guided by Scripture, the Holy Spirit and one another as we stand against the oppression that hinders human flourishing and invite people into the abundant life God offers in Jesus Christ.
I value the Presbyterian values of church leadership, grace and stewardship
I was raised Baptist, became a Methodist church musician after seminary, and became a Presbyterian to consolidate a faith basis for a blended family after my 2nd marriage to a Catholic woman, 36 yrs ago. Would I say that Reformed/Presbyterian principles are better than other traditions? No! I would say that finding the life, teachings of Jesus, and being part of the community of faith that his disciples created and has lasted and grown over the past 2000 years is a very good reason to be a Christian. But I believe people of all faith traditions are seeking the 'truth' about what it means to be human within this cosmic reality and that we should honor each other's quest for 'truth' and work together to make Jesus admonition in Matthew 25 become a reality in today's globally shrinking world.
I was raised in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church where we learned to fear God. Presbyterianism taught me about God's love and God's grace.
I worry about religion and extremism. I find more faith in individual spirituality. I find more connection to God when I help with social justice issues and helping my community and country. There should be no room for hate or intolerance but sometimes that's what I see with some religious folks.
I would not be a member of a Presbyterian church if I did not deem these principles to be of the utmost importance!
I'd rather not elaborate
If justice & righteousness go hand in hand - yes
If not called, why bother? Connectionalism, if we can bring ourselves to look outside our doors to other churches and resources, we would be stronger and more effective.
I'm associating Calling with Discernment and think both of these are very important. Grace is possibly the single most important principle. We are all Christians and we all have different talents, education and experience to use in leading the church together. God's sovereignty is of vital importance and may be the only principle that is more important than Grace. We were created to be stewards of God's creation making Stewardship very important. Connectionalism is important but I don't think as important as some of the other topics. I'm not sure what is meant by Covenant Life - Christian Living maybe? Election is a principle I struggle with (especially in answering Question #12 above) but it is an important principle. I interpreted Human tendency toward idolatry and tyranny as sin and I believe the concept of sin and that we are all sinners is an important principle to understand.

I'm currently serving on a Pastor Nominating Committee, so I'm in tune with a lot of the polity of the church. But, man is flawed to our core. It is through communion with God and our brothers and sisters in the faith that we are brought into grace. We demonstrate our faith through our works of social justice. The ruling and teaching elders work as a team to reflect the goals of their church and the church catholic. There has to be the attentiveness to God's will in all. The polity of the church as a representative democracy is a foundation upon which our country was built. King George referred to the American Revolution as a Presbyterian revolution.
I'm not knowledgeable about the exact meanings of the principals of Connectionism, Covenant life or Election.
I'm not sure I understand the question dealing with idolatry/tyranny... we should guard against it and teach/preach to avoid it.
I'm not sure I understand what Connectionalism means in this context. The idea of election is difficult, but also hard to avoid; since it is beyond our control or understanding, however, I'm not sure how central it should be (this is more a topic for a book than questionnaire response, I know). I am not active in stewardship, but nonetheless recognize its importance.
I'm not sure I'm knowledgeable in all that's Reformed. Always learning. But I hold all are children of God, and it is not my place to pass any judgment on anyone. But it's important to understand right and wrong.
I'm not sure what is meant by Connectionalism and Covenant Life.
Inclusive and forgiving
It is apparent that I do not know much about connectionalism or election. So sorry for that. I am a lapsed Catholic and never received instruction on these. Any way to bring myself up to date with that?
It is by grace we are saved! We are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus and we are redeemed by His life.
It is important for us to make the world a better place and spread love for everyone by helping and providing service.
It is important to me that one church hierarchy hands down dogmas saying this is what I have to believe. It is the freedom of conscience, always guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit that is very important.
It is important to not only study and reflect on the principles but also to live and embrace them
It makes us what we are.
Its importance
It's important to me that ALL are welcome; we are inclusive.
It's what I teach; it's what I live -- and have for 40 years. My life and ministry are an open book.
It's who we are, it's why the Reformed witness to the world is important, regardless of what happens to the denomination
LEADERSHIP IN OUR CHURCH IS VERY IMPORTANT TO OUR RELIGION
Makes my belief and Christian life personal and accessible
Many of these, I don't know what they are.
Micah 6:8
Miniatures and Elders leading together is very important, so all in a congregation can feel connected. I also think calling is an important idea, leading myself in particular to positions I would not have felt qualified for otherwise. I believe there is one god, but others have a different way of perceiving and worshipping

Most are deeply ingrained in my psyche. I have been Presbyterian all my life and at least 4 generations of my family were Presbyterian. I find election less important than the other principles only because it is a difficult concept. It is one I need to study more.
My husband and I are both Elders. We take these seriously.
My opinion so far.
My personal relationship to God in direct communication leads me to know, believe, and understand that God's will for me in this world I'd revealed through Reformed theology.
N/A
Na
NA
No answer
No comment
no comment
No comment
No need for go-bet-weens, either with their intervention or interpretations.
no specific comment
Not all Reformed/Presbyterian denominations hold the same view of connectionalism. Ministers and elders (all presbyters) lead realizing/honoring that God's will is expressed to/within all believers. All things belong to God, even us - 'In life and in death we are God's.'
Not sure what 'connectionalism' is, the term never came up in a sermon or Sunday school class.
Not very familiar with the first 4 - so I guessed at their meaning.
Of the principles listed above, items g and k resonate most strongly with me because lay leadership is missing/low priority in other denominations, esp.l Catholic and stewardship of money, time, and talent makes for a vibrant church.
Our constitutionalism is extremely important. We can do more together and we need to support each other
Our role is to share God's love, grace, and expectations with one another and others, not to judge or exclude others. We also have a responsibility to teach our own to share those as well, including those young members who experience a call to the ministry and those who are in our seminaries heading into the ministry.
Principles must be led by the personal life of God. God's actions on our behalf cannot be reduced to principles, but can be descriptive of the relation of God to us. Having established the active life of God, we as humans share in a responsive and participate manner by Grace.
realistic view of humanity, but priesthood not limited to church leaders, responsibility to help bring God's justice to our world
Reformed / Presbyterian principles are the reference point of my faith and life. I believe that it is not the only truth, my part of The Truth I come to know God and experience more deeply the life of the spirit in community with others different faiths and cultures, as well as experience the awesome power of the Holy in the beauty of the universe
Reformed principles are the basis of my faith. Grace and the Sovereignty of God are primary. That John 14:6 is true gives me assurance.
Ruling elders and teaching elders lead the church together.
Salvation through grace from the sovereign God who calls us to covenant living is the key to my life and faith. Avoiding the human tendency to idolatry including the "virtue signaling" of Social Justice Warriors is to be avoided.
Scripture is understood through the guidance of the Holy Spirit by the individual believer. Faith is strengthened through fellowship and equal participation in interpreting Scripture.

See Q14
See Q14 answer
Social issues are important BUT they can become PC and divisive. PC/USA often is PC and it can draw you to a very narrow message that divides people; the message should be inclusive to generate dialog and not shut it down.
Social righteousness is a sensitive subject. Presbyterians are all inclusive which is a positive thing but people should still be held accountable socially. We love in a world with all kinds of people and children looking up to adults. Being responsible and aware of others is important as a Christian.
Social righteousness is baloney. Our Christian practices are all we need
some who are called are not able to answer due to life. We all need to understand grace and what it means over all. Christians killing each other and going to war when food, water, and shelter are more to gods calling...
Sovereignty of God is supreme and shapes our relationship with God and grace as the overarching certainty that we are forgiven in Jesus Christ.
Stewardship is important to demonstrate one's faith, not in a bragging way, but to be an example of what Christians are called to do to help others.
Support sound basis in history, Confessions, Book of Order and tradition. BUT, guided by reformed, always reforming.
Thanks to recent changes in the PCUSA I'm becoming more and more Eastern Orthodox.
That we are called into ministry with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who along with God the Father and the Holy Spirit leads us to live Christ-centered lives. Presbyterian connectionalism with pastors and elders working together within their church and with other churches helps leaders grow in their leadership roles.
That we depend on the grace of God for our salvation, the Holy Trinity is at work in our lives, and the following of the Scriptures as a guidebook
That would take me at least 10 pages, with footnotes. I find myself wondering at the agenda here... Is this part of an effort to redefine how we frame ourselves as PCUSA? An effort to repackage and market our tradition differently? Get at the pulse of congregants? As a seminarian I frequently wonder about our inordinately cumbersome ordination process. Building the Kingdom, from my angle, needs leaders. Barriers to leadership are one of my PCUSA concerns (just look at how Methodists and DOC folks license local pastors and let them hit the ground running). Why don't we do this? Sorry for the digression... But, with regard to PCUSA, that's where my head is right now.
That's a BIG question. We need more education in the nuances of these theological principles. We also need to be coming up with creative ideas for how to tell the world about what we believe. We need to spend less time fighting, more time confessing, and even more time moving forward and living into the creative reality that God is bringing about in this world. We are not abandoned. We must care for our earth. We must worship beautifully, and we must give Christians a good name. How do we do that? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, visit those in prison, care for destitute, empower and advocate for minorities. And shut up about who's in and who's out. That's God's job. This will be our witness to the world.
The acceptance of all people no matter who they are or where they are in life's journey.
The activity of God on our behalf, for us, in us, through us is of ultimate importance. Our humanity and our connection to other human beings is also important but secondary
the church as social betterment agent is a good model
The church is a body of individuals coming together for various purposes. It is vital that the community choose its leaders, and that it have a set of core principles to keep it focused.
The church is never stagnant nor static.

The church should play an important role, so individuals live a connected faith driven life
The connectedness of our theology is important to me. I come from a congregational (prior to UCC) background and I like the fact that Presbyterians do things together. We spend time making decisions in a 'slow and steady' manner.
The conscience of believers is not to be bound by any ecclesiastical body without explicit Scriptural authority. For this, reformers have shed their blood.
The fact that we are ALL teachers of the word and don't need to have a priest to intervene for us is important. Who's knows who gets into Heaven, so I don't dwell on 'election.' All I can do is to live the best way I can and follow the Golden Rule. As far as the importance of being a 'connectional' church, it is important that together we can share the love of Christ and do more in the community. Each church can only do so much. We also have the ability to learn from each other. We already have too many versions of being Presbyterian anyway.
The freedom of knowing I am a child of God by His Grace allows me to serve @ this with a new spirit and practice my faith within a Priesthood of all believers knowing we are all children of God
the homosexual issue can be very decisive to the church ...
The importance of our theology and how that can be interpreted in social activism
The ones marked no opinion are the parts of religion that get in the way of relationship with God. That should be our primary focus. That and sharing it with others.
The people having a voice in the way the church is run is crucial to my involvement. Giving to the larger group for larger purposes is important to me. Social righteousness or social justice is essential.
The power of sin and grace is essential to me to live in this world, also God's sovereignty, God being in charge, not me, also stewardship of all God's gifts and resources
The principles make sense! Study, time and intellect have put together a meaningful way to understand and explain our beliefs.
The principles provide a foundation, or anchor point, on which to stand as I explore and discover God and my relationships with others. For me, the specific principles of that foundation may shift and change over time, as I learn and grow, but God's love and grace are always there to keep me rooted.
The real important issue is the relationship with Jesus Christ, all else is secondary
The Reformed / Presbyterian principles are important as currently stated
the Sovereignty of God and Bible based beliefs are most important
The Sovereignty of God is key for me, through his Sovereignty, he has the power to Love me and has promised to care for me if I look to him as Lord. Through Christ, he has offered me Grace for my human sins and failings. In so doing he calls me to follow Christ by being a good steward of my gifts for the benefit of those less fortunate (the alien, widow and orphan so to speak). I also believe that the use of my skills in the way I work and lead is a calling to demonstrate my faith in all that I do.
The sovereignty of God is the foundation of our faith. The priesthood of all believers is the foundation of our relation to each other, equal in the sight of God. The confessions lay out what we as a church believe.

<p>The Sovereignty of God, the Grace that has been offered to all, and the calling of those who minister in His name is extremely important. Not only are teaching ministers called, but also those who are ruling ministers are called to lead the church together. Neither one should have more power or authority over the other. Also, people are called to serve in a variety of ways through the church. This can be volunteering for committee work, supporting of various ministries by work or financially (stewardship), or through prayer. Through these ministries, various social issues may be addressed. The human tendency to idolatry and tyranny have no place in a church other than to be aware that it exists and that it is a tool of Satan, threatening the success of a Christ-centered church.</p>
<p>These are all Presbyterian distinctive, and hence, all are very important to me.</p>
<p>These are fundamental to Presbyterian church and if I could not support them, I would seek another denomination.</p>
<p>These principles are what help my understanding of our relationship to the Holy and guide our living together, not only with other Christians but with those who are not Christian.</p>
<p>these principles must be applied with an understanding of human fallibility and the unknowable aspect of the divine</p>
<p>These principles require me to be part of a team. A team with common goals. A team is stronger than one working alone</p>
<p>These, in my opinion, are basics of the Reformed faith.</p>
<p>They are why I affiliated with the Presbyterian church.</p>
<p>They serve as a guide in my life walk with Jesus.</p>
<p>This is God's Universe. He has set His laws in motion. We as humans are sinful but by His Grace we are redeemed. He has put in the hearts of some, the ability to interpret the Word and to lead the rest of us closer to being what God has intended for us. And to do God's work in all types of settings.</p>
<p>Those that are Biblically based are very important. What is not Biblically based are not so important.</p>
<p>To live in a community of faith that nurtures its members, and reaches out to the larger community responsive to needs of all people is Christ centered</p>
<p>To me, Jesus Christ, the 'exact representation of God' Heb 1:3, is my savior and my God. All the categories above vital to spiritual health as they keep foremost that Jesus is the reason for the PC USA and must be worshiped and obeyed or there is no point to the existence of the PC USA.</p>
<p>To slightly reiterate my response above, the Reformed / Presbyterian principles most important to me center around the principles that include love of all people and governance of the church by members as well as clergy.</p>
<p>We all sin and fall short of the glory of God but are saved by grace through Christ.</p>
<p>We are all <u>Beloved</u> Children of God who are called by God to love one another.</p>
<p>We are all called and all equal. So often ministers fall into seeing themselves as 'above' others, but they are not. If we are not addressing the social injustices, why are we here?</p>
<p>We are all saved by grace and each of us have a calling. We have a covenantal relationship with one another in Christ.</p>
<p>We have done a poor of explaining and 'selling' these principles to our youth and our new members.</p>
<p>We have too much political emphasis in the PCUSA.</p>
<p>We need to be true to the Book of order as it reflects the evolving faith of PCUSA as based on the Book of Confessions.</p>
<p>We serve God through His LOVE flowing through us. We give of ourselves in response to His calling.</p>

<p>We try to always reform our life and practice, both individually and corporately, according to the teachings of scriptures. We believe we have been chosen by God's grace. However, this election is not primarily for privilege, but rather for service. It leads us to gratitude and assurance in our faith. Missions have always been a strong emphasis of our denomination. This means being good stewards of God's creation. It means working for peace and justice. We seek to change unjust social structures where they exist. We are slow to change our theology, but quick to change our practices when it helps us take the unchanging gospel into a rapidly changing world.</p>
<p>What's the difference between 'Ministers and elders lead the church together' and the 'Priesthood of all believers'?</p>
<p>Which one?</p>
<p>With so many members coming to us from other denominations or no tradition at all, I think there needs to be a concerted effort to instruct all members of the church in the doctrine of the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition not to enforce conformity but as a starting point to nurture people in the growth of their own faith within the Presbyterian community.</p>
<p>Without active participation in the needs of society, the church has little, if any relevance.</p>
<p>You've quizzed on several, but this question itself, seems obtuse. The previous principles are what define and set apart Presbyterians from other denominations by their combination. We have been a church in change and adaptation, sometimes slowly, to the world around us. The connectional relationship to one another is strained by the processes of adapting and understanding our place in modern society. Hopefully, the results will bring us closer rather than tear us down.</p>

Appendix E: Teaching Elders' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Open-Ended Question on the Importance of
Various Reformed/Presbyterian Principles

Q-16: Please elaborate on your response to the question about the importance to you of various Reformed/Presbyterian principles.

?
I felt that listing almost all of my responses as 'very important' would come off as disingenuous. The responses are true, but it felt weird to list 'election', for example, as slightly less important than 'grace' when they're really inseparable.
We live in response to God's grace in Jesus Christ as a thankful and active covenant community, together sharing and embodying God's grace to all creation, participating in God's ongoing transformation and redemption of the world.
Election can become overly simplified as a doctrine and doesn't always account for interaction between people and God
My response reflects my personal belief our relationship with God and that which separates us from God are primary. Other Reformed traditions relating to our life in community arise out of this relationship with God. I also ranked Covenant Life and Election lower, not because of any lack of importance, but because these concepts are not well grasped in contemporary culture.
I am interested in Truth, and want to follow what God has said, as revealed in Scripture. These Reformed principles are only valid to the extent that they reflect who God is, what he has said, and what he is doing. Scripture is primary, and Reformed principles are properly defined by the Scripture alone.
The PC(USA) has ruined the notion of social justice. I am all for promoting social righteousness, (right relations or shalom stemming from God) but not the way that the PC(USA) boils it down to a platform of secular liberalism.
These principles help shape me and help me to articulate my views.
In general, (though not as a rule,) most of the items that I marked as Very Important are actually items that are sort of out my control and thus, really depend upon God as their architect. The other items, those that are 'important' or less so are items of which I am more the architect so they are really more of my chosen response to God's revelation as opposed to originating from God Himself. (Forgive the non-inclusive language...)
The ideas listed above are important to me, especially in our current age, because they give us theological lenses through which we might understand the systemic problems/evils with which we struggle. They also help me understand God's attitude toward these things, and God's expectation for us when it comes to the redemption of creation from brokenness. However, when these concepts get applied to individual stories of 'salvation' (or of being chosen) then these concepts are much less helpful.
See my prior answer.
All of life (work, relationships, leisure) is sacred. Election is assurance of salvation, not proof of personal worth - seeing your life as always being held in God's hand. Grace is a central reality in all of our lives.
It would behoove us to reflect as a denomination our commitment to connectionalism. How is our connectionalism most fruitful as we steward God's gifts, and ultimate gift in Jesus Christ?

These days, I'm so discouraged by my denomination's choices that the historical principles are what guide me. I used to like being Presbyterian, now I'm making apologies for it.
One's understanding of who God is in one's life and how Christ calls and leads a person to follow his example and to be empowered by God's presence in the Holy Spirit.
What is social righteousness?
I guess I'm looking at these through the lens of my ministry - preaching, teaching, counseling, etc. And I see two of them in particular rising up above others - though I'd put connectionism and covenant life right behind them, and could have marked them higher. Idolatry and tyranny would be not far behind, too - though that acknowledging those things leads us to God's grace which is where we want to end (that's the good news, right?) and so in that sense idolatry and tyranny are less important. Priesthood of all believers goes hand in hand with calling...promotion of social righteousness and stewardship are important too, but seem to be more a derivative of calling and grace. Sovereignty of God is up there as well, especially in the challenges people face - knowing that God has them 'in the palm of his hands.'
I selected 'election' and 'human tendency to idolatry and tyranny' as only 'slightly important.' This is not to say that I think they matter less than the others, but that we've heard a lot of theology and preaching over the years on these topics. So much so that they are stereotypes of our tradition. I'd like to see us lean into theological areas that are less comfortable for us and less expected of us; I hear the Spirit calling the church to growth in that way.
We are made in the very image of God ... God breathed life into his creation. We are God's children and adopted into Christ's body, the church. Christ's ministry and mission have become our ministry and mission ... to help and to heal ... to share the Good News of salvation and eternal life through Jesus ... to baptize and make disciples.
All are important.
Because of decades of experience within the PCUSA and the manner in which it's connectional life is governed, I have lost confidence in the reality of the Sovereignty of God. Greed, abuse and tyranny are too rampant for God to be truly sovereign in God's own house. And a non-Sovereign God is unworthy of devotion and praise. Let me see backbone in the denomination. Let me see consequences for abusive and destructive behavior, and I might believe again in God's sovereignty in all creation. As is, I can't see that God is sovereign even within this denomination.
I see all of the items in the list above as essential to Presbyterian principles. Perhaps all are equally important, but I've noted those that stand out as more meaningful to me. Part of what appeals to me is the equality of all under God and the lack of hierarchy in our way of being church.
신안 생활의 기준을 잡아주며, 이끌어 준다. [Guide the standard of religious life.]
They give to us a good model to live together, and teach us how does we live in Kind of God

I don't think that election is important in itself, and I also think that the idea of something like double predestination (that God chooses people to definitely save and definitely abandon) is a horrifying interpretation of the Scriptural witness. Not to mention, any idea of election is easily housed under the sovereignty of God, and calling it out specifically, to me, invariably smacks of self-congratulation. It's pretty rare, if not unheard-of, for a Reformed theologian to speak at length about election with the premise that they, and those who agree with them, are not the elect. In contrast, without a sense of calling, grace, understanding of our inclination to idolatry, shared leadership and the priesthood of all believers, the promotion of social righteousness and stewardship the church would be unrecognizable to me. I choose not to focus on the sovereignty of God because that idea has almost invariably been leveraged as support for authoritarianism, with only a few exceptions like Bonhoeffer. But overwhelmingly, 'God is sovereign over all' translates to 'I am sovereign over you.' I rated connectionalism as merely 'important' because to me it doesn't approach grace or the priesthood of all believers in importance. I gave no opinion on covenant life because I'm actually not sure what specifically that term is referring to.

I am convinced that objectively regardless of how I may feel personally that the doctrines of the Reformed Faith concerning God, Jesus Christ, salvation, and grace are 100% reliable, truthful, and accurate. The theology that underlies and sustains them has a beautiful consistency and logic and gives my soul and the souls of those whom I serve as a pastor great comfort and peace.

They all relate in some way to our faith. They all have importance. I cannot imagine not holding any of them.

The issues that are connected with our relationship with God are the most important because they fall under the greatest commandment. The others that are related to the second great commandment are extremely important, but not as much as anything having to do with God.

Primary focus needs to be our response to God's grace.

Nothing more to say. All of these principles are very important to me.

God is at the forefront of what we teach and believe. God equips the church and members of the body of believers. We are all called and gifted by the Spirit.

Because we tend to be susceptible to the idolatries of the world... It's only with God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit that we have the means to work together as God's people for God's Goodness

One word names for complex concepts are largely unhelpful.

As Presbyterians, we function in a church system that emphasizes the importance of everyone having a right to lead and share their opinions. All people are called to ministry, whether as a profession or in other areas of life. We learn together how to be the church in the world, looking to God for guidance in those matters. All people are loved by God and grace is available and offered to all people.

We are elected and called, not only to eternal life but to responsibility for participation in God's work in the world. That includes responsible use of the earth's resources and seeing that all people have the resources for life. This is work for all believers together, not just clergy. We do not bring in God's kingdom by our own power, but God invites us to participate now as we look forward to God's ultimate fulfillment of creation.

We are a people called by the grace of God to live into God's vision for the world. Because of our sinfulness, we lead together never giving authority to an individual. We work for social righteousness because God is sovereign over all things.

I marked 'Very Important' on each of the principles. I became Presbyterian during college as a result of studying Christian Doctrine by Shirley Guthrie. The way he wrote about each of these ideas was very compelling to me and helped me make the decision to join a Presbyterian church.

God acts; we respond.
I struggle with the idea of election, because I think it distracts us from what is really important -- which is doing kingdom work here and now. We're so fixated on salvation, and that salvation becomes privatized, that we forget to do what Jesus called us to do -- feed the hungry, clothe the naked, advocate for those without voice or power. I do believe that God is sovereign, but I think the way that this concept has been traditionally interpreted is that God has absolute power over everything and everyone. I think power in God's understanding is very different than how we interpret and understand power. I've never understood the disconnect between the power Jesus displayed -- power exemplified in weakness and vulnerability, and the power that humanity proclaims. Our understanding of power seems to be more about God being able to smash the world with God's little finger, than in the power Jesus lived out.
I love being Presbyterian - partly because that's what I know best and am a PK and partly because of 39 years of practice - and still learning. Different years have needed emphases. Your #15 does not include intelligent reliance on Scripture and spiritual formation!
Different groups hold different definitions of these 'principles' so we talk past each other and do not agree on the basic definitions so it is hard to work together on these things.
Together we are the Body of Christ - connectionalism; priesthood of all believers; minister and elders lead together.
I am a lifelong Presbyterian and fell this is where God wants me to serve. I try not to be overly critical of other faith traditions and try to live a life that will attract others to our Reformed practices.
Grace is one of the hardest gifts to receive from God because we are so independent when in reality we are not!
Realize there are MANY elements and often hard to keep 'all the plates' in the air!
It is very much tied to God as the first move above: God as the first mover elects us into a covenant community, often called the church, he does this out of grace not works, and despite our sin, we then work to be his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.
Wow. As a TE, I struggle to conform to a concise bubble but here goes! They are all important but not to the same degree. My primary filters are the two greatest commandments (love God; love neighbor) and context. I believe we live in an emergent time for the church universal-- and that is my context. Narrowing that universal church down to my denomination PCUSA and we have my more refined context. I view these principles as helpful guideposts. I also realize that emergence means moving in the Spirit which can lead to new trails taken. I like guideposts but in following Christ, I have found it is more: more life, more possibilities and journeys into unexpected territories. These principles have served me as a healthy and durable rubric so far and yet I am open the fluidity of the Holy Spirit and the call of Christ moving me and us into the 21st century.
All of these principles matter and they are all held together. To pull on one is to pull on them all.
We believe in gratitude for the grace that God has bestowed upon us. From that gratitude, all else flows.
We all share in the ministry that God has called us to take part in. God calls us all bear witness to what God is doing in the world, and we need to be able to trust that God is in control in order to do that. Our assurance of the election of others is unimportant, only that God's grace is extended to all, and we should treat all people as though they are children of God (which they are).

<p>God calls us into a covenant life. Our responsibility is to recognize and worship God as well as seek to pursue a life of witness to the salvation offered by Jesus Christ. That includes seeking to help others thru righteous acts, confessing our failures, and accepting the grace of God. Each of us must listen for the calling of God to become disciples of Jesus Christ. This is thru prayer, fellowship, and example. It also means we must be willing to witness when that places us in a difficult situation where our only help and hope is Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>All of them inform our faith and are foundational to our relationship with Go</p>
<p>Our primary focus should be on our relationship with God in Christ, and then with one another. Sometimes we spend so much time on one another and issues, that we have not supported the primary relationship.</p>
<p>Election is outdated; grace abounds as together, a priesthood of all believers, follow our Lord Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>Every listed is precious to my understanding of myself and the covenant in which we live together.</p>
<p>Reformed principles reflect a particular way of interpreting Christian life and faith, with particular emphasis on the primacy of God in salvation, and the freedom of God in calling the church into being and establishing the realm of God on earth.</p>
<p>These are absolutely essential aspects of the Reformed understanding of life and faithfulness to God's gracious call in Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>The doctrine of God's grace - both as mercy and also empowerment - is key for me. I believe all are called to serve God with their gifts as the priesthood of all believers. I think elders and ministers should guide the church together, although I believe we need to honor the gifting/anointing on pastors and not stifle their call by God to lead. Practically speaking, election is not a doctrine I find to be of much importance in ministry. We love because God first loves us, however, we need to emphasize choosing a relationship with Christ to a world that does not know him. While I agree with the human tendency to sin, I believe we have been given a new nature - we have 'put on' Christ, and we are in the process of being sanctified. Confession is important, but it is also important to begin to see ourselves as transformed and to raise our expectations of the way the Holy Spirit is working in us to make us into the image of Christ.</p>
<p>I think it's particularly important that we remember God is sovereign over every aspect of our lives.</p>
<p>Priesthood of all believers is bedrock. Our response to God's grace is made real in our engagement of social justice. Connectionalism is an important goal/value but hard to achieve in church/presbytery life.</p>
<p>I see that we often find God's word expressed in the voice of the community and it is through community, the Body of Christ, that we know Christ's care. As such we are called to be stewards of all creation.</p>
<p>The PCUSA, with its fixation on social action/social justice, to the exclusion of all else (in national program & General Assembly actions) has become heterodox.</p>
<p>The things listed above are many of the hallmarks of Presbyterians and why being a Presbyterian is theologically important to me</p>
<p>equal ordination for all persons; shared call to all to bear witness and mission; working ecumenically and interfaith on shared justice, peace, hunger, human development for all peoples</p>
<p>Individually and collectively it is a constant tendency to enter into idolatrous relationships with people, things, ideas vying for the position God should hold in our lives. By grace we are forgiven, again and again. The sovereignty of God has to be the foundation of our being, the DNA of our existence as spiritual beings.</p>

Presbyterianism represents an authentic intelligent presence in the world. Its confidence lies in Sovereignty of God through Christ and the Cross. In plenary gatherings we seek and discover will of the Spirit. We are more than a social agency. We are a unique witness of God and Christ by the power of the Spirit able to engage the world based on Scriptural revelation.
God acts out of love to call us together to identify and confess sin in ourselves and in our groups and to use our gifts to promote social righteousness
Almost all of these are core to my identity as a Christian
I am grateful that we respect each individual's calling by God and we are not an extremely hierarchical church.
I'm much more compelled by Jesus Christ's life, work, and example than I am by a Reformed parochialism. We who follow Jesus also need the strong nonviolent witness of the Anabaptists, the liturgical depth of Orthodox and Anglican churches, the every-week celebration of communion like Lutherans do, the contemplative and monastic tradition from the Catholics, and so on. From our own heritage, I most love and need our emphasis on God's free, unconditional grace.
We are called to serve Christ together, using our varied, God-given gifts to glorify God
Those principles are central to and guide my life day after day.
Reformed principles are a unified unite. To pick one as more important than another seems counter productive
n/a
I believe in all the above principles of faith but some play a lesser role in my everyday lived faith.
They show us the nature of God and our call to live as forgiven sinners saved by grace who are elected to proclaim this good news to a broken and lost human condition.
I'm confident that God uses the Spirit to guide the church if we seek it.
Each of those principles flows out of the nature of God who lives eternally in community, One God, Three Persons. Created in God's image to be in covenantal relationship through Jesus the church joins in the mission of God, sharing the Good News and striving after justice.
These principles shape my individual understanding of God and the church as well as shape our common life together.
These principles guide every area of life. To deny or denigrate these principles is to deny historic Reformed/Presbyterian understandings. Why would anyone want to be a Presbyterian if he/she denies these?
I think in world today we have too much individualism, and the connectionalism of the Reformed faith is important to stress. Certainly we need to emphasize the grace of God and the Sovereignty of God. It is critical to our witness to be deeply involved in promoting social righteousness.
I love our Six Great Ends of the Church and think that we all share in the responsibility of bringing the kingdom of God to reign on earth. Human capacity for sin is great, but it is nowhere near as great as God's love and mercy sent for us in Christ. We strive to follow Christ's example and we do that better surrounded by a community of believers who hold us accountable and to high standards of Christian life and faith.
No comment
As part of the theological system, I cannot really assign varying degrees of importance.
Principles are helpful but not exclusive.
Grace is essential for even beginning to understand God's work in our lives. Sovereignty points to the truth that God is the one who saves us, not ourselves (which goes back to grace). Calling is how we live out our relationship with God vis-a-vis others in the world. The rest of the categories listed above fall within these categories.

I had no opinion on a few, specifically sovereignty and covenant life because I think there are various views on what that specifically means, and in some interpretations of those theological ideas I agree and in other interpretations I don't. For me grace is the most important of those listed
I feel Reformed/Presbyterian principles best express the understanding of scripture.
I think priesthood of all believers is often misunderstood to mean that every individual Christian is a priest. It means that all believers together form the priesthood until Christ return.
In 500 words? This is thrown in as a little laughter for the survey, right?
I believe that we are called to live our lives as God would have us do, following the teachings of Jesus. As Jesus often pointed out to his critics, his ministry was not in the jots and tittles of obeying the law, but rather in leading people to a right relationship through love, not criticism and finger-pointing. We are called to try and bring about the kingdom of God here on earth for all people.
Many of the categories are tied together. Connectionalism, Covenant life, and social righteousness are clearly all bound together. But my main focus in thinking about sin is not my own personal morality, but how my thoughts and actions affect others. And stewardship isn't just about my personal resources, but how I use them to benefit others and for the glory of God. Grace is as much about how I relate to others as it is about how God relates to me. So much of what we believe really comes down to community - with God and with our neighbor.
God is beyond us yet surrounds us.
Election implies a certain elitism which goes against other principles such as grace and calling and covenant life and ministers and elders leading the church together, etc. I believe that no matter who we are God welcomes us and calls us son or daughter.
I don't think we are doing enough as a church to focus on these doctrines/teachings. Much of what we are focused on these days are peripheral issues instead of these core issues. We are side track away from our roots and heritage. We have gotten lost in the political and social commentary of today's society and have forgotten to focus on things like connection, covenant life, sin, grace, forgiveness, mercy, God's election, and ministers have left out disciplining their congregations. Discipleship has follow to the side as we have debated issues rather than teaching the core principles of faith to our members we have focused on debates. Instead of helping people truly understand their faith and deepening their faith we have been bogged down with other things. Instead of raising up people in the faith we have given them surface answers, filled them with just information and have not created disciples who can go out and truly share their faith with the world around them.
As a pastor, many of these are important and I strive to help church members understand these ideas better as I also practice them in my own life.
I am thoroughly reformed in my theology, with perhaps less emphasis on election than some. These are principles that shape my life, not just intellectual exercises.
I tend to favor Reformed principles that support day-to-day living as people seeking to follow God rather than those that are more about church polity
Most are important, some are very important.
They really work together, and make a nice abode for living faithfully
Each principle of reformed theology is important. Grace, sovereignty of God, priesthood of all believers, & our connectional nature working together rolls together in tandem as we are the church, sent out. These blend together as I live out my faith so it's hard to separate them.
There is room for everyone in our tradition. We are at our best when we hear all the other voices around us. It isn't about us, but about what God is doing in our midst.
They shape my understanding of everything.

All of the above are vital to the Reformed faith.
Election is often misunderstood!
'Election' can presume winners and losers. That is why I marked it lower than all other answers.
We in the Reformed tradition recite the Ten Commandments in a way other Christians do not, i.e., I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, you shall have no other gods before me. These principles all come from the understanding that God chooses to be in covenant with us and in their own ways elaborate on the tense relationship between Creator and created. Calvin teaches us that one God's plenty and that's who we have business with our whole lives long.
All of these are essential elements of Reformed Theology growing out of the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord
All are very important. Those that I do not emphasize as much as others I put down as important. Though I may believe they are important, my preaching and actions suggest some are more important to me than others
As a Presbyterian, these things are ingrained in me. They have formed me. Sometimes I struggle with them. Even then, I am responding to them.
All of them are important, but I think there are some that are emphasized more in my own life.
All of these are needed now in the Church more than ever. For too long religious fundamentalist has distracted our study and focus away from them in the name of saving souls. As if a prayer to Jesus brings about salvation. There is no such thing. If we are saved, we are already in the process of being saved by God's grace due to no action of our own. Nothing we say or do can warrant or bring about God's generous gift of grace. We never deserve it.
Grace and God's sovereignty are central to my understanding of the faith.
The short essay in No. 14 sums up my thoughts more fully. I was born into a Presbyterian household, baptized as a Child of the Covenant, was confirmed in that same church, then had a powerful personal experience of coming to a heart knowledge of what I had been able to say for years: that Jesus Christ is my Savior and Lord. I was later ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in that same church. Two weeks ago I attended the funeral service for my mother, who served as an Elder, and sat next to my 90-year-old father, also an Elder, affirming out belief in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, and remembering a life of 85 years that was filled with many acts of Christian discipleship. I think that sums up the Reformed accent on the Gospel: we are saved by God's grace in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; God makes us part of God's people, under a covenant of grace; God calls us to offer up our gifts and abilities for God's glory, in service to God and our neighbors; God calls for us to place our loyalty and commitment to God's reign's values and mores, especially when those come into conflict with, and/or judge, the mores of the time and place in which we live. Scripture is our guide to faith and practice, both inspired uniquely in its writing and selection for the Canon, and brought alive in our hearts and minds, by the Holy Spirit.
Remove anyone of these and we are no longer Reformed/Presbyterian.
I understand God's sovereignty through grace and believe that grace is best seen in community that seeks to live into God's calling to live and to offer our gifts and resources for justice and love of all people.
Did not put promotion of social righteousness as very important because of the way our church leaders view it and use it to engage in partisan politics nationally.
the faithful Christian life calls for balance and holding various things together in tension, and the Reformed Tradition is a part but not the total of Christianity.

<p>When I consider the Reformed tradition, the word that often comes to mind is 'balance' and another is 'wholeness'. Our faith challenges us to use our hearts and minds and spirits to love the Lord our God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Through the various principles of the reformed tradition, we are made aware of our weaknesses - but also the value that God places upon us; our need of discipline - but also our Freedom in Christ; our total dependency on God - but also our need of the fellowship and dialog with other believers, etc., etc. I like to tell people that I am a Presbyterian by choice because I feel very comfortable within a faith that is always challenging and nurturing me - yet I also have always sensed God's hand in bringing me into the church - yet another example of the balance and wholeness I find within our faith tradition.</p>
<p>I believe that the connection to other Christians is important, but the connect to other Presbyterians, or even other reformed churches, is just a way for us to continue to put up dividing walls between us. Therefore, connectionalism is wonderful if we are talking about getting to know the churches/pastors in the community that you live, but less important at the Presbytery level.</p>
<p>all are good</p>
<p>It is not the only path, of course, but it is the one to which I have been called and the one I seek to follow.</p>
<p>Election is easily misinterpreted and/or abused.</p>
<p>To 'believe in' Jesus Christ means giving my heart to him, not assenting to a set of theological statements. The Way of Christ is a dying and rising way of life, which includes giving up touting Christianity as 'superior'. Yes, Jesus saves the world, yet I don't hold with universal salvation. He knows who are his. We are to be loving and humble toward all while demonstrating the gospel.</p>
<p>If we don't stand for something, we will stand for anything - where the PCUSA is currently headed.</p>
<p>Priesthood of the believers continues to be what I spend the most time attempting to explain to church members and something that I feel makes PCUSA uniquely postured for justice work</p>
<p>Muy importantes, me las enseñar on desde niña [They are very important. I learned about them since I was a child]</p>
<p>I am learning about God through my interactions with others and through my relationship with God as I read scripture, follow Christ, discern God's will through the Holy spirit</p>
<p>You named all the hallmarks. I agree.</p>
<p>All of human life is to be lived in love, joyous gratitude, worship, and service to Jesus Christ</p>
<p>Most closely reflect what I understand as important from Scripture</p>
<p>The sovereignty of God and the implications of the acknowledgement of the reality of human sin are what makes the Reformed Tradition unique. Emphasizing the finite nature of human understand and the imperfection of any human system requires a humility that I find consistent with Scripture. Understanding Scripture as the Living Word of the Living and Sovereign God prohibits a fundamentalist literalism which denies the role of the Spirit in the reading, interpretation and preaching of the Bible. The Form of Government, while imperfect, seeks to acknowledge the tendency towards idolatry and tyranny by mitigating the chances of any one person holding too much power. The 'Priesthood' of all believers requires us to treat all people equally and to refrain from judging motives while discerning those with whom we will be in community based on behavior.</p>

<p>Connectionalism - Great concept, but we don't really use it. Church is very divided and communicates poorly at various levels. Presbyteries do not offer viable support to congregations. Minister and Elders leading together--not really. My experience is that the minister is alone and lonely. Sessions could do with some serious, ongoing study of scripture to be better leaders. There is still a hierarchy of clergy, elders, deacons, in that order. Social righteousness is, unfortunately, guided by personal biases more than scripture, such as Matthew 25.</p>
<p>When the Word is faithfully preached and the sacraments administered, and the clergy/lays have a collective leadership...that is Presbyterian principles at work (at its best) for God's people.</p>
<p>The world and all in it, including me, belong to God. Everything else flows from that.</p>
<p>These principles ensure that no one individual or subgroup captures and perverts the forward movement of the church as God desires to lead it as a saving force in the world. These principles function as checks on human ego and fashion the church as the people of God.</p>
<p>human sin is all too obvious, helping people to see and experience the grace of God is far more challenging (grace and call though Jesus Christ). Who's going to heaven is not the primary concern. I believe I'm called to help people live into a new way of life found in Jesus Christ.</p>
<p>I've already expressed most of these in what I feel is distinctive about Reformed/Presbyterian theology. Covenant is important as it expresses the nature of God's promise to us that should be reflected in our community of faith. The non-hierarchical organization of our denomination is also important, recognizing that we all have gifts to share in our calling. Also, that more than just the teaching elder should be involved in decision-making so that the guidance of then. Holy Spirit for the community of faith can be better discerned.</p>
<p>We are saved by God's grace, which is undeserved and freely given. The life of faith is a journey to realize the endless influence God's grace can have on the mortal life. No one is perfect. All fall short of God given potential, but all are called beloved and all are called to repent, to return, and to be redeemed.</p>
<p>no answer</p>
<p>The community of God's people, e.g. the church is the center of God's activity. In this community we perceive and determine God's will and channels of Grace. This is true whether the community is local or national.</p>
<p>we must focus on Christ before all else</p>
<p>Sovereignty seems to me to be little understood</p>
<p>Sharing all principals with all, relying on God's call and blessings to each to live and share in the way God has elected them... not all will respond in the same way, for the Spirit is free as are those who follow where Spirit leads.</p>
<p>I believe that this a good fundamental list of theological issues that under gird our Reformed faith, and I believe that they should be important to all Reformed believers.</p>
<p>To me, the principles are only as important as they help me understand & live into what Scripture calls me to be & do.</p>

When it comes right down to it, we must recognize our sinfulness (idolatry and tyranny) and brokenness, repent of that sinfulness, and accept the gracious forgiveness that flows from Christ (grace). In so doing, we affirm the unquestionable sovereignty of God, and our ability to freely go to God ourselves (priesthood of all believers). Christ is central. His death on the cross is necessary and central. The grace that is offered through Christ is central. That is where our focus must be as Presbyterians. Differences over social issues divide us, and although they are important to some people, the social issues are not the most critically important issues of our faith. As Presbyterians, we have a long and treasured history of addressing social issues, and that is very good. But in recent years we have seen great division in our denomination over social issues, and the message that the division sends to the world is atrocious. We fight and argue, we watch as droves leave our denomination and financial resources shrink dramatically, and then we pat ourselves on the back for being 'progressive.' We claim that God is doing a new thing in the church, but is God really doing a new thing, or are we shooting ourselves in the foot, smiling, and ignoring the bleeding? Honestly I don't care if my pastor is gay or not, but I sure don't want his or her sexuality to be the focus of my church. What about our mission partners? Missionaries. We can barely support them financially anymore. They are on the front lines of the church, working in hospitals and children's homes and educational centers, but the church can't support them anymore and many foreign branches of the church are severing ties with the PCUSA because of our stands on social issues. So we rejoice over our progressiveness, but Rusty and Sara (who are working in the mountains of Peru), have to figure out how to do more of their vitally important work, with less help from the PCUSA. Evidently we think it is more important to celebrate our sexual preferences than to proclaim the Gospel in the most needy places of this world. What would Calvin think about that?

I am very Presbyterian in my theology and am committed to teaching these principles to my congregation.

I really don't know what else to say.

Sovereignty of God - my actions do not save myself or anyone else - only God does Grace - God's grace is deeper and more broadly given than I can imagine - without it, I am nothing. Election - is God's business, not mine. I put it as less important because I do not need to focus on it stewardship - I am mindful of giving back to God who has given me everything social righteousness--we are called to advocate for those who have no voice

Who is part of God's elect has never been a major concern for me or my ministry. Recognizing our need of God's grace and understanding such grace is found in Jesus Christ are of the utmost importance. So is living by faith in accordance to the will and ways of God as proclaimed and lived by Jesus.

We need to be careful around election. I think there are many misunderstandings at play in our teaching that is not accurate.

I believe upholding the life and example of Jesus Christ is central to who we are.

The human tendency to idolatry and tyranny is why we need to lead the church in the context of community, ministers and elders together with the congregation.

The Priesthood of All Believers, while a good thought, is really more Lutheran than Reformed. Our understanding of election to service and ordination isn't really that all are priests but that all are called to particular ministries which differ according to the gifts of the Spirit. Those ministries are not the same or hierarchical but none-the-less some do have responsibility for overseeing the ministry of others.

Why ask about idolatry and tyranny if you make no reference to our basic sinful nature?
Interesting omission.

For me the understanding of a loving God who continues to take an active part in my life, in human life is critical. In recent years I have been particularly drawn to the essence of 'Grace and Gratitude.' I am more aware of God's active involvement in my life and seek to give expression to my gratitude. Grace is expressed in things like covenant life, the living out of the priesthood of all believers, our practice of the stewardship of life all that God has entrusted to us and issues in our concern for the world around us/promotion of social righteousness.

