

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
COMMUNICATOR

FROM THE PASTOR:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

Remaining Faithful

An amendment to the Constitution of the denomination of which First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon is a part, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been approved. A majority of Presbyterians is required to amend the Constitution, and this majority was reached on May 10, 2011.

In this newsletter is:

1. A letter from the elders and pastors of First Presbyterian Church which provides an initial response.
2. Q&A to this amendment, as well as additional background information.
3. Our congregation's Statement of Faith.
4. Our Congregation's Human Sexuality Position Statement.
5. A brief overview of the History of Human Sexuality and Homosexuality in the Presbyterian Church (USA).
6. A letter from *Presbyterians for Renewal (PFR)* with more information and perspectives on this change.

To reiterate the sentiments of the background information of the letter:

First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon's beliefs and practices are unchanged. We will continue to uphold biblical standards for church officers. The freedom we embrace is the freedom of the Gospel, which calls us all to live humbly in the righteousness of Christ (Romans 6:18).

In Christ,
Jonathan



JUNE 2011

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Mark 10:45:

For the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many .



Youth

“God-Sightings”

Ben looks to attack while Brayden celebrates his beautiful shoe. Andre and Alexis watch from a safe distance



Do you believe that God is actively involved In your life and the world today? If you do, then hopefully you can point to various moments in your recent history and point out ways that you have seen God at work. Perhaps you had just enough money to handle an untimely bill, or perhaps a song came on that you needed to hear. It is a discipline to keep our eyes open to this sort of thing, and that's why on our mission trips we try to develop that habit in the lives of our Participants and leaders.

This past Sunday night we began our mission experience with our first preparation meeting. I had a “God Sighting” before the meeting even began:

On Sunday afternoons I try to get out and play ultimate frisbee with a group of guys. This past Sunday, our fun landed me in the emergency room (nothing major, I'm fine)! On my way to the hospital, my first thought was that I needed to cancel our first mission trip meeting. Not quite the momentum booster we needed. Yet as I thought about it, perhaps I wasn't depending enough on my other leaders.

So I made a few calls, and my leaders were more than willing to make things happen. I felt at ease as I sat in the waiting room about our meeting.

I was hearing God in that moment -in the waiting room- saying, “Hey, I've got this taken care of.”

After a few hours of waiting and then quickly receiving attention, I was only a little late to our meeting. Regardless of my making it there, my leaders continued to lead the night. I was able to sit on the sidelines and watch my leaders handle the night without a problem! We started our mission experience on the right foot, and it would have happened whether I was present or not.

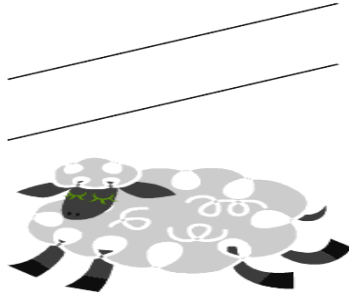
It was such a blessing for me to see that this team was not so dependent on one person; we are a team, ready to give grace and fill in the gaps when necessary. I am so excited to see what God does in and through our team -regardless of whether or not I show up!

In Christ,
Kyle

Upcoming Youth Events

- May 26** **Grill N' Chill**
6-8 at Hiawatha
- May 29** **No Youth Mission Prep**
- June 5** **Senior Recognition**
- June 5** **Bake Sale & Auction**
(During Sunday School in the fellowship hall, will continue the following week)
- June 9** **Grill N' Chill**
6-8 at Foundation Park
- June 12** **Parent Meeting**
9:45 in the Parlor
- July 3-9** **Youth Mission Trip**

VBS is almost here!!



It's time for Vacation Bible School! We are preparing to love some children! We are going to travel back in time to first century Nazareth and get a glimpse of how Jesus lived as a child.

*We'll play games to simulate household chores.

*We'll visit Mary's house and meet Jesus' mom!

*We'll go to the market place and buy food, plant some flowers, visit the wood shop and learn about olives and wool.

*We'll even experience a dye shop first hand!

There is always lots of singing, learning and love! And there is still time for YOU to join us and have some fun this summer!

June 20-24

9-11:30 am

Please call the church at 393-1326 to register your child for a week of fun!
Or call or email Amanda Gebhardt at 740-310-2112 or ahunter_1@yahoo.com
to find out how YOU can help!

GRADES K-5

I would like to thank you parents for sharing you children with me during Sunday mornings. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning and growing with them over the last nine months. They are truly wonderful and delightful children. I would also like to thank my very dedicated volunteers this year who have been there religiously every Sunday - Marsha Bibart, Missy Kaufman, Amanda and Greg Gebhardt, Carole Waugh, Marilyn Weil, and Kyle Peters. As most of you are aware, we will be taking the months of June and July off. Sunday School for Grades K-5 will start back up August 7th. Please fill out the form below if you would like to take one Sunday or more to teach. The lessons will be done as a large group and we will not split into grade levels. If each parent or another church member would be willing to take at least one Sunday, we will be able to continue to disciple our children for the full month August. Thank you for volunteering to dedicate your time to our children. You can place this form either in the collection basket, give it to me (Michelle Shillito) or leave it in the office.

