



Presbytery of Ohio Valley
1701 E. Second Street, Suite 100
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

From the Office of

The Presbyter for Common Life

May 10, 2011

Passage of Amendment 10-A

Dear Friends,

News travels fast. By now, many of you already know that Amendment 10-A, which proposed new language for ordination standards in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has been approved by a majority of presbyteries in our denomination. The new amendment will take effect July 10 of this year.

News travels fast. But sometimes, it doesn't travel accurately. It's important that we understand what has happened.

The provision that is currently in the Book of Order (G-6.0106b) is this: *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.*

The new language that will take effect on July 10 is this: *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.*

In an article on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) news service website, Communications Coordinator Sharon Youngs writes, "The new provision reaffirms the long-held right and responsibility of ordaining bodies . . . to determine the suitability of each candidate for ordination. The effect of the new language also opens up the possibility that persons in same-gender relationships can be considered for ordination." It is important to note, however, that each ordaining body (sessions for elders and deacons and presbyteries for ministers) is given the authority and responsibility to determine a person's fitness for ordained service. In addition, each congregation continues to have both the privilege and the responsibility to determine whom it wished to call as pastor or associate pastor.

News travels fast. There are some who will find this to be good news. Others will consider it to be bad news.

In the midst of such an emotional decision, there are bound to be people who identify themselves as either winners or losers. It is important that we hold one another in prayer, and that we hold our denomination in prayer. When we voted as a presbytery on this amendment in March, we refrained from cheering or jeering on

The Reverend Susan C. McGhee, Presbyter for Common Life
The Reverend Lawrence Jackman, Stated Clerk
Elder M. Jean Brown, Treasurer

Phone: 866-344-7853 Fax: 812-334-1630
Email : info@povpc.org
Website : www.povpc.org



Presbytery of Ohio Valley

1701 E. Second Street, Suite 100
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

From the Office of

The Presbyter for Common Life

the floor of assembly when the vote was announced. I pray that we will keep the same spirit among us and within us.

News travels fast. In response to this news, leaders in our denomination have issued a letter to all congregations of the PC(USA). Below is the full text of that letter, as well as a link to several resources that may help pastors, sessions and church members better understand and interpret this news.

Before I sign off this evening, I want to share with you the best news I heard today: We belong to God. In life and in death, and in all the circumstances of life, we belong to God. And we belong to one another. Thanks be to God for this blessed connection. And thanks be to God for the high calling to share this good news, in word and in deed, with everyone around us. I count it a privilege to be your colleague in this ministry.

Grace to you, and peace,
Susan C. McGhee

The Churchwide Letter from Gradye Parsons, Cynthia Bolbach, Linda Valentine and Landon Whitsitt:

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

May grace, mercy, and peace be yours in abundance (Jude 1:2).

The debate about ordination standards has been a Presbyterian family struggle for much of the last three decades. We have sought to find that place where every congregation and every member, deacon, elder, and minister of the Word and Sacrament can share their gifts in ministry while, at the same time, the integrity of every congregation, member, deacon, elder, and minister is respected.

This year, the conversation has focused on Amendment 10-A that was passed by the 219th General Assembly (2010) and sent to presbyteries for approval. While we wait for official tallies, it appears that 87 presbyteries have approved 10-A, which is the majority required for approval.

If this becomes official, the new language outlining the gifts and requirements for ordained service will say the following: “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.”

This decision begins with an unequivocal affirmation that ordained office will continue to be rooted in each deacon, elder, and minister’s “joyful submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life.”

The Reverend Susan C. McGhee, Presbyter for Common Life
The Reverend Lawrence Jackman, Stated Clerk
Elder M. Jean Brown, Treasurer

Phone: 866-344-7853 Fax: 812-334-1630
Email : info@povpc.org
Website : www.povpc.org



Presbytery of Ohio Valley

1701 E. Second Street, Suite 100
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

From the Office of

The Presbyter for Common Life

This action also has important effects on our life together as a church, namely:

- in keeping with our historic principles of church order, each session and presbytery will continue to determine the suitability of individuals seeking ordination within its bounds.
- persons in a same-gender relationship may be considered for ordination and/or installation as deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within the PC(USA); and
- all other churchwide standards for ordination remain unchanged.

Reactions to this change will span a wide spectrum. Some will rejoice, while others will weep. Those who rejoice will see the change as an action, long in coming, that makes the PC(USA) an inclusive church that recognizes and receives the gifts for ministry of all those who feel called to ordained office. Those who weep will consider this change one that compromises biblical authority and acquiesces to present culture. The feelings on both sides run deep.

However, as Presbyterians, we believe that the only way we will find God's will for the church is by seeking it together – worshiping, praying, thinking, and serving alongside one another. We are neighbors and colleagues, friends and family. Most importantly, we are all children of God, saved and taught by Jesus Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

We hold to the strong affirmation that all of us are bound together as the church through Jesus Christ our Lord. “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all,” Paul wrote to the Ephesians (4:5-6).

It is Jesus Christ who calls individuals to ordained ministries, and all those who are called to ordained office continue to acknowledge Jesus as Lord of all and Head of the church. It is this same Jesus Christ who is the foundation of our faith and to whom we cling.

No doubt, there will be several news stories and other reports about this change in the days ahead. A number of resources, including frequently asked questions and liturgical resources, are available for you at <http://oga.pcusa.org>. In addition, for those who wish to comment on or inquire further about 10-A, please contact ga.amendments@pcusa.org or call (888) 728-7228, ext. 8202.

We invite you to join us in prayer:

Almighty God, we give thanks for a rich heritage of faithful witnesses to the gospel throughout the ages. We offer gratitude not only for those who have gone before us, but for General Assembly commissioners and presbyters across the church who have sought diligently to discern the mind of Christ for the church in every time and place, and especially in this present time.

May your Spirit of peace be present with us in difficult decisions, especially where relationships are strained and the future is unclear. Open our ears and our hearts to listen to and hear those with whom we differ. Most of all, we give thanks for Jesus Christ, our risen Savior and Lord, who called the Church into being and who continues to call us to follow his example of loving our neighbor and working for the reconciliation of the world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

*The Reverend Susan C. McGhee, Presbyter for Common Life
The Reverend Lawrence Jackman, Stated Clerk
Elder M. Jean Brown, Treasurer*

Phone: 866-344-7853 Fax: 812-334-1630
Email : info@povpc.org
Website : www.povpc.org



Presbytery of Ohio Valley

1701 E. Second Street, Suite 100
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

From the Office of

The Presbyter for Common Life

Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Cynthia Bolbach
Moderator, 219th General Assembly (2010)

Linda Valentine
Executive Director, General Assembly Mission Council

Landon Whitsitt
Vice Moderator, 219th General Assembly (2010)

Links to other resources that may be helpful:

- [Churchwide letter](#), [Spanish](#), [Korean](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#), [Spanish](#), [Korean](#)
- [Liturgical Resource](#), [Spanish](#), [Korean](#)
- [Advisory Opinion #24](#), [Spanish](#), [Korean](#)
- [Video message from the Stated Clerk](#)
- [Video message from the Moderator](#)
- [Video message from the Office of the General Assembly](#) (Korean)
- [Video message from the Office of the General Assembly](#) (Spanish)