

**MINUTES OF
THE PRESBYTERY OF CAYUGA-SYRACUSE**

The Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse held a special meeting at Park Central Presbyterian Church, Syracuse, on Saturday, February 1, 2014. The meeting was called to order by the Moderator, teaching elder Steve Thomas, at 11:00 a.m., who then opened the meeting with prayer.

The Moderator declared that a quorum was present. Introductions were made of first time ruling elders.

The call to the meeting was read:

The Moderator of the Presbytery, teaching elder Steven Thomas, in accordance with the Bylaws and Standing Rules, hereby calls a special meeting of the Presbytery to be held on Saturday, February 1, 2014, at 11:00 a.m. at Park Central Presbyterian Church in Syracuse. The purpose of the meeting is to consider and vote upon three proposed overtures to the General Assembly:

1. On amending W-4.9000, Marriage, by striking the current text and replacing it with new language (to concur with overture 021 from the Presbytery of the Cascades);
2. On issuing an Authoritative Interpretation of W-4.9000 to affirm pastoral discretion in performing marriage ceremonies (to concur with Overture 024 from the Presbytery of Heartland); and
3. On Encouraging Use of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation (to concur with Overture 016 from the Presbytery of New York City).

The full texts, along with supporting rationale, of these proposed overtures have been distributed and will be posted on the Presbytery's website and Facebook page. No other business may be considered at this meeting.

Attest: Steven W. Plank, Stated Clerk/Communicator

Vice-Moderator, teaching elder Lorrie Day Anson, led the opening service of worship.

The Presbytery considered and discussed the first proposed amendment. An amendment was made to the rationale: that the second sentence of observation 1 be struck: "The nostalgically remembered pattern of marriage of 1940's America cannot be taken as normative from a Biblical or theological point of view." The amendment was seconded. After discussion, the motion was **approved**. An amendment was made to the rationale: that the second sentence of the last observation be struck: "The statement that marriage is 'between a man and a woman' reflects conventions of the mid-20th century and is descriptive, not prescriptive." The amendment was seconded. After discussion, the motion was **approved**. Discussion then resumed on the proposed overture and the amended rationale. After discussion, the Presbytery **approved** the proposed overture with the amended rationale. (See Appendix A for the full text of this.)

The Presbytery considered and discussed the second proposed amendment. After discussion, the Presbytery **approved** the proposed overture with rationale. (See Appendix B for the full text of this.)

The Presbytery considered and discussed the third proposed amendment. After discussion, the Presbytery **approved** the proposed overture with rationale. (See Appendix C for the full text of this.)

The business of the special meeting having been accomplished, the Presbytery moved to a time of worship. The Sacrament of Communion was celebrated.

After worship, the meeting was adjourned, with the Moderator offering a closing prayer.

Steven W. Plank
Stated Clerk/Communicator

Roll –

Teaching elders present: Harold Abram, Garrett Anderson, Mary Anderson, Lorrie Day Anson, Earl Arnold, Robert French, Mark Harrison, Stuart Hayes, Craig Lindsey, Roger Martin, Tracie Martin, Dan McCollister, Andrew McTyre, Sarah McTyre, David Nethercott, Steve Plank, Shawn Reyburn, Harold Sanderson, Jerald Shave, Pete Shidemantle, Caroline Simmons, Patricia Simmons, Saunda Thomas, Steve Thomas, Kathleen Waters

Commissioned Ruling Elders present: Gail Banks

Ruling elder commissioners present:

Amboy Belle Isle – Robert Armstrong
Auburn, First – Ann Wiley
Auburn, Westminster – Jill Fandrich
Aurora – Ellen Schaffer
Baldwinsville – Jean Harshaw
Cazenovia – Scott Campbell
East Syracuse – Lynn Jacques
Fayetteville – Beth Krause
King Ferry – Neil Rotach
LaFayette – Robin Walburger
Liverpool – Tina Buzak
Morrisville – Sylvia McKinnon
Onondaga Hill – Don Faber-Langendven
Parish – Jeff Raner
Skaneateles – Stephen White, Dave Graham
Syracuse, Park Central – Joe Russo
Syracuse, Robinson Memorial – Mary Browne
Syracuse, Westminster – Linda Harrington

Weedsport – William Smith

Leadership Team ruling elders present: Pearl Fischer, Christian Imboden, Gordon Howard, Jeff Raner (listed above), Sharye Skinner, Charlie Smith, Craig Williams

Total present and eligible to vote:

Teaching elders	25
Commissioned Ruling Elders	1
Ruling elder commissioners	20
Leadership Team ruling elders	6

Total **52**

Visitors present: Kathy Faber-Langendven, Wynetta Devone, Lorrie Cooney, Frank McDowell, Ruth Haase

(Minutes approved by Presbytery as submitted – May 17, 2014)

APPENDIX A

On amending W-4.9000, Marriage, by striking the current text and replacing it with new language (to concur with overture 021 from the Presbytery of the Cascades

The Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse concurs with Overture 021 from the Presbytery of the Cascades to overture the 221st General Assembly (2014) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Amend W-4.9000 by striking the current text and replacing it with the following:

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the wellbeing of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community.

In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges.

If they meet the requirements of the civil jurisdiction in which they intend to marry, a couple may request that a service of Christian marriage be conducted by a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), who is authorized, though not required, to act as an agent of the civil jurisdiction in recording the marriage contract. A couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall receive instruction from the teaching elder, who shall agree to the couple's request only if, in the judgment of the teaching elder, the couple demonstrate sufficient understanding of the nature of the marriage covenant and commitment to living their lives together according to its values. In making this decision the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the session, which has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service.

The marriage service shall be conducted in a manner appropriate to this covenant and to the forms of Reformed worship, under the direction of the teaching elder and the supervision of the session (W-1.4004-.4006). In a service of marriage, the couple marry each other by exchanging mutual promises. The teaching elder witnesses the couple's promises and pronounces God's blessing upon their union. The community of faith pledges to support the couple in upholding their promises; prayers may be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness.

A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the statements made shall reflect the fact that the couple are already married to one another according to the laws of the civil jurisdiction.

Rationale of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse:

At issue is the Presbyterian understanding of the nature of Christian marriage and a pastor's and session's responsibility and ability to extend appropriate pastoral care. As more and more states

(14 at this writing) authorize marriage between same-gender partners, pastors and sessions trying to be responsible in providing pastoral care to church members by officiating at marriages in the church building find themselves increasingly constrained by the provisions of section 4.9000 of the Directory for Worship as interpreted by the 1991 General Assembly and subsequent decisions of the General Assembly's Permanent Judicial Commission.

In light of the increased flexibility offered by the new Form of Government for conducting the mission of the church, it is time for the Presbyterian Church to amend the Directory for Worship to provide comparable flexibility in extending pastoral care to church members in same-gender partnerships.

The report of the Special Committee on Civil Union and Christian Marriage, which the 219th General Assembly approved and commended to the church in 2010, offers important background to the Biblical, theological, historical, cultural and pastoral issues involved here.

The following brief observations support the Amendment to the Directory for Worship requested above:

- * the Bible and the Reformed tradition reflect many patterns and forms of legal, religiously approved marital relationships.¹
- * the understanding of marriage has changed through the years and was often geared more to property rights or political advantage than to a mutual, loving relationship.²
- * marriage is a contract regulated and licensed by the state.³ This was recognized in the ancient church and in Protestant churches since the Reformation.⁴
- * there are legitimate differences of interpretation of the passages regarding homosexual relationship in the Bible.⁵ The present regulation forces Presbyterian elders to act based on one interpretation, with which many disagree as a matter of conscience.
 - Jesus in his public ministry broke down the barriers that separated people. He identified with those who were outcasts and marginalized by society. Gay and lesbian individuals are considered outsiders by many today. The church needs to witness to the inclusive love of Jesus for all people.⁶
- * to prohibit clergy and congregations from fulfilling a legitimate request for pastoral services binds the conscience of clergy and prevents them from fulfilling their pastoral responsibilities.

¹ Report of the Special Committee on Civil Union and Christian Marriage, pp. 1-2 and 25-27

² Ibid., pp. 3 and 27

³ Directory for Worship, W-4.9000 “Marriage is a civil contract”

⁴ Report of the Special Committee on Civil Union and Christian Marriage, pp. 3-4 and 27-28

⁵ Ibid., pp. 11, 13 (item 3), and 20-21

⁶ Confession of 1967, 9.44 and 9.47; Foundations of Presbyterian Polity F-1.0302c, F-1.0404 and F-1.0405

* in 2010, the presbyteries approved Amendment A allowing persons in same-sex relationships to be ordained. These church members should be allowed to be married if the state issues them a marriage license and their teaching elder determines that their marriage is advisable.

* the statement restricting marriage to “one man and one woman”⁷ addresses polygamy in 17th century England.