SUMMER SUNDAY SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS GRADES K-5

NAME _____ PHONE NUMBER _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

I would like to volunteer to teach Sunday School Grades K-5 for the following Sundays during the month of August:

August 7 ___ August 14 ___ August 21 ___ August 28 ___

I would like to plan the lesson ___ **I would like to have the lesson planned for me** ___ **I would like to work with another adult** ___.

Have a wonderful break and enjoy your family time! God Bless You!

In Christ,

Michelle Shillito, Sunday School Leader

TREASURER'S NOTES

If you are retired, you probably know, anyone over the age of 70 1/2, who has an IRA account, is required to take an annual distribution from that account. The minimum amount of money required is a calculation that depends on several factors. Naturally, more than the required minimum amount may be distributed. The distributed amount is usually added to ones income and Federal Income Tax must be paid on that income. However, this coming tax year of 2011 provides for a one year exception. If an individual so chooses, they may arrange to have all or some portion of the distribution given directly from the IRA account to a charitable organization such as First Presbyterian Church, We would give credit to the individual toward his/her pledge or general offering but the amount given will not be counted as income and zero Federal Income Tax will be due on that amount. In addition, this could reduce the amount of taxes on ones Social Security benefits. This is particularly beneficial to those who plan to take Standard Deductions in 2011 rather than itemizing. You should first contact your financial and or tax advisor (s) to fully understand all the ramifications of this one time benefit.

Bob Meldrum, Treasurer

Congregation Elects Officers & Clerk of Session Change

First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon held a congregation meeting on Sunday, May 15, 2011.

Four members were elected to serve as Elders on Session for the three term starting July 1, 2011 through June 31, 2014. Elected were James Carhart, Deborah Curran, Betty Hirsch and Mary Crumm.

The Session (Board of Elders) consists of 12 ordained Elders. Four elders are elected each year to a three year term.

Elected by the congregation to serve on the 2011-2012 Nominating Committee were John Bibart, Carole Conway, John Denzer, Clint Eutsey, Lauren McKenzie, Penny Sajkowsky and Brenda Schultze. Our bylaws and The Book of Order call for the Session to appoint a moderator and one other Session member to also serve on the committee.

Thank you to the 2010-2011 Nominating Committee members John Bibart, Melanie Bolender, Deborah Curran, Monica Eutsey, Ralph Haffenden and George Stone. Pastor Jonathan Fettig served as an ex-officio member.

A new Clerk of Session was approved at the May 10 Session Meeting. Mike Conway replaced Bill Shriver in this important role.

First Presbyterian Church

106 North Gay Street
Mount Vernon, Ohio 43050, USA
(740) 393-1326



Jonathan P. Fettig, Pastor
firstpresbyterian@rohio.com
www.mtvpres.org

Dear Members and Friends in Christ of First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon (FPC),

As the elders and pastor of FPC, we are writing to inform you of a recent event in our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Specifically, a significant change has been made to the PC(USA)'s standards for church officers (pastors, elders and deacons).

While this change is deeply troubling, it does not change FPC. We have the freedom and the responsibility to continue upholding biblical standards for church officers.

For many years, the PC(USA) has been embroiled in debate regarding what standards ought to be required of deacons, elders and pastors. In particular, the debate has focused on whether our denomination should maintain "the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness" (PC(USA) *Book of Order*, G-6.0106b).

An amendment to the PC(USA)'s constitution was recently approved, and this biblical standard for church officers will soon be removed from the *Book of Order*.

The Session of FPC stands with the many congregations and individuals with whom we have worked and prayed to prevent this change, which we regard as a significant break in the covenant relationship of the PC(USA). This revision is a departure from the beliefs and practice of the historic and global Church.

What will change in the Presbyterian Church (USA)?

- *De-centralization:* The removal of the denomination-wide standard gives congregations and presbyteries (regional governing bodies) permission to make their own decisions about appropriate conduct for church officers. Some have stated that they plan to ordain leaders who do not abide by the "fidelity/chastity" standard that is being removed.

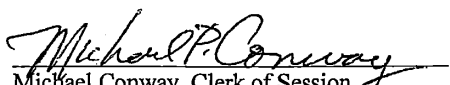
How will this impact First Presbyterian Church?

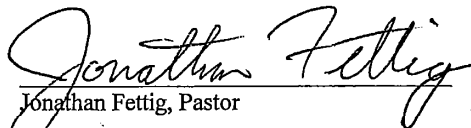
- *FPC's beliefs and practices are unchanged.* We will continue to uphold biblical standards for church officers. The freedom we embrace is the freedom of the Gospel, which calls us all to live humbly in the righteousness of Christ (Romans 6:18).
- The Session is studying and evaluating these events in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

We invite you to communicate any questions or concerns you may have, by writing to the Clerk of Session, Mike Conway (at the FPC address, or email pastor@mtvpres.org).

