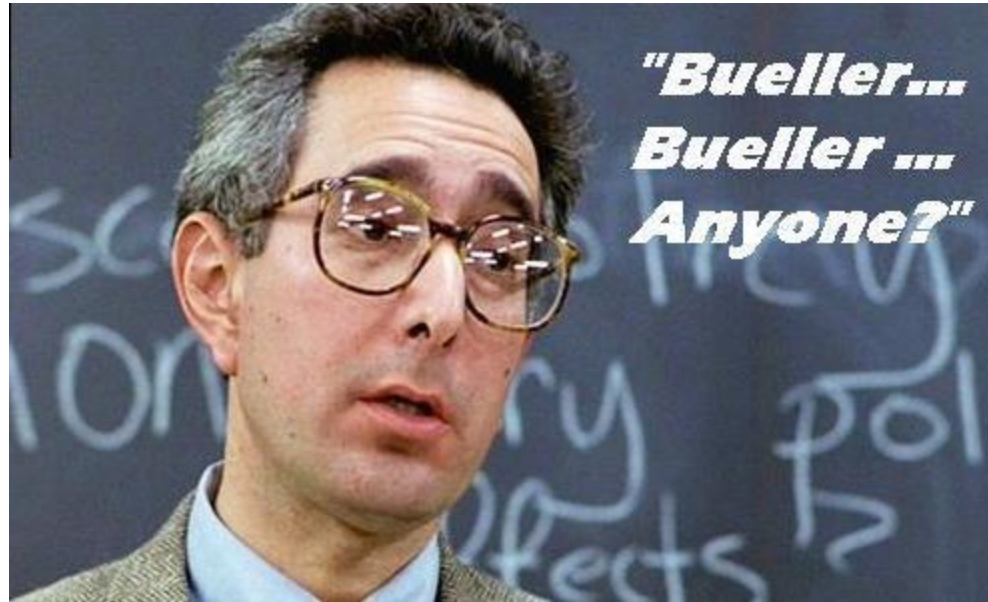


# Sermon

## “General Assembly”



# **Another PowerPoint for a Sermon?! On Church Polity?! ☹**



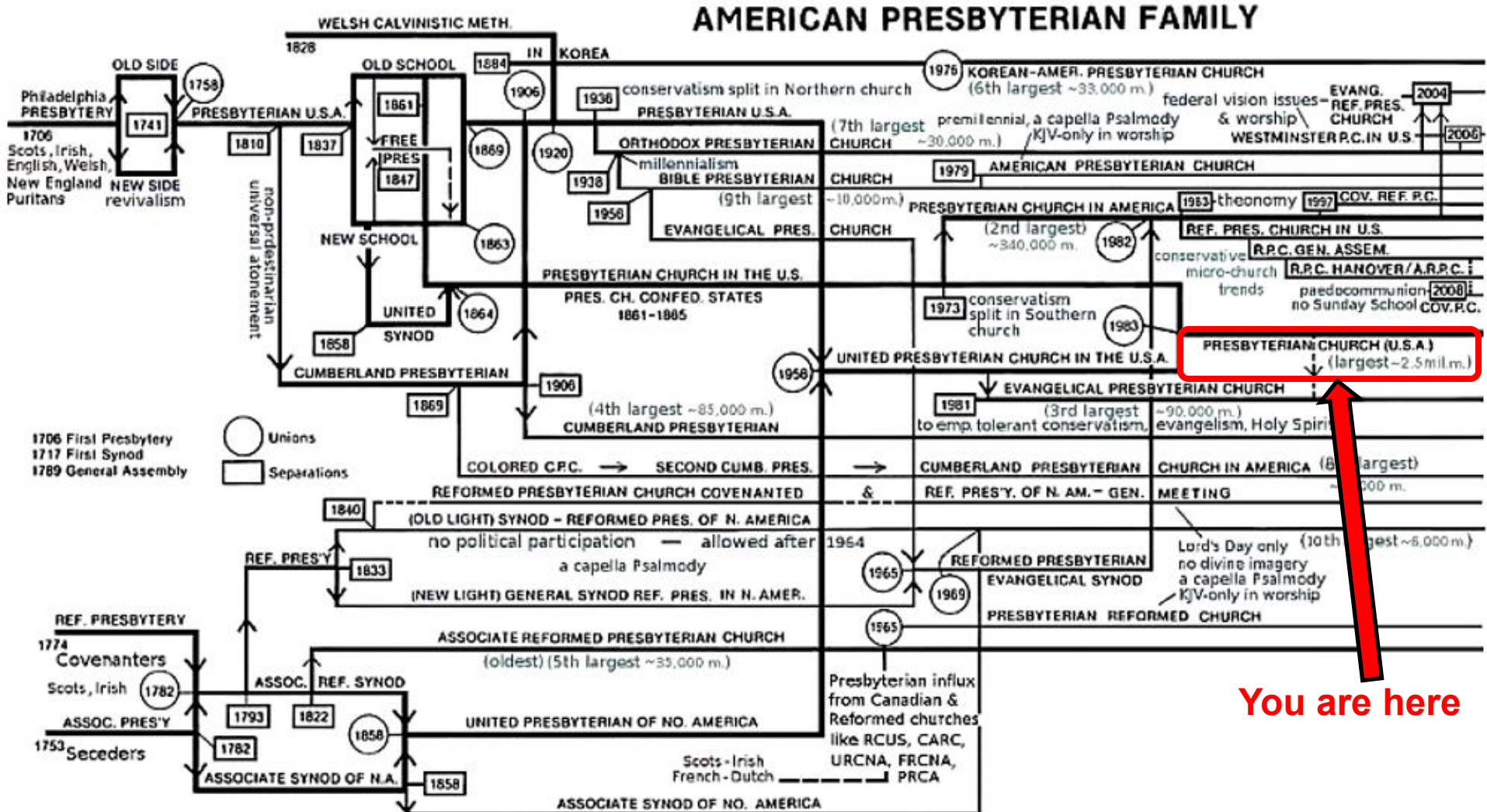
- **Is this better suited for a lunch & learn?**
- **Are you just taking advantage of a captive audience?**
- **Is this just an excuse for being lazy in the summer?**