In light of the above we believe positive action on this overture is warranted.

⁷ Westminster Confession, 6.131

APPENDIX B

On Issuing an Authoritative Interpretation of W-4.9000 to Affirm Pastoral Discretion in Performing Marriage Ceremonies (to concur with Overture 024 from the Presbytery of Heartland)

The Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse concurs with Overture 024 from the Presbytery of Heartland to overture the 221st General Assembly (2014) to issue the following Authoritative Interpretation of the *Book of Order*, W-4.9000:

Worship is a central element of the pastoral care of the people of God (W-6.3001, 6.3010) in which a teaching elder's discernment of the leading of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. The necessity of ensuring the exercise of freedom of conscience in the interpretation of Scripture (G-2.0105) in the planning and leadership of worship has deep roots in our Reformed tradition and theology. Because a service of marriage is one form of such worship, when a couple requests the involvement of the church in solemnizing their marriage as permitted by the laws of the place where the couple seek to be married, teaching elders* have the pastoral responsibility to assess the capabilities, intentions, and readiness to be married of the couple (W-4.9002), and the freedom of conscience in the interpretation of Scripture (G-2.0105) to participate in any such marriage they believe the Holy Spirit calls them to perform. Exercising such discretion and freedom of conscience under the prayerful guidance of Scripture, teaching elders may conduct a marriage service for any such couple in the place where the community gathers for worship, if approved by the session; or in such other place as may be suitable for a service of Christian worship. In no case shall any teaching elder's conscience be bound to conduct any marriage service for any couple except by his or her understanding of the Word, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Authoritative Interpretation of this section by the 203rd General Assembly (Minutes 1991, at 21.124-128), and the subsequent Authoritative Interpretations of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission relying upon it, are withdrawn and replaced with this Authoritative Interpretation.

**As in other places in the Directory for Worship, the use of "teaching elders" in this paragraph should be understood to include ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service.*

Rationale of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse:

As the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. wrestles with its understanding of the nature of Christian marriage, pastors and session strive to be faithful in providing appropriate pastoral care to church members who seek to be married. As of October 28, 2013, fourteen states have legalized civil marriage for same-gender couples among their 100 million citizens. Teaching elders in those states must risk disciplinary action if they seek to give to same-gender members of their churches the same pastoral care that they offer to other members, officiating at their marriages. For leaders in many Presbyterian churches in these states, this constitutes a crisis of conscience. Until the Presbyterian Church determines how to resolve the conflicting definitions of marriage in the Directory for Worship and civil law, teaching elders in those states that authorize same-gender marriage need to be protected from judicial action for carrying out their responsibility to provide pastoral care to church members.

Here in the State of New York, same-gender couples have been able to be married since June, 2011. Since then, hundreds of same-gender couples have approached their pastors, requesting to be married in the church where they are members. Some pastors have consented and conducted same-gender wedding ceremonies, either in the church or in another location; a few of these pastors have been charged and convicted, at considerable expense to themselves and their presbyteries. Some pastors have declined out of scruples of conscience. Others have declined out of respect for the denomination's policy or because they were intimidated by the prospect of disciplinary action. These pastors generally tried to make other arrangements, either having a minister of another denomination conduct the wedding or conducting a service of blessing after the couple had a civil marriage. When their pastor declined to conduct their wedding, most same-gender couples felt a sense of rejection from their own faith community, and many then joined a different church where they could be married or left church altogether.

One pastor in the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse was approached by a same-gender couple who had been together for 17 years, requesting to be married. The pastor consulted with the Session, which disapproved of having a marriage that would expose the pastor and the church to disciplinary action. The pastor then regretfully arranged for a minister colleague to conduct the couple's marriage, but the pastor conducted a service of blessing for the couple afterward.

In the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse, one third of our churches are united or federated churches, usually with a church of a denomination that allows same-gender marriage. In at least one case, a same-gender couple sought to be married by the Presbyterian pastor of their united church. The pastor arranged for a minister of another denomination to conduct the wedding in the couple's church building, an awkward arrangement at best! A similar situation arose when a Presbyterian pastor serving a church of one of our Formula of Agreement partners had to invite another minister to officiate at the marriage of one of their same-gender member couples. Another couple, both active leaders of the church, requested that they be married in the church sanctuary by their pastor (a Presbyterian serving under the Formula of Agreement). The couple had been together for nearly forty years and to refuse to extend pastoral care in this situation was unthinkable.