Prayerfully Yours in Christ,

The Session (Elders and Pastor) of First Presbyterian Church


Michael Conway, Clerk of Session


Jonathan Fettig, Pastor

Our mission is:

To grow in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and to make Him known in our community and the world.

Questions and Answers about the passage of Amendment 10A:

What has changed in the PC(USA) Constitution, the Book of Order?

a. The following section, G-0106b, of the Book of Order has been deleted:

Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage of a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacraments.

This Section G-6.0106b was added to the Book of Order in 1996. The provision was often referred to as the *fidelity and chastity* standard. It summarizes the biblical standard for sexual morality by requiring of all officers fidelity within the marriage of a man and a woman or chastity in singleness.

b. The new section reads as follows:

Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

What is the impact of the change in G-6.0106b on churches in the PC(USA)?

The impact can perhaps best be summarized as creating local option for ordination decisions. The explicit *fidelity and chastity* standard is gone. On its face, the new G-6.0106b does not sound objectionable. But the history of the decade's long struggle over the "fidelity and chastity" provision and the intent of those who brought it forward is clear: the amendment will allow presbyteries to ordain pastors and congregations to ordain elders and deacons who do not live in accordance with Biblical standards of "fidelity and chastity." In addition to this change in G-6.0106b, the 2008 General Assembly of the PC(USA) rescinded an Authoritative Interpretation that had been in place since 1979 that strongly supported the biblical standard of *fidelity and chastity* and also adopted an Authoritative Interpretation that emphasizes that the ordination decisions of governing bodies should be given great deference. The net result of these changes is to give freedom to presbyteries and congregations to make ordination decisions without the guidance of any explicit standards and without the fear of any meaningful challenge. Very importantly, however, the change does not impose any particular ordination standard on any local governing body. It does not, on its face, celebrate or encourage a life style that does not conform to biblical *fidelity and chastity* standards. Nor does it require ordination of those who do not conform. Nevertheless, the net effect of the change, along with other actions taken by prior General Assemblies of the PC(USA)

gives unbridled freedom to presbyteries and churches to decide for itself what standards to apply. There is no doubt that some presbyteries and churches will utilize this freedom to ordain officers that do not comply with *fidelity and chastity* standards.

What is the impact of the change on FPC?

As stated in a letter from the Session of FPC, *FPC's beliefs and practices are unchanged*. We will continue to uphold biblical standards for church officers. The freedom we embrace is the freedom of the Gospel, which calls us all to live humbly in the righteousness of Christ (Romans 6:18)."

What is the "official" reaction and response of FPC?

In anticipation of this vote, the Session has been discussing the mission of our congregation for the last nine months. The Session will continue to prayerfully and carefully study all of the implications of the amendment over the coming months.

When will the change take effect?

The change will take effect on July 11, 2011.

Approved by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon
11/13/2001 (Reaffirmed in 2005, 2010, 2011)

First Presbyterian Church, Mount Vernon
A Statement of Faith

*"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the certainty of what we do not see."
(Hebrews 11:1) The First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon affirms our faith in God as expressed in the historic confessions of the Church, including the Nicene and the Apostles' Creeds. Based on our understanding of the Bible and The book of Confessions, we wish to re-affirm the following tenets of our Christian beliefs:*

I Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior.

- ❖ Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, fully God and fully human, the Word of God revealed.
- ❖ Jesus lived on earth, proclaiming God's kingdom through his words and actions. He died on the cross for our sins, was raised from the dead so that we might have eternal life, ascended into heaven and sits at God's right hand, where he prays for god's children.
- ❖ Salvation is found only through the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

1) Scripture

Matthew 3:17; Matthew 4:17; Mark 9:7 Luke 11:20; John 1:1-14; John 11:27;
John 14:6; John 20:31; Acts 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 20-22
Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-5; 1 Peter 2:24

2) The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Nicene Creed 1.2; The Heidelberg Catechism 4.015-018, 4.029-030;
The Westminster Confession of Faith 6.043-047, 6.055-056
The Shorter Catechism 7.021; Theological Declaration of Barmen 8.11
The Confession of 1967 9.07-10

II The Bible is the ultimate authority for our life and faith.

- ❖ The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are God's word, pointing to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God.
- ❖ The power of the Holy Spirit is needed for a true understanding of the Bible.
- ❖ The Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and life.

