

PROPOSED OVERTURE -- from the Session of Covenant-First Presbyterian Church

The Presbytery of Cincinnati overtures the 217th General Assembly (2006) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbytery for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-6.0106b be amended as follows [text to be inserted is shown in CAPITAL LETTERS]:

Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scriptures 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 of Sacrament. THIS PARAGRAPH MAY NOT BE AMENDED PRIOR TO 2018.

Rationale

It is God's desire that the church should live in unity and community, and not be torn by constant and recurring strife. The church should be able to give first priority to the advancement of the Gospel and Gospel values in the world.

Thus, a hiatus from perpetual conflict is in order in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—a period during which the church can concentrate on its mission to the world without the threat of biennial battles about ordination standards, disagreements that sap the church's strength and continue to produce winners and losers. The decade following implementation in 2008 can instead be a period of renewed evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, service, and mission, apart from the acrimony of fixed controversy.

The provision in our Book of Order section G-6.0106b, commonly known as "fidelity and chastity," has been a fitting expression of the peace, unity, and purity Jesus Christ seeks for his church. There is no new consensus in the church that would cause us to conclude our understanding of the Scriptures on these issues has been in error. Nor has the constant and perpetual nature of conflict been good for the ministry and welfare of our denomination.

There is longstanding precedent already in our *Constitution* for an amendment such as the one proposed by this overture. G-8.0701, for instance, concludes with, "This paragraph may not be amended." This current overture concerning G-6.0106b proposes a more modest approach, asking merely that further possible amendment be forestalled only for a decade. During this hiatus of ten years, we pray that the ensuing peace will enable us to hear clearly what God speaks to us through the Word, that our church may do justice, honor God's intentions for human sexuality, and be a loving, faithful witness to the world. We would be free to take up the debate again after a healthy period of peace and further discernment.

For now, however, we need not break into the same argument every time Presbyterians meet! May we call a halt to the acrimony and seek above all obedience to Christ, that we may live out the great ends of the church with vigor and harmony.