

Resolution of the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Florence S.C.

June 28, 2011

For many years the actions of the PCUSA General Assembly have been deeply troubling to many in our church and in our denomination. These actions have called into question the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the church.

In direct response to the actions of the PCUSA General Assembly, the Session of First Presbyterian Church has previously adopted the following Resolutions and motions:

- On August 28, 2001, the Session adopted a Resolution announcing its commitment to the Confessing Church Movement which affirms (1) Jesus Christ is the world's singular Lord, and no one comes to the Father but through Him; (2) The Bible is God's holy Word: and (3) those who are called to ordained office must strive to live a holy life, which includes the Biblical standard of chastity in singleness and fidelity in marriage.
- On September 26, 2006, the Session adopted a Resolution reaffirming the Biblical standard of "fidelity and chastity" for ordination and installation of ministers, elders, and deacons (Section G-6.0106b, PCUSA Book of Order).¹
- On July 22, 2008, the Session voted to withhold per capita funding from the PCUSA General Assembly and to create a denominational issues task force.
- On November 25, 2008, and in response to a report from the denominational issues task force, the Session adopted a "dual track" approach in regard to determining the extent and nature of the relationship between our church and the PCUSA. Those dual tracks were (1) to be proactive in the continuing effort to bring about needed change in the denomination, and (2) to do our due diligence in exploring alternatives for dismissal of First Presbyterian Church from PCUSA.
- On May 24, 2011, the Session, by motion passed by voice vote: (1) reaffirmed the September 26, 2006, Resolution stating our standard for ordination and installation; (2) reaffirmed the July 22, 2008, Resolution to withhold per capita funding from the PCUSA General Assembly; and (3) appointed the sitting unit chairs of the Session to serve on a steering committee to reconstitute the 2008 denominational issues task force.

Consistent with the "dual track" approach to be proactive and to exercise due diligence on the relationship between our church and PCUSA adopted in November, 2008, the Pastors and Session of First Presbyterian Church have taken and continue to take the following actions:

- Sending representatives to conferences on denominational issues;
- Holding informational sessions and congregational meetings on denominational issue for members;

- Communicating with other churches in our Presbytery on denominational issues;
- Sponsoring an unsuccessful overture to the PCUSA General Assembly in 2009 to restrict the ability of the General Assembly to consider proposed amendments to the Book of Order which have been approved for two consecutive years by the General Assembly but not adopted by a majority of the Presbyteries for the same two consecutive years.

In May, 2011, a vote by a majority of Presbyteries in PCUSA sent a shockwave throughout the denomination. Amendment 10-Aⁱⁱ of the 219th PCUSA General Assembly (2010) was adopted. Amendment 10-A creates a new ordination standard by removing the “fidelity and chastity” provisions from the Book of Order. We now find ourselves aligned with hundreds of PCUSA churches throughout the country that are unable to reconcile Biblical truths with this new PCUSA ordination standard.

It is clear to the Session that our efforts to bring about needed change in the denomination have failed and that we must actively pursue other options, including dismissal from the PCUSA.

The steering committee to reconstitute the 2008 denominational issues task force which was created in May, 2011, has met. It has made the following recommendations to the full Session concerning membership, duties, and responsibilities of the reconstituted denominational issues task force:

- 1) The task force will be made up of the six 2010/11 Session Unit leaders, the Clerk of Session, and the Pastors;
- 2) The task force will recruit qualified individuals from within the congregation to serve in specialized working groups as required;
- 3) The task force will address issues including, but not limited to: (1) dismissal from PCUSA, including other denominational options; (2) process and precedents from the Book of Order and other authoritative sources relating to dismissal; (3) property and other legal issues relating to dismissal; (4) financial considerations relating to dismissal; (5) congregations communications; and (6) liaison with other churches and with the Presbytery.
- 4) The task force will report to the Session monthly.

The Session hereby approves the recommendations of the steering committee and charges the reconstituted denominational issues task force with the above duties and responsibilities and requests that the denominational issues task force proceed with all due haste.

ⁱ G-6.0106b in the PCUSA Book of Order provides the following standards for persons ordained as church leaders (deacon, elder or minister):“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.”

ⁱⁱ Amendment 10-A deletes G-6.0106b from the Book of Order replaces it with the following language: “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; G14.0450) 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.”