

TO THE 218TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)
ON DELETING G-6.0106b, SUBSTITUTING A NEW PARAGRAPH IN ITS PLACE
AND PROVIDING A NEW AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETATION
THE PRESBYTERY OF CINCINNATI, OH RESPECTFULLY
OVERTURES THE 218TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2008) TO:

1. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

To delete the current text of G-6.0106b,

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.”

and to replace with the following:

b. Those who are called to ordained service in the church are to lead lives of obedience to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures and guided by the Confessional standards of the Church. Suitability for the offices to which they have been elected is determined by the governing bodies where the examinations for ordination/installation take place. By their assent to the Constitutional questions for ordination and/or installation, officers declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church. Whether the examination/installation decision complies with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and whether the ordaining/installing body has conducted its examination reasonably, responsibly, prayerfully, and deliberately in deciding to ordain a candidate for church office is subject to review by higher governing bodies.

2. Provide the following Authoritative Interpretation:

Interpretive statements concerning ordained service of homosexual Church members by the 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the 119th General Assembly (1979) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and all subsequent affirmations thereof, have no further force or effect.

RATIONALE

The qualifications for leadership based on sexual orientation, which is the overt or covert purpose of G-6.0106b, discount the Constitutional questions to those preparing to be ordained or installed. These questions focus broadly on the faith and manner of life expected of Church officers, without exploration of personal sexual matters or orientation (the questions are attached at the end of this document).

There is no doubt that the issue of ordination for persons who are not heterosexual has caused much distress and consternation within the Church for years and challenges the belief and conscience of varied perspectives within the Church.

Current denominational policies regarding ordination contradict the Church's understanding of membership in the Church and present a standard that creates second class membership – barring some persons, but not all, from “all the rights and privileges of the Church including the right to hold office.” (G-5.0202).

The current denominational policies regarding ordination, by calling almost exclusive attention to the current G-6.0106b, place limits on the inalienable right of congregations to elect their own officers, (G-6.0107), and on their freedom of conscience in interpreting Scripture and the call of the Gospel. (G-6.0108).

This proposed overture also complies with the Authoritative Interpretation of the Constitution approved at the 217th General Assembly (PUP report 1068 -1072) regarding the examination process itself, assuring that it be rigorous, constitutional, and subject to judicial review.

Further, at Baptism, we make a promise of union with Christ and one another. “The body of Christ is one, and Baptism is the bond of unity in Christ. As they are united with Christ through faith, Baptism unites the people of God with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Barriers of race, gender, status, and age are to be transcended. Barriers of nationality, history, and practice are to be overcome.” (W-2.3005).

Let us recommit to the promise of Baptism with the same spirit and intention in regards to ordination, leaving no room for discrimination among God's children. For the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who called us to demonstrate gracious hospitality to our friends and enemies, who called us to welcome and love all who seek his mercy, we submit this overture.

Ordination Questions

1. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

2. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
4. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
5. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
6. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
7. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?

Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and

(1) (For elder) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(2) (For deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people's help to the friendless and those in need, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(3) (For minister of the Word and Sacrament) Will you be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(4) (For commissioned lay pastor) Will you be a faithful commissioned lay pastor, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

(5) (For certified Christian educator) Will you be a faithful certified Christian educator, teaching faith and caring for people, and will you in your ministry try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?