



Notice of a Special Meeting of the
Pittsburgh Presbytery
to be convened on
Saturday, March 14, 2009 from 9 a.m. until Noon
at Northmont United Presbyterian Church
8169 Perry Highway, Pittsburgh, PA

Notice is hereby given of the Call of a Special Meeting of the Pittsburgh Presbytery to consider and vote upon the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Proposed Ecumenical Statements, as approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008) and Recommended to Presbyteries for Affirmative or Negative Vote. Commissioner registration cards will be available at the meeting's Registration Desk for completion and filing.

A *listing* of the Proposed Amendments and Proposed Ecumenical Statements is enclosed with this Call, as is the anticipated Docket for the day. Minister and Elder Presbyters are reminded to bring with them to the Special Meeting the *booklet* of proposed amendments and ecumenical statements which was previously provided to ministers and congregations, as only a very limited supply of additional booklets will be available at the Special Meeting itself. The proposed amendments and ecumenical statements are also published on the website of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and can be accessed from the Presbytery website at: www.pghpresbytery.org.

Also enclosed are comments of the Pittsburgh Presbytery's Amendments/Ecumenical Statements Review Committee about the Presbytery-wide amendments and statements listening sessions which were held in January, 2009. Additional Committee comments and recommendations will be posted on the Presbytery's website in advance of the Special Meeting to further assist Presbyters in their review process.

For the Presbytery: Jay W. Lewis, Stated Clerk 2/26/2009

DIRECTIONS TO NORTHMONT CHURCH

8169 Perry Highway
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
412-364-0105

You can take I-279N to the Camp Horne exit. At the end of the ramp, make a right turn. Go straight until you get to fork, make a left onto Rochester Rd. At the first light, make a right turn onto Sewickley-Oakmont Road. At the next light (Willie's Ski Shop on your right), make a left onto Route #19. At the third light the church will be on your left.

Going North or South on I-79, exit at the Wexford exit. On the east side of the exit you will see King's Family Restaurant. Turn right at the light onto Brandt School Road. Soergel's Orchards is on the right. Continue on Brandt School Road. It changes its name at Ingomar Road to Highland Road. Continue on until Highland dead ends at Perry Highway (Rt. #19). A Sheetz store is on your left. Turn right onto Perry Highway (Rt. #19). The church is on your right at the next light.

If you are coming on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, exit at Exit #3. Follow Route #19 south toward Pittsburgh. After passing the second McDonald's Restaurant, you go down a steep hill. At the base of the hill there is a "Y." Bear left (do not follow the McKnight Road sign). Continue straight on Rt. #19 and pass Community College of Allegheny County and Sheetz convenience store on your right. The church is on your right at the next light after Sheetz.

DOCKET
for the
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PITTSBURGH PRESBYTERY

Saturday, March 14, 2009
Northmont United Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Dr. Donald Ewing, Moderator, Presiding

Presbytery's Mission: To serve the congregations so they are healthy and vital as evidenced by: † success in bringing others to Christ † vibrant worship † active participation in the mission of Christ's church

A...THE CONVENING OF PRESBYTERY

1. Presbytery Constituted with Prayer
2. Announcement of a Quorum and Completion of the Roll

Order of the Day 9 a.m.

B...MORNING WORSHIP

C...THE BUSINESS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING

1. Greetings from Northmont United Presbyterian Church
2. Special Meeting Docket
3. Explanation of Matters to be Acted Upon

**D...REPORT OF THE AMENDMENTS/ECUMENICAL
STATEMENTS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

E... CONSIDERATION OF AN OMNIBUS MOTION

F...CONSIDERATION OF SEPARATE MATTER(S)

