



First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood

**Actions of the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the
Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA)**

FPCK Analysis of Four Recommendations from GA 219:

- **Proposal to Change Ordination Standards**
- **Proposal to Study Change in Marriage Standards**
- **Proposal to Change to New Form of Government (“nFOG”)**
- **Proposal to Add Confession of Belhar to the Book of Confessions**

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[Introduction & Executive Summary](#)
**Actions of the 219th General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA)**

Introduction

The 219th General Assembly (GA219) of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA), held July 2010, referred to the church at-large for ratification votes or study and discernment four measures representing fundamental changes of direction for the national church. Concerned equally over the direction of the PCUSA and the potential impacts of these changes if implemented on FPCK's mission and witness in our home community, the Session selected a team of elders, deacons, and at-large congregation members to evaluate the proposed changes, determine the potential impacts on FPCK, and engage the congregation in an issue-awareness dialog and feedback program. This team is now described as the Denominational Relations Study Team, or DRST.

As a necessary first step in the evaluation directed by Session, the DRST recognized the need to craft a church values statement for FPCK, essentially setting out our shared values as a local church and congregation. The resulting *Statement of Values of First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood* (see Section 1) was approved by Session and then utilized by the DRST as a touchstone to evaluate the PCUSA's proposed changes.

The DRST then systematically evaluated each of the four major issues emerging from GA219. This report is the summary of the assessment on these issues with a particular view toward whether these changes are consistent with FPCK values and how FPCK might be impacted by the changes if they are implemented.

The DRST will shortly embark on a series of meetings amongst groups within the church to review our findings and gauge the reaction of our congregation to these changes as proposed for the PCUSA.

Proposal to Change Ordination Standards

GA219 proposes to delete section G-6.0106b of the current *Book of Order* concerning ordination (the "fidelity and chastity standard") which holds that "Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament." This standard would be replaced with a fitness-for-ordination review process conducted by the Presbytery calling for examination of "each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation."

The DRST concludes that this proposed change deletes from the Book of Order an absolute biblical standard consistent with FPCK's value statement which says, "*In accord with Scripture, we do not permit any person who refuses to repent of any self-acknowledged behavior the Scriptures or the Confessions call sin to be ordained to the office of deacon, elder, or minister of word and sacrament*" and which agrees with the current fidelity and chastity standard. The change would also undermine FPCK's belief



that Scripture is “*the church’s first and final authority in all areas of faith and life.*” This change would substitute in its place the judgment of a panel or reviewers at the Presbytery level charged with determining a minister candidate’s fitness for ordination.

Proposal to Study Change in Marriage Standards

GA219 received two reports from the *Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage*, which had been charged to evaluate how the PCUSA should deal with covenanted same-gender relationships. The Special Committee issued a majority report proposing a change to the PCUSA’s marriage standards allowing the church to sanction, bless, and perform same-sex Christian Marriages in states where same-sex unions are legal and a minority report strongly advocating maintaining the traditional marriage standard as “between one man and one woman.” After an emotional floor debate, GA219 determined to send both the majority and minority reports out to the wider church for study prior to the next General Assembly. Since GA219 did not recommend any change to the current marriage standard for ratification votes by the Presbyteries, no change is currently pending consideration. Presumably, some form of overture to change the marriage standard will come back to GA220 (Summer 2012) for an approval vote and, if that succeeds, for ratification by the Presbyteries in the 2013 timeframe.

The DRST concludes that this proposed change is contrary to FPCK’s values which emphasize Scriptural Authority and the scripturally-based definition of Christian Marriage as “between one man and one woman.” (See Section 3 for more information.)

Proposal to Change to New Form of Government (“nFOG”)

GA219 proposes to dispose of the current Book of Order in its entirety and replace it with a new streamlined form of government. The new governing document attempts to identify the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and certain key governance provisions that would be retained in the new Book of Order, although in somewhat modified forms. Large sections of the current form of government will not appear in the new Book of Order, and instead will be moved into new or expanded “administrative operations manuals” that each Presbytery will develop to suit its own needs. This change ostensibly would allow customization of Presbytery and local church procedures and practices to meet local missional needs while reducing the “regulatory restrictions” of the current Book of Order.

The DRST concludes that nFOG does not achieve its stated objective of making the Church more missional and instead introduces the prospect for Presbytery-to-Presbytery differences, re-litigation of settled matters due to voiding past church case-law, further fundamental changes to the church, and continued theological drift. (See Section 4 for more information.)

Proposal to Add Confession of Belhar to PCUSA Book of Confessions

The Confession of Belhar was drafted in 1986 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in response to South Africa’s legally mandated system of apartheid – the segregation of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This confession defines all forms of forced separation [segregation] of people based on their natural diversity, eg. race, as sin and strongly advocates for unity within the church. GA219 recommended the inclusion of the Confession of Belhar in the PCUSA’s *Book of Confessions* and referred the proposal to the Presbyteries for ratification by June 2011.



