

The Presbytery of Santa Barbara respectfully overtures the 219th General Assembly [2010] to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative vote:

“Shall G-12.0000 be amended by inserting new text as G-12.0400 as follows: *[Text to be added is shown as italic]*

The following amendment creates a new synod, which, for convenience, is referred to as "New Synod," and sets forth the process by which it will begin operations. The new synod will be named at its first meeting. After the name is selected, the amended section of the Book of Order will be further amended to refer to "New Synod" by the name that is adopted. New Synod is not assigned a particular geographic region, nor will the presbyteries within New Synod necessarily have contiguous borders. Synod boundaries currently existing within the PC(USA) do not need to be re-drawn to include New Synod.

G-12.0400 New Synod

G-12.0401 *New Synod is the unit of the church's life and mission, which consists of not fewer than three presbyteries, which are admitted into New Synod as, provided in this Section. New Synod is the intermediate government unit responsible for the mission of the church throughout its presbyteries. New Synod has the same responsibilities and powers of all other synods with the additional responsibilities and powers set forth in this Section.*

G-12.0402 *New Synod has the responsibility and power to maintain the standards for ordination and continuing ministry as set forth below. The standards for ordination, installation, and continuing ministry set forth in this Section shall be binding upon all presbyteries, sessions, and officers of New Synod. All those called to office within New Synod are to lead a life and engage in ministry in conformity with these standards and the governing bodies of New Synod shall examine qualifications for ordination and installation of officers based on adherence to these standards. These standards shall be strictly interpreted, followed, and enforced in any judicial process involving New Synod or a governing body or ordained leader within New Synod.*

- a. *New Synod and its constituent presbyteries will structure themselves to facilitate the missional*

identity of their congregations. Although there are numerous ways to give expression to a missional intent, the congregations of New Synod will emphasize:

- the singular saving work of Jesus Christ,
- the unique and authoritative witness of Scripture,
- the calling to live not for themselves and institutional interests, but for others by engaging in loving service locally and beyond,
- intentional efforts to learn from others within the global church, build relationships, and partner in various ministry endeavors.

- b. The presbyteries and sessions of New Synod will conduct examinations of candidates for church office in a way that preserves the integrity of our common ordination vow:

Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?"
(W-4.4003)

To that end New Synod will offer its presbyteries and congregations the use of a statement regarding "essential tenets" to assist them in their examination. While the statement will not purport to identify the essential tenets, it will emphasize several areas of doctrine that must not be overlooked in any such examination. If the examining body is to assure that a particular candidate does indeed affirm the essential tenets of the Reformed faith, then she or he must be able to affirm these important doctrines. New Synod will compose its own statement for this purpose. It may be guided by previous efforts, such as the "Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives" tool adopted by the Presbytery of San Diego in 2003. New Synod will also offer this statement to its congregations for the purpose of education and discipleship of members.

- c. *The presbyteries and sessions of New Synod will also use the following statement to examine candidates for church office with regard to their manner of life:*

Along with the broader constitutional standards for manner of life (e.g., G-6.0106a), New Synod also holds to the standard that its officers will live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.

Those who cannot make this affirmation for their own manner of life will not be approved for ordination or installation in an office, or for membership in a presbytery

While this standard is certainly not the most important manner of life for one who would serve as an officer in the church, it is an area that has been contested in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). For the sake of clarity in its standards, and consistency in its various governing bodies, this New Synod expects that all of its officers will be able to make this affirmation about their own manner of life.

- d. *Congregations and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament within New Synod will celebrate marriages only between a man and woman. They will not celebrate marriages between members of the same sex in those states whose laws allow such marriages, nor will they celebrate marriage-like unions between members of the same sex.*
- e. *Congregations of New Synod, in welcoming all God's children with the unconditional love of Jesus Christ, will also endeavor to teach biblical sexual ethics according to the traditional understandings (i.e., fidelity in marriage between a man and woman, and chastity in singleness). In this as in all areas of church teaching and discipleship, Christ's forgiveness, redemption, and healing shall be emphasized.*
- f. *Presbyteries and congregations within New Synod will give deacons, elders, and Ministers of the*

Word and Sacrament regular opportunities to renew their ordination vows and reaffirm these additional standards.

G-12.0403 *After the first meeting of New Synod, any presbytery shall have the right to transfer into or out of New Synod. A presbytery may request to transfer its synod membership by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery at a regularly called meeting. The change in membership shall become effective upon the vote of the receiving synod to accept the presbytery into its membership.*

G-12.0404 *Any presbytery that becomes a part of New Synod will consist of its member churches and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament on the date it becomes a member of New Synod. New Synod has the power to determine the geographical boundaries of its presbyteries without the need for approval from General Assembly. The presbyteries of New Synod will have boundaries that overlap with the presbyteries of other synods. A minister called by a church within a particular presbytery shall be a member of the calling presbytery and permission of any other presbytery with which it has overlapping boundaries shall not be needed to issue the call. The calling presbytery shall have the right to permit a minister to labor within the geographical boundaries of both without the consent of the other presbytery.*

G-12.0405 *A congregation shall have the right to vote on dismissal to a presbytery not in New Synod at a duly called congregational meeting. Such dismissal, with real property and all other property, shall be effective upon the vote of the receiving presbytery to accept the church into its membership.*

G-12.0406 *A congregation shall have the right to vote on dismissal to a presbytery within New Synod at a duly called congregational meeting. Such dismissal, with real property and all other property, shall be effective upon the vote by the receiving presbytery to accept the church into its membership.*

G-12.0407 *The provisions of this section G-12.0400 supersede and control any other provisions of the Book of Order to the contrary.*

G-12.0408 *The provisions of this section G-12.0400 may not be amended without the consent of New Synod. A majority vote of each of its presbyteries is required to give this consent.*

G-12.0409 *Within 180 days of the vote of the General Assembly to send this amendment to the presbyteries for consideration, any presbytery shall have the right to become one of the originating presbyteries of New Synod by a two-thirds vote of its members. The creation of New Synod authorized by this Section shall become effective upon the convening of its first meeting, which may be called, by any of the originating presbyteries after the effective date of this amendment. When New Synod meets it shall be composed of commissioners elected by its presbyteries. The ratio of commissioners to members at a New Synod meeting shall be the same as for General Assembly. At the first meeting, a majority vote of the commissioners is required to confirm each of the originating presbyteries as members. If an originating presbytery does not receive a majority vote it shall remain a member of its current geographic synod.*

G-12.0410 *At the first meeting of New Synod, the commissioners will adopt a name for New Synod and advise the Office of the General Assembly. Upon receipt of written notice by the Office of General Assembly, all references within the Book of Order, as amended, to the "new synod" shall reflect this change."*

RATIONALE:

Our Presbytery is concerned about the continuing tensions within our denomination over issues of sexuality and ordination, which have led to the departure of congregations from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We believe that we as a denomination find ourselves at an impasse over these matters at present, with people at the extremes on both sides of the issues advocating a conquer-or-depart strategy.

We believe that the most important issue is always Jesus Christ, yet the pressing issues

over sexuality and ordination continue to consume the time and resources of many in our church. There is a need to offer a way to preserve the unity of the church without violating the conscience of its members.

Our denomination already has non-geographic presbyteries that exist for missional reasons. We ask that a New Synod be created, identified by particular theological and missional commitments rather than by a geographic region.