1) Scripture

Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 1; Psalm 119:1-2, 11, 105; Isaiah 55:8-11;
Matthew 4:4; John 1:1-14; Romans 15:4; Colossians 3:15-17;
1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:22

2) The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Second Helvetic Confession 5.001-14; The Westminster Confession of Faith 6.001-010; Theological Declaration of Barmen 8.11-12, 26-27;
The Confession of 1967 9.03, 9.27-30

III Christians are called to respond to the good news of God's love in Jesus with faith and obedience.

- ❖ All people are sinners and need to trust in the forgiveness found in Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Believing in Jesus Christ is the first step in a life-long journey of faith which is described in various ways by the Scriptures; repentance, transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit, inward renewal, becoming a new creation,
- ❖ putting on the new self, dying to sin, sanctification, *discipleship*.
- ❖ God's people are called to a life of holiness in all aspects of life.

1) Scripture

Leviticus 11:44-45; Deuteronomy 6:3; Ezekiel 18:30-32; John 3:16;
John 14:15; John 17:17-19; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 1:17; Romans 3:22;
Romans 6:1-14; Romans 6:19-22; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 4:16;
2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 2:8-9; Ephesians 4:22-24;
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 John 2:3-6

2) The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Heidelberg Catechism 4.086; The Shorter Catechism 7.029-040, 086-087;
The Confession of 1967 9.23-24

Adopted by the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Mount Vernon, OH 11/13/01

Adopted by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon - 11/13/2001
Reaffirmed in 2005, 2010, 2011

First Presbyterian Church, Mount Vernon, Ohio
Human Sexuality Position Statement

I. Introduction

In light of the current debate within the Presbyterian Church (USA) regarding human sexuality and homosexuality, the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Ohio, believes that we must make a statement as to our understanding of God's will in the area of sexuality. This ongoing debate has raged for over 20 years within the PC(USA) and is a reflection of the controversial nature of this issue in contemporary culture. We do not single out the issue of human sexuality to titillate, nor is this statement meant to suggest that we deem this one issue any more important than a host of other matters. Rather, we feel compelled to respond to recent events within our denomination regarding this issue. Our position is based on our interpretation of the Scriptures, which we believe are the most complete revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ and the ultimate authority for matters of life and faith. In addition, this statement describes in greater depth one tangible example of the third tenet of our church's Statement of Faith (approved October, 2001) which asserts that "Christians are called to respond to the good news of God's love in Jesus with faith and obedience" and furthermore that "God's people are called to a life of holiness in all aspects of life."

We do not take this task lightly, and we do not believe we have acted hastily. The Session of this church feels that it is essential, when discussing issues of such complexity, to move forward with prayerful deliberation, and this is what we have done. These issues have been debated among members of Session, and this statement underwent numerous drafts before this version was completed. The final draft of this statement is the most thorough in scope, and not only outlines our positions with respect to human sexuality and homosexuality, but also provides Scriptural references to support these positions as well as commentary where necessary to illuminate or clarify a particular tenet. In addition, historical background to provide a context for this debate within our denomination is provided as an appendix to this paper.

II. Position Statement

With regard to human sexuality and homosexuality, we believe that Scripture teaches that:

- 1) Human beings are created in the image of God, both male and female. Therefore, human sexuality is part of God's good creation and God's good gift to us.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28

- 2) Sexual intercourse is to be exercised and enjoyed only within the context of a covenant relationship of marriage between a man and a woman.

Scripture: Genesis 2:24-25; Exodus 20:14; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:9; Ephesians 5:31-33; Hebrews 13:4

- 3) Those who are not married are called by God to be celibate. Therefore, heterosexual promiscuity, homosexual behavior, and the blessing of same-sex marriages are not in accordance with God's will; whereas, those who are in control of their temptations and/or immoral tendencies aspire to God's will and demonstrate their faithfulness to God.

Scripture: Genesis 39:1-9; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; 2 Samuel 11:2-12:14; Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 1:21-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7; Hebrews 13:4

- 4) Those who hold church office (i.e., ministers, elders, and deacons) are called to the highest standards of Christian life. Therefore, the ordination of unrepentant sinners, including those who are unrepentant with regard to heterosexual promiscuity or homosexual behavior, is not in accordance with God's will.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:2-13; Titus 1:6-9

Commentary: The word "repent" means to "feel so contrite over one's sins as to change one's ways." The important word in the phrase "unrepentant sinners" is the first word, "unrepentant." Indeed, if *sinners* were not permitted to be ordained as officers in the church, the church would have no officers at all, as all of us are sinners (Romans 3:23).

- 5) Realizing as professed Christians that we are duty-bound to repentance for our sins and to put them aside, we lovingly welcome *all* sinners into our church body to hear the good news of the gospel, to repent of sin, to profess faith in Jesus Christ, and to enter into Church membership and Christian fellowship.

