

## Appendix A

### **Theological & Ethical Standards for Ordained Leaders**

**Adopted by the Presbytery of Nevada – September 2011**

In light of the Presbyterian Church USA's decision to allow greater freedom for governing bodies to set theological standards for leadership and greater independence between governing bodies, the Presbytery of Nevada affirms the following principles for its members and for guidance in issues of theology that challenge the presbytery and its member congregations.

#### **Biblical Authority**

1. The Presbytery of Nevada affirms that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the church's first and final authority on faith and life. As members of the Nevada Presbytery we are guided by the historic confessions of the church as found in our Book of Confessions. We believe that in God's written word Jesus Christ is revealed as Lord of all and the only way of salvation.
2. We believe that God continues to reveal Himself through the work of the Holy Spirit and that we depend on the Holy Spirit to help us interpret God's Word accurately. Furthermore, as members of the Presbytery of Nevada, we believe that the revelation of the Holy Spirit is always consistent with Scripture.
3. We grieve that there are those within the PC(U.S.A.) who have sought to compromise the authority of Scripture and the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ. We commit ourselves to stand together in witness and ministry with those who profess Jesus as Lord, and seek to live in accordance with the revelation of God found in the Holy Scriptures. We commit ourselves to work for the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our world. Denominations or doctrinal divisions will not bind us in our biblical mission. Accordingly, the Presbytery of Nevada will not willingly participate in any mission, ministry or endeavor that works counter to the biblical witness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Essential Tenets**

Understanding that Scripture is our highest authority and guide in matters of practice and faith, we further commit ourselves to the following essential tenets, as they are revealed in God's Word.

##### **1. God**

We worship the one only living and true God who is revealed in the Bible and who is the source of all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness. There is one God alone, infinite and eternal, Creator of all things, the greatest good, who is one in essence or nature. He is the sovereign ruler of creation, working all things according to the counsel of his omnipotent and righteous will.

## **2. Humanity**

God created human beings in His own image. God intended for human beings to know, love and obey Him. Our earliest forbearers chose not to love and obey God. This brought sin and death upon humankind and all creation.

There is now a brokenness and corruption in human nature that is the result of sin. All sin is rebellion against God. No human effort can fully resolve or redeem this defect. Human beings are sinners by nature, by influence, by choice, by action.

As a result, human beings are in bondage to sin and subject to God's holy judgment. Without God's intervening grace and salvation, they are lost and condemned.

Humanity is created by God to glorify God. Man cannot create God to glorify himself. Man is created to serve God. God is not created to serve man. The church belongs to God. God is Lord of all.

## **3. Jesus**

*"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. " - 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Jesus Christ is our lord and savior. He is fully God and fully man. By Jesus' sacrificial death humankind has salvation. He died for us and was raised to life not so we could sin but so we would become in Him, the righteousness of God. Thus, the church must commend righteousness and condemn sin for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is God's only Mediator between God and humankind. Christ is God's unique agent for the salvation of the world. He is also the perfect expression of humanity as God designed it to be. In His complete obedience, He became the representative Human Being, modeling for us human life and offering to God, on our behalf, human life that is rightly in God's image.

## **4. The Church**

The Presbytery of Nevada acknowledges that the Church was founded by Jesus and He is the Head and Savior. Being in the Church we are subject to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

*"so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. " - Romans 12:5*

The Presbytery of Nevada affirms that the Church is the gathering of believers who come together to participate in fellowship with one another as they worship God and hear from His Word, the Bible. The Church as a whole is equipped with people possessing different spiritual gifts. The purpose of these gifts are, *"to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the*

*Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. " -  
Ephesians 4: 12-13*

## **Leadership in the Body of Christ**

In a time in which people put a high value on personal freedom, leaders in God's church must place greater value 'on submission to Christ and obedience to His Word.

