



presbyterians for renewal

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Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

In June 2008 a simple majority of the 218th General Assembly proposed the removal of G-6.0106b (biblical standards of fidelity and chastity) to the presbyteries, requiring, for the fourth time in a dozen years, the time and energy of people across the PC(USA) be expended on debating the clear teaching of Scripture. When, in one vote, the same Assembly removed three decades of Authoritative Interpretation, Presbyterians for Renewal was compelled to declare the time had come to find a new way to relate to one another within the PC(USA). We continue to contest for the historic and global witness of the Church to remain the faith and practice of our denomination. But, biblical and missional faithfulness compels us to direct energy away from answering the self-serving demands of a minority within our own denomination to joyfully proclaiming Jesus Christ in the world. Passion and energy that has been diverted to an interminable internal struggle must be released into active participation in God's mission.

To this end, Presbyterians for Renewal launched an ambitious campaign to converse with Presbyterians across the denomination. In the course of five months, we held over 40 regional gatherings, listening and responding to over 3000 people. Simultaneously, we formed a resource team to prayerfully consider new ways of relating within our denomination; ways that would allow both continued communal ties within the PC(USA), and uncompromised obedience to Jesus Christ. For over a year this team reviewed previous polity proposals and considered new ones.

As a result of these conversations and deliberations, we now offer a bold proposal: the creation of a new, non-geographic synod that could minister both through and to the PC(USA). Three documents describing this proposal are attached:

- a collection of frequently asked questions regarding the choice of a new "synod," other options we considered, and common concerns about the way forward
- a recommended revision to the Book of Order (or the new Form of Government currently under consideration)
- polity specifics regarding our vision for the shape and structure of the new synod, realizing the synod and its constituting presbyteries would further define the nature of their life together.

While we offer this proposal as our best option, we gratefully acknowledge the work of others who also seek creative solutions to our current impasse, and we welcome the opportunity to work with them as together we seek the mind and heart of God.

The challenges we face as followers of Jesus Christ are immense. But equally amazing are the possibilities to proclaim Christ in a broken and hurting world and the need to do so. We offer this proposal to the glory of God as a way to begin a new era in the vibrant history and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA)!

FAQs on the New Synod Proposal

UPDATED: August 25, 2009

Introduction

1. Why propose a New Synod?

God has called us to the joyful task of mission and ministry with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8). However, the current state of the PC(USA) hinders many throughout the denomination as they seek to fulfill this calling. As a denomination, we are incapable of articulating a compelling unified witness to the person and work of Jesus Christ, the mission and purposes of God, the authority and interpretation of Scripture, and the role of the Church in the world.

2. What is the proposal?

We propose reshaping the life and witness of the PC(USA) through the creation of a new synod. The New Synod would be equal in every way to the current sixteen (16) synods, but would be non-geographic; identified by particular theological and missional commitments rather than by a geographic region. We believe this New Synod would provide an important means of moving the whole denomination toward missional and ministerial effectiveness.

3. How will re-structuring the bureaucracy re-shape the life and witness of the PC(USA)?

Currently, the PC(USA) appears to be united only by bureaucratic structure, common history, and an inherited confessional tradition. There is little definable unity in the understanding of biblical authority or in the interpretation and application of core biblical teaching. As a result, there is little agreement on our common vision for mission and ministry. Because of this, the PC(USA) is hindered in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

However, because we share common history and an inherited confessional tradition and, more importantly, because we believe God has called us to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ in this time and place, we believe it is important to reshape our flawed bureaucratic structure in order to allow effective ministry to flourish.

4. Why a “non-geographic” proposal? Aren’t we a “connectional church?”

The current state of the PC(USA) demonstrates that geographic proximity does not automatically produce the unity of faith sufficient for meaningful “connection.” Many congregations in close geographic proximity have little else in common. God builds the covenant community around Jesus Christ: a common faith, vision, and understanding of mission. Mere polite conversation among commissioners at a presbytery meeting hardly suffices.

5. **Why create another synod? The current synods serve increasingly little purpose. Won't this simply create more bureaucracy?**

Whether or not traditional synods are necessary is an ongoing discussion across the PC(USA). However, the synod is currently the governing body overseeing a group of presbyteries, and as such remains part of our polity.

It is anticipated that the New Synod will not establish a significant bureaucracy. Rather, it will structure itself in ways that foster a contagious passion for God's mission, while at the same time de-centralizing ministry as much as possible.