**YES!**  
**but also good to know**

# Basis for Presbyterian Structure

- **Rooted in the Reformed conviction**
  - Scripture contains a blueprint for church order that directly mirrors the practices of the apostolic New Testament church
    - Acts 1:21-26, 14:23, 6:1-16, 15; 1 Timothy 3:8-13, 5:17
- **Plurality of leadership**
  - *presbyteros* means elder
  - Ruling Elders (session) = Teaching Elder (minister)
  - Connected hierarchical bodies
    - Congregation – Session – Presbytery – Synod, General Assembly
  - All representatives democratically elected

# History of Presbyterian Church in U.S

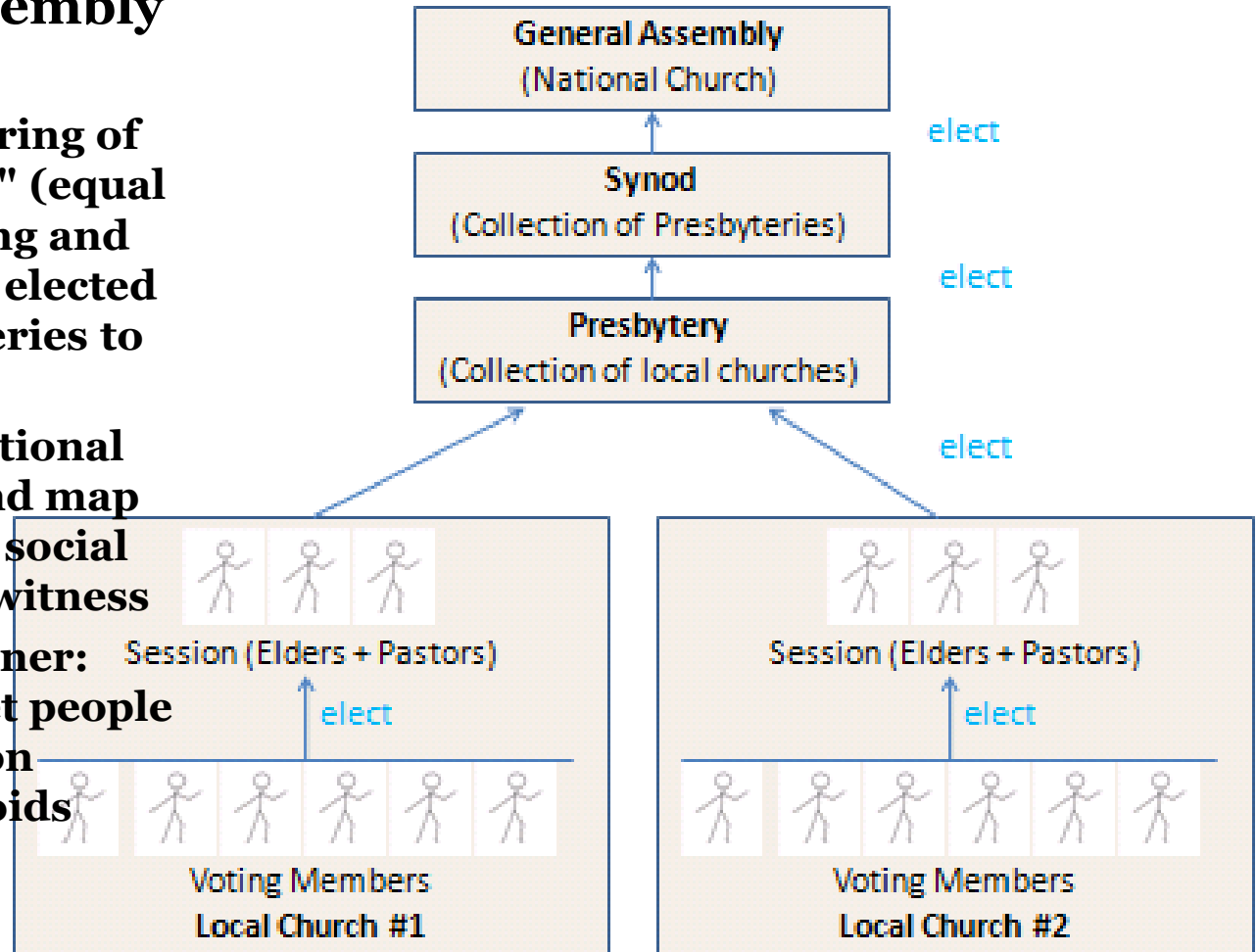


*Similar polities, different theologies*

# Presbyterian Church Structure

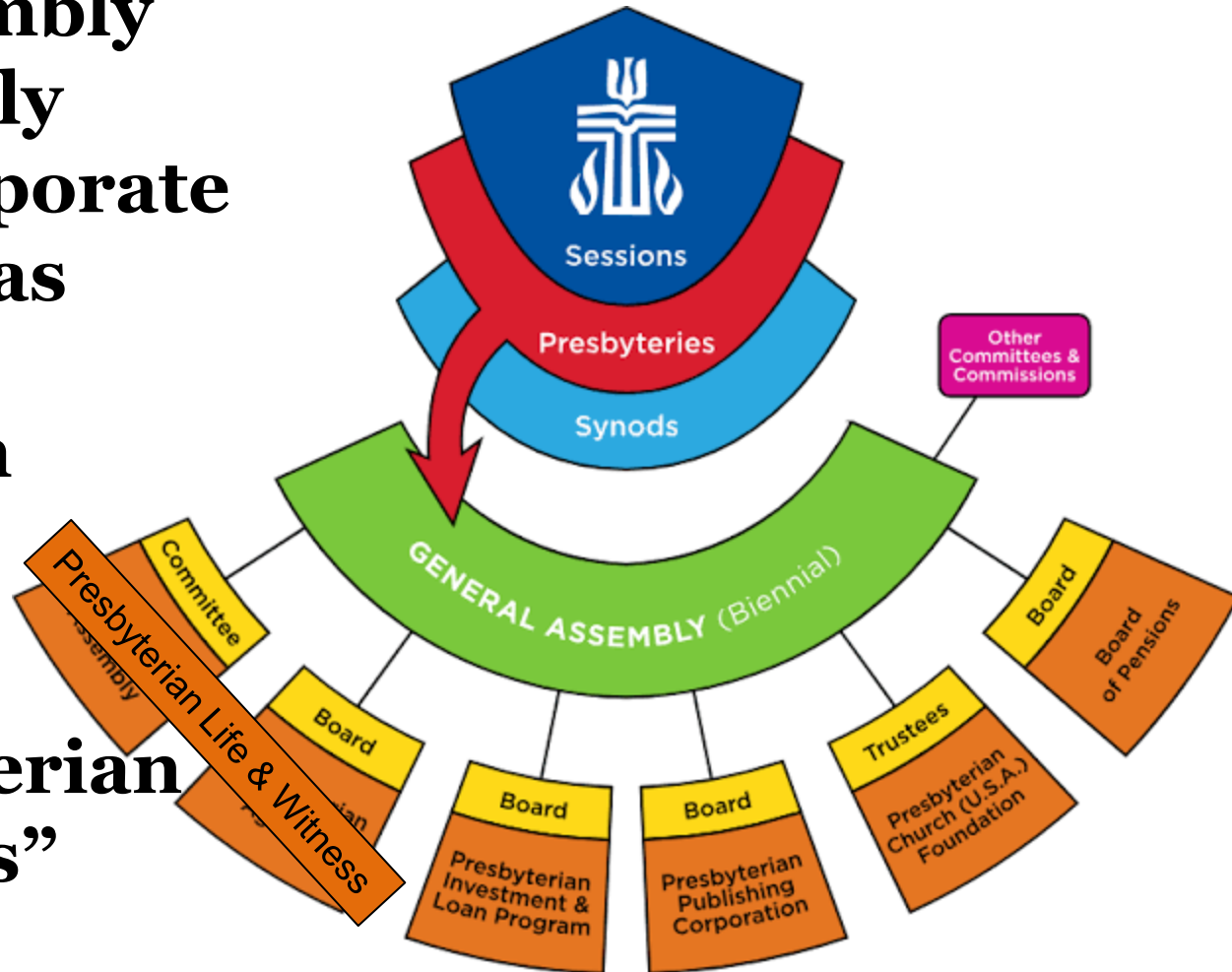
- **The General Assembly Meeting:**

- A biennial gathering of "commissioners" (equal numbers of ruling and teaching elders) elected by local presbyteries to deliberate
- Vote on constitutional amendments, and map out the church's social and theological witness
- **Ideal commissioner:** extrovert to meet people & craves a session meeting on steroids



# PC(USA) Structure

- **General Assembly operates legally through a corporate entity known as PC(USA), A Corporation (or "A Corp")**
- **New “Presbyterian Life & Witness” controversial because of laying off mission workers**





- **227th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) aka PC(USA)**
- **June 22 to July 2, 2026 in Milwaukee, WI**
  - (plus prior committee meetings)
- **508 commissioners from 164 presbyteries plus 508 advisory delegates**
- **Theme: “Persevering Toward Wholeness”**
- **Scripture focus: Rooted in passages such as Isaiah 58:6–12**



