

More Light  on...

More Light

### What is “more light”?

The phrase “yet more light” originated in Pastor John Robinson’s sermon sending the Pilgrims off to the colonies, in which he stated the belief that God does not reveal God’s whole truth to any one person in any one point in history, and that we must continually be open to hearing the new things God is saying to us through the Word. The phrase is used in the Book of Order (G-18.0101) in support of the Presbyterian principle of the Church reformed and always reforming.

More Light churches affirm that the church has more to learn about human sexuality, and therefore question the Church’s current position that excludes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons from full participation in the life, ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

### Why be more light?

Churches become more light for a variety of reasons. For some this is a moral and ethical issue; for others it is deeply personal. For some, it is a matter of being faithful to the Gospel, being a welcoming church that allows no barriers to membership and service that are not essential to faith. For others it is a justice concern, a stand for inclusion and equality. For many it is a pastoral care concern for LGBT adults, youth, children, and their families and friends. Some churches become more light to honor our reformed theology and tradition, restoring integrity to our church’s constitution and polity.

Each congregation, each session, pastor and church staff, must discern their own paths and know with certainty “why” they want and need to take this step of faith.

### How does a church become more light?

Because of our polity, it is necessary for the Session of a church to decide and recommend to a congregation that they become known as a “More Light” Presbyterian Church and affiliate with the national organization and network, More Light Presbyterians. Clergy and staff should and can assist in the process of discernment, education, decision, and proclamation. And, it is the Session that makes the decision.

This decision is not to be brought to a congregational vote; that is not our polity. Moreover it is not prudent to have congregational members voting on one another – this is about persons and families within every congregation.

It is helpful for the entire congregation to be given the opportunity to participate in a study and discernment process that is appropriate to what is wanted and needed locally. For example, a comprehensive study and discussion of human sexuality might include: meeting with LGBT people of faith

to hear their stories; Biblical and theological study and discussion from the reformed perspective; specific discussions and review of the Book of Order, the existing restrictions upon the open service of LGBT persons and non-married heterosexuals as deacons, elders, and clergy; and pastoral care concerns and needs related to LGBT persons and their families.

It is best that the study process be intentional and for a specified period of time. The recommendation from Session is best to come after the open study and discernment process within the congregation.

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## Becoming More Light

To become a more light church, the session:

1. Affirms the Mission Statement of More Light Presbyterians:

“Following the risen Christ, and seeking to make the Church a true community of hospitality, the mission of More Light Presbyterians is to work for the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people of faith in the life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

It is not necessary for a separate statement to be created to become a More Light church, although some Sessions decide to write an additional statement beyond affirmation of the MLP mission statement. Becoming a more light church is not in itself a challenge to the Book of Order. Rather, each session must decide how to live out the call to be more light.

2. Sends a letter of intent to MLP stating that your congregation, through an action of Session wants to become a “More Light” Presbyterian church to our national address: More Light Presbyterians, PMB #246, 4737 County Road 101, Minnetonka, MN 55345-2634

3. Sends membership payment of \$100 annual dues to the above address, check made payable to More Light Presbyterians.

4. Considers budgeting mission donations to support the comprehensive work of MLP, including educational outreach; legislative work in all presbyteries and at General Assembly; judicial support related to ecclesiastical court cases; and special projects such as congregational nurture, national field organizing, and the annual, National MLP Conference.

## What's Next?

Your church will be listed along with the other more light churches in MLP materials. Your church will give witness to a fully inclusive Gospel and a standard of justice that will inspire other churches to do likewise within your presbytery and around the country. Join us by sending a group from our church to the Annual National MLP conference! Your Church will soon discover other areas of growth and ministry that will strengthen and be informed by your decision to become a “More light” Presbyterian Church.

## How welcoming is your congregation?

### LGBT concerns for communities of faith

1. *Are LGBT people, and their families and friends, genuinely welcome in your congregation? If so, how would they know that? If not, why not? How skillful are your pastors (elders, deacons) in offering appropriate pastoral care to LGBT people and their families?*
2. *How are matters of sexuality dealt with in your congregation and in your religious education program for children, youth, and adults? How does your congregation respond to the needs and concerns of LGBT people regarding their sexuality and faith?*
3. *What are the possibilities for a common sexual ethic for all persons in your congregation? What guidance on matters of sexuality and relationships do you offer to couples – opposite-gender, same-gender, married, partnered, not married – and to youth? Singles? Do you offer blessings of same-gender relationships?*
4. *How do Presbyterian restrictions on leadership for LGBT people and single heterosexuals affect your life as a congregation, your witness to visitors and new members, and your witness to your community?*
5. *The PC(USA) supports full and equal rights for LGBT people in civil society, viewing homophobia, discrimination, and hate crimes as wrong. How does your congregation work for fairness and justice for LGBT people?*
6. *How does your congregation respond to homophobia, prejudice and bigotry within your congregation, and in your community? When racism or sexism is addressed, are homophobia and heterosexism included within that sermon, conversation, or teaching? What are the connections among these attitudes and beliefs?*
7. *Communities of faith exist to bring “good news” and care to ALL persons. How does your congregation demonstrate this to include LGBT people and our families?*

## Resources, study materials, and help: [www.mlp.org](http://www.mlp.org)

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