6. **Why work so hard to preserve the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?**

The proposal to form a new non-geographic synod has little to do with preserving the institution that is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This proposal seeks to encourage a faithful response to the call of God by individuals, congregations, and presbyteries who are currently hindered in their response by the state of affairs in the denomination. The goal is to give glory to God, not the PC(USA).

Presbyteries

7. **What presbyteries would be part of the New Synod?**

The New Synod would be formed by no fewer than three presbyteries who share common faith and vision for the role of the Church in God's mission. These would be the originating presbyteries.

8. **Would the originating presbyteries retain their current geographic boundaries?**

Presbyteries who form the New Synod would be received with their current boundaries intact. As congregations outside the bounds of the originating presbyteries request to be received into the New Synod, provision would be made for incorporating these congregations into the community and mission of the most logical presbytery.

9. **What happens when other presbyteries vote to join the New Synod?**

The New Synod would realign the congregations and presbyteries in the most logical configuration.

10. **Congregations with broad geographic separation could feel isolated. How is authentic community and connectional ministry possible without geographic proximity?**

For many congregations within the current structure of the PC(USA), isolation has long been their reality because of their theological position, sense of mission, or understanding of biblical faithfulness. Many experience more authentic community with congregations from other denominational traditions than they enjoy with their PC(USA) "neighbors." As affinity networks like PFR and PGF have proven, connectional ministry results from common faith, understanding of mission, and vision, regardless of the distance between congregations. While our current middle governing body structures are predicated on the expectation of face-to-face interaction as the primary system of communication, continuing advancement in communication technology is providing multiplied options for meaningful interaction through virtual community.

11. Can the New Synod sub-divide existing presbyteries, or create new ones?

Just as with any existing synod, the New Synod may not sub-divide existing presbyteries or create new ones without permission of the General Assembly.

Presbyteries within the New Synod will be expected to form smaller sub-groups of congregations to enable hands-on mission, discipleship, and accountability. These smaller sub-groups allow even a large presbytery to function like a band of smaller ones.

12. If an entire presbytery moves into the New Synod, this transfer will leave a “hole” within the boundaries of an existing synod. How will this hole be filled?

The “hole” will be filled by re-drawing the boundaries of the geographic presbyteries within a geographic synod with approval of the General Assembly.

13. Will presbyteries function differently within the New Synod?

Presbyteries within the New Synod will be expected and enabled to move away from hierarchical, “regulatory” government to “ministry,” emphasizing our participation in God’s mission in the world.

The New Synod and Unity

14. It appears the New Synod will only attract and receive congregations and presbyteries that might be characterized as theologically and socially conservative. Are we are giving up on trying to understand one another and on working together?

As has been proven repeatedly, attempts to force diverse congregations into “dialogue,” feigning the authentic community of common faith, does not create connectional ministry. As a denomination, we are currently neither united nor together.

Given this reality, the New Synod is an experiment that would allow congregations with theological affinity to explore a means of authentic community and connectional ministry. If there is sincere desire to communicate across theological divides, and if common ground exists on which to do so, no polity arrangement can prevent it.

15. What is the point of staying “together” if we are going to build high polity fences, only coming together every two years for a General Assembly?

We believe that to leave the denomination or simply to defect from active participation in the broader mission of the PC(USA) is to give up, thereby turning our back on the ministry to which God calls us. Moreover, such decisions claim individual sovereignty to determine when, how, where, and with whom we will love and serve Jesus Christ. We believe this is biblically unfaithful.

Unlike other proposals for networks or loose affiliations of congregations, the New Synod would be created by the whole denomination and governed by the Book of Order. Like any geographic synod or presbytery, the New Synod will participate in the whole life of the PC(USA). Its presbyteries will send commissioners to General Assembly, and its members will enjoy the same participation as other synods on the GAMC, its committees, and the GAPJC.

16. Other than being non-geographic, what is the primary distinction of this New Synod? How is it different from other PC(USA) synods?

The primary distinctives of the New Synod are detailed in Appendix A. These distinctives portray a common faith, vision, and understanding of mission; and they are designed to foster a covenant community grounded in obedience to Scripture, guided by our Confessions, and faithful to the historic Reformed Tradition. The differences in polity, intentionally few, include:

- the non-geographic nature of the synod
- creation of a synod-wide vision that is binding on all presbyteries, sessions, and officers, and
- the right of presbyteries and congregations to transfer into and out of the Synod.