1. We believe that membership in the PC(U.S.A.) rightly requires only that one confess Jesus as Savior. We believe that leadership requires even higher standards. These higher requirements are implicit in our ordination vows.
2. In submitting to the Lordship of Christ, the church officer agrees to set aside his or her own opinions when they are in conflict with Scripture. Furthermore, the church officer fully agrees to embrace God's Word. We are committed to the historical position of the Reformed tradition that states we are reformed and always reforming according to the Word of God.
3. We believe that our ordination vows are one of the things that make churches in our denomination connectional. They set a uniform standard for deacons, ruling elders and teaching elders (Ministers of Word and Sacrament). These vows start with a right understanding of Jesus. Additionally, our ordination vows require a firm belief that God's Word is true and reliable.
  - a. In light of these things, we uphold the Biblical standards of fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness for leaders in our Presbytery.
  - b. We further uphold the requirement that persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which scripture identifies as sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, ruling elders or teaching elders (Ministers of Word and Sacrament).

In recent times the issues of inclusion and biblical authority in regards to sin, lifestyle and leadership in the church have threatened to unravel the PC(U.S.A.) and its witness in the world. In response to these challenges, guided by the principles stated above, the Presbytery of Nevada affirms the following positions.

## **Limits of Unity and Diversity**

1. The Presbytery of Nevada celebrates the God-created and God-honoring diversity we enjoy as people created in the image of God. We also affirm the notion that our unity is in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is through the Lordship of Jesus Christ that we are called one body.
2. The Presbytery of Nevada, as a part of the body of Christ, affirms that any discussion regarding unity within the body of Christ and in particular the PC(U.S.A.) of which we are a part, must never place institutional conformity over adherence to biblical standards.

3. As the Presbytery of Nevada, the unity we affirm and strive to maintain is not a unity found simply in a word defined by us. It is not maintained in human agreement or accommodation. It is unity as God's people called by Christ and submitting to Him, often imperfectly but always with repentance from error and toward greater faithfulness to Him and in obedience to His Word.

4. The Presbytery of Nevada affirms that as we strive to maintain our unity in the PC(U.S.A.) we will work toward unity in the body of Christ. We will help one another and, with the grace of God, to continue the journey of sanctification. Accordingly, we will not participate in endeavors which are counter to the witness of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures

### **Relationship with the PC (U.S.A.)**

Relationships between church members and between congregations within the PC(U.S.A.) have been damaged in a new and deeper way by requirements approved in 2011. The decision officially to reject Biblical standards for ordination of church officers is a violation of our essential beliefs and has driven a wedge between members of our churches, congregations and higher governing bodies. In response, the Presbytery of Nevada makes the following declarations.

1. The Presbytery of Nevada upholds the Biblical standards of fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness for leaders in our Presbytery.
2. We further uphold the requirement that persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which scripture identifies as sin shall not be ordained and/or installed deacons, ruling elders or teaching elders (Ministers of Word and Sacrament).
3. We will work to restore the PC(U.S.A.) to Biblical standards and faithfulness. We will continue to stand together as a Presbytery for our church, the PC(U.S.A.), 1) working for the Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind, 2) for the Shelter, Nurture and Spiritual Fellowship of God's Children, 3) for the Maintenance of Divine Worship, 4) for the Preservation of the Truth, 5) for the Promotion of Social Righteousness and 6) for the Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World.
4. The Presbytery of Nevada affirms our thoughtful ethos as Presbyterians of humility and mutual respect in the midst of passionate and important debate over vital issues of faith and life. We will bless our brothers, sisters and churches who cannot in good conscience affirm this statement by the Presbytery of Nevada. And we will bless our brothers, sisters and churches who cannot in good conscience affirm the recent decisions of the PC(U.S.A.) as a whole.
5. In accordance with our Presbytery's "Policy for Churches Leaving for other Reformed Bodies," we will support churches within our Presbytery who feel it necessary, in order to be faithful to Jesus Christ, to affiliate with a different denomination.

Reviewed and affirmed by session October 27, 2015