G...CONFIRMATION OF ALL VOTES

THE DISPERSING OF PRESBYTERY

Order of the Day Noon

1. Committee on Leave of Absence and Report of the Enrollment Clerk
2. Resolution of Thanks
3. Ending Prayer

LIST OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

- 08-A. Vows of Membership—On Amending G-5.0200.....
- 08-B. Ordained Officers—On Amending G-6.0106b, G-14.0240, and G-14.0450
- 08-C. Replacing “Sympathy” with “Compassion”—On Amending G-6.0202b and G-6.0401
- 08-D. General Assembly Council Name Change—On Amending Throughout the *Book of Order*.....
- 08-E. Nongeographic Presbyteries—On Amending G-11.0102 and G-12.0102k.....
- 08-F. Presbytery Membership of Certified Christian Educators—On Amending G-11.0407 and G-14.0730
- 08 G. Synod Membership on Permanent Committees On Amending G 13.0107, G-13.0108, and G-13.0202a
- 08-H. Five Ordination Examinations—On Amending G-14.0431.....
- 08-I. Certified Christian Educators—On Amending G-14.0730.....
- 08-J. Alternative Forms of Resolution—On Amending D-2.0103 and D-10.0202h .

- 08-K. Ecumenical Statement with the Roman Catholic Church
- 08-L. Ecumenical Statement with the Episcopal Church.....
- 08-M. Ecumenical Statement with the Korean Presbyterian Church in America
- 08-N. Ecumenical Statement with the Moravian Church

Pittsburgh Presbytery Listening Sessions
 Amendments Review Committee (ARC)
 Attendance Summary: February 20, 2009

Attendance by Session = 112 Total

Includes repeat attendees and ARC members not assigned to attend.

Jan. 14	Lebanon	15
Jan. 17	Crossroads	18
Jan. 23	Northmont	22
Jan. 24	Southminster	15
Jan. 26	Fox Chapel	30
Jan. 28	East Liberty	12

Pittsburgh Churches Represented = 30

The digits below represent the number of different persons present from each congregation.

Bakerstown (2)	Bellefield (1)
Bethany (1)	Bethel, Bethel Park (1)
Bethel, Monroeville (1)	Beulah (1)
Bower Hill (2)	Community of Reconciliation (5)
Covenant-Community (1)	Crossroads (2)
Dormont (1)	East Liberty (13)
First, Tarentum (1)	Fox Chapel (6)
Hawthorne Avenue (1)	Hebron (10)
Hiland (1)	Ken Mawr (1)
Lebanon (7)	Logan's Ferry (1)
Mt. Lebanon (6)	Mt. Pleasant, Wexford (1)
Northmont (9)	Plum Creek (4)
Ross Community (1)	Sixth (6)
South Side PC (2)	Southminster (3)
Sunset Hills (1)	Wallace Memorial (2)
Members-at-Large (3)	Honorably Retired (2)
Redstone Presbytery (3)	Pittsburgh Presbytery (1)
Four persons attended twice, one attended three times, and one person attended four times, not including ARC members.	

ARC Members: Rev. Dr. Randy Bush (East Liberty), Rev. Mary Lynn Callahan (Northminster), Rev. Janet Edwards (COR), Elder Elly Fleming (Southminster), Rev. Dr. Jack Lolla (Plum Creek), Rev. Tom Moore (Emsworth), Rev. Dr. Rachel Stahle (Member-at-Large), Elder Roger Stuart (Universal UPC), Rev. Dr. Steve Wilson (Oakmont)

Pittsburgh Presbytery Listening Sessions
Amendments Review Committee (ARC)
Statement Summary for Amendment 08B
February 20, 2009

General Statements

1. Issues surrounding this amendment are deeply personal, irrespective of where one stands regarding its passage. The importance of personal experiences, theology, compassion, Scripture, love for the Church, and desire to obey Christ was evident in every session. Some people feel anguish in being conflicted about 08B.
2. Several spoke with praise for the listening sessions with the thought that Presbytery leaders do not always listen as well as they could. The Presbytery needs better means of communication and better overall relations with congregations.
3. Providing parents, grandparents, and leaders with materials regarding the issues surrounding 08B would be helpful.
4. The Presbytery needs a forum in which to discuss some of the issues that underlie 08B, such as scientific evidence about homosexuality, theological and hermeneutical assumptions, the nature of sexuality, what it means to be Presbyterian, and the definitions of sin, holiness, and love. When discussing such matters, we tend to talk past each other, do not truly love each other, and treat the issue as political rather than spiritual.