The DRST concludes that the Belhar Confession includes very little new material that is not covered in existing confessions (especially *The Confession of 1967*), speaks directly only to issues which are not highly controversial within our church, and given the state of modern-day race relations in PCUSA, Belhar's message is not particularly timely to us. (See Section 5 for more information.)



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Section 1 – FPCK Values Statement

Statement of Values of First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood

(Approved by Session February 28, 2011)

John 12:26

Our Shared Values

The history of FPCK is relatively brief as compared to many, but its traditions are rooted in many generations of Reformed Christian congregations, and it is to these traditions that we look for a statement of "values."

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are God's uniquely revealed and written Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and are the church's first and final authority in all areas of faith and life. The Bible speaks to us with the authority of God Himself and bears true and faithful witness to Jesus Christ.

FPCK believes in one God, the sovereign Creator of all things, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All action that impacts the creature from God begins with the Father, is made actual by the Son, and is perfected through the Holy Spirit. In life and in death, we belong to God.

Jesus Christ, the living Word, became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. In the incarnation, He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead and ascended into heaven where He is now our High Priest and Mediator.

The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ, to convict us of sin, to draw us to the Savior, and to indwell our hearts. He gives new life and empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth by pointing to and revealing the redemptive power and love of Jesus. He seals us for the day of redemption.

Our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God.

The true Church is composed of those who have faith in Jesus Christ, and who through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united with him in the body of Christ. The Church is located in congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity, where scriptural standards of righteousness and discipline are maintained, and where loving fellowship is practiced.

The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the gospel to all the world and to make disciples of all nations. He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth personally and bodily to judge the living and the dead and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

These values control and guide all that we do as individuals and as a congregation.



Our Shared Mission and Witness

We are unreservedly Reformed in our theology, believing that the doctrines summarized by the "five solas" - Sola Gratia (by Grace alone), Sola Fide (by Faith alone), Sola Scriptura (by Scripture alone), Solo Christo (through Christ alone), and Soli Deo Gloria (glory to God alone) - and the Creeds and Confessions in the current Book of Confessions are wholly sufficient to guide our worldly deliberations and undertakings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We commend to all our members the verity of our shared values and theology and ask of our leadership an affirmation and commitment to these shared values and theology.

We are wholeheartedly Presbyterian, believing that governance by lay and clergy through a connectional, confessional form of government is essential to holding and embodying the true faith in our worldly undertakings.

We strive to be ecumenical in our community, recognizing that we are but one part of the universal catholic Church. We welcome into the membership of our congregation all those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We encourage all our members to listen and respond in obedience to the counsel of Scripture which encourages us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2) so that God's values become our values and God's standards our standards. In accord with Scripture, we do not permit any person who refuses to repent of any self-acknowledged behavior the Scriptures or the Confessions call sin to be ordained to the office of deacon, elder, or minister of word and sacrament. We encourage all to share their gifts within our congregation and out in our community at large, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Our faith and these values compel us to ministry, mission, and witness in our local community, Kingwood, and beyond. Within our congregation we minister to and nurture the faithful in our many church functions - worship, Christian discipleship, church life, and many interpersonal ministries. Within our community, Kingwood and the Houston area, we support many social, educational, spiritual and relief organizations financially and with volunteers. Beyond our community, we take mission and witness in the name of Jesus Christ to the world where our resources and skills enable us to be credible missionaries and make the world better in His name.

Thus we take as our mission statement:

First Presbyterian Church of Kingwood is a family of faith where people sense the presence of Christ, respond with passionate worship, embrace the power of personal discipleship, and partner in God's mission to the world.



Section 2 – Proposal to Change Ordination Standards

Actions of the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA)

Background and Purpose of the Proposed Change in Ordination Standards

The Presbytery of the Western Reserve (serving northeastern Ohio) made an overture to the 219th General Assembly (July 2010) proposing to change the Ordination Standard for elders, deacons, or Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. The change would remove the current standard (reference: Section G-6.0106b, often referred to as the “fidelity and chastity standard” – see Proposed Changes below) and replace it with an Ordination qualifications review to be determined and administered by each Presbytery according to its own standards (for ministers) while continuing to be advised by Scripture and the Confessions. This revised (standard) or process is intended to create the ability for each Presbytery to ordain practicing homosexual ministers, if it otherwise determines such candidates have the requisite gifts required to serve the churches and congregations within its borders. Individual church Sessions could likewise determine relevant ordination fitness standards for elders and deacons. The General Assembly approved (by a vote of 373 in favor, 323 against, and 4 abstentions) referring this proposal out to the Presbyteries for ratification votes.

The proponents of this change argue that: (1) the current “fidelity and chastity standard” unfairly excludes from ordination due to their homosexual orientation otherwise talented and gifted church officer or minister candidates, (2) the currently exclusionary standard effectively closes church membership doors to homosexuals by making them feel unwelcome, and (3) the PCUSA has never achieved consensus on the correct interpretation of the Scriptures describing homosexual practices as sin.

Those arguing against the change hold that: (1) the plain language, the translational hermeneutics, and the historical context of the scripture (both OT and NT) are clear in defining homosexuality as a sin, (2) the “fidelity and chastity standard” is biblically based and so must be affirmed, (3) to allow ordination of unrepentant sinners of any stripe – homosexual or otherwise, which would be allowed under the new ordination review process, would be an outright contradiction of Scripture, and (4) Presbyterian churches and Presbyterians have on numerous past occasions voted against provisions designed to allow homosexual ordination, so this is an already settled issue.

Voting amongst the Presbyteries on this proposal will mark the fifth time since 1996-7 that some form of change to the Book of Order allowing ordination of practicing homosexuals has been proposed, approved by General Assembly, and referred out for vote in the Presbyteries. The Presbytery of the New Covenant has consistently voted against these proposals over this period, while margins against the proposals have narrowed over time.

What are the Proposed Changes?

The General Assembly proposes to delete the following section of the current *Book of Order* concerning ordination of elders, deacons, or Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (the “fidelity and chastity standard”) and replace it with the “fitness for ordination” review process in the proposed text below:



Current Standard

G-6.0106b. ~~“Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W 4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”~~

Proposed Text

Standards for ordained service reflect the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.”

How and When Would These Changes Be Approved?

Currently, the proposed change in ordination standards is being circulated amongst the PCUSA’s 173 Presbyteries for votes of approval. The Presbytery of the New Covenant, of which FPCK is a member, on November 13, 2010, voted against the proposed change by a vote of 156 against, 144 in favor, and 4 abstentions. The overall voting process must be completed by July 10, 2011. If a majority of the Presbyteries approve, then the new ordination qualifications review process will immediately replace the current “fidelity and chastity standard,” and the Book of Order will be amended to reflect this change.

How Would These Changes Affect FPCK and our Mission and Witness in Kingwood?

- 1) This change removes accountability based on biblical standards from church officers or ministerial candidates to live a “life in obedience to the Scriptures.”
- 2) A panel of Presbytery reviewers would determine a ministerial candidate’s qualifications by local rather than historical confessional standards.
Reference: Ordination Standards of 219th General Assembly of 2010 Questions and Answers - *“The proposed change would focus ordination examinations on the individual calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability of candidates for the responsibilities of the office in joyful submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life”*
- 3) Each session and congregation would determine their own ordination standards, not in obedience and conformity, but “guided by” Scripture.
Reference: Ordination Standards of 219th General Assembly of 2010 Questions and Answers - *“Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.”*
- 4) The value system at FPCK concurs with the fidelity and chastity standard which is presently in place. Were the change to occur, it would be an abandonment of clear biblical standards and the church’s reliance on Scripture as Authoritative.



Reference: Ordination Standards of 219th General Assembly of 2010 Questions and Answers – “*The 219th General Assembly recommends deleting this statement: Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001 or chastity in singleness Persons refusing to repent of any self- acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.*”

- 5) FPCK’s present value system is that biblical scripture is “the church’s first and final authority in all areas of faith and life.” Were the change enacted, a panel of reviewers at Presbytery would determine who is qualified to attain a ministerial position based on standards determined at the local instead of national church level.

Reference: Ordination Standards of 219th General Assembly of 2010 Questions and Answers –“*The proposed change would focus ordination examinations on the individual calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability of candidates for the responsibilities of the office in joyful submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life*”

- 6) Confessional standards and ordination requirements would be compromised, and there could be a possible disconnect from our fellow church members in Africa and other countries.

Reference: Quote from African Presbyterian Minister at the PNC’s presbytery meeting on November 13, 2010, at St. John’s Presbyterian Church -“*I took vows to keep the scripture holy. I am called to uphold the scripture and be against shameless acts.*”

- 7) Local resources sent to the national level could be used in ways not compatible with FPCK values.

Reference: www.covnetpres.org Covenant Network web site: Quote from Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick regarding the change to G-6.0106b (the fidelity and chastity standard) -“*It (the church) needs to go ahead and change it and make it right.*”

- 8) Tremendous energy and resources which could be used in fulfilling the “Great Commission” of winning souls to Christ are being diverted.

Reference: Quote from The Layman Vol. 43, No. 10, December 2010, Page 9 -“*Using the agreed upon ‘gracious dismissal policy’ of San Francisco Presbytery, the request by Community Presbyterian Church of Danville, California to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA) to join another presbytery has been approved. An approximate \$321,000 dismissal price has been negotiated.*”

- 9) Conservative membership in the Presbyterian Church throughout the United States is experiencing a decline, and congregations are leaving the denomination.

Reference: Quote from speaker at General Assembly Rev. Chris Erdman -“*A steep membership decline. A state of theological impasse. A dysfunctional debate over ordination. Congregations leaving the denomination, splintering our fragile unity. These things are on people’s minds when they ask me if the Presbyterian Church has a future.*”

- 10) The change in Form of Government – “nFog” - is being considered by the Presbyteries during the same time frame as the proposed ordination standards change; if the change in ordination standard is approved, nFog will be automatically amended to reflect the change. Under these circumstances, Presbyteries would acquire the authority to intervene in local church affairs in the interest of promoting “diversity.”

Reference: nFog F-3.0206, page 13 -“*A higher council shall have the right of review and control over a lower one and shall have power to determine matters of controversy upon reference, complaint or appeal.*”



Reference: nfog F-1.0403, page 6 - *“The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is, therefore, no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.*

Is This Change Consistent with FPCK’s Values?

This proposed change deletes from the Book of Order an absolute biblical standard consistent with FPCK’s value statement which says, *“In accord with Scripture, we do not permit any person who refuses to repent of any self-acknowledged behavior the Scriptures or the Confessions call sin to be ordained to the office of deacon, elder, or minister of word and sacrament”* and which agrees with the current fidelity and chastity standard. The change would also undermine FPCK’s belief that Scripture is *“the church’s first and final authority in all areas of faith and life.”* This change would substitute in its place the judgment of a panel or reviewers at the Presbytery level charged with determining a minister candidate’s fitness for ordination.

Where Can I Go to Learn More about the Change in Ordination Standards?

These following links and documents give a good explanation of the proposed change and arguments for and against:

http://www.oga.pcusa.org/pdf/proposed_amendments.pdf

Text of proposed amendments (Part 1 of 3)

<http://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=2309>

Report to 219th General Assembly on Ordination Standards

<http://oga.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/ad-op/note08.htm>

Report to 219th General Assembly on Ordination Standards

<http://www.layman.org>

Conservative views on the proposed change to the Ordination Standard

<http://presbycoalition.org>

Evangelical group’s critique of proposed change to the Ordination Standard



Section 2 – Appendix

Brief Descriptions of Presbytery Votes since 1996

Amendment B

In 1996-97, Presbyteries in the PCUSA voted 97-74 to place a constitutional provision in the *Book of Order*. Before its adoption, that proposal was known as “Amendment B.” It is now G-6.0106b, which requires candidates for minister, elder and deacon to practice fidelity in their marriages or chastity in their singleness. In other words, it prohibits the ordination of self-affirming, practicing adulterers and homosexuals.

Amendment A

In 1997-98, Presbyteries voted nearly two-to-one against a proposed amendment that would have replaced G-6.0106b. That proposed change, known as “Amendment A,” would have eliminated the constitutional prohibition against the ordination of adulterers and homosexuals.

Amendment O

In 2000-2001, Presbyteries voted on a proposal called “Amendment O,” which would have prohibited Presbyterian ministers from conducting so-called “same-sex” unions. The presbyteries voted 73-99 not to prohibit local sessions from determining whether to allow their pastors to conduct same-sex unions within the local congregation’s buildings. Many believed that the issue was more about the rights and duties of sessions and ministers than it was about whether same-sex unions are morally acceptable.

Amendment A

In 2001, Presbyteries voted 46-127 against Amendment A which called for extracting the “fidelity/chastity” constitutional standard required for the ordination of church officers and ending the denomination’s historic Biblical theology that says homosexual activity is sinful.

Amendment 08-B

In 2008-2009, Presbyteries voted 78-95 against Amendment 08-B, which would have removed the “fidelity/chastity” standard from the Book of Order. The standard requires that ordained officers be faithful in marriage between a man and a woman, or chaste in singleness.

The Presbytery of the New Covenant (of which FPCK is a member) has consistently voted **against** these proposals while margins against the proposals have narrowed over the years and from one vote to the next.



Biblical References Regarding Homosexual Practices

Romans 1:26 “God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural one. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.”

1 Corinthians 6:9 “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed and you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

1 Corinthians 6:19 “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”

1 Timothy 1:8 “We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for law breakers and rebels, the ungodly and the irreligious, for those who kill their mothers and fathers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders, and liars and perjurers and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the blessed God which he entrusted to me.”

Leviticus 18:22 “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, that is detestable.”

Leviticus 18:30 “Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the Lord your God.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Matthew 10:20 “For it is not you speaking but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

Luke 10:16 “Whoever listens to you listens to me, whoever rejects you rejects me, but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

1 Timothy 3:11-13 “In the same way the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.”



Mark 7:20-22 “(Jesus) went on: ‘What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.’ ”



[Section 3 – Proposal to Study Change in Marriage Standards](#)
**Actions of the 219th General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA)**

Background and Purpose of the Committee Reports

GA219 received two reports from the *Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage*, a committee that was appointed during the preceding General Assembly in 2008. The Special Committee had been charged to evaluate and recommend to GA219 how the PCUSA should deal with covenanted same-gender relationships.

What are the Proposed Changes?

The Special Committee more specifically considered whether to propose to the church at-large a change to the PCUSA’s marriage standards that would allow the church to sanction, bless, and perform same-sex Christian Marriages in states where same-sex unions are legal. The majority report favored making such a change, while a minority issued a dissenting report strongly advocating maintaining the traditional marriage standard as “between one man and one woman.” After an emotional debate on the floor, the General Assembly determined to send both the majority and minority reports out to the wider church with a recommendation to study both reports leading up to the next General Assembly (GA220) in 2012.

How and When Would These Changes Be Approved?

Both reports are available for study and discernment by concerned congregations (see the links below). Since GA219 did not act to recommend any change to the current marriage standard for ratification votes by the Presbyteries, no change has occurred or is pending consideration at present. Presumably, however, with the issue out for study in this manner, some form of overture will come back to GA220 (Summer 2012) for an approval vote and, if that succeeds, for ratification by the Presbyteries in the 2013 timeframe.

Is This Change Consistent with FPCK’s Values?

The Study Team has reviewed the Special Committee’s Majority Report, the accompanying Minority Report, and numerous documents explaining the possible effects on local church congregations like FPCK. In discernment, we offer the following perspective on these reports and the prospect that the PCUSA would change the church constitution so as to allow Presbyteries and individual Pastors to sanction, bless, and perform same-sex marriages in states where such unions are legal.

The marriage relationship between a man and a woman has been a prominent feature of human history since its beginning. The date of the first marriage is long since lost in antiquity. God has been involved in this relationship since page two of the Scriptures. It is probable that no other relationship can claim an earlier start than can marriage. During this extended history, the relationship of marriage has endured many changes which have been motivated largely by changes in man’s society and culture. The majority and minority reports which we have studied each gives good and well-documented descriptions of the early history of this development, and we refer you there for additional information.



Both the Old and New Testaments set forth regulations concerning marriage and divorce, and those rules prevailed and controlled this relationship from the time of Adam and Eve to the Reformation. Calvin considered marriage to be extremely important and viewed it to be a covenant between God, individuals, and the community. He thought it important because: 1) it provided for mutual love and support between a man and a woman, 2) it provided for the birth and nurture of children, and 3) it provided “protection against sexual sin.” In the Presbyterian system, all the confessions since the Scots Confession have dealt with marriage very specifically as being between one man and one woman. About the time of the Reformation (circa 1500AD), various aspects of government began to take a larger interest in the regulation of marriage, and that intervention has increased until today civil control of Marriage is equal to or greater than religious control.

In 1967, the United States Supreme Court, in *Loving vs. Virginia*, held that a state statute which prohibited interracial marriage was unconstitutional as being in violation of the 14th Amendment. It was here that the present controversy had its origin. In 1996, Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defined marriage as between one man and one woman and further provided that any state with a similar statute did not have to extend full faith and credit to same sex marriages of other states. Then in 2000, the PCUSA’s General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) in *Benton et al vs. Presbytery of Hudson River* did allow for individual ministers and sessions to conduct a same-sex ceremony that “celebrates a loving, caring and committed relationship” that does not “confer a new status” but “blesses an existing relationship.” These services are not to be confused with Christian Marriage or civil marriage, “do not constitute a marriage ceremony,” and “should not be construed as an endorsement of homosexual conjugal practice proscribed by the General Assembly.”

Thus, the GAPJC decision permitted ecclesiastical rites for same-sex couples that allow those couples to receive a public benediction, but do not confer a new status to these couples or their families within the community of faith. Some with same-sex partners do not consider this arrangement satisfactory and desire a relationship recognized by the church as a marriage; consequently arises our controversy - Shall the definition of Christian Marriage be amended to include relationships between same-sex partners?

In today’s society, governmental control of the marriage relationship has begun the shift in concept urged by the majority report. Some states have passed legislation authorizing same-sex marriage, and it is probable that other states will follow this lead. Recently, in February 2011, the Obama Administration has abandoned the constitutional defense of the Defense of Marriage Act, claiming a belief that it is unconstitutional. But Scripture is clear that marriage between one man and one woman is central to God’s plan for mankind, and tradition teaches us that society in general is best served with stable families comprised of mothers and fathers together raising children. The “family” in this society is under enormous pressure. The number of single parent families increases every day, and abortion and teenage unmarried pregnancy are epidemics out of control across our whole society. And, of course, the obscene rate of divorce continues to be highly destructive to the well-being of our society.

The community of believers, which is the body of Christ, must pursue God’s plan set forth in Scripture and resist to the fullest every attempt to reshape it by secular society, which we are in, but of which we are not a part. Traditions extending over thousands of years should only be changed under compulsion of the most compelling sort, and such a compelling reason for the proposed change is nowhere evident. Further, this committee believes that the change discussed would have a devastating result for both PCUSA and FPCK. We believe that we should have the grace to permit God to make fundamental alterations in His plan for man and that such changes do not fall in the scope of our mission. Thus, we believe that the PCUSA’s Marriage Standards should not be changed as proposed in the Special



Committee's majority report favoring same-sex marriages, or as may be proposed in similar overtures in the upcoming GA220.

Consequently, the DRST concludes that this proposed change is contrary to FPCK's values which emphasize Scriptural Authority and the scripturally-based definition of Christian Marriage as "between one man and one woman."

Where Can I Go to Learn More about the Marriage Standards Issue?

Special Committee Majority Report: <https://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3333&promoID=168>

Special Committee Minority Report: <https://www.pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3335&promoID=169>



Section 4 – Proposal to Change to New Form of Government (“nFOG”)

Actions of the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA)

Background and Purpose of nFOG

The General Assembly report which recommends that the PCUSA adopt the New Form of Government (nFOG) explains the need for the change as follows:

“The current Form of Government has served the church ably over the past quarter century. The bedrock historic principles of Presbyterian governance will continue to order our lives together today and into the future, just as they have guided those who witnessed before us. At the same time, the world in which we as 21st-century Presbyterians proclaim the gospel is not the world of the 1950s, or even the 1980s. The proposed Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and Form of Government are intended to help the church better meet the needs of mission in the 21st century.”

“The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity gathers together in three succinct chapters the historical and theological provisions that have defined, and continue to define, our church life together. Placing this bedrock material into a separate section of the Book of Order provides an excellent teaching tool to explain who and what we are.”

“The current Form of Government has evolved over the years from a Constitution into a regulatory manual that attempts to provide a ‘one size fits all’ answer to every situation faced by congregations and presbyteries. The problem with this regulatory approach is that the diverse, multicultural environment in which we do mission no longer permits a ‘one size fits all’ approach if we are to do mission effectively. The proposed new Form of Government lifts up the constitutional standards that are essential to our life together, while at the same time empowering councils (governing bodies) at all levels to respond more effectively to the ministry and mission needs that each faces.”

What are the Proposed Changes?

The General Assembly proposes to dispose of the current Book of Order in its entirety and replace the form of church government with that set forth in the nFOG overture. The new governing document attempts to identify the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity and certain key governance provisions that would be retained in the new Book of Order, although in somewhat modified forms. Large sections of the current form of government will not appear in the new Book of Order, and instead will be moved into new or expanded “administrative operations manuals” that each Presbytery will develop to suit its own needs. These new or expanded operating manuals must still conform to the “constitutional standards that are essential to our life together” as set out in the new Book of Order. The proponents of this approach believe that giving more discretion to the Presbyteries in this manner will allow more latitude to customize local church procedures and practices to meet local missional needs while reducing the “regulatory restrictions” of the current Book of Order. The key changes as they may concern FPCK are discussed below. The scope of this change is sweeping, however, and can only be appreciated in full by reading the nFOG manuscript at <http://www.pbyofnewcovenant.org/sections/home.html>.

How and When Would These Changes Be Approved?

Currently, the proposed nFOG changes are being circulated amongst the PCUSA’s 173 Presbyteries for votes of approval. The Presbytery of the New Covenant, of which FPCK is a member, voted on this proposal at the February 5, 2011 Presbytery meeting (held at FPCK); the measure was defeated by a vote



of 186 against versus 44 in favor. The overall voting process must be completed by July 10, 2011. If a majority of the Presbyteries approve, then nFOG will immediately replace the current form of church government, and the Book of Order will be amended to reflect this change. The change would subsequently require each Presbytery to develop or expand its own “administrative operations manual” to replace the elements deleted from the Book of Order, and that may take some time before new or changed operating procedures are known. (Some Presbyteries may choose to use the deleted old Book of Order sections as the starting point for their new procedures, while nFOG would intentionally allow wide latitude in local decisions on content of new procedures.) Also, since the many Authoritative Interpretations (AIs) provided over time by the General Assembly or Permanent Judicial Councils (PJs) of the PCUSA, Synods, and Presbyteries were based on the current Book of Order, some AIs will be voided, and many issues may have to be “re-litigated” in front of new PJs to develop new policies or standards governing our ecclesiastical discipline, faith, and works in accordance with nFOG.

How Would These Changes Affect FPCK and our Mission and Witness in Kingwood?

The Study Team completed extensive due diligence on potential changes arising if nFOG is adopted, including: (1) reviewed numerous documents setting forth the proposed changes and explaining the possible effects on local church congregations like FPCK, (2) attended briefings sponsored by Presbytery of the New Covenant regarding NFOG changes and impacts, and (3) held an informational exchange meeting/discussion with the Executive Presbyter of Presbytery of New Covenant, Mike Cole. From this review, we believe the following are the principal impacts that would affect our Church if the nFOG proposal is approved:

- (1) Since significant portions of the current Book of Order will be left out of nFOG, some issues previously settled with Authoritative Interpretations (AIs) or Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) decisions will be open to re-litigation, possibly leading to further fundamental changes within the denomination.
- (2) One objective of nFOG is to reduce the size and constraints of the PCUSA constitution. However, given the significant portions of the current Book of Order deleted or referred out to Presbytery manuals, future General Assemblies will likely be approached with proposals for further Book of Order revisions or add-backs, in essence starting the constitutional amendment process (and Book of Order expansion) all over again.
- (3) Another stated objective of nFOG is to make the PCUSA, down to local congregations, more missional by removing hierarchical constraints and increasing the latitude to conduct missions as needed by local communities. It does not appear that the changes to be implemented through nFOG will accomplish that aim, at least with respect to Presbytery of the New Covenant, FPCK, or Kingwood and environs.
- (4) The latitude granted to Presbyteries to define or change local operating procedures and priorities will likely increase Presbytery-to-Presbytery variances and in so doing dilute the connectivity and national



identity of the PCUSA. There are few checks and balances on Presbytery autonomy provided in nFOG: *“Powers not mentioned in this Constitution are reserved to the presbyteries.”* (G-3.0101)

- (5) The amended representational guarantee (nFOG Section F-1.0403, referred to as the “unity in diversity” provision) reads as follows: *“The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.”* This guarantee is explicitly referenced as a mandatory requirement in connection with numerous routine functions: Welcome and Openness (G-1.0302), Election of Ruling Elders and Deacons (G-2.0401), Participation and Representation on higher councils (G-3.0103), Committees and Commissions of higher councils (G-3.0109), Administrative Staff of higher councils (G-3.0110), and Composition and Responsibilities of commissioners to Presbytery (G-3.0301). These mandatory requirements for representational diversity seem fertile ground for dissension between congregations, Sessions, and Presbyteries.
- (6) Several aspects of nFOG would contribute to the continued theological drift of the PCUSA. nFOG in its Foundations of Presbyterian Polity section does not affirm the Authority of Scripture as a foundational principle for the PCUSA. (Note that this is an omission repeated from the current Book of Order.) nFOG also dilutes the authority of the historical Creeds and Confessions of the church with the proviso that the confessions “appeal to the universal truth of the Gospel *while expressing that truth within the social and cultural assumptions of their time (emphasis added).*” (F-2.01) This proviso openly invites re-interpretation of the timeless truths of the church through the lens of today’s culture. nFOG, in the Foundations section, also contains language summarizing the PCUSA’s reformed theology that could potentially be misconstrued as contradictory to theological doctrine more fully articulated in the Book of Confessions. (F-1.0 and F-2.0)
- (7) nFOG appears to enable the Presbytery to apportion a missions contribution within the per capita tax from congregations to support programs determined by General Assembly, the Synods, and/or Presbyteries (G-3.0106); currently any missions contribution to Presbytery and above is left to the Session’s discretion.

Is This Change Consistent with FPCK’s Values?

The Study team commends the PCUSA’s stated objective to make our community of churches more outreach and missions-oriented. We believe, however, that the General Assembly has not adequately established that the proposed nFOG changes would create or enable this new mission orientation. (We note that FPCK already undertakes substantial mission and outreach programs of its own accord.) Further, the wholesale governance change by nFOG would open the gates to possibly major differences Presbytery-to-Presbytery and a stream of further fundamental changes to the denomination. Based on the



impacts described above, the Study Team concludes that these changes are not in FPCK's best interest and might distract us from fulfilling our own Mission and Witness here in Kingwood. Thus we believe nFOG should not be approved.

Where Can I Go to Learn More about nFOG?

The following links and documents give a good explanation of the proposed changes and possible effects on local congregations:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/constitution.htm>

Link to a PCUSA page with the nFOG text, current Book of Order, and Confessions of the PCUSA.

http://oga.pcusa.org/pdf/proposed_amendments.pdf

Actual text of the proposed nFOG

<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2010/7/6/new-form-government-moves-full-assembly/>

Report on nFOG as it came out of committee to the General Assembly floor at the 219th General Assembly (July 2010)

http://oga.pcusa.org/ga219/pdf/FOG_final_FAQ.pdf

Report on nFOG as it came from General Assembly to the Presbyteries who must vote to ratify or reject

<http://www.presbycoalition.org/nfog.cfm>

Resource materials from the Presbyterian Coalition - an Evangelical group offering a critique of nFOG (published prior to the 219th General Assembly)

<http://www.theologymatters.com/TM100915.pdf>

Website with a thoughtful critique of nFOG and other GA219 matters

<http://www.reclaimbiblicalteaching.org/Reasons%20why%20nFOG%20should%20not%20be%20adoped.pdf>

A summary analysis of nFOG by the Presbyterian Coalition



Section 5 – Proposal to Add the Confession of Belhar to PCUSA Book of Confessions

Actions of the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA)

Background and Purpose of the Confession of Belhar

The Confession of Belhar originally grew out of the response in the 1980s of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church to South Africa's legally mandated system of apartheid – the segregation of people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Dutch Reformed Church separated non-white members into the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, and later in the implementation of Grand Apartheid (1948-1994) into three non-white churches - the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (the *colored* church), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (the *black* church), and the Indian Reformed Church in South Africa (the *Indian* church). The Belhar Confession is a product of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, and it defines all forms of forced separation [segregation] of people based on their natural diversity, eg. race, as sin. It also strongly advocates for unity within the church. Some reformed churches around the world have adopted Belhar as one of their confessions, and some others are currently studying, or considering adoption of Belhar.

