

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The central area is white, providing a clean space for the text.

# Grace Presbyterian Foundation Class

# Three Class Series

- ▶ Where Did Grace Presbyterian Church of Columbus come from
- ▶ The Essential Tenets of the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO)
- ▶ Covenant Partnership

# How Did Grace Presbyterian Start?

- ▶ Increasing tensions at FPC over theological issues within the PCUSA
- ▶ PCUSA rather than “Always Reforming” seemed to be “Always Conforming” to the culture.
- ▶ The press tried to imply it was simply an issue within the church regarding same sex marriage. But that was just a symptom of a much larger issue....



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



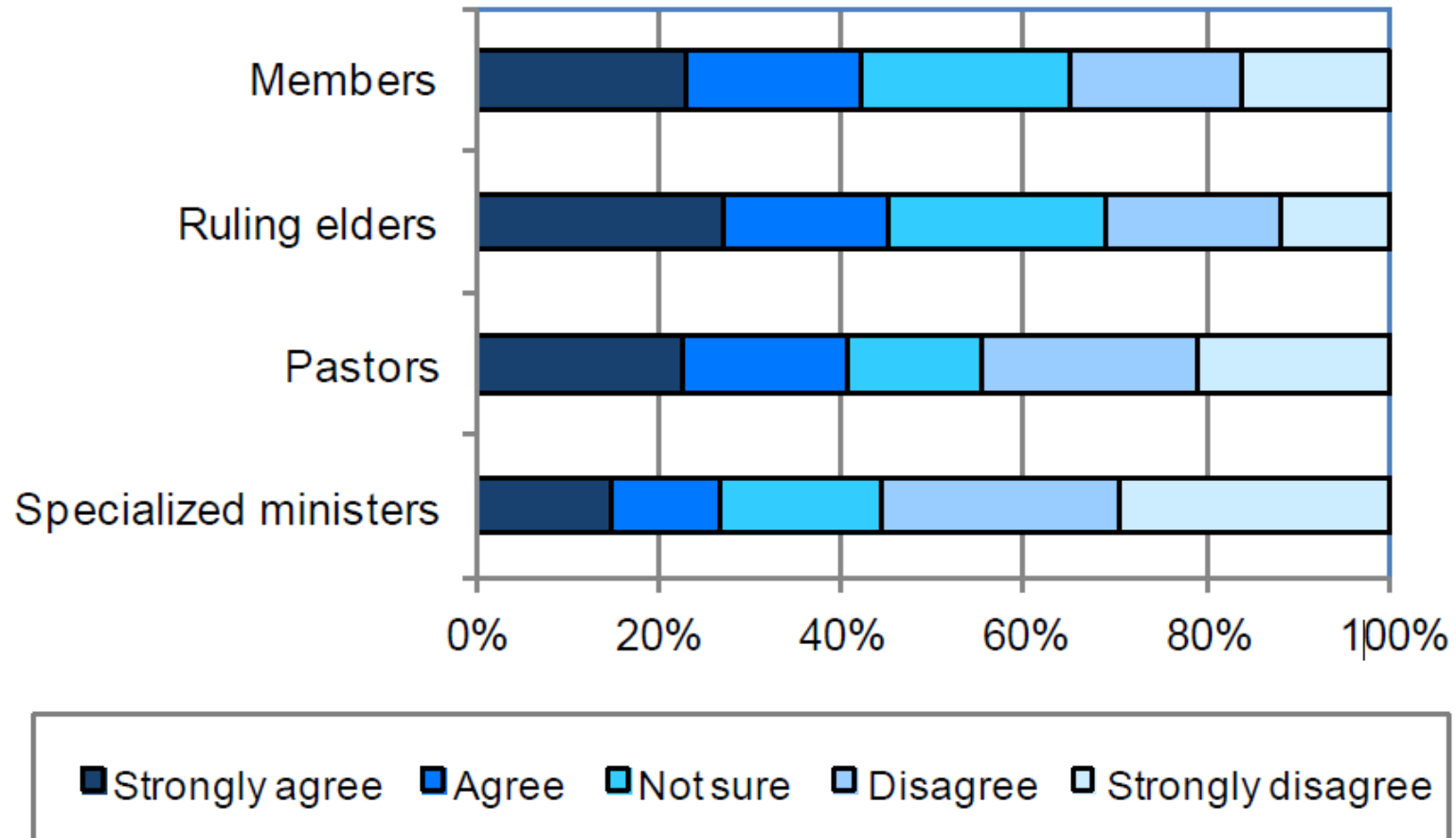
**REPORT**

**Religious and Demographic Profile of Presbyterians, 2011**  
**Findings from the Initial Survey of the 2012-2014 Presbyterian Panel**