I may sound like a broken record, but all of these principles are very important to lived faith within our denomination. Our human tendency towards idolatry and tyranny is evident in our personal as well as corporate expressions of faith. So, God's grace is what makes our lived faith even possible. I so appreciate that my lived faith is a response to God's call and claim on my life. God initiates, I respond. The principle of election demonstrates this, God elects us for salvation, but more importantly in my mind for service. We are called as stewards of all creation, which leads to the promotion of social righteousness, for don't we pray, 'give us this day OUR daily bread.' The sovereignty of God gives me hope for something more than what is, for God not humanity is sovereign. A number of these principles highlight that our reformed faith is not a solo sport. We are connected. We are all gifted. Together we are to be the visible witness of what God intends for all humanity - a tall order. By grace we are able to seek something more than just our own well-being, but that of others, of all others, for when one suffers, we all suffer. Shared leadership provides a check and balance given our tendency towards idolatry and tyranny.

I do not know who is or is not elect of God. My calling and that of the Church is to proclaim God's Gospel of Jesus to everyone for the salvation of humankind. The problem is that we have elevated social justice above that of proclamation. It is not that social justice is not important, it is, but our greatest purpose is the proclamation of Jesus to all of humanity regardless of whether they listen. We are also to teach, enable, and equip our congregations for service so that we may become effective witnesses for Jesus. When Jesus is no longer the focus of what we do we cease to be church. In the PC (USA) today Jesus is no longer the focus. Consequently, we are hemorrhaging both members and churches. We will never see renewal of effective witness in our communities until such time as we confess and return to God.

As a pastor, I believe the only way we can be church is to uphold the priesthood of all believers and to allow ministers and elders to lead the church together.

Sin and grace are linked... if one is under-valued, both are. Most of the terms above would need to be 'unpacked' or further defined to have a meaningful discussion... the understanding of each varies widely in the PCUSA.

My 'very important' answers emphasize community. We aren't called to a private life and private demonstration of faith. Though we belong to God, we need each other and are accountable to each other. Concepts of salvation are less important. That's God's work and worry; not mine.

All of these are Reformed and Presbyterian distinctives, and hence, all are very important. I might have mentioned more of these in my earlier description, but wanted to focus upon what is most crucial.

As a pastor/teaching elder, it is important for my congregation to know we are connected as a family in Christ and our leadership responsibilities are to the whole family - not just a few.

Evil exists, but I choose to focus on the good stuff when at all possible.

My answers are more idealistic than the current reality. Though Calling and Connectionalism, for example, should be important, we don't see them in practice nearly as much now as in the past.

I decided to become Presbyterian because I am Reformed in my theology. I have been disappointed at the turning away from classic Reformed Theology that I have seen in the PC(USA). It is hardly recognizable to me as a Reformed denomination anymore. The reason I have not left is that there at least is freedom to be traditionally Reformed due to the new trend toward local option.
Sovereignty of God is one of favorite concepts.
My identity is shaped most by my faith as a Reformed/Presbyterian Christian.
The sense that we are ALL called to serve God is key to me. We serve not to earn God's favor or our salvation, but in humble, thankful response to God's amazing grace made known to us in Jesus Christ. Grace leads us to serve others, especially those most in need.
So far I am a 'cradle to grave' Presbyterian, and even before I could articulate my theology, these ideas had been passed on to me during my church life.
The sovereignty of God and Christ as the head of the church should be a core value for us, and that God gives us grace so that we respond to God and one another with love; this response guides and calls us to care for God's good creation, promote justice, protect and serve the most vulnerable of society, and to resist all forms of idolatry that promotes self and wealth over God's call; finally, I love that Reformed/Presbyterian connectionalism reminds that we do not live or serve alone as individuals or as congregations, we are accountable in our ministry.
Covenant life, grace, and stewardship (which I rated as either important or very important) are the aspects that I think need to be highlighted now. I see them as imparting an understanding of the value of institutions and people outside of our own. 'Election' is not at all important to me unless it could be claimed as a universal application (all are elected.)
I am not sure what you are looking for here.
Not sure what you're looking for here. We should not be compromising our principles. If you don't hold to the principles, then...
I am a Presbyterian for a reason - not the least of which is by the grace of God, but because of our Reformed principles. They are liberating and, frankly, a relief. God chooses me (us) even when I'm too stupid to make the right choices. My salvation is not based on works righteousness.
These are the foundations of our faith & give us the tools to living out our faith and beliefs daily.
Presbyterian principles are important in a religious world where evangelical distinctives seem to be more influential in Christian culture.
I live in a homogeneous rural town far from the big city... and surrounded by Arminians. I stress the concepts of sovereignty, election, social righteousness and connectionalism to my congregation as vital to our lives as a Reformed people so that we all can become stronger and more understanding of who we are in God and work to share the love of Jesus Christ without judgment and the pride that comes with thinking we are capable of choosing to be saved. So far our understanding of social justice as lived in our community is strong. we are also getting stronger with God's sovereignty and being connected to other reformed congregations. The distinction from Arminianism is still something they aren't totally getting.
The 'Institutes of the Christian Religion' matters. Need I say more? We have forgotten the demands of God according to systematic theology.
Grace, Priesthood of all believers, and Stewardship OF THE WHOLE EARTH are very important to me.
These are part of the distinctives of a Reformed understanding of theology.
These are biblical principles and truths that I try to apply daily.
God chose me to be saved. I choose to be Presbyterian because of its emphasis that God is in control of everything about my life. I find that strangely comforting.

We have to stand on the principles of our forefathers but make sure we treat equally and work with others whom we disagree.
The inclusion of all these principles as important to me speaks to the breadth and depth--and therefore the importance to a wide world--of the Reformed tradition.
They are all important and must sometimes be held in delicate balance and tension.
We tend to take these principles as stand-alone when they are in fact inter- dependent. Example, Election apart from Sovereignty of God is meaningless. In all this relationships human/God & human/human is the thread that gives these principles substance.
We are called by Christ into a saving faith to live that faith in a covenant life, acknowledging our connectional and representative form of church government. Election suggests that the church particularly has a special calling to share the good news of Christ's love; we are to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8). Since we are not inclined to fulfill Micah's call to a life of justice and humility, our tendency is to live idolatrous and tyrannical lives. To live a life of social righteous, while, at the same time, exhibiting the Kingdom of God is the task of the Christian life. Ministers and elders share parity with each other, leading the people of God, calling all to repent and believe the good news. We are called to I've holy, faithful and joyful lives, in obedience to the sovereignty of God, serving as wise, responsible and generous stewards of all God's good gifts.
It's about God
All of these principles are critical in their interaction to a proper understanding of God, human beings, and our purpose in life.
We must start and end with God. As Reformed Christians, the idea of election and call is central to how we understand the rest of the scriptures and our faith. If Jesus is the head, then we must take our very being from Him and follow the Spirit to glorify the Father in all aspects of our lives.
I choose this faith tradition because I believe in these values
My experience of these principles as a layman led me from a congregational upbringing into the Presbyterian Church and ultimately into the role of Teaching Elder.
These are all a part of our Tenets listed in our Book of Order (except the reference to Ruling Elder and Teaching Elder).
I fit well with Presbyterian theology... I am not having to deny large portions to satisfy my own personal theology. What's most important to me is God's action first... and then our response to what God has done. The old justification and sanctification equation. I do not believe in the salvation of religion, which it seems this survey is trying to evaluate. Religion is an imperfect tool through which we respond to our experience of God's grace. Christ and Christianity are not one and the same.
All are very important as a reflection of who we are and what we believe as Presbyterians.

The only one that is less important to me is election, simply because it is a complex idea that leads to the terrible theology of double predestination, that is the idea that God randomly condemns certain people to life outside the covenant of grace before they are even born. As a metaphor it functions well to emphasize God's initiative. It serves also to explain why some are outside the covenant without ceding God's sovereignty, or sliding into the individualistic, consumeristic view of people choosing to be followers of Jesus Christ. But Paul's letters clearly leave room for people to be faithful or not, to become Christians or not, and to choose good or bad theology and actions even as followers of Jesus. What I do love about the idea of election is that it emphasizes God's grace and God's initiative. As a young person I was worried about my salvation, and whether I believed 'well enough'. I finally got to the point where I figured out that God was probably a lot more concerned about my well-being and growth than in deciding whether I was in or out based on some random, invisible measuring stick of 'good enough' faith. Because of that experience I realized I could not imagine any measure God would use to decide who is inside and who is outside the covenant. It became impossible, then, for me to believe anyone was condemned. Instead I have come to believe that all are saved by grace. Faith is a gift some receive and some cultivate. Now we see in a mirror dimly, but we will see face-to-face, and all our imperfect ideas, faith, and beliefs will melt away as foolishness. The dross of our sinful natures will melt away as in a refiner's fire. I no longer worry about election at all.

Teaching Elders/Pastors/Ministers of Word and Ruling Elders complement each other in guiding and leading the local congregation, Presbytery and the more inclusive governing bodies. As previously stated emphasizing the Triune God's sovereign mercy and mystery of salvation mediated through Christ and Holy Spirit through Body of Christ--human sinfulness in absolute need of grace--interplay between authority of Scripture and authority of Reformed Creeds and Confessions--worship as balance of proclaimed Word, sacrament, prayer, praise and confession of sin along with evangelism and service

I pray that our human ways are not God's ways - because we humans often get it wrong. So I'm all about the sovereignty of God and about that God being graceful and loving.

We are each responsible through our connections for what happens in the world. We are called to respond to different situations to make God's grace known.

They are part of who I am

The list above includes the essential tenets of the reformed faith and for me, personally, they speak volumes to how my life is lived out of my faith. I am a reformed Christian, who continues to seek to be reformed.

I believe all humans will respond differently to some of the above, based on their personalities and experiences. Calling and grace are two of my major preaching themes, whereas others may spend more time emphasizing other principles. It is all to God's glory!

Some of these are more difficult to rank on a scale from 'not at all important' to 'very important,' when, for some principles, my spectrum of engagement engages more of a dialectical tension or a wrestling with. This intense engagement would tend to lead the principle to be important, but other principles I have less of a tension with and can more simply mark 'important' without a second thought.

They ring true to my life- personal and corporate-, have sustained me in difficult times, and brought me deep joy.

Presbyterian principles remind me that God's got me and my future is in God's hands. This comforts me when I am discouraged, and releases me from having to be perfect.

They are all important. We exclude any of them at our peril.

The earth and everything that is in it or on it belongs to God. We are to be care-takers of it and one another. As a result, we are all to live in covenant relationship to one another.

I believe that election is of less importance since Calvin regarded it as a teaching that guards the totality of grace, not as an essential for preaching and daily life. The other principles are of equal and great importance in informing our lives and worship as Presbyterians.
You've listed some of the hallmarks of the Reformed tradition. They are true to the call of Scripture and foundational to faithful living.
In our increasingly secular age - we need leadership...strong leadership. Whether that comes from ministers or elders or both is less important than getting good leadership itself. Stewardship is of increasing importance in an age of consumerism and consumption.
It's interesting how the PC(USA) leadership in general has been swept into the politically correct line of thinking that all religious faiths are equal, when clearly Scriptures and the Confessions teach us this is not the case. This does not mean that we are to belittle, criticize or even judge other religious faiths. But we are not supposed to capitulate and call them equal nor say they provide the same path to salvation.
I have a varied church background. I was not born and raised Presbyterian. I grew up United Methodist, became Catholic, spent some time in the UCC, went back the UMC, and then became Presbyterian. The things I picked as very important are the things that I fell in love with when I became Presbyterian. They are the things I wrestled with and found God's wisdom in (especially election as a former Methodist), the things I challenged, and the things that I love very, very much about the Reformed Tradition.
Those are all VERY IMPORTANT! As a systematic theologian, removing one undoes them all.
This is what we believe, and the theological foundation for who we are. This who cannot affirm these beliefs, while they might, and probably are dedicated Christians, are not being faithful to our Reformed Faith, and should either further study the Reformed Faith, or find another denomination that better fits their beliefs.
God's grace and love are the foundation for everything else we believe.
God's grace and sovereignty offer a much larger reality for people of faith than narrowly defined dos & don'ts central to orthopraxis ideals. We are fallen and erring humans, but God's grace is sufficient. We have God's Word to guide us; Christ's example to follow; and the Spirit's continuing help in daily life. We will still fall short. There is nothing we can do to make God stop loving us or prevent God from offering us grace and compassion, particularly if we seek it and seek God. We do this not only by ourselves but particularly in community, reconciling ourselves with neighbors and friends. Being open and honest and working through the hurts and hardships of communal life together, instead of 'me and Jesus' conquering the world on our own. As such, together we offer each other grace -- not handed down solely by a designated holy representative, but each of us has the God given grace to pass on such grace, forgiveness, love, and blessing that way we have received the same from our Lord.
Grace is the radical principle around which a 21st Century Reformed praxis ought to be organized.
The Reformed faith is expressed as a worldview- a thought world - where we live out our faith in the community of believers in the wider world.
God does such great things through the church whether we understand it or not, it is great to try, to blow our minds, let God be God.
These beliefs put into practice are a major influence on the life of the church but sometimes in a significantly detrimental way.
These are the elements that place God as primary in our thinking and our living and directs our service.
We seek the guidance of the spirit through equality of elders (ruling and teaching), and work to honor the sovereignty of God

Presbyterian emphasis on Call & Connectionalism is what makes Presbyterians unique which encourages priesthood of all & social righteousness.
Our denomination has lost its way by reinterpreting Scripture to be more a social document. We've lost our connectionalism through poor decisions that through the Bible under the bus. The recent action of the GA of including interfaith prayer is modern Asherah poles and demonstrates our lack of commitment to the Holy One of Israel. While we can work together with other faiths, we cannot worship together when we don't hold the one Triune God sovereign in all the earth.
We're to be a sent people who share God's kingship & love & our stuff with those who don't have... widows, poor, children & jailed
I was raised in a different Christian tradition. I chose/was called into three PCUSA through these principles.
Most are important, obviously.
All the above except 2 are very important to me - therefore, I'm pretty immersed in Reformed theology. The two I did not list as very important have to do with our personal character, and not that of God or the community. ELECTION -- I struggle with election as it relates to free will and to scripture in which Jesus and the Creator are both said to be reaching out to all. Therefore, I see election as our being elected to service, i.e. a specific calling. I don't preach election, but I do preach calling. HUMAN...IDOLATRY: I absolutely feel there is a strong tendency for [most] all of us to choose self over anything else. But I'm not a complete Calvinist. So that is not one of my most important theological pillars. By the way, you didn't tell us this 'brief questionnaire' would require a couple of theological treatises!!!
For me, responding to my calling as an instrument of God's grace is primary!
The priesthood of all believers means that we are committed to a polity that has no particular hierarchies. Officers and members are what we are, a partnership for love and service to God. No one is to be considered better than another. We are all in this together, each responsible to respond to the call to follow Christ.
Reformed people are to be thoughtful in their work, worship and life choices. As we receive grace so are we to live extending grace. We live with the understanding that we are joined together as a body. There is not a hierarchy of Christians, clergy and lay work together in carrying out Godly actions in the Church and world.
Other Christian organizations say the people choose Christ. Reformed says God chooses us and we follow (or not). We are led by elders and pastors. God uses the people as a 'priesthood.' Grace is astounding! Why would God love us this much? This is a major one. So many people think we earn salvation by what WE do or do not do.
Different times and crises will change the priorities on some of these. I do think that our principles inform our polity pretty well, and we are being reformed
Election: no so much as who is 'save' and who is 'damned'. Rather the perspective that out of grace God elects all of humanity through Jesus Christ, who saved or liberated us from sin and death, regardless if we accept it or not.
I believe that God has a purpose for creation. It is to fulfill the perfection of love that we know in Christ. In Christ I find my place in that purpose. Reformed theology takes seriously the challenge of sin, or our separation from God.
Election is an outdated concept that is more Calvin and his time than the Bible and our time. What is important is the connection we have and how we minister through grace to give hope to those in need.
I believe God is active in human history and we are called to pay attention and listen for God's activity. Faith is not a solo activity, it is important to me that we are part of the community of faith as, equally called and equipped by God.
A consistent worldview with the story of redemption in the Bible!

Focus on the community as opposed to individualism.
These are things I grew up knowing and loving. These are things I have challenged and explored. These are the things that still form the foundation of who I am.
Most questions and answers about election and whom God saves are too simplistic: I believe that Jesus Christ is the way God chooses to save the world, but I do not believe every person must confess faith according to one Christian formula. God may indeed save those who have not made profession of faith as Christians, but it is still because of God's act in Jesus Christ. I affirm the language of the GA-adopted statement 'Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.'
saved through grace, by no merit of our own- we all join together in the cause of Christ-loving one another as Jesus loved- trying the best we can....
I believe it is very important that the PCUSA does not dilute its theology. Jesus Christ revealed love and grace, but did not compromise the truth in the midst of a culture that was more polytheistic than the 21st century. The church has a message that the rest of the world longs to hear and no other organization or corporation has the responsible custodial stewardship of this message. May the church (specifically, the PCUSA) not fall prey to becoming an effective social club; we are more than a club.
Living according to the Word of God in response to God's saving grace.
Grace abounds, and in response, we are *called* to live our lives in *gratitude* for the grace of God's blessings through lives of *devotion* and *service.* I've starred words from my answer to question 14 which I've listed as 'very important' in question 15.
I think the theology of election, and who goes to heaven and who doesn't is a theology that has been overworked, and abused (mostly by other Christians) and thus, in our current time and context we should focus on Love instead.
Calling has long been a part of the Christian Tradition. As Reformed believers, we believe that everyone is called in the life of faith. Calvin taught that whether we are shoveling out the horse stall or proclaiming the word we are fulfilling our calling. While I consider election to be important, I favor the view that Jesus is the elect one who calls us and claims us as his own. We are only elect in Jesus Christ who is the Elect One (Ephesians 1:4). I place less importance on 'connectionalism' because I do not find that to be a biblical or theologically helpful word. Rather, covenant life or communion are better alternatives. But our use of connectionalism betrays our refusal to use deeply biblical words in a manner that teaches a new generation about the rich texture therein. Grace reigns supreme for grace has a name and his name is Jesus Christ. As a pastor, I am all too aware of the ways we are prone to idolatry, especially in our North American context. Our idolatry creeps to the surface when we lose the sovereignty of God - the God who is known in, through, and as Jesus Christ. Our idolatry is revealed when we are not open to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our idolatry persists when we refuse to share in the priesthood of all believers, when we forsake any sense of social righteousness, when we fail to think of our lives as disciples in terms of stewardship, and when we neglect a robust understanding of who Jesus is as he gives himself to be known to us out of the freedom of his love and in the power of the Spirit.
My aim is to practice what I preach!
I'd rather not.

<p>Calling: God is first mover, not us. Connectionalism: See last sentence #14. Covenant: God unilaterally declares, we obey; not a contract with the varied interests of all parties in contention. Election: Thy Kingdom Come--Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior both--He can never be one and not the other; it's only in Him that we are elect. Grace: Ephesians 2:1-10; the works prepared for us are the fruit, not the root. Sin: Only theological concept with 100% empirical proof. Romans 6-7. Yep. Presbyters: Because of sin, no one of us can be trusted with all power--best case is when, confessing our sinful nature before one another, we pre-emptively and proactively submit to open accountability before one another. There is no real connectional/covenantal community without this (Eph 5:21). Priesthood: Pastors are not to be hired hands (Eph 4:11-13). All have a call. PSR: As Kingdom people, we are to be leaven, witnesses, salt & light. Again, all have a call. This must be done a) according to Biblical principles, and b) with clear witness to the salvation & sovereignty of Jesus Christ as the only Savior & Lord of all, even when (maybe especially when) this is 'politically incorrect' or even dangerous. So Scot McKnight: 'There is no Kingdom work apart from Kingdom proclamation.' But equally pressing is James 1:27; 2:14-17. Sovereignty of God: Sadly undervalued &/or misunderstood in our culture. God is not a tyrant, but neither is God our peer. Again, James 4:4-10. We could all use a heapin' helpin' of humility. Stewardship: NOT just butts, bucks & bricks. Unless & until we recover our understanding of the 'Creation Mandate' in terms not of power, privilege and prerogative but in terms of responsibility, ministry and compassion, we will not be united in Christ in pursuing shalom and hesed, and likely, we will destroy our society and our environment. Nevertheless, in the long term, good (Biblical) stewardship IS good ecology IS good policy IS good economy IS just and equitable and merciful. And would be good evangelism as well. We get tripped up when we compromise Biblical principles (and the holistic nature of shalom) in the interest of some fragment of social witness policy.</p>
<p>Each of the topics raised is interrelated with the sovereignty of God connecting each. Also, the parity of leadership between teaching and ruling elders in our connection system of governance is extremely important (and mostly unique) in to our principles.</p>
<p>Well...they're all important, the question might better be a hierarchy of importance which wasn't the question.</p>
<p>All of the elements above work together to provide guidance, comfort, and a shape to our life together as the body of Christ.</p>
<p>I think these accurately articulate some of the key facets of maturity in Christ</p>
<p>stewardship not just in terms of money but in the stewardship of creation, spiritual gifts, time</p>
<p>All of these are very important to me. However, connectionism and election need to be emphasized at appropriate times in appropriate settings.</p>
<p>I struggled with the term 'importance' when describing the human tendency. There is a human bent or tendency toward sin, and it is important to understand that, but I would never say that is an important principle.</p>
<p>These answers reflect the pattern of my life.</p>
<p>If we have no sin, why do we need grace? We need to avoid bashing people, but instead leading people to consider their lives and what difference aligning them with God's will would make</p>
<p>We are totally in sin. We are totally graced by God. Without. Without God we are lost, but God is not contained only in one religious tradition.</p>
<p>Leadership is important but only if its second to the Sovereignty of God and understanding that we are only leading by God's grace.</p>
<p>priesthood of all believers - all are called to speak the good news of Christ in our lives and love all people whether they hear and believe or not</p>
<p>Let God be God - lead together - be the Body of Christ in community</p>

While Teaching elders may have a specific calling, as followers of Christmas we all have the same calling to proclaim the gospel and new in ministry together.
I gave my responses. This question is redundant!
all important - connectionalism less so... prefer to think in terms of how we are related
Although elders share the same power/authority with ministers in the PCUSA, elders do not go through the similar discernment and examination process as minister do. This poses a great threat in our denomination because usually there are more elders than ministers in ordinary sessions. I support the idea of sharing power between ministers and elders as long as the same standard applies to their ordinations. I strongly believe that the elders must go through the similar preparation process including the Ordination exams (ORDS) except the subject of Bible Exegesis because elders don't preach on a regular basis. Elders must be knowledgeable on the Polity, Reformed Theology, and Reformed Worship/Sacraments. This is very, very important.
The sovereignty of God trumps all else. Grace and mercy pursue us and all God's children
People who claim to be Christian from the Reformed / Presbyterian tradition are claimed by God through the saving death of Jesus Christ in order to become part of Christ's body and serve those in need. We are led by the Holy Spirit to work together as a team, each with her/his own role.
The only reason 'Covenant life' is not named as 'very important' (unlike the other principles) is that the language of 'covenant' has been used in ways that I do not believe are faithful representations of the best of Reformed thought.
Because election has meant so many things in various times and places, including double predestination, I am leery of assigning it a high level of importance without further definition of what is meant by it.
I'm not so big on election and predestination and total depravity. God's calling on us at our baptism, calling us to service and stewardship frame my life. I love the Presbyterian way of doing church with ruling and teaching elders leading and serving together.
I believe in the importance of the connectionism of the Presbyterian church. We see ourselves as a unique expression of the church, but not the only church. The church has also been involved in not just teaching, but also modeling and practicing its values.
I think they speak for themselves actually
These brought more to mind on the deeply valued theological foundations of the Reformed faith.
As I explained in 14 the reformed faith is one where our call is the thankful response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. For the church and well as its members to living into that requires us to live in mutual interpretation of revelation of God in the context and discernment of where God is calling us to go. It is not that we can perfect to be without error but work hard at being better.
You listed central tenets of the Reformed faith, which are all important.
I think that we need to know the distinctives of Reformed theology and live in faithful witness to the life to which God has called each of us. I think that it is important to maintain the focus on listening to the Spirit corporately as well as searching the Scriptures and growing our personal devotion to God
Reformed, always reforming. Informed by the world around us. We do not have 'the answers,' but are open to new learnings. God is always at work within our theology. Community of faith. We are not in this alone. We accomplish more together than separate. We need each other. Brothers and sisters in one family.
I fell it is important to allow God the freedom to work in each person's life according to God's will and not according to our will or expectations.

Not sure the most important ones for me are ones that are all that uniquely 'reformed'.
Simply, these are cornerstones of what it means to be a Reformed Christian
I marked every one either Very important or important, as they all have a bearing upon my daily response to life, although, as a 'recovering sinner' I'm prone to sin -- even though it is also very important to keep in mind and be aware of.
They are the lens through which I think, pray, study, learn, grow and serve.
While I do not believe that BEING one of God's elect is insignificant, it is impossible to determine who is and who is not the elect. Considering our own brokenness and limitation through time, sinfulness and imperfection, we can only live as if all are included in the elect, and leave it to God to determine the particulars.
Connectionism keeps us accountable. Grace encourages humility. Priesthood of all believers undercuts hierarchies. God's sovereignty makes clear that we can never know all that God is, all that God wants, all that God wills. There is always new light. And we can never be smug and triumphalist.
It seems to me that Presbyterians are committed to listen to God, pay attention to the communities they live in and live faithfully and responsively to God's voice speaking and the needs of their neighbors.
I'm not sure what you are asking me on what to elaborate. They are important to me as marked.
Following Christ is both a privilege and a responsibility. The particulars of a reformed faith enables me to give into that reality authentically and fully.
The principle I responded to line up with my earlier answer.
election and grace go together; sovereignty of God and human tendency to I/T go together; stewardship and promotion of SR flow from calling and grace
Stewardship means more than money to mean; it means all resources, especially our planet/environment and advocating for the poor and downtrodden, as well as for nature. Non-violent protest for change is also important on behalf of those who are experiencing violations of human rights.
God alone is sovereign, and all else is under His Lordship. That creates our connectedness, our life in covenant with Him and one another, and His sovereign rule is characterized by His amazing grace.
God's initiative and sovereignty
The only reasons why I give lesser importance to Election and Human tendency to idolatry and tyranny is that 1) they tend to be used in extreme rants that aim to judge and convict. 2) the language is outdated. If we are reformed and always being reformed the best environment for that to happen is one of inclusiveness--being connected beyond geographic boundaries, creating no boundaries with power or privilege or rights. I value Calvin's writings that express his awe of God's love and majesty and humanity's puniness and then where that contrast leads him in his theology.
Not sure what you are asking here
Grace is related to calling, and our calling to life with God and life for others is an expression of God's grace toward us, God's gift of a high and holy purpose. We are in this together, we Presbyterians - our calling is ours, but not ours alone. And we need one another, in our diversities, to better be a part of the whole God seeks to employ in God's work of salvation. We are connected in Christ, our center. Leadership of the church is a shared responsibility and work. Again, we need the diversities of lay and ordained leadership functioning together to better lead the people committed to our care... and to limit the tyranny one or the other might be inclined to exhibit if leading on one's own.

Jesus is my personal Lord and Savior and I speak to him directly with no need for an Intercessor such as the Virgin Mary.
Truth cannot be grasped with words, formulas, doctrines. Important as these are in shaping a mind during its early formative stages, ultimately truth is an event, a transcending of a former state of mind; and itself always subject to being transcended. Reformata semper reformanda. Therefore, all the codified 'Presbyterian principles' are bound in the chains of the letter of law. Only acceptance of the possibility that Holy Spirit breaks in unexpectedly--where, when, and in whom not to be controlled--can lead a Christian to live a life as a fragrant offering.
It is impossible to determine which of these is most important--I take sin seriously and the centrality of grace; that justification and sanctification take equal precedence in life of faith; that faith is a journey not a 'state' or an 'achievement'
We are meant to be in community, not alone, and each person is gifted in ways to benefit God's world. We are blessed and should be respectful of and responsible with those blessings and share them freely with others. Clergy and laity work in partnership to discover and lead us to God's will. Although we are imperfect, God freely gives us undeserved grace and expects us to love others as we are loved.
Most of my responses to the list were in the very important category. I value our tradition and also the variation that exists in our individual out working of these themes.
n/a
1. God calls us to be his followers, not by our will, but by his grace. We are elected to follow him. 2. Presbyterians do not live life in a vacuum, but are connected to other Christians around the world.
As I have mentioned before God calls us to a specific ministry or work or task in our lives. And by his Grace we are made whole to be ministers and elders and leaders of the church for we are all called into some form of ministry to care about our society and promote the general welfare. It is the because of God's great sovereignty that we are called to be Priests and care for one another and for the Earth that he has given us.
My fear for this denomination is that we have lost all balance. The only thing that seems important to the denomination as of late is the 'Promotion of social righteousness' above listed. Clearly, scripture is rife with calls to do just that. But that is not all. Without the framework of the other principles, we lose perspective and focus. In truth, I firmly believe that Social Justice is our idol. In it, we take undue pride. Of it, we speak only. For it, we spurn those who disagree and drive from our midst faithful Christians who arrive at differing interpretations of scripture. Diversity of race and economic background are desirable, but so is diversity of opinion. The General Assembly, believing that the end justifies the means, harped on the same point at its every meeting, inventing new ways to take the same vote until all who disagreed were driven out of the Assembly through frustration and fatigue. I am still here, because I believe in Faith and Order, and Order requires that I stay and have Faith. Yet I question the 'Order' used to effect the will of what was a minority, but is now, through attrition, a minority. Would time not have changed minds? Has it not done so in our nation? Could we not have been gracious toward each other? Could we not, for once, let the middle guide us? What I see is a desire for connectionalism--among those who agree, a desire for social righteousness--as defined by secular ideals coated with a veneer of selectively managed scripture and theology, and a firm belief in the Sovereignty of ourselves (that most banal of idolatries). We as a denomination are in dire need of BEING reformed. Pride and idolatry are so indoctrinated now, that only the Spirit, only the Triune God can save us...as it now and ever shall be.
Reformed theology shapes my thinking and my life

For me personally, predestination is not an important part of my theology. However, the sovereignty and providence of God, along with the grace of God are key. Also I strongly believe that Christians need to work together as a community to be 'salt and light' in the world, to promote justice and compassion for others, no matter their race or religion. We must each seek to find our calling with respect to working out God's will in our lives and in the world around us.
These principles support Reformed Theology's emphasis upon freedom to pursue truth through dedicated and continual scholarship, respectful listening to others, loving and reasoned questioning, inclusive compassion and mutuality across boundaries.
God's loving grace and Jesus' forms of ministry influence all else.
All of these principles are important in giving shape and substance to the community of faith. None of them trumps God's grace in loving one another.
The rituals of worship offer a way to praise God and strengthen my relationship with my creator. Joining with others as believers means being in a ministry for all of us while serving God's whole world.
I take the order of the ordination vows with utmost seriousness.
No time to now. Not sure just what 'covenant life' means. Social righteousness is a very good thing, but I worry sometimes that it becomes foundational, and not an implication of our foundations. If we're just another social r. group, so what? The church's one foundation
Teachings regarding the doctrines of grace are absolutely central. Teachings regarding ecclesiological matters are of secondary importance.
All Christians are called by God to serve Him through the Holy Spirit's leading. What we do with what God gives us is important to God. We all should be better stewards each day, relying upon God's strength.
Together and individually we are called in the Body of Christ in service, led by God to share the Good News as understood in Scripture, and to give of ourselves to promote and live a life that lifts up the weak and heals the broken, breaking down the powers that corrupt human life, and thus bring peace and justice and the sovereign will of God.
Ministers/elders leading together is a concept I appreciate about Reformed theology, but is not crucial to God's kingdom on earth. God's grace and recognizing the sovereignty of God are crucial.
It would be hard for me to rank order most of these. Ours is a complex faith that reflect this in the way we hold a number of principles together as we seek our path of faithful discipleship.
The movement away from salvation as an escape plan from earth...that Jesus came for the Kingdom of God. It is already here. The promotion of compassion, understanding, and non-judgmental finger pointing.
It is interesting that the principles listed in qn 16 do not include belief in Jesus Christ as Lord of all and head of the church, our Lord and Savior - collectively as Christians and individually. Yet, our 20th century confessions (Barmen, C67, Brief Statement) lift up the centrality of Christ. I think that is a rather serious omission. Some of the other principles, eg election and covenant, are biblical and speak to God's free choice, God's sovereignty. I happen to be something of a universalist in believing that God's love and mercy are extended to all of us. But again, the Spirit blows where it will and God's choices and judgment are God's. I think in recent years we have become caught up in this teaching/ruling elder language and that there remains a strong anti-clerical thread in our denomination. My ordination certificate states that I am ordained to the exercise of ministry in the church catholic. As a matter of order, I have been privileged to, first and foremost, preach the Word and administer Sacraments, and then participating in the discipline of the church. This is still my vocation.

<p>Grace includes all and fosters right-relatedness with God, humans, self and creation. God holds people accountable for their acts of injustice and failures to be in right relationship. Community and spiritual practices are key to continued discipleship and right-relatedness. The kingdom is here but not yet so we are called to work for justice and peace.</p>
<p>We are God centered. Each individual has a role to live out in the body of Christ.</p>
<p>The above reflects my current understanding based on life experience and interactions with others including those of other faiths. I think I would have answered differently when I was younger.</p>
<p>Our examples in life supersede our declarations and demonstrations.</p>
<p>Most of the Presbyterian principles are outdated. The church has meetings all over the place, expending the hard earn money of its members without any concrete results. The current church appears to elitist and out of touch to the poor, small church in the inner city or the rural location. Our leadership is sitting in their places that are, most of the time, separated from the real people. The Presbyterian Church principles are irrelevant to our society.</p>
<p>As you can see, I place high values on many of the classic Presbyterian principles. I believe that the meaning of 'connectionalism' and 'stewardship' have been watered down to the point of near-meaninglessness ('stewardship,' for instance, is closer in practice/use in most PCUSA churches to 'fundraising'). I question whether the meaning can be recovered. 'Promotion of social righteousness' is slightly different--there we need to clarify language that is over 100 years old for today. I'm not sure that we are doing that very effectively, and the result is that we don't end up being a witness to the world. We only end up mimicking the value systems of certain groups within our society. The church should be marching to the beat of a different drummer entirely.</p>
<p>We are partners with God in all things. Incorporate earlier statements about Reformed concepts here. Humans dare not usurp God's role. Being 'nice' and being Christian are not synonymous. There are Divine challenges for humans to stand up and speak out for justice. Not only connectional nature of church, but recognize the spiritual connection of all life forms. We are all connected. God made us part of one another. Alpha and Omega God. We are not alone.</p>
<p>Faith comes before action, therefore, for me, principles of faith precede social righteousness and stewardship. Election is often misinterpreted and is less important than grace. We are all human and not God.</p>
<p>I did not understand what you meant by promotion of social righteousness; honestly, the words or phrases are really too vague to answer accurately</p>
<p>Scripture defines all the other principles.</p>
<p>They are the guides by which I love and serve God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, personally and communally.</p>
<p>God is God and we are not. None of us can fully know the mind of God and so we discern as a community together, leading and equipping disciples who then lead and equip new disciples.</p>
<p>In response to God's prior grace, love and sovereign lordship, we answer though the gift of our lives, our sense of calling, our all, our everything in deep gratitude and faith.</p>
<p>I embrace the sovereignty of God. My responses indicate I value believers' insight led by the Spirit. A faithful life entails working for justice and peace.</p>
<p>I believe the response not being the sole responsibility is crucial to our faith and to the person with whom you are in discussion.</p>
<p>These guide me</p>
<p>I think most of the above principles are sound and important. The 'doctrine' or understanding of 'election,' however, has never held much weight in my mind, perhaps because I have seen it misunderstood and misused. God definitely 'calls' us and we are thereby 'elected,' but the principle of human freedom gets lost when a strong argument for 'election' is made.</p>

Most of it is very important to me!
I try to consider all of these, to one degree or another, in my personal, family, church, and community lives, in addition to my involvement in national and international concerns.
These principles are important and I think other denominations share most of them but perhaps with a different degree of emphasis
I seek to be involved in community justice issues with others.
Christ has asked me to invite Him into a personal relationship (long ago made). Then I was called to serve Him through the PCUSA. As a connectional church we encourage and support one another (individuals, congregations, governing bodies) in manifesting the Great Ends of the church. Since most of us are acutely aware of our sinful tendencies, the unmerited favor we know as grace must always be the primary emphasis of everything the church does while acknowledging that our God calls us, challenges us, and enables us to be focused on God's mission in the world and the social arena.
They are important because they are the foundation of my faith.
Too often, and too much, the denomination has chosen to 'select' its stance (theology) on what is 'wanted' or popular in the culture, nearly always ignoring or 'bending' God's Word to fit the human pattern, rather than God's design. The denomination has put human desire at the forefront, pandering to culture, and ignoring or discounting the sovereignty of God. We have made idols of human persons, and human desires. Does the denomination actually read the Bible - especially the Old Testament? The mainstream of the denomination has moved very close to being apostate.
While I emphatically believe in the significance of 'calling' in Presbyterian theology, I am disturbed by the perception 'calling' seems to be increasingly being given lower status than such business models as performance evaluations, minimum salaries, etc.
The PCUSA is dying. Why should my responses matter?
If I am going to claim to be 'Reformed/Presbyterian,' then I don't think any of them are optional.
There are many I didn't type in that were mentioned in the last section. Sovereignty of God - God creator, God sustainer, God redeemer. Human tendency to idolatry and sin - we are a broken people who sin regularly and who often distance ourselves from God by finding other 'gods' in our lives to worship and adore. Parity of ministers and ruling elders - sharing in the work of the church at all Council levels, having equal voting rights, and having voice on council issues. Priesthood of all believers - all are called to be messengers of the Gospel. All are called to share in the work of Christ and to serve his children.

I think the Church is being called to reinvent itself, maybe by becoming less hierarchical and less centralized (sort of like the home churches of early Christianity). Many of the foundational Reformed principles, though historically interesting, are no more relevant to the Church today than are indulgences to the present-day Roman Catholic church. We need a Reformation that reforms us completely, possibly by focusing on concepts like redemption (as opposed to salvation) and grace, which have counterparts in other religions. I think we are being called to unite with people of other faiths, and to focus more on what binds us together than on what differentiates us. As a hospital chaplain I work in an interfaith environment and regularly conduct interfaith worship services. The life-and-death issues I confront with patients, families, and staff every day make the types of issues raised in this survey seem silly and totally irrelevant by comparison. I can tell you that a dying patient is not interested at all in the 'sovereignty of God,' or whether ministers and elders lead the church together. They are interested in redemption (i.e., something good coming out of something bad) and in finding hope in this redemption. Most of my patients (pediatric, adolescent, and young adult) could not care less about 'salvation,' as many of them don't even believe in God and are quite comfortable with the idea that when you die, that's all there is. What they *do* want, though--badly--is for some good to come out of their death in some way. That could be resurrection (in which case Christianity can be enormously comforting), or it could be reincarnation (also comforting to some), or it could be whatever they choose to believe. What they want, though, is for their lives to have meaning. What they want is to discover their purpose--their contribution--to life. They are far more concrete in what this means than 'glorifying God' in terms of our chief purpose in life. They want to have made a positive difference in the world, and/or to be able to help others in some way through their suffering. The Church needs to focus on hope and redemption--NOT sin--if it wants to be relevant to young people. They are searching for answers, but the Church as it is today is not providing them. Why we are still yoked to the traditional Sunday morning worship service where we sit and listen to an expensive choir sing to an expensive organ accompaniment while paid ministers present a 15-minute sermon that takes 20 hours a week to prepare I do not understand. It is clearly not what young people--the future of our church--want or need. Nor is it what I want or need, and I'm clergy. I find my daily 6AM yoga class to be far more worshipful and meaningful than most Sunday morning worship services, and the community at my yoga studio is far more supportive, inclusive, and welcoming than more churches. We are missing the mark in so many ways.

Important how?

Our polity is a reflection of our theology; I think the Great Ends of the Church matter, and reflect the principles, above.

These are especially important because they set our denomination apart from most others and inform our quest to discern what God wants us to be doing in his world among his peoples. They keep us on course and focused on God's will and not our own.

<p>Many questions were great ends of the church which I became acquainted with as a ruling elder then more as a teaching elder. We didn't talk a lot about them in seminary, but I looked at them on my own. The Trinity is extremely important and unique - our ability to explain it as pastors and leaders to those in the pew and then to the world needs work. Especially the ecumenical and interfaith world. The various principles of the Reformed faith/Presbyterian faith should be laced through the sermons we here and articulated, also explored in bible study and Sunday school at all ages. They are aspects of our denominational/ religious culture that help us to connect to one another, and other Christians, but also set us apart. As a woman ordination and opportunity for women in leadership and all facets of ministry is of major importance as is parity of elders. Both provide balance and variety. Our sinful human nature and God's response in grace are important and applicable across time, place and culture. I even studied them in Peru in a Presbyterian church and I am an American. Covenant relationship and being created for relationship seem to be dying arts in our post modern society...especially around marriage. Committed is not the same as covenant...to me a covenant is holy and invites God in or acknowledges Gods role in. Committed is what the unchurched say.</p>
<p>If followed seriously, they provide a balanced Christian life that is reflective of the teachings of Jesus.</p>
<p>The concept of election contradicts my understanding of God's loving grace and salvation if it is used to mean that the elect are chosen for salvation and others are not.</p>
<p>Each of these tenants when considered hold great importance in the worshipping life of a Presbyterian</p>
<p>They pull us together as Presbyterians to accept God's call to work in the world</p>
<p>We are in covenant relationship of God & others. Our stewardship is about time, talents & resources & is a lifelong endeavor - Priesthood of all Believers - social justice righteousness - our own failings do not negate God's grace.</p>
<p>All fall back to the sovereignty of God</p>
<p>A God-centered - even Christ-centered - orientation is indispensable and never to be replaced by a kind of glorified humanism or anthropocentric "theology". God's glory means all</p>
<p>Election matters in that we are chosen to serve</p>
<p>My rankings are mostly ranked "in relationship to each other". All are important. Deciding on very or slightly was difficult. Election, Grace & Sovereignty are the most all-encompassing and are umbrellas that include the other principles. The other principles follow from the over-arching.</p>
<p>About life together A's G's people - use of resources, follow G's call, with ability to forgive and allow for humanity. Important that it is the work of <u>all</u>, not just some.</p>
<p>These were all historic, traditional markers of the Reformed Tradition - all important to us</p>
<p>Theological & ethical more important than institutional / organizational</p>
<p>I also believe in election, but not the way most people understand it as predestination</p>
<p>Because of God's grace and that we are forgiven our sins, we can live with gratitude which should guide and direct us to a life of community, working for justice and mercy as well as constant reflection on our relationship with the Triune God.</p>
<p>God calls us and equips us to follow, and all are called. Perhaps Micah 6:8 sums up God's call and expectations best.</p>
<p>I am always curious as to what the essential terms might be.</p>
<p>Sorry, can't attempt to write on the importance in this small space - except the Sovereignty of God is the foundation from which all other principles emanate.</p>
<p>Election, calling or vocation, grace and sovereignty of God are vitally important to the Reformed tradition and to me personally</p>

Calling: I am not only called by name in my baptism, becoming a child of God, I am also then called to service and thanksgiving
We need Gods unmerited favor - Grace. God's riches at Christs Expense
As I look at the "dots" above, I realized that my sermon topics reflect the reformed principles most important to me.
The grace of God guides us to listen, to respond and to actively engage in justice, mercy and acts of love
Again, God's sovereignty, God's grace, our gratitude
connectionalism in our polity way of expression our communion w/Christ and with one another. God's grace is our only hope of salvation. Social righteousness is the ministry of reconciliation to which Paul points in 2 Corinthians.
I am Presbyterian by choice, in large measure by the example of faithful Presbyterian Christian's and such principles
God is in charge and saves us according to God's plan. We are called to live a life faithful to Jesus Christ in our personal life and in our society. God saves us through the life, death and resurrection of Christ.
To me the idea of grace, promoting social righteousness & challenging human tendency to idolatry are critical faith values.
I don't believe God excludes people from his Kingdom. He is always seeking us. We live in covenant relationship with God because of his gift of grace
God is active and present in the world today. God calls, appoints, sends, diverts and teaches people as God's plans are carried out in each generation. Each of us is called to participate in that plan, and we are given the ability to do so by god's grace. All of us, even little children, are imp of God's gifts and wisdom which we share in God's love.
Social Justice in changing times. The church should lead - not military - race, women, gay equality
Knowing Scripture as a context of God' revealed will slay leadership with lay and clergy living life out of a sense of God's sovereignty and grace.
In and through Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church continues to call women & men to share the good news with all people in all times & ages. This includes each & every above items A, C, D, E, H I & K.
I believe that, above all understanding the sovereignty of God is the only firm knowledge I have - all else is based on that. Yet, in sovereignty, God offers grace, and through the Spirit, engenders a calling in the lives of believers
All these principles are important for our understanding of Reform Theology. I give special attention to grace & social issues
I see "calling" as a very important concept in Reformed Theology, in my own life, and in life of others.
We need "called" ministers who do not consider the pastorate as just "a job". The bible should still be the basis of our theology, rather than being mistranslated as many of our leaders are trying to do today.
We are called by God, by God's grace, to be a royal priesthood to full claim the good News of the love of God in Christ Jesus in Word & deed.
Promotion of social righteousness takes place by people helping people directly in Relationship, this is the service of Jesus described in the parable of the talents not political activism and its seductive draw of power and influence that plagues the PCUSA and drives people away from our churches by the millions
We are called to be a holy people become God is holy. Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion gives full expression to these concepts. Our study of the early church fathers helps to understand these concepts.