Scripture: Psalm 51; Psalm 103:8-13; John 8:1-12; Romans 3:21-24; Romans 10:9-13; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24-25; 1 John 1:8-9

A History of Human Sexuality and Homosexuality in the Presbyterian Church (USA)

I 1978: Definitive Guidance or Authoritative Interpretation

The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church (the old northern Presbyterian Church) was asked by several presbyteries to give “definitive guidance” on the issue of ordination of persons who openly acknowledge homosexual orientation and practice. The General Assembly concluded that even though the cause of homosexual orientation is unknown, homosexuality is not God’s wish for humanity. Membership in the church may not be denied to persons who affirm their homosexual behavior, as long as they profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. However, ordination to the office of pastor, elder or deacon is not allowed for a person who acknowledges homosexual behavior (a similar action was taken in 1979 by the Presbyterian Church US, the old southern Presbyterian Church). The Permanent Judicial Commission (the courts of our denomination) has continued this ruling since then. “It is unconstitutional for the Church to ordain any self-affirming, practicing, and unrepentant homosexual as elder, deacon, or minister of the Word. A self-affirming, practicing homosexual may not be invited to serve in a PC(USA) position that presumes ordination.” Homosexual action, not homosexual orientation, is rejected. This position was reaffirmed by the General Assembly in 1993.

There are a number of people who disagree with this position, and have since 1978 made attempts to change it. Some have protested by taking actions which contradict this position. Some have protested by trying to change this position. At many, if not all, of the General Assemblies following this 1978 decision there have been motions to change this position. Some have passed and gone to the presbyteries for debate.

II 1997: Fidelity and Chastity

In 1996, the more conservative faction of our denomination tried to take a clearer stand on the issue, trying to settle this struggle once and for all. An amendment came before the General Assembly, was passed, and later approved by a majority of presbyteries (97-74), and became a part of our *Book of Order* in 1997. The amendment, known as Amendment B, reads, “Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.” (*Book of Order*, G-6.0106b).

III 1998: Amendment A

In 1997, the General Assembly passed an amendment which removed the previous year’s Amendment B. It essentially reversed the actions of the previous assembly, not making ordination of homosexuals permissible, but also not explicitly rejecting it. The presbyteries rejected this amendment by an even larger margin than the previous year’s amendment was

passed (114-57). In the 1999 General Assembly a motion was passed to stop debating the issue and have a time of study (2-3 years).

IV ‘Amendment O’

In 2000-2001, 173 presbyteries voted on a proposal called “Amendment O,” which would have prohibited Presbyterian ministers from conducting so-called “same-sex” unions. The presbyteries voted 73-99, with one tie vote, not to prohibit local sessions from determining whether to allow their pastors to conduct same-sex unions within the local congregation’s buildings. Many believed that the issue was more about the rights and duties of sessions and ministers than it was about whether same-sex unions are morally acceptable.

V. ‘Amendment A’

In 2001, presbyteries voted 46-127 against Amendment A which called for extracting the “fidelity/chastity” constitutional standard required for the ordination of church officers and ending the denomination’s historic Biblical theology that says homosexual activity is sinful.

VI 2006: Created at GA in 2001, PUP – The Peace, Unity and Purity Task Force and Report (which brought none of the above.)

VII 2008: ‘Amendment 08-B’

In 2008-2009, presbyteries voted 78-95 against Amendment 08-B, which would have removed the “fidelity/chastity” standard from the Book of Order. The standard requires that ordained officers be faithful in marriage between a man and a woman, or chaste in singleness.

VIII Amendment 10A – Passed on 5/10/2011

Below is the wording for Amendment 10-A:

The 219th General Assembly (2010) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-6.0106b be amended by striking the current text and inserting new text in its place as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as italic.]

~~“b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.”~~



Pastoral Conversation on the Passage of Amendment 10-A
for Leaders of Congregations within the PC(USA)
PFR Issues Ministry Team

May 2, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Once again the ordination standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been challenged. This time, unfortunately, the vote of the General Assembly that placed this issue before the presbyteries is being ratified by a small but sufficient majority of elders and ministers within those presbyteries. This will be a massive change in our covenantal life, and it is urgent for elders and ministers to understand the impact of this change, to be prepared to minister to people in their congregation, and to speak with clarity and biblical conviction when approached by people beyond the PC(USA). The document that follows is designed to assist you in meeting these challenges.

The change in our ordination standards will be a surprise to many Presbyterians who will first hear about it from the secular media—an experience not unlike hearing about the death of a sibling from an acquaintance you meet at the grocery store. Even for those who have been following the voting, the reality of this change is a source of unspeakably deep grief. While in some ways this vote is just another step in the ongoing disintegration of a denomination we have known and loved, this particular vote verifies the deep and unquestionable divisions among us—and consummates a significant institutional departure from the Christian faith we have been called to proclaim. For those who love the Presbyterian Church, this is a form of death. Expect to encounter all the classic stages and symptoms of grief, and be prepared to listen with patience and respond with compassion.

