

A VISION FOR THE PCA  
Goals Towards an Ongoing Maturity  
in Our Worship, Work, and Witness in the 21st Century

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We believe that God is calling the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to be faithful to her Head and King, Jesus Christ, by obeying the Great Commission He gave to His disciples shortly before His ascension to rule the world and sovereignly advance His kingdom by His Spirit through the Church. We believe that the clearest elaboration of what it means to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you," is found itself in Scripture, particularly in the Epistles of the New Testament, the most prescriptive books for how the Church is to live, worship and carry out her great mission. To that end, and in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to discussing, striving towards, and wrestling through the following 33 propositions as worthy guidelines and ideals for the PCA.

## I. Reformed Orthodoxy

A. The Westminster Standards ~ All true practice must be founded upon Scripture and so we base all of the below on the essentials of the Gospel as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith & Catechisms (WCF&Cs), while at the same time recognizing the need in our ministries to communicate those essentials with plain and ineloquent words that today's cultures can understand (Ephesians 1:3-14; 4:4-6; I Corinthians 15:1-2; 16:13-14; II Thessalonians 2:15; II Timothy 1:13)

B. Humility ~ As the chief mark of every Christian ought to be love, so Reformed Christians should additionally be known first for our Humility as the chief outworking of the doctrines of Grace. We commit ourselves as members and officers of the PCA to do more teaching, preaching, writing and praying about this critical but much neglected hallmark of Reformed doctrine (Ephesians 4:2; I Corinthians 13; Romans 3:27; Ephesians 2:9; Philippians 2:1-11; I Peter 5:1-7; Psalm 115:1; 131; 149:4; Proverbs 11:2; 15:33; 16:18-19; 18:12; 29:23; Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:1-12; Luke 14:7-14; 18:9-17)

C. Unity ~ After humility, the next great application of the doctrines of Grace is that we would maintain the unity of the body above all other ambitions and goals for the church short of preserving the Gospel, eschewing all forms of party spirit, for as we are made acceptable to God by grace alone, so must we accept one another by grace, treating each other as God has treated us (Ephesians 4:3-6; 5:1-2; I Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-11; 10:16-17; 11:17-34; I John 5:10-13)

## II. Reformed Orthopraxy

A. Grace ~ That we would more and more understand the fullness of our need for the Gospel and so exemplify the Faith, Hope and Love that results from the Gospel, growing in the Fruit of the Spirit and characterized by the Beatitudes as credible marks of our sanctification

(Matthew 5:1-11; Galatians 5:22-26; II Thessalonians 2:13-15; I Peter 1:2; II Peter 1:2-11)

B. Wisdom ~ That we would grow in knowledge and in wisdom, learning the depths and sound applications of God's Word and truths, so that we may become a church that is discerning, stable, and peaceable (Proverbs 1:7; I Corinthians 8:1-3; Ephesians 4:13-16; James 3:13-18)

C. Law ~ That the Law of God in its summary forms would be well understood and regularly emphasized not only to direct our lives, but also to drive saints continually to the Cross of Christ, our only hope and boast (Galatians 6:14; Colossians 2:13-16)

D. Family ~ That our covenant families would be spiritually healthy and as royal priests, practice regular family devotions, singing and praying together, as well as studying the Bible and the great catechisms of the Reformed faith (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4; I Timothy 5:8; I Peter 3:1-7; BCO 63)

E. Calling ~ That our members would be encouraged to discover and pursue their particular callings with vigor and integrity simply to the glory of God, regardless of the visible quantitative impact on society (Ecclesiastes 4:4-6; 9:7-11; I Thessalonians 4:9-12)

### III. Reformed Worship

A. Word & Prayer ~ That we would move away from personality-centered and visually-driven worship towards a greater emphasis on public prayer and expository preaching of the Word done in fear, weakness and trembling (Exodus 20:4-6; Romans 10:8-15; I Corinthians 2:1-5; BCO 47, 50, 52-53)