They reflect Christ as Lord & Savior & our response to being called-into the body of Christ
Priesthood of all believers affirms our equality as children of God. We all belong
Having a God-centered life, so that we see that all life is important & valued, so that we're motivated to help those on the margins of society
Grace is the most important principle. The connectionalism is important for spiritual growth, encouragement, and mission. Election is also important in so far as God's invitation to shared purpose.
What we do as the church we do because of God and each other and only by the grace of God. God could choose to work alone, but instead God chooses us.
God's call to humanity to respond to divine gifting of grace through Jesus, as seen in Scripture, challenges a tendency to the sin of independence & exclusion. The Church community - all variations of that priesthood - who our response to God's sovereign fights with a life of praise & service - stewarding both.
All above are of equal importance
PCUSA is in dysfunction, disconnected situation at this Time because instead of church transforming culture, culture is changing the church. There is a movement to develop a modern day gnostic agenda that is being influenced by a liberal social justice platform that has crippled the churches ability to proclaim goodness of Jesus Christ as defined by the Scriptures.
I believe that God calls us into connected covenant life, elects love and forgive through amazing grace, despite our human tendency to idolatry and sometimes tyranny. I believe that God is sovereign and calls ministers, elders and all believers to social righteousness and stewardship as expressions of love for God and one another.
Selection seems to be a concept that was a primary obsession of medieval and early Reformed theology. I believe it is over-emphasized in our confessional heritage and not on the Bible or current theology
God's claim and call on my life - election by grace - are the guiding piece in all things. I am prone to idolatry / sin and need to be reserved and transformed in the context of covenant community / accountability, living gratefully b/c of this.
I stress the community of faith as critical for living in an alternate reality. We are resident aliens. I reject Calvin's secure of election to eternal life vs. damnation. I believe in god's ultimate salvation of all people.
God's grace is primary principle
God connects all of reality - the church is the convergence of God's will for humanity
All of life is a call from God who created me & sustains me & sends me. All the rest of the list are the how God provides for all & schedules the work through the created order.
Theology by nature, is interconnected. It is hard to specify one or true beliefs and regard the others as somehow irrelevant
Look at the membership numbers over 70 years. They speak for themselves
They act as a guide to decisions we make
The Reformed church should never be platform to provide a personal agenda. Rather, we need to whole heartedly seek God's guidance & courage to speak out against injustice.
God's call - to faith, to work, to stewardship, to leadership, to connectionalism - is what I value most in life.
to put a little space between them: Sovereignty is #1, Grace #2, Stewardship embraces the rest. I think the meaning of election is changing, certainly it is for me.
Ministers have a mandate to lead with the session. While sessions and elders have responsibility to lead, humans like (and prefer) one leader who casts vision, encourages & leads session

I think our connectionalism, style of leadership (Elders), and emphasis on Call are what make us different
E - H are especially important. They describe the method of reconciliation and the means of fulfilling our purposes within God family.
Solo gratias - if we could only remember
God reveals Godself in the Word, which is Jesus. The Bible through the Spirit witnesses to this Word.
Grace, relationships, and service inform the rest of our values and actions.
Elders & ministers working together to demonstrate the Priesthood of all believers & social justice are <u>KEY</u>
these principles define who I understand God to be and do as well as who and what I am and may yet become.
Grace is the foundational principle
I have no further observation
It is important to understand that, although I must make a decision of Faith in Jesus Christ, the origin of that choice is in the prior, electing grace of God.
1. Connectionalism is very important as a challenge to forces that seek to divide people into subsets of humanity. 2. Promoting social righteousness is a critical response to the gift.
Without Jesus the sin which separates us eternally from God is not dealt with.
God's word in scripture carries more weight than historical situations. God's revelation carries God's truth in all times and situations.
God's grace in Jesus Christ is @ the center of our Faith. Election is connected to grace. Social righteousness and stewardship are an appropriate response. And, honestly, they are largely coopted by the political left in advance of an agenda.
Predestination and election are reformed words and concepts we don't use enough these days. We have become unmoved from our history and grounding.
I don't know who's in and who's out, but I do know God's got this. So my job is to be God's "hands and feet" on this earth.
I have always appreciated the creative tension established by our understanding of vocation & calling depositing authority in ruling elders led by a teaching elder/Moderator
My whole lens through which I look is built on a robust and lively engagement with Reformed theology
All important, but need to be defined because many different definitions exist for each
the liberal PC(USA) today is making the same mistakes as the conservative southern Baptist in the 1980's. We are not keeping the main thing, the main thing. We have become the Democratic party w/o a cross.
The "very competent" responses from the foundation. "Important" responses come out of the foundation. Election is an unusable, inaccurate, unhelpful term that serves to alienate and divide those we try to reach
all of these are important to me. The concept of election is less important because it is mysterious and a paradox. I worry less about who is "elected" or how that works and feel it's important for everyone to hear and have to opportunity to respond to the gospel
The ones I marked as very important are the most significant principles for the church at this time.
Election is an outdated idea that people use to put themselves above others, it is behind wars, imperialism and the idea of manifest destiny which has resulted in genocides and needles suffering. Otherwise, I am in agreement with most other principles of Reformed Theology
For me, God's grace in the midst of our brokenness has primary in our lives, along with our call to go and share this Kingdom reality in the world

All that we have and all that we are comes from God. As god's people called to be followers of Jesus Christ we live in grateful obedience to God's call.
Reformed / Presbyterian principles offer a Christian tradition which promotes and enriches Christian faith.
It can be difficult to discern god's guidance as a minister when that guidance is filtered through the acceptance or non-acceptance of elders
those things in the very important category help us love God and each other
god's calling on election to be God's people includes all areas of our lives. We are called to serve and glorify god no matter what is our daily occupation
I believe these basic Reformed Principles are essential to the practice and understanding of the Christian faith
We are reforming always to be reformed. Koinoina is essential to the survival of the church. I live by grace
a balanced life
god calls each of us & all of us as communities of faith to various ministries, & God alters these callings according to changing circumstances & how we respond or fail to do so. That is, god works with us according to our own faithfulness & never gives up on us.
God is sov. - we are not, but God gives us His grace to work together for the solace of His Kingdom
I chose the Reformed tradition as a young adult because it made the most sense out of life. It is intellectually satisfying & comprehensive & flexible
Sovereignty of God, priesthood of all believers, revelation of God through Christ.
As I strive to rearticulate our faith in a global context in a way which is inclusive, I find relevant wisdom embedded in our tradition. For instance, our insistence that we make idols, even of our faith tradition, frees us up for new and more faithful interpretations for our time.
What is obviously missing from your list is direct mention of Jesus Christ
I would have gone a step further with "e.grace" to answer <u>extremely</u> important if the option existed
It is the responsibility of the church as a whole, ministers, elders, deacons, and members to witness to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the importance of faith in daily life.
I highlight Kingdom of God principles, morals, ethics & economics "Thy Kingdom Come" not the Presbyterian church come. Discipleship, Discipleship, Discipleship
these forms and identity as tenets of our faith & life
God's grace is what allows us to live, breath, and have hope!
All but g above are one step removed from O's sovereignty so they are all very important
My seminary was Lutheran and my theology has moved in the direction of mainstream United Methodism. I'm currently active in the Emmaus movement
Calvin place a high priority on the sovereignty of God, from which all our understanding of scripture is filtered
Grace is fundamental to my life & theology. I think all of us have a calling to share our talents in unique ways as we serve as Christ's body/church. It is important that power is shared so all can share unique gifts & faith.
Our secular society thinks the church is one more non-profit & is run with a executive director board of directors. The church is <u>not</u> a non-profit it is the body of Christ & its elders as a group seek God together for God's leading. We lead together
My lowest choices are tied to a mistrust of social connectivity - society is warped
Most important is the sovereignty of God, as Presbyterians. Election and Grace are foundational, and upon all this we are called to our covenant life together. There is shared leadership and accountability among leaders, TE's and RE's. I love the PCUSA!

Classical Reformed principles of calling, connectionalism, Grace and tyranny are more important now than ever. We are all under the Sovereignty of God
We are the faith community who strive to become the image of the body of Christ. Because of the essential tenets mentioned above, we are saved by God through faith as we build a household of God with spiritual "roots" for our salvation.
My surprise at putting "social righteousness" as "important" rather than "very important"
I value creation story above the story of the "fall"
The Lord's table is for Christ's disciples
I think all of these are important - I've been in this tradition almost my entire life
the promotion of social righteousness is important but can never take the place of God's Word. I'm afraid we have worked harder at showing social righteousness than we have walking humbly with our God
Our faith has many facts and all work together to build a lifestyle that is loving, generous, forgiving, and hopeful.
Of this list, in addition to my answers in 14 above, I would hold as <u>most</u> powerful the promotion of social righteousness (crucial!) & priesthood of all believers
I place importance on the individual member participation in the life of the church, to recognize their calling, and their responsibility. I believe the activity in the "social" civic world is essential, local mission activity at the top of the list. Stewardship is more than money. Presbyterian Polity is what attracted me to the Presbyterian faith church.
Christian faith must be foremost gospel of grace: gift before task
Not that ministers and elders leading together isn't as important, but communal discernment and the fact that God the Holy Spirit can and does speak to all who seek & listen makes it more Presbyterian Polity than theological belief.
the list is a good summary
I struggle w/the sovereignty of God, but I understand that Reformed understanding of the human tendency or idolatry to be very relevant
Sovereignty of God is all encompassing of the others i.e. calling and election are up to God as is grace without God we are nothing and our life is void of identity and purpose. As the people of God we are called into community and out of this comes an understanding of being connectional, covenant life, and priesthood of all believers etc.
I was raised with them - don't know how they don't affect me.
We are all called but it is by the free gift of grace from God that claims us as God's
the earth and all in it belong to a loving god who is the giver of life and good gifts and deserving of our effort to live lives which are pleasing to God and caring for God's human and natural resources
As fallen people we desperately need a Savior to enable our reconciliation with God. By God's grace Jesus Christ bore the sins of humanity on the cross and provided atonement for us so that by faith we could receive forgiveness and eternal life. God has given us gifts as people of faith to utilize in the service of God's Kingdom, gifts to lead, to give, to serve.
God is omnipotent
Our idolatry of self, race, nation is strong, pervasive and often unnoticed by us.
Sin absurd, grace more absurd and forces us to live our calling as individual and are concentrated community, using our gifts to serve and love God and others and all creation
Reformed discipline opens our redemptive witness to a variety of society formational mature of reformed theology open vitality and organized discipline to teach, preach, missionize, change society's vision (Presby enabler Reformed Faith to provide for leadership for church of Jesus Christ body
god's love is paramount. God gives varying gifts to each, and <u>together</u> , we are the body of Christ

These items marked as Important / Very Important are the essential elements of my Reformed heritage
Promotion of social righteousness has taken on overly-political connotations
God calls us into covenantal life. Because of God's grace & mercy, we are called to respond in gratitude! We are all called by God thru baptism.
Foundational for identity of church, God's mission through us.
An emphasis on grace, ministers & elders leading together & the sovereignty of God are guiding principles that should help build a loving and cooperative community
God has elected us to service in Christ's name. We are co-workers with God through Christ to mend & broken creation through our God given gifts, talents, & vocations.
All these are important guides but need some reflection and study; election needs to be better explained
God's grace & sovereignty are primary, followed by the significance of all of us to be faithful leaders, discerners, followers
In different time in the life of our tradition, certain principles become more emphasized than others. I see them collectively inviting us to deepen our relationship with God and one another.
I put election & stewardship as not important because they are not the piece that urges us to respond to a God of love.
Reformed beliefs help to keep our minds focused on God by reminding us that we all sin & fall short of the glory of God
I love the great ends of the church. We are called to be "Christ" to the world. To quote Bonhoeffer - as Christ is the manifestation of God, so the church is the manifestation of Christ - The living Body of Christ - in all his grace, unconditional love & hospitality - working for light in the darkness, so that justice might be about God's reign.
Emphasis on elders leading God's people in their service; social and economic justice to herald in God's new kingdom/reality
For me, relating to others, as God in Christ has to humanity, is primary. Election, those saved and those unsaved, is a thing that doesn't correspond to my understanding of who God is as unconditional love.
that baptism though important isn't a prerequisite for receiving the eucharist
Not enough space
The church is the body of Christ through whom Christian churches are bound together and sent out for ministry and service
Total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints - these principles may be important for seminaries or CPM's, but let's face it, not all that important, useful, or informative for parish ministry in a post-modern, post-Christian world
As pastor of a UCC church I am removed from PCUSA polity. However, I find it extremely important to teach my congregation the concepts of grace, salvation, sin and church to help them grasp the gift they have been given in Jesus Christ.
I appreciate the priority that reformed / Presbyterian Principles place on personal calling confirmed by the community and the mutuality expressed in the connectionalism of the church life
I believe a-k are affirmed in scripture
god calls & equips disciples for their service in the church & in the world. When we live our vocation we are blessed & are a blessing
I am a lifelong Presbyterian and have grown in my appreciation of these principles, seeking to embody and teach them to others
Much depends on one's view of terms (i.e. election)

I am a <u>progressive</u> . I do not believe in divinity of Jesus. Christ is a human construct. Actually I am kind of done with the PCUSA.
In and of themselves they have formed my theology and faith practices but when I am eye to eye with another - it is God's love, grace, forgiveness and growth that is important to living.
The theological contribution of the reformation can be summarized in 3 points: 1) justification only by faith, 2) The normative authority of scripture and 3) Universal priesthood of all believers. Nevertheless, very often Presbyterians forget two very crucial principals: 1) the Christian Liberty and 2) The church always in transformation. It is regrettable how we take for granted the topic of Christian Freedom, a very central issue of the Protestant Reformation. Those postulates of the Reformation tell us today: 1) Challenge us to re-discover constantly the meaning of the Good News of the gospel and the power of the Evangelical Freedom (Karl Barth) very costly for the reformers in XVI century. 2) those principals call us for a continued Biblical exegetical work, seriously, scientific, questioning on our individual and collective consciousness as church. 3) they call us to be respectful toward all our brothers and sisters in Christ and together look for God's will in obedience to the liberty before every human word.
God creates...God watches over...God calls...God forgives...God equips...God is in charge of all things
Love God above all things & Love your neighbor as yourself
We are to live into the salvation we have been given by grace. Be a Christ follower
All of these attributes are subject to interpretation and the church hasn't voiced a particularly progressive or dynamic interpretation
the principals provide sustainability under all circumstances humans endure
God's election and our gracious response

Appendix F: Members' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Open-Ended Question on the Relationship
Between Baptism and the Communion

The 222nd General Assembly (2016) in Portland, Oregon, approved changes in the *Directory for Worship*, which will now go to presbyteries for approval. In one of these changes, the directory would no longer specify Baptism as a requirement for taking communion in PC(USA) congregations, but instead would explain that the unbaptized who wish to take communion should also be invited to be baptized subsequently.

Q-19: In your opinion, what does this say about the relationship of Baptism to the Lord's Table?

NA
I don't think that it is necessary to invite unbaptized for baptism after communion. The Holy Spirit will lead them. Proselytizing turns many 'babes' in the faith off
Baptism is a must for each individual.
The two are important but can be mutually exclusive
They should be unrelated. I believe the act of Coming to the Lord's Table in and of itself is the same as coming to Baptism and accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.
The Table should be open to all.
The sacrament of the Lord's Table should be open to all who are interested in it. It seems silly to place barriers on those who are intrigued by our faith.
Eucharist is more important than the symbolic ritual of baptism.
It is for Christians whether baptized or not.
Baptism is symbolic of Christ's sacrifice for us. We should not participate in it lightly, as we would be trivializing His sacrifice.
It is open to ALL no restrictions
I don't know.
if it is not a requirement, the significance of the sacrament is void.
I believe that there can be a conversion with the ceremony of baptism, but that Baptism is a very important symbol.
Generally, our baptism is a promise by the parents of how to raise the child. If an adult decides to accept Jesus, do they need that promise? I think it would be good practice to be baptized as it would be a conscious choice and promise of the individual.
I believe baptism is the parents' and the congregation's pledge to bring the child up in the church and help them follow God. If an unbaptized person is spiritually moved to take communion, they should be allowed.
Jesus welcomed everyone. Yes, he baptized the disciples but I do not believe that Jesus would exclude anyone
Since I don't have a strong opinion about this, there is no opinion to discuss
communion table is separate from baptism
It is symbolic
I believe communion is an act of love that should be available to all, regardless of whether one has been Baptized.
I think believers should be invited to the table. Ok if not baptized if is a follower of Christ.
They are both sacraments of the protestant faith. Neither one is above the other.

Both are symbols of our faith.
Baptism is an important aspect of Christian life, however when serving communion in a church, it is difficult to determine who has been baptized. If we are truly going to 'welcome all' to our congregations, we must consciously include attendees without making initial assumptions about their faith. To attend a church should not be a test, but rather a welcoming gesture.
My baptism was a public announcement in accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Each time I take communion I believe it reiterates that same desire to pronounce the I am a follower of Christ. Otherwise what would be the point of baptism.
This is certainly a difficult question, as a lot of theologians have noted! The importance of the Lord's Supper is fundamental and crucial to the idea of the church. At the same time, I don't like the idea of excluding people. I guess all I can say is that I appreciate the dilemma.
It's a nice way to separate the good people from the bad people
The Lord's table is a symbol of a covenant between Jesus Christ and believers, not between Jesus and non-believers. It is a sacred ritual and should be treated as such. God commands us to love the sinner not the sin.
Jesus was baptized before he even started his ministry so if you use him as an example then we should be baptized before taking communion.
The Lord's Table is an invitation to all, so why should someone be rejected because of no baptism?
I believe that either sacrament can initiate a deeper relationship with God and Jesus Christ. In some cases, that may happen at the Table rather than at the Font, and that can then lead the person to be baptized as a result of their communion with God at the Lord's Table.
Baptism is the indication that a person has made the commitment to Christ and truly believes in the importance and significance of communion. Those who have not made that commitment may not understand the importance of what would be participating in if they took communion before they were baptized. We should invite non-baptized individuals to observe and learn, but should not let them participate until they are baptized.
I feel that Baptism, Confirmation and Communion all are intertwined. Each separate but strengthening the others.
The relationship does not have to be linear.
That everyone is included and invited to the Lord's table and make the decision that Jesus is Lord and Savior even after partaking in the Lord's Supper.
I do not think Jesus would turn anyone away
Everyone should be welcomed to the table. Restricting this tells non-Christians that there is a prerequisite to partake the bread of life. I agree with the amendment that baptism should be offered consecutively but not restricting people from coming to the table.
That God welcomes all who seek him no matter where they come from
To me, it indicates that, in our church, all are invited to the table and to the family of God.
Baptism indicates that we take seriously our faith and that communion is not a ho-hum affair.
As long as you want Jesus as part of your life, then you should be welcomed at his table.
We welcome everyone to the Lord's table, even the unbaptized, and hope that they will join us in faith.
I am not a theological expert so this is a lay opinion. I think one can lead to the other. There are no rules about this. Jesus said love God, love each other. The rules around the rituals come from people, not Jesus.
Giving of oneself completely to God to be transformed into his disciple through faith
There is Grace in being fed. Amen.
Baptism is a covenant that may proceed Communion but is not a prerequisite

Baptism serves as our welcoming of a person into membership in our family of faith. For many,* communion may be a step in the direction of Baptism. I remember a story that a friend of mine told me. She serves as an episcopal priest in an urban parish in my city, Louisville. She had a group of refugees visit the church for a Sunday Eucharist and they received Holy Communion. It is clear that they found the sacrament to be something special, something that was important to them. We need to foster this importance of Eucharist in our own members and that starts by welcoming ALL God's people to the table.
Baptism is a world structure not a kingdom or Jesus value
Open to all, not a select few.
Some come to the table by way of the font, and some go to the font by way of the table. For people not baptized as a child, encountering Jesus at the table may be a crucial moment of faith formation not to be hindered by a theological 'ideal.'
That the table is the Lord's Table and that he invites each of us to participate; that it is not necessary to be baptized in order to be part of the body of Christ.
We are all invited to the Lord's table, we are all offered baptism
One leads to the other
Remember Paul's warning about taking communion unworthily. As a teen, my parents reconciled after divorce and my father was very embarrassed to see my sister and I pass up communion and told us we had to take it. That was taking it unworthily. I was not a believer at that time. Unbelievers should not take communion (baptized or not). The question regarding unbaptized believers is more difficult. I can follow the argument of feeding them and then inviting them to be baptized, but I was at the committee hearings on this and it was obvious that many pastors did not invite non-baptized communicants to be baptized (and had no intention of doing so). I think separating them trivializes both of them.
Both are a gift that point to the Person and work of Christ, unconditionally given, unconditionally received.
I would say one is not conditional of the other. If Jesus came up to someone on the street and invited them to His table, do we really think he would ask for proof of Baptism? No, he would want them at His table because He loved them and wanted to share God's word with them. Is this simplistic? Maybe...
Regeneration is not received by either sacrament, but only from the Holy Spirit by faith in the faithfully-proclaimed Word of Jesus Christ. The sacraments are necessary only for membership in the visible church.
Baptism recognizing being a called child of God and communion is the practice that embodies that, so with that understanding baptism is the natural precursor to communion.
Sacraments are preferably reserved for those who follow Christ, but the Lord's Table is open to all, and the offer to come is extended to all.
Communion is the invitation of our Lord to receive Divine Grace. Baptism is the claiming, through the congregation, of a person as God's own. There should be only love of Jesus Christ as a requirement to feast at the Table.
Still required
Communion should be offered to all as the table does not belong to any one person/organization, it belongs to God. Being baptized to me is a symbol/promise that you will walk as a Christian as God has already claimed you.
Someone not yet baptized should still be welcomed at the Lord's Table. This inclusiveness could lead someone to want a closer Christian relationship by reaching out to be baptized.
Of some import, but not critical.
Baptism is a commitment to follow Christ. Jesus never excluded anyone and neither should we from the Lords Supper.

I am sure that it is happening already. My concern is that the individual understand what they are doing when they participate in the sacrament and are not just doing what everyone else is doing.
Baptism has a public sense. It is an individual's decision to come to Christ. The Lord's Table is a more intimate, private statement that may move one towards public acceptance of the Lord's grace and work in their life- Baptism.
There are many manifestations of the process of baptism. Anyone who feels moved to participate in communion should be able to.
Both are important symbols. When symbols cease to help, they can be skipped.
The table welcomes all.
I was permitted communion at several different denominations as a young un-baptized person. I was aware of its meaning and purpose and strength. Baptism was denied me by my parents Presbyterian church, because of issues between the minister and my parents. I was wise enough, and had a mother who articulated the breach well enough, that I knew this was an issue with the adults, not me. She, also, explained the traditions and tenants of the church to me so that I accepted faith without an official baptism in childhood. As an adult, I was baptized. It hasn't changed how I view faith because that was rooted in childhood.
Not as relevant. More important to connect with non-baptized through communion, than to exclude them for not participating in a ritual.
The lack thereof should not bar one from the Lord's Table
Ordinarily speaking, I would say a confession of faith should be followed by Baptism which now means you have entered the communion of the Body of Christ and now partake in the Lord's Supper. But we see so many instances in scripture where the Spirit does not seem to concerned about logical progressions. Also, I have never been to a PCUSA church that examines communicants before they take the elements. The Lord's Table should be presented as being for those who have put their faith in the Lord of that table, and encouraged to receive baptism as a sign and seal of that faith. What I do not support is the idea that the supper is just there to make you feel warm and fuzzy. It is a remembrance of our Lord's death. And the very real presence of Christ with us.
All are welcomed at the Lord's Table
These are two of seven sacraments. Without baptism along with a public profession of faith in Christ, one is not worthy to participate in with the bread and the cup.
While Jesus commanded us to go make and baptize disciples, and to observe the Lord's Supper; he did not say one must be baptized in order to participate. One would hope that with study of scriptures, all believers would choose to be baptized, but I'm not convinced that baptism should be a prerequisite to participation in the Lord's Supper.
That baptism is not mandated to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper.
All are welcome to the Lord's table whether you are baptized or not.
I don't think they should be exclusive. If you have not had the chance to be baptized why should you be excluded from communion if it moves you.
The first 'communion' was a mixture of men celebrating their Jewish heritage and the last time that they had together before Jesus' arrest. It was attended by 12 men of various histories/spiritual strengths/shortcomings. The subsequent events of that night and following days became definitive in determining how they viewed their leader who became crucified and who somehow became a 'living reality' in their midst, and the sharing of their story about him became 'the' purpose in their remaining lives....thus the reality today that half the world wants to 'follow' this Jesus is witness to the power of his life and teachings to bring individual human fulfillment and provide the basis for a social ethic that leads to justice and peace.

<p>Sacraments go hand in hand. The Sacrament of baptism marks you as Christ's. It is a marker of you in a certain community as well. My question is, 'why would you want to take communion if you weren't baptized?' But I'm not barring anyone from either sacrament. That is not my job. We need to reclaim our understanding of baptism. What does it mean to be baptized? It means you are a part of this family, and we are bound not by blood, but by thicker water.</p>
<p>The Lord's Table is open to anyone and should not be tied to baptism which is a symbol of God's grace, not a prerequisite for Communion</p>
<p>It maintains the connection, while lessening the legalism. For example, some parents prefer to defer children's baptism until those children can decide for themselves, which arguably is more meaningful for the child -- or more appropriate if the parent is passive: i.e., not a strong practicing Christian.</p>
<p>I am not sure that is why I am holding off on a definitive response.</p>
<p>Jesus will invite all person in the world to the Lord's Table.</p>
<p>It is The Lord's table - not ours. If we believe that God's grace is experienced in Communion, then sharing Communion is a way that God can touch and engage with someone. Communion can be the means by which God becomes real/intimate/vital to someone. What makes a person WANT to be baptized? Isn't it the recognition that a relationship with God is real - not just in the abstract, but personally. So it's not at all strange to think that the gift of God's grace experienced in Communion might precede a person's making a formal commitment to follow Christ. Baptism then follows and is the sacrament that seals that person into the family of faith. I thank God - literally - that my pastors took this view when I was dating my now-husband. After a long career in medicine, he was becoming interested in the spiritual side of life rather than just the scientific side. In his first marriage years before, he had attended Catholic church sometimes, but he experienced it as an 'outsider'. He was 'not one of them' and he did not feel welcome. Participating in the Eucharist was out of the question. When he started coming to church with me, he was drawn to the community and the theology, but a key moment was, I think, one Sunday when the Words of Invitation were given and he felt called to join in and was welcomed by name when he went up front to receive the elements. 'Come to me all who labor....' 'This is my body given for you...' etc. AND He Was Welcomed. And Fed. And, shortly thereafter, at age 55, he was baptized and joined the church. Now, 10 years later, a Deacon, he has helped serve communion many times himself. I think that early welcome to the Communion table was KEY to the growth and development of his Christian faith. I'm delighted to hear that this will become church practice rather than a pastoral-care exception like it (fortunately, blessedly) was for my husband!</p>
<p>I am glad that we accept the baptism of other denominations in inviting the congregation to the Lords table. I guess this new change reflects what my congregation has already been doing for years. We do not announce who are welcome and who should not partake.</p>
<p>The Lord's table is for all who wish to partake. Period.</p>
<p>These are symbols. Symbols that have meaning to the individual. Ultimately, we are all on our own faith journey. Finding a community of like-minded believers is a blessing. Of the two, Communion with God is the stronger symbol, because it is done with your brothers and sisters in the faith. In questions like this, I ask, 'what would Jesus think of us?' He was a teacher whose message was love. Christianity is a religion built by man. How much love are we sharing if we turn someone, who believes, away from Christ's table?</p>
<p>It's the icing on the cake.</p>
<p>accepting people is more important</p>
<p>this would be changing the sacramental nature of the church somehow</p>
<p>It assumes that baptism is required.</p>
<p>All believers should be invited to the Lord's Table.</p>

No opinion.
The work of the spirit should take precedence over excluding people who have not participated in a ritual.
Let's not get too tied to traditional interpretations. Our faith is an evolving faith, not rigid and proscriptive.
That is no longer an obstacle.
Most people learn best by actually practicing whatever it is they want to learn - baptism and the ritual of the Lord's Table included. I believe baptism is an ongoing experience. I believe that there should be another level of baptism since I didn't have a choice as an infant. I do believe infant baptism is good, but later on in life, one should know what the true meaning of it is and then choose for themselves to be baptized.
I believe we must have an open, welcoming table for all and then from that Sacrament we must invite those not yet baptized to prayerfully consider taking the next step in proclaiming God as our Lord and Savior.
Inclusiveness is part of the philosophy of Presbyterians. Participation may lead to baptism.
Baptism is an outward sign of our commitment to Christ. Communion is acknowledging our need for forgiveness and a personal relationship to Christ.
The two sacraments are mutually reinforcing, but neither should be a prerequisite for the other.
Christ did not make baptism essential to receiving his grace and mercy. Neither should we.
My grandma's name was Grace. Eating at her house was one of the best experiences of my life. Her father was a Baptist minister who believed in baptism at the 'age of accountability', but I got baptized way sooner than that. I sort of think communion should be more of a 'pause during meals' than wafers and juice.
Everyone is welcomed. That is what the Lord said.
I believe in a Lord's Table that has no barriers, even Baptism.
This seems to be a moot point as our pastor invites everyone to the Lord's Table who wants to know Jesus better.
They are 2 separate means of grace, with different gifts for each person.
Baptism is a sign of faith in Jesus Christ, but is not a requirement for faith.
I have no opinion. I will pray and come to an understanding about this.
Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both sacraments to which all are invited with neither totally dependent on the other, cf. infant baptism.
I've always had some difficulty in making a direct connection between the two. But here it's this: I understand a sacrament to be 'an outward manifestation of an inward spirituality'. I understand baptism as being a promise (by parents for children, or by adults for themselves) to learn more about the teachings of Christ and to be led in His path. I understand the Lord's Supper to be a time of reflection and remembering Him and that promise of baptism.
not inseparable
it is not a requirement I am of the mind 'who are we to judge'
It shows respect and affirmation of the demonstrated faith of those who ask for and receive the body and blood of Christ.
It is important.
Baptism is symbolic, that it is not necessary to receive God's grace. Although it is one of our very few sacraments, one can be saved and welcomed into the family of God without it. That is my belief.
We are inviting all to believe...

You never know how the Lord will work in life of the person taking communion. But I would hope that they would keep coming and through learning and community make the decision to be Baptized. I was raised Lutheran so I was not allowed to take communion until I was confirmed after 2 years of study. So it has always been very special and important for me. But after reading the book Take This Bread by Sarah Miles I can see that God works in each one of us in a special way. We are not all alike.

This shows the importance of including all people in God's family.

17. 'In the realm of values, the final authority about good and bad is the Scriptures' . . . as interpreted with our hearts and minds in community and guided by the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' examples he would welcome anyone!

Our two sacraments are based on scripture. I don't recall Jesus saying 'do this in remembrance of me' only if you are baptized. We should not separate them, but neither should there be barriers. Education is crucial, so those who come to the table and are not baptized can learn and grow in their faith.

(what does 'this' refer to?) If 'this' means the new content in the DFW regarding baptism/communion, the authors have placed the importance of 'community' and 'inclusion' over purity of belief within the community - a sad direction for the church rebelling against the sacrament of communion as instituted by Jesus in favor of human, feel-good theology. If 'this' means my response to Q18, I say that scripture is pretty clear about the nexus between baptism and communion -- we violate it at our peril. In fact, the abject refusal of the authors of the newDFW (doesn't have quite the same ring as 'newFOG' - does it? I can hardly wait for newROD! ... nimROD, maybe as these books have been going.) should have been a clear warning to the 222GA - as it should be to the presbyteries -- that this is a feel-good, humanistic document near-completely divergent from scripture -- on the single matter scripture is most clear about: the WORSHIP of GOD! Panel: The responses to this question are immediately confounded by the inappropriate use of the indistinct pronoun 'this' -- you cannot tell which meaning is taken by the respondent nor can you draw any reliable conclusions from the mess you will get (unless the respondent spells out their meaning of the pronoun. Sadly, your statisticians are allowing you to pose such confounding questions in this and other surveys. Please stop doing this! Get professional help writing the questions so they neither push some agenda answer not confound the result. Shame on you for this and several previous surveys.). The next question (Q20) pushes syncretism - which is the bane of un-careful foreign mission messages - as it mixes local heresy with the gospel 'so it will be understood and absorbed more readily' - such foolishness! Are we so insecure in the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we are more concerned with meeting numbers of 'conversions' or 'being liked' than we are with being true to the Gospel in its proposition and exhibition to the unbelieving and lost world so badly in need of salvation? How can we stand before God and expect to hear 'Well done, good and faithful servant?' Better get ready for 'I will be seating you in the smoking section.'

In Baptism we become one with Christ and the church universal. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we join in communion with our fellow believers to affirm our kinship with one another through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It would seem that although Baptism usually precedes Holy Communion, it need not necessarily, especially for adults not raised in a faith tradition.

The table is a visible tactile experience of our nourishment by the holy spirit within the community of faith. Baptism is a visible outward sign of the inward work of the holy spirit joining us to the community of faith. Both sacraments were commanded by Christ without litmus tests. My son's fiancée has yet to be officially part of the family but she has been welcomed into the family celebrations. Both sacraments are necessary to our worship. The hospitality extended at the table may be the first expression of unconditional love and acceptance a seeker experiences.

Baptism in an invitation to faith, but God loves everyone. Ceremony just is a public recognition of it
Everyone is welcome at the Lord's Table without regard to other factors.
These ordinances of the church are inseparable. Baptism must come before the Lord's Supper.
It does unite the two, but coming to the Lord's table speaks volumes about one's desire to know and feel called to learn more about our Lord.
That if you are going to partake of the Lord's supper, then you should come to be in a deeper relationship with Him.
in the PCUSA- all are welcome at the Table - they need only to profess their faith in Jesus Christ! for me, one does not have to be baptized for admittance to the Table - that is between the person and God.
Baptism is an important event in our life in Christianity but there are other events equally important inner Christian growth
The Lord's Table is the place where we receive the nourishment, the manna from Heaven, to continue our journey as Christians. All whom God loves, which is all of us, should be welcome. Baptism is important, but it is not required for salvation.
The sprinkling of water is not critical-faith is.
Jesus loves and affirms everyone and would not turn anyone away so we shouldn't either.
Many of us were presented for baptism - new life in Christ- by our parents. In partaking of the Lord's Table we are receiving God's grace & love, renewing or professing our faith in God, as revealed in Jesus Christ. It is our attitude and faith with which we approach the Table that is important. Baptism is a symbol offering of lives to God and is important. We should hope that all would desire to publicly express this thru baptism, but we also we are attempting to do this thru our expressions of faith in other ways, such as Communion. Therefore, I guess I would say they are parallel, in relationship.
The Table should be welcoming, supporting people who its, hoped, will want to take baptism step.
'Tasting and see that the Lord is good' should lead directly to a deeper relationship.
The Table is at God's invitation. Baptism is the human response to God's work
I think it says more about inclusiveness.
It irrevocably tears it completely.
It is for everyone.
Jesus would not want to restrict access to communion to only those people who had been fortunate enough to have a relationship with a church structure that could baptize them.
I believe it weakens the value of Baptism and Communion.
I was baptized as an adult but had taken communion all my life. Never occurred to me that this was a requirement. I see neither as essential to my faith.
To be honest, baptism is not important to me; it's an empty ritual for me. My difficulty is that I feel there should be some understanding (which requires some education) of the Lord's Supper before taking part in it (or else it's also an empty ritual). So I'm not in favor of young children taking communion, and I'd prefer that adults also be educated about communion before participating. Such education is a part of membership classes. Since our polity requires baptism before membership, it, for me, becomes part of the education process. I'm just weird.
Baptism and the Lord's Supper are very important to all Christians. Baptism has been a requirement for Communion - both are Sacraments. Since we believe in infant baptism it becomes problematic for new believers to have to be baptized before their first communion. This action of change relaxes legalities in the church. I liked the way it was, but can see how it could hinder new adult believers.

There is hope....if I wasn't baptized as a baby...who knows when that would have taken place...being open is fine with me...I don't feel that exclusive.
all who thirst and hunger for the Lord should be fed at the table.
I feel that all people are invited to the Lord's Table and that it should lead them to wanting a fuller relationship with the Lord and possibly Baptism
That God's grace and love is available to all without condition.
The Lord's Table means little or nothing to one who chooses not to be baptized.
Though both are sacraments, thus essential to the whole Christian experience, they are still separate. Where baptism is symbolic, in communion you partake in God's grace and forgiveness.
I cannot get away from sensing that there is a deeper motive behind this action that will lead the PC USA further away from the historic faith as defined in the confessions.
I'm not sure if we have the right to make that change.
It's not inherent that Baptism has to precede communion; communion may lead some to Baptism
Children who have not been baptized should be included in the invitation to the Lord's Table. They are to be taught the principles of Reformed Presbyterian faith.
If we assert that God loves all and that God's table is a place of communion and of worship, I cannot see the logic in using Baptism as some sort of hurdle to taking one's seat at the table. To do so is to place ourselves as gatekeepers to who is allowed to experience the love of God through communion. Baptism, to me, is a means to deepen one's connection to God, but should not be a prerequisite to admission to God's table or the community of the church. If we are indeed, all of us, God's children, we are all welcome at the table, regardless of the rites and passages we have undertaken. Let people come to Christ in their own way, in a way that feels authentic and genuine to their own faith journey.
For me Communion and baptism are the direct connection to Jesus Christ. How can a person begin to have a connection with Jesus Christ if they have not been baptized.
That the Grace of God does not exclude. Anyone. Ever.
All are welcome at the Lord's Table. Individuals should be encouraged to be baptized.
It is a gift not to be taken lightly but understood through study and commitment by the people presenting or the person being baptized
Very important
Being Baptized into the church is critical prior to coming to the Lord's Table. Without it how can you understand or be prepared for the experience?
By taking communion, an individual is proclaiming the death of Jesus. If we explain this to them and they are ready to take this first step, then the next step of Baptism may be easier for them to understand, accept and receive.
Baptism should be the initial entry point to the Lord's Table as it has been historically
They operate independently.
Whether a person has been baptized or not should not be a pre-requisite for taking communion. If one loves God, that should be enough. Baptism may be offered afterwards as one way to have a deeper relationship with Christ depending on the situation but should not be an expected condition for communion, before or after taking it.
That it is the LORD'S Table, not ours.
Baptism is unrelated to being fed at the Lord's Table. The important thing is for the person taking communion to be a believer in Jesus or seeker of a relationship with Jesus.
Inviting people to join us in Communion shows that we invite the world to become Christians.
God's table is open to all who believe whether they have been baptized with water or not; baptism is a symbol of God's love for us before we even knew of love and is not a requirement before being included in the family meal

All are invited. No one is left out in God's kingdom. God's love is expansive.
I believe Jesus would want any who feel they want to partake in the Lord's Table to do so, whether or not they were baptized.
The proposed changes show that the church no longer thinks there is a relationship between baptism and the communion table.
Everyone has a relationship with Christ
There is strong theological understanding that all who know Christ understand the importance of the sacrament of Baptism, but salvation is truly based on acceptance of God's offer without conditions or qualification. Elections is the evidence of God's omniscience.
While it is an important sacrament, the invitation to communion includes people from the east and from the west, from the north and south. Why limit it if people are hungry for the word of God?
no relationship
removing baptism as a requirement for accepting communion diminishes the importance (holiness, specialness) of baptism
I tend to think it diminishes it
This does not make baptism less important as a sacrament. One may or may not come first in the life of a person.
It is more ritual expression of faith than a requirement
In order to receive Communion, you should have accepted Jesus as your Lord & Savior. Those who receive communion should want to be baptized, but I don't believe it has to happen in an A before B order.
I have viewed baptism as an entering into the covenant of faith, and the Lord's Table as one way of feeding that faith. I am not sure if one needs to come before the other.
There is a relationship between the two sacraments but one does not necessarily have to come before the other.
Baptism is a further commitment to receiving God
an important rite of the church, but not necessary for salvation
Both are gifts from Christ to us, through the Holy Spirit. It is not up to us to decide who is worthy of either of them. The Holy Spirit can work through the Lord's Table to reach an unbaptized seeker. We dare not restrict her work. And baptism is simply an outward sign, performed by human beings, of an inward and invisible grace. We have no way of knowing whether the invisible grace has been given to another person, except through their desire to approach God either through Baptism or the Lord's Table.
I think Baptism is a sign of God's calling and promises to us before we are able to respond. Communion is a response to God's invitation--not an entitlement, but a sign of a bond that comes only through the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting us in Christ
That all who believe are welcome at the table but may not have yet been baptized.
Not sure
If a person who has not been baptized wishes to take part in communion this may be a first step in them becoming baptized. I don't think anyone should be refused communion.
Christ was baptized before the Lord's Table. Wish we still followed His example, but GA222 decided otherwise. So, can PCUSA at least maintain SOME lip service towards the importance of Baptism?
Why should anyone who wants to be a part of Christ through communion be denied?
Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both Sacraments, but one should not necessarily have to proceed the other. I know of someone who visited a PC(USA) church and wanted to take communion but were unsure if they had been baptized. I think they should be allowed to partake in the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's table is just that, THE LORD'S!! It is not up to humans to judge who is worthy and who is not. Taking Communion may be very meaningful to someone who is a seeker.
I personally think Baptism is a significant piece of relationship with Christ and Christ's Church. It was even important for Christ himself. I would need to understand the biblical and historical rationale for changing our current approach. I am all for being inclusive. There is no barrier for anyone to profess Christ or be baptized that I am aware of. So the issue is choosing to be a part of Christ's church, not just wanting to avoid 'feeling left out'. Communion, to me, defines a special relationship with Christ and his followers.
That the table is open to all.
We are fed by God before we acknowledge Him. We are in the fellowship before we are members of the church. I see baptism as a requirement to join the Church but to be served by it.
The proposal lessens the importance of Baptism.
This says that a person is welcome to believe and partake, regardless of whether they have been baptized.
It's the Lords table, not our table. It should be open to everyone
We only have two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. My concern would be not that we should exclude people but that for some the inclusion of the non-believer would somehow water down the meaning of those who believe. I understand the idea that all should be welcome, but when we no longer have a symbol to identify us, where does that leave us? The sacrament of communion isn't just a potluck dinner. All who believe that Jesus is their Lord and Savior should be welcome, but should unbaptized people (and therefore people of other faiths) be opening included? I don't think so. How do you 'do this in remembrance of me' if you don't understand who you are remembering? And if you don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God? There is a fine line for children who I think should be included until they can decide for themselves. Obviously, we cannot check at the door, so to speak, so it is left up to the individual at the time of communion. But to me, specifically stating that you do not need to be baptized (and by extension, be a believer), opens the door to confusion and possible misunderstandings. I would never assume that I should participate in another faith's sacrament if I were visiting their worship. I think it would be arrogant and disrespectful. As a woman, if I were visiting a mosque, I would cover my head out of respect for their traditions. But when I attend my own worship, I don't do that, because it isn't our tradition. I don't even go forward for mass at a Catholic church even though I could and just ask for a blessing.
A gift of God's wonderful Grace.
That baptism is not a prerequisite for taking part in being received and fed at the Lord's Table; it is the Lord's table, not ours. Therefore, as the Lord invites, we are received by God's invitation.
All are welcome at the Lord's table.
That it follows, rather than leads.
I cannot yet answer as it needs much thought and prayer. Without prayerful study of the pros and cons, I must answer as 'not sure.'
Our church does not exclude anyone from communion, no matter where they are in their faith journey.
The Lord's supper is an act of faith for believers to show the sacrifice Christ made for us and the importance of the covenant He has with us and us to Him. If you have not taken the step to confess your belief in Him through Baptism you are not fully participating in the act of communion and should not partake.
The options above do not follow my belief. The requirements for a person to receive communion should be belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace for their salvation, and acknowledgement of their sins. Baptism alone is not enough.

That Baptism is secondary.
Both sacraments enact, teach about, and celebrate God's gift of saving grace through Jesus Christ. Jesus served even Judas, so who are we to turn anyone away from the Lord's table?
All are welcome.
The Lord's Supper is pointless to those who don't believe that they have been reborn through Jesus Christ. Seems like it is getting the cart before the horse.
?
Both are symbolic. One does not preclude or necessitate the other. Getting caught up in theological dramas over things like this makes the whole thing meaningless. I do not believe 'Righteous Exclusion' is commonly thought of as a teaching of Jesus, that's a human error.
It's OK to separate the order of them.
God decides how individuals feel His presence and calling. Our practices including the sacraments are important to our connected nature as a church community, but God does not need these rituals to decide how the Spirit will reach people.
Baptism is important and should be encouraged but. All are welcome at The Table
does not need to connect
You do not have to be baptized in order to partake in communion. It can certainly help lead to full acceptance of Christ and ultimate Baptism.
Decisions have consequences & PC/USA often make decisions that do not reflect members' beliefs.
Baptism is a sign of a person's commitment to follow Jesus. To take Communion, a person must acknowledge their faith in Jesus; baptism is a key step in acknowledging that faith.
Re: Q18. I believe that only those who profess faith in Christ should take communion. So generally, these individuals would be baptized--either as infants, or later life when they professed faith. The exception then would be the person who has now professed faith, was not baptized as a child, and hasn't yet been baptized as an adult---but intends to be. Baptism per se should not be a requirement for communion, but confession of faith in Christ must be.
Nothing
people came to John the Baptist to be baptized. Communion is a way of 'coming to the altar (to christo. then from that place one chooses to become baptized.
To be born again can happen in an instant. The Lord's table is as good a place for this to occur as any. All must come and are forgiven.
I believe an individual can be committed to living a life for Christ, of unconditional love toward others, without benefit of either sacrament. I believe the act of confession is the action that makes it possible for us to be received at the throne of grace and be absolved of sin, making us one with God. The receiving of Communion and Baptism are public responses that allow me to feel, receive, and acknowledge God's presence in a special and blessed way.
God's grace is for all.
The Lord's Table is an acknowledgement that he died for us. Baptism is committing oneself to follow his teachings in life, and lead others in faith
How can we truly know the relationship between a person and their Lord
Baptism is symbolic of accepting Christ, but not a requirement for communion.
ritual is not essential to join with Christ
Coming to the Lord's Table may be the impetus for coming to baptism and knowing the Lord.
Both are mysteries that draw us more deeply into God's grace. Both are available to all who desire them.
It confuses what the Table means, which is feeding those who are following (i.e. baptized)
Baptism is the outward sign of an internal movement of the Holy Spirit either on the parents of an infant/child or the individual. It is one of 2 sacraments in our church. It is a basic part of our faith tradition. .

I do not believe that baptism is a requirement for communion. Adults who have not been baptized should not be made to feel like outsiders.
In the reality of today's world, I believe not being baptized would reduce the importance/tradition/practice of one of our two sacraments. We offer a 3rd grade Sacraments class to help children to remember/learn about their baptism or understand their desire to be baptized. They also learn about Jesus' baptism as well as Holy Week and Easter Story. I guess we teach that in order to truly experience the Easter story we have to remember our baptism. On the flip side, the 'requirement,' if you will, could deter some people away from religion all together because it is a human-imposed requirement... and not by our Triune God. I can see how folks could respond to the Holy moment of the Lord's Supper and want to be baptized. I'm conflicted on this one!
It says there does not have to be a prior relationship between baptism and the Lords table which makes sense because baptism is generally a parents' decision and Lords table is the individuals decision.
I think baptism is essential to being a confirmed member of the church. I also think people need to understand the significance of communion before parking of it.
That the heart of the individual is God's focus.
I believe everyone is a child of God at birth and should be welcome at the lord's table. We Presbyterians have it right with infant baptism for those who a person needs to understand and accept God before receiving communion
The Lord's table is open to all. Baptism is more ritual in nature that varies from faith to faith; i.e., its significance is valued differently among congregations. It should not be a road block to understanding and accepting Jesus sacrifice or his very existence.
They are two different sacraments.
You must 'hear', 'believe', 'repent', and be baptized into the body of Christ before receiving the sacraments.
That they are separate and that one could have a relationship with the Lord but not necessarily have been baptized.
We begin with baptism--we end with communion
The Lord's Table should be open to all believers as a reminder that Jesus died and shed his blood for us. Baptism is a sacrament which is an outward sign of an inward happening of salvation and entry into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ through the Grace of God.
Baptism is the adoption into the family of Christ, and requiring Baptism to be fed at the Lord's Tables seems exclusionary. At first glance, I can see a path to feed the uninitiated first, and then offer inclusion to Christ's family via baptism.
Baptism can be a statement of faith. It's a covenant between the Triune God and the individual and/or parents. The Lord's Table can also be a statement of faith, but is most important a vehicle of grace and sustenance as we journey in life as disciples. The Table should ALWAYS be open to ALL.
Communion means everyone is part of God's community
that they are partaking because of a faith belief and that should be nurtured to fruition - baptism
All who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord & Savior are invited to participate in communion. A new believer may not have been baptized yet but should not be kept from having communion. Baptism should be encouraged as a public sign of their acceptance of Jesus as their personal Lord & Savior, though.
For the unbaptized, taking Communion could motivate them to be baptized and to join and take part in a Presbyterian Church
That Baptism is not required to be welcome at the Lord's table; that we are inclusive of all people, no matter where they are in their journey

I do not believe anyone should be denied a place at the Lord's Table. It is my opinion that receiving and understanding the communion of Christ would bring the participant closer to the step of Baptism. It makes sense and brings everything together.
If people are NOT required to be baptized to take communion, I think they will give it more thought that God is inviting them to His table no matter what. For me, I feel I would not feel right not being baptized.
Communion without Baptism is not my preference but I feel Jesus would have welcomed them to Table if they had presented themselves within the celebration.
Very important
Baptism is an outward profession of faith, not a requirement for relationship with God
All are welcome at the Lord's table - even those who have not been baptized
For many adults who came to faith late in life & have never been baptized, this may encourage them to take that commitment
To me baptism is very important but I don't think it is a requirement for Communion. Communion is also important to me and I feel each is important, but not necessary to be tied together
If the ritual can encourage people to explore the PCUSA - that is good
If we are required to "wash up" before dining, we should be washed (Baptized) before taking Communion.
If you feel worthy to participate, it should be allowed
Not required
Nobody should be excluded from the Lord's Table. I didn't even know you had to be baptized to receive communion
It shows that everyone is allowed to partake in the Lord's table and feel like a part of the church
Baptism is an important part of the church
No opinion
Not sure
that the Table is emphatically connected to Baptism
Invitation to establish a relationship with Jesus
It is important and should be the intention of those who wish to partake.
There is not coercion to obeying "the rules" - come to the Table if you know or feel that you are on the way to becoming a Christian.
All should be welcomed at the Lord's table
Simply that they're connected, one doesn't follow another
Baptism doesn't make a believer. I think the Lord's Table is for believers
If one who is not baptized chooses to take communion, then he should indicate a willingness to be part of the religious community and become baptized.
Any Christian should be accepted at the Lord's table
Baptism is the moment in which a person publically becomes a Christian. It makes no sense to take communion before that moment
baptism represents a connection with God and the church. For some Baptism may bring them closer and more involved while for others it could be communion
I struggle with my faith and if this encourages others to become involved in the church - I think its good.
I think Baptism is individual choice - as is Lords Table. I think when folks are ready for either - they can choose. I think it is also OK for infants to be baptized - depends on family.
Jesus was about 30+ when he was baptized preformed the last supper at later age. We don't know if all the disciples had been baptized. Maybe the individual should....

That God loves everyone regardless if they are baptized or not.
God knows everyone's heart and even if you are not baptized it will be fine with God to receive communions
I believe all should be welcomed to partake of communion to unite us with Jesus Christ and make us members of God's family
This makes the Lord's Table an act of welcome and hospitality, and as such, an evangelical act.
Go together
Baptism welcomed me to God's family and into a personal relationship. Communion is a subsequent event (sacrament) in which the baptized knowingly share in Jesus' last meal and pending sacrifice
The Lord's table should be open to all Christians who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior even before they are formally baptized!
All individuals are welcome and invited to the table for Salvation
I think it says more about someone who believes in Jesus being welcome at his table
I feel all are invited to the Lord's Table. The participant should be offered the opportunity to be baptized but should not be made to think because they participated in the Lord's supper that Baptism should follow.
Everyone is welcome by God's love
Baptism is the beginning of a relationship with Jesus Christ
All are invited to God's grace
Allow participation wherever the person is in his/her spiritual walk and proceed according to the individuals calling
Infant Baptism is the responsibility of the parents. A person should not be shunned from the table - Adult baptism is a personal choice
Maintains the connection but allows immediate access to the table, which is as it should be.
They are both gifts from God. They are both evidence of God's grace. They are both initiatives of God
That all are welcome at the Lords Table
No relationship
Baptism should be an elective choice, not a requirement to receive communion
When you accept responsibility of being saved you then move to be baptized. Being call to believe in Christ and the Abba father is but a first step, communion being another to profess this relational responsibility.
baptism is desirable but not a vital prerequisite
Not the only qualifier
Welcome those who are coming to the faith
Even more than baptism, I believe the person should take a communicant class before being allowed for communion. It is becoming meaningless - 6 year olds are taking communion & have no idea what they should be thinking about or the real meaning! Going through the motions. More political correctness!
all are welcome at our Lord's table!
I don't think baptism is important
We are baptized in the body and blood of Jesus Christ
<u>All</u> are invited at the Lord's Table
Baptism is a first step in becoming a Christian
Christ wants us to be baptized into the faith his death & resurrection
I believe one must have accepted Jesus and have been baptized before receiving communion. These steps help a person think about their beliefs

As proposed, the change says that one does not have to be baptized to be invited to the Lord's Table. It is inclusive, which is generally good
I was baptized because of my present faith at a very early age. Many people are not as blessed to have such good parents. They must be given a chance
if we are going to call it the Lord's Table, it is open to everyone. It is not our decision. It is not "our table"
That people who partake in communion should first be baptized
Scripture teaches that he individual accepts Christ as Savior <u>before</u> Baptism. <u>Baptism does not save.</u>
The Lord's table is for baptized believers
In the bible, I believe it says you should be baptized, but uncertain about communion
<u>Being Baptized</u> into the Christian faith <u>can</u> be a promise made by parent & the church community to raise a child into the faith of the parents & may not be the wishes of the child. So If true what can happen to the child's faith is no more than what an unbaptized adult may feel when coming to the table for communion, with others in the community. A promise!
To follow His word in the scriptures once we accept & acknowledge what is asked of a Christian
your straining at gnats! The Holy Spirit is far less litigious than us. Too many rules strangles people
Sacraments should be for all! An understanding of the Lord's Table should be made known to whoever takes of it, as well as baptism!
Baptism of infants benefits family members. Baptism of an educated adult is one way to show His commitment to Christ!
important
You should be baptized regardless
When children were little, it was not considered proper for children who did not understand the lord's Table's meaning should be taking Communion. I still do not think they have an understanding but see no wrongful effect if they do.
That it should be separate just because a person hasn't been baptized doesn't mean that the Lord isn't present in their life.
up to session of each congregation they know the members
I can't answer the above question because I don't believe it is the right or the responsibility of pastors or elders to ask that question. It should be the person's right or responsibility to decide when they take the bread/wine
Willingness to take communion implies an intent to become closer to the church and to Jesus, in my view
It's important to make everyone who attends the church service feel welcome and included in all activities offered.
Jesus welcomes all to his table & invites all to be baptized.
Baptism is an outward acknowledgment of a person as God's child. But, we are God's children, whether we get baptized or not, so all are eligible to eat @ the Lord's table. Didn't Jesus eat with Zaccheus?
That communion is invitational - evangelical, almost - and that participation can lead to the full commitment of baptism
Baptism and communion go hand in hand. I prefer that baptism be administered prior to communion but in some cases (young people, transfers, etc.) it can be allowed, provided baptism is administered shortly thereafter
Baptism is preferred, but should not be an impediment to communion
We may say communion is for all but I feel it is a communion of <u>believers</u> (maybe even those not yet baptized)

Each stands alone
Baptism is not a necessary condition for acceptance into the community / fellowship of believers.
Baptism should not have banners and neither should communion. All should be invited
I am conflicted on this. On one hand, they are both just symbolic actions and because we practice infant baptism and the individual does not confirm their own faith perhaps they should not be related at all. Made more sense to me when it was related to confirmation, but Christ did say "Do this in remembrance of me", so why shouldn't anyone who wants to remember him be welcome? I think I just talked myself into agreeing with the change.
the invitation to take part in communion and being invited to a deeper relationship is more important than baptism. (Which for many is a parental decision during infancy)

**Appendix G: Teaching Elders' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Open-Ended Question on the Relationship
Between Baptism and the Communion**

Please elaborate on your response to the question about the importance to you of various Reformed/Presbyterian principles. The 222nd General Assembly (2016) in Portland, Oregon, approved changes in the *Directory for Worship*, which will now go to presbyteries for approval. In one of these changes, the directory would no longer specify Baptism as a requirement for taking communion in PC(USA) congregations, but instead would explain that the unbaptized who wish to take communion should also be invited to be baptized subsequently.

Q-19: In your opinion, what does this say about the relationship of Baptism to the Lord's Table

That the Lord's Supper can and does precede baptism as we see in scripture, yet there is precedence for baptism preceding the Lord's Table.
Christ would have never stopped people and asked whether they were baptized, therefore 'worthy'.
That it is not our table. We have no business saying who can eat at God's table.
To call it 'the Lord's table' is to say that it isn't mine. It seems as if, by restricting one Sacrament as accessible only after another Sacrament, we are putting a fence around it that we control and not Christ.
If God draws someone who is not baptized to the Lord's Table to dine with Christ and the church, seeking after Jesus, and through that experience the Spirit opens their eyes and they desire to pursue being baptized, then Thanks be to God. Fundamentally, the Lord's Table is for the baptized community, but the Spirit is always moving beyond our boundaries.
Both are visible signs of God's invisible grace. And more about what God does for and in us than what we do
They are both incredibly important, but the traditional order of covenantal commitment symbolized in baptism does not necessarily proceed all peoples' desire to partake of Christ's body and blood in these confused times
Both are outward signs of the inward presence of Christ. I believe, from his example, Jesus would welcome seekers of God, faith and salvation at whichever beginning they might appear. In Jesus' several parables on the wedding feast and the great banquet, he did not place any requirement other than invitation. Encouraging both sacraments adds to the life of the believer but I do not believe one sacrament depends upon the other for efficacy but rather makes it more meaningful and powerful.
Both are visible signs of responding to the covenant, yet distinct.
Baptism is the mark of membership in the church. Communion is the fellowship of all those who are looking for and hoping for the in-breaking reign of God in the world. It anticipates and gives us a chance to practice our way into the inclusive community, which is made complete only in God's time. Baptism can lead us to the communion table, or the communion table can lead us to baptism. Together they mark as those chosen and accepted by God apart from our own effort (baptism) and as those who accept and love one another as a result (communion).
I'm concerned that in treating baptism in this way, one is taking away the sacramental significance. Baptism, like the Lord's Supper, is a tangible experience of God's grace for us. They do not depend upon each other for God's grace to be experienced in either of them.

It confirms my opinion that baptism is a communal recognition of the granting of God's grace, and that God's grace is already conferred on all persons - even when we have not or cannot see it or affirm it. If the commitment that is perceived in baptism feels too much for a person to bear, we should not deny them the gracious invitation that they might feel in the table.
Baptism is a recognition of what God has already done, in claiming the life of the candidate through grace and Christ's victory over sin and death in the resurrection. It is a sign and seal, but accomplishes no specific salvific purpose. It is also a place of covenant, where the church and the candidate (or the candidate's family) make aspirational pledges about shared responsibility regarding growth in the faith.
Baptism is the sign of the covenant community and the Lord's Supper is for the covenant community. They are two parts of a whole.
They remain the two sacraments of our church. They are connected but not conditional.
It says its meaningless. We help a child tie their shoes till they learn how. Do we allow them, just so they don't feel left out? Too much like other aspects of society. Don't make them make a choice. I CHOSE to follow Jesus.
The Lord's Table is an open invitation to participate in celebrating God's grace. It is a visible reminder of God's grace. Baptism is also a visible sign of God's grace. However, in baptism, the participant (or parents) is making promises to follow. The Service of the Lord's Table does not ask the participant to make any promises. It shows the participant what God's promise is to us.
both sacraments were essential for the followers who witnessed the baptism of Jesus and the disciples who were and are fed at the Lord's table. The meal is for all.
Both are signs and seals of God's grace. To extend grace is to also identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus seen in both sacraments. Does baptism HAVE to precede the other? They are part of what identifies me as a follower of Jesus.
It says more about the relationship between a person's heart condition toward God and their faith in Jesus. For whatever reason, baptism may not have happened in a person's life. It's not (usually, in most Presbyterian churches) offered in the same kind of way that Communion is. Communion is, in a sense, more convenient. I don't mean that negatively, just an observation. Baptism should be offered, perhaps more regularly, and perhaps made a little more accessible like communion.
both are gifts freely offered
a weakening of the relationship, also gives the false impression that to follow Jesus is easy and takes no commitment.
I don't agree with the premise of the question. I see it as an issue regarding the relationship of sacraments to faith and discipleship. Baptism takes time; it's a planned thing that requires votes and liturgy and making sure someone fills the pitcher with water. The Lord's Table, if baptism is not required, could foreseeably become a more 'spontaneous' experience of the divine to someone who is seeking. We live in an increasingly unchurched world and the Table is an incredibly powerful experience of grace. I've never known anyone to shy away from religion because Communion was too readily available; I've known too many to leave the church entirely because they were refused Communion.
Baptism is one act, but communion is an ongoing opportunity to become closer to Christ.
The sacrament of Baptism is a sign and a seal of what God has already done in a person ... loving, calling, welcoming, adopting, us into the fellowship of the body. The sacrament of the Lord's Table celebrates that working of the Holy Spirit in that person's life. Both are important but the order that each carried out is less important than the fact that they have occurred.
Grace can lead to grace
This will be a change for me particularly for adults.

They are not forms of each other but are related forms of grace and inclusion. No test of faith was given before feeding multitudes.
Jesus invited his disciples to his table and fed them. There is no evidence that any were 'baptized'. Jesus died for the baptized and the unbaptized. Baptism (or confirmation) is a commitment to follow Jesus. The Lord's Supper is an act of thanks, remembrance, and honor. They are not related.
Baptism is a sign of commitment to Christ but one can share in the body of Christ before being baptized. I believe in an open communion table. Baptism should be encouraged, but it is more important that people understand what communion is and participate in it as an act of faith
그리스도인 임을 고백하는 행위 [the act of confessing as a Christian]
Two separate sacraments - the Lord's Supper can be an invitation into the community of faith and belief.
That is the God decision
That the two are distinct, and that baptism should not be used as some kind of barrier to fellowship. Either all are welcome at the table because it is Christ's table, or only some are welcome at the table because there is a litmus test of baptism placed first. Who is to say a person couldn't not encounter Jesus Christ at the table before they are baptized?
In Baptism we identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If I have not identified with the one who invites me to the table, to eat his body and drink his blood, it is meaningless.
Access to communion with Our Lord is based on grace and not ritual.
Both are sacraments. Does it matter which order they are received. I think not!
The sacraments are both vital pieces of our life in the Lord. But neither depends on the other- everything depends on God. Maybe God wants to bring someone to him with a communion-first approach. Should I deny God? Maybe he wants to do it in a Baptism-first approach. Should I deny God? Whether I live, die, baptize or take communion I seek the Lord's heart and will. I think there are ways that we as humans may be more likely to respond to the Lord- or respond more strongly... which is why there is so much of the Lord's power in baptism. But that doesn't mean there is less power in the Lord's Supper.
All are welcome, even those who have not committed to faith.
Both sacraments are important but they are not pre-requisites for God's love and grace. They are a means of experiencing God's grace within the covenant community. They are related and tied to one another in that way.
It is the Lord's table. It is a sacred place. Some come to the table not fully aware of its meaning but God can use that invitation to the table as part of his drawing them to him. It is not up to me to decide who is eligible and who is not eligible to come to the Lord's table.
Jesus invited all to his table, to the great feast of God's grace even before Maundy Thursday's supper.
That initiation to the mystery of Christ is not a prerequisite for partaking of Christ.
I think that my opinion on this depends on the interpretation of the phrase 'then invited into deeper relationship with Christ through Baptism'. While I definitely agree that those who haven't been baptized should be welcomed and included in communion, and that people should always have the opportunity to be baptized and join the church, and that we should encourage people in their discernment of this decision, I don't think that including it in the Words of Institution or the Invitation to the Table is appropriate. The Lord's Table is open to ALL people, because Christ died for all people. You can be a part of the Body of Christ without being baptized. We as Presbyterians do not believe that Baptism is necessary for salvation, so why would we do something that might lead people to think that they have to be baptized in order to be part of the church, the Body of Christ, or partake in communion?

They are linked in a dynamic way as sacraments instituted by our Lord and given as a proclamation of the Gospel
God extends grace before we are even able to receive it. Jesus does not turn away the stranger, but invites the stranger to become family.
I believe the Lord's Table is a place to experience the grace of God through Jesus, without necessarily being able to explain what's going on. For some people, once this grace has been experienced, they will want to be received into the community that stewards the gifts of the Lord's Table, which would lead to baptism.
Baptism is important in coming to the Table, but the experience of coming to the Table can also lead to Baptism.
It says that baptism, like communion, is a response to God's work in our lives. Failure to respond to one does not negate another.
There is a relationship.
In Baptism, especially in baptism of infants, we believe that God's grace works in our lives whether we are capable of responding to it or not. Perhaps welcoming people to the table without first being baptized is an opening for grace through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the words of institution, we say, 'Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.' The emphasis is on the word, 'trust.' It isn't that I think Baptism has no place in relationship to the Lord's Table. I do. Both sacraments are essential in deepening our life of faith, but I wonder if loosening the requirement for baptism will bring us one step closer to what Jesus was instituting at the final meal with the disciples. Is requiring Baptism another way of making our communion closed? Or does erring on the side of grace allow us to witness to God's love in Jesus Christ to people who might otherwise be excluded?
I believe that the Lord's Table is Biblically a feast of inclusion. It is transgressed when it is used to strengthen social barriers, especially those related to class and race. Unfortunately, the Presbyterian Church (USA) is a historically white and affluent denomination. This fact means that many of our requirements for participation (such as baptism) exclude people of particular racial or socioeconomic backgrounds, though without particular malice. As long as we remain a primarily white and affluent denomination, I do not believe that we have the right to exclude anyone from the table.
That most people do not see a tight connection between being baptized and receiving communion. Adults are baptized as part of joining the church and when it is convenient for their extended family to be present.
Both of these Sacraments are gifts from God and not means to sanctification. I believe the foundation of Baptism is God's gift of life, love, forgiveness, covenant and community and our practice of Baptism affirms what God has already done. The absence of our church's act of Baptism cannot negate what God has already done. God invites us to affirm and publicly show and share what we, through faith and grace, have come to affirm. A similar theology undergirds the practice of Communion. Would we say that someone is less of a Christian if a year, or 2 years or 3 years had gone by without Communion?
that feeding people in the name of Christ, helping them feel a part of the community, can bring them to baptism and perhaps it doesn't have to be the other way around.
Jesus asked us to remember him in this way through this meal. Children and adults need to understand Christ's sacrifice and their understanding will increase with age and maturity. We have been entrusted to pass on faith and when children and adults are baptized we make those promises to help them grow in faith. The two can go hand in hand, but I would lean towards baptism first and then communion.
Scripture does not have a hierarchy of one before the other. Once someone is invited to the Lord's Table, the Holy Spirit works in their heart and leads them to a deeper commitment which could be a request for baptism.

The two are not as sequentially required as they have been in the past. Both are still the Sacraments of the PCUSA.
It is of my opinion that the invitation is open to all regardless of anything we do.
Both are important, but is there a necessary succession?
The relationship, in my opinion would be the same.
Baptism is required for Lord's table.
That we have difficulty appropriately catechizing people. That we (in a good way) understand that baptism is neither entry into our club or salvific so lack therein does not represent an inability to move forward in the journey of faith. That we (in a bad way) are not careful about our rituals/symbolism and so follow the spirit of the age.
I think of baptism as the wedding and accepting Christ as the engagement: we are married, not legally but morally, at the engagement. It would be immoral of me to ask my love to marry me and then be with someone else in the same way I would with her. The correlation in baptism is that if I have accepted Christ as my Savoir (become engaged) then I have to grow into the marriage (the wedding) and the life-long 'being' of marriage. But, how do we grow? By participating in the community: the Lord's Table. Now, that doesn't mean that I have the right of full participation: as for marriage I shouldn't 'play house,' as for serving Christ I shouldn't be an officer without membership. The Lord's Table is a part of the community coming together.
These are our sacraments. They are full of mystery. We encounter Christ in them. We connect and reconnect with Christ and one another through them. If someone's faith journey leads them to table before baptism and they are welcomed by Christ and in the community of faith, I imagine the possibilities of nurture bearing the fruit of spiritual growth that far outweigh fencing the table.
Baptism is the sign of being included in the covenant family. Communion is the family meal of the people of God. We need to be careful that people understand what communion is really about. There are strong warnings in Scripture about not doing so.
That God calls us each in different ways and that for some the experience of celebrating the Lord's Table might be what draws them into wanting to be baptized into God's family.
Lord's Table can be a place/experience where people are introduced to Jesus and from there can make a decision about baptism.
I do not recall the Lord requiring anyone to be baptized before they were fed in the Gospels. God's grace appears where and when it will. Our appreciation of the sacraments truths grow as we mature in faith regardless of what order we first come to them.
I think we should take seriously to consider the little children and forbid them not - for such is the kingdom of heaven. In my congregation, it is two children whose mother is Baptist and father is Presbyterian who are unbaptized and yet want to take communion.
At the Lord's Table everyone is welcome and is fed.
I think that we don't want to elevate the sacraments to the point where they get confused as being salvific, but we also don't want to lower them to the point in which they are meaningless. 'Unfencing' the table is good in nature, but something that should be done with care, and done with an understanding that we should all move to an understanding of what Christ did for us through the cross, and that we share in this death and resurrection through the sacraments.
Baptism & Communion are both acts of witness in response to God's calling of us. They are both open to the believer. One is not dependent on the other. Rather, both are in response to God's calling thru Jesus Christ of us. Christ, in relation to both, told us to go and do.
I think more important than if someone has been baptized is the attitude of their heart in coming to the table and I don't think Jesus would exclude anyone, baptized or not.

I believe that the Eucharist can be as an important seed in leading people to faith. Baptism is a sign of commitment. I think they're quite different.
Because our faith is communal and covenantal and not just personal, Baptism is a powerful sign that we are connected to Christ and one another. We come to the table because our lives are under the authority and grace of Christ. We are so thankful for forgiveness and spiritual feeding.
It has no more bearing than in Jesus' day with his disciples. Did Jesus require his disciples to be baptized before inviting them to his table?
Baptism is less accessible and subject to way more church rules than the Lord's Table. People can be welcomed to at nourished at the table without an appointment, class meetings, verification, certificate, special clothes, photo ops, etc. Sorry, that's what we've done to baptism.
Both are not ours but come to us as God's grace, which does not depend upon age or understanding, or Presbyterian rules.
The sacraments are inextricably linked in our covenant life, but new people who are drawn to this life in the church come in vastly different ways. Paul makes a point in the fourth chapter of Romans that what is seen from the inside of religious institutions as a sine qua non - circumcision, or Torah strictness, can find us opposing the hospitality of faith (trust) that is the real foundation of our corporate life and its gatekeepers. It is more important to be a good host than fear for the cultic practice of baptism.
Communion can be a step in a person's journey toward baptism.
The Reformed practice of infant baptism is a poignant example of the church's understanding of God's providential and electing love. Moving the order of Baptism in the Christian's life has the danger of making the table seem more about our choosing God, than God choosing us in grace.
I believe baptism is not meant to be a door that shuts people out from the Lord's table, but rather the gateway through which we become part of a community of faith where the invitation to the Lord's table is received and where we experience the grace of God's real presence through that sacrament. I feel that the Lord's Table can be used evangelistically to those who are sincerely seeking a relationship with Jesus Christ. Welcoming seekers to the Lord's table is something I find great value in. We can taste and see that the Lord is good, and from there, we can go deeper in our commitment through baptism.
Jesus' gifts and nourishment at Table were not dependent upon baptism, so neither should the gifts of the Lord's Table be contingent on baptism. It's the Lord's Table. Jesus Christ the Lord can welcome whomever he pleases to dine.
The Lord's Table nurture's us in our faith by offering a connection to Jesus. Baptism is an outward sign of the connection to Jesus. Both are important, however, what is most important is the desire to be connected to God through Jesus.
Baptism is a ritual of invitation and welcome. God excludes no one.
I see that Christ invited all to the table, breaking boundaries all the time. It is the invitation to the kingdom of God. It makes sense that baptism follows such an invitation.
Answer above is particularly relevant to children whose parents have chosen to defer baptism for whatever reason. Those children should be included. Adults, not so.
They are not mutually exclusive, but are components that work together to bring people to a deeper faith and connection with God in the Trinity and with the community.
baptism is entrance into the Body of Christ, hence the participation in Christ's fellowship, discipleship, redeeming grace and peace: the two are interconnected and interrelated parts of a whole salvation.

<p>While bathing is essential to living, eating is more so. We are at our most human in table fellowship with others, and thus with Christ who was notorious for eating and drinking with sinners. Both sacraments are to be used to teach and nurture people in faith. We too often devalue baptism by just doing it, allowing grandparents to press sessions and pastors to baptize infants/children, often no-resident, and then the church has little or no ability to fulfill its side of the vows. Should we talk about baptized members instead of active (i.e., voting members) of congregations?</p>
<p>The Lord's Supper is the witness of faith to an unbelieving world. Baptism is the entry into the family of faith and through Baptism the invitation to participate. The unbaptized, observing the witness of faith and hope realized, are invited to receive the Grace of God, be baptized and then feast at the table. The Table is the witness of believers to the world.</p>
<p>Baptism is God first calling and loving us. The table is where we respond to that love continually. For God's love to claim people at the table is to claim people with God's love and presence. Baptism, then becomes an intentional response to being claimed by God's love.</p>
<p>These are not necessarily sequential, but they mutually inform one another</p>
<p>In general baptism comes first, but I have heard of people coming to Christ through receiving the Sacrament and then requesting baptism.</p>
<p>It privatizes the sacraments and diminishes the outward sign that is intimately connected to the Spirit's inner work. Also, it betrays the true nature of the church and will make the church more difficult to discern.</p>
<p>It gets us closer to what the Lord's Supper meant when Jesus instituted it. He did not establish ecclesial hoops for his disciples to jump through before being 'worthy.' He simply said to all of them, 'Eat this, and remember me' — including Judas who was about to betray him. We have no right or reason to turn away anyone who wants to receive Christ's meal.</p>
<p>The Lord's Table is open to all who by faith receive and believe, and baptism celebrates God's love for us, even before we make any decision in the matter</p>
<p>I believe that the Assembly was in error by disconnecting the two.</p>
<p>To admit unbaptized to the table changes the understanding of baptism as admission into God's family and communion as the meal provided by God for the family</p>
<p>Humans should not be guardians of the Table</p>
<p>The Holy Spirit works in many ways, not always decently and in order.</p>
<p>They are both roads to a deeper relationship with God.</p>
<p>This was previously a theological scruple for me. If someone feels drawn to the Lord's Table, that is God's grace calling them and they should be welcomed. This drawing to the Table may happen before s/he is baptized and should be considered a part of God's initiating grace, calling that person to a life of discipleship. Appropriate pastoral care would include inviting that person to be baptized, but it may not happen immediately.</p>
<p>They are interconnected but baptism can be initiated by a sense of call to the table.</p>
<p>That God is in charge and we are not.</p>
<p>Both are means of grace. Both can be entry points, both are communal and covenantal.</p>
<p>Baptism is more of a process than a one-time event. It's more about the grace of God working in a person's life than the actual event.</p>
<p>I think there is a stronger relationship between baptism, communion and church life. If an individual is a part of the church community, then I think either baptism or communion is appropriate.</p>

<p>The Bible is clear that Jesus ate with sinners. The Feast should be the sign of ultimate hospitality and all those who wish to be drawn closer to Christ should be invited to eat with him. Baptism is a symbol of a life committed to Christ, and Scripture shows us that many times those who were invited to dine with him were then compelled to faith in him. I believe strongly that the sacraments are interconnected, but not that they must be given in any specific order.</p>
<p>The Lord's table and Baptism are both forms of grace</p>
<p>Either sacrament might lead to the other. Both are a witness to the forgiveness of sin.</p>
<p>It's an open table that we are cared to foster and serve... while it's a sealing of salvation, I don't think it's experienced as 'salvation' by folks today. It has become a wall, dividing force rather than a unifying experience of disciple-edification.</p>
<p>Jesus' table is open to all and can be a gateway to baptism and discipleship.</p>
<p>It is not a requirement but an addition to one's place in the community.</p>
<p>주의 성만찬은 그리스도께서 정하신 대로 그의 죽으심을 상징하는 떡과 포도주를 그가 다시 오실 때까지 나누는 예식입니다. 이 성만찬에서는 크게 두 가지 요소가 있습니다. 그 첫째는 떡을 떼는 일과 포도주를 붓는 행위이며, 둘째는 그 행위에 이어 '너희를 위하여 주는 내 몸'(눅 22:19)과 '많은 사람을 위하여 흘리는 바나의 피 곧 언약의 피'(막 14:24)라는 예수님의 설명입니다. 예수님은 자신의 죽음을 새 언약을 세우는 희생 제사로 보았고, 자신의 대속의 죽음으로 하나님의 의로운 백성이 창조된다고 말씀하십니다. 이것을 신앙으로 받아들이고 고백하는 것이 성찬의 의미입니다. 이 성찬은 단순히 과거의 사건을 추억하는 기념행사가 아닙니다. 따라서 이 성찬에 참여하는 자들은 성령의 역사를 기대함이 없이 아무렇게나 참여하는 오류를 범하지 않도록 자신을 살펴야 할 것입니다. [The Lord's Supper is a ritual sharing the bread and wine which symbolize the death of Christ until he comes back as he has instituted. The communion has largely two elements. These are the first on the acts of breaking the bread and pouring of wine, and the second on following the acts in 'my body given for you' (Luke 22:19) and 'covenantal blood, my blood which is shed for many' (Mark 14:24). Jesus saw his own death as a sacrifice for building new covenant, and creation of God's righteous people by his own death of atonement. Receiving and confessing the faith is what the communion means. The Lord's Supper is not simply a remembrance celebration of the past event. Therefore, those who are participating should examine themselves in order not to make mistakes in casual participation without the expectation of the Holy Spirit.]</p>
<p>God works outside of time and sequence. However, baptism is seen as being born into the Family of God and the Lord's Table as the family meal. One necessitates sequential priority over the other. Yet, again, God works outside of our concept of time and sequence. Should communion be taken before the act of baptism, I trust God's hand at work in that individual's life. As a pastor, I am not the gatekeeper of the Table - only Christ is.</p>
<p>I think they are related as mysteries, as things that are bigger than theology or creeds or denomination or even religion, they embody the wideness and love of God, events in the life of the church that are fuller when experienced, not just talked about or specifically defined in confessions, they are central to the life of the church and unite not only a particular church, but all people, strengthening them to more fully share the love of God with the world. It should be added, I don't think election is about salvation, but rather being elected to participate in God's Grace, and to share God's love as Christ's hands and feet</p>

Baptism is a means/sign of God's grace and a sign of entry into the life of Christ and the church community. The Lord's Supper makes most theological sense for those in the covenant community.
I have to go with Wesley on this one: some will be called from the Table to faith. I know it is not B.O.O. Lo siento. [I'm sorry.]
Baptism is very important in the life of the believer. Reformers have traditionally held that a believer would desire to receive this 'mark of the covenant' as soon as is reasonably possible. To encourage those to participate in the Lord's Supper without clearly understanding that this is a sacrament for believers only is to encourage them to eat and drink damnation to themselves according to Paul. Should a believer who has not been baptized be encouraged to receive the Lord's Supper? Yes. They should also be instructed as to the importance of receiving baptism. To encourage participation as a way to Christ, etc. is to go against the clear teaching of the Bible.
They are both sacraments.
While I believe that baptism should precede participation in Communion, I also have never barred someone from this sacrament because they weren't yet baptized. I do like the pastoral care element that is implied in the invitation to be baptized.
I am against anything that dogmatically causes these two Sacramental entry points in one's growing relationship with God and with God's church to in reality become barriers.
I believe that baptism brings one into the Church of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is the meal of that Church. However, we are not to fence the table, and keep people away from this means of grace. We have no control over Jesus, nor ability to require him to act as we would have him act. Ultimately, it's between Jesus and the person receiving the sacrament. Ours are just the hands serving it. The rules around Baptism and the Lord's Supper were written by fallible humans attempting to explain something beyond human comprehension. The is another example of that. (I was a commissioner at GA, and I'm still confused!)
We are introduced to a family at dinner and later join the family. I don't read anything in scripture that indicates a firm order to the Sacraments. On both God meets us with grace.
All are welcome to the table even if not baptized.
Both sacraments represent God's loving grace. While they are related, neither sacrament serves as a prerequisite to the other.
That the Spirit of God is free to operate outside of the sacramental practice of any one faith tradition.
To me, the Lord's table reminds us of what Christ has done to give us life. Baptism is similar, but includes more language about how we respond to God's gift in Christ. So in some sense, it would be more appropriate to celebrate the Lord's Supper first, and respond with Baptism.
Both are signs of God's love and grace. Requiring one to accept the other is a human construct of who is 'in' and who is 'out.' God's love is more inclusive than human rules.
Baptism should not be a condition which gains access to the Table or restricts participation. The joyful feast of the people of God should be inclusive and welcoming of any who are wanting to experience the sacrament.

I think the two are connected and yet I Don't think we have the right to reserve the Table for only those whom we either deem fit, buy into our religious practices or deny communion to those who have yet to be baptized. The disciples weren't baptized when they at the table and the table is supposed to be a great equalizer where all gather from north and south, east and west to feast. I believe though that a person should believe in Jesus Christ as they come to the table. I believe that a person needs to be on a spiritual journey and the hope would be that through communion and faith a person would then desire to be baptized as an outward symbol of an inward grace. I think that we don't have the right to withhold communion as it might be a means of grace for someone who has never received grace in such a manner. The two should still remain our sacraments and we should be disciplining people in such a way that if they have not yet been baptized that they are encouraged and invited to understand its meaning and purpose and thus moved closer to making a decision about being baptized but it shouldn't be a condition of receiving the grace of Christ through communion.

It says that the arrow of direction could sometimes move from the table to the font. The Spirit blows in many directions and so we should assume this movement sometimes happens this way, too, and not only the reverse.

'all may do what's right in their mind'

I will be reflecting on this decision for many months to come. I fear that it is a misguided application of a wonderful impulse. Yes, God's grace is at work in our lives, even before we are aware of it. Yes, perhaps communion can be an instrument of that grace and lead someone to a deeper relationship with God. However, the life of the Christian is distinctive. We are called to be different than the culture. Baptism and communion are set apart as Sacraments as two ways we embody that distinctiveness. I have not yet decided how this new decision will be implemented in my church--or if it will be implemented in my church.

Both are symbols of grace to me. God's gift to humanity. Baptism is rightly administered first but exclusion is never a good thing.

God's grace (represented by communion) should be freely offered. Baptism is part of the joyful response to God's grace and sign of further commitment.

We've perverted the understanding of the Lord's table over the centuries from what Christ said at the original 'Lord's' table - the Passover meal.

it says that nether sacrament is primary, they are both signs of God's grace

That Christ welcomes all to the table and desires a relationship with them.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper continue to be vitally linked. But the connection is not about what we understand, but what God is doing in our lives.

It's connected but the Lord's Table isn't hospitable if people are denied access because of a lack of baptism, which we can't just do on the spur of the moment

It's troubling that we're contemplating this.

Baptism is a means of God's grace which is available to all!

A guest in one's house is not seated in another room while the family meal is served. Extra chairs are pulled up to the table. Jesus broke bread with people of all backgrounds too.

Its all about grace, one way or the other. If someone come to the table hungry for their soul to be nourished by the body and blood of Christ, why would there ever be a gate? Why would we ever hinder how God may be working in that individual, within the understanding that God is sovereign? Further, why can it not be a catalyst for baptism, and thus a deeper understanding of grace?

I will still tend to encourage baptism before coming to the Table, but life as a pastor tells me that people learn in different ways. Perhaps some first need to make the decision to come to the table and in being fed realize they are being called by Jesus to believe in him. The churches I serve in always have visitors present on communion Sundays and I already issue an invitation to the table to the adults in the room that love Jesus to come to the table where Jesus sits as host regardless of their membership status to our church or any church. The relationship of baptism to communion is more like a Mobius strip than a linear progression. Eating and drinking together makes us yearn to renew our baptismal promises, renewing our baptismal promises makes us hunger and thirst.

It is Jesus' table and the Lord invites all who seek to know him or meet him for the first time to gather at the table. Baptism depends on the claim of God upon us - long before we claim God in return. The same claim of God upon us before the waters of baptism hit our heads is the same claim which invites us to the table.

All who profess faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior should be welcome at His Table

It's also about the role of the Holy Spirit.

It is an acknowledgement that God can reach people through myriad means. When that happens, we should rejoice rather than hinder.

That the church is open to let the grace of God move according to his sovereignty. Since we are administrators of the grace, as a church, we are keeping our sensibility to the Lord of Grace and his will to let others come and enjoy them (Sacraments) in the perfect time, not ours.

They are both vital to life as a Christian. For those born to Christian parents, I believe baptism should take place in infancy, with communion received by young children. They are born into the family of faith through baptism, and nourished in their growth at the Lord's Table. However, I recognize that others come to faith later in life or have a different story. I believe that the Lord's Table can actually be a place of conversion, as a seeker encounters the presence of Christ in bread and wine shared with welcoming believers. I know some Christians who have come to faith this way and were baptized later. Welcoming sinners and saints to Christ's table of grace is more important to me than making sure people follow a proper protocol or order.

It opens up communion to all while still recognizing that they must be connected.

I never check for ID to see if someone wanting communion has been baptized. How would we enforce that in our mobile and secularizing world today anyway? We want people to want to come to church, not have more reasons to stay away.

The Lord's table should be open to all who come seeking connection with Christ and his church.

I 'fence the Table' by issuing the invitation to all those who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Not all of those have been baptized (I always think of the thief on the cross). I do invite baptized children who have been through a time of instruction about the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper. Faith in Christ is essential. Baptism is highly important, the sign and seal of God's saving work. But if that faith is present in advance of Baptism, I believe the Table should be open to all who profess it. I have had the joy of celebrating several adult baptisms, following professions of faith in Jesus Christ. I do believe that offering the invitation for anybody at all--no matter what they believe, whether they have professed faith in Christ or not-- is highly inappropriate.

This separates the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the community of faith. It becomes more an individual exercise than communal.

Both signs of God's grace.

Baptism is God's mark of grace welcoming us into God's covenant family. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is God's spiritual food which all believers need, not only those who have been baptized. There is no record that all of the disciples who ate the Last Supper had been baptized, we should not place requirements or fences around the Lord's Table.
Not a prerequisite
I think it says that we have two, co-equal sacraments as a way of experiencing the grace of God...and it lessens the perception that baptism is an initiation ritual (you must do this to be a 'real Christian'). That perception (of initiation) cheapens the reality of experiencing God's grace and the depth of that moment. I also worry that requiring baptism limits some children who would be fed and nurtured at the table (but have not been baptized for any number of reasons). Also, if baptism is required, it makes communion appear to be a subordinate, or secondary, sacrament, which is false.
If you have sincerely professed faith in Christ, there is no reason to delay Baptism. We fully understand salvation is by faith. However, faith leads to obedience. Jesus teaches us that we are to baptize those who profess him. Why take the Lord's Supper if you are unwilling to be baptized? This breaks the relationship. Prior to the above change they were linked to one another, and I believe faithful so. Passionate I am, it's not a life or death issue.
To me, it says that Baptism and the Lord's Table a stops on a distinctly Christian journey that people respond to as they are led by the Spirit. These are rituals to desiring a life with God in Christ.
It says that God's grace has power to move, inspire, embrace within the context of communion, in the context of receiving and serving one another tangible grace which can lead to invite and incorporate folks into the community of faith. Communion with others can be the very grace someone needs to make their way to baptism.
It changes our practice in a helpful way.
They are meant to go together but neither is salvific. This has been the practice of the vast majority in our church for years.
both are signs of God's grace, only signs not God's grace itself. I dare not exclude any whom the Lord has called to participate and I prefer to error on the side of showing grace.
The Table of Christ is a table of invitation and welcome -Jesus never refused fellowship with anyone and it just seems to me that those who are exploring their relationship to God will feel more encouraged to have a relationship with God if they feel welcome at the Table of Grace and Inclusion. Baptism is seen in the reformed tradition as the beginning of a lifelong journey with Christ. If we take a journey, we like to go with people we already know and feel we can count on. To me the requirement to journey with Christ before we have had a chance to fellowship with Christ at the Table has always seemed a little backward. By opening the Table to those who are searching, we are making it more likely that they will want to take life's journey with Christ through their 'eventual' baptism.
That is more affirmation of what God is doing in the life of an individual, than a sign of something that I have publicly declared. This also seems to fit with the way that God works, it is never 'in order' in all believers' journey. I have never asked people if they have been baptized before I serve them communion anyway, nor would I. If someone wants to experience that grace of God in communion then who am I to stop them.
no comment
It is a pastoral response that takes seriously where a person 'is' in his or her life and extends invitational grace.
They are not sequential; they are similar in being sacraments of God's grace, but dependent on each other. Each is sufficient in a particular circumstance.