In 2008, the PCUSA General Assembly created a special committee to study whether the Belhar Confession should be adopted into *The Book of Confessions*. This Special Committee recommended that the 219th General Assembly (GA219) in 2010 approve the inclusion of the Confession of Belhar in *The Book of Confessions*. The GA219 voted 525 in favor, 150 against (with 3 abstentions) to refer this proposal to the Presbyteries for ratification by June 2011.

What are the Proposed Changes?

The proposal from GA219 is to add the Confession of Belhar to *The Book of Confessions* (the full text of this Confession is attached at the end of Section 5). The Association of Stated Clerks of the PCUSA published an *Analysis of Amendments to the Constitution*, and their report cites the key arguments put forward at GA219:

Arguments Supporting an Affirmative Vote:

- It is a confession of faith that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord as it gives clarity on theological reasons for church unity which it proclaims as coming from God, not from our own efforts.
- It has been enthusiastically used by multicultural congregations.
- It would be a Confession that has as its origin a faith community from below the equator, and as such would be the first in *The Book of Confessions*, all the others of which are European in origin, and would demonstrate our theological unity with sisters and brothers of several other Reformed traditions who have already adopted this confession.

Arguments Supporting a Negative Vote:

- It is sparse in its Christology and is more a social creed coming from a particular cultural situation that does not have direct applicability to our own.



- It could be used as a basis to support other issues for groups who perceive themselves as being treated unjustly within the denomination.
- The Declaration of Barmen and the Confession of 1967 adequately address the issues of injustice so an additional confession is not required.

How and When Would These Changes Be Approved?

The proposal to include the Confession of Belhar in *The Book of Confessions* is being circulated among the PCUSA's 173 Presbyteries for votes of approval. Our Presbytery of the New Covenant will vote on these changes on June 11, 2011, and the overall voting process must be completed by June 2011. Since this is an addition to the Book of Confessions, a greater than two-thirds (116 or more) vote of all Presbyteries is required for approval.

How Would These Changes Affect FPCK and our Mission and Witness in Kingwood?

The Study Team has carefully reviewed the Belhar Confession and numerous documents discussing its merits. Since the Belhar confession includes very little new material that is not covered in existing confessions (especially *The Confession of 1967*), and speaks directly only to issues which are not highly controversial within our church, we believe that its adoption would have little practical impact on FPCK.

Is This Change Consistent with FPCK's Values?

The Study team commends the PCUSA's stated objective to take a clear stand against racism as articulated in the Belhar Confession. We believe that Belhar is largely consistent with FPCK's values, but it is a poorly written document, and contains sections where the full meaning is difficult to discern. It adds little of value to our existing confessions, at least from the perspective of PCUSA and FPCK, and given the state of modern day race relations in PCUSA, Belhar's message is not particularly timely to us. It can be said that Belhar might have more meaning to Presbyterians outside the USA, and it could be argued that its adoption might enhance relationships between PCUSA and the worldwide church, but because of its perceived low value and ambiguity stemming from poor literary quality, we believe that the Confession of Belhar should not be added to the Book of Confessions.

Where Can I Go to Learn More about Belhar?

The GA219 letter transmitting Belhar to the Presbyteries (Proposed Amendments to the Constitution—Part 2 of 3) contains a wealth of pertinent information, including a note from the GA219 stated clerk, the text of the proposed amendment, a statement of rationale and background for the amendment, the entire text of Belhar with scriptural allusions, and the Belhar Accompanying Letter which gives its authors' statement of intent. This may be found at: http://oga.pcusa.org/pdf/proposed_amendments2.pdf.

Those interested in a detailed and open discussion of Belhar's pros and cons can find one at the PCUSA's Belhar online discussion forum: <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/belhar-confession/>



CONFESSION OF BELHAR

September 1986

11.1. We believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This, God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

11.2. We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

We believe

- that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another;
- that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain;
- that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted;
- that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another;
- that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity;
- that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God;
- that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church;

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;
- which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace while believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;
- which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;
- which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.

11.3. We believe



- that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world; that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker; that the church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.
- that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity; that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world;
- that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;
- that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which, in such a situation sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

11.4. We believe

- that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged;
- that God calls the church to follow him in this; for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;
- that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right;
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;
- that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Therefore, we reject any ideology

- which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

11.5. We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head, the church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence.



Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and ever.

Endnotes: (1) This is a translation of the original Afrikaans text of the confession as it was adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in 1986. In 1994 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). This inclusive language text was prepared by the Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Section numbers are OGA suggestions based on the document's five original sections and the numbering from The Book of Confessions. (2) The Confession of Belhar also contains a list of Scriptural Allusions and an Accompanying Letter explaining the historical context of the Confession; these materials have been omitted for space purposes here but can be seen in the referral document from the General Assembly to the Presbyteries available on the Presbytery of New Covenant website.