B. Confession & Singing ~ That we would move away from performance-based worship towards more vibrant congregational participation and singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, incorporating the best words and music from all eras (Colossians 3:15-17; I Peter 2:9-10; BCO 51, 54-55)

C. Sabbath & Sacrament ~ That we would move away from cultural theme-based services towards the regular means of Lord's Day worship and the drama of the Sacraments, especially marking and rejoicing in every baptism and initial admission to the Lord's Table (Hebrews 10:25; I Corinthians 11:27-32; BCO 48-49, 56-58)

D. Uniting in Worship ~ That we would move away from an unpredictable variety of worship in our congregations towards a more united reverence, hymnody and free liturgy, brought about not by codification but by dialogue and a work of the Spirit (Romans 15:5-6; I Corinthians 11:16; 14:33, 36; 16:1)

#### IV. Reformed Ecclesiology

A. Active Reconciliation ~ That we would move away from homogenous-targeted congregations towards the full breadth of class and racial reconciliation enabled and demanded by the Cross (I Corinthians 1:81-31; Ephesians 2:11-22; Revelation 7:9-12)

B. Full Fellowship ~ That we would move away from segregating most of our formal fellowship groups by age and affinity towards being the family of God through meaningful interaction and cooperation between all types of families and members (Acts 2:44-47; I Timothy 3:14-15; I Pet 2:1-5)

C. Pastoral Ministry ~ That we would move away from program-based ministries towards the simplicity of earnest Pastoral teaching, praying and visitation by both Teaching and Ruling Elders (Acts 20:17-37; I Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:13-16; I Peter 5:1-4; BCO 8, 12, 60)

D. Diaconal Ministry ~ That we would move away from a hierarchical view of church office and an ascetic downplaying of physical need, towards the full inclusion of Deacons as equal Spirit-filled representatives of Christ's ministry in the church and demonstrating that the Gospel addresses all areas of a believer's life, including the physical and financial (Acts 6:1-7; I Timothy 3:8-13; James 1:27; BCO 7, 9)

E. Faithfulness over Favoritism ~ That we would move away from especially honoring the unique and large ministries among us towards the encouraging of the common and the small, knowing that we are all at best, as scum and dregs (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 1:18-31; 3:7; 4:1-13; II Corinthians 4:18; James 2:1-13)

F. Vital Connectionalism ~ That we would move away from our presbyteries and general assemblies being legal courts and business meetings only, and away from an independent spirit that undervalues our need for each other in the body, towards acting as a true church of Christ in all her fullness in our presbyteries and assemblies, including fellowship, prayer, worship, teaching, and cooperative work, contributing our various gifts to the good of the greater church, including the wealthier churches assisting other worthy churches in need (Acts 2:42-47; Acts 15; Romans 12:4-8; I Corinthians 12; II Corinthians 8-9; II Timothy 2:1-2; Hebrews 12:23; James 5:12-16; BCO 13, 14)

#### V. Reformed Scholarship

A. Culture ~ That we would continually examine the influences of cultural assumptions upon our individual and corporate faith, whether they be past or present, obvious or subtle, seeking always to be not conformed to the pattern of this world but to renew our minds in the ways of the Gospel (Romans 12:1-3; I Corinthians 1:18-31; II Corinthians 10:3-5)

B. Sufficiency ~ That we would particularly study and uphold in our day the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture as wise enough to instruct the church in her means as well as her ends, paying particular attention to how various mediums affect and possibly compromise the message itself (Mark 7:5-9; I Corinthians 2:1-5; II Timothy 3:16-17; I Peter 1:22 - 2:3)

C. Seminary ~ That we would pursue new ways of supplementing or even partially replacing formal seminary studies with less costly and longer mentoring studies to provide for non-upper/middle-class candidates and to better practically train men in the church in the areas of ecclesiology, homiletics and practical theology (I Corinthians 4:14-21; Philippians 2:19-30; II Timothy 2:1-7; Hebrews 13:7-17)

