

Overture to the 46th General Assembly

Whereas, God created Adam and Eve and ordained the first marriage and family consisting of one man and one woman in sexual union, establishing the context for the biblical sexual ethic (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; 4:1); and

Whereas, God has established the one flesh union between a husband and wife, as a great mystery in reference to Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25; 31-32); and

Whereas, the Holy Scriptures declare that the sexual union and desire between one man and one woman, in the covenant of marriage, is righteous and holy, and all other sexual activity is unrighteous and sinful, including homosexuality, which the Holy Scriptures describe as “degrading passions” (Romans 5:18-19; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; *Westminster Confession of Faith* 24:1; *Westminster Larger Catechism* 138, 139); and

Whereas, the application of the Seventh Commandment forbids the sins of homosexuality, unnatural lusts, and unclean affections, affirming that homosexual acts and the desires to commit those acts are both sinful (Matthew 5:27-28; *Westminster Larger Catechism* 139); and

Whereas, the Christian’s identity is rooted in Christ so that he is a “new creation” in Him, his identity cannot be defined by sexual and any other experiences, desires or lifestyles that are contrary to the Holy Scriptures; for the Christian there is a clear distinction between self-conception (“this is who I am”) and their remaining indwelling sin (“this is what I must daily mortify”) (Romans 6:1-14; I Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:1-5); and

Whereas, identification or ongoing experience as “Same Sex Attracted” or any other identification or ongoing experience contrary to the biblical sexual ethic is sinful, is against nature itself, is something God detests, and is not fitting for an officer of the Church of Christ (Leviticus 18:22; I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5-6); and

Whereas, the biblical qualifications for a church officer require him (or her) to be “above reproach,” officers and candidates for office must conform their lives to biblical sexual ethics, which include denying and mortifying all sexual passions and desires toward anyone to whom they are not married (I Timothy 3:2); and

Whereas, for two thousand years the Church of Jesus Christ has at no time doctrinally allowed for the ordination of those engaged in homosexual activity or experiencing homosexual desire and thus has been faithful to the Holy Scriptures teaching on human sexuality, sanctification and the offices of the church, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church has faithfully followed that teaching since its inception; and

Whereas, the *Position Paper on Homosexuality*, adopted by the 16th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in 1996, affirms, “The witness of God’s Word in both the Old and New Testaments is clear, declaring that the practice of homosexuality, including lust, is a grievous sin, and that any who continue to engage in such activity face the consequences of God’s condemning judgment. However, God’s grace offers love, forgiveness, hope and a new life. The necessary response to this offer is true repentance, including turning from homosexual behavior, and commitment to a faithful obedience to the Lord according to His Word;” and

Whereas, the *Position Paper on Human Sexuality*, adopted by the 37th General Assembly in 2017, declares, “As repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to teach the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen, with compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves;” and

Whereas, the LGBTQ+ movement has infiltrated many quarters of the church, resulting in widespread confusion and controversy and has disrupted the peace and unity of the church; and

Whereas, the question of ordination of those who, on an ongoing basis experience homosexual desire, is sufficiently grave so that should any court in the EPC ordain someone who acknowledges ongoing homosexual desire, there is likely to be widespread rejection of the validity of that person’s ordination resulting in significant disruption of the peace and unity of the church; and

Whereas, promoting the peace and unity of the church is a vow all church officers of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church make (*Book of Government* 13-2A.9); and

Whereas, in response to the consideration of ordained church office for those currently experiencing Same Sex Attraction, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church must take a definitive, constitutional position on this matter;

Therefore, be it resolved that _____ Presbytery overtures the 46th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church to amend the Book of Government 9-3A. as follows:

Current Book of Government 9-3A.

According to Scripture, those who bear office in the Church should exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill this office should exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. A congregation preparing to elect persons to this holy office should carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the Ruling Elder and be very prayerful in selecting persons to this office.

Proposed Book of Government 9-3A.

“According to Scripture, those who bear office in the church **shall** exhibit certain characteristics of life. This includes being above reproach, sound in the faith, wise in the things of God, and discreet in all things. Persons who fill **these offices shall** exhibit a lifestyle that is an example to all, both in and outside the Church. **Therefore, persons eligible for church office shall conform in heart, mind, and conduct to God’s design for human sexuality, embracing with gratitude the calling of either chastity in singleness or fidelity within marriage between one man and one woman. Those who profess, persist in, or identify with unnatural desires or affections, contrary to God’s created order and condemned by Scripture as against nature, are disqualified from holding office in Christ’s Church. A presbytery or congregation preparing to elect persons to these holy offices shall** carefully study appropriate passages of Scripture relating to the **Teaching Elder**, Ruling Elder, and **Deacon**, and be very prayerful in **electing** persons to these offices.

See Romans 1:26–27 on desires contrary to God’s created order; Genesis 1–2 on the creation of male and female; Westminster Larger Catechism Q.139 on the moral duties of Christians and the proper ordering of affections.