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Elder Dennis H. Piermont, Executive Presbyter
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My Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

We are writing to you in response to the ratification of Amendment 10-A by a majority of the presbyteries of the PCUSA. As we are sure you know, this change to our denominational constitution replaces language describing the qualifications for office in the PCUSA as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added is shown as *italic*.]

~~“b. 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. 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; G-14.0450) 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.”~~

Many among you are likely celebrating the passage of this amendment while at the same time others are grieving its passage. The secular press, as well as denominational affinity groups on both sides of the issue, are likely to misrepresent the potential consequences of this vote. Let us share several observations with you.

- The vote **does** remove explicit language barring those involved in sexual relationships outside the bonds of marriage between a man and a woman from holding office in the church.
- The new language **does** more clearly place the responsibility for determining a candidate’s fitness for office on the governing body calling the individual to service.
- The new provision **does not** force any congregation, session or presbytery to ordain or install to service any person that it does not deem qualified.

We urge you to exercise restraint in your reactions to this development. We, in the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, have made considerable strides in bridging our theological differences and we hope and pray that this change will not trigger a new sense of fear and distrust among us. Friends, we “beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **making every effort** to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:1b-6).

Grace and peace to you,

Elder John Mauntler, Moderator

Elder Marjorie S. Morgan, Council Chair