It confirms the freedom of the Holy Spirit. Both sacraments are signs and seals of God's action in human life. Though adoption into the body ordinarily precedes communion, the Spirit is free to draw seekers to the body through the experience of inclusion at Christ's table.
It disconnects the two and commitment from the Table
I think it says more about how we understand the Lord's Table - can we open it to all? That is what people want from us. I no longer believe that our table should be closed to those who have not been baptized. I think baptism is a worthy sacrament and helps us understand our relationship to grace. I think the table also helps us understand our relationship to grace, but when the table is not fully open to those in the worshiping community it becomes confusing and prohibits us from being fully loving as Christ loved.
All are welcome, without restriction, at the table. And also, at the font, for those who believe. No sequence is enforced.
The Lord's Table can lead people to baptism as they 'taste and see that the Lord is good.'
The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is meant for those who are a part of the family of faith (in a formal way) -- baptism is the means by which individuals become part of the family of faith (in a formal way).
It separates one from the other. It raises a classic concern about people receiving communion with a lack of knowledge and understanding.
Son dos Sacramentos distintos, bien importantes . Pero todos y todas estan invitados a la mesa [They two different sacraments, they are very important. However, everybody is invited to the table]
in Baptism, we claim God's love dripped upon us as we step into new life with Christ. Part of that new life is connected in remembering his death and resurrection, until he comes again
God extends grace; therefore, we should extend it. If receiving Communion leads an unbaptized person deeper into God's grace, then we should not fence off that avenue.
Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are God's gift to us to encourage us and our trust in God.
they are both signs believers are commanded and invited to partake.
Both reflect our belonging to Christ
The Grace made available through the Sacraments is not dependent on those administering them. It seems to me perfectly consistent with the Reformed emphasis of God's ultimate sovereignty not to limit access to the Lord's Table to those who have been baptized, just as we decided years ago to admit baptized children to the Lord's Table.
Both speak to God's grace. Lord's Table may be a first experience leading to Baptism.
I still believe that we come to the Lord's Table after having confessed our desire to be a Christian and part of the body of Christ. That is concretized through baptism. I feel that what the PCUSA is doing is watering down many principles, hoping that more people will gravitate to the church. We send a message of 'y'all come and do whatever.' I became a member of PCUSA when I was 10 years old. At the beginning of each congregational meeting the roll was called. My name was called. That act held me accountable as a member to be present, or if I could not be present, request in advance to be excused. Today, we just look around the room, count heads and announce that is a quorum. Often, persons who are not actual members vote on items of business. But the point I am making is that we stop doing things because we want to seem more 'laid back' and casual to attract people. We often give in to people saying they don't want to spend a lot of time in church or in a meeting. In so doing, we have a casual watered-down denomination. More and more, members are wanting less structure. The question is: Is this really helping us to be more dedicated and committed disciples?
all are invited to the table but there is nothing that we have to do to earn a place there
I think it is 'technically and theologically' correct...but God knows the heart of the one receiving the elements.

Baptism and the Table are still deeply connected as means of grace and signs of God's faithful love. The change is the logical extension of the open table: we don't need to qualify for Communion. Just as baptism bears witness to a grace that precedes be outward sign, so the open table bears witness to a boundless grace where all are welcome.
Baptism is entry into the family. The Table is the family meal. I think that this actually helps us reach out because it invites commitment.
Rather than baptism as a gateway to the table, this change sees these two sacraments as continually feeding into each other. It also acknowledges the reality that with so many people growing up unchurched, the Lord's Table is often their first invitation to get close to God in a tangible way. Baptism becomes a stumbling block to faith if we use it as a roadblock to a deeper communion with Christ for those who are coming to the faith later in life having not been baptized.
Both are commandments for believers and are visible signs of invisible grace
The relationship is not a linear one, but an organic one. Logically, it makes sense that faith is confirmed first in baptism, then fed at the Lord's Table. But this is an example of how theological logic as a human system must never override the creative, imaginative movement of the Holy Spirit. Faith is not always linear.
Baptism is not the gateway. God can work through the sacrament of the Lords Supper
We're willing to be less uptight about the rules if it will help people come to Jesus.
Both are expressions of God's grace and our response of gratitude. Baptism is our response to God's love and claim on our lives that calls for our response of grateful service. The table reveals God's grace in calling all to be in community, to share in God's abundance, and to share that abundance with our neighbors in need.
Jesus' invitation to the table is unconditional. It should lead all who come towards a deeper relationship with Christ.
In brief - Baptism is a welcoming into the Covenant community and a recognition of God's grace. Communion is an experience of the presence of God in community. That can come to anyone by God's grace. Baptism is once and for all. Communion is renewal and repeatable any time one seeks God's presence.
Baptism is the gateway to the table. Yes, the table is fenced so that only the members of the community may participate at it.
Baptism is a public statement of accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior. The Table is spread for all people those who do and those who do not accept Jesus. Anyone can come to the Table and be fed - it is a more considered choice to seek baptism. Baptism is a once and for all while the Table is a renewal.
I hold this for two reasons: in the case of unbaptized children, some parents wish to reserve baptism for a time when the child will remember and be able to affirm the faith for themselves- I do not believe these children who otherwise participate in the life of the Church should be excluded from the Table; In our congregation, people confess their faith in Christ in preparation for receiving Communion and are nourished in their faith through receiving the elements. I do not know where Jesus made being baptized a condition of receiving the meal.
this removes the sealing of our faith through the sacrament of baptism
I see it as rite of initiation, but were members of the early church baptized prior to sharing in supper as in Acts 2?
The family meal is for members of the family. Baptism is the sign of entry into membership of the family
Our baptism with water & Holy Spirit is a response and recognition of the claim and baptism God has already bestowed upon the individual... so to say they are not baptized, just because they haven't been formally recognized as baptized by the church is pretty narrow thinking...

I can see both sides on this issue. I personally would never be comfortable 'fencing the table' and denying the Lord's Supper to anyone who wanted to receive it. Part of our Reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper is that in that meal we receive spiritual nourishment to grow in our faith and discipleship. I also believe, though, that this language could start to cause problems in our understanding of the relationship between Baptism and the Lord's Supper, particularly in what I would consider to be a crucial Reformed understanding that Baptism is the beginning not the culmination of our journey with Christ, as God chooses us before we even know how to respond to that call. I believe if someone truly wants to receive the Lord's Supper then they are ready to be baptized, and that conversation should take place, but I don't feel that the old wording was inadequate.

Some who aren't baptized have already been baptized by the Spirit. I believe Baptism in the Spirit is a requirement, as evidence of trust in Jesus. Jesus invites all who trust in Him to share His table. I wouldn't have a blanket policy for the unbaptized. If they trust in Him, they're welcome (& should be invited to be baptized). If they don't, they should wait.

The mere question appears to beg the fact that we are uncertain, myself included, about the relationship between the two. I can make an argument for both positions and have embraced both positions. Today, I find that I lean toward baptism being a prerequisite to receive Communion because Communion is an act of and for the church community (admittedly, both originate from God's grace) and the church is comprised of the baptized (our polity suggests as much). More and more I sense that we must extenuate our Christian distinctiveness--not for the purpose of exclusion, but for the purpose of better understanding our own identity.

It changes our traditional understanding.

Should not be a requirement. We need to invite as many people to the table as possible.

It diminishes Baptism; it suggests it is an optional experience and that Jesus didn't mean it when he commanded us to baptize. It ruptures the integrity of the sacraments.

I don't think that Baptism is necessarily a prerequisite for being invited to the Lord's Table, but I do think the two are closely related. It is possible that someone may feel drawn to the table and it's abundant grace as part of their faith journey. I would certainly think the call to baptism would naturally accompany such a call. A person who is entering the faith should not be made to feel unwelcome at the table. God's grace is neither given nor withheld by human beings, but is the gift of God.

Traditionally Baptism leads us to the Table. Although this muddies those waters (no pun intended) I am not totally uncomfortable with the Table leading to subsequent baptism.

It says that the call to the covenant and sacrament of baptism can be initiated by an experience of being welcomed and received by God. It expresses that dying and rising with Christ, starts with God and we respond to God's leading.

They are connected and baptism should proceed Communion.

Both are signs of God's prevenient grace.

Baptism used to be the gate by which people experienced grace and were invited to the Table. However, in the 21st Century it is more often the Table at which people experience grace and are then subsequently invited to the font where they are asked to make a commitment to the God who has already made a commitment to them. This change does shift our understanding of the Table away from the Feast of the Faithful and towards the parable of the Wedding Feast where the least and the lost are gathered in. I am theologically comfortable with this shift and suspect that in this post-denominational age most churches have already made this shift in praxis if not in theology. My only hesitation in this regard is the way in which it breaks with 2,000 years of sacramental practice and how that might impact our ecumenical relationships.

<p>Baptism should not be a divisive dictated experience required for any standing in the church. Grace is grace and received from God through Jesus Christ. Our very roots have said and indicated that the table is open to all who follow Jesus. It is my understanding that we have moved past earning our Elder granted communion coin in order to approach the table.</p>
<p>I believe this makes for less of a hierarchy between the two sacraments. It maintains a relationship between the two. It allows for a gracious invitation to the table and an invitation to baptism.</p>
<p>An open table confirms for me that it is God who initiates a relationship with us. This is one of the reasons why I appreciate infant baptism, for God loves us long before we can knowingly respond in love towards God. These two sacraments are intricately bound, each inviting an individual into a deeper relationship with Christ.</p>
<p>Baptism is not required for salvation, yet, it is a public way of expressing the inward change that occurs in those who believe in Jesus as Savior. Nevertheless, it is not up to me to determine who is or is not in a relationship with Jesus by faith. But if we do away with all standards of faith and practice will we still be church? The only thing which marks us as unique and different from all other civic organizations and institutions is our relationship to Jesus the Christ. When we fail to make proclamation of Jesus especially in the sacraments then we are no different from the Lions Club, the Rotarians, the Fraternal Order of Police, or any other civic group. It is our proclamation and relationship with Jesus that makes us Christian and the Church. To allow people to participate in the Lord's Supper without baptism, while making us feel good about our openness to others, denies that which makes us Christian.</p>
<p>While we currently say all who are baptized, it is possible that people who have not been baptized partake of the Lord's Supper. You cannot tell from one's outward appearance. If we allow people who have not been baptized to come to the table, we are opening the table to all who believe without any prerequisites. Baptism then becomes an invitation to grow deeper in faith and publically profess one's belief.</p>
<p>I do not believe in a fenced table. I believe in the calling of the spirit. I am also not going to check for baptism credentials as we pass the plate.</p>
<p>Both are entry points to the other and into the life of the church.</p>
<p>Baptism then Lord's Table. The Lord's Table is a community meal. Baptism is welcoming into the community through profession of one's faith (parents' faith). We should encourage people to become part of the community first, and then enjoying the Lord's meal.</p>
<p>I think the invitation to the Table should be to Christ and in response to the Word and Spirit (not just to 'try' the Table) . . . if so, then baptism soon afterwards makes sense. Baptism is the sign of incorporation into the covenant, of which the Table is the meal. Ordinarily, baptism should precede, but I think honoring a response to Christ's presence through the Word and at the Table is a fitting order when it happens.</p>
<p>The Baptism is acceptance into the household of God. The Lord's Supper is a means of grace for those who partake</p>
<p>There's no distinct or proper order to receiving the sacraments in my mind. One can and SHOULD be an invitation to the other, and the cycle should repeat every time we witness a baptism and every time we're invited to the Table.</p>
<p>Baptism is meant to offer entry, or belonging. Often, family or community membership happens through table fellowship, and table fellowship is a matter of hospitality, something central to the life of the Church. I hate the idea that someone who wanted to seek the fellowship of the church through the Lord's Supper would not be welcomed because they had never been baptized. I understand the linkage theologically, but pastorally, excluding folks from the table seems to run against the great ends of the Church. The table can serve as a means of grace, but also as an act of welcome, and hence, a sharing of the Good News.</p>

Although it may weaken the previously-held 'doorway to the communion of the family' practice, it also opens the doorway wider for those who feel a need to receive Holy Communion and learn more about the importance of Christ and His Church.
Instead of a linear understanding (first baptism, then the Lord's supper) it affirms that we never merit God's gifts of grace. God's grace may first come to us through the table. (Sara Miles in her book, Take This Bread, gives a personal example of how God comes to us in ways we cannot control.)
All are welcome!
It says that even a soul that does not yet know Christ can still be fed by him. It says that commitment to the body is not required in order to receive grace.
It says that God works in ways we cannot control. For some attending worship and being included at the table is the first time they feel the tangible presence of God. Once they have been included that are ready to learn more which may lead them to baptism.
I believe baptism should remain a requirement for coming to the Table. The oldest document we have outside of the NT, the Didache, affirms this requirement. Baptism is a replacement of circumcision, a sign of entrance into the covenant community. The Lord's Table is a fulfillment of Passover, which is Christ's invitation to share in His life and death.
I have always liked the Methodist position: If you feel your heart warmed by grace, you should be allowed at the table.
They are still connected. We cannot systematize God's working in people or control access to grace.
Baptism remains a rite of initiation, but the table is an opportunity for evangelism. It is Christ who welcomes people to his table, even the unwashed. (Matthew 15:1-20)
The Lord's table is open to all. Jesus didn't demand that the tax collectors and sinners be baptized before he ate with them. Both the Table and Font are powerful symbols of God's unconditional love, acceptance and grace.
That the warnings of Scripture about coming to the table are no longer relevant in the PCUSA and that we have lost our way when it comes to understanding the Supper as an expression of the covenant community that we enter, according to the command of Jesus, through the visible act of baptism.
I think it mostly affects unbaptized children, whose parents have chosen to let them wait to be baptized. The 'stigma' in worship to be one of the only ones not welcomed to the table can be a problem for these families.
Both are gifts of grace from God and should not be dependent on the other. I think recognizing that participation in the Lord's Table is communion with God and the community of faith should be an invitation to the grafting of one's life into the Body of Christ. Meanwhile the Lord's Table serves as a door for an individual to experience grace in the midst of community.
Opening the table to all, baptized or not, provides an opportunity for someone to become so nourished that they wish to symbolize their incorporation into the body of Christ by baptism.
Both are a means of grace by which we might come to know and be known by God. Both are sacraments to be taken seriously by the church.
I think it points to a reality of our lives today: that there are times when a child or young person has not been baptized, and may not live in a home where the idea of baptism would be welcomed. That child, however, may find her/himself in a situation of attending worship with a friend or relative, when to be turned away from the Table because of a situation out of that child's control could cause the child to feel rejected by God and/or the church. To welcome her/him to the table would allow for a witness to God's love and acceptance of everyone. So, I think what it says is that our timetables are not always the Lord's timetables.
Concerned that people are going to be taking communion in an unworthy manner.

I think it is extremely important, but not to the point that I would bar any believer from the Table. Sometimes there are circumstances that have been in play that have prevented someone from being baptized, no matter how ridiculous someone may think they are. If there is someone present who professes Jesus Christ as his or her Savior, s/he should be welcomed to the Table. With open arms!
Sometime folks come to faith later in life even if they were not Baptized as children. The Lord's table is a place of nurture & blessing.
The desire to share in the meal at the Table can be a powerful motivator to come to baptism. I think that the traditional view of baptism prior to joining the community at the table reflects the life of the early church and its need to prepare people thoroughly in Christian teaching and life-style before becoming a 'full' member. Today, I think it is acceptable that participation leads to deeper understanding.
What this means is that the Lord's Table is a means of commuting God's grace to people, regardless of baptismal status or religious background.
I've always held that the Spirit works in mysterious ways to bring people into closer relationship with God and Christ. Just as with little children, I believe that if they reach out for the bread and wine, we are called to educate and guide them towards baptism. However, I also believe that the Spirit will or will not move a person to accept baptism and that God knows who has been chosen. This is a complicated issue and needs to be handled on a case by case basis by the pastor and the person in question.
Jesus didn't require it, neither should we.
We have forgotten about being born again. If one is dead, why does one need to partake of food? If one has not been born again, why does not need to partake of the elements by which we are nourished spiritually? What a mess up!
Baptism is the sacrament of entrance into God's family and, traditionally, Communion is the Family of God gathered at the table.
It says that the sign of our union with Christ is not very important.
It removes Baptism as a requirement to receive communion, and is a practice already quite common, in my experience, to the invitation to the table.
Salvation is by grace through faith. Baptism is very important but I think that Jesus would offer communion to faithful yet not yet baptized followers. Baptism is an act of faithful obedience to Jesus' command.
They are complementary, rather than exclusionary.
All who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior need to be allowed to take communion.
It says that God can put the means of grace in any order God wants; as God does so, the Spirit will call the Church to be intentional about inviting people into both.
Both are ways through which God's presence is made known to us, draws us together, and nourishes us in faith and purpose.
Baptism is a 'sign and seal' of the divine. At the Lord's Table we profess that we come into the presence of the divine (Christ is with us). There should be no barriers to this holy event.
Invitation to the Lord's Table can be a way to include someone one the 'fringes'. It can open up a person to repentance and lead to baptism.

In baptism we are grafted into the Body of Christ and become part of the covenant of faith, baptism is simply a visible sign of an invisible grace; and in baptism we grow in and learn to trust Christ as savior. Talk to any children or adults baptized as infants, no one remembers their own baptism but we celebrate it vicariously by watching and participating the baptism of others. Since we experience Christ at both the font and the Table, the former may lead us into a deeper understanding of what it means to be a member of a faith community; and yet at the Lord's Table we remember Christ is with us as we celebrate the Sacrament. In my view experiencing God's grace at the table may bring about a faith awakening, resulting in a person wanting to be baptized. I fully support non baptized individuals to receive community. It is the feast of God for the people of God.

This proposal is a weakening of our sense of being God's own people.

The Lord's Table is intended for those who are his followers and baptism is the formal 'mark' of the commitment to follow Christ. Thus, only those who claim Christ as Lord and Savior should be invited to the Lord's Table, but if not yet baptized, should be challenged subsequently to make that commitment.

Under the change, Baptism is no longer a prerequisite for participation at the Table. I oppose the change, preferring the long-standing tradition of the Church.

Baptism, or the mark of God's call, is still the foundational sacrament, but there is no magical quality of Baptism--it is a sign and seal of what God is already doing and has already done. So invitation is essential, but there is no sin in recognizing and allowing the change of heart in the Spirit to be acknowledged and fed in Eucharist prior to Baptism.

The Lords Table is open to all people. It is God's table and not ours. We should not set limits on who can come to the table. If an unbaptized person feels moved to take the sacrament they should be as welcome as anyone else.

Normally baptism should precede Communion; however, especially in the case of very young children the lessons of the community of faith can be demonstrated and taught through inclusion in the Lord's Table.

I think of this in terms of children. Children, by grace, are invited to the table regardless of baptism (at least in my experience, not by church law). As children of God, I believe that those seeking to have a relationship with Christ, even if they have not yet been baptized, should be welcomes to the table.

God's acceptance and grace trumps all else

since it is not a requirement for participation it affirms God's grace for each whether they acknowledge it in baptism or not. Those who still wonder about baptism's significant are able to share in the reality of community offered in communion and the presence of Christ offered unconditionally.

I am still trying to get my head around that one. This goes against our Confessions (of course, since when has that mattered). As children of the Covenant, Baptized into the community of faith, I can justify communion to those who have not made public profession (though I am not entirely comfortable with it). As an adult one comes to Christ, we enter the Covenant Community by Baptism and with that community we celebrate the Sacrament. This change says that they have nothing in common. I am disgusted by this potential change.

They still remain interconnected and both point to God's graceful actions. By putting baptism before communion takes away the sense that some people come to baptism through an awareness of the grace found at the table. A baptized child may learn at the table as well as an unbaptized adult. While we are justified by God alone, our acts of sanctification continue to reveal to us and help us claim more and more the miracle of God's justification.

It affirms that the table is an open invitation of God's grace to all who want to come

Baptism is extremely important, but I think the Table should be open to all who put their trust in him. Baptism should come before, but can also come afterwards.

<p>Baptism is a visible sign of an invisible grace. That grace includes recognizing that we are children of God, members of the family of faith. The Lord's Table is our family table fellowship, if you will, where Christ presides and the children of God gather to be fed and sustained. But surely guests are invited into people's homes to join the family at dinner! A guest does not degrade or contaminate or belittle the dinner. In fact, the family might be more grateful for a meal they so often take for granted as they realize not everyone gets to enjoy this company and joyful Feast.</p>
<p>It tells folks that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are just happy-go-lucky ceremonies. That is more akin to the Quakers, Salvation Army and Unitarians</p>
<p>Baptism should not be a barrier to the invitation to the Lord's table. To make it so flies in the face of the meaning of the table, which is Christ's invitation to each of us, to show we are accepted. To do otherwise sure looks like 'works righteousness.' I HOPE that this change is made in the directory!</p>
<p>We say that these are our only two sacraments, baptism is a sign of our belonging to the family - the table is the family meal. Changing it to open it up to the unbaptized says that it's not important to join the family.</p>
<p>that the table is open to anyone and everyone and as a gift of God. Baptism is the moment of the welcome to the church to take a vow of commitment to learn and grow in God's kingdom</p>
<p>I have been raised with the understanding that we are welcomed to the Lord's Table after Baptism, which is something I respect. However, I have come to think the more hospitable and gracious thing for us to do is to welcome people to the table and then make that an opportunity to engage with them about belief and, eventually, baptism.</p>
<p>Both are mystical ways of connecting to and with God, neither essential for salvation, both means of grace.</p>
<p>That they would be invited to be baptized is important here. There is an important connection of baptized into the faith community and sealed as God's own and the Lord's table as we remember and embrace what Jesus Christ did for us but, I don't think anyone should be kept from the table if they feel called to participate. Although i can't speak for God, I think God can handle that just fine!</p>
<p>The table and font are connected. One leads to the other. One gives identity, the other continues to celebrate it, again and again. The table and what happens at it cannot be separated from baptism.</p>
<p>I do not know the baptismal status of each of the disciples who were present at the Last Supper. Had all of them followed Jesus' example? It is the Lord's table and we are not the monitors of the efficacy of the sacrament in the person's life.</p>
<p>I think it says that there is a stronger connection between being washed in the waters of baptism and being invited by Jesus to the Lord's table. It says that both are equally important, and understanding of one informs understanding of the other. There is also a pastoral sensitivity that someone may be present in worship and invited to the Lord's table before they have explored baptism, as we live in a society were religion is less of a given in someone's upbringing, I don't think it can be assumed that someone has been offered, whether as an infant or adult, the opportunity to be baptized.</p>
<p>Connected, not essential. What is essential is that no one be excluded from table.</p>
<p>If the Lord's Supper is a means of grace, then it could be an avenue through which someone would come to faith and lead that person to baptism. Anyone receiving communion must be instructed on its meaning, however. Practically, I don't see how we would check someone's 'baptismal credentials' before serving them the supper.</p>

I think Baptism should be necessary for someone to partake in the Lord's Supper. If you want to invite a non-baptized person to partake, you will need to be fairly earnest in pursuing them for baptism. So, I could possibly consider this new change, but I'm skeptical that a real invitation for baptism will be continually pursued, either by the pastor of the non-baptized person.

This change allows for those who have not yet been baptized to have an opportunity to meet Christ at the table of grace. It allows for someone to begin to hunger and thirst for a relationship with Christ which will then be marked in baptism. To require baptism is to prevent the Holy Spirit from working through the sacrament of Holy Communion which might be the best entry (before baptism) for a particular person and lead to a desire to receive the sacrament of baptism as a result of being welcomed at Christ's table.

Persons meet Christ at the table. So come if you are baptized; if you believe; if you want to believe

The two are united and neither should be treated as primary. The table may be the most evangelical moment in Presbyterian worship. To refuse table fellowship to one who is seeking to understand faith seems contrary to the movement of the gospel.

Not much -- I do not see where the disciples were baptized at the time of the institution of the table by Jesus. Moreover, it can be interpreted as a meal shared with Jesus -- and many of the people who did that were never baptized. It opens up a dialogue about the faith, then it seems like it should be allowed.

Although we regard baptism as a rite of initiation that comes prior to coming to the Lord's Table, Jesus did not. If Jesus welcomed everyone to his table, and if indeed the table is a place where we are lifted up into the presence of God and in communion with Christ and with one another, what better way to invite people into relationship than to welcome them to eat with us? We would not set up a dinner table and then bar our children from coming to it on the basis of some decision that their parents made (or failed to make) some years prior. Neither should we bar them from Christ's table. Whenever I teach our children about the sacraments, there has always been at least one child who subsequently asks to be baptized. Once they've come to that table, they want even more to be part of the family.

I think it puts the two sacraments as means of grace for all people. There is not a special order by which we must receive the grace God bestows upon us through the sacraments - the grace comes by the will of God and the way that the Holy Spirit stirs within each of us. I do believe that the Lord's Table can be a place of conversion.

Jesus did not seem to make a distinction between the order and importance of these sacraments. We do not even know if the disciples were baptized prior to his gathering them in the upper room for the first Lord's Supper. Therefore, we cannot say for certain which should be first. However, the early church adopted this practice, of waiting for baptism before a believer received the Lord's Supper. With that in mind, I believe the PC(USA) should generally practice such a tradition with latitude to be flexible in certain circumstances. I will not stop including in my invitation, 'All who are baptized and profess Jesus as Lord and Savior are welcome at this table....'

It says that the table is open to ALL people. It is my belief that the grace once receives at the communion table may be the moment that Jesus comes into his/her heart and changes his/her life forever.

I know this is tricky theologically. But in practice where my church is urban and growing fast, we can't know who is 'in' and 'out' when we do communion but we can when it comes to baptism because it's easier to have a pre-service process. It's impossible to enforce the Lord's Table requirement of baptism when I honestly don't know who is in my church each week! Maybe in smaller churches this works, but not in mine. I'm ok understanding the Table as open instead of closed and think that this is a healthy development.

I think we believe that salvation/ relationship with God is not dependent on Baptism. We believe that church membership/baptism go together (because in part baptism is a bold statement of one's faith). Because of our commitment to interdenominational relationships and our desire to reach out to those who are still coming to faith, communion should not be a barrier.
Baptism is the initiation into the community. Only those who are members of the community of faith are entitled to receive the blessing of grace.
If someone does not want to be baptized, or cannot affirm baptismal vows, the Lord's Supper cannot be received, since they cannot do it 'in remembrance of me' in the Hebrew sense of remembering.
God's grace and healing are available to everyone at every moment. As far as I know, the Bible does not mention the baptized state of the people at the original last supper.
While the Table must always be open, baptism is the best path.
Either of the sacraments can be the way in for a person; we lose out when we deny communion to anyone -- and that one loses out as well.
My upbringing and my training say that we come to the Table of grace through the waters of Baptism, that having died to sin and risen in Christ, we now feast at Christ's holy Table. Experience, reading Scripture, and particular focus on the stories both of the Hebrew & Gospel texts shows that God is abundant in goodness, graciousness, radical hospitality, and literally feeding those who are hungry. To deny anyone - any child of God - access to the freely given gift of life giving food and grace at the Table seems contrary to the Spirit through which manna rained and Jesus fed multitudes. I continue to wrestle with this from the vantage of theological tradition vs. current revelation.
Baptism is invitation to discipleship, a beginning point. The Eucharist can serve as a moment of encounter in which an individual might experience the hospitality modeled by Jesus and hear an invitation to discipleship that would lead to baptism. Solomon Stoddard suggested that the eucharist can be a converting ordinance. It seems appropriate that the sovereign God of the Reformed tradition could call someone to faith in Christ at the communion table with that call and encounter leading on to baptism and deepening discipleship.
Both are sacramental transactions between the individual and God. Both are only dimly understood by humans. Both are acts of obedience. If those unbaptized by water partake of the meal, it is up to the pastor to inquire as to the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual. If no work can be discerned then further participation in the meal should be discouraged. If it is apparent that the HS is at work then both salvation by grace and the obedience of baptism should be explained and water baptism should follow. We are not the judges, only the administrators. The Holy Spirit is the Guardian of the effectiveness of both sacraments.
You don't need to do anything else to partake of Christ but to come.
We experience God's grace at table in the sacrament of the Eucharist, which reminds us of our baptism. However, those who are not yet baptized can experience the gift of God's grace and forgiveness at table in the Eucharist, a powerful form of our worship as a living ministry.
Baptism by the Spirit is sufficient to share communion at the table. Baptism by water recognizes God's action, but does not preclude it
Baptism would no longer be the only 'entry' sacrament into faith and Christian life.
In daily life... One is invited to the table before becoming added to a family (i.e. by marriage). We get a 'taste' of what it is we are yearning for & thus commit ourselves wholeheartedly via public baptism & local membership.
The sacraments are inextricably linked.

Baptism is not the entry fee to Christ's table of grace. By welcoming everyone to the Lord's Table, an Ú baptized person may feel the welcome of the church and then be moved to explore baptism as a way of joining the church.
These are both sacraments of the Christian Church. Baptism is the initiation of the faith and the Lord's Table is the celebration of Christ death and resurrection for our sins. The table is open to those who profess their faith in the Lord Christ and accept his forgiveness for sin. Baptized Children who are being instructed in the meaning of the Table may receive the Gifts of God for the People of God. Allowing non-baptized person come to the table without an understanding of its meaning is foolish.
Baptism is the formal sign of being in covenant community with one another. We gather in community at the Lord's Table. Both are essential practices, but one does not necessarily precede the other.
Open hospitality, we don't see this as salvific - but as a way to remember & be drawn in to the act of Jesus's ultimate sacrifice & love for us. Sharing all we are & have is an expression & enactment of the at the Lord's table. & it is the Lord's table. Not mine, not the PC USA's & that means we should be at least as inviting as Jesus was.
It more deeply connects the two sacraments; it is an indication that both are available to every individual, and that God accepts that individual where and how he or she comes to either the table or the font.
As in the Halfway Covenant, communion can lead those who experience divine grace there to seek a deeper faith in baptism.
Baptism is the initiation into the covenant community of Christ's Body, the Church. The Lord's Supper is nourishment for the Christian spiritual journey. In some instances, that pilgrimage/journey begins before one is baptized.
As a practicing pastor of a congregation, I ALWAYS say that those who TRUST (i.e., back to the old credo meaning) in Jesus are invited to the table BY JESUS! Did he require baptism before sharing bread? No. There is not enough room here to talk about the relationship between the two sacraments, nor have I yet taken the time to consider what this new change implies. I only know that I believe fully in an open table.
That the Lord's Supper is the entry point to God's grace.
That Baptism is not a 'work' to be performed in order to receive the bread of life and the cup of salvation. It's related to the reason why we no longer demand confirmation/church membership for our children in order to receive the sacrament.
The Lord's table is open to all who trust in Jesus and their children. The invitation to Baptism is presented to individuals and parents but is not used to exclude anyone from communion.
God's grace is open to all to want to know more. In some ways we are removing 'the fence' from The Table.
I think this could very well break the traditional understanding of the two, a relationship that has been closely identified though experience and history. The two definitely help to inform each other, and really should not be separated.
Baptism is an external sign of what God has and already is doing in the life of a person and that they are part of the life of God. The Lord's Table is the external sign of our internal spiritual pledge and desire to be at-one with God and one another. If someone is moved to commune with me, then it is also a means of grace inviting them to publicly profess the faith God is growing within them.
They both belong to Christ, not to us.
Baptism is not the chief requirement to take communion, faith is.
If this passes it will separate being baptized into God's family from sharing in the family meal. It may be more true to what is already happening in many churches
Without the requirement it takes away the response to grace in baptism

It is God's work, not our own, that draws us into faith. Just as we baptize infants who cannot profess faith, we can invite all of God's people to the Table, even those who have not received the gift of faith.
Visible signs of God's love and grace.
Separate issues. The table is open, period. Jesus Christ is the host and invites all to come as a demonstration of the kingdom of God.
Baptism is the rite of initiation into the Christian faith. The Lord's Supper is the shared meal of the Christian community.
Jesus invites all- Jesus was born for all Jesus died for all . . . (those who recognized him, & those who didn't)
That both are means by which God creates a community that is equipped to be the Body of Christ in the world.
both important but in no special order
The two are integrally tied one to another; God's grace is made manifest through each of these sacraments. Both are a declaration of faith, and both serve to nurture the believer in one's walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.
Baptism is not a requirement for communion. This accurately reflects the situation when Jesus instituted communion with his disciples.
Baptism, while a holy, sacred, and beautiful sacrament, does not hold the authoritative key to being eligible to receive God's Grace, as if the Session approving a baptism and a minister performing a baptism would somehow be a magic formula for Grace to be received. God's unending and undeniable (irresistible) Grace is not limited by our constructs and rules. The Table is bountiful, there's a place set for each of God's beloved children, and there's enough for everyone to be fed, nurtured, and cared for. Baptism is a recognition of our naming/claiming by God's Grace - a claiming that comes from before the beginning of time - and we're nurtured in God's Grace at the Table. Several times in ministry, I've met with people who cited the Sacrament of Communion as THE moment they felt most welcomed and that they belonged in our worshiping community. It's quite possible that someone can, indeed, find the seeds of deep faith planted by being invited to gather at the Table of Grace!
our theology of Love is the most important. For an unbaptized person, being denied the lord's supper is unloving. Yes, people should be baptized first, but following that rule too strictly gets in the way of the Grace we embody at the Table.
When I began attending Southminster Presbyterian Church in 1996 I was 14. I had never heard the gospel before. I never worshipped before. In many ways I didn't know what I was doing. On one particular Sunday, the communion tray was passed around. I took the wafer and the cup. I believe in Jesus Christ but I had never been baptized. Later on, to my horror, I learned that I wasn't supposed to take communion. This led to a conversation with my pastor. She knew that I was searching. She also read Calvin; she knew that someone taking the sacrament cannot defile or change the sacrament. What I came to learn through participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was the nature of Jesus' presence in the midst of the holy meal. By the Holy Spirit he was nurturing and nourishing me. While I do believe that the Lord's Supper nurtures and nourishes our baptismal identity as disciples of Jesus Christ, as children of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I also believe that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ should be invited to partake of the sacrament - even if they are not yet baptized. Participation in the Lord's Supper may become the vehicle through which an unbaptized person senses a call to be baptized. If we believe in the sovereignty of the Triune God, if we believe that Jesus is present in the bread and wine through the power of the Holy Spirit, then it should make no difference if a person is baptized or not; for the same Spirit that is at work through the common elements of bread and wine is also at work in the water. And it is the Spirit's work that is ultimately important in our twin sacraments.

<p>Ordinarily, baptism is the outward sign of belonging to the covenant of grace -- for which the Holy Communion is the covenant meal. However, there may be cases where people are called by God and/or leaning into grace prior to water baptism. Just as one can be saved without baptism ('today you will be with me in Paradise') so one can participate in Communion without baptism, subject to the warning of 1 Corinthians 11.</p>
<p>That there seems to have developed some kind of disconnection between the two. Is this a misguided attempt to get more members into the denomination?</p>
<p>The case for Baptism as a prerequisite to participation at the Lord's Table (for reasons of order) is less Biblical than ecclesial. Baptism is clearly not a prerequisite to salvation. Nevertheless, I instruct those who would receive that, 'Though set by human hands, the invitation to this table comes from Jesus Himself. Therefore, you need not be a member of this congregation or denomination to receive freely what Christ has offered at great price. If you are able to declare, by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, that Jesus is your Lord and Savior, then come and receive.' This also reflects my conviction that all who are in Christ are one in Christ, if we are in Christ at all. There is no division. I'm really not interested in making Presbyterians, only introducing people to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.</p>
<p>As the 'Book of Common Worship' states, all those who trust in Jesus are called to share in the Lord's Supper together at the table.</p>
<p>The two sacraments have different functions in their life of a disciple. Baptism is a proleptic mark of community inclusion, the Eucharist flows from Jesus to his followers and involves participation in his body and blood.</p>
<p>The Presbyterian and Reformed belief with regard to the sacraments is that they are the sign and seal of what God has already/is doing/will do. We do not claim special knowledge or understanding of the inner workings of the sacraments other than faith that God is at work in them for the good of the Body. Further, we acknowledge that we do not know the hearts of others, nor the way in which God is working in any person's life.</p>
<p>Baptism is the sign and seal of Gods action of grace in a person's life. If they are strongly on the road to full confession of faith, but not fully there, I think Communion is a means of experiencing grace that nurtures on to fullness of faith.</p>
<p>It allows for the many ways that we come to faith. Just as Christ is available to all, so is the experience of communion with Christ and the Body. If you are seeking to be fed by Christ, you should not already be required to have made a profession of faith as a disciple of Christ.</p>
<p>Both baptism and the Lord's Table are sacraments where God acts in grace despite the fact that the ones participating are undeserving.</p>
<p>While both are extremely important, I don't think baptism always has to proceed participation in the Lord's Supper, often participation in the Lord's Supper leads people to desire baptism!</p>
<p>I don't feel there is any relationship between Baptism and the Lord's Table specifically. Mark 16:16 and many other passages on salvation will affirm that salvation is the defining principle. Baptism is an outward act (could even be classified as works, but I won't go there) based on an inward faith. I believe the scriptures teach that those who receive Christ should share in the Sacrament of Baptism, but also that we should not fall into the trap of legalism. Who am I to say that Christ could not even use the invitation to share at His Table as an evangelistic tool in individual cases? I will always say that those who have accepted Jesus into their hearts as Lord and Savior are invited and welcome at His Table.</p>
<p>They are open to ALL people.</p>
<p>Not sure what the 'this' is. We come to the table through baptism.</p>

<p>It's Jesus' table, none of his disciples were baptized as far as we know. It is about his invitation and our willingness to claim him as Lord and Savior as much as we can comprehend at that time in our lives. It is about time-actually only non-baptized children were banned, there was nothing about adults baptized. I don't think we should pressure everyone who takes communion to be baptized. That is a much bigger step.</p>
<p>They are both important sacraments; one does not depend on the presence of the other for its efficacy.</p>
<p>God's claim upon an individual is already there. An open table invites people to experience God's grace and love, enlivening in them the gift of the Spirit and then can proclaim their recognition of this presence in their lives through the act of Baptism.</p>
<p>baptism is not a rite of initiation but rather a sign of our relationship to Christ</p>
<p>This change would bypass the early church practice of incorporating people into the Body of Christ through baptism before inviting them to the Lord's Table. Although I think it is very important not to exclude people from communion, especially when people increasingly don't understand what the sacraments mean in the first place, it is also important for the church to know its own distinctive identity in the world and practice that identity firmly. Younger generations are increasingly offended and off-put by any practices of exclusion, especially in the church, and would easily be turned off of the church if someone told them they couldn't take communion without being baptized. At the same time, however, we are the church, and at some point we have to act like a church and not a buffet. I wonder if there is more of a balance. Perhaps Teaching Elders like myself should take on more of a teaching role, explaining briefly the sacrament of communion before people are invited to the table, and also inviting people to know more about the sacraments by talking to an elder after the service. That way, the sacraments don't become empty rituals, simple rites of passage, but at least there would be a chance to instruct people on their meaning, giving them the opportunity to see more deeply into the sacraments as a spiritual practice.</p>
<p>The Lord's Table is a covenant meal for covenant members. I see no reason to change this basic criteria. One of the most substantive evangelistic moments I've experienced as a pastor was when a young woman wanted to receive communion but I asked her to first seek baptism. She did, and ultimately found communion to be far more meaningful.</p>
<p>Both are gifts from God and a means by which we are given grace - To invite one to eat calls for a relationship - after one is fed it is easier to discuss baptism - they are complimentary not exclusionary</p>
<p>While Paul reminds us not to take communion in an unworthy manner and Calvin states it is a greater sin to refuse the table when offered; communion really only has meaning, understanding, and within the covenant relationship with Christ. Baptism is more than a covenant, it is also our response to what God is doing in us, 'fulfilling all righteousness.' When we come to the table without that relationship, through the Holy Spirit, it reduces the gift of what Christ gave us to simply eating some bread and drinking some grape juice. Coming to the table reminds us of the depths Christ went to redeem us and satisfy the righteousness of God. We come to the table because in it we remember what he did and celebrate his love for us. As the Holy Spirit reaches out to us in baptism to draw us to a relationship in Christ, at the table we experience that relationship first hand. How can communion hold depth of meaning without that relationship already established.</p>
<p>It is important for life in the covenant community, but it doesn't s not essential to salvation. We look to God's grace for our salvation, not drops of tap water.</p>
<p>baptism has always been seen as the entry into the church</p>
<p>Open invitation to all</p>
<p>Grace precedes our acceptance of salvation.</p>

Both sacraments support and reflect, but are subsidiary to the community's life as followers of Jesus the Christ. Accepting unbaptized persons to the Table follows from that.
The two sacraments are not dependent on one another.
As sacraments, both baptism and eucharist are signs of the surpassing grace of God; as such, neither ought to be treated as things controlled by the church or treated as events in which God's grace is uniquely imparted. As sacraments, they are also seals of the faith the church attempts to express in its actions and so ought to stay linked to each other.
Lord's table should be open to all as an expression of God's grace. But all should also be invited to join with other believers in Baptism thus by the Spirit becoming part of the body of Christ.
The Lord's Table for me goes back to Jesus' ministry before his betrayal and Passion, and as such his table fellowship included all people who wished to be present. Baptism was not a prerequisite.
I believe it diminishes the place of Baptism as a sacrament, and the place of Baptism in the salvation-grace-initiation-baptism complex.
I don't know. I believe the table is one way that a person might hear God's invitation. If one is moved to respond to the invitation to the table then they should be included and helped to hear God's desire for them to be baptized into the body of Christ.
Both are open to anyone who is seeking to be in relationship with God. Having an open table is more like the hospitality Christ offered- come and see, no matter who you are.
The Lord's Table is just that - it belongs to the Lord and it is not ours to restrict or exclude others for any reason whatsoever.
Whether a person is baptized should not be a barrier to seeing connection and community celebrated at the Lord's Table.
The Lord's table can be a means of the grace of receiving baptism and entering the fellowship of Christ's body, the church.
Baptism is optional for partaking of Communion; especially modern baptism which has become formalized even calcified by tradition. The Lord welcomed Judas to the table so we know the any sense of personal righteousness is unnecessary.
In baptism we were buried with Christ therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. We become part convent with God and the community committed to live out of that thankful response to what God has done for us. To live, Grow and reproduce that growth in others so that we might be witnesses for God. In communion is ritual of a global feast in the Kingdom of God. There is a table where people who once were enemies are now friends. All have a place, and all will be fed by God. The act of communion is a foretaste of that Kingdom to come. Just as little children play house to understand the roles of being mommies and daddies, we as adults play in communion to grow into the roles we will play in the Kingdom. In this spiritual play we are also are nourished to do the things we can and should do to live into the thankful response for what God has done for us we go into a broken and sinful word.
Normally you don't deny a meal to a guest in your home. It would be rude and inhospitable. Although historically baptism has been required for participation in the Lord's, to be a people who show the love of Jesus Christ, I think we have to consider welcoming even the unbaptized. Regarding your question, I'm not sure what the 'this' is when you ask, 'what does this say about the relationship...'
Baptism leads to communion
Both demonstrate God's initiative for and welcome of us. Who are we to limit the work that God may be doing through the mystery of the sacrament.

I think that it may recognize that meeting Christ at the table can happen for some people prior to their coming to a place of conviction in which they believe they are to be baptized. I think it also speaks to the fact that we do not take baptism seriously and that we do not teach on why people should be baptized. It also is related to our lack of focus on the importance of membership to the local and wider body of the Church (both the PC(USA) and the universal church)
Baptism is an affirmation of something God has already done. God already loves this individual and invites them into community. The Lord's Table is the nourishment of God's community.
That there is not necessarily a strict order, but either one can lead to the other.
They are both sacraments, but not dependent or connected to each other.
Baptism is the sign/symbol that one been welcome into communion of Christian faith
That it is Christ's broken body that reaches out to us and heals us and invites us into a deeper relationship with the Triune God. Communion, a joyous feast, becomes the entry point of faith & worship.
It somehow puts baptism in 2nd place. It should share 1st place with communion, for they are both instituted by God, through Christ.
This indicates that the Lord's Supper is a gracious gift of God given to the people of God for the strengthening of their faith. While it could indicate a low estimate of the Lord's Supper, I hope that it will reflect God's deep desire to meet people where they are and help them to move closer to Jesus Christ through the participation in the Supper. If that is the case, then Baptism might well be the outcome of the work of the Holy Spirit through the Lord's Supper.
Baptism declares who we are and to whom we belong. The Lords Table is where we gather with the family and learn and grow into who we are.
Baptism is the ordinary rite of entrance into Christian community but it is not a requirement for participation. Belonging precedes believing for many people today, especially younger generations.
Baptism is a visible event of an inward (& invisible) event that God completes. All family tables have guests from time to time. If a person feels called to share in communion, let him and her come - but make sure that the announcement is made that feeling called to participate in the Lord's Supper IS a call to be in the family of God - a call to be baptized. Perhaps even more strongly - feeling called to participate in the Lord's Supper is a RECOGNITION that God has baptized this person. But, just as Jesus submitted to baptism out of obedience, so then, do we make visible what God has worked within us.
both are invitations to explore a deeper relationship with God and develop a personal faith life. This is pastoral care question regarding how sessions/churches 'gate keep'.
Both are gifts of God's grace, not ours to restrict or withhold. Ever.
I'm not exactly sure. I've always invited everyone to gather around the Lord's Table because that's what I believe Jesus would have done (& it's his meal we remember and continue to celebrate). But I didn't hear him tell people, 'Now you must do this.' That feels a little bit manipulative, like making hungry people listen to a sermon before they are fed. Why not just feed people at the Lord's Table and then allow the Holy Spirit of God move in their hearts? I've served communion to Muslims, Buddhists, Atheists, and others and it always felt like a moment of holy communion to me. One time I served communion to a Buddhist and told him, 'This is the body of Christ' and he looked me in the eye with tears running down his face and said, 'So are you.' Why would I get in the way of God?
You have misrepresented what the proposed DFW states. It implies that the norm is that the baptized who participate in the Lord's Supper. What are you fishing for?
Baptism is still the prerequisite for inclusion at the table, but not in a legalistic way, so long as the unbaptized who come to the table are urged to seek baptism as soon as possible.

