

Policy on the Inclusion of Gays and Lesbians

The Session of the Mt. Auburn Presbyterian church of Cincinnati, Ohio, meeting on December 19, 1991, adopted the following resolution:

1. **Whereas** the Mt. Auburn church of Cincinnati has a policy of open communion which does not establish any conditions to come to the Lord's Table other than a willingness to respond to Jesus' own invitation to dine with him;
2. **Whereas** this church welcomes all into its membership regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic background, race, or economic condition;
3. **Whereas** the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church makes abundantly clear the inclusive character of membership as especially so stated in G-5.0103:

"The congregation shall welcome all persons who respond in trust and obedience to God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the membership and ministry of his church. No persons shall be denied membership because of race, ethnic origin, worldly condition, or any reason not related to profession of faith. Each member must seek the grace of openness in extending the fellowship of Christ to all persons. Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the gospel."

4. **Whereas** the Constitution also makes clear in G-5.0202 that:

"An active member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church, including the right . . . to vote and hold office."

5. **Whereas** the General Assembly has contravened the Constitution by declaring in 1978 and in 1991 that "unrepentant homosexual practice does not accord with the requirements for ordination" and such a declaration has been adjudicated as "definitive guidance" for the whole church by the General Assembly's Permanent Judicial Commission in 1985, thus creating a second-class membership for gays and lesbians;
6. **Whereas** further inconsistencies prevail on the issue of homosexuality in the church by General Assembly actions such as:

- a. In 1978 it called upon Presbyterians "to work for the passage of laws that prohibit discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations based on the sexual orientation of a person," and, therefore, urges a standard for society it does not apply to itself.
- b. Also in 1978 the Assembly encouraged "seminaries to apply the same standards for homosexual and heterosexual persons applying for admission," and yet will refuse to ordain unrepentant gay and lesbian persons after they graduate and have a call to a ministry.
- c. In 1983 the Assembly affirmed that "we will work to increase the acceptance and participation in the church of all persons regardless of racial-ethnic origin, sex, class, age; disability, marital status or sexual orientation," yet in 1991 it again rejected the recommendation of its study committee for the second time that gay and lesbian persons be fully accepted as members of the church and their sexual orientation or non-celibacy not be a hindrance to ordination.
- d. In 1987 the Assembly urged the elimination in all states of laws governing private sexual behavior of consenting adults yet it considers such practice, especially with homosexuals, as behavior not "according to godliness."

7. **And whereas** the 1978 General Assembly recognized, in its policy statement on this matter,

"that not all United Presbyterians can in conscience agree with our conclusions. Some are persuaded that there are forms of homosexual behavior that are not sinful and that persons who practice these forms can legitimately be ordained.

This is wholly in keeping with the diversity of theological viewpoint and the pluralism of opinion that characterize the United Presbyterian Church. We are concerned not to stifle these diverging opinions and to encourage those who hold them to remain within the church."

8. **And whereas** the Biblical understanding of homosexuality is at best inconclusive in that

- a. the Biblical views of homosexuality appear more derived from current cultural attitudes than the definitive Word of God, and, consequently, the church gravely errs, as it has with race, slavery, and women's issues, and now with homosexual persons, by legalistically establishing these cultural biases as the final Word of God;
 - b. the Bible does not consistently focus on homosexuality or give it major importance;
 - c. the Bible lacks current scientific and psychological understanding of the causes and complexities of homosexuality;
 - d. the few Biblical accounts of homosexuality are generally a reference to sexual acts of violence and aggression, not of love and fidelity, and should, as with comparable heterosexual acts, rightly be condemned;
9. **And whereas** we believe the sixty-six books of the Bible are to be judged by the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, "the one sufficient revelation of God" (Confession of 1967); and we are convinced that Jesus would not condemn such behavior when it is an expression of love and fidelity;
10. **And whereas** we believe that sexual orientation is a condition not chosen and can rarely be changed; and what matters morally and ethically is how we live our lives as faithful people regardless of our sexual orientation;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Session of the Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati adopt the following policy entitled the "**Inclusion of Gays and Lesbians**" to be the position of this church:

Acknowledging that the reality of prejudice in the church and society gives gay and lesbian persons reason for uncertainty as to their reception, we of the Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church wish to make clear our real and genuine welcome of all persons. We affirm that gays and lesbians are part of God's good creation and that they, no less than heterosexuals, are meant to enjoy God's gifts of love, joy, and intimacy. All who seek and receive God's love are welcomed as full participants in the life and worship of Christ's church without having to deny or hide their sexual orientation. Therefore, we are gratefully open to the service and leadership of gays and lesbians including those called to ordained positions in our congregation.

Our loving welcome is unconditional. We further affirm our commitment, along with the General Assembly of our church, to full civil rights and justice for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, in society and in the church. We will continue to seek more light on the ways in which we can offer our support and our love to all the children of God.

In so acting, the Session of Mt. Auburn Church openly acknowledges that it does not in conscience agree with the "definitive guidance" issued by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (1985) which states that avowed practicing homosexuals are not eligible for ordination as ministers, Elders, or Deacons.

The Session not only agrees that the position is wrong and contrary to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church but will not abide by such "definitive guidance."

The Session is also aware that this stance is in keeping with other Presbyterian Churches that are called "More Light Churches." While we have no hesitation to be so associated, we prefer to call ourselves the Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church of the Presbytery of Cincinnati of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The Session further directs the Clerk to send copies of this statement to the

1. General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Cincinnati,
2. Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee,
3. Social Justice Committee,
4. Ministry Committee,