17. Come on, this “New” synod is just about holding on to the G-6.0106b “fidelity and chastity” language. Why not admit it?

A key presenting issue is the ordination of persons who openly profess disagreement with the premise of G-6.0106b, and who express their intention to knowingly violate the denomination’s ordination standards. While “fidelity and chastity” is not the only standard for ordination, or even the most important, it is the standard being contested.

But the mere existence of G-6.0106b is symptomatic of a more fundamental disunity in the PC(USA). More significant than concern over G-6.0106b is concern over the trajectory of the PC(USA) toward a diversity that has neither an identifiable theological center or clearly defined boundaries. This trajectory is moving us away from communion with those in the global Church who profess Nicene Christianity.

The vision of the New Synod is to re-establish a covenant community within the PC(USA) whose identity is based on serving Jesus Christ through the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200), and whose standards for leadership are not de-constructed or ignored. This New Synod will seek to respond faithfully to the plan and promises of God, and to embody God’s transformative grace.

The New Synod in the Book of Order and the “nFOG” Proposal

18. How would the New Synod be affected by the “nFOG” Proposal?

The proposed new Form of Government is a work in progress. Appropriate polity proposals will be prepared when the specifics of the nFOG’s proposed revisions are more concrete. The intent of the New Synod would in many ways reflect the best features of the initial proposals reported from the nFOG project.

19. How would the New Synod be represented within the current Book of Order?

The New Synod would be created through a proposed amendment to the Book of Order (see Amendment) and with the addition of specific standards (see Appendix A).

20. In what way are the proposed “standards” in the Appendix binding on presbyteries and sessions within the New Synod?

They are binding in the same way any other standard in the Book of Order is binding (e.g., G-14.0450). Just as with all constitutional provisions, perceived deviations from these standards by those to whom they apply may be the subject of a judicial proceeding to determine whether an offense or irregularity must be addressed.

21. What is the impact of the PUP AI or other similar actions on the “standards” proposed in Appendix A?

The implications of the PUP AI are not yet clear. Many questions remain unresolved. Can any standard be ignored at the discretion of any governing body? Are there no standards? If any governing body has complete autonomy, the existence of a constitutional body that could reasonably be called a “reformed denomination” must be questioned. The vision of the New Synod is that the proposed standards will be binding upon governing bodies and judicial commissions relating to ministry within the New Synod.

22. Is it fair that the New Synod would have its own more rigorous standards for ordination, protected from change by the whole denomination without the New Synod’s consent, and yet participate in the debates and votes on the standards in the whole denomination?

While the New Synod creates a polity means by which the whole denomination can make room for those who want a more rigorous standard, even those living with the more rigorous standard have a continuing interest in the overall standards for the denomination, because these too will affect them as they interact with the denomination as a whole, and as they participate in the whole denomination’s interaction with other Christians and the world. An analogy for this already exists in the Book of Order. Sessions can adopt more rigorous standards for membership, and yet their ministers and elders can continue to participate in presbytery considerations of the general standards of membership.

23. Would ordination under the standards of the New Synod be honored in other presbyteries? Conversely, would ordination under presbyteries in other synods be honored by presbyteries in the New Synod?

The transfer of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament from one presbytery to another would operate no differently after the creation of the New Synod than it does now. No change is proposed to the current language in the Book of Order: “Ordination for the office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery...” (G-14.0480). This is for at least two reasons:

- The fundamental unity of the Body of the Christ (the Church) binds all congregations together regardless of denominational affiliation. Thus the act of one congregation is the act of the whole Church, whether we acknowledge it or not. This reality cannot be superseded by deleting language from the constitution of any one denomination such as the PC(USA).
- More superficial concern over the appearance of complicity can be mitigated by the clearly defined identity of the New Synod. It will be clear when actions of other congregations in other synods are not consistent with the vision and identity of the congregations in the New Synod.

24. **But doesn't Scripture itself condemn affiliation in any form with those who knowingly practice unfaithfulness? Wouldn't this proposal weaken our biblical witness?**

Regardless of the context in which we find ourselves, God calls us to address both people and issues with grace and truth. Emphasizing one over the other negates both. The world in which we are privileged to minister is broken by sin and needs the redemption that only Jesus Christ brings. Mistaken beliefs and misguided behaviors occur even within the Church. Yet we remain responsible to pursue a better way. This proposal creates a structure that fosters that reality.