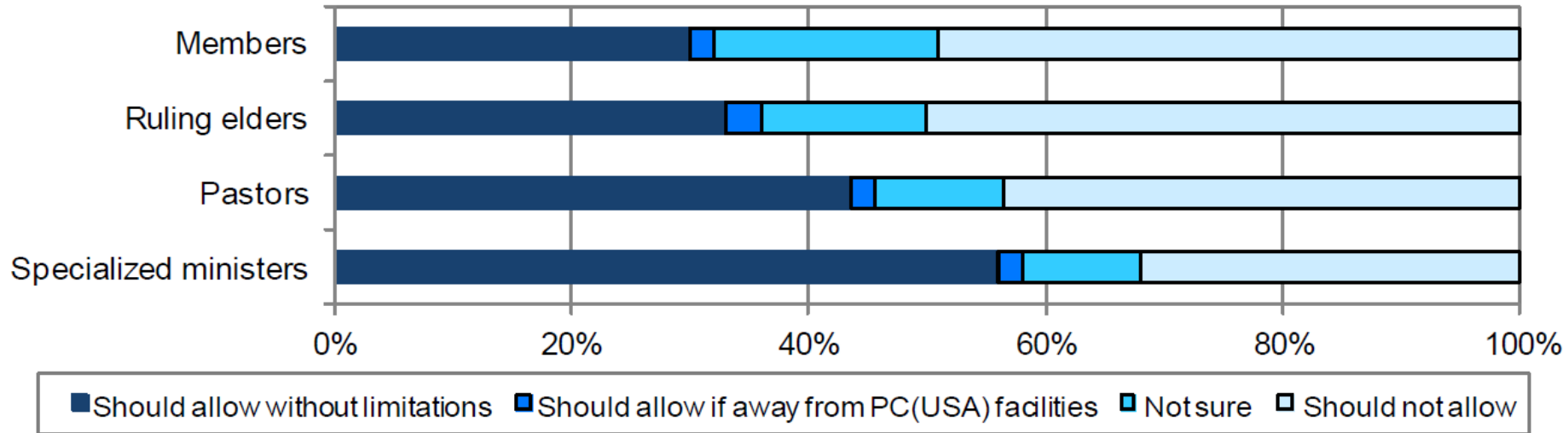
# Where Grace Presbyterian Came From

- ▶ **Four in nine pastors (44%)** and five in nine specialized ministers (56%)—but only about one-third of members (30%) and ruling elders (33%)—**believe the denomination should allow PC(USA) teaching elders to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies** without restriction in U.S. states and territories where same-sex marriage is legal (p. 8).
- ▶ Majorities of teaching elders (pastors, 77%; specialized ministers, 62%) but fewer members (42%) and ruling elders (46%) *strongly disagree* or *disagree* that “all the world’s different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.” **[23% of pastors think all religions equal]**
- ▶ Among pastors, almost identical proportions *strongly disagree* or *disagree* (45%) and *strongly agree* or *agree* (41%) that following Christ is necessary for salvation.

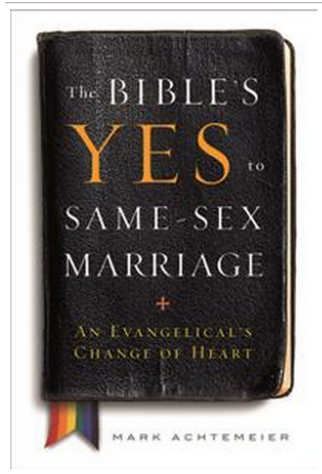
**Figure 7. Opinions on “Only Followers of Jesus Christ Can Be Saved”**



**Figure 10. Opinions About Allowing PC(USA) Ministers to Perform Same-Sex Marriage Ceremonies in U.S. States and Territories Where Same-Sex Marriage Is Legal**



# Linked on PCUSA.org



## The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage

An Evangelical's Change of Heart  
*Mark Achtemeier*



Availability: Ships Immediately  
Publisher: Westminster John Knox Press  
Publication Date: 6/10/2014  
ISBN: 9780664239909  
Pages: 156  
Trim Size: 6 x 9  
Product Type: Paper



DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MORE BY AUTHOR

EDITORIAL REVIEWS

[Click here](#) to download free chapters from Mark Achtemeier's *The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage: An Evangelical's Change of Heart*.

In the early 2000s, Mark Achtemeier embarked on a personal journey with the Bible that led him from being a conservative, evangelical opponent of gay rights to an outspoken activist for gay marriage and a fully inclusive church. In *The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage*, Achtemeier shares what led to his change of heart: the problems with excluding groups of people and the insights into the Bible's message that led him to recognize the fullness of God's love and support for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Readers will discover how reading snippets of Scripture out of context has led to false and misleading interpretations of the Bible's message about LGBT persons. Achtemeier shows how a careful reading of the whole Scripture reveals God's good news about love, marriage, and sexuality for gay and straight people alike.