Just as in any other season of significant grief, now is not the time for quick action or far-reaching decisions. That time is coming. But for now, it is important that we speak honestly with one another about the reality of the pain, anger, fear, and loss we are experiencing, and that we find appropriate ways of lamenting before God. If we, individually and corporately, can take our burden of grief to God in prayer, and wait with joyful anticipation for the discerning of his Spirit, we can hope to find a biblically faithful path for ongoing ministry with integrity. PFR is committed to walking this path with you and with your congregation, beginning with the basics, and addressing questions people will be asking now and in the coming months.

FAQS ON AMENDMENT 10-A

Q: What is Amendment 10-A? What does it say? What does it not say? What does it change?

A: Amendment 10-A is a change in the language of the Book of Order proposed by the 2010 General Assembly. It calls for the removal of paragraph G-6.0106b:

Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

and replaces it with:

Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation

(W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

Proponents of the changed wording will argue that the passage of Amendment 10-A, in and of itself, changes nothing for those who remain committed to upholding historic orthodox teaching. Technically they are correct. Explicit language will be removed from the Book of Order that, for the vast majority of Jesus' followers around the globe and for many who are still within the PC(USA), remains implicit. In other words, no vote by the Assembly and presbyteries can change the truth of God's Word, and Scripture clearly teaches that God intends the gift of sexual intimacy to be expressed only within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. If we in the PC(USA) agreed on the clear teaching of Scripture, we would never have needed G-6.0106b. But we don't agree, and so we defaulted to polity to find a way to live together.

Passage of this amendment does not mandate the ordination of practicing gay and lesbian deacons, elders, and ministers, although some people within the PC(USA) and the majority of people outside the denomination will read it as though it does. With the current standard eliminated, PC(USA) congregations will be free to ordain people in a variety of sexual relationships not currently affirmed for those seeking to be ordained (i.e. those living together outside wedlock as well as self-affirming, practicing gay, lesbian, bi and transsexual persons). With this change, there will be no stated sexual behavior standard for persons in church leadership. Passage of this amendment does make further attempts to redefine Christian marriage a certainty in the near future.

Q: How did this proposal get through the General Assembly? Why is it passing in the presbyteries this time?

A: Four overtures that have challenged ordination standards have been passed by the General Assembly over the past 15 years. A majority of presbyteries have refused to ratify the Assembly's actions until this time. While there are several possible reasons why this change is passing now, one unavoidable reality is that people are simply weary of this seemingly ceaseless struggle and have disengaged from the process.

Q: What does passage of this amendment mean for our denomination?

A: This remains to be seen. Currently the Book of Order states, "Ordination for the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery..." (G-14.0480). As long as this provision remains, ordinations that are made possible with the removal of G-6.0106b will create a serious crisis of conscience and integrity for many in the PC(USA). One thing is sure—passage of this amendment will change the PC(USA).

Q: What does passage of this amendment mean for mission personnel and global relationships?

A: The answer to this question will vary by culture and region, but the simple fact is that the validation of same-gender attraction is a liberal, white, privileged, Euro-centric concern. The vast majority of Jesus' followers around the globe are dismayed that the PC(USA) has now joined a handful of other denominations in undermining biblical authority in matters of human sexuality. For many people serving on the mission field, this action will make life more difficult at best.

Q: What does passage of this amendment mean for theologically orthodox evangelical women in leadership?

A: Evangelical women who are ordained deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament are perhaps the most vulnerable in the changing landscape of the PC(USA). Their options for distancing themselves from this crisis (see below) are minimal at best. Our long-standing affirmation of God's equal call on men and

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women to leadership in the Church undergirds PFR's commitment to creating a way for ministry with integrity within the Presbyterian and Reformed Tradition.

Q: What does passage of this amendment mean for our local congregation, and for me as a Presbyterian?

A: Truly, the only initial effect passage of this amendment will have upon us individually or upon our local congregations is one of perception—other people asking, “How can you still be a part of the PC(USA)?” Perceptions can form a potent reality, but we must remember that the only One whose approval ultimately matters is the One whose Son defied earthly perceptions to become the atoning sacrifice for our sin. Decisions about our present and future affiliation must be made in discernment of God's call to mission and ministry, not on the basis of gossip and intimidation.

Congregations still have the right and the responsibility to examine and elect deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament. The new constitutional language, though lacking the clear expression of “fidelity/chastity,” does not require us to violate our understanding of biblical standards. It does not mean that congregations will be required to maintain a quota of gay elders and deacons or interview at least one gay candidate when seeking a pastor or associate pastor. However, we are now entering a season when opposition to ordinations because of theological integrity may come at a price, and where further erosion of biblical authority may be reflected in the decisions and actions of middle governing bodies and future Assemblies.

Q: What options do we have in a post-Amendment 10-A denomination?