25. **How is this "New Synod" proposal different from the "two synod" proposal that has been suggested from time to time in the past decade?**

A two synod proposal divides the denomination into "liberal" and "conservative" affiliations, eventually forcing every congregation in the PC(USA) to decide with whom they wish to affiliate.

By contrast, the creation of the New Synod will not force any congregation or presbytery to do anything. The proposed amendment gives congregations and presbyteries the opportunity to transfer in or out of the New Synod at any time.

26. **Won't this New Synod cause "Article Thirteen"-type battles in congregations as members debate whether to join a presbytery in the New Synod or not?**

Unfortunately, unanimity on any issue in the Church seems rare. It is hoped that a congregation would seek to join a presbytery in the New Synod or decide to remain within their current presbytery affiliation only after careful study and prayer, discerning the guidance of God, and obtaining the approval of 2/3 of the active members.

27. **What about congregations who disagree with their presbytery's choice to take no action or transfer into or out of the New Synod?**

The New Synod provides an opportunity for congregations to seek affiliation with others who share common faith, vision, and understanding of mission. Congregations who find themselves in disagreement with the action of their current presbytery will be free to seek transfer in or out of the New Synod. Presbyteries will need to adapt their structure and mission accordingly.

While this type of transition is never easy, adaptive change could well foster renewal in many presbyteries. With or without the New Synod, change is a continuing challenge within the PC(USA).

Individual Members of the PC(USA) and the New Synod

28. **What provision is there for individual members of the PC(USA) who agree with the common faith, vision, and understanding of mission of the New Synod to participate in that ministry even if their current congregation or presbytery does not?**

The potential for individual Presbyterians to "affiliate" with the common faith, vision, and understanding of mission of the New Synod, enhancing their missional effectiveness in their current setting, is one of the as yet unexplored possibilities of this proposal. Such participation would most likely be by an affinity arrangement, and not a formal polity revision.

Other Questions

29. **Does this proposal weaken the evangelical witness in the denomination by creating a “co-conoon” for conservatives and diluting the effect of their votes in “swing” presbyteries?**

The Great Commission does not remove disciples from the challenges of the world. Rather, it catapults us into the culture with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Likewise the New Synod does not remove presbyteries or congregations from the life and ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Instead, it provides a clear identity through common faith, vision, and understanding of mission. Moreover, it provides a structure that fosters the expression of Nicene Christianity and orthodox biblical interpretation within the diversity of the PC(USA). The design and intent of the New Synod is to strengthen and focus ministry based on the Good News of Jesus Christ, not to dilute it.

As for the actual impact of the New Synod on voting patterns in the presbyteries, it is impossible to predict. If the New Synod is not approved, the PC(USA) will most likely continue to lose those individuals and congregations who find the current state of the PC(USA) is undermining the integrity of their ministry; quite possibly at an even greater pace. What impacts voting patterns more; a New Synod, or increasing defections? God alone knows. But the New Synod does offer the promise of a missional vitality that could make for significant growth in its congregations, which would thereby affect the overall voting balance.

30. **Can a congregation that has begun the process of leaving the PC(USA) come back into the New Synod?**

It is hoped that the New Synod would provide a faithful alternative to leaving the PC(USA), both for congregations considering this costly and difficult decision, and for those who might be reconsidering their actions.

31. **Some congregations have deliberately established an effective witness in their current geographical presbytery. Do they need to move into the New Synod?**

No. But for those whose witness is being hindered, the New Synod provides an attractive option for following God’s call while remaining within the PC(USA). While larger congregations may be able to witness effectively despite their presbytery’s actions, smaller membership congregations are not so resistant. They, in particular, may find the partnership with other congregations of like concern to be a boost for their ministry.

32. **Some have asserted that a proposal like this simply can not win approval at a General Assembly, given that the Commissioners are those who have a great interest in and facility with the system as it currently exists. Why bother?**

Why bother? Because change is coming one way or another. Anyone observing the last three decades of our struggles with ordination issues, or how our sister denominations (e.g., Episcopalians, and Lutherans) are struggling with the same issues, must realize that change is coming. Some describe the current changes as the beginning of a great realignment, or the manifestation of an emerging “post-denominationalism”. While it is early yet to know just how “great” these changes will prove to be, significant change in the alignment of denominations will certainly come. Recognizing this, those who love the PC(USA) may well be open at this juncture in our history to a proac-

tive proposal that seeks a way forward, preserving unity even while creating space for differing views.

