

Overture to Heartland Presbytery from Brookdale Session

RE: An authoritative interpretation of the Book of Order G-6.0106 b and G-6.108

The Session of Brookdale Presbyterian Church, St. Joseph, Missouri, meeting on January 31, 2010, respectfully requests Heartland Presbytery to overture the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to issue the following authoritative interpretation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Constitution:

The 219th General Assembly declares that church officers and ministers of Word and Sacrament may in good conscience disagree with constitutional requirements for both faith and behavior. Nevertheless, the constitution of the Presbyterian Church USA, while allowing freedom of conscience in interpreting the Scripture (G-6.0108 a), also requires that in becoming candidates and officers, members of the Presbyterian Church USA choose to exercise their consciences 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." G-6.0108 b shall be understood to mean that no governing body may grant an exception to any explicitly stated behavioral standard for ordination and that church officers are to remain in compliance with such standards. Consequently, any person declining to comply in practice or refusing to comply in stated intent is ineligible for ordination or installation or for candidacy as an officer or minister of word and Sacrament, and shall not be ordained, installed, validated, or reinstated to active ministry by any governing body. We recognize the church's responsibility to counsel with and care for those whose consciences lead them to disagree with standards adopted by consent of the whole church and urge our particular churches and governing bodies to counsel and minister to such persons at all times with Christ's love and moral clarity.

RATIONALE

- Confusion remains in the Presbyterian Church (USA) about the meaning and application of G-6.010b in light of G-6.0108;
- Confusion feeds dissention, animosity, inconsistency and controversy, poorly serving the whole church, which is in need of clear and forthright instruction;
- The General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission has a constitutional responsibility to deliver binding authoritative interpretations, both in Permanent Judicial Commission proceedings and in this General Assembly;
- Whether the standards adopted by the whole church must be applied uniformly has been the subject of many complaints, which has resulted in costly litigation that wastes resources that could be used for better purposes;
- The lack of a clear and direct statement has led many to conclude that the Presbyterian Church (USA) is less than serious about constitutional consistency;
- The above statement would promote the peace, unity and purity of the Presbyterian Church (USA) by stating clearly what the standard is and by uniting the authoritative interpretations of

both the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission and the General Assembly.

- And the above statement stands in solidarity with the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission's authoritative interpretation of the requirements for ordination.