The above overture would give relief to teaching elders and sessions in our presbytery, so that they could discharge their responsibility to provide pastoral care to their church members, including to the same-gender couples in their congregations who seek to be married in their church, without risking disciplinary action or having to resort to tortuous and generally unsatisfactory alternatives.

APPENDIX C

On Encouraging Use of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation (to concur with Overture 016 from the Presbytery of New York City)

The Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse concurs with Overture 016 from the Presbytery of New York City to ask the 221st General Assembly (2014) to do the following:

1. Encourage programs and ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) agencies to give preference to tourism companies and businesses, including but not limited to hotels, airlines, and travel agents, that have signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism adopted by End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT), as the companies and businesses make arrangements for meetings and travel to meetings;
2. Encourage programs and ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) agencies to make available opportunities for advocacy and education with tourism companies and businesses, including but not limited to hotels, airlines, and travel agents, that have not signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism when they are used for arrangement for meetings and travel to meetings;
3. Urge members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to give preference to tourism companies and businesses, including but not limited to hotels, airlines, and travel agents, that have signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism when traveling and to engage in advocacy with tourism companies and businesses that have not; and
4. Direct the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Human Trafficking Roundtable to maintain current information on the status of companies that have signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism and to continue to partner with and support EPCATUSA.

Rationale: *(identical to the rationale submitted by the Presbytery of New York City)*

Affirming that each human being is created in God's image and should be treated with dignity and respect, the General Assemblies of the PCUS, UPCUSA, and PC(USA) have approved reports and statements condemning human trafficking, slavery, and sexual exploitation. Most recently, the 218th General Assembly (2008) adopted by A Resolution to Expand the Church's Ministry with and Advocacy Against Human Trafficking and On Preventing the Trafficking of Women, Internationally and Nationally. As followers of Jesus who welcomed children (Matthew 19:13-15), the General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed our commitment to children and their wellbeing. A Vision for Children and the Church, adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993), expressed this understanding.

The 217th General Assembly (2006) brought the church's affirmation of children and concern for human trafficking together as it approved an overture from the Synod of the Northeast, On Condemning International Human Trafficking In and Sexual Exploitation of Children (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 994ff).

Children around the world and in the United States continue to be sexually exploited and trafficked. Individuals travel overseas to exploit children sexually. Air travel provides a primary

means of transportation for these “child sex tourists.” Sex tourists usually have said it is legal and culturally acceptable to sexually exploit children in other countries, and often state that the impoverished children benefit by the payment received. In the United States, traffickers use hotel rooms as venues to abuse children, knowing that systems are not in place to protect the victims. Exploiters seek creative means to move child trafficking off the streets and behind the closed doors of local hotel rooms.

The organization End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) was created in Thailand in 1991 to ensure the right of all children to live free of child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sexual purposes. There are currently over 80 groups in the ECPAT network in more than 70 countries. This includes ECPAT-USA. The 217th General Assembly (2006) called the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to partner with ECPAT in the effort to end the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

Developed by ECPAT, the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism sets a standard of responsible business practices that effectively deters child sexual exploitation. It is an industry-driven, multi-stakeholder initiative with the mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry in order to combat the sexual exploitation of children in contexts related to travel and tourism. The Code employs the following six criteria which members of the tourism industry must adhere to once they endorse The Code:

1. To establish a policy and procedures against sexual exploitation of children.
2. To train employees in children’s rights, the prevention of sexual exploitation and how to report suspected cases.
3. To include a clause in contracts throughout the value chain stating a common repudiation and zero tolerance policy of sexual exploitation of children.
4. To provide information to travellers on children’s rights, the prevention of sexual exploitation of children and how to report suspected cases.
5. To support, collaborate and engage stakeholders in the prevention of sexual exploitation of children.
6. To report annually on their implementation of Code related activities.

Nearly 1,300 companies in the tourism industry have signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism including Delta Airlines, Adventure Travel Trade Association, Association of Corporate Travel Executives, International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association, Nix Conference and Meeting Management, Sabre Holdings, Carlson Companies, Hilton Worldwide, Wyndham Worldwide, Inn at Saint Mary’s Hotel, Millennium Hotel St. Louis, Real Hospitality Group, E-Trip Africa, Global Exchange, Meaningful Trip, and International Tour Management Institute in the United States.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessors have long used its economic power to stand for equality and justice. Use of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism in arranging meetings and travel to meetings would allow the church to continue that tradition and seek the human rights of children in our country and around the world.