Statements We Heard Supporting the Passage of 08B

1. The Church needs to be a leader in opposing discrimination of all kinds, including that against homosexual persons. This issue relates to justice and human rights, just as there once was a debate about ordaining blacks and women. The Church needs to keep up with the times, change, and be “Reformed, always reforming.”
2. The current language in the *Book of Order (BOO)* focuses on sexuality rather than giftedness, talents, faithfulness to God, and sense of call. It applies behavioral standards to a spiritual matter.
3. The Bible notes the “priesthood of all believers.” We should not limit who the “priests” can be. Jesus included the disenfranchised and minorities. All who are called should be able to serve, and not need to fight for the chance to serve.
4. The current language in the *BOO* denies that committed and loving homosexual relationships are possible, and overlooks wrong heterosexual behavior. Bible passages about homosexuality do not relate to faithful homosexual relationships.
5. 08B will allow congregations to live together in disagreement more peacefully and will permit the denomination to move forward past this issue.
6. The current language is not applied evenly regarding homosexual or immoral heterosexual behavior. Some churches already affirm and ordain leaders with a “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach. The proposed language corrects this inconsistency.
7. 08B includes obedience to Christ in its wording, is consistent with the PUP report, and has been declared constitutional.

8. 08B allows congregations and CPMs who know candidates for ordination to evaluate their fitness. The current wording is strict and limits how God can use homosexuals in the Church. 08B trusts committees and the Holy Spirit to call and ordain leaders.
9. 08B will allow homosexuals full participation in the Church and reduce the alienation they now experience.

Statements We Heard Opposing the Passage of 08B

1. Individual governing bodies should not be given the latitude to determine ordination standards. 08B's language diminishes the common standards for ordination and reduces our identity as one body. The current language in the *BOO* provides commonality along with the Confessions, which affirm "fidelity and chastity" and are not obstacles to faith.
2. Passage of 08B would open the door to affirmation of other beliefs and sins that are rejected by a majority in the denomination. This includes the possibility of ordaining persons who oppose the ordination of women and blacks, for example. 08B is ambiguous with language that is too broad, and will lead to a modification of what it means to obey Christ.
3. The current language in the *BOO* applies to all people who are unrepentant of their sexual sin, and should be applied consistently to heterosexuals and homosexuals by all governing bodies. The sanctity of marriage is essential and sex outside of marriage is sin.
4. The Bible opposes homosexual behavior. Jesus affirmed the sanctity of marriage at Cana. In His ministry, Jesus was loving yet firm about sin. In Christ we are transformed and are no longer to express the inclinations natural to us, particularly sexual ones. When people are redeemed God draws them out of their previous lifestyle, but homosexuals desire to stay in their sinful ways. Calling them to repent and be transformed is truthful, loving, and compassionate, not discriminatory.
5. If 08B passes, more churches will split and more people will leave the denomination. The amount of time and energy that has been devoted to this issue over the years has been tearing churches and the denomination apart. The issue is an exhausting distraction and there are greater ministry needs to be addressed. Even though repeatedly voted down, the issue keeps being raised, and proponents of 08B are trying to wear down the rest of the denomination. There is cynicism that the issue will continue no matter what the vote is for 08B.
6. 08B reflects the Church following society and not following Jesus. It ignores God's holiness, God's design for sexuality, and our need to repent of sin. Continuing to follow society will water down our moral standards and our polity so much that the Church will no longer represent the truth.
7. Those who are ordained are called to live by a higher standard. The current *BOO* language is a declaration of who should be leaders, not a statement against reaching out to homosexuals. We should care about GLBT persons. We all need a Savior because we are all sinners.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

In preparation for the March 14 Presbytery vote on the proposed Constitutional Amendments and Ecumenical Statements, here are a short series of Questions & Answers.