33. What happens if this proposal for a New Synod is rejected by the General Assembly?

God is both sovereign and faithful, and God will continue to guide the PC(USA). Our call is simple: to follow where God leads.

That being said, there are many individuals and congregations who find both the current trajectory of the PC(USA) and ongoing radical challenges to biblical faithfulness unacceptable misrepresentations of the Christian faith. While no one can predict the future in detail, it is certain that PC(USA) faces significant and unavoidable change. Whether or not we work together and proactively address that change could well determine the future unity and vitality of the PC(USA).

34. What about the other proposals for realignment? How does the New Synod proposal stack up against them?

In preparing and refining this proposal, other possibilities have been raised. Some of these may come to the General Assembly, which we believe would be to the good. The Assembly would benefit from the juxtaposition of various recommendations. Still, we bring this New Synod proposal with confidence, having considered these other options in our own process.

Some have suggested non-geographic presbyteries with congregations able to join whatever presbytery they believe interprets best the Book of Order. We considered this option. It avoids entirely the decidedly unsexy “synod” aspect of our proposal. But we also believe it does not provide protection from changes to the ordination standards that would be adopted by the whole denomination. Should the PC(USA) not only permit but require the approval of candidates for ordination who do not live within biblical standards, a presbytery is at pains to “interpret” that new standard away. The non-geographic presbytery, gathered by affinity, only puts off the inevitable collision.

Others have suggested what would be, in effect, “sister churches;” making the division at the Assembly level rather than the Synod level. The “sisters” would continue to cooperate where they could, sharing common resources such as the Board of Pensions, various international mission endeavors, etc., but they would have separate Assemblies. This might lower the volume of debate, at least on some issues at national level, but it would also cause immediate and harsh division in local congregations who would then be forced to decide between the “sisters.” In contrast, the New Synod proposal presumes congregations who do not make a super majority decision to be a part of the New Synod will simply remain where they are—all still part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Motion to amend the Form of Government or nFOG

by adding the following new section G-12.0400 (FOG) [or G-3.0408 (nFOG)]:

The following amendment creates a new synod which, for convenience, is referred to as "New Synod," and sets forth the process by which it will begin operations. The new synod will be named at its first meeting. After the name is selected, the amended section of the Book of Order will be further amended to refer to "New Synod" by the name that is adopted. New Synod is not assigned a particular geographic region, nor will the presbyteries within New Synod necessarily have contiguous borders. Synod boundaries currently existing within the PC(USA) do not need to be re-drawn to include New Synod.

- 1.1 New Synod is the unit of the church's life and mission which consists of not fewer than three presbyteries which are admitted into New Synod as provided in this Section. New Synod is the intermediate government unit responsible for the mission of the church throughout its presbyteries. New Synod has the same responsibilities and powers of all other synods with the additional responsibilities and powers set forth in this Section.
- 1.2 New Synod has the responsibility and power to maintain the standards for ordination and continuing ministry set forth in Appendix A, which for all purposes is considered a part of this Section. The standards for ordination, installation, and continuing ministry set forth in this Section shall be binding upon all presbyteries, sessions, and officers of New Synod. All those called to office within New Synod are to lead a life and engage in ministry in conformity with these standards and the governing bodies of New Synod shall examine qualifications for ordination and installation of officers based on adherence to these standards. These standards shall be strictly interpreted, followed, and enforced in any judicial process involving New Synod or a governing body or ordained leader within New Synod.
- 1.3 After the first meeting of New Synod, any presbytery shall have the right to transfer into or out of New Synod. A presbytery may request to transfer its synod membership by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery at a regularly called meeting. The change in membership shall become effective upon the vote of the receiving synod to accept the presbytery into its membership.
- 1.4 Any presbytery that becomes a part of New Synod will consist of its member churches and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament on the date it becomes a member of New Synod. New Synod has the power to determine the geographical boundaries of its presbyteries without the need for approval from General Assembly. The presbyteries of New Synod will have boundaries that overlap with the presbyteries of other synods. A minister called by a church within a particular presbytery shall be a member of the calling presbytery and permission of any other presbytery with which it has overlapping boundaries shall not be

needed to issue the call. The calling presbytery shall have the right to permit a minister to labor within the geographical boundaries of both without the consent of the other presbytery.