# Public and Social Witness

- **White Christian Nationalism**: The Assembly voted 459–25 to formally label the ideology a "theological error" incompatible with Jesus' teachings. They advanced a constitutional amendment to add this stance to the Book of Order.
- **Israel and Gaza Resolution**: Commissioners voted 454–15 to declare Israel's military campaign in Gaza a genocide and a violation of international law. They authorized divestment from corporate entities linked to the conflict, specifically targeting Palantir Technologies and GE Aerospace.
- **Ethics of Artificial Intelligence**: The church officially signed onto the "Rome Call for AI Ethics". The policy explicitly directs pastors and church leadership not to utilize generative AI tools as a substitute for sermon preparation or pastoral counseling.
- **Gender-Affirming Care and Immigrations**: New social witness statements were established to protect access to gender-affirming healthcare and critique enforcement practices by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

# Gender, Sexuality, and Church Leadership

- **LGBTQIA+ Pastoral Candidates**: The assembly approved changes to the Church Leadership Connection platform. Congregations looking for new pastors can now explicitly signal an **openness and readiness to call LGBTQIA+ candidates** within their Ministry Discernment Profiles.
- **Denomination-wide Family Study**: Commissioners voted to advance a comprehensive, multi-year formal study analyzing evolving definitions of **sexuality and family structures**.

# Internal Operations and Polity

- **World Mission Accountability:** Following the controversial closure and staff terminations at PC(USA) World Mission, the Assembly initiated an **independent investigative commission** to audit national agency leadership.
- **NDA Ban:** The Assembly voted to immediately **ban the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs)** for national church employees and staff.