Question: Why are we voting on these amendments and what is the deadline by which our votes have to be completed?

After every General Assembly, proposed amendments to the Book of Order are sent to presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes. The recent GA (218th General Assembly – 2008) also proposed four ecumenical statements that presbyteries are asked to consider ratifying. If a majority of presbyteries (87) votes in favor of an amendment, that constitutional change is implemented. The deadline for the General Assembly office to receive responses from presbyteries on these matters is May 18, 2009.

Question: Is Pittsburgh Presbytery's process for this year different from in past years?

In past years, our presbytery has voted on these amendments either at regularly scheduled meetings or at special called meetings. Because of the high degree of interest in a few of these amendments (especially 08-B), Pittsburgh Presbytery organized a series of six Listening Sessions to facilitate discussions prior to the actual vote. Many other presbyteries across the country also set up special listening sessions or adjusted their normal business meeting practices so as to allow for faithful, respectful conversations on these important matters.

Question: Amendment 08-B suggests revising the language in a section related to “ordained officers.” To whom is this referring and how long has the existing language been in our constitution?

Chapter VI of the Book of Order is titled “The Church and Its Officers.” It refers to ordained officers in the church, namely, ministers of word and sacrament, elders and deacons. The gifts and requirements of these ordained officers are outlined in two paragraphs under G-6.0106. The first paragraph (G-6.0106a) stresses that ordained persons should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and whose manner of life is a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and the world. This has been in the Book of Order for a long time, with some edits done at the time of our denomination's “reunion” (1983). The second paragraph (G-6.0106b) was added in its entirety in 1997, after being proposed by the General Assembly in 1996.

Other important sections in the Book of Order that speak about the ordination standards for officers include G-6.000, G-14.000, and W-4.4000.



Report of the Amendment and Ecumenical Statement Review Committee

At its February 26, 2009 meeting, the Amendment and Ecumenical Statement Review Committee confirmed the following recommendations to the Pittsburgh Presbytery on voting for the pending amendments to the Book of Order and ecumenical statements:

After numerous times of discernment, discussion and prayer, the Amendment Review Committee is prepared to offer a recommendation in support of all the proposed Amendments and Ecumenical Statements, with the exception of item 08-B for which we offer no recommendation.

Concerning the other nine proposed amendments and the four ecumenical statements: We recommend that Pittsburgh Presbytery vote **Affirmatively**, in favor of these items. They appear to be appropriate adjustments to our denomination's constitution, based on input from advisory committees, church staff at various levels, and General Assembly commissioners. We also recognize that others may have differing opinions or wish to raise questions on the implications of these amendments and ecumenical statements.

Concerning Amendment 08-B, our committee chooses not to offer a recommendation either in support or opposition to this item. Like the Presbytery and the denomination as a whole, we are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of this amendment and are sensitive to the controversial nature associated with the current language about ordination standards. But we also have been struck by the spirit of openness and faithfulness that marked the preparatory "Listening Sessions," and are encouraged that so many people participated in a process of prayerful reflection and dialogue on this difficult issue. We recommend that Pittsburgh Presbytery treat Amendment 08-B as a separate agenda item, allowing generous time of discernment, discussion and debate (shaped by worshipful aspects of prayer and liturgy) when this matter is considered at the March 14 meeting.

In closing, our committee wishes to commend to Presbytery Council that a similar process of naming a review committee and offering "listening sessions" be employed as future topics of significant controversy may come before Pittsburgh Presbytery. By God's grace and the leading of the Holy Spirit, our committee has grown in affection and collegiality through our involvement in this Amendment Review Committee and we strongly recommend that this model be used again in the future.

Amendment Review Committee of Pittsburgh Presbytery: Randy Bush, Rachel Stahle, Mary Lynn Callahan, Janet Edwards, Ely Fleming, Jack Lolla, Tom Moore, Roger Stuart, and Steve Wilson.

3/2/09