



CHAPEL BY THE LAKE

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Dear Chapel by the Lake Members and Friends:

Many of you are no doubt aware of the significant change that recently occurred within our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA). This letter is meant to explain this development and clarify my position, and that of Chapel's Session, with regard to this situation.

First the change...

A majority of the presbyteries in our denomination have ratified an amendment to our constitution (Book of Order), which substantially alters the standards for ordination to the offices of deacon, elder, and pastor in the PCUSA.

There are two crucial changes to these standards. First, the denominational-wide ordination requirement of *fidelity within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman, or chastity in singleness* has been removed. Secondly, the new amendment instructs each ordaining body (the local church for deacons and elders, and presbyteries for pastors) to determine a person's suitability for ordination. These new standards allow local churches and presbyteries to ordain self-affirming, practicing homosexual individuals. The new rule does not mandate, or compel, a presbytery or local church to ordain or install those who practice a homosexual lifestyle; however, it permits churches and presbyteries to take this step.

As a point of information, all six presbyteries in our region (Synod of Alaska Northwest, which includes Alaska, Washington, and north Idaho), including our own Presbytery of Alaska, voted against this change.

My position and that of the leadership of Chapel by the Lake...

As your pastor, I am deeply saddened by this outcome. The Bible, the sole authority for faith and life in Christ, speaks unequivocally on the issue of homosexuality: it is contrary to God's will for humanity. I recognize that this is a difficult word for some to hear. Human sexuality is deeply personal, and many of us have encountered the complexities of homosexuality first hand. I have no desire to cause offense or create pain; nevertheless, I must hold to the standards of Scripture on all issues, including human sexuality.

Allow me to offer two additional observations. First, to reject homosexual practice is not to reject people who struggle with this particular orientation. Nor do I mean to isolate homosexual practice as a unique sin that demands special attention. Indeed, heterosexual forms of sin are equally troubling. We must set aside harsh, smug attitudes and encourage one another to strive

for sexual holiness. We love and care for all – regardless of the particular ways we struggle to remain holy and faithful to our Lord.

Secondly, the decision to deliberately reject clear Biblical teaching uncovers a deeper malaise in the PCUSA – namely, the intent to follow culture rather than Christ and the authority of the Scriptures. Many in the PCUSA, including myself, have watched this trend develop for many years; indeed, we have sought to counter this development by working for Biblically-rooted, Christ-centered reform. Sadly, the effort to resist such change has fallen short.

One thing that has not changed is Chapel by the Lake’s commitment to serving Jesus Christ and building the body of Christ with the Bible as our single authority. This means the leadership of Chapel by the Lake is firmly opposed to the ordination of practicing homosexual people. This has always been, and remains, our position.

The next steps...

The question becomes, where do we go from here? The short answer: we are not sure. Your elders on Session have monitored this development for several months, and we are actively seeking the Spirit’s guidance regarding future steps. I, and perhaps some of our elders, will attend a national gathering of evangelically minded Presbyterian pastors and elders in August. This group, called the “Fellowship PC (USA)”, whom I support, will pray and explore new ways of being the church together. We are determined to move forward and find a way to live out our call to be a missional church, committed to the truth of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

So even though we are not sure of the precise shape of the near future, we can be sure of one thing – things will not remain the same. God is calling us to something new. I urge you; I call you, to pray with our Session and me as we plan and seek to discern God’s wisdom and guidance.

Finally, let me encourage you not to become distracted by denominational machinations. God’s Spirit is doing wonderful things in and through Chapel because of your faithful service to our Lord. Let us rejoice in that good news! Let us not become discouraged or sidetracked from our call “to know Jesus and make Him known.” We shall respond wisely and faithfully to the challenge before us, because we will submit ourselves to will of the Father as he guides us in Scripture and through His Spirit.

I am deeply grateful to be your pastor and I am confident that God is doing a good and faithful work amongst us. The words of the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi are God’s word to us: “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil 1: 6) In this we have complete confidence!

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dye", with a stylized flourish extending from the bottom.

Rev. Dr. Douglas M. Dye