

Overture to the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly:

Regarding the question of whether persons unrepentant of sexual activity outside of the marriage of a man and a woman are eligible for ordination.

The Presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ overtures the General Assembly to adopt the following Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108b (*It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body.*):

To be an ordained officer is to be a human instrument, touched by divine powers but still an earthen vessel. As portrayed in Scripture, officers of the church are to set before the church and community an example of piety, love, service, and moral integrity. We acknowledge that their humanity subjects them often to repeated sinful acts. Nevertheless, church officers are not free to adopt a lifestyle of conscious, continuing, and unrepentant sin in any area of their lives. For the church to ordain to ministry any person who affirms his or her own homosexual practice and is unrepentant, would be to act in contradiction to its charter and calling in Scripture, setting in motion both within the church and society serious contradictions to the will of Christ. Therefore, the PC (USA) acknowledges that unrepentant sexual relations outside of the marriage of a man and a woman do not accord with the requirements for ordination set forth in Form of Government G-6.0108b. The same proscription applies to all other categories of offense as defined in D-2.0203b, “An offense is any act or omission by a member or officer of the church that is contrary to the Scriptures or the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).”

Rationale:

An Authoritative Interpretation adopted at GA 218 declares that the “**Interpretive statements concerning ordained service of homosexual church members by the 190th General Assembly (1978) of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the 119th General Assembly (1979) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and all subsequent affirmations thereof, have no further force or effect.**”

This AI leaves the PC (USA) without guidance on the question that occasioned the 1978 and 1979 interpretive statements Presbyteries asked for definitive guidance “concerning the eligibility for ordination to the professional ministry of persons who openly acknowledge homosexual orientation and practice.”<sup>1</sup>

On the divisive issue of the ordination of unrepentant sexually active practicing homosexuals (USAPHS), this lack of guidance threatens to fragment the PC (USA) into presbyteries that are willing to ordain candidates without regard for their sexual behavior [who do ordain USAPHS without regard to sexual practice and those ] and presbyteries that are unwilling to do so. This sort of division threatens to partition our church and undermine even our institutional unity.

The biblical and theological evidence remains unchanged. The biblical revelation to Israel, reaffirmed in the teaching of Jesus and Paul, portrayed in the *theology and human creation*, specifically reflected in the ethical teaching in both the Old and New Testaments, and confirmed in nature, clearly indicates that genital sexual expression is meant to be within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. Behavior that is pleasing to God cannot simply be defined as that which pleases others or expresses our own strong needs and identity; it must flow out of faithful and loving obedience to God.

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<sup>1</sup> **1978 Policy Statement and Recommendations on Homosexuality, United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America** (Reprinted in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Minutes*, 1986, Part I, pp. 1019-1024)

Faithfulness to the univocal biblical boundary on sexual conduct established by our Confessions is our charter and calling as reformed Christians committed to doing the will of Christ.

The ordination promise to be governed by the polity and abide by the discipline of our church means that all officers are under orders from God to be responsive to his call to submit themselves to his will as revealed in Scripture and interpreted by our Confessions as a whole.