

Vote "NO" on 10-A

By Elder Jeff Crisp, Presbytery of Western North Carolina

Mr. Moderator, thank you for the chance to speak this afternoon about why I will be voting "NO" on Amendment 10-A. My name is Jeff Crisp. My entire Christian walk has been in the PC(USA) and specifically in this Presbytery of WNC. I was baptized and confirmed at United Presbyterian Church in Lenoir. While attending UNC-Asheville I was active in the Presbyterian Campus Fellowship and pastored by men and women provided by this presbytery, including Ed Brenegar. My wife and I were married by Rev. Pete Peery at First Pres. in Asheville. While working in Henderson County we joined the congregation of First Hendersonville, and when I moved my family back to Lenoir 8 years ago, we joined First Lenoir. During this time I have been blessed with a wonderful wife, three beautiful children, and many opportunities to grow in and serve Christ.

Almost exactly 1 year ago, I was installed and ordained as a Presbyterian elder. I am proud to follow in the footsteps of my parents, who are also elders; along with my grandfather and many other past relatives. At that time, I took vows not that different from the vows I took 12 1/2 yrs ago when I was married. Vows of commitment to Christ's church, the truth of the scriptures, and my responsibilities to our congregation. At my wedding, many words of scripture were read, including the passage from Genesis 2 that says, "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife." My marriage has not always been easy, but I am blessed with a loving wife, and we work very hard together to insure that our marriage takes precedent over any other desires we may have.

Despite the difficulties, it is evident to me that God made women and men for each other. They are simultaneously compatible and opposable, physically, cognitively, and emotionally. My experience tells me that marriage was intended by God to be between a man and a woman, and that marriage relationships must remain sexually pure in all ways.

However, as we consider Amendment 10-A, we CANNOT look to our own personal experience. Reliance upon personal experience will lead us to conclusions that are self-serving, subjective, and chaotic, particularly in a time when our denomination is seeking to find peace, unity, and purity. (3:00)

I represent a generation that has felt this chaos. In my role as a high school teacher I work with many students who come from broken and sexually confused homes. These students and many of my own friends are victims of a culture and mentality that promotes self-fulfillment over personal sacrifice, diversity over purity, and cultural correctness over truth. When personal experience leads to confusion and discord within the church, we must turn away from self and towards Christ.

Christ came to bring shalom, peace to a world awash in chaos. Christ brings peace through truth. Truth is revealed in God's word. Christ knew deeply and submitted Himself to God's word, even saying that He did not come to replace the Scriptures, but to fulfill them. The Bible clearly states time and again that marriage was intended for man and woman, and that we should flee from all sexual immorality. When we adopt laws governing our church that allow our spiritual leaders to ignore this in the name of their own personal or cultural experience, we muddy the waters and create chaos, where Christ intends peace.

Today, a "NO" vote on Amendment 10-A will keep us aligned with Scripture's clear teaching on sexual fidelity and chastity. Since 1997, when the current language was added to our Constitution, Presbyteries have voted again and again to maintain scriptural standards to be applied throughout our denomination. Our Church's judicial bodies have upheld the application of G-6.0106b as essential to the integrity of our governing documents and the connectional nature of our churches. I hope you will join me today in voting NO on Amendment 10-A in order to hold our church leaders to the sexual standards of God's Word.

The beauty of standing in God's Word is that its truth always moves us to share grace, love and mercy. Many who oppose my view have and will argue that Christ's Church must show grace and love to all, or risk losing our witness. If God's truth does not undergird the grace and love we show, we witness to a false hope, not the life-changing salvation of Jesus Christ. The spiritual leaders called to our denomination's churches must be those who are willing to live in the truth of God's word, *so that* they can show grace and teach our members about how to offer it.

I point you to Paul's words in Romans 6.

"Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? Absolutely not! We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?" It is my earnest prayer that this presbytery will stand with Christ for truth, upholding that sexual purity IS important among our leadership, and that Christ's love is seen only when we clearly abide in God's word. Please vote NO on Amendment 10-A and help us maintain a grace-filled witness.