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OVT-005 On Amending G-2.0104b to Clarify Standards for Ordination—From the Presbytery of Stockton.

Source: Presbytery Sponsor: Stockton Presbytery
 Committee: No Assignment Type: General Assembly Full Consideration
 Topic: Unassigned

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RECOMMENDATION

The Presbytery of Stockton overtures the 220th General Assembly (2012) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote:

Shall G-2.0104b be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“b. Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). *These standards are found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as interpreted by the confessions of the church and include the commitment to live a chaste and disciplined life, whether in holy marriage between a man and a woman or in single life (The Book of Confessions, 4.108).* The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate’s *commitment to these standards, calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003).* ~~Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.~~ *Only those who affirm a desire to adhere to the standards for ordained service and who make an affirmative answer to the constitutional questions shall be ordained or installed.*”

RATIONALE

The Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) currently states that the manner of life of those called to ordained office in the church “should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world” (G-2.0104a). It is vital to clarify that this gospel we are called to demonstrate is not whatever one wishes it to be, but is, rather, the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). This gospel is found in the Scriptures as interpreted by our confessions.

Further, the Form of Government currently states that “Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02)” (G-2.0104b). This affirmation begs the question of what the Lordship of Jesus Christ means. The answer includes that we have no knowledge of Jesus Christ other than as he is revealed to humanity in the written Word of God. Therefore joyful submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ means to seek obedience to the way of life that is commended to us in the Scriptures as interpreted by our confessions.

This amendment gives necessary definition to terms used in the Form of Government and removes ambiguity in the present wording that is causing grievous disruption to the peace, unity, purity, and witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).