A: The most obvious and least realistic option is to pretend nothing has changed. This is an exercise in self-deception. While it might appear to be a pleasant placebo for the moment, it is only putting off an inevitable confrontation with the deep and far-reaching implications of a dying denomination. More responsible options that are available at the present time include dissenting in place, defecting in place, and distancing ourselves from the crisis within the PC(USA).

- **Dissenting in place** involves “taking a stand” in your local neighborhood and presbytery; offering a win-some witness to the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ and intensifying your participation in Christ-honoring ministry both within and beyond the PC(USA). Depending on your context, this may include a polite but firm refusal to participate in any ordinations that are outside the clear teaching of Scripture and the Confessions. Dissenting congregations must become increasingly vocal in presbytery discussions and examinations, and active in the ministry of presbytery-shaping committees and/or councils. In addition, by affiliating with like-minded congregations, they can receive support, encouragement, and fellowship from others in the PC(USA) who share their theological commitments.
- **Defecting in place** involves disengagement with the PC(USA) without actually taking steps to leave the denomination. Defecting in place often begins by redirecting financial support (including general mission and per capita funding) from the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. Defecting in place might also include limited (or no) participation in the actions or decisions of the presbytery. Defecting congregations can also form independent local and global partnerships, and seek informal affiliations with individuals and congregations for discipleship and mission.
- When it comes to **distancing ourselves from the crisis** within the PC(USA), the only option currently available is departure to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church or a similar denomination. This could be changing, however. Several proposals are currently being explored for different types of affiliation:

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- non-geographic presbyteries and synods within the PC(USA) based on theological affinity
- a “presbytery within a presbytery,” based on theological affinity
- the creation of a “fellowship” or “association” that would consist of congregations and individuals both within and beyond the PC(USA)
- the creation of a category of “affiliated congregations” that would function at the presbytery level much like affiliate members currently function at the congregational level
- the creation of a new Presbyterian and Reformed association apart from the PC(USA) that would affirm our confessional heritage and unflinchingly honor God’s equal call on people of both genders and all races, ages, and cultures in all aspects of church life and leadership.

Q: What does PFR recommend?

A: As we have said, this is a time of deep grief for many in the PC(USA). Although PFR and its predecessor organizations have worked and prayed in opposition to this change for the decades of this battle, the denomination we have loved is now choosing to proclaim lies as truth, and our covenant with one another has been broken.

In this time of deepening crisis, PFR remains determined to help form the continuing orthodox witness of Presbyterians. Now is not the time for rash decisions or quickly reasoned action. It is a time for repentance of the sin in our own life, prayer for discernment of God’s clear leading, and cooperative action among the evangelical orthodox in the creation of Christ-honoring ministry.

As biblically faithful people, we must see that God is using this time and these circumstances to shape and form his Church and to continue to challenge and change us. If we miss the opportunities this crisis presents, we will be poorer in the short term, and much more apt to repeat mistakes of the past that have contributed to our current situation. We are on the threshold of losing a significant battle. However, we are also aware that at some future point we may realize we have learned a good deal in the process, and we will be far better prepared for what lies ahead.

As missionally minded people, we must remember as well that our primary call is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in words and actions, exhibiting the Kingdom of Heaven. This is a congregation by congregation call, and a person by person commission. This we can do regardless of the theological confusion expressed in our middle governing bodies.

Regardless of long-term plans for dissent, defection, distancing, or other forms of realignment, PFR strongly advocates the creation of a “Presbyterian order:” a voluntary association of individuals and congregations who mutually and publically commit to a disciplined life of prayer and service, seeking to follow the teachings of Jesus, accept the counsel of our Confessions, and stay faithful to our core identity as Presbyterian Christians. This is not a time for independent, entrepreneurial experimentation in ministry. We need to work together, being willing to sacrifice our own desires and risk the misunderstanding of others to accomplish the ministry to which we have been called.

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Standing calendar events

Please remember to fill out a building use event form for all events and return to the office.

Sunday:

7:30 a.m. Worship Team Practice **8:30 a.m.** Early Worship Service with Communion

9:55 a.m. Church School.

11 a.m. Traditional Worship Service with Communion served on the first Sunday of the month.

6-8 p.m. Sr. High Fellowship-Youth Room

Monday: 5:30 p.m. Hot Meals **7 pm** Cub Scouts

Tuesday:

Noon Men's Prayer Lunch-Kitchen **6 pm** Prayer Meeting

7 PM-Boy Scouts

1st Tuesday of Month 6 pm Healing Prayer Service 7 p.m. Finance Meeting-

2nd Tuesday of Month 6 pm Leap Service **7 pm** Session Meeting

3rd Tuesday of Month 6 pm Prayer & Praise Service

4th Tuesday at 7 pm Committee Meetings– Building & Grounds-M. Weil & Missions Committee –B. Malek

Wednesday:

2nd Wednesday of the month 9:45 am Women's Circle Meeting

6 pm Hand Bells **7 pm** Worship Team Practice **7 PM** Chancel Choir

Thursday:

9:30am Women's Bible Study –Parlor **11 am** Bridge Club-Knox Meeting Room

Noon-AA meeting –CE bldg. **6-8 pm** Jr. High Fellowship-Youth Room **6 pm** Alpha –Parlor

6:30-8 pm Griefshare-Office Conference Room

Saturday: Last Saturday of the month 9 a.m. Men's Fellowship Breakfast-Parlor

SPECIAL EVENTS

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

When: June 25th at 9 a.m. **Where:** Parlor **Who:** Men of the congregation and any guest.
All are welcome! Please join us for a hearty meal and fellowship.