- 1.5 A congregation shall have the right to vote on dismissal to a presbytery not in New Synod at a duly called congregational meeting. Such dismissal, with real property and all other property, shall be effective upon the vote of the receiving presbytery to accept the church into its membership.
- 1.6 A congregation shall have the right to vote on dismissal to a presbytery within New Synod at a duly called congregational meeting. Such dismissal, with real property and all other property, shall be effective upon the vote by the receiving presbytery to accept the church into its membership.
- 1.7 The provisions of this section G-12.0400 [or nFOG G-3.0408] supersede and control any other provisions of the Book of Order to the contrary.
- 1.8 The provisions of this section G-12.0400 [or nFOG G-3.0408] may not be amended without the consent of New Synod. A majority vote of each of its presbyteries is required to give this consent.
- 1.9 Within 180 days of the vote of the General Assembly to send this amendment to the presbyteries for consideration, any presbytery shall have the right to become one of the originating presbyteries of New Synod by a two-thirds vote of its members. The creation of New Synod authorized by this Section shall become effective upon the convening of its first meeting which may be called by any of the originating presbyteries after the effective date of this amendment. When New Synod meets it shall be composed of commissioners elected by its presbyteries. The ratio of commissioners to members at a New Synod meeting shall be the same as for General Assembly. At the first meeting, a majority vote of the commissioners is required to confirm each of the originating presbyteries as members. If an originating presbytery does not receive a majority vote it shall remain a member of its current geographic synod.
- 1.10 At the first meeting of New Synod, the commissioners will adopt a name for New Synod and advise the Office of the General Assembly. Upon receipt of written notice by the Office of General Assembly, all references within the Book of Order, as amended, to the "new synod" shall reflect this change.

Appendix A:

1. New Synod and its constituent presbyteries will structure themselves to facilitate the missional identity of their congregations. Although there are numerous ways to give expression to a missional intent, the congregations of New Synod will emphasize:

- the singular saving work of Jesus Christ,
- the unique and authoritative witness of Scripture,
- the calling to live not for themselves and institutional interests, but for others by engaging in loving service locally and beyond,
- intentional efforts to learn from others within the global church, build relationships, and partner in various ministry endeavors.

2. The presbyteries and sessions of New Synod will conduct examinations of candidates for church office in a way that preserves the integrity of our common ordination vow:

Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?" (W-4.4003)

To that end New Synod will offer its presbyteries and congregations the use of a statement regarding "essential tenets" to assist them in their examination. While the statement will not purport to identify the essential tenets, it will emphasize several areas of doctrine that must not be overlooked in any such examination. If the examining body is to assure that a particular candidate does indeed affirm the essential tenets of the Reformed faith, then she or he must be able to affirm these important doctrines. New Synod will compose its own statement for this purpose. It may be guided by previous efforts, such as the "Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives" tool adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego in 2003. This statement will also be offered by New Synod to its congregations for the purpose of education and discipleship of members.

3. The presbyteries and sessions of New Synod will also use the following statement to examine candidates for church office with regard to their manner of life:

Along with the broader constitutional standards for manner of life (e.g., G-6.0106a), New Synod also holds to the standard that its officers will live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.

Those who cannot make this affirmation for their own manner of life will not be approved for ordination or installation in an office, or for membership in a presbytery.

While this standard is certainly not the most important manner of life for one who would serve as an officer in the church, it is an area that has been contested in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). For the sake of clarity in its standards, and consistency in its various govern-

ing bodies, this New Synod expects that all of its officers will be able to make this affirmation about their own manner of life.

4. Congregations and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament within New Synod will celebrate marriages only between a man and woman. They will not celebrate marriages between members of the same sex in those states whose laws allow such marriages, nor will they celebrate marriage-like unions between members of the same sex.
5. Congregations of New Synod, in welcoming all God's children with the unconditional love of Jesus Christ, will also endeavor to teach biblical sexual ethics according to the traditional understandings (i.e., fidelity in marriage between a man and woman, and chastity in singleness). In this as in all areas of church teaching and discipleship, Christ's forgiveness, redemption, and healing shall be emphasized.
6. Presbyteries and congregations within New Synod will give deacons, elders, and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament regular opportunities to renew their ordination vows and reaffirm these additional standards.