- **Return to In-Person Assemblies:** In a 389–83 vote, the assembly decided to abandon the hybrid model and return to a **fully in-person General Assembly format** starting in 2030, which includes fully subsidized on-site childcare for commissioners.
- **Financial Adjustments:** Approved a **3% budget expansion** for the national church alongside a per-capita rate increase of \$2.10 for the upcoming fiscal year. Established a single, unified national budget framework covering both the 2027 and 2028 fiscal years

# Some Observations

- **“Presbyterian Life & Witness” Off to a Rough Start**
  - Appears the final step in the structural unification process of merging the functions of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) into a single operational entity was not handled well.
  - Many people so upset that overtures bordered on retribution and retaliation—even though the process has been going on for years and I saw no impropriety.
- **White Christian Nationalism Trying to Infiltrate**
  - “Presbyterians for the Kingdom” were present particularly among the youth delegate advisors. They are part of larger mainline “Operation Reconquista” movement.
  - Their goal is for evangelicals to join mainline churches in order to tip the scales and win back denominations they claim have been hijacked by secular liberalism.
- **LGBTQIA+ and Sexuality Continue to be Struggles**
  - PC(USA) forcefully supporting LGBTQIA+ but people also pushing for monogamy and traditional family structures.
- **Presbyterian Polity is Two-Edged Sword**
  - Good: shared leadership, democratic elections, “big tent”, prayerful deliberations
  - Price: slow to (re)(en)act. World and narrow issue groups move fast and dominate

***We are trying to be more Christ-like rather than dogmatic***