DEACONS CARE & COMPASSION

"...pray for each other so that you may be healed..." James 5:16

At the Ohio Eastern Star Home

Linda Fox Katherine Garzieri
Maxine Peters Martha Warden
Edith Whitney (*Sally Martin's grandmother*)

Autumn Health Care

Helen and Everett Chrisman

Emeritus at HillenVale Nursing Home

Mary Stansell

The Living Center

Jean Fribley Myra Philpott

At Home

Ruth Grove Eloise Hagan
Treva Haltermon Ellen Proper
Dorothy White Dorothy White

In the Military

Jacob Hahn-USMC-Moreland's
Nephews-Afghanistan
Matt Patterson-USN -P. Patterson's son

Special Prayer Concerns

Madeline Blamer (*kidney-Weil's granddaughter*)
Darla Brown (Niece of Sally Conway)
Glenn DeBoard (*Liver cancer*)
John Ewalt
Tom Hall (cancer-friend of Stone family)
Jennifer Hatton (*Tyson's granddaughter*)
Reverend and Mrs. Markle (*friends of Toby Lord*)
Matt Palmer (*Lung cancer-friend of Sally Martin*)
Chris Patterson (Honduras-mission work)
Robert Kidder (*Polly Patterson's father*)
Harriet Sells (*Toby Lord's sister.in law*)
Red Shaw (*cancer*)
Lindsay Smith (*Crones disease*)
Lisa Stephens (surgery-sis of Rhonda Phillippi)
Kirk Swartz (*cancer-Ketner's nephew*)
Treva Haltermon (*health concerns*)
Misty Whitmann (*Lupus-family of Shillito's*)
Julie Williams (*family of M. Shillito*)

New address and phone for Dann Goodson

Whetstone Gardens and Care
3710 Olentangy River Rd Apt 216
Columbus, OH 43214 ph:614:442-5075



COMMUNION *If you have an update to the Deacons Care & Compassion list please let the Church Office know as we would like to stay as up to date as possible. Also, If you are a shut in or know of a shut in who would enjoy having communion, please contact the office with your name, date, time and location as there are friends who are willing and anxious to come to you and share the sacraments. Thanks!*

NOTE FROM TREASURER We have completed the month of April and find that our current year pledges are about \$5,600 below this time last year. Even though our expenses are below budget, we find ourselves about \$9,400 in the red for the year. This, of course, is a concern and could affect our ministries for the remainder of the year. Please look at your "giving" and try to make every effort to bring it current with your pledge amount. We need your help!! Thank you for your continued support.
Bob Meldrum, Treasurer



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

106 North Gay Street
Mount Vernon Ohio 43050

Phone: 740-393-1326

Fax: 740-393-1321

Email: Firstpresbyterian@rrohio.com

WE'RE ON THE WEB

WWW.MTVPRES.ORG

The web site has the most up to date information about what is happening in the life of the church.

You can access the Interactive Church Calendar, Sermon Audio Archives and much more. The web site is constantly updated, so be sure to check it out!

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CURRENT RESIDENT OR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

June 7
Jim Carhart
Marilyn Gibler

June 8
Jim Risko

June 9
Ian Hawthorne

June 10
Erin Lawhon

June 11
Javier Benavides

June 13
Mike Merrilees

June 14
Dottie Denton

June 16
Katherine Griesmyer
Ruth Grove
Quinn Denzer
Pat McLarnan

June 20
Jo Richardson

June 21
Christine Herald
Emerson Payne

June 26
Dave Paxton
Bob Plentovich
Marty Trese

June 27
Louise Trinkner

June 28
Sam Highnam

June 29
David Eaton
Monica Eutsey
Marthalee
Schaub

June 30
Ezekiel Bergeson
Joan Mann

July 3
Olivia Wiley

July 5
Judy Mailloux

July 7
Debra Denzer
Jack Warden

July 8
Tricia Pokosh

July 13
Dorothea Hawthorne

July 14
Missy Kaufman

July 17
Raymond Guajardo

July 18
Marjorie Walcutt

July 21
Lydia McKenzie
Ryan Rupp
Rachel Ruth

July 22
Deb Curran

July 29
Jackie Craigo
Dina Herald
Marilyn Weil

July 31
Mike Noll
Heath Reynolds

