



*Moderators Rick Ufford-Chase, Freda Gardner and Bruce Reyes-Chow*

April 27, 2011

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you. While we've had the remarkable opportunity and privilege to serve as Moderators of the Presbyterian Church (USA), we are simply 3 Presbyterians as well. We are keenly aware of this moment in the life of our beloved Church as presbyteries continue to vote on the 219th General Assembly's Ordination Amendment 10-A.

We've been asked what we think about 10-A, so we decided to share our thoughts and hope with you in this way. We also know that some in our Church are anxious about 10-A and its passage. We imagine similar fears were expressed about women's ordination. All of us are aware of the natural kaleidoscope of feelings in the midst of change.

We believe that Amendment 10-A will be profoundly helpful to the mission, future and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

**Rick Ufford-Chase:** "Those who know me well know that I have believed for a long-time that we should drop any ordination standards that single out one particular class of people for exclusion. They also know that I have been frustrated at our inability to reach a theologically honest accommodation with one another, too often to the detriment of our ability as a church to take on the critically important work in the world to which God calls us.

Amendment 10-A will allow us, finally, to do just that. It doesn't make our disagreement go away, but it places the conversation about ordination back in the context in which it belongs. Each of us brings unique gifts, and also unique challenges, to the practice of ministry in the service of Jesus Christ. It has always been the role of local congregations and presbyteries to weigh the gifts and the challenges of each candidate and to determine whether that person is genuinely called by God to the service at hand. Amendment 10-A reaffirms that history and places the obligation for such discernment back where it belongs once again.

As a result, several generations of faithful followers of Jesus who have been categorically excluded from service will feel welcome to explore their call within our denomination. Folks like my fifteen year old, whose life experience of people who are gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgender has only been positive, may begin to feel like the church is worth a second look.

In any case, this is the right thing to do. Let's affirm our shared gifts, and our shared brokenness, and get on with the work of healing the world and building up the reign of God. I'm grateful for the movement of God's Spirit as Amendment 10-A nears passage, and hope that you will add your voice and vote toward the movement of that Spirit."

**Freda Gardner:** "In the beginning God created heaven and earth and sometime after that: humans...of two varieties. And God claimed them as God's own and God's own son came among us to guide our lives and evoke all that was good about us. And we multiplied, made good and bad choices, loved and hurt each other and we discovered we are not all the same. For some love leads to marriage and that covenant calls to everyone who enters it and to all who live in the same world with them to honor them as God obviously did and does in creating them. And God kept and keeps calling us back to what was intended: that we love and care for the earth and each other. For every "each other", even those who make us uncomfortable. Comfort is not the criterion...faithfulness is. It is out of this call from God for us to care for each other that I ask you to join me in supporting Amendment 10-A."

**Bruce Reyes-Chow:** "I am not naive enough to think that any statement by any former moderator will change your mind on Amendment 10-A. After all this time, from both "sides," we have heard thoughtful interpretation from Biblical scholars, we have shared deep stories of pain and yearning and we have all entered into a time of reflection and discernment about the future of the Presbyterian Church (USA) when it comes to our standards of ordination. I have no doubt that each of us has been faithful.

So what I offer to you today is simply this, with thousands of others in our church, I stand up as one more asking you to vote yes on 10-A. I am humble enough to know that I will never fully understand the will of God and the mind of Christ about anything, but I am just as confident that God is moving the Presbyterian Church (USA), even in the midst of our deep division, to a place of full inclusion of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters. For as deeply as I understand my limitations, if I do not stand up and vote for inclusion, I do not honor the God that Christ has lead me to know. Now is not the time for silence, waiting or further posturing, now is the time to vote yes and I urge you to do just that. I am trusting in the unfolding of God's reality for us all."

With God's grace,

**Freda, Rick & Bruce**



Rick Ufford-Chase, Moderator, 216th General Assembly, PC(USA)



Freda Gardner, Moderator, 211th General Assembly, PC(USA)



Bruce Reyes-Chow, Moderator, 218th General Assembly, PC(USA)