

Nothing Can Separate Us

At all times and in all places, Christians are called to confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ with our lips and our lives and to do so without equivocation. The Church is called to “the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.” We confess that we have not fulfilled these “Great Ends” of the Church. Longing to be a more faithful people, we acknowledge our complete dependence upon the grace of God.

We are presently challenged by a theological, moral and institutional crisis in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). At the core, this crisis results from incompatible responses to the central question of faith posed by Jesus himself: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29).

We acknowledge that, in our pursuit of the Great Ends of the Church, we must be faithful in our response to this crisis. Though united as brothers and sisters in Christ, we recognize that the Spirit of the living God may lead some to stay within the PC(USA) and may lead others beyond its boundaries.

Those who believe they are called by God to stay within the PC(USA) face myriad challenges. Among these are the faithful application of ordination standards and church discipline. To this end, we call attention to the statement of Community Presbyterian Church of Ventura, CA, entitled *A Declaration of Theology and Action*, and in particular we commend the first three resolutions of that declaration (concerning ordination standards; see the [Appendix](#) below).

Those who believe they are called by God to stay within the PC(USA) also face the need to reassess their stewardship of financial resources. To this end, we commend to the church the document entitled [*Pursuing Our Highest Moral Obligations: Facts and Sample Resolutions Concerning Per Capita*](#).

Those who believe they are called by God to leave the PC(USA) are to be extended the grace of our Christian community. Believing that church property cannot be the basis for an authentic church unity, we repudiate the coercive and unchristian counsel released by the Office of the General Assembly and commend to the church the document entitled [*Peace, Unity and Property*](#).

Because we exist for God’s mission and God’s glory, we submit to the claim of Christ on our lives, and offer ourselves fully in Christ’s ministry to a broken world—proclaiming the Gospel, showing compassion, seeking justice, and living in humble service to God and to all God’s children. We commit to this common mission because of our common faith in the Lord Jesus. Whether we are called by God to be witnesses in the PC(USA) or elsewhere, we can be united in this mission because we are one in Jesus Christ, from whom no one can separate us (Romans 8:35).

Drafted and signed by the following on November 8, 2006. Organizational affiliation is noted for identification purposes only.

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Appendix
(3 Resolutions Proposed In *A Declaration of Theology and Action*)

1. In its discernment of the essentials of Reformed polity and for the sake of the peace, unity, and purity of the church, the Presbytery of Santa Barbara adopts the principle that compliance with the standards for ordination adopted by the whole church in the *Book of Order* is an essential of Reformed polity. Therefore, any departure from the standards for ordination expressed in the Book of Order will bar a candidate from ordination and/or installation by or membership within this governing body. Provisions of the *Book of Order* are signified as being standards by use of the term "shall," "is/are to be," "requirement," or equivalent expression. Those violating these standards shall be ineligible for ordination, installation, and/or service as minister of Word and Sacrament within our presbytery.
2. To promote the peace, unity, and purity of our presbytery, we resolve that the Presbytery of Santa Barbara shall not receive into membership, nor recognize as a member, anyone who has been made eligible for ordination or installation via the granting of an exception for his or her departure from the essentials of Reformed polity which denies or annuls any of the ordination standards as set forth in the Constitution of the PCUSA [G-1.0500] as described above.
3. In its discernment of the essentials of Reformed polity and for the sake of the peace, unity, and purity of the church, the Presbytery of Santa Barbara adopts the principle that compliance with the standards for ordination adopted by the whole church in the *Book of Order* is an essential of Reformed polity. Since every session member has vowed to be governed by our denomination's polity, any conscious and collective departure from the essentials of Reformed polity is a sign of spiritual illness. The presbytery has the express power (a power that only the presbytery can exercise) to provide pastoral care for the churches and members of presbytery, visiting sessions and ministers on a regular basis (G-11.0103g). Therefore, the presbytery will counsel, guide and, if necessary, endeavour to bring healing to any session that is spiritually ill.