



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

April 28, 2009

To Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbyteries and their congregations

Grace and peace to you in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Among the hundreds of actions taken by the 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) last summer were ten amendments to the church's *Constitution* and four ecumenical statements that were then sent to all 173 presbyteries for ratification. Each of these items needed 87 votes, or a simple majority of the presbyteries, to be adopted or defeated.

While presbyteries have until June 28 to vote, the Office of the General Assembly has now received official notification from enough presbyteries to know the outcome of each item.

With just a few dissenting votes, presbyteries approved historic covenants and agreements with the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the Korean Presbyterian Church in America, and the Moravian Church. In addition, the General Assembly Council will have a new name – the General Assembly Mission Council – which will put the word “mission” front-and-center to reinforce the work of the council.

Slightly less unanimity but substantial support was shown by presbyteries as they approved amendments addressing the leadership of certified educators at presbytery meetings, as well as adding the vows of membership to the Book of Order. Also adopted was a change in the Rules of Discipline that expands the role of alternative forms of resolution.

The proposed amendment that would have replaced the current language of G-6.0106b with new language is the only amendment that did not receive approval by a majority of presbyteries. This item in its current form will continue to be part of the Book of Order.

We have witnessed and heard many different stories as the amendment on G-6.0106b was debated. In this and other deliberations, we as a church have learned better how to talk about difficult issues in a spirit of trust and faith. We may not always agree, but we have never forgotten that those with whom we disagree are still our brothers and sisters, as together we strive to reflect our common calling to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

By God's grace, the Holy Spirit is at work, strengthening our commitment to one another through this denomination. We give thanks for a diverse and faithful church that challenges us all to serve with integrity and offer our gifts enthusiastically. Thanks be to God for our life together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Reyes-Chow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Reverend Bruce Reyes-Chow
Moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda Valentine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elder Linda Bryant Valentine
Executive Director, General Assembly Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gradye Parsons". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly