



May 2, 2011

To commissioners and advisory delegates to the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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

It is now nearly nine months since we parted ways in Minneapolis. We have been blessed with the opportunity to reconnect with some of you as we travel across the denomination. We hope to be able to see many more of you between now and July 2012.

It's probable that commissioners and advisory delegates to a General Assembly conclude their work thinking, "We're the best GA ever." Obviously, we're biased, but we believe the 219th created an extraordinary body of work. While all of our decisions were important, three items have garnered notable attention: (1) the proposed new Form of Government, (2) the addition of the Belhar Confession to *The Book of Confessions*, and (3) the replacement of Amendment 10-A for the current ordination standard now found in G-6.0106b of the *Book of Order*.

Over the past few months, presbyteries have been discussing, debating, and voting on each of these issues. The discussion about each has, regardless of the outcome, been helpful as we as a denomination seek to determine who we are and how we organize ourselves as we respond to God's call in this 21st century.

It goes without saying that the most emotionally intense issue is, and has been for some years now, the ordination issue – whether to approve Amendment 10-A, which would mean that persons who are in same-gender relationships could be considered for ordination as deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament. While some presbyteries have yet to vote on the amendments, some of which will do so as late as June, it would be disingenuous of us to ignore the current reality that, if prior voting history on matters relating to G-6.0106b holds in those presbyteries yet to vote on 10-A, it will be approved. And that will be a decisive moment in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

If 10-A is adopted, reactions will vary widely. Some will celebrate what they see as an acknowledgement of full inclusiveness; others will be distraught over what they see as a diminution of biblical standards. This will be a testing moment for whether our denomination really is a "big tent" that can accommodate both those who rejoice and those who grieve over this particular action.

This is where you come in. We were deeply gratified and humbled by the graciousness, camaraderie, and receptivity to different points of view exemplified by all of you who comprised the 219th General Assembly. As with the rest of the church, some of you supported 10-A, some of you opposed it. Yet, despite differing views, we, as the assembly, discussed, debated, and

decided this issue with civility, mutual respect, and acknowledgement of the deeply held views on each side. You did good work in Minneapolis, and we know you will do good work now by modeling in your congregations, presbyteries, and synods that same graciousness and openness to all points of view that exemplified our work last summer.

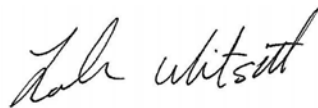
We ask that you help Presbyterians understand both the range and depth of the emotions that are involved with the passage of Amendment 10-A. It is our hope that all of us within the denomination can, in prayerful dialogue with one another, live into what this constitutional change means, and that those who are not in agreement with its passage will take time to evaluate whether it in fact impacts their integrity to proclaim the gospel prophetically and authentically.

We are indebted to you for your service and commitment. We are grateful for your continued work to preserve the peace, purity, and unity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cynthia Bolbach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Cynthia Bolbach
Moderator, 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Landon Whitsitt". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being the most legible part.

Landon Whitsitt
Vice Moderator, 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)