

A COMMITMENT TO GRACIOUS INCLUSIVENESS

The Presbytery of New Hope recognizes that over time, the system of governance in the PCUSA has led to a proliferation of groups such as Covenant Network, The Fellowship Community, More Light Presbyterians, and Presbyterians Pro-Life. These groups now have significant impact on ways Presbyterians debate and act upon matters of polity. On occasion, debate over issues has depended more upon the democratic procedures of our polity and not theological consensus. This reality has resulted in strained relationships, often leaving individual and congregational understandings of scriptural and theological differences unresolved, a result that leads to loss of trust and respect within the Presbytery.

While the Presbytery is well aware of our Presbyterian history of debate and even division over issues of Biblical interpretation and of varying theological perspectives on major issues, especially issues that impact inclusivity, justice, grace, salvation and the authority of scripture, the Presbytery seeks to affirm a commitment to unity and inclusiveness in spite of deep and persistent differences on essential matters of faith and discipleship.

In an effort to address these realities, the Presbytery of New Hope seeks to affirm a commitment to “gracious inclusiveness” by adopting the following resolution:

Diversity in Deed as Well as Word: Providing a Safe Space for Congregations and Members to Remain in the PCUSA

1. The Presbytery acknowledges that some of the actions of recent General Assemblies and the Presbytery of New Hope have contributed to strained relationships and division in significant numbers of congregations and among many faithful members. We acknowledge the difficulty and tensions those actions have created within congregations, resulting in dynamics that strain the fabric of unity and peace, as they strive to adapt and respond to the dramatic changes within our Presbyterian family. We further acknowledge that some of those in agreement with the results of actions taken by the previous General Assemblies have expressed the opinion that methods used to accomplish the goal violated the spirit of ways Presbyterians traditionally make changes to our polity.
2. The Presbytery reaffirms its commitment to processes and policies whereby participation in the councils, structures and various committees and commissions reflects the diversity of not only gender, race and ethnicity but also theological views.
3. The Presbytery recognizes *The Fellowship Community* as a representative of the voices and concerns of theologically conservative/evangelical Presbyterians within our communion and commits to that *Community* encouragement and opportunity for sharing at meetings of the whole Presbytery in the same manner that other organized groups within the denomination are given public voice. The Presbytery further commits to assure the *Community* that congregations and pastors affiliated with the *Community* will be protected from any attempts to coerce compliance by sessions or pastors with the recently adopted actions on ordination and marriage as long as such protection is constitutionally permissible. However, the Presbytery also affirms the rights of individual members and pastors of all congregations to support those actions.
4. The Presbytery will continue to ensure that the Commission on Ministry allows ministers/teaching elders from other approved Reformed bodies, in addition to PCUSA teaching elders, to serve churches within our communion as both transitional and permanently installed pastors, subject to the rules and criteria of the Presbytery that apply to all pastors who are members of Presbytery or who seek to be members of the Presbytery.
5. The Presbytery commits to a financial reporting system that recognizes all the benevolence contributions of each congregation that are directed to any cause approved by the Presbytery, the Synod or the General Assembly of the PCUSA.
6. The Presbytery instructs the Coordinating Body to consider proposed amendments to this resolution recommended by seven or more teaching and/or ruling elders.

Recommended by Ray Cobb, Joe Harvard, Jimmie Hawkins, Delores Parker, Lori Pistor, Art Ross, Rocky Stone