I have prayed this past year for the Presbyterian Church to return to God's word. Sadly, a minority of people who really don't understand the words within the Holy Bible, have been infected by satan, and the results will not be good for the church and humanity. I wrote the General Assembly a year ago, and quoted scripture which condemned same sex relationship, but only received back a response which basically told me to enjoy my new denomination! I responded and asked for an apology, but there was none. After 75 years as a Presbyterian, elder, trustee, teacher, etc., we have been thrown out. Shame on those who support this anti-God movement, and God will be your ultimate judge. Dick Morrisett, Davison, MI



# Decision Time....

- ▶ FPC formed a team to discern whether or not FPC should leave the PCUSA, and if so where should we go?
- ▶ The recommendation was to leave.
- ▶ Some in the congregation felt differently, formed another group to convince the congregation that we should stay.
- ▶ Eventually there was a vote, 2/3 approval was required to leave. We were 8 votes short, so FPC did not leave PCUSA, yet the majority of the congregation wanted to leave.

# Grace Presbyterian Church of Columbus is Born

- ▶ The afternoon after the vote, 4/19 an email was sent asking if anyone was interested in starting a new congregation.
- ▶ Wednesday 4/22 we met with 23 people in attendance
- ▶ Facebook Group Midnight 4/22
- ▶ Webpage Midnight 4/22
- ▶ Sunday 4/26 was our first service with 71 in attendance
  - ▶ We were expecting maybe 25
- ▶ Made the news
  - ▶ Ledger Enquirer
  - ▶ Christian Post Website

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What is ECO?

# Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO)

- ▶ In the summer of 2010, seven pastors from the Presbyterian Church (USA) spoke of finding new ways to encourage each other in faith, ministry, and mission.
- ▶ They were concerned by the declining membership within their denomination (from four million to two million in 40 years).
- ▶ These pastors dreamed of reclaiming a sense of covenanted community among leaders from a Presbyterian and Reformed heritage, and to find new ways for churches to connect, grow, and multiply.
- ▶ In January 2011, these pastors sent out a letter to PC(USA) pastors around the country, asking if others wanted to join in a crafting new way forward. The response was overwhelming: just seven months later, in August 2011, nearly 2,000 men and women gathered in Minneapolis to dream and pray. This became the birth of The Fellowship of Presbyterians, a ministry association that seeks to equip and connect those in various Presbyterian denominations including the PC(USA).
- ▶ But some pastors and congregations felt God calling them to leave the PC(USA), and many young seminarians were looking for a different context for ordination. As a result, in January 2012, at a conference in Orlando with more than 2,200 in attendance, a new denomination was formed: ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterian

## Our Name

The name ECO is not an acronym. It reinforces our passion for strengthening the ecosystems of local churches. We believe the church is a living organism that needs life-giving resources to help it grow, thrive, and multiply. ECO is committed to cultivating a healthy, diverse, resource-rich ecosystem where pastors and congregations can flourish.

Our full name (ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians) speaks to our core commitments:



### Covenant

To connect leaders in accountable relationships and encourage collaboration.



### Evangelical

To advance the gospel of Jesus Christ and plant new missional communities.



### Order

To commit to a shared way of life as we unite around a shared theological core.



### Presbyterian

To stand within our Reformed heritage and celebrate the life of the mind.

Rev. Dr. Dana Allin, Synod Exec.

ECO Short Video Clip

3:48 probs in PCUSA

5:00 how ECO different

5:30 ECO culture

6:00 Core and Progress

9:09 What is Progress?

# What Are Tenets?

- ▶ Tenets are the core beliefs of our understanding of theology as found in scripture.
- ▶ Another word that could be used is Dogma
- ▶ The Tenets describe what we believe about:
  - ▶ God's Grace in Christ
  - ▶ Election for Salvation and Service
  - ▶ Covenant Life in the Church
  - ▶ Faithful stewardship of all of Life
  - ▶ Living in obedience to the Word of God

## Some Samples...

- ▶ “The ongoing act of creation is further manifested in God’s gracious sovereignty and providence, **maintaining** the existence of the world”. To combat the notion that God created the world, wound it up like a clock, then let it run unattended.
- ▶ Incarnation: Jesus is truly God and truly human (with body and soul). Virgin Birth was real. Jesus ascended to Father in **bodily** form.
- ▶ We recognize and honor the image of God in every human being from **conception** to **natural** death.



## ...and Why Are They Essential?

- ▶ It is important to have an official set of Essential Tenets that express our beliefs. Without them, we are left to suggestions and individual discernment within the denomination and even within congregations that could allow for interpretations of scripture that could end up as untrue, unchristian and possibly even heretical (e.g. Jesus is not the only way to God/Salvation).
- ▶ The Tenets also define our understanding of scripture that differs from other denominations:
  - ▶ Method of salvation: election/grace vs works righteousness
  - ▶ Original sin
  - ▶ backsliding

# Do I have to believe it?

- ▶ It is not necessary to “sign off” on the essential tenets to be a covenant partner of GPC or any ECO church
- ▶ It is necessary to affirm your belief in the essential tenets to be a pastor or elder at GPC and any ECO church

# Essential Tenets.... More to come

- ▶ We will study the essential tenets in more detail in the second class.
- ▶ Go to ECO website, print off a copy of the Essential Tenets
  - ▶ [www.eco-pres.org](http://www.eco-pres.org) -→ Resources
- ▶ Q&A

## Next Week

- ▶ Meet at the Azalea at Doubletree Hotel, next to The Rock at 10:45