

47 reason we must not—indeed we *cannot*—break fellowship with our church nor can we
48 initiate a process that may lead to such a break without sinning against the Body of
49 Christ, our Lord, and our confession of faith (we “believe in the holy *catholic* church”).
50

51 **3. “Unity” is the only means to “purity;” it is our witness to “peace”**

52 In order to address this pastoral crisis—a crisis caused not by a defection from
53 confessional allegiance, but by our fear, our imitation of our culture’s divisiveness, our
54 uncritical willingness to “wage war according to human standards” (2 Corinthians 10.3),
55 and our attempts to gain and maintain power—we believe that we must summon the
56 church’s elders, teaching and ruling, to remain true to their ordination vows.

57 We have each vowed, among other things, “to maintain the peace, unity, and
58 purity of the church.” There is a reason “unity” stands between “peace” and “purity.”
59 According to our Lord’s prayer for the church (John 17), there is an intrinsic relation
60 between *unity* and *sanctity*, and between our *unity* and the witness to Christ’s reconciling
61 *peace* we are to be and offer to the world.

62 Led by the scriptures, we believe that unity is the best guarantee of purity. When
63 we divide, we deprive ourselves of the witness of those who, though they differ from us,
64 nevertheless serve us and the gospel by shedding light on those inevitable blind spots that
65 keep us from the clear-eyed obedience to the Word of God we all desire. Our best hope
66 for a *pure* gospel witness is the wholeness, fullness, and *catholic*-ness of the church.

67 We also believe and confess that the *peace* we practice through our visible *unity* is
68 the best witness we can offer this world to the truthfulness and *purity* of the gospel.
69

70 **4. Therefore, we are full of faith, hope, and love**

71 Finally, we recognize the present turmoil in our church is threatening our fragile but
72 necessary unity.

73 Should we fail here and divide, the world will lose the strength of our particular
74 Presbyterian witness to the gospel of *peace* and its promise of healing, hope, and
75 reconciliation.

76 Should we fail to remain *united* here, the world is right to denounce us as having
77 no real answer to its own warring nature.

78 Should we fail to maintain the *unity* God enjoins upon us, not only will we not be
79 *pure*, but we will have no *peace*, and we will have profaned God’s name “among the
80 nations” to which he has sent us (Ezekiel 36.23).

81 Nevertheless, even our failure is not irreparable; even if we cannot remain true to
82 the *unity* Jesus asks of us, he will, by his own creative Word, have a church as his
83 witness. Therefore we are not despondent or pessimistic. Instead, with the prophets of
84 old, we too see a day when by God’s grace we will be “sprinkled clean,” given a new
85 “heart,” and made abundant in our fruitfulness. “Then the nations that are left all around
86 you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which
87 was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it” (36.26-36).

88 On the LORD God and on God’s unfailing promise to the church, in our love for
89 God and for our “neighbor” presbyters, we take our stand and confess our faith and hope
90 in God’s future for our church.
91

Signers:

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