Both sacraments are related and yet able to stand on their own in our faith development. Inviting non-baptized believers to the table is an illustration of God's extravagant love and grace. Irresistible! Baptism calls us into a deep covenantal relationship with the Triune God that continually calls us into relationship.
Baptism is NORMALLY the entrance rite to the Lord's Supper, but the Lord's Supper is also a foretaste of the great Messianic Banquet when all of God's children will come together in the Kingdom of God.
All should be welcomed to the table, and then invited to receive the sacrament if they have not already been baptized. Jesus offered the bread of life to all, regardless of their religious or moral status. So should we.
the relationship is important but it is not a legalistic, sequential relationship
Open invitation to all to receive God's grace without any preconceived qualifiers
Baptism is not a key to pass through an otherwise locked gate. Our invitation to experience the grace of God in Christ, as experienced at the Table, is not exclusive, it does not require prior participation in some rite. Baptism is a wonderful and sacred statement of God's grace, His showing love and acceptance and calling of an individual through family, or life experience, or movement of the Holy Spirit, experienced both in the present and through memory and through personal history, in which God says you are unique, you are special to Me, your journey is yours and Mine together, and I am with you and have been with you and will be with you. That journey includes other sacral, sacred moments when you and I come together at the Table, when again we remember, and we claim that promise as present and future.
Still deeply interconnected
In this day and age I think it is more important to have an open Table, I believe this may open the door to a deeper relationship with God through the Covenant of Baptism.
That it has its roots in scripture. Jesus did have prerequisites for those he invited to eat with him, or with whom he invited himself to eat. And I always had a feeling in the back of my mind that requiring baptism made the Lord's Supper kind of exclusive.
Both are God's gift to the church, which is God's gift to the world. Both are community experiences - not just things done to and happening to individuals. Through both, God manifests grace. Baptism recognizes the grace God has poured out in Christ on us and helps us respond with thanksgiving and faith. Communion is bread for the journey, which might begin before baptism, or afterwards. Both lead persons and communities into the life of Christ.
The Lord's Table is an outward and visible sign of the sacrifice of Christ for all of the world (3:16-17). The covenant of Baptism is an invitation to enter into discipleship of that Christ: to metanoia and to faithfulness. One can be moved to accept and believe the sacrifice before one has been welcomed into faithful discipleship. The sacrifice does not require discipleship.
The table is open to all. Baptism is the ceremony in which an individual is marked and sealed as a child of God.
That we are finally beginning to grasp a genuinely Reformed meaning in our rituals, that they involve zero magic, and must first meet the test of love for the stranger, washed free of any speculation about heavenly operations in the act of baptism.
In general, I think the table is the fellowship of the 'family'--yet I can appreciate the importance of recognizing that sometimes the table fellowship might come first, even when not fully understood, and be a vehicle leading a person into the family through baptism.

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward state. Baptism is not 'magic'; the act of baptism confirms and celebrates God's claim on a life, which can and does happen without the benefit of a baptismal ceremony. I believe that anyone who is spiritually fed through participating in the Lord's Supper is welcome at the Lord's Table. Some of those participants may still be growing in their depth and understanding of God's claim on their life and not yet baptized, but it is not my choice to make to bar them from the Lord's table. Others may have no desire to be baptized or proclaim all the theological tenants that we believe, but participating in the Lord's Supper draws them into community and brings them spiritual or emotional comfort. I celebrate anyone who shares the desire for the fellowship of community, the spiritual nourishment, and the celebration of God's grace extended to each of us in Communion.

Baptism is joining the family of faith. The Lord's Supper is nourishment for faithful living. Both are mysteries of grace -

They are both means of grace (to use the old verbiage). Both communicate the work of God on our behalf. They are not linear in that one leads to another.

They are both important, but the absence of one shouldn't mean the withholding of the other. These are signs of God's grace to us, not an admission ticket to the family.

It says nothing more than Jesus' own example at the institution of the Lord's Supper. How do we know that all those gathered in that upper room had been baptized?

Baptism is a sign that we have accepted God's invitation to be his followers. Our practice of baptism encourages education about the faith, encouraging an understanding attitude when approaching the Table. Many who have not been baptized have had little or no instruction in the meaning of the Table and may come simply because they are following the rest of the congregation. Getting a little juice and a little piece of bread is not the same thing as being in communion with God. The General Assembly has watered down the theology behind the Table and has made it little more than an agape meal. John Calvin would be petrified and John Knox would have some choice words for our bad practice.

It is because in the Old Testament the people of Israel had questioned God about those that had not experienced the Exodus, nor the commitment so what of these Children. The answer was that they were Children of the Covenant and therefore included in the promises of God. Therefore, it is right for all to be welcomed to the table of our Lord regardless of whether they are baptized or not. They are included in the invitation of our Lord.

It makes the Lord's Table more inclusive than it is presently. In some senses this separates the two sacraments. It seems to me that those who choose to commune will also choose to be baptized, but it allows people to enter the Church through communion as well as baptism.

What a delightful question! How nice to talk about an area of theology other than social justice and homosexuality. This may be the first time I've been invited to do so by a Presbyterian body in about ten years. When we look at the ever-dwindling numbers in the pews, we should think about that. I see no reason why the Lord's Table should not be open to all, assuming that the minister administering the sacrament explains its meaning (as through the Book of Worship). Baptism is no key to salvation. It is no rite that changes someone internally and, in so doing, makes them particularly and uniquely worthy of the Lord's Table. Baptism is an act of the community committing to an individual and agreeing with each other to undertake a shared responsibility. In many ways, the Lord's Table is the same. Baptism is a sign and a seal. As Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace, and not a prerequisite of grace, I see no reason someone who has not been baptized cannot experience the Triune God in Holy Communion. I have always wondered at this requirement. If God does the blessing and God does the saving, why should God through the Spirit not do the inviting to the Table. The fact that someone, having never been baptized, wants to approach the Table shows the working of the Spirit. Shall we bar the Spirit? Or shall we do what we (hopefully) will do when they express a desire to be baptized and nurture them in our traditions and life of faith. This is not to say baptism should not be required for membership. While I have not the space here to address that issue, I do not believe we should go so far. But as for the Table, let all who would come do so.

Jesus invites us to the table and to be baptized. Both are ways of responding to God's prevenient grace

I would not exclude anyone from the Lord's Table. That said, I think the Lord's Table is primarily for the baptized. However, participation in the Lord's Supper could be a means of grace to draw someone to faith in Christ, although a bit unusual. I don't think Jesus would have left anyone out who wanted to participate.

It detaches baptism from the idea that it is a requirement for salvation/communion --i.e., inclusion in the community of faith and a special relationship with God, rather than a designated status of membership in the church.

God welcomes all to God's table, just as Jesus dined with all.

Answering a question with a question, what would Jesus say is the relationship of Baptism to his Table? I think I know how he would answer. Do you?

Believing in the sovereignty of God and that Jesus Christ died and rose from the grave is sufficient to receive communion. Baptism affirms these beliefs for the individual and the community of faith and serves to bind together those who receive communion, yet does not exclude the strange or anyone on an personal journey of faith.

I cannot imagine Jesus excluding children from the table--really?! I was almost hauled before Presbytery for allowing refugee children of an animist mother to eat take the sacraments. They ate nonetheless and eventually chose to be baptized. I think the table can be a on route to the font.

It says that the repentance and profession of faith in Christ which are to accompany baptism are no longer prerequisites for receiving from the Lord's Table. This is a divergence from the teaching of Scripture as well as the tradition of the Church.

If we are serious about using the invitation to the Table as a serious invitation to the Christian life & Baptism, then it seems pastoral & practical.

It seems to return to Solomon Stoddard's idea of the Lord's Supper as a 'converting ordinance,' which I thought we had long since debunked.

Baptism is a sign and seal of God's people much like circumcision was in Jesus' day. Our Lord ate with people who were not circumcised and therefore, did not carry the sign of the covenant on their person. Baptism is certainly a sacrament and is important to our life as God's covenant people. I do not believe, however, that it is either the doorway to heaven or the litmus test to participate in the Lord's Supper.

The Table is the place where the Spirit of Christ invites all to faith. Jesus shared the Last Supper and washed the feet of Judas, the one whom he knew would betray him. The Table represents the free gift of God's grace for those who will receive.
Any guest is welcome at the Table which is the Lord's and not ours. One doesn't have to be 'part of the family' to be fed at the table.
They are connected-- but not necessarily (though perhaps most typically) sequential. After the example of Christ-- we feed the hungry and often in Christ calling them to the table, they find their joy in baptism.
That all are welcome, irregardless. The fence has finally been taken down. We are already forgiven, already loved, already saved by the Holy One of all.
Although baptism is the entry point into covenant community, the Lord's Table is an invitation that is extended to all to experience the grace and love of Jesus Christ our Lord.
The sacraments are an integral part of Christian belief however I do not believe that there is a particular order in which they are to be administered.
I think the question may rather be what does it say about commitment. Are we willing to belong to Jesus Christ, heart and mind and soul and strength? It also has implications for our relations with other Christian denominations and seems contrary to our historic emphasis on teaching and understanding.
Baptism is a 'sign and seal' of what has already happened in relationship with God. We are children of God, belonging to God and each other. The Lord's Table invites all of God's children to be nurtured regardless of whether they have experienced the sign and seal of their relationship with God.
That Christ invites all to the table, and that Baptism is a claiming of what God has already done.
All are invited and welcomed to The Lord's Table. Each person must individually choose a deeper relationship with Christ. By being fed at the table, we receive nurture, strength, love and grace. This should lead to a deeper desire for more of Christ and through the waters of Baptism we identify with Christ and are raised to new life in Him.
It removes the 'legal' restriction to partake of the love offered at the table.
It says we are inclusive, not exclusive.
That the relationship between the sacraments is important, but so is gracious hospitality in worship
Pro: There is no scriptural mention that the apostles were baptized, but Jesus admitted them to the table anyway ... the invitation to 'taste and see that the Lord is good' is inherently evangelical ... it gets back in the business of baptizing adults. Con: Would such a change alter relations with our present (ELCA) and in-process (Episcopal) ecumenical partners?
GA action trivializes baptism (now optional) and Eucharist (now not necessarily Christian).
No clear on the question
It requires less of a personal commitment accepting God's mercy and grace.
At the Lord's Table, the disciples, who were to deny, betray and run away, were welcomed. Yes, they walked with Jesus for 3 years, learning much, growing in relationship, but they weren't baptized until Jesus had been baptized into death and new life, and they by the Holy Spirit and then into their own suffering and death. Baptism doesn't earn us a right to the Lord's Table; our Lord graciously invites us. However, in decency and in order, for those who have been baptized, recognizing our sin, and also the joyous grace of our God as we prepare and partake in communion, is a proper response to God's grace, and a way that we remember our Baptism in deepening our relationship with God.

<p>The Lord's Table should be a choice in which the person taking communion should decide, after some teaching, if they want to participate or not. There should be no relationship between baptism and communion. Communion always should be a personal choice of those who would like to do participate.</p>
<p>It says: (1) that the Lord's Table is now available to those outside the community of believers, and/or (2) that Baptism is no longer the ordinary point of entry into the community of believers. In either case, we have deviated from the Reformed understanding of the Sacraments. However--this is not surprising. Practically speaking, this understanding of the sacraments has not been in play in any churches I have seen (except the ones I have led) for a long time. It has been the result of (unwitting) attacks from both 'evangelicals' (who challenge the notion of Baptism as the ordinary entry point into the community of believers) and 'liberals' (who challenge the notion of the Table as proper only to the community of believers).</p>
<p>There is baptism of desire. Some may not know the Christian concept of baptism and yet feel drawn to Christ in communion. God initiates, calls and invites. Humans are to respond with openness and grace. God's love for others does not diminish God's devotion to Christians. There is not a hierarchy of Sacraments. All who seek God and are drawn to Christ are welcome at God's Table.</p>
<p>Baptism is a critical part of a person's journey to faith in Christ. So is communion.</p>
<p>Just as Christ died for us when we were yet sinners, we are invited to share the Feast, though we are unworthy to partake. I am as unworthy as any other human - baptized or unbaptized. God is gracious and loving.</p>
<p>The Lord's table is intended for confirmed/baptized followers of Jesus. It is a sacred meal for believers. It is diminished when treated as something for the common person.</p>
<p>I dislike seeing Baptism as a 'gateway sacrament.' I would rather distance them and allow each to play complementary roles in the means of grace.</p>
<p>It's important that the Table bring the baptized together. But it's also important that the non-baptized be welcomed to the Table in hopes that they will be baptized.</p>
<p>The sacraments are a visible and outward sign of an invisible and inward grace. To make participation on one conditional on the other violates this principle.</p>
<p>The Sacraments are outward, visible signs of inward, invisible grace. As a sign, the literal exercise of the sacrament is separate from the experience it can embody.</p>
<p>It is important but never to be essential in all discussions.</p>
<p>makes it subservient and not equal</p>
<p>The notion that Baptism is a prerequisite for Communion is a bad idea that somehow got into our Book of Order many years ago. Since we have allowed parents to choose not to baptize their infants and also allowed parents to approve their children to take Communion, we have created a contradiction within our church. A child, whose parents have chosen not to baptize him/her as an infant should not be refused Communion when his/her friends are able to take it. This is lunacy. There can be no sound theological arguments to put any restrictions on taking the Lord's Supper, since Christ died for all, not just the baptized. Ours should be open communion, period - open to any who feels open to the spiritual power of Christ's sacrificial love.</p>
<p>I am thrilled about this potential change. The table for me has always been a place of extravagant welcome, where all people can be nourished by Christ and called into deeper relationship with each other and with God in Christ. Baptism is a sign of a commitment that has already been made (whether by an individual or by parents and community), which for some people might be the beginning of that relationship with Christ, but increasingly for people who are not raised in a church some other beginning point may be necessary. The table can be a powerful enactment of Christ's invitation into a relationship, an invitation which can then be accepted through baptism.</p>

<p>There are various ways to enter into and to continue on the faith journey. It is not a static or wooden progression.</p>
<p>They are both ways of experiencing God's grace and either may lead to the other. The spirit is at work through both calling the person into relationship with God and the community of believers. Participation in either can also be the individual's response to God's grace in their lives.</p>
<p>The Holy Spirit invites us to the Table to partake with our Lord's grace.</p>
<p>Those who have experienced the love of Jesus Christ are welcomed to the Lord's Table. Experiencing that love does not require the 'outer sign' of baptism, so Baptism should not be used as necessity to participation in the sacrament celebrating the height, depth, and breadth of the love of God.</p>
<p>To me, this allows for the table to be where we first recognize God's abundant love and grace, where we are fed, and in doing so discover the claim that God has always had on our lives, the claim that we witness to through baptism. It makes it clear that communion is not a reward for having already confessed your faith through baptism, but can be the means the Spirit uses to bring someone to a fuller understanding of the faith they are beginning to confess.</p>
<p>While baptism is essential in the life of a Christian, as it symbolizes the 'death of self' and the birth into a new life under the Lordship of Christ, I don't like the idea that we place a barrier around the communion table. That is an issue I have with the Roman Catholic tradition which prohibits any non-Catholic from receiving the eucharist. However, it was instituted as a believer's partaking of the 'stuff' of life - the body and blood of our savior. I'm not sure if there is any spiritual benefit in the meal if it is taken by an unbeliever. But, neither do I think there is harm. Plus, how do we know if a visitor IS baptized if they come forward? I don't want to police the communion table.</p>
<p>Both Baptism and the Lord's Table lift up (in different ways) our union with Christ. Admission to the table, however, is about our basic need to be fed by Christ rather than. I do not believe it should be a privilege that follows the rite of reception or requires a level of understanding. (Imagine saying we could not eat food until our parents received a birth certificate or that we had to refrain from eating until we understood the biology of the digestive system.)</p>
<p>The emphasis is and should be on Jesus Christ as host and the one who invites, not on the who is worthy or the extent to which baptism determines entrance. Baptism should be lifted up as a gift and marker of grace, but should not always be a barrier to the covenant meal.</p>
<p>We are open to non-believers to come to the table and meet Jesus</p>
<p>Baptism is not a prerequisite for admission to the Sacrament of the Lord's Table. Baptism is an equally important God-given gift, in and through Christ. Baptism is an act of the church in recognition of what God has ALREADY done for each of us.</p>
<p>One never knows what the Holy Spirit is doing in the life of a person. All should be welcome at the table, baptized or not. When included at the table as an unbaptized person, the Spirit may move that person to a profession of faith and baptism due to the experience of being included in a community of faith. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are indeed sacraments, but I don't believe Jesus ever told his disciples to 'Do this in remembrance of me, but only allow those who are baptized to partake.' Baptism is indeed essential to professing faith and inclusion into the body of Christ. Jesus did instruct us on that. But his instructions on the Lord's Supper were simply, 'Do this and remember me.'</p>
<p>I cannot believe this is even an issue. Who cares?!?! Incorporate all into the body of Christ and feed them, and do NOT get hung up on Pharisaic laws/rules/guidelines. Please, let's just move on to things that really matter.</p>
<p>Receiving Christ's Body and Blood at the Table is no less a full life commitment to him than dying and rising with him in the waters of Baptism. There is no trial form of Christian commitment.</p>

That they are related, and come first by water and some first by being fed. In any instance, in death our baptism is made complete, and the table reminds us of the reconciliation of the world thru Christ.
It affirms the fundamental equality of the sacraments.
God provides grace and indicates this through sacraments. God decides whether someone is able to receive grace through a sacrament and in which order they are to be given.
It says that we believe that God saves, God calls, God claims, not any ritual of the church, even those instituted by Jesus himself. I've never been part of a Presbyterian congregation that barred the table to the unbaptized and wouldn't want to be.
baptism is not a prerequisite
Both are sacraments that embody and proclaim God's grace and constant presence in the world. In both of these sacraments the only significant factor is God's action (not the state of pastor, recipient, etc.).
That something happens at both the font and the table separately, but that they also one can lead to another. It isn't just symbolic, transformation of the witnesses and recipients takes place. When I learned about preaching I had a professor that gave a sermon format that said lead them to the table and font. I think education and instruction MUST be done for both, and ongoing, especially since we only baptize once. All of these inform and constantly reform my sacramental theology.
That both are essentially inclusive gifts of God and any effective work in either sacrament is by the grace of God rather than the action or understanding of humans.
There are no qualifications for who can participate in the Lord's Supper - Jesus welcomed all to his table, and we should do the same. Baptism is important, but not necessary before communion
that the table allows for the spiritual presence of Christ working in & through the bread & cup, inviting the unbaptized to witness the grace & transformative power of the Triune God
Baptism is both an act of God's spirit and the congregation. It is a sacrament to be taken seriously by all
Baptism is a sign & seal of God's love - but Lord's Supper is by invitation from the Lord - can God not come to people in a variety of ways & then have Baptism as our acknowledgment of God's grace
Baptism is the primary way to enter the church universal. Communion is a sign of God's grace should be made available to all. Maybe key will then enter, maybe not.
The table is not for insiders/members/only believers alone. The table is an invitation to greater faith (At the Last Supper, how many had been baptized?)
No one should be denied a place at the table. Baptism makes the experience richer and adult baptism deepens understanding
One is not contingent on the other. It is entirely by grace that we come to belief, entirely by grace that we come to baptism. Entirely by grace that we come to the table
Baptism is an outward sign of an "interior" event. If that event has taken place and is sincere, then the outward sign is less important - it's about the heart
the table should welcome everyone. Baptism is optional
There are some instances (e.g. young people of different faiths) who are people of faith & active in churches. But baptism would not be possible due to family tensions.
As your faith evolves, some allow those who have evolved differently from previous times, room to sit at Table finally!

<p>Lord's Supper should be indiscriminately open to all; baptism is a way of saying "yes" to the community & way of life offered by the Christian community in the name of Jesus, acknowledging God's grace & God's claim in & on all of life. But everyone "belongs" & should be welcomed at the table whether they understand and/or acknowledge that they are part of God's family or not.</p>
<p>It is one of the two sacraments. The risen Lord through the Holy Spirit does all the inviting - it is not our role to limit access to the Table</p>
<p>Jesus invites all. His body is broken for all. His blood is shed for all.</p>
<p>Both are sacraments, but one is not required for the other.</p>
<p>In a culture that has fewer people who have been brought up in or exposed to a life of faith - I think any avenue to reflect God's welcome and grace should be available to those willing to explore what a relationship with Christ means.</p>
<p>Baptism is an adult response to Christ. All are fed at the Lord's Table, no matter the age or condition of their faith. As their understanding grows, they can respond by taking on the covenant of Baptism. (In the early church persecution led to closed communion, which might apply today)</p>
<p>I am, on the one hand, disappointed in this decision, because it separates font and table. But I also believe Jesus would welcome all, baptized or not.</p>
<p>I feel that the bible should be open to all who seek to know Jesus</p>
<p>It indicates that there is no relationship between the sacraments</p>
<p>Makes baptism less meaningful and important</p>
<p>Both the Lord's Supper & Baptism are "means of grace" - of sharing the grace of God with the believer. For <u>practical</u> purposes, it is not always easy to put Baptism first. I struggle with this issue.</p>
<p>The grace extended through communion could lead people to baptism and church membership</p>
<p>Outdated! Thrive to grow up as Christians</p>
<p>Baptism is a sense of belonging. You are a member of the family of God</p>
<p>baptism is normally the introduction to the Table, but in today's world which is becoming increasingly secular, the church needs to be less rigid</p>
<p>We feed children before they understand nourishment. These days, we need to offer the fellowship and grace of the table in hopes that those who do not understand, will experience that grace.</p>
<p>We do not and cannot prescribe <u>how</u> God lead's people to salvation. If we can marry couples who are already making love, we can get this out of order too.</p>
<p>It reflects God's sovereignty in the lives of individuals. The Lord's table is for all whom he invites, and it is highly possible that those who experience God's grace at table will feel called also to join the Body of Christ by expression of faith and baptism.</p>
<p>The baptism we offer is only representative of what God is doing in the life of the individual. The baptism of fire and the Holy spirit occurs outside of our mandates and control</p>
<p>The Lord's Table is an uncommon table and the "meal" is to be done in remembrance of Jesus indicating fellowship w/Christ, commitment for continuance in the faith, and unity with the church (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Baptism is an initial step of commitment. Communion is an act of continuance in that relations with the Lord.</p>
<p>God invites all to the table who believe in Jesus Christ. Baptism is important and should be pursued by all who believe in Jesus, but not as a requirement for the Table.</p>
<p>Baptism & communion are both "sacraments of entry", leading people and nurturing them as they commit to & grow into the community / body of Christ</p>
<p>You do not need to be baptized to be nourished by God at the table. God seeks us out and being fed by God may lead to Baptism.</p>

There is not magic formula, no special ritual that is required or insures a follower's place in the kingdom of heaven - for example, the thief on the cross, who experienced neither baptism nor communion. However, each is a blessing to the individual participant and a sharing with God's family in the faith community. We are witness for God to one another as we demonstrate our need (cleansing & renewal) and God's love and grace.
Baptism is an outward sign of a renewed reality of God: Spirit calling a person. A person may not have yet experienced Baptism but is full communion with the Spirit
I would substitute "should" with "may" not all non-baptized persons desire to share at the Lord's Table
That there are <u>NO</u> pre-requisites to encountering the grace of God
The Lord's Table is an invitation to all who seek to draw closer to God. Baptism (earthly) is the sign of the church's recognition of the claim God has on an individual, and that individual's response to being claimed.
We believe in an "open table" the inclusion of people who haven't receive baptism is a demonstration of inclusivity
I should care, but honestly, both are gifts of grace, not earned, so I don't worry over much
Both are visible signs of an invisible grace
(How that "invitation to baptism" happens - and where / when it happens - is important to me.) It says that the Lord's Supper can lead to baptism and vice versa
Baptism is a covenant sign of entry into the Christian community. Lord's Supper is sign of formation for those who are in covenant
Baptism distinguishes human relation with God in Jesus Christ. Baptism is a sign & seal of God's covenant favor. As bearers of covenant - xp's [chi ro's] invitation is extended to you.
if you believe and profess Jesus as your Savior, why not be baptized. He was. One should wish to understand its witness, as well as wish to individually accept its meaning for himself.
Sacraments are not consecutive - one does not necessarily follow the other or preclude the other
Baptism is an outward sign of an internal grace. Baptism does not save only trust in Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior. All those who trust in J.C. are invited to the Lord's table.
I'm not overly interested in the relationship between the two, I am more interested in the relationship of people to God and each other, the relationship is primary not the path. Now let us stop mandating clergy serve communion and we will really be acknowledging the priesthood of all believers. I never consult the Directory.
God welcomes all to the table / into relationship. Baptism is a sign of that welcome received.
While each is a sacrament - each are also a means of grace. In the community connection of celebrating communion, a person may be drawn, especially, as an adult, into deeper commitment to the vows of baptism. I like to invite all who believe in Christ and want to have life anew to communion.
they are connected - but it's about sacrament - (illegible) god's grace in the body -- not our doctrines
It is important & should occur. But should not be an impediment to the table for the short term
baptism and Faith in Jesus as Lord should come before the Lord's table so that we are "doing this in remembrance of me." Have to know Jesus and experience salvation in Him to remember Him.
Baptism is entry into one faith community and the Lord's Supper is our communal meal. We delight in welcoming singers to the table. Who knows, we may be entertaining angels
It could weaken the connection - why take communion if you're not ready to be baptized? On the other-hand, it makes less for barrier for those to be a part of the community of faith.

Both sacraments are signs of grace. They are God initiated and our participation is the choice to accept publicly God's mercy, grace, and sovereignty
Just as Jesus did not turn away non-followers, we should not either. -Grace can beckon a seeker to go deeper in faith through the L.T. -the H.S. brings Grace in the Lords Supper according to our faith.
baptism is a sign of initiation. The L.S. is a sign of union with Christ. Baptism can be "converting ordinance". For example, an appropriate response to an evangelistic message could be an invitation to receive the Lord's Supper and then later to be baptized.
The two sacraments are deeply connected to each other, but the path of God's grace is not a one-way street. Who are we to say that one must happen before the other? However, I believe it is important for worship leaders to make the connection clear.
They are connected and equal the order does not matter
The sacrament of baptism & the Lord's table should not compete with each other. The invitation to Table by our Lord began with 12 disciples, including a traitor. So should our invitation to Table be open & inclusive so eyes might be opened as they were at Emmaus.
They are intertwined as the sacraments but do not have to come in a specific order.
The Lord's Table may lend people to Baptism, rather than Baptism being required before partaking at the Lord's table.
Both are invited by Christ - once fed @ the table and/or baptized one may lead to the other
All are welcome because the table belongs to Jesus Christ, as we belong to Jesus Christ, whether baptized or not.
Baptism is a means for an individual / family to publically proclaim a grace covenant w/God in a desire to raise a child in that grace on /our not God's grace promise. At the same time, I serve a church of diverse believers (Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Lutheran, etc.) This we focus was on the Faith relationship w/Jesus Christ & connect with caring.
I believe that all are invited to the Lord's Table and that baptism is a sign and seal of God's love for us through relationship to the community of believers.
the Lord's Table is open to all. Baptism confirms God's work already done - some of that work may be revealed at the Table
that they are not cosmically related in a contingent way. God's grace prevails - our sacramental activity is secondary at best.
People who are not Baptized should not receive communion because they are not accepted into the <u>Community of Faith</u>
That we are no longer in Christendom, but live enough in its shadow that distinctives can be misinterpreted / misunderstood as being in hospitable and lacking grace. Baptism & the table are means of grace, and to be presented as such.
Baptism is a controversial doctrine today. Baptized as infants, many people do not participate in worship. I support adult baptism as a sacrament of commitment to Christ. Infant baptism as a sign of God's love covers everyone, baptized or not. Hopefully parents of children who are baptized take their responsibility seriously of raising the child in the faith.
God loves us first in baptize - we regard in communion
Baptism comes first incorporation into the family of believers
That both are a calling of the Spirit into a deeper relationship with God in Christ. Called by Spirit we enact an outward sign of grace along with Word preached. It ties them more closely as a dance & not a hierarchy or prerequisite.
While Baptism is normative, to specifically refuse the Lord's Supper to unbaptized person, misses the opportunity to show God's grace to them.
They are related but not interdependent
It cheapens both greatly
Both are sacraments ordered by Jesus

Jesus had no problem welcoming children who had not made a personal commitment to the Kingdom
The invitation to the Lord's Table should include everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is welcome to this Table. The sign & seal of Baptism is a spiritual depth of factor necessary for Christian walk of Faith
The two are inextricably linked. However, baptism is not primarily a matter of going through a ritual; it is first & foremost an inner experience.
The table is open to all seeking god through Jesus. Baptism is a sign of public commitment
Grace proceeds admarifect
2 sacraments of the Church
In the life of faith, things do not always occur in a linear or formulaic fashion - It's relational journey & these should be more openness because of that
Sacraments are part of the way we experience God's grace & are united/Christ through the Holy Spirit. This puts Baptism on par w/the Lord's Supper & other movements of the Holy spirit in a person's life. Baptism can still be celebrated as a sign & symbol of Gods covenant w/us and of our entrance into the covenant community of Gods people, the church. Basically, if the L.S. can be experienced as a means of God's grace, why exclude?
Baptism is not the primary, casual, invitation to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper can also be the primary casual invitation to baptism.
That it is intimately connected
Baptism is outward sign/seal of God's Grace which has already happened.
The Lord's Supper should be based on profession of faith in JX as Savior & Lord. For someone who has made that commitment baptism should be no problem.
It means, it is the Lord's table. Any requirement for admission is a human requirement, & number of sacraments have varied throughout Christian History
Baptism means you are part of God's family and either the individual or parent thinks that's important. Why then take communion to be fed if you aren't part of the family? A blessing by clergy would be more relevant for the non-baptized "communion" participant
Baptism grafts the person to the Body of Christ. This Body is the one put partakes in communion. I think it is reasonable to think the tradition is smarter than I am.
these are personal as well as corporate actions - within the concepts of love and acceptance. Inclusion begins with sharing and inviting. A meal is a good way to being a relationship.
That they are two entirely different Sacraments - not dependent on each other.
The Lord's supper is no longer connected to covenant renewal in the PCUSA and Baptism has been declared largely irrelevant
Baptism is our yes to God. The Eucharist is a gift from God without conditions(s)
All are sinners. All are welcome. Baptism is a sign & symbol of new faith but should not be a barrier.
No opinion
God's salvation is for everyone and Jesus die for us all.
Both sacraments are means of Grace, thus we don't really control their administration, except insure that they are given freely, meaningfully, and respectfully.
The relationship is a dotted line, not a solid line. Arrows on the dotted line point in both directions: baptism leads/points to the table, the table leads/points to baptism. (Were all at the first last supper baptized?) Baptism<.....>Communion
I think it is necessary for one to have received Christ as Savior to take communion put as baptizm is a public declaration, it could be done afterwards
Why would a sacrament be important to partake of if you haven't made a profession of faith?
Only insofar as baptism becomes a sign of conversion

Christ invites us to his Table and Life, confirmed in the other sacrament: baptism. The sequence of the sacraments is not crucial
I believe that it makes grace central again and shows how the response to grace is belief. (Much like w/Baptism, we believe and then respond. I'm less (but not opposed) enthusiastic about sacraments as marking the boundaries around God's special people.
Baptism comes first. It is Christ's banquet for the church community
It's a little chicken and the egg. I tend to go with baptism first but my Presbyterian roots run deep.
Both sacraments are worshipful acts. Part of the meaning in both is the affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ. In baptism we recognize God's claim on our lives and our affirmation of that claim. In Eucharist we recognize God's feeding and renewal in life.
Although ideally the baptism should always be before taking the Supper, the process of the Lord's Table and its gathering together of the church as a body might well convince someone of their desire / need for baptism
Both are sacraments but all who believe in Christ are welcome to the Table
Discipline is important but grace must prevail
Those two sacraments (Baptism, Lords Supper) are closely related to each other. The faith affirmed in confession must follow before - those two sacraments. Thus, without confession faith has no meaning.
It says the grace of god comes to us before we respond
Baptism is not a requirement of faith in our Triune God, but it is a sign and seal of God's grace. Baptism should never be removed from Lord's Supper. Pastorally, there are times when the Lord's Supper comes before baptism
God's grace and provisions are offered freely and as a community we respond to these gifts. We respond by baptizing and welcoming all to the table
Important but not essential
Adult baptism or confirmation ensures people understand that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins to purchase a place for us in heaven
In practice, I am concerned that the "open table" practice will result in more participation in the Lord's Supper without any further faith development or expression leading to baptism. Children are allowed to the table with instruction. So should adults.
My understanding is that faith in Jesus Christ is the requirement for access to the Lord's table. Baptism is a public profession of faith, but it is possible that a private profession of faith could, and most often does, precede baptism and that believer should be free to share in communion.
They are both expressions of God's grace, without one being dependent on the other
You are making me think to hard right now and I don't have the time or energy at this time to formulate an answer.
I believe there is a strong correlation, but I wonder if we are too linear in our thinking. Some come to faith & are baptized through their experience of the supper, for ex.
In baptism we are called by God into a relationship. The relationship must be established first, then strength at the Lord's Table. The history of the Christian church as borne this practice out for twenty centuries!
It seems that one not need to be a member of the community to bread with the gathered community
The Sacraments are, I believe, equal in meaning and essence. Both are signs and seals of God's Grace.
If baptism is a distinguishing factor in a believer's relationship to Christ and the sacrifice of the cross, then allowing unbelievers to participate diminished that distinguishing factor
I believe their so not stumbling blocks for people to gather at the water & the table

the Passover meal which Jesus transformed into the Lord's Supper is a sacrament which only has meaning for those who are responding to Christ's invitation. Baptism signifies this invitation.
Baptism does not "save" us but is a sign of God's grace. The Lord's Supper is Christ present with us in a special way to bring us to God. That too is grace. To insist on Baptism before Communion is to make a Law. I do not <u>judge</u> the Table when I preside
Baptism is not the qualifier to receive God's grace. It is the individual's belief and profession of faith that does this.
Baptism is a sacrament. It brings us into the household of God. Communion is a symbol of our commitment, as baptism is to our commitment to Christ
baptism - an event we live into all our lives both important and amplify each other
Both sacraments have a history that has been seen as dividing people who's in or out - as opposed to a gracious invitation into relationship with God
I don't think either sacrament is a pre-requisite for the other, but either may be part of a faith journey that leads to participation in both & in the faith community in other ways & personal trust in God through Jesus Christ
It is good to stop practices which exclude. The table is for all who are hungry & who thirst
It divides the two apart. There is no reason someone who has yet been baptized & make confession of faith should take this sacrament
Baptism isn't a requirement, it's a <u>response</u> to the experience of God's grace.
this change is unbiblical and shows the creeping influence of certain strand of methodism. It also demonstrates a walking down of church discipline & membership for a squishy inclusivism
God works through both. Normally we baptize first but God may be calling unbaptized and Lord's Table is a means of grace
Both are sacraments, given by Christ, and are of equal importance. The order in which one does them is not determinative
Both sacraments are experiences of grace and points of entrée into relation with Christ. In Acts Peter recognized that the Holy Spirit was received without baptism. The Spirit will lead to deepening relationship and to covenant relationship, but can work outside of church order.
Christ invites all to come to the table - even those who are not part of a given community of faith. Baptism is deeply meaningful of that relationship & may come after receiving Christ's invitation to come.
It is a reversal of what we know of the church's history and practice
I would not agree with an unbaptized person receiving communion indefinitely. However, baptism should be more available outside of worship than it is currently for those extremely self-conscious of standing before the congregation.
I know many churches who already allow this. It diminishes the importance of baptism but the historical and theological reasons for having Baptism first don't exist anymore
All starts with union with Christ - <u>Who is your Lord & Savior?</u> Without a faith in Jesus Christ - we merely get our bread wet & have a snack. Union with Christ makes everything effective. We must not Profane font/Table <u>but</u> there is room for grace in order to education - show Christ's love/Forgiveness
People are not excluded from the Lord's Table because they have not been baptized yet.
Baptism is a sign of the grace we receive from God - the table is a representation of grace, a reminder of Jesus' sacrificial work, and our union with him. They both are closely related.
The Lord ate with "sinners" quite often. This grace to them was intended to give them opportunity to get to know him.

Sorry, but I've served communion to all believers through 40 years of parish ministry. Once we allowed kids to take communion and families to choose believer baptism, the old requirement made no sense to me.
It says that Baptism is a day was of being identified as part of God's church as well as an act of obedience to God
We come to the table broken and it is there we are made whole. Baptism is God's public saying I love you.
While both are important sacraments, the PCUSA does not believe that baptism is necessary for salvation - it is an outward sign of an inner reality. Devout people wishing to join others at table & communion w/Jesus/Holy Spirit should not be restricted by lack of baptism. However, we shouldn't take it lightly & should move to bring that person into the family of Christ officially & baptize him/her.
The Lord's Supper is an extension of grace to all people. It's offered to all. Baptism is an acceptance of the grace & an affirmation of discipleship. Even Judas was offered the Lord's Supper.
Puts the Table as more important - God's act over and against man's act - the bowl
As visible means of an invisible grace - we cannot deny access to one based on the presence of another. Is <u>baptism</u> superior to <u>communion</u> ? How can we deny anyone access to the real spiritual presence of Christ because they lack baptism. One can lead to the other - either way.
I believe in the open table, but baptism has always preceded The Lord's Table in the historic Christian Church
It says to me, maybe the relationship has <u>changed</u> and what does that mean for other aspects of doctrine, tradition, and faith practice.
Baptism is an outward sign of an inward work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Table should be open to everyone who places trust in Christ as Lord.
I think it says less about the relationship between the two and more about God's grace.
I am struggling with the separation of baptism and the Lord's Table that is inherent, in this change. I "get" the practical aspect of hospitality/inclusion...but it does not fit my theological understanding of the Table
One is not required for the other
Is Baptism necessary for participation in the Lord's Table?
Worship is for those present so it should address that culture
I think communion can sometimes lead people toward baptism - however I am concerned that if the un-baptized take communion it might de-value communion
I feel it is important, but I have also said before the Lord's Supper that if the Holy spirit is calling you to take and eat, then do so. I do not feel that Baptism <u>has</u> to be a requirement to partake. It is important though.
Both are invitations to community and to the mystery of God with us.
god's grace is extended in both baptism and The Lord's Supper not to welcome everyone to The table limits our hospitality and witness of God's love
The Lord's Table cannot be "fenced" or restricted, but should be open to all who respond - and <u>is</u> often, mystically, the gateway to deeper relationship & even conversion.
I believe both Sacraments are essential, both important in the relationship with the Holy Spirit
Both sacraments are means of grace & signs of God's providence for human needs
Baptism is not a pre-requisite / condition for partaking at the Lord's Supper. People are welcome at the Table regardless of their sense of identity. People can be fed and sent into the world in mission regardless of their sense of grounding in a community of faith in baptismal covenant

Baptism is the sign of allegiance & entry to the life the Lord's table supports
Intricate -- thus the invitation to baptism is crucial.
Faith seeks understanding
Baptism comes first - but cannot ultimately be enforced
Rather than Baptism being the "door" to the Lords Table, the Lords Table becomes the door to Baptism. Both sacraments are visible signs of an invisible grace.
This change adds confusion to the way the Sacraments are a sign and seal proclaiming the work of Jesus Christ
Baptism is a public expression of the acknowledgement of what God has done through Christ to be reconciled to God's people. In baptism we accept/proclaim God's acceptance of us and love for us. Baptism is one and for all times. Lord's Supper is a reminder several times a year of this same reconciliation.
Baptism for church membership / communion wasn't instituted by Jesus - the church made it a rule/condition
Important relationship but if a person has not been baptized they should be allowed to partake in the meal as long as they understand the meaning of the meal and if they profess Christ as Lord then they are welcomed.
The Lord's Supper is the special, meaningful, meal of the Baptized children of God. It is not restricted, but only meaningful to those nurtured in the Christian faith.
The key inclusion at the Table to me is one's faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ
Belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is all that is required to partake in communion
Jesus invited all to the table
It would be a departure from the historic practices and theology of the church!
Baptism is a symbol of being a beloved child of God. Which includes all people. The table is God's welcomed importance to all to fears as God's banquet, love, forgiveness, grace, no justice
Judas was welcomed to the Lord's Supper as well as other disciples. By faith we are saved by grace not what we do God's will and grace are redeeming salvation from death this resurrection. Paul is great example me to live is Christ again. The Lord's Supper is the symbol of remembering what he did not hurdle you can't do!
Jesus didn't demand that all at the table fulfill some duty - Judas was there! Baptism is an outward sign of what God does at the table, some unbaptized people will be drawn to God & the church at baptism.
Both Baptism & The Lord's table are visible & tangible signs of God's grace - freely offered to all - I dare not stand in the way of God brining Grace to anyone!
Both sacraments are enactments at the Word and of God's call on our lives. They are independent and inform one another only God's call has to precede one or the other
I struggle with this every time I issue the invitation to table. While not wanting to "fence" the table, I also feel baptism is essential...
Two sacraments. Both important
It reinforces the value of each sacrament and reminds us that Jesus participated in both
Both sacraments affirm the work & coaxing of the Holy Spirit to woo & heal & cleanse the life of the congregant. They both naturally edify the Body of Christ, both individually & corporately
the Lord's Table is the table of Jesus who was always inclusive, not necessarily folks who have not been through a ritual door to inclusivity
Baptism is not a requirement or a key required to share in God's grace. It is for all regardless of baptism.
Baptism is a pre-requisite to the Table. It would violate sacramental status otherwise

The connection between the two is the community of faith that is formed by baptism and nurtured by communion. Neither of these two sacraments are necessary for salvation but the connection is necessary for church life.
the offering extended by Christ at the table is a gift, freely given, with the power to call us into a deeper relationship with God. Baptism as an adult is the claim to want to follow through and the call that has come from Christ at the table. All should be fed. Grace is not withheld.
Jesus is the host - if someone wants to eat at the table He has prepared, that they come to know Christ and subsequently are baptized indicates a direct relationship w/the Lord's Table
they are both means of grace
They are both essential - but maybe not one before the other.
Open to everyone; including Judas Iscariot
It begins to dilute the sacrament of communion. However - how would a pastor know whether or not a recipient IS baptized? I would not refuse a person who comes to the table.
Taking of Communion signifies the purpose of God & His Son within us. Our sins can be forgiven but not in one taking of communion. To show trust we are in our way, by faith, in our life's task of faith baptism is more encouraged
that the Table is a vehicle through which God works, plants the seeds of faith. They work together, not one First and then the other, but as expressions of God's grace and love
Barriers are broken down and everyone is invited to the Lord's Table
children of believers should be allowed Holy Communion though not baptized. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are closely related as per theology, but not practice
Jesus didn't require people to be baptized before he invited them to share his table. Why are we gatekeepers when he was not?
Honestly, I need to study this more. I am attached to the notion that baptism and communion are the joys and privileges of believers. However, it is not Christ's way to exclude, and to avoid any appearance of being "insiders" I believe we should open the table, as long as the communicant has an idea of what they are partaking of.
Baptism should not be used to exclude a person from being welcomed to the table
it says that Baptism is not a prerequisite of sharing at the table. Our Lord feeds all.
Anyone who believes & accepts the Lord Jesus Christ can be invited to the Table whether baptized or not.
They are both ways in which God invites & builds relationship with people, the timing is up to God
Both, as sacraments, are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace.
Grace is the key - it's not up to me!! Jesus didn't / wouldn't place such restrictions, it seems to me!
Baptism & Communion are just human rituals
They are both sacraments - it is not one before the other...
As in all organized Religious systems, Baptism and the ritual around "the Lord's Table" correspond to "Ceremonials of Initiation" performed for declaring the acceptance of an individual as "lawful" partaker in the social ethos of "the club" (family, tribe, clan, class or race) Christian baptism, circumcision, body imprinting or mutilations, Quinceñeras Ceremony and more, all of them are acts of legitimation for an individual to be included as members of the group. Baptism and "the Lord's table" should not be an act of exclusion but gracious invitation to a Festivity of inclusion and liberation for everyone.
Baptism is a public expression of saying that I am invited to the Lord's Table
Baptism is a sacrament as well as Lords Supper but is not required in order to eat at the table
the Lord's Table invite everyone to believe Jesus Christ which will eventually lead a person to a covenant w/God through baptism

Both are means of grace
Baptism is a sign it is not a magical change of status or permission slip. The Lord's Table should be open to all.
I might suggest Baptism / Confirmation / Communion. One could renew one's Baptismal vows. In cases of war, violence extreme circumstances communion could be offered.
Both are outward signs of inward activity God is already doing.
God's grace is offered through the sacraments. Is refusing the table withholding God's grace?

Appendix H: Members' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Final Open-Ended Question

Q-25. Please use the space below for any additional comments about interfaith relations, theology, or your vocation.

