

Presbyterian Alphabet Soup: What All those Initials mean...

APC and ARPC The **Associate Presbyterian Church** and **Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church** are small Covenanter synods located in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas. Covenanters are characterized by exclusive Psalmody in worship, and the Scottish Covenanting tradition. Though partially merged in 1855 with the **UPC**, a tiny minority of the **APC** continues apart still.

BPC Bible Presbyterian Church. This group formed in 1938 as a split from the newly formed **Orthodox Presbyterian Church**. In 1956 it divided into two groups, the larger **BPC, Columbus Synod** and the smaller **BPC, Collingswood Synod** which was made up mostly of supporters of Carl MacIntire and his 20th Century Reformation movement. The Columbus Synod group changed its name in 1961 to the **Evangelical Presbyterian Church**, a name which it held until 1965, when it merged with the **RPCNA,GS** to become the **RPCES**. The **BPC, Collingswood Synod** group is still operating under the **BPC** name.

CPC and CPCA Cumberland Presbyterian Church. A Tennessee Presbytery left the **PCUSA** in 1810 in order to license men to preach who dissenting on predestination. They adopted a revised *Westminster Confession of Faith* in 1814. With leanings towards liberalism and the social gospel, a partial merger back into the **PCUSA** of about two thirds of the body (90,000) in 1906 brought those liberal trends with them. The **CPC** started ordaining women in the 1880's. A Negro church, the **CPCA**, was formed in 1874 – several later attempts to merge these bodies have failed. The **CPC** is located in the South and Southwest.

CRC Christian Reformed Church. Not precisely a Presbyterian denomination, this Reformed Church was formed by Dutch immigrants. In the late 20th century, it moved to allow the ordination of women, prompting more conservative denominations to break with it.

EPC Evangelical Presbyterian Church. This name has been held by two different Presbyterian denominations. From 1961 to 1965 it was the name taken by the **Columbus Synod** division of the **Bible Presbyterian Church**. In the 1981, another group made up of conservatives who because of their views on ordaining women and charismatic gifts and other issues would not be welcome in bodies like the **PCA** or **OPC** took the same **EPC** designation upon leaving the **United Presbyterian** denomination.

NAPARC National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. This is a conservative ecumenical organization in the United States.

NPC National Presbyterian Church. The organizational name of the **Presbyterian Church in America** during its formation in 1973. The name was voluntarily relinquished when a local congregation in Washington D.C. objected to the new denomination taking this name.

OPC Orthodox Presbyterian Church Coming out of a break-up of the **Presbyterian Church of America** in 1938 over matters related to Christian liberty, eschatology, and the independence of denominational agencies, the **Orthodox Presbyterian church** has continued as a solid Reformed body very similar to the Presbyterian Church in America, though differing somewhat in organization and methodology, and perhaps in an emphasis on doctrine. Merger efforts with the **RPCES** in the seventies failed, and the **OPC** continues as a smaller body enjoying good fraternal relations with its sister churches.

PCCSA Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. Organization of the Southern church from 1861-1865. After the Civil War the church changed its name to the Presbyterian Church in the United States (**PCUS**).

PCUS Presbyterian Church in the United States. The major southern branch of the American Presbyterianism from 1865 to 1983 when it merged with the **UPCUSA** to form a new **PCUSA**.

PCUSA Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Current name for the mainline Presbyterian denomination in the United States. Though merged in 1958 with the **UPC** becoming the **UPUSA** and then with the mainline Southern **PCUS** in 1983 to become again the **PCUSA** and the largest Presbyterian body in the United States, its membership has been declining significantly. Recent controversies over the ordination of homosexuals and same sex marriages have resulted in a rapidly growing **Continuing Church Movement** in 2001 by conservatives seeking to reform the church from within in regard to Scripture, salvation through Christ and the sanctity of male-female marriage.

RPCES Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. Denomination formed in April of 1965 from the merger of the **Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod (RPCNA,GS)** and the **Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)**. This body joined and was received by the **Presbyterian Church in America** in 1982.

RPCNA Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, (Covenanter). A Covenanter church that along with exclusive Psalmody maintained a position on the Supremacy of Christ over the nations and in civil matters in the 1800's that encouraged civil dissent (not voting or holding civil offices) until the US Constitution acknowledged Christ's Lordship. They continue small, but strong.

UPC United Presbyterian Church. A smaller mainline denomination in existence from 1858 to 1958. Its churches were located primarily in the midwest and in the north. It merged with the **PCUSA** to form the **UPCUSA**.

UPCUSA United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. This was the name of the denomination formed by the 1958 merger of two largely northern Presbyterian denominations, the **PCUSA** and the **UPC**. This body continued under this name until 1983, when it merged with the southern **PCUS** to form a new denomination under the old name of the **Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA)**.

Old light? New Light? Old Side? New Side? Old School? New School? These refer to different movements which led toward splits in both the American and Scottish Presbyterian churches.

* **Old Light.** Orthodox Presbyterians of Kentucky and Tennessee during the revivalist controversy in early 1800s. Also conservative or traditionalist elements of the American and Scottish Covenanter churches in the 1830s schism. **New Light.** A New Light split led to the formation of the Church of Christ by Kentucky Presbyterians after the camp meeting revivals. Covenanters in both America and Scotland broke out in the 1830s over several issues. * **Old Side** represented the ultra-Calvinistic wing of the schism of the 1700s. **New Side** represented a mainly orthodox but more revivalistic wing of the 1700s Presbyterian Church. * **Old School** was the orthodox Reformed church in the controversies of the 1800s. **New School** was a generally inclusivist and often liberal movement within the 1800s **PCUSA**.