

Message to Congregation May 1, 2011 Amendment A revised 4-29-11

Good morning everyone. My name is Jamie Brown. I am one of our church's elected elders currently serving on session. For those of you who are guests among us, please allow these few minutes of time for some church family business.

Our national denomination, the Presbyterian Church USA, has been struggling for years now with theological and church governance issues. Specifically, a national vote is currently underway which seeks to remove certain ordination standards from our denomination's constitution known as the "Book of Order." Obedience to ordination standards is required of our pastors, deacons, and elders.

Our denomination is geographically divided into 173 regional administrative units known as presbyteries. Delegates from churches in each presbytery vote on amendments which have been approved for consideration by the national General Assembly. If the current amendment, known as Amendment 10-A, is approved by a majority of the presbyteries around the nation, the following language would be removed from our constitution:

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. (G-6.0106 b.)

For the last 35 years, our denomination has been wrestling with many issues that swirl around human sexuality. Trinity Church's session has devoted much time to study and ask for God's guidance in this matter. We want you to know that your church leaders, that is, all pastors, elders and deacons, publically affirmed their support of the current ordination standards which are now threatened with removal.

After learning that the amendment will likely pass in the coming weeks, and in anticipation of news stories in the national media, it was determined that you should hear from us first. To provide more information and answer some of the questions that may be forming in your mind at this very moment, a letter will be sent this week to the congregation.

During Holy Week I was once again reminded of Jesus' exhortation at the Passover meal that we love each other as he first loved us. Our church session is committed to that same love for all who come to Trinity whether visitor or member. We are committed to moving beyond church politics to elevate the conversation about all dimensions of sexuality, keeping grace and truth in holy balance. We do not want this to become an issue that divides us. We want, instead, to invite you to seek the Lord with us. We will be looking at a variety of ways to listen and respond to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit in this season.

Join us in patience and humility before the Lord who is head of the Church. We are all sinners saved by grace. There is no place for pride or condemnation. Join us in prayer that we will not be sidetracked by the present struggles and veer away from our most important purposes of believing in Jesus and glorifying God in all we do.