

July 31, 2008

Many in our congregation, and denomination for that matter, are unaware of the actions of the recent 218th General Assembly. The articles and web links on this area of our website are provided to help you become aware of these actions which many in our denomination find very troubling. You are aware that issues of human sexuality have for many years been discussed and debated within our society and the Church. Heterosexual promiscuity and homosexual activity has never been considered by the Church as God's plan for humanity and the Bible speaks clearly to these issues. Our culture is, however, changing and the challenge for the Church is, "do we adapt to the culture or do we hold to and promote the truth of God's Word"?

This recent Assembly has, I believe, adapted to the culture and abandoned the clear teaching of Scripture. For nearly two thousand years, this was not an issue in the Church. However, in the late 1970's a movement began to loosen our sexual understanding and condone the practice of homosexuality. In 1978 the Church answered this issue with an "Authoritative Interpretation" (known in 1978 as Definitive Guidance.) This document is linked for you review. In 1996 this position was strengthened by the addition of G-6.0106b into the Book of Order. G-6.0106b states:

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.

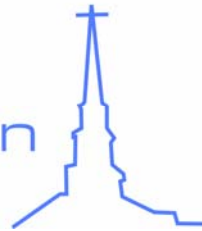
This addition addressed both heterosexual and homosexual concerns. Since its adoption in 1996, there have been two separate attempts to remove this from the constitution and both attempts were defeated by increasing numbers. There have been those within the denomination who disagree with this position, but this has been the historic teaching of Christianity and the Presbyterian Church.

This 218th Assembly managed to undo this historic position of the Church and has paved the way for the approval and ordination of self-acknowledged practicing homosexuals. While the attempt to remove G-6.0106b will still require a majority approval of our 173 Presbyteries, others actions taken by this Assembly allow for a circumvention of this requirement. The documents and links on our website will help you to understand the history, theology and biblical teaching regarding this subject. At a meeting of the Session on July 22, 2008 two motions were taken in response to the actions of this Assembly. These motions are:

Because the Session is grieved by several of the actions of the 218th General Assembly, it is moved that the Session of First Presbyterian Church take all appropriate action and investigate such options necessary to remain faithful to our reformed faith and be guided by the authority of Scripture.

In support of the previous motion, the Session shall charge the Enabling Ministry Unit to create a funded taskforce made up of elders and members of the congregation to gather information on options regarding our church's response to several actions of the 218th General Assembly and to apprise and update the Session monthly regarding the work of the taskforce.

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Your pastors and members of the Session will be attending meetings in Atlanta (August 6-7) and California (October 13-15) to work with other Evangelicals within the Presbyterian Church to discuss an appropriate response and to consider our alternatives as we seek to be faithful to our Biblical witness. This web site will be updated periodically to keep you fully informed.

God is at work within this congregation and the ministry of First Presbyterian will continue forward. Our faith teaches us that even in troubled waters, God is still in control. I look forward to being a part of God's work!

God Bless,

Barry Jenkins