?
40 years of working with children mostly full time, in Christian & public schools, and in churches - education & music.
A daily walk with the Lord does not require a conscious awareness of being guided. We should honor others' faith without losing the awareness of the rightness of Christianity.
A few questions (notably comment) would have been answered more appropriately had I chosen to take more time. However, I believed you were desirous of an overall response in a timely manner.
A lot of people at First Presbyterian Church of Flint wish Sunday School could start with the time of Service instead of after
A small group of women at my church have talked about getting an interfaith group together. We have done a few things along with the Jewish Community. We have a large Mosque in our area but have yet to reach out to them. (Pray for us)
All of these are part of my life as a Christian
All of us have been called and gifted. Called that in the sense that God has a task for us in his kingdom. Gifted that in the sense that he has given us the gifts to do the task.
although I believe we should be informed about other religions this should be <u>individual</u> responsibility. Interfaith activities and learning about religions should <u>not</u> be responsibility and active focus for church
Although we live in a pluralistic society in America - and increasingly in the world, while we must respect the rights of others to propagate and practice their religious beliefs (as they must respect our rights to do the same), we must not get tricked into changing our beliefs or practices - either through political correctness, or even force of law just to get along, get along better, or to be liked. We must remain faithful to God in our belief and practice - as we are commanded in scripture. If we become like the world to get along with them and do not remain faithful to God, we have nothing. We get what they get in the end.
As a Christian I feel called to reflect Christ in the world and to be his hands and feet including service to non-Christians.
As a teacher I always felt my Senior & Junior High School students needed a teacher who not only taught a subject but was an example they could follow: kindness to all, helpfulness, truthfulness, and a desire to use their resources, talents to the best of their ability
As being God's called children we are called in every area of our life. (Bonhoeffer's theology of grace)
As children of God, we are guided continuously by God's word whether we acknowledge it or not
Being part of a church community helped me develop as a human being, offered opportunities to grow in leadership and relate to people to name a couple of things. It is my extended family. I'm blessed.
Being still and knowing that God is God on a daily basis is an everyday challenge.
Do not like Gays being married. Man & women were meant to be married. <u>Against the Bible!</u>

Do not think I have heard much about calling, vocation. But, could be emphasized more in church school, to new members
'election' and 'discernment' are overused to the extent of almost being meaningless! 'election' can be replaced by 'selection' - 'the elect', IMHO, has minimal emphasis in the Bible and many other instances that indicate that Salvation is available to all who 'knock at the door'. God may select an individual for a task - that's a 'calling'. 'discernment' is nothing more than seeking/determining/ identifying a perception of meaning - it has been cloaked with a mystique of something special. In the case of vocation, 'calling' is more meaningful than 'discernment'; in any case seeking God's will is paramount. Leaning on a mystic happening of 'discernment' is a cop out.
Everyone who is Christian is called not just pastors. Jesus had been completely misunderstood by American Christians. Our shameless pursuit of wealth, power, status and privilege is only one part of it. We must intentionally engage with other religions especially Hinduism.
Everything I have was given to me by God, so I work for him with love and gratefulness.
God's Grace is my daily guide.
I always sought to be in a vocation that God want me in. I pursued an education in linguistics and several foreign languages to be a missionary/mainly to help a people to get their language into a written form and then to translate the Bible into that language. My doctoral dissertation was to be about how the Bible was used in many languages to solidify the language in writing. I had one major and 5 minors in college. I went to serve as a summer missionary between my junior and senior years, then after graduation I supervised a group of student summer missionaries to the Northwest. I felt called to stay there, began a career in social work in protective services which eventually led me to be a therapist and a seminary adjunct professor. That led me to be an ordination exam reader, then ordination exam writer and convener. The blessing that I have experienced and shared with so many seminarians/ministers/professors in the PCUSA has been incredible. God works in mischievous ways when we are open, especially when we are open to change.
I am 95 and am Australian by birth
I am a theologian. This is my life's work.
I am an elder, not an ordained pastor.
I am in the process of finding new way to connect my faith to my formal work life and new ways to connect my talents to an outward expression of my faith.
I am involved along with several other members of my church in an amazing Food and Resource Center feeding over 800 families each month at a client choice food pantry that works to provide healthy food choices especially fresh produce. We also grow some of that produce and teach our clients gardening and nutrition classes. It's quite a mission of many churches in our town, but First Pres has led the way from the beginning and continues to lead. It's FPC Enid or check it out at www.loavesandfishesnwok.org
I am moved and thankful for the people of our church who are assisting me as I care for my husband (AD) to keep him in touch with God
I am now 96 years old and less sure of what I believe than when I was younger. We are all searching from Einstein to this paper boy.
I am retired but belief my vocation as a teacher was God's will and the best use of my abilities,
I am retired so my vocation is now serving as a volunteer for church activities. I try to use the skills I acquired through my paid work in their roles. My theology is expanded through reading and discussion. I have also been fortunate enough to hear some renowned theologians at Chautauqua Institution, including Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Amy-Jill Levine, and John Shelby Spong.

I am retired, but vocation is all of life, not just a paying job. When I was working, I tried to follow the principles of my faith in dealing with other people, and in faithful performance of by duties.
I am very thankful to be a Christian and to be in relationship with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
I am year 2, M.Div., age 58, retired teacher...
I believe evangelizing should be a key part of Christian life, but one best done one person at a time. I distrust the denomination's ability to do it well, as its own churches are falling away. Rather, the denomination could create better evangelizing toolkits for individuals to use on their own. I believe outreach to current followers of Islam is most urgently needed now. I have friends who are atheists, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist. I would welcome useful evangelizing 'ammo' to better understand what will pique their interest in coming to Jesus. I believe orthodox theology is the only way to arrest the slide of the denomination into universalist irrelevance. I have deep doubts that the denomination itself is prepared to make that kind of shift. I see a new meaning for connectionalism to be based not on brand or financial ties, but on shared theological rigor.
I believe everyone has a theology but many times their theology is not based on Scripture. It is more likely to be based on human ideas and feelings. I hear many people say 'my God would never do', indicating their God is of their own making.
I believe in interfaith dialogue only when it is understood that I am not looking for a way to dilute my Christian faith so that it appears more acceptable to unbelievers. Jesus never compromised on the truth to gain followers.
I believe that I show my faith every day - in my work and my relationships - I do not <u>worship</u> God - I follow his lessons. I live my faith daily.
I believe that interfaith relations are very important. They provide us the opportunity, based on what we have in common, to truly solve human problems. But, if we devolve into judgmentalism we cannot achieve that.
I believe that learning about other faiths makes my own stronger
I believe that my path to God is through the Christian church and the life of Jesus, however, I do not believe that that this is the only path to God.
I believe that the Lord is leading me to write fiction, but I haven't lately followed that.
I believe that, in the words of Jesus, He is the only way to the Father. Anyone that has received Christ as their Lord and Savior is a brother and sister in Christ.
I believe we are all created by God and we should strive to love each other accordingly.
I believe we Presbyterians need to build a bridge/relationship with other faith traditions. Through this we can bring God's rein on earth.
I differentiated between vocation and avocation so some of those responses didn't fit with my idea of vocation
I do believe that people are called for various tasks. They don't always see it immediately themselves, but many times others do. I also believe that each job a person takes on is molded by the individual who performs it. And I believe that as a Christian, we are to use our skills and gifts for the betterment of the world around us. Through our actions and choices, we show others God's love.
I do well interacting with those who believe in the same God as I do, i.e. Jews, and those who have no God. I do not do well with others because their God is so different I cannot get in touch with them.
I do, and the church should, struggle with how to honor and respect all people without compromising the basic tenets of Christianity. All religions are not just different paths up the same mountain, but all people are loved by God.
I feel like my vocation is a gift from God and believe that it is a calling and ministry.

I feel that if the professional church staff would spend more time with congregants and less time designing doctrines that are of little or no consequence to congregants, we would be better served and our money would be better spent.

I have no additional comments

I have not been at interfaith services, but have attended Christian services where Muslim background and Hindu background believers and seekers worshipped and proclaimed Jesus Christ. I missed the opening ceremony where the imam prayed for Christians and Jews to 'follow the straight path' listing Muhammed as prophet (and final therefore in Muslim cultural context the greatest). This is blasphemy. I work with Muslims and Hindus and Jews in secular organizations promoting righteousness and benefit to the poor, but that is not the same as interfaith religious ceremonies. Salvation comes only through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God's revelation in the Bible is true, historically accurate, scientifically accurate and not superseded by culture or 'new revelation' - which is not to say that we cannot misinterpret it or miswrite history or misinterpret scientific evidence. God created Adam and Eve in His own image and we are all descended from them (not from hominids, which are animals that God created). I have much more in common with Presbyterians of other denominations than I do with 75-90% of the Presbyterians I meet at the PCUSA General Assembly. I have more in common with the Catholic colleagues in my professional organization than I do with most commissioners to the PCUSA GA, despite fundamental differences. I have served as a UPCUSA/PCUS/PCUSA missionary and relationships formed during those years remain a deep part of my life (my local congregation supports work there still) and my closest friends. My vocation is a physician (pediatrician), to share the Gospel with Bangladeshi Muslims (mainly through financial support and annual visits), and to call the PCUSA back to a reliance upon Scripture.

I love church. [] Presbyterian in [], Michigan!!

I love Diwali. And Hanukkah. And solstice. I think there are many connections that we should focus on - but we must take care of each other and our planet. If we do not we all will lose. Climate change, cancer, ziki - knows no boundaries, religions, etc. If that not a message from God to work together - I don't know what it.

I love participating in worship with other faiths. As I age, I am more and more sensitive to the Spirituality of the persons I am surrounded by, and find myself convinced that God's desire for me is to live my life focused on loving others, sacrificially. Personal salvation is no longer my focus, I now see that as narrow and selfishly motivated.

I think it's important to work well with people of all cultures and faiths. Jesus distilled the entirety of the bible down to 'Love God' and 'Love People.' I try to respect people for who they are in every aspect and facet of their personhood. The best way to preach the gospel of Christ is with my actions and not my words. I love my neighbors. I love all my neighbors. I love them as they are, for who they are. I love Love. That's how the Spirit moves in/through me.

I think that some interfaith observances -- particularly civic/public ones -- sink to the level of lowest common denominator, which tends to denigrate all traditions. People should be clear about who they are, what they believe, and engage on that basis. It can be done respectfully.

I try to live my life to glorify God and use Jesus as a guide for myself and to lead others to God

<p>I very much feel that my Christianity and spirituality is MOSTLY about how I live out my daily life and the choices I make in the world (my service-related job, daily interactions with family and strangers, volunteering, etc.) and less about the act of worshipping on Sundays. Sometimes this means I don't prioritize Sunday worship, because I feel my whole life is a Christian commitment--I am Christian not because of how I talk about Christianity, but because of how I ACTUALLY live my life daily. I feel that I am deeply Christian because of this and that my life itself is my prayer to God, however some people may think I am not as faithful because I am not at church every single Sunday. I am okay with this.</p>
<p>I was a teacher and an elementary principal before I retired. I felt called to this vocation as a child. I continue to volunteer in educational activities.</p>
<p>I was born a Presbyterian. My mother was raised in a Waldensian Presbyterian church. I have lived in 3rd world countries and spent 50 years as an educator. For 32 years I was director of a public school program for pregnant teenagers and their children. I believe my mission is to know Christ, to live by his example and show his love and hope to others. I have served as a Sunday School teacher, circle chair, parish leader, deacon and an elder.</p>
<p>I wish I had been aware of and sought guidance in my job choices. Once I began to include God's will in my job choices, my entire life opened up to Him.</p>
<p>If I am living my calling, then my actions must speak much louder than my words so that the message God wants conveyed is expressed.</p>
<p>If you can incorporate your theological beliefs in your vocation that can be good. Additionally, interfaith relations are a true expression of God's love!</p>
<p>I'm a pluralist and don't think that everyone has to be a Christian. Who is to say that my faith is THE faith of the world? We should embrace the diversity of faith that we have in the world. In this day and age with all the strife that is taking place in the name of a faith, the extremists especially, we need to learn more about other faiths. I consider myself a 'Professional Non-Paid Volunteer', with most of my volunteer work via my church.</p>
<p>I'm a retired corporate project manager. I try in my retirement to bring those management skills to bear in various leadership roles in the church, at both the congregational (clerk if session), presbytery (committee chair, council member), and GA levels (served as a GA commissioner and on a COLA). My congregation is very involved in local interfaith initiatives, and I try to participate as much as possible. I also am very active on Facebook in this area, including as admin for a multicultural page.</p>
<p>I'm married to someone of another faith, so interfaith relations are very important to me.</p>
<p>I'm retired, so that is reflected in my answers...</p>
<p>In my opinion, interfaith relations, in a time, where active membership in Christian churches is shrinking, needs to be a priority.</p>
<p>In spite of that evangelical favorite, John 14:6, I strongly believe that it is deeply Christian to affirm the equality of all faith traditions...and all peoples. I certainly do not mean to say that all traditions are the SAME, but that they are all rich and equally valid, each offering a unique, valuable perspective on the problems of living faithfully and with love for the human family.</p>
<p>In this category (the above, Vocational Discernment) I'm not sure what is meant by Discernment. I am not aware of opportunities in my community to learn about or participate in interfaith relations. I worked in my vocation for 42 years and tried very hard to perform my responsibilities in a truly Christian Manner.</p>

Interfaith community is important, but it is also important to have a church in which one feels at home. I think we should do all we can to make others welcome, but not to the point of compromising our identity. Although it may sound crude, I think that if someone is not comfortable with our worship they should seek another church that fits them better. I would rather to see a number of different churches offering different kinds of worship than one big, amorphous church that is the same everywhere. As Presbyterians, we know how difficult it is to separate our desires from God's will. I want to say that I feel vocation, but I honestly don't know how much of that feeling might be my own ego speaking to me.
Interfaith relations are best served when we know where we stand while respecting what others believe. Adopting a position of we're all saved and let's ignore our differences just to get a long may work in the secular world but it is not the true path to developing interfaith relationships.
Interfaith relations are important. my theology is Totally based on Christ. I have always tried to follow Christ's teaching in my work.
Interfaith relationship is good but we need to remember who we are
Interfaith study is enlightening, but I think it is outside the normal role of the church congregation. You can treat everyone with respect and love regardless of their belief but it should be out of Christian duty and charity not out of curiosity or diversity or obligation to get along for a secular purpose.
Interfaith: More is better. Theology: No additional comments. Vocation: I am in my 41st year as a physician. I'm long past counseling for career change/misgivings/reconsiderations. I do look for ways to use these talents for God's purpose--every day. This career and calling takes up a sizable amount of time and energy. There is no way I could or should seek out counsel for how to do more than I have been. Rather, I look to my church as a place to guide me to reflect and find God as well as to maintain my sanity in a field of work that has become mixed with way too much in the way of monetary, administrative, and political motives.
Isolationism is a negative state. We must constantly pursue interfaith relationships to enable better understanding and improved community.
Let's sit very loose to conversations with Muslims and other religions. When we speak together with them, Christianity gets lost in the process.
My answer to 24 is based on my belief that my mind is the locus of God in me, so that the gift of being alive and part of this created reality is itself the mystery of God in my life. I do not think of God as 'something Other.'
My ultimate choice of vocation resulted from a series of events. I did not feel that my religious beliefs contributed much to the decision. God was in control of the events, not me.
my vocation is where I impact the world and make it better as a Christian
My vocation was a result of my effort and support from family.
My vocation was caring for sick - I was a nurse
My vocation was chosen because I felt I had a gift for teaching children with special needs.
My vocation was teaching in the public schools and Sunday School. Also, served as a leader in the Women's organization in the church
My work itself did not glorify God but I felt I made an impact on my co-workers and management
N/A
Na
no comment
No other comments.
None

None
None
None
None
Our city has a lot of refugees. It would be nice to be better equipped to interact with them. The church can do that thru partnership mission that benefit the whole community. I'm not that "up" on theology
Outreach is the crux of the Great Commandment. Nevertheless, Jesus teaches us to love the sinner, not the sin. It is important to keep that in mind and not accept sin as OK in the name of cultural liberality.
Q12: We are saved by God's grace -- don't really agree fully with any of these statements
Q15a-d: Not sure what is meant by these terms.
Q18: god accepts us as we are, where we are then it is up to us .
Q20: Bad question! Difficult to understand what you are asking
Q20: Culture should be taken into account to accommodate the congregations at hand.
Q20: Different cultures have different traditions which are very meaningful to the participants
Q20: Old enough to make the commitment to Christianity before being baptized / Lord's Table
Q21: retired, but choose carefully & mindfully volunteer activities
Q22: I see my job as primary occupation for subsistence; church activities are an avocation - items 2-8
Q22: I was a caseworker for BB/S for 18 years also a teacher (commercial)
Quite a personal question and too broad. Sorry.
Re: Interfaith. All Christians should be knowledgeable about other faiths, and should be respectful of other faiths and those who follow these other faiths. But if we believe the Bible and our confessions, ultimately only the Christian faith is the true faith. Ecumenical relationships and ecumenical worship is appropriate; interfaith relationships are critical and appropriate but interfaith worship is never appropriate---we need to respectfully decline interfaith worship, as we believe, or so we say we do, that Jesus Christ alone is our Savior and Lord.
remembered when making decisions, as a person, as a church, and as a denomination.
Religion and culture are closely tied. I respect the culture and religion of my Muslim, Jewish & Hindu friends and enjoy knowing their beliefs & traditions. However, I do not want my own culture, religion or worship diluted or diminished by incorporating other cultures or religions
Retired but feel God's presence in everyday decision making
Since you must understand before being understood, it is important to learn about other faiths if you ever want to share your own experiences with Jesus Christ
Teaching and organizing - using my gifts.
Teaching was my vocation and even as a retired person I continue to volunteer as a teacher.
Thank you for allowing me this opportunity. I hope it helps.

<p>The Church must choose between appeal to a narrow group of strong believers and broader appeal to the masses. It's theology, largely from 16-17th century Calvinism is poorly suited for the latter, and the most vibrant churches the last 30-40 years have focused on the former. But competing with other churches on the former is like a zero sum game because that group is not growing much. So, long term I think it needs to figure how somehow to be more relevant and appealing to a broader cross section</p>
<p>The older I get the more I meditate on the meanings in life. I'm 93.</p>
<p>The PC(USA) prides itself on being a 'big tent.' And I for one am glad for the openness to struggle with questions and issues and to see all people included. But I am actually worried for the future when I see the lordship of Christ become a nonessential. I can discuss any controversial subject, hopefully with gentleness and humility; but if we can't even start with agreeing on the basic foundational Christian belief for the last 2000 years that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, and that the Scripture is our final authority on who God is and what God has done and is doing, I don't think we have much of a future. The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.</p>
<p>The questions on vocation hit a sore spot with me. I have interpreted the work I do for a living as a vocation, and not a broader concept of that word that includes all other aspects of my life (like an avocation). I have not figured out how to serve God in my work other than to work hard, be kind and ethical, and have a sense of humor and higher purpose.</p>
<p>There is one God and one faith though we may call it different things and practice our faith through different protocol, we ask for God's help and grace and forgiveness...all who believe do this.</p>
<p>Referring to Question 20: It is good that we as a PC(USA) church are aware of and participate in activities with the culture of the church around the world as long as these are Christian denominations. To do so with other religions blurs the line that makes us different from them, thus we become more like a secular society group rather than the separate from society church that a Christian church is expected to be. If, as a Christian church, we believe the Bible to be true, then we need to abide by its teachings, which are as pertinent in today's world as they were 2000 years ago. The farther away we move from written word of God, the farther away we move from God. To continue on that path leads us right into the arms of those whom we have been warned about. God has given everyone gifts and talents. He calls them to use them for His Glory. Some folks listen to His call. Some folks ignore it the first time and eventually hear and know what to do. Still others choose not to use their gifts for God. As a church, we need to make sure the opportunities are offered and accept those who choose to serve in the varied ways they can. A church is made stronger by the wide variety of talents and gifts that are accepted. A conservative church, one that remains Biblically sound and not one buying into popular, secular trends, is one that will have a lasting impact on individuals. Being a servant of Christ in today's world is still the expectation. Knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior guarantees a life with Him forever. God is not dead, nor are His teachings. Both are the Real Deal and that needs to be remembered when making decisions, as a person, as a church, and as a denomination.</p>
<p>This is where we try to reflect Christ in the world through our actions. Because the minutia of daily life distracts us, we fail at recognizing God when we should.</p>
<p>Through reading the Bible, through prayer and with the leading of the holy Spirit I discerned my career in government as God's calling. I get similar help in many other endeavors.</p>
<p>Very thought provoking. Thanks for the chance to complete this questionnaire!</p>
<p>Vocation is something that others see. We should do all of our works and give our talents as Christians.</p>
<p>We all have different needs, reasons, etc., that impact our decisions. In a relationship w/God - I think respecting each individual relationship is Key.</p>

We are God's people. We need to work together.
We are now a global community within a new century, and we need to look at the whole of God's creation in order to be the stewards he requests us to be. I'd love to be more than a white church!
We have to reinforce them all the time.
we live in a global community - PCUSA talk, a good game of social justice yet still 92% white
We must learn to accept other religions to improve world peace.
We need to put together curriculum for COLLEGE STUDENTS about all of these areas of the faith. Call it Confirmation 2.0. That is the time period when people are discerning those three aspects of Christian life. If you need help, contact me. []
When I was young it was expected that women's first & most important job was raising the children well & guiding the children & family to live Christ-centered lives. I had no thought of anything else. Now we talk about being missionaries & learn these things are open to women. When the children were older I was active in Bible studies where we went out door to door to share our message. Not my favorite activity but I did it. I worked in retail & then in dental offices: I loved the public & it was wonderful. Really miss everyone after retirement.
When you actively look for answers to prayers it becomes very easy to find them and then recognize the signals God sends. Practice! Practice! Practice!
You know Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Paul interacted with people of all faiths in the market. They had to behave in a way that honored them and their own as people while elevating concern for all, that's why the parables are so cryptic.

Appendix I: Teaching Elders' Verbatim Responses
Theological Reflection Presbyterian Panel: Volume 3, 2016
Final Open-Ended Question

Q-25. Please use the space below for any additional comments about interfaith relations, theology, or your vocation.

<p>I have found it a good thing to explore the basics of other faith traditions. I think there are many vistas, but still hold Jesus (the Triune God) to reveal the wholeness and fullness of God. Salvation comes from the Triune God. My vocation is to serve this God and this God's ongoing of mission of healing and reconciliation of the world until this God brings all creation under his sovereign rule.</p>
<p>I think it is important for us to know the cultural context of the person with whom we seek engagement and relationship, just as Jesus appeared deeply cognizant of the uniqueness of each individual he encountered. To know a person's unique context is to know that person's deepest concerns, highest hopes, truest loves, darkest fears, the experiences which have shaped their world view and the language which holds meaning to them. Jesus never gave a blind person the ability to walk, not a lame person the ability to see. He meets us in our own condition. Sharing the Good News and doing justice are not cookie-cutter enterprises but arise from unique relationships forged through shared experience and active listening. Put differently, we need to earn the right to be heard. All that said, I am concerned by what I perceive to be a contemporary trend of idolatry toward diversity and multiculturalism. Diversity is a given in my faith view and what we seek to give witness to in word and deed is the unity in Christ. Bowing down before the altar of diversity and diminishing or watering down our personal witness out of a timidity or desire to be politically correct fails to live after the example in the first Letter of John when he writes not once but three times, 'We declare what we have seen and heard...' We offer this witness boldly, not out of hubris, arrogance and privilege but with genuine humility and gratitude. As D.T. Niles remarked, it is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.</p>
<p>I work in another denomination's institution, and my church works with four churches for a joint community mission trip. And, until everyone ordains women, or doesn't run by congregational or episcopal governing, I shall remain a Presbyterian. Sometimes my discouragement with the direction my denomination has chosen deeply saddens me. Funny, when the conservatives led, the liberals could do as they liked. Now that the liberals lead, they crack down on the conservatives who disagree. No amount of 'selling' will work. I don't always agree, but I offer you the right to disagree with me, and we should get back to what we're supposed to be about, rather than grinding an issue over and over until the church is destroyed. Franklin, I DON'T want to know what you do in your own privacy, but it seems we can't seem to get on with things. I've 'perfected motions' quicker with less blood and loss. But, hey, who's listening to me? No one.</p>
<p>I am a Minister of Word and Sacrament who is currently not serving in a local church. I would like to be serving however, there are far more seeking calls than there are open positions. I continue to serve on committees and to preach occasionally. However, I would say I don't feel that I have been able to fully serve God with all my gifts. I continue to explore how to do this without serving in a local church as it is unlikely a call will happen.</p>
<p>My vocation and theology flow within the body of Christ (Church) and outside in the world to show and share Christ.</p>

I think there's a difference between ministering to people of other faiths and ministering with them. 'To' we should definitely do. 'With' we need more discernment, I believe, because we may inadvertently be supporting or implicitly giving approval to the beliefs of another faith, when they are contradictory to what we believe as Christians. We should never participate in worship leadership together with people of other faiths - they shouldn't be leading our services in any way, and we shouldn't be leading theirs. The exception to the latter situation would be if a Christian is invited to share a Christian perspective on a particular topic, or given the opportunity to share our beliefs in an interfaith (or other faith) setting.
Christians are to hear Christ's voice and commands. The mainstream churches are increasingly listening to other voices that take them away from Christ.
Jesus said that the greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. And in Micah 6:8 are these instructions; 'show kindness, act justly and walk humbly with the Lord'. We must demonstrate these teachings with people of all faiths ... not just with those who profess Christian faith and share our own culture.
If this is a denomination that believes in God's sovereignty in all creation, then it should reach out to people throughout creation and seek a larger, fuller understanding of God and faithfulness. It will help if the approach is humble, seeking to learn, rather than haughty, seeking to impose.
I think that interfaith relations is an important growing area for the church in the 20th century. It's also at the heart of my own vocation as a professor in a theological school, but I've found that many congregations (Presbyterian and other) are interested in learning about other faiths, particularly Islam. I think interfaith awareness and the ability to build relations will be essential to the future of the church.
사회적으로 인정하는 종교와 성경을 믿는 기독교와는 다르다고 생각하며, 성경 절대 가치가 환경의 흐름에 따라(포스트 모더니즘)무너지지 않게 지키는 것이 중요하다. 고 생각함 [I think there is a difference between socially accepted religion and Bible believing Christianity, and it is important to keep the absolute values of the Bible in order not to be destroyed by environmental flow (Post-modernism).]
The focus on language of honoring and glorifying God as describing vocation makes God seem like someone who needs constant reassurance, and I'm not sure it's God who needs the reassurance. I would like more language of following Jesus, discipleship, loving self, neighbor and enemies, working for the kingdom of god, etc.
My vocation and calling from God came through numerous encounters with the Holy Spirit and the counsel and encouragement of others led by the Holy Spirit.
I live in a small community with very minimal interfaith opportunities. I cannot answer #12 because none of those are closest to my position. I believe salvation is available to everyone--freely offered by God. So to say 'God chooses...' in a way is true because he chooses to offer it to all. 'People choose...' only in response to God's initiative not of their own. 'God saves everyone' is not right because there is a faith and believe component...response to his calling, accepting his offer, accepting Jesus Christ as Lord. But God does call for everyone/everywhere. 'Salvation...outdated', um, no. I am ordained Teaching Elder. I responded to God's call to ordained ministry when I was in my 40's.
I am a pastor and chaplain
I am a Pastor, so I feel that my vocation, while technically is 'my job', covers many, many aspects of my life in ways that it may not for other Christians.
I feel called to find and promote common calling by the One God revealed in the world religions and work together toward Love in justice and peace
I am a soon-to-be retired minister of Word and sacrament whose faith will continue to seek understanding.

I have often quoted from an action of GA where we voted to say that FOR US, Jesus Christ is the only way to God (John 14). I like how that allows me as a pastor and the church as a denomination to 'Speak our convictions, but with humility.' Sovereignty of God first; grace of God second; the love of Jesus Christ; the koinonia of the Holy Spirit and most everything else will fall into place! My vocational training was more spiritual and had greater spiritual depth at Colgate University than the outstanding education I had at Princeton. Having served many years on CPM I am frustrated at our seminaries' continuing emphasis on the leadership and administrative skills of the pastor over the spiritual formation. How sad, but necessary that spiritual formation should be a requirement for graduation. How sad that, as far as I know, only one of our seminaries requires it. I know we can't make it happen, but so much time and effort is still spent making Greek and Hebrew happen! I wish every seminary professor had the length of experience and depth of spiritual life and joy in the Spirit as someone like Elder Hawkins (former Rochester GA moderator during the Angela Davis controversy). While I have been very supportive of the progression of our belief about ordination and marriage of gays (we have a married gay son with children), these have consumed so much time of dualistic votes (a la Richard Rohr) that we have become more and more divided and our presbyteries have less and less dialogue because of those who have left. I served in Beaver-Butler Presbytery 1987-2000, a hot bed of discontent and division at the end of those years and into the next decade. But for a while I loved the dialogue and challenges we shared. When one side began to say the 'other side' was in apostasy (or going to hell), respect, unity and fellowship in the Spirit went out the window. At the same time the cost of administration and the dischord in the ranks kept leading to more and more time spent on rearranging the deckchairs on the titanic of the GAC. I was ordained in 1977 and we had 3 agencies and several hundred missionaries. We are institutionalizing ourselves to death at the loss of our mission outreach. Here are three ways to measure our faithfulness as a church of Jesus Christ: 1) How many adult professions of faith do we have each year and why? (GA resources; seminary courses; presbytery workshops); 2) Who are the children on our baptized rolls (I preached about the need for this before GA adopted it) and how do we help one another nurture these folks? I count them only through age 18 (since instructions don't tell us how to do otherwise) and then they are lost if they have not been confirmed or oftentimes if they were only youth confirmation class members. I think the loss of UMHE (United Ministries in Higher Education) was the sign of our huge losses here! 3) Since GA collects all of our money stats each year, why not figure our Mission Ratio? I add ALL of the income figures - every group, every investment, all income, and divide it by the mission dollars that leave the building - local mission, PC(USA) mission, other mission. The highest we have had (my church has 350 members) is 17% and I think last year's will probably be down to 12% or so. We measure what we value!

We need to tell Christ's story in ways that are relevant to the culture around us but the message will always be counter-cultural and will inform how we engage and interact with our own culture and other's.

As I grow older, my eyes are opened more and more to how God is working in all aspects of my life and throughout my day.

We serve a big God in a big world.

<p>I am a second career TE although my first vocation was health care which I consider to be a stepping stone to where God has called me as pastor. And God still calls--I have begun my D.Min. as answered prayer to where is God calling me next. I value interfaith relations however I serve in rural central USA where these relationships are slim to none. Theology has taken me (and us--we are a second career clergy couple TEs) to deep places of pain and joy and continued growth. I see our Reformed/Presbyterian PCUSA theology as dynamic i.e. moving the church ever toward Christ and in Christ and in the reconciliation of all God's people. What that looks like takes into account interfaith relations too.</p> <p>Presbyterian/Reformed theology has given me a platform to launch into the mysteries of our faith and as they wash over me, transform me to be more affective in mission and ministry. I may be considered 'old' in a culture which values youth and I am young in the spirit with a call yet to be fully lived. I do not think that our shrinking denomination is dying. I have hope. God's ways are not our ways and all will be well. I believe that reflects my theology in the liminal space of the all but not yet. Grace & peace to y'all</p>
<p>When I lived in a more urban environment, I had interaction with the tri-faith community. In this rural setting, there are not the same opportunities.</p>
<p>I felt called to ministry thru a unique set of circumstances when I was 14. I sought to turn away from that calling and pursued teaching instead. Yet, a subsequent unique set of circumstances along with strong support for others led me back. I graduated from seminary at age 31 and was ordained. I have been in active ministry since.</p>
<p>An earlier question asked about sharing our faith with those of other faith traditions and non-faith traditions. I want to be respectful of those in other faith traditions. I can share, but I want to hear from them as well. My goal is not to convert them. God will convert. I feel much stronger about listening intently to one with no faith tradition and trying to discern where God is working in their hearts and minds. I believe that God uses all religions. I do believe that Jesus is 'the way the truth and the life' and he will be the ultimate judge - that is why 'no one comes to the Father but by me.' I want to be in the right time at the right place to listen and share and journey.</p>
<p>We must work to improve interfaith relations. While I firmly believe that Jesus reveals God to me, as so faithfully follow Christ, I cannot and would not say that God cannot draw women and men to God by another path. To say so puts a limit on God, which would be foolish and arrogant to do.</p>
<p>That Christ is Lord and Savior and that he became as nothing to reveal how, out of that nothingness - making oneself small for the sake of others - God is revealed, leaves us with a paradox. Probably the only way to work our way through that tangle is to love God and neighbors as we were commanded and let the chips fall where they may. It helps to be able to laugh at ourselves from time to time. Buddhism could help us with that even though they come from a vastly different cosmology.</p>
<p>I believe it is important to establish interfaith relationships, but I feel the PC USA desperately needs to first understand what it means to be a witness for Jesus Christ in the world, and how to share the gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus Christ. We need to honor our brothers and sisters who practice other religions, but that does not mean that we need to pretend that we all worship the same God, and that the very real differences between our theologies do not exist.</p>
<p>I came to the vocation of Teaching Elder because I felt God was calling me to reach out and share my own faith with others to help them find their own faith.</p>
<p>I find it objectionable that the PCUSA seems more interested in pursuing interfaith relations than relations with our more conservative Christian brothers & sisters - Baptists, AG, etc.</p>
<p>I am an ordained teaching elder; active interfaith ministerial leader; freely share pastoral care/counseling with the wider community; share in crop walks, habitat projects, volunteer rebuilding projects</p>

<p>It is important to hold center on Christ as distinct from other religious traditions, rather than trying to project our faith into other traditions. A Christian and Presbyterian revelation of our Triune God is separate and distinct and unique from all other traditions. We cannot and should not define commonalities where they do not exist. Vocation is based on discernment first of God's/Christ's calling and speaking through the Holy Spirit. It is a spiritual discernment through spiritual practices. Mere skills or enjoyment in activity is an insufficient spiritual 'call' to vocation.</p>
<p>I am open to interfaith relations and as a missionary in 3 different countries, it has been woven into my whole life's journey to respect and know others of different faith traditions.</p>
<p>For me, it remains an interesting and critical question whether some other religions are worshiping/pointing to the same God I think that I'm worshiping as a Christian. Sometimes I feel those spiritual connections with people of other religions, while often I feel like we may be pointing in different directions. I do have hope and faith that Jesus Christ reveals God as *for* all people and all creation.</p>
<p>I feel like I am outgrowing the limitations of the institutional church.</p>
<p>I think God calls us to many different vocations over a lifetime, sometimes several concurrently. This reinforces for me the idea that our whole lives are to glorify God in whatever we say and do, day in and day out.</p>
<p>No comment</p>
<p>Interfaith studies are important but must follow first knowing what we believe</p>
<p>I appreciate this survey. But what will you actually do with all of the data you're collecting. I don't see much in terms of 'helpful' stuff being published and shared.</p>
<p>Each person has a calling from God. That calling is connected to all the facets of our life. That calling can change throughout our life, so we need to be constantly attentive to the Spirit.</p>
<p>There were some questions I didn't answer because of the diversity of understanding regarding specific theological concepts, like being a witness to Christ to other faiths. If that means that I reference scripture and talk specifically about Jesus, I don't know how important that is, but if it means showing them love and compassion and kindness (more specifically a reflection of the love I receive from Christ) then I think that is very important. Another one I thought was interesting was the question about sharing one's faith, sharing one's story is important, specifically when it reflects faith is an intimate relationship with the divine, but I think listening to other people's stories, particularly in an interfaith setting, I think that's way more important.</p>
<p>Christ claims all of life!</p>
<p>Engaging in interfaith relations and theology has to have a component of acknowledging that our use of language matters. This survey misses that. The survey misses the nuances of theology at various points with the statements and words used. For example, 'the holy month of Islam' (it is so much more!). A search of the 'five pillars of Islam' would easily explain this point. 'Catholicism' is the most misused word I noticed. While I assume the writer here meant 'Roman Catholic,' abbreviating to 'Catholic' belies a clear misunderstanding or even reflective prejudice. A search of the word 'Catholic' would easily explain what I am saying. Words matter - particularly in intercultural and interfaith relations.</p>
<p>I should know better to start one of these when I stop by the office to pick up the bulletins for my first service. I'm going to be late!</p>
<p>The comment about worship included the phrase, 'contextual, cross-cultural, transcultural, countercultural, and intercultural event.' The contextual I understand, as well as the countercultural. The others though seem to become conflated and confusing. Should just simplify it to contextual, cross-cultural, and countercultural. That covers the bases of worship being appropriately part of my culture, inclusive of other cultures, and when needed, against my culture.</p>

I have been practicing inclusive communion for twenty years because when I was a college chaplain I had many students from other traditions or no tradition who were part of the group for whatever reason and to exclude them from the sacrament goes against Table hospitality and the example of Jesus. I also remember what it was like as a child being excluded from the sacrament, even though I was baptized. I never could understand why I needed to be 'older and confirmed' before I could eat with the rest of the family. It's about time the PCUSA practices the radical hospitality which the gospel demands.

This is a tough question as I am an ordained minister who has spent 2 and 1/2 years seeking a new call and have decided not to pursue ordained ministry for a while after receiving nothing but no's and silence. I have questioned my 'vocation'/calling greatly in this period of time and now doubt what God's calling is for me personally. I think the church is losing its way and those of us as pastors who would be great in leadership and helping direct churches are largely looked over based on either our gender and its connection with our theology. I am a conservative female pastor and most jobs are going to my male conservative male colleagues and I think the church is making large assumptions about gender, people, theology and not focusing on the Lordship of Jesus. In the mean time I am applying for a teaching position that will be teaching on World Religions. I think that it is important for people of faith to understand other faith traditions not for the sole sake of conversation but to help us better communicate and understand one another in a world where we are becoming more polarized and people spew information that often isn't based on fact or true understanding. I think we have to be grounded more securely in our own theology even as we learn about other faith traditions

The issue with interfaith relations is to maintain our call as believers. We are to share the Good News of the Gospel with all who we encounter. Interfaith relations tends to ignore that we preach Christ and Him crucified.

This survey seems bent on trying to get answers rather than being a valid survey. Am I right? I hope not. Remember to validity check your questions.

Interfaith relationships are important because they speak to us living in a pluralistic world as neighbors - for understanding plus cooperative efforts to help the vulnerable. There is strength in knowing our neighbors and what lies at the heart of their beliefs and actions.

About vocation: I HATE it when people talk about God pulling them kicking and screaming into ministry. It's arrogant. I wish people would say they felt called by the match of their skills and talents - that we emphasized more the excellence and ability of our ministry personnel and not the inevitability of their calls.

The other traditional Presbyterian understand that seems to not be discussed much is when, if at all, the dead are raised with Christ. We traditionally believe this occurs at the second coming (as described in John 6:40; 6:44; 6:54; 11:24 and elsewhere.) Calvin believed being dead was much like going to sleep until such a time. But few want to talk about that anymore. Why don't we discuss this in the church? Are we too afraid of offending someone?

My sense of vocation has recently been tested by a hard loss in our family. The Spirit is the person of the Trinity I feel most connection to. In interfaith relations, I believe we should respect other traditions and work with them where we can to serve others.

I believe what Jesus said about himself in John 14, about being THE way, THE truth, and THE life. At the same time, how God will apply the fruits and benefits of his faithful life, atoning death, and liberating resurrection are unknown to us. We are called to share the Gospel. We live in an increasingly interrelated and interconnected world; I live and serve a church in a wonderfully diverse setting. Understanding what people who hold different religious faiths, truly communicating and being in respectful conversation with them, and where we have intersecting beliefs-- for example, love of neighbor expressed in acts of compassion and service -- and can work together, we should. I am a Minister of Word and Sacrament, a Teaching Elder, and have expressed several 'calls' to different settings for ministry. But all those are embedded within that broad call to all believers that comes from Christ, 'Follow me'.

Presbyterian Christians do a good job with interfaith relations within their own communities. Unfortunately, the denomination ends up way too often mixing relativism with their interfaith efforts.

Regarding interfaith relations; theology; and vocation; I believe the 'title' that fits me best is 'Carpenter's Apprentice' - I true to follow the guidance of my teacher, mentor and friend Jesus Christ, the Carpenter's son. I do not possess all of the knowledge, skill, or talent that he does, but I believe that he guides me in his ways and shows me new things every day.

I am thoroughly orthodox, yet also Reformed enough to know that rigidity with regard to other religions is sinful. We see through a mirror dimly. One can honor and learn from other forms of truth without giving up what is essential about Christianity.

There seems to me to be much more work needed in the area of the Reformed understanding of Scripture. We seem unwilling to 'own' our heritage out of fear of a split along Fundamentalist/Modernist lines, even though all of the conflicts and divisions in our denomination and its antecedents have been rooted in this distinction. The absence of a chapter in 'Foundations of Presbyterian Polity' detailing our understanding and use of Scripture in formulating our policies and shaping our faith speaks volumes. We teach 'Historical/Critical' interpretation in our Seminaries and require candidates for ordination a Teaching Elders to demonstrate competence in it, but nowhere in the Form of Government is the reality acknowledged that the PC(USA) bases its policies and programs on this method of interpretation. This is dishonest. Paragraph 29 of C-67 make this clear. The PC(USA) is not a Fundamentalist denomination, yet we continue to give fundamentalist and fundamentalist-leaning members, Teaching Elders and congregations 'hope' that we will become one. I and several colleagues wrote the 'missing chapter' to 'Foundations' and offered to our Presbytery it as a proposed amendment. The Presbytery's 'Leadership Team' declined to recommend it to the body suggesting that it sought to 'exclude' people from discussion. It made it to the floor for debate and the Leadership Team's argument was picked up by others. The proposed amendment was not endorsed. This hermeneutical schizophrenia is a major impediment to serious interfaith relations because literalist and historical/critical interpretations yield functionally incompatible agendas. As to vocation, the Fundamentalist emphasis on 'saving souls' is as odds on a basic level with the Sovereignty of God and Election yet we continue to back away from this central affirmation. As long as Fundamentalists continue to have a voice in shaping our policies and programs, we will not be able fully to present the unique gifts of the Reformed tradition to the world.

Keep the focus on Jesus. We have something unique to offer to this hurting world.

I didn't answer the question about salvation in Christ (I can't remember the #) because none of the options fit for me. The answers were poorly worded. To say 'God saves everyone' is overly simplistic even as saying 'I choose Jesus as Savior' puts me in control. I didn't check a box because to answer one particular way without more explanation could be seriously misunderstood.

I am a second career Teaching Elder. My feelings about vocation and calling were part of my life prior to seminary. I learned to talk about vocation and call in new ways after that time.
no answer
While I believe interfaith relations is important I am in rural Iowa and the most different faith tradition is Catholic! I am a Pastor - 2nd career before this I was a Director of Christian Education for 20 years. I have thought, prayed and studied a lot about vocation
we must ensure that the PC(USA) preaches salvation through Christ in all that we do and say
I resist being told what I believe by folks not in my tradition. I resist the sense in some interfaith groups that I am expected to apologize for all Christians
I am disturbed about the possible change in the directory on baptism -- and saddened/upset that I discovered this news through this survey.
I am a second career pastor... I strongly believe that my prior career in banking was also a vocation in service to God... being a pastor makes me no more faithful or obedient to God's will than my prior profession
I fear that the PCUSA is becoming irrelevant, like other church institutions. Our emphasis on interfaith relations is, perhaps, laudable, but it hardly seems like the most important exercise of faith. Our polity and connectionalism is, at the local level (in my neck of the woods) not very crucial, anymore. The greater the degree of American individualism, the less our polity makes sense (in a fantasy world, it should make more sense--but, in reality, it does not).
I don't generally feel specifically guided by God, so much as find the Scriptures the guide to my life as a whole.
We need to have more of a passion to pass on the Reformed Tradition.
Our trinitarian faith guides us to respect all people as created by God and affirms the incarnate Son as God's gift of salvation to the world.
For me grasping the concept of Grace and Gratitude has been a freeing, life giving experience. These two words together express the heart of the reformed faith and stand in sharp contrast with much of the popular understanding of Christianity. I see even the crucifixion so different. It is not so much some horrible thing we did to Jesus rather it is Jesus' act of love and sacrifice for us. ' ... no one takes it (my life) from me, but I give it up because I want to.' [John 10:18] While I have not been a forceful evangelist, I do believe that as reformed Christians we have a gospel to proclaim that may more readily be heard as Good News. And our sharing of the gospel need not be based on fear--fear for the others salvation or our failing to bring someone to salvation. After all we do not save anyone. God has acted to save us. In some sense we were saved 2000 years ago and we had nothing to do with it. It is God's undeserved gift.
Interfaith relations sounds like a great thing. However, it seems to me that spending too much time and effort on them is not the primary calling of the Church. In interfaith relations each faith is supposed to play nice and not share their respective faith other than by witness. This denies the reality that we are called to proclaim to all of creation-even those of other faiths- Jesus as the only way of salvation. Regarding theology, it seems to me that the PC (USA) has adopted the theology of pleasing the world rather than pleasing God. We are currently far too willing to please people rather than God. We are currently moved by every wind of social action and always at the expense of proclaiming Jesus. This is wrong and we will be judged by God for our failure to faithfully stand up for Jesus even when all others refuse to stand firm in their faith. Concerning vocation: the Christian cannot separate their faith in Jesus from their everyday life. All decisions and actions must be informed by our faith in Jesus. Again, this is what makes us unique in the world-our relationship with God through His Son, Jesus. If the Christian is able to turn their faith on and off because some social construct says they must then I question the reality of their faith.

