

May 10, 2011



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Amendment 10-A has now been approved by a majority of the presbyteries within the PC(USA). While the ongoing voting in remaining presbyteries is important, both as a means of faithful witness, and for the sake of understanding the state of our divisions, the biblical standard of fidelity in marriage between a man and a woman and chastity in singleness will soon be removed as an explicit denominational standard for ordination and/or installation of church officers. We deeply grieve this unfaithful action, for it brings great harm to the life and witness of the PC(USA). We have prayed that our denomination would uphold this biblical standard, and we have worked to maintain it. But now a line has been crossed.

This revision of our Book of Order signals a massive change in our covenantal life and a departure from the beliefs and practice of the historic and global church. We who are committed to holding fast the clear teaching of scripture must pray and work all the more to discern how to move forward with biblical faithfulness in and for a denomination that has lost its way.

First, we must affirm what has not changed:

- Jesus Christ is Lord—this has not changed and never will! Remember Jesus' words, "I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18 ).
- The ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death has not been compromised! No action taken by the PC(USA) can threaten our Lord's redemptive purpose.
- Scripture still clearly teaches that God intends the gift of sexual intimacy to be expressed within a lifelong covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. No vote by the PC(USA) can change God's truth.

Within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), other important realities have not changed:

- Congregations and presbyteries 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.
- Our Book of Order can be amended again. We who oppose this decay in ordination standards are still free to work to restore the clarity that has been lost and even to raise the level of accountability.

This is not a time for panic or for ill-considered actions that could potentially damage our mission and witness even more than the passage of Amendment 10-A. Neither is it a time for pretending that we can continue to "do church" as we have before. Instead, this is the time for:

- focused prayer on repentance for our own unfaithfulness and wisdom for the future;
- new covenanted fellowships within and perhaps beyond the PC(USA) based on closer theological agreement, which will support continued biblical faithfulness, and;
- sober assessments of the options we have for ministry with integrity.

PFR pledges to continue our ministry of networking, resourcing, educating, and equipping biblically faithful, missional leaders within the PC(USA). We have been here for you throughout the many struggles that have led this point, we are here with you now—and wherever God may lead us.

So let us together lift up our hearts—it is not an accident or a disaster that brings us here. God is at work.