D. Theology ~ That we would continue to explore the riches of the Historical Redemptive aspects of Scripture, while remaining united around the Systematic Theology found in the WCF&Cs, not seeking to refine the bonds of our unity beyond that which is absolutely necessary (Acts 7; Romans 9-11; II Corinthians 3; Galatians 3; Hebrews 8-12; together with all references in I.A,B,C above)

## VI. Reformed Evangelism

A. Powerful Evangelism -- That we would place our hope in seeing both individual lives and the culture transformed only by the Gospel, neither holding out the Law as effectual for inner change, nor distracted from our mission by judging those outside the covenant (Romans 1:16-17; I Corinthians 5:9-13; BCO Preliminary Principles 1, 7, 8)

B. Ethical Evangelism ~ That we would emphasize first and foremost that we, officers and members alike, bear witness to Christ by living out the Gospel in our lives through modeling repentance and reflecting the character of Jesus so as to draw those whom God is drawing, always being ready to give a reason for the hope within us (Galatians 6:9-10; I Thessalonians 4:11-12; James 1:22-27; I Peter 2:11-12; 3:8-17; II Peter 3:11)

C. Authentic Evangelism ~ That we would encourage our officers and members to carefully consider the means and context of our verbal witnessing opportunities so as to respect all men when sowing, and not attempt to harvest those whom God is not harvesting (Proverbs 27:14; Mark 4:10-12; II Corinthians 2:14-16; Colossians 4:2-6)

D. Sensitive Discipleship ~ That we would make concerted efforts to reach all kinds of people wherever they may be found, focusing on the Gospel and majoring on the majors, teaching folk only as much as they are able to bear, and yet over time seeking to disciple them in the fulness of the Reformed faith (Acts 20:27; Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:16-19; 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28-29; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

E. Careful Discipleship ~ That our sessions would make every effort to confirm in membership only those whose professions are sincere and accurate, and that they continue to take care that those whose professions are discovered over time to be false are properly disciplined and if need be, removed from the rolls (Matthew 16:17-19; 18:15-20; I Corinthians 5; BCO 12, 57)

F. Kingdom Driven ~ That we would encourage churches to continue sending out core groups to plant new churches whenever a congregation reaches the size when it is no longer reasonably possible for her active members to know and love each other personally, or when her pastors are not able to effectively care for all of the members, both for the preservation of authentic community and to better assure that glory is reserved for God alone and not inadvertently shared with any church or her leaders (Isaiah 48:11; Acts 4:32; Romans 11:36; 16:1-16; I Corinthians 3; 16:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-12; BCO 12)

## VII. Reformed Missions

A. Ecumenical Sensitivity ~ That we would cooperate with other Christian churches in prayer, mutual community concerns and real, personal communication about possible membership transfers and active discipline (Ephesians 4:3-6; Colossians 4:7-16; III John 9-10)

B. Home Missions ~ That we would boldly penetrate the dark regions and cities and rural communities of our country, persisting in ministry and church planting among the abandoned and needy, the secular and hopeless wherever they may be found (Mark 2:15-17; Ephesians 5:8-14; James 1:27)

C. The University ~ That we would recognize the influence of the modern university upon all classes of society and so seek to continue to minister to students, professors and employees on more and more college campuses (Acts 17:16-34; II Timothy 4:1-5)

D. Foreign Service ~ That we would cooperate strongly and humbly with indigenous Reformed churches in other countries by assisting them in church planting, presbytery development, and theological training (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 10-20; Titus 3:12-14; Revelation 7:9-12)

E. Ends of the Earth ~ That we would produce bold missionaries and martyrs who take the Gospel to the outmost frontiers of this world's dark strongholds, with the end of bearing witness to Christ's rule and planting churches abroad (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:18-23; Colossians 1:15-20; Revelation 7:9-12)