As I stated earlier in this survey, I am a pastor (for the past 40 years) and have served in ecumenical/interfaith settings as a hospital director of pastoral care - working with Jews and Muslims, hospice chaplain - serving all faiths, police chaplain - serving all faiths, and have also served as a chaplain to a Vietnam Veterans Association - also serving all faiths. In these settings, not only have I learned about the other faiths, but have been called upon to perform services for members of other traditions.
God has gifted me with many talents and I have tried to use them in my life to glorify God.
Cooperative Interfaith ministry is important, but it should never cause us to obscure, hide, or deny our uniqueness as Christians, nor should it require those of other faiths to do the same.
To say that Christ is the savior of all, does not mean everyone has to be Christian. The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are God's saving act for the world.
In the face of our society's discrimination against non-Christians and the view that Christians are judgmental of others, it is important to present a visible witness to our unity as children of God with all people of faith.
Too often interfaith we have come to interfaith dialogue with the misplaced perspective that in order to come to the table with those of other faiths we have to first agree that we are talking about or even following the same God. In my experience, those of other faiths appreciate dialogue even more when we are able to be open and honest about the foundational and essential belief of all true Christians, that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.
Vocation: It can sometimes change. Just because we've been doing one job or participating in one call for a long time doesn't mean that that's it for the rest of your life. Discernment is key. Theology: As a teaching elder, it is absolutely imperative that I have a good handle on theology, and in the PCUSA, Reformed theology. How else can I preach and teach it? The average pew sitter is NOT going to seek it out on his/her own. And, I must live it. Interfaith relations: If we have any hope of the world getting to a 'better place,' whatever that may look like, we absolutely MUST improve these relations. And we must be respectful, and curious.
I feel blessed with my vocation to serve God & humanity.
As the role of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches had disappeared in the culture of the USA, our government has gone to pot, and the principles on which our nation was built have been eroded. The degradation of society is an indication of the loss of impact our theology is having on our nation. If the last 7 horrible years under Obama are any indication, God is bringing ungodly rulers to be over us that the judgment of God would fall upon us. There needs to be a reversal, but it seems the PCUSA is glad to support the downfall and engage it as a new evolution as to what we are to be. It will lead to the damnation of many, erosion and destruction of the PCUSA and in time, the downfall of our once great nation. To put it succinctly, 'Theology Matters!'
I am thankful for the clear calling I received from the Lord in 1976. My calling has carried me through these last 41 years.
As I near retirement my understanding of vocation is foggy and I am doing thing to clear it up.
Most white folks I deal with don't have a sense of cultural identity or religious identity so interfaith interactions are disconcerting for them.
Our understanding of the Reformed tradition has been stretched so far that it is no longer recognizable. I fear for the future of our church. We have forgotten who we are. We are focusing so much on large scale issues such as racism and climate change that we neglect the specific calling of the church to make disciples.
I obviously feel strongly about vocation as calling since I am serving as a full time PCUSA pastor. My life and faith are intertwined.
God has blessed me with longevity beyond my expectations. In that time my vocation has changed significantly a number of times. In each 'calling' God's leading was clear and strong.

I have a sense that I should say 'something' here though I am unsure as to what you all are looking for in this answer. I think we have lost our theological moorings. We really have no Tenets with teeth. We will not even hold a pastor to any degree of sound theology. I think it is important to build bridges of cordial relations across faith lines where the intentions are mutual. One should always behave in a gracious manner. But, these bridges should not be built at the expense of our acknowledging that 'Jesus is Lord'. I do appreciate the questions on vocation. They are thoughtful and we should consider those principles more regularly. I am currently doing some soul searching in regards to my own vocation these days. I find this list helpful in the reflection process.

This is one of the most interesting surveys you've offered. I look forward to seeing results, and welcome some form of notification about where to find your conclusions. The concerns about interfaith relations are certainly timely with the blanket condemnation of Islam coming from some quarters. One concern not addressed here is the statement I often hear that 'all roads lead to one God' or the sentiment that all religions are alike. I would also explore the way US Christians (including me) have adopted spiritual exercises and beliefs from other religions; e.g. yoga, meditation, mindfulness practices.

As a pastor in Elizabeth Presbytery, I participate in the Metuchen-Edison Area Interfaith Clergy Association. I also participate in a clergy group made up of very theologically conservative pastors who are from Believers' Baptism traditions. I see myself as a bridge builder. I am a member of the PCUSA Fellowship Community--formerly Presbyterians for Renewal

We are all one in Creation ... if we don't live this out we will destroy it. Despite or in spite of a loving creative God our human will put us all in danger. Our servant perspective is meant for all people not to just feel good about ourselves.

I have come to love many of the more difficult passages in scripture. I enjoy wrestling with them, exploring their context, and the possible implications for faith in my current setting. It's fascinating that the faith community would hold some of these stories up and pass them onto the generations when they can be so disturbing. But, there are very interesting things those stories have to say about what it means to be a human being, broken, trying to discern what is right, and attempting to live in faithful ways.

The church had to catch up to God leading me into ministry. My call as a young person was not possible because of my gender. But...it never went away.

Inter-faith activities have been a given throughout my entire ministry. I have tried to take seriously Jesus' statement: 'I have other sheep that are not of this fold.' I may not know who they are, but that is irrelevant. He does and I believe I should treat others as if they are.

Some of my experience with interfaith relations has taken place away from home, since in a small Midwestern town there is little opportunity to engage with other faiths. However, we have done great ecumenical work in our town, and I believe it has strengthened the faith and understanding of all who have participated.

Your question about the Jewish Sabbath could be misinterpreted. The Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and goes through Saturday.

I do not believe in interfaith worship and will not attend, lead, or participate in such an event knowingly. I believe it is wrong for people of different faiths to worship together and feel as if it denigrates their particular faith when they do so. It was wrong for the Portland GA to invite a Muslim Imam to participate in worship, especially considering the insulting nature of his prayer in regard to Jesus. This would be akin to us bashing Allah or Mohamed in our worship. For us to do so is sinful and not right. For the Imam to do so in our worship was the same. This, in my opinion reflects on the poor theology of our PC(USA) leadership and is a disgrace to our common vocation.

I do think that in our interfaith relations we must maintain our sense of who we are as Presbyterians--the things that make us distinct.

My biggest concern when it comes to interfaith relations is that in order to achieve peace or (false) unity the Lordship of Christ is de-emphasized. Most of the folks passionate about these issues are older and as someone in the 30s category most of this interfaith stuff will fade away once the Boomers pass on. Another statistic of interest would be of those are highly in favor of interfaith relations, my hunch would be that those are the smallest churches with the least impact. I'd love to see numbers on that.

Two things.... #1 I felt like the questions regarding salvation in this survey were too specific (either/ or mentality). I believe salvation is all about God's choice, our choice, AND COULD be for all for all (God is gonna do what God does). Allowing for mystery was not included in question... Maybe it should have been. I marked the outdated answer... I think your question was outdated not salvation itself #2 I wonder if testing our knowledge about other faiths is truly a good measure of the importance of interfaith relations. Wouldn't it be much more important for individuals to learn a lot about the 'select' faith's they and their church come in contact with regularly than a 2-inch deep general knowledge about them all?

By conversing and sharing both ways about our faith experience and beliefs, I have been able to understand what others believe, but also have given them a better understanding (and appreciation) of what it means for me to say 'I am a Christian, and a Presbyterian.' A you cannot effectively share your faith unless you receive permission from the other party, and one of the ways that can happen is by sincere listening to what they believe.

My view of interfaith relations is clearly colored by the fact that I am part of an interfaith family. My husband (and most of his family) are Jewish, while my family is ardently Presbyterian Christian. As such, we have spent years deeply considering our faith, what Scripture says, prayerfully discerning what we believe and how we practice/express our faith, and where & how God fits into the larger story of creation beyond a narrow slice of denominational theology.

Discovering that my life was both mission and ministry helped inform my faith and vocation. I practiced orthopedic spine surgery as my mission and ministry for the last 6 years of my career. After retirement, I went through a period of discernment which led me seek ordination as a Teaching Elder after serving as a Ruling Elder in a large congregation for 15 years. I am now ordained as a Teaching Elder in Foothills Presbytery and serve as a stated supply pastor in transition ministry with several areas of responsibility in presbytery. I see some areas for interfaith relation, but more particularly, interracial/interdenominational interaction and cooperation in ministry in our local and faith communities.

The main way I would like to have interfaith relations is not with an eye of converting others of Christianity but of seeking respectful dialogue - working together where there is agreement.

There is little opportunity for interfaith connection where I live, but would crave more opportunities.

There is a difference between interfaith activities (with many different religions) and ecumenical activities (many traditions within the Christian faith - oikumenos). This survey erroneously conflates the two.

I hope this questionnaire is helpful, and I believe in the Reformed ideal of the body being guided as a community by the Spirit. But we don't believe in 'mailing in our vote' without being part of the discussion. To use the 'majority' vote of such a questionnaire to guide policy without bringing these voices together is anathema to our theology. All you will learn is what you already know - some are progressives and some are not. Some may have changed their minds since the last time such opinions were sought. And you've asked personal theological answers which are different from what I, personally, will preach. I am honest when I tell congregants in conversation that 'I always believe what I preach, but I don't preach all that I believe.' It would be too much! That's what our theological groups are for, our Bible studies, etc., to grow peoples' understandings . . . not to dump heavy concepts in 8-20-minute sound bites on Sunday morning. So changes among the elders, deacons, and non-ordained members are going to move at different paces, and this cross-section consists of all three, as I recall. How can you draw conclusions from this? I have had the privilege of serving congregations who value interfaith and ecumenical relations, who are open to broadening their theological positions on some issues in some circumstances (usually based on individuals whom they know . . . LGBTQ, Mormon, those living with disabilities, etc.), but those are congregations with whom my PIF and their CIF/MIF have been good matches. I know that they are not representative of all congregations. I LOVE our Big Tent church, and I hope that is what you learn from this exercise - that we are still a Big Tent.

God's grace can be experienced in my ways of experiencing God's presence. for me, it is through Christ, but others may find it in other ways.

Theologically I believe the Presbyterian Church is often more reflective of the past than of present realities. Our Biblical studies still revolve around a soft core fundamentalism (selective literal interpretations) rather than a progressive understanding of scripture and faith. Though our denomination is more friendly toward Judaism than others, we still don't grasp the totality of the Jewish origins of Christianity. Too many of us look for Jesus in the Old Testament rather than looking for the Jewishness of the New. As far as interfaith relationships go, we need to cultivate an understanding of how different religions are like different languages. Christianity is our language of speaking about the deep mysteries of life and why we are here and like languages we speak, no language is necessarily better than another, though there may be positive and negative aspects of each language of faith. It grieves me that communion liturgies in our Book of Common Worship more often than not reflect the tone of substitutionary atonement, a concept that hurts us more than helps us. To my mind, among our better attributes is that we Presbyterians are not doctrinal but rather confessional, which means there is hope for us yet. As confessional, there is room for dialogue and further development of an intelligent faith that does not relay on literal meanings or happenings in scripture. People in our pews need to be liberated from the idea that you have to believe certain things to be a follower of Jesus. We need to stress more the life of the community and how our common life together in love and in service (especially to the poor) is the heart of why we gather and not simply as insurance with regard to the life to come. Actually, in the old days, people believed in the threat of damnation. These days, most don't. The church needs to discover new ways of exciting the faithful to be faithful and communal life in a congregation still holds promise in this respect. As for myself, I dislike any emphasis on what God can do for me. I don't believe the idea that Jesus Christ is my personal savior. To ask 'what must I do to be saved?' is the wrong question. What must we all do together to saved is a more relevant question. Perhaps the question we should ask of confirmands is: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior? And then we'd better have a more informed definition of what savior means other than promising that when we die we get to go to heaven.

Vocation is living out our commitment to follow Jesus Christ in life

Interfaith is fine BUT our goal is spread the Christian news... NOT to claim the others as equal. Reformed theology is very different than non-reformed. It takes a lot of explanation to have people understand this in today's world. My vocation is my life.

We do need to be better able to converse intelligently with other faith traditions. Plus, we deceive ourselves if we imagine Christianity is a monolithic faith. With age and experience, I still agree that theology matters, a lot. I also find that dogmatism has less sway with me than ever. Reformed theology for me was rigorous enough to inform my faith and ground it intellectually. It's real significance for me later in life has been its ability to give me a basis for understanding and to free my imagination for further understanding. I still find my home in the Reformed/PCUSA tradition.

I do the best I can- with the time, talents God has given me...

Theology was once recognized as the queen of the sciences; may the PCUSA be the standard bearer of lifting this discipline to a rightful place of recognition once again. It is my hope that the PCUSA does not trivialize the earnest study of theology. cf. Calvin's comment on John 7:48

There was a question earlier about Christ's witness to other in interfaith situation. That question can be interpreted in 2 ways. 1) Do we witness to others by trying to convert them to Christianity, or 2) do we demonstrate God love in all our words and actions and witness to Christ to others without trying to convert them, but by loving them. I think we should do the 2nd in Interfaith interactions. I also believe that interfaith dialogue is really, really, really important.

Don't know what to make of this survey or where the PCUSA is theologically, either.

On interfaith relations vs. ecumenical cooperation: You suggest (but do not explicitly define) a clear demarcation between interfaith dialog & relationships, and ecumenical cooperation & communion. I would clarify this distinction by saying that respectful dialog with members of other faith traditions (i.e., non-Christian, including in that definition such heretical instantiations as LDS, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarian Universalists, Unity Church, etc., that cannot honestly or unequivocally embrace Nicene/Chalcedon creedal statements. By this condition, RCC, Orthodox, SDA, etc. are well and fully Christian) is well within our calling, as long as such dialog is mutual, respectful and allowed to be fully declarative of our conviction the uniqueness of Christ as the only mediator of reconciliation between God and all humanity. As far as _relations_ go, I have to question at the outset, if some formalized relationship/recognition is to exist, what are the Kingdom strategic and tactical goals which such relations are to serve? Bearing in mind that there can be no Kingdom work devoid of witness to Christ (else it is just kindly altruism), is such relationship serving as a precondition for witness, or merely to pursue 'common ground' or 'common goals' for some 'common good'? If so, leave that to the other NGO's and get on with the business of mission (see Luke 10). In contrast with this is the need all across the church universal to strengthen and deepen our ties, trust and mutual accountability, to pursue mission & ministry in greater synergy, transparency and economy, and most of all to represent to humanity not yet in Christ (including some 'membership' of the church) that, the beauty & brokenness of our diverse expressions, habits and history, all who are in Christ are one in Christ if they are in Christ at all--there is no division. Of all the means of evangelism left untried, this is perhaps the most important. Nevertheless, it is surprising how often (the closer you get to Louisville) that this distinction is blurred, or worse yet, completely unrecognized. Yes, we notice. I left Q12 and parts of Q11 blank. For Q11, 'The Bible cannot be reinterpreted according to the changing circumstances in which we read it' I would argue that 'reinterpreted' is a loaded word (is there a *textus receptus* of interpretation that was RE-interpreted?). The Bible is ALWAYS interpreted, but must be interpreted NOT 'according to the changing circumstances in which we read it' but according to the whole counsel of God (measure Scripture by Scripture, by witness of the Holy Spirit, which will never confound the plain meaning of Scripture). The Bible also must be contextualized (this is DIFFERENT from interpretation), and this IS 'according to the changing circumstances in which we read it' but must be based on solid, BIBLICAL interpretation. For Q11 'The concept of God's grace means that everyone, no matter who they are or what they do, is loved by God.' As worded, I cannot agree with this, as grace is the effectual extent of God's unmerited favor in the interest of His beloved. God's love begets grace, not the other way around. Yes, God loves everyone, 'no matter who they are or what they do.' But God's grace, while liberally and universally offered, is neither ubiquitous nor unconditional--on our part. Grace, to be offered, requires only God's unconditional love. But to be received, requires progressive willingness on our part to be radically and permanently changed by that grace. God is not a cosmic vending machine. For Q12, options 3 & 4 are clearly and decidedly heretical. No bones about that. But options 1 & 2 force us onto the horns of the Calvinist / Arminian debate. As per the Biblical witness, the reality is far subtler and steeped in mystery for such a simplistic, binary formulation. God is sovereign; yet we are free. God is initiator--we can do nothing to save ourselves; yet we are responsible. Salvation is a free gift; yet we must confess Christ (and live unto Him) as Savior and Lord. God elects us in Christ for salvation & service; we must obey as Kingdom people. God sees all humanity and all history from an infinite vantage point (Psalm 139, Rev 13:8, I Pet 1:20; John 8:58); we see through a glass, darkly. According to James Torrance, J. McLeod Campbell and others, the perspective of Calvin on predestination & election (for all his stress on assurance of salvation in the 1553 edition of the Institutes [cf. 1536 edition]) could never support the TULIP formulations of such as Abraham Kuyper or (gulp) Loraine Boettner. I don't know what the formulators of the survey were digging for here, but this was a seriously misguided collection

[cont.] of choices--even damaging, I would say. I would throw ALL the data out on this one. It is illegitimate (dare I say heretical) on its face.

I think interfaith interaction needs to happen regularly at local level. I think it far less useful at the denominational level. Give congregations some help in how to connect with other faith communities nearby

Faith cannot be separated from life. It defines actions and words used.

Interfaith relations are crucial to lives of every person around the world.

CPE was the single most important training that helped me identify God's specific calling in my life and it equipped me to use my seminary education to fulfill that calling.

As a Teaching Elder who works with refugees as my ministry, I have strong beliefs about incorporating global Christian practices, songs, liturgies, etc. in worship. To me, using worship materials from other cultures is very important, insofar as they are used alongside education, both for the congregation and for those planning worship. I spent a year in Ghana as a YAV and often see pastors wear kente stoles, for example. This is a great way to remind congregations of global peoples who worship the same God. At the same time, it represents to me the brief, superficial encounters many church leaders have with the church leaders in Ghana, without knowing what happens behind the scenes - how many Ghanaian pastors exploit their congregations for money and power, engage in inappropriate activity with congregation members and missionaries, and avoid societal sin such as child abuse, oppression of women, and interreligious hate. The lack of interaction between PC(USA) church leaders / missionaries and 'regular,' everyday people in Ghana astounded me. When I wear my kente stole in worship, it represents the relationship I have with the people there. In short, that one object carries deep meaning for both me and for others who wear it. I have seen 'global' paraments, communion items, breads, liturgies, and songs used simply because they are 'global,' while many in our denomination do not bother actually spending a great deal of time with global peoples. So I am torn - Do we bring these 'global' items and liturgical elements into worship, hoping that people will be moved to more relationship with diverse peoples outside of worship, or do we cease bringing them in unless someone with experience and/or knowledge of various peoples depicted in worship can instruct the congregation on the meaning of those symbols? Further, I have heard many discuss how we can bring more diverse peoples into our churches. This indicates to me the lack of contact with immigrant groups in the U.S., especially those that are not Hispanic, Latino, or Korean (The PCUSA seems to have done well with incorporating those groups into its church structure and culture.). Most immigrant and refugee groups (non-Hispanic/Latino) I know crave Sunday worship with their own ethnic group because that is the only time during the week that they can fully practice their own culture, speak and sing in their language with a large group of people, and struggle with those of their own culture how to combine their culture with U.S. culture in a healthy way. I would much rather them have that rich experience than try to incorporate them into mostly upper-class, white congregations that would not understand the blue-collar employment world, shift schedules that don't allow people to attend worship at 11am on Sundays, the fact that most of these congregations have to rent space from other churches, etc. Why don't we go visit their churches and see what it's like to worship God in another language, with interpretation, etc.?

God calls us in a variety of ways for a myriad of expressions of service. We are created in the image of God and into relationship in the human family. Our faith seeks understanding and expression with all people.

We grow in faith and understanding of God and other Christians when we experience worship through the eyes and practices of other cultures. While being ever true to the gospel and Lordship of Christmas, joining in worship with Christians from other cultures can only deepen our shared faith in a loving and merciful God.

It is important to understand that Christian vocation is not limited to church vocation.
We, as Reformed boy, must distinguish ecumenical and interfaith relationship. We should work hard for the ecumenical community where the faith of Trinity is professed and shared. But, we should limit ourselves to interact with the interfaith community where non-Trinitarian concept is the norm. It is absolutely right and good to respect and recognize those religions for the well-being of the society, but that should be enough.
I believe each of these topics is so important! Thank you for your work putting this survey together. God bless your continued work.
I think there is a great deal of difference between sharing our faith with others (whether Christians or not) and trying to proselytize. I believe that the former allows space for the Spirit to help us both learn and grow, whereas the latter is a kind of spiritual pride that assumes I know much more than I do, both about my faith and about the other person with whom I'm in conversation.
For most, Interfaith relations is to be preamble to evangelism, for we do well to understand the faith context of those without the gospel. For some, interfaith relations is properly their sole gifting and calling. In any case we express our love and the love of Christ to those of other faiths, respecting their personhood and their pursuit of spiritual wholeness, but holding to our calling to bring them without coercion to faith in Jesus Christ.
can I get a copy of this questionnaire to share with my colleagues in ministry. My Email is []
Promoting good interfaith relations is possible while still proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
I feel we are called by God to seek to have relationships with all people, no matter their religion, theology or vocation. By Jesus' death on the cross God took responsibility for everyone's salvation, our call is to build relationships with others and to bring them into relationship with God, however that looks.
I know that the Christian tradition is a faithful way to become closer to God. However, that does not make it impossible for God to have developed other paths, other traditions which can be equally effective. Relationship with God (witness Job, Abraham, David, Jesus, the disciples or negatively, Unfaithful OT Kings, Jewish Temple Leaders in the NT) is more important than exactly right behavior or belief. In question #24, I could honestly answer with any of the choices. Once in a while, God's behavioral call has been very specific, some, perhaps most days, the call is present but more general. Every day there is a call to live & speak the Gospel, to care for those in need - to love one another.
God reveals Godself to humankind. Humankind can only ever partially apprehend that revelation, because a finite mind can never encompass the entirety of the Infinite. God has chosen to reveal the Divine Self to me in the person of Jesus Christ. If God is sovereign, then God may, if God chooses, reveal the Divine Self through the Buddha or through the Prophet or through the natural world. To say that God can ONLY reveal the Divine Self through Jesus Christ is to restrict God. What is important is that the apprehension of the Divine Self - through whatever revelation - leads to beliefs and actions which glorify God and serve the needs of humankind.
I suppose I have been a little reluctant to answer some questions because I think it may be time for us to consider the definition of theological terms -- what does salvation mean, as an example? Or election? Does it continue to mean what we say it has for all of these years, or is God moving us to a deeper understanding?
N/a

While a pastor, I loved teaching, and now am a full-time middle school social studies teacher. I believe I have found my calling, but I also think my calling can and will evolve to something else. God's call is not a static, one-time voice. It is an ever-present reality we tap into: 'Another world is not only possible - she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.' — Arundhati Roy

Christian theology, at its best, is written, taught, proclaimed, lived in humility. We simply do not have all answers to all questions (as is seen in how often we argue with one another!). There are many admirable practices in many other faiths (for instance, the Mormon focus on family, or the Muslim discipline of prayer) from which we can learn much. As we have taken much in science, mathematics, and so forth from other cultures, so we might make ourselves stronger in our spiritual lives by hearing what God might have us to know from others. Theology, at its best, doesn't lock us in and cement our minds in one place, but instead opens doors to greater understandings of that which is far, far beyond our full human grasp. Our faith does offer the truest path up the mountain, but it's not a competition between religions--it should be a cooperative effort. What works for each of us best is not always the same thing--we should celebrate the many different ways to climb. My vocational choices--in ministry, in career, in community development and service, in family life and social and recreational activity, hopefully reflect that perspective.

Learning, for me, has been enhanced when I've been in the company of persons of other faiths. I recognize the limits of my experience and perspectives, and I value the additional perspectives God has provided me through others. I deeply value my own tradition. But I also know that God is Lord of all, active in all of creation, and engaged not only with me but all. So it behooves me to be receptive to God's presence and working, responsive to what God's doing and addressing to me in my exchanges with others.

the sense of God's guidance is a crucial part of my life and desire--but it is stronger at some times than others

n/a

This is an awfully poorly worded survey. Far too many choices that end up being 'forced' with an apparent goal already in mind. This subject is MUCH more nuanced than this particular survey will ever manage to address. I confess to being disappointed in this.

I believe we need to be very open to the various faiths and learn all we can of what they believe and how we can connect with them on common issues and concerns. That way it will help us bring about peace and help make a world that will live in harmony with our God.

The questions, particularly about interfaith relations, often didn't have the answer that I would have chosen -- so I chose the one closest to my beliefs. I believe that our God is a God of inclusion, and that somehow everyone (whether Christian or Muslim or Jew or Hindu or atheist, etc.) all get the opportunity to respond to God's love poured out to each one -- and that may have a Muslim or a Christian or a Buddhist flavor to it. In the end, there is only one God, imaged in many different ways, and, while Jesus is God's special revelation, I believe that people who worship in truth and from the heart who are in a different religion are saved too. As a former professorial colleague (and systematic theologian) once said to me, 'I believe we all get there somehow.' And the somehow is God's work, not mine. My work is to be faithful.

I think it is important for Christians to respect people of all faiths. Christian leaders should go out of their way to model this respect. Interfaith activities are important to build understanding and promote peaceful relationships in the community. Interfaith dialogue is important. Our calling as Christians is to witness to our faith, but only the Holy Spirit can work in someone's heart to bring about conversion. I prefer to let God judge those of other faiths, and not to make pronouncements about whether or not they have salvation. However, I do believe a person can find eternal life and a relationship with God through faith in Christ, and I am happy to share this faith in a respectful way with others.

I am called into service even when I cannot immediately discern my call or even my role in serving God. If I am there, God is with me and leading toward a place of discernment.

I take my ordination vows seriously.

In my learning of other faith traditions through interfaith dialog, my Christian faith is strengthened and I know all the more why I believe as I do. No other faith believes in preemptive grace. No other faith believes in a personal relationship with God that is grace-filled. How grateful I am to have faith in a loving God!

I feel our Reformed understanding of calling has been one of the greatest gifts in working with young people, both adults and youth. I find that in wedding counseling, school discussions and many other activities, this hallmark of the reformed tradition speaks volumes

I believe that as a Christian what I do and say all day is that which I somehow cannot not do. It is very compelling.

As a clergy, I always thought that I was called by God. Now, after 40 years of service, I am not that sure. On many occasions I felt disconnected from a so call connected church. Our church has too many committees and too many meetings. We go all over the U.S and other countries to hold meetings and our membership is going down the drain. My best experience of service has been working as a social worker, of course I had a second job while being a pastor because the small inner city church that I served, did not have the resources to sustain full time work, and as a social worker, I served children with disabilities and talk about satisfaction while in service. I am currently retired and served as a volunteer with an organization providing 'final wishes' to terminally ill children and their families. Serving dinners, helping with trays, getting coffee, cleaning tables and mopping the floor... this was more satisfying than any worship service that I ever attended. People of different ages, religions, race... all came together to serve and try to make life a bit more satisfying for children and families. That is really vocation and theology.

My calling of hospitality is central in my life. It has brought great challenges, joy and meaning to my life and family. Most of this hospitality has occurred outside the confines of the church through secular exchange programs, hosting long-term international students, short-term travelers and pilgrims, summer music and art students. Barriers to sharing the significance of this hospitality with church family exist where church is perceived more as a 'club' than 'the Body of Christ.' Relationships with boarding schools has also been a treasured life experience in meeting the spiritual needs of an ethnically diverse student body, faculty and staff. The highlight of my vocation in Specialized Ministry has meant a lot of one-on-one encounters primarily with terminally ill patients in hospice programs, home visits and clinical settings. Great interactions have occurred through multiple-disciplinary and inter-religious Hospital Ethics Board and cases, working on crisis management teams, training in disaster and child abuse prevention. Vocational choices have taken me on a rich grand, unique journey to work in Hawaii, N. Ireland, Germany, and four different American states. I could never have planned or designed such vocational experiences without God's hand being directly involved.

All are part of God's creation and pronounced good. Therefore, my role is to focus on my relationship to God and allow God to guide me into relationships with others for God's greater glory.

I have four daughters and they have introduced me to a global, diverse world. One dated a Hindu, one a Jew, and one a Catholic. One of my daughters married a French man who was raised Catholic but his mother was raised Muslim in Morocco. I love that the millennial generation represent the real world and embrace the expansive diversity in terms of faith, sexuality, ethnicity, race, language, etc. I often wonder if the majority of Presbyterians live a very sheltered, fearful life in very homogeneous circles. I am very comfortable using helpful spiritual practices from other traditions and have no need or desire or no sense of call to proclaim Jesus Christ the only Savior and to damn everyone else. That's outrageous. I am compelled by the Christian story and am grateful I happened to be born into a family and country that was predominately Christian, greatly increasing my chances to be Christian myself. But I do not discount other faiths and in fact find the development of religions fascinating. I abhor gender inequality and misogyny in any faith tradition, including my own. I lament the prolific violence, violent theology, misogyny, racism etc. in sacred texts of any faith and long for the silenced voices of women from the beginnings of my own tradition. I am shocked and appalled by Scientology's practices yet intrigued by what type of religion could evolve in a modern era. I don't think that if Jesus came today (for the first time) that the Christianity of the NT would have taken off. Timing seems to be critical to world religions developing in the first place. Frankly, considering the state of the world and denominational squabbling over human rights of parishioners, someday I don't want to be associated with any religion at all. But I remain compelled and called by the God I have been lucky enough to know in Jesus Christ, the God who so loves the world.

Vocation is just that, a calling. Having been called to life in Christ, daily behavior is more of a direction or an attitude than a list of 'good deeds to be done/bad deeds to be avoided.'

Our practice of religion is shaped by our cultural context. We must seek awareness of our particular cultural 'embeddedness' to enable us to expand and deepen our devotional experiences

My only concern is to never to lose your own identity in such discussions. So often I feel this is not considered in the discussions.

Actions / behavior come first, and then words. Understanding and appreciating others' lives and theology and piety within their own contexts is preferable to imposing my own upon them. The previously used term of 'Christian service' as referring primarily to a church-related vocation is thankfully out of date (almost!).

I think fostering good interfaith understanding and relations is extremely important in our world today.

I continue to be surprised that God has new plans for me.

I find interfaith worship problematic. The Bible is not vague about who God is and what God has done and is doing. Jesus was quite plain that he is the only way to God. While I appreciate that other cultures hold different views, I don't think that negates Jesus command to make disciples of all nations. This kind of vacillation on the part of the Church serves neither God, nor people. Either we really believe that the Bible is God's Word, or we don't. I believe in salvation through Christ and through him alone. And I think that once we have accepted his lordship, all of who we are and all of what we do is to be done in the 'new life.' Or as St Benedict instructed, we are to do all things as unto Christ.

Having been quite active in interfaith relations in a large city, I can say without equivocation that exposure to other religions always strengthens not only my appreciation for my own faith tradition, but my faith in God.

I am doing it right now. To fearfully leave one type of ministry for another.

We need to be clear about our reformed theology & practices or we become irrelevant as a denomination and as a church

I will be anxious to read the results of this survey

I have deep concern over a well-meaning, "nice" interfaith enthusiasm and its risks in jettisoning essential Christian content in order that everyone "get along". I feel the Christian/Reformed distinctives - part and parcel of <u>our</u> culture and identify are worth continued representation.
If the PCUSA continues to do church the same way of the past, then we will die...from the ashes may raise & phoenix movement that is similar to what new church development attempts today - God help us in our journeys to be faithfully led - not just humanly led.
Missionaries must learn the language customs of the people they serve in order to translate the gospel for understanding. This is true anywhere. How can we bring people to faith without understanding what they value.
Vocation has little to do with a paycheck and lots to do with my use of God's gifts
It is very easy to get distracted by the similarities between religion practices and the ways in which each may be doing good in their community. Throughout this and other experiences of outreach and openness, it is important to remember essentials of the faith God teaches through the Bible over and over - there's one God and one mediator between God and humans. God is love. God is right, and in God there is no darkness at all. God has already provided for the sin that separates us from God and hinders our attempts at good; Jesus Christ, who said: I am the way, the truth, Life - no one comes to the Father except by me".
I was a school teacher in a poor country gay advocate seminary & preacher. School teacher for Hispanic kids - I tithe. I no longer attend a church
Working w/people of different faiths is a great experience. I hope we can promote in the PCUSA more events with people from different faith
Roman Catholic & Orthodox Christians are Christians just like Presbyterians & all other Protestants
Presbyterians need to go back to the Holy Bible and its teaching. The last General Assembly by its actions has diluted our faith and the denomination is crumbling as a result. Unless we return to Christ as our leader, you folks will soon be out of a job!
PCUSA inter-faith discussions promote paganism and universalism just like at the last GA. "Muslim prayers". PCUSA leaders are naïve and ignorant and often non-faith people, but primarily Universalists who know little of Jesus personally, are consumed politically by anything left leaning and know almost no Xians from Hindu, Muslim or other countries, the persecution they face and how silly PCUSA inter-faith relations are to those other Religions that exploit them.
Interfaith relations is key to the future of our world that Christ came to save & God created to redeem all of creation
Serving is the joy of giving thanks for God's grace
I wish PC(USA) churches and organizations did more to promote / raise awareness of Spiritual Direction
This past presbytery meeting, an inquirer who was becoming a candidate publically shared on her Faith Statement & oral presentation that she had scruples about Jesus' being God's only way to Salvation & declared there is more than one way to get to heaven. Her statement mocked God's plan of salvation as defined by God's word, yet the Presbytery voted her approval demonstrating once again how the PCUSA has become disconnected from reform tradition
While celebrating our Reformed traditions, we need to move into dialogue and action w/all faiths. We should explore our common ground and shared path.

I believe that it is imperative that we Presbyterians along with all Christians develop a greater understanding of Islam. I am a retired Presbyterian pastor. I am currently studying Arabic to understand the Qur'an better. My study of Islam has already resulted in appreciative conversations (both ways) with Muslim people. I help my Muslim contacts to understand Christianity better, and they help me with Islam.
having a Muslim address the 222 GA was a disgrace for all who believe Jesus is our Mercy-seat through the Father. Not equal to Buddha, Abram, and Muslim prophets
Dr. Muck, Austin Sem, 1990's said: "We do a disservice to those of other faiths if we aren't totally honest about those doctrines that distinguish us". I concur. Our faiths do not seem to under sell their uniqueness. Sometimes, in interfaith dialogue, I feel we soft-pedal our beliefs. We don't want to offend.
As a devout Christian, I support interfaith relationships fervently as a man of peace-making, community-building and delighting in God's creation.
Too much time focusing on differences and distinctions rather than on common ground. Too much arrogance and not enough grace and service. Thanks!
PCUSA must take leadership in promoting interfaith relations and work to rid Christianity of "we are the only way to God!"
the little interfaith trivia exam was a bit insulting. Also, the PCUSA's political positions on Israel have poisoned much of the interfaith work we are doing locally with Jewish synagogues
Some choice of wording in your statements makes it difficult to answer
Good questions!! Very thought - provoking
I have studied other faiths quite a lot. It is okay to have relationships with them and to be amicable but we must realize that there are fundamental differences. That is not to say we need to have unpleasant relationships - we just see things differently. I have worked hard to serve as a PCUSA pastor. I will retire soon. Probably it was not the best possible use of my talents. But perhaps I can serve well in retirement
Wherever we see God's responsive, transforming love at work, the Christ's presence is made visible. It was made most visible in the person of Jesus. But the Christ is at work through all people. This means salvation is only through Jesus Christ, but not exclusively through Christianity
I believe the PCUSA has an impressive record of ecumenical & interfaith relations and we should continue and increase our efforts
PC(USA) needs to get back to Christian basics: worship and mission/evangelism. Quit the politics. We are little more than a wing of the Democratic party and have gone against Israel and duped by Palestinians. I sense Jew hatred in Louisville, PC(USA) HQ.
More reality education about other faiths & our own needs to be distributed, addressing the real <u>threats</u> each faith group pose to the others, as well as the <u>hopes & potential for good</u> .
I understand and support the need for interfaith relations but never at the expense of faithfully and respectfully proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ
"Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14
BTW: I taught both on xn ed (both on Judaism and Islam in the past year - In regards to Q17(f): god save me and E.T. Thompson - a virgin birth question! Parthenogenesis is not all that unusual biologically speaking in some vertebrates. What gets me is that someone rose from the dead. The Resurrection is at once "foolishness" and essential to Christianity.
It truly takes a village. I am blessed to be part of the PCUSA that engenders love and community for so many diverse groups of people. My life is blessed beyond measure by God and Jesus Christ
We live in a global community - PCUSA talk, a good game of social justice yet still 92% white

One of the pressing challenges for the Christian community is learning to live in an interfaith environment by strong faithfulness to our tradition & beliefs & practices while respecting the different paths of those of other traditions. Working with people of other traditions on matters of social need. & seeking to interpret our faith to those who feel cut off from God.
Very nice! Good work! Thanks for doing this. I'm very interested in changes in belief patterns. Would be glad to help you in this task
communion before baptism is a shock and an offense!
I gave up a law career to pursue a career in ministry because I felt so strongly called by God to do so. I now feel that I am in the vocation God intended for me.
Increasingly, I have been led to rediscover our Christian contemplative tradition. This has equipped and energized me professionally and personally. I feel more integrated than ever before, and able to engage an ever complexifying world with a clearer sense of the invaluable contributions of our tradition.
I am not currently serving a church
Q12 was difficult because of the choices. I think, that is, I believe there are many paths to God - for me that path is through the life & teaching of Jesus. I think God desires that ultimately all will be part of the creator as was in the beginning - how that happens I do not know - Poepole can choose a life giving path on a life taking path that leads to deadening life here on earth
I'm old enough that I had to be confirmed before I could join in the Lord's Supper. If wer allow anyone who want to take it to do so we diminish its meaning unless we provide a lot of education on its significance
Jesus met people where they were, showed god's grace & love, led them to deeper faith, as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, we are called to find seekers, make disciples, and send them out to repeat the cycle. Reflect Christ in all, love enemies, and serve where we are called. PC(USA) needs to hear voice of God, not human opinions, desires, or goals
The church risks losing its "saltiness" when we go too far try to be inter-faith oriented. We blur our distinct gospel message to please others. We need to remember that universalism is heresy
Remember - Jesus says, "anyone who calls me Lord, Lord shall be saved." Not a mention of baptism there. Baptism is for the covenant and welcome to the household of God as an adopted child. No mention of salvation there....
Connecting with people of other faiths is critical. We need more communication and especial eating together.
In college I experienced a program about vocation funded through Lily Grant - it is the reason I am a pastor today, and I'm grateful
The PCUSA is dominated by leftist ideology. It is where god called me, but there is not much room in it for people like me who are orthodox, conservative, evangelical. Thanks for listening
I believe it is important to understand other religions knowing that our mission is evangelism!
I view my everyday work in my profession as part of my worship & prayer as well: an offering to God
I am disappointed when members do not understand the need for ecumenical relationships. I believe respecting others is a necessary step in loving others as our Lord directs
the American revived emphasis talents & calling is more based on affluence, elitism, & pride of unique individuals having the economic freedom to self-actualize, and not so much on a desire to honor God and serve humbly in community in the body of Christ
Humbly respect all people and their religion while faithfully proclaiming God's love and grace that I have come to know/experience through Christianity. I am not called to judge but called to love God and love others - all others. Salvation is God's act and reconciliation with all creation will happen however God desires.

Interfaith is the way forward to peace & understanding in our world. As a pastor for almost 30 years my primary vocation now is as a co-active coach which primarily focuses on life purpose i.e.: God's will for your life / vocation without the hindrances of theological language 'call me'!!
My 60 years as Preacher, Pastor, Chaplain, Father of 5 children and service in 4 states with 12 separate churches makes me feel akin to Paul for each church. Are WWII, Korean War, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars would not have been possible many times I served military and Carlson church at same time a Middle East head of chaplains and conducted as O6 ranks staff. College at Bevoir fowl - Mead four and Dover Air Force for 12 years. Also served in Air, Japan, Korea, Israel, Bragg, Benning, Andrews, Maxwell
The church' is the communion of the whole world (Augustine) I believe God loves all people and desires union. Interfaith work is crucial, especially in this day & age.
Send us more questionnaires on the order & style of this one!! Thank you.
"In Christ alone"!
I stand firmly in our tradition and belief that we are reforming and always reforming. The building blocks are given in the tradition and we are called to see how these building blocks invite us create and to adjust the ways, we seek to respond to God's action in our world.
I am learning to question more & more and as a preacher I encourage my congregation to do so as well. God continues to be at work in & among us so that we grow in wisdom, understanding - and in humility & GRACE
I try to live with a conscious awareness of God's presence in all my activities of life.
God is doing a new thing in God's church, and it requires much prayer and discernment on our part to know what new practices and attitudes to adopt.
I have the good fortune and privilege to be a Minister of the Word and Sacrament (now called Teaching Elder) with the PCUSA - I serve as a hospice chaplain in the community. The PCUSA assisted me in all areas of vocational discernment for which I am eternally grateful.
Getting ready to retire from my job as a pastor - never will retire from my vocation
I am honorable retired. When I entered the ministry I was <u>very</u> Presbyterian. As years have gone by I remained connected to the church for community only
We are called by God for his ministry. Ministry is a call it is not a professional work.
God's love must result in obedience to his commands and will in our lives. God's love doesn't mean absolute freedom but freedom to do this will & obey his commandments. As shown in the example of the woman who committed adultery, she was not condemned but Jesus told her SIN no more.
My prayer is that the PC(USA) will focus more time loving God and loving others or we love ourselves
the PCUSA would do the world a glimpse of God if they / we demonstrated that we understand God is not found in one religion alone, that Christ is cosmic not limited to the tribe of Jesus, and the Christians that followed
Q24: badly worded question; God's guidance not so episodic
Q1c: What about the commandment regarding worshiping no other God? Q1: Studying about other religions should also be included to Q1
Q18: Jesus didn't make it a requirement to dine w/him
Q20: Worship must meet our cultures, not emphasize others
Q3: Friday <u>NIGHT</u> , because their sabbath begins @ sundown the day before the Sabbath <u>DAY</u> , which is Saturday. Q7: Catholicism - is this really being considered a different religion for the purpose of interfaith dialogue?!?

Q2c: Absolutely not! Only learn so there can be dialogue for conversion / salvation. Q23: I deal regularly with all these religious groups and we do creative outreach to our Hindu and Muslim neighbors and see conversions here and internationally.

Q20: Worship is about God not culture

Q12 a&b: these two are equally true.

Q15b: Yet our church is disconnected as influenced by modern day questions. Q20: As long as church does not compromise Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

Q17f: Huh? What is this a vitmus for? Q20: It is always present in [illegible] & celebrating. God - focuses on the principles & right form will follow

Q17: Both are sacraments ordered by Jesus. God choses persons to be saved (election) grace (gracia)

Q 20: Save times in attempting to identify with other cultures we abandon the counter culture outside our own door.

Q20: We love all people - but we don't adopt their practices or ignore our own in an effort to be "inclusive". We must stand on the foundations of our faith - not succumb to being current

Q24 response: When I'm willing to pay attention!

Q20a: other than acknowledging world communion Sunday

Q17d: the final authority is Jesus Christ, made known thru scriptures

Q24: Although it is in retrospect that I see God at work in the world.

Q2: this can be interpreted in different ways. Can we respect other faiths w/o intention of changing them, still witnessing Christ? I believe we can & should. QQ11: Reformed & always reforming - God continues to be revealed. Q12: but I believe in the theology of 2nd chances and do not believe hell to be a place of constant burning by fire. Q13: a&b.. But not completely definitive. Q17d: But this is tricky - how does one interpret scripture!! Q18: I think hospitality to the Table is important - but Baptism is also very important. I'm still wrestling with that. Q22j: There is not one square inch of all creation over which Christ does not say, 'This is mine' Abraham Kuyper. Q23: Vocation changes as (can change) experiences change

Q20: In my rural town of 1400, we have WASP's and 5-6 Hispanics

Q20: But as a way to incorporate the culture of the community where the church is planted. Incorporating a Hymn in Korean has no meaning to our congregation.

Q20: My church is in a mono-cultural community. Is it appropriate for us to make every Sunday a cross-cultural, transcultural, etc. event? What about our context and history?

Q2: But I do not think that means asking them to be us!

Appendix J: About the Presbyterian Panel

The Presbyterian Panel consists of two nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members of congregations and teaching elders (ministers of the Word and Sacrament). A new group of panelists are invited to participate every three years. Panel surveys are conducted quarterly, by mail and with an online completion option.

The Panel is maintained and directed by the office of Research Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The first Panel was created in 1973 to provide a means of informing leaders of the opinions and activities of Presbyterians across the church. Survey topics and questions are usually developed at the request of, and in consultation with, staff or elected members of national church entities. However, ultimate decisions on content and the disposition of Panel data are those of Research Services. Standards developed by the American Association of Public Opinion Research guide Panel surveys.

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