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Denominational Update ***Ordination Change Is Official***

By Alan Hager

On May 10 the 87th Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted in favor of new language to replace the existing requirement in the church Book of Order that officers of the church live in fidelity in marriage or chastity of singleness. That vote represented a majority of the 173 presbyteries of the denomination. The change does not become official until July 10. This is one year after the adjournment of the last General Assembly when the overture was initially approved.

Here is the official statement on this new position from the session of SPC.

In response to the recent change in the standard for officers in the Presbyterian Church (USA), the session of Spotsylvania Presbyterian Church expresses deep sadness and concern. Removing the requirement that leaders of the church should live in either “fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness” reflects a view that is inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible. It also represents a departure from the witness of historic Christianity through the ages and separates the denomination from the vast majority of Christians around the world who do not support this view. Likewise, Spotsylvania Presbyterian Church does not share the views of the PCUSA in this matter and will continue to fulfill its vision of graciously reaching out to all people while affirming the standards of the Bible regarding morality and the nature of marriage.

In addition, the session would like to convey to the congregation that the new standard on ordination of leaders challenges our ability to fulfill our mission. The session believes this new situation is not tenable for the long term health of the church and some form of change is required. Please visit the church website at www.spcontheweb.org for additional background information on this matter.

Much has already been shared with our congregation about the background to this change and why it is significant. Let me add just a few highlights.

First, this decision does not require churches to make any immediate change in their practices and leadership.

There are real concerns and questions about what this new position will mean in the future, but we do not have to react in fear of being forced to accept an elder or pastor in our church that we would not choose or who would not meet our expectations for an officer of the church. Although the way ahead may seem challenging, we can move forward together in the future God intends for us trusting His timing and making deliberate decisions.

Second, since people have been asking about what we will do or can do, let me assure you that the membership of the church will be fully involved with decisions regarding the future of our church. Dramatic changes cannot be implemented by the pastor or session in this matter. So you will have opportunity to speak and vote as options are considered in the future.

Finally, please feel free to speak with me or a session member at anytime regarding questions or concerns you may have. Your input is important. And let us together continue to seek God in prayer for wisdom and strength.