

Member Sessions and Congregations of Eastminster Presbytery

September 29, 2005

Dear Presbyters and Member Churches:

The Session of the North Benton Presbyterian Church is gravely concerned that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has stepped out of line with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by:

- 1) the uncertain acceptance of Jesus Christ as the one and only Lord and Savior.
- 2) the tenuous acknowledgment of Scripture as the final rule of faith and practice.
- 3) condoning Sophia worship, invoking animistic rituals, and introducing liturgical forms and readings from other faith traditions in national and regional forums.
- 4) failing to uphold the biblical standard maintained in the constitutional provisions regarding the ordination of self-affirming, practicing homosexuals.
- 5) failing to uphold the biblical standard maintained in the constitutional provisions respecting the restriction of Christian marriage ceremonies to opposite-gender couples.
- 6) advocating a pro-choice policy that even sanctions late term abortion.
- 7) insisting that “inclusiveness and diversity” serve as primary hallmarks of the life of faith.
- 8) bonding with liberal/progressive ideology.
- 9) looking to the prevailing culture as an authoritative and confirmative resource.
- 10) giving top priority to meddling in civil affairs.

To encourage our denomination toward actions and policies that more visibly demonstrate the hope we have in Christ Jesus, we are imposing the economic sanction of withholding the voluntary per-capita contribution of those members of our congregation who do not personally and specifically request the forwarding of this gift. Beginning in 2005, the per-capita of individual members of the North Benton Presbyterian Church will be forwarded upon request or receipt, while the balance of the per-capita funds asked for by higher governing bodies will be withheld.

We model this action after the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s own policy of employing economic sanctions as a tool to influence both governments and private corporations toward a course of action more in line with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Witness the now concluded Taco Bell boycott, sponsored and promoted by our General Assembly, and the action of that same body in favor of limited divestment in Israel.

In taking this step, we call out to leaders and members at every level of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in the words of our Savior and Lord: "Repent, and believe in the gospel!" (Mark 1:15c).

Reclaim the historic creed of the church: "Jesus is Lord!" (Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 12:3). "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Restore the ultimate authority of Scripture as the final rule of faith and practice: "All scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). "First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Resist worship in the name of any god except that "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19): "You shall have no other God's before me. . . You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers [and mothers] on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:3, 5-6). "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God" (Isaiah 45:5a-b).

Reassert a biblical standard for ordination: "A [leader in the church] must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, [the wife of one husband], sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2). "Appoint elders . . . who are blameless, the husband of one wife [or the wife of one husband], whose children are believers and not open to a charge of debauchery or insubordination. For a [leader in the church], as God's steward, must be above reproach" (Titus 1:4c-7a).

Reaffirm a biblical standard for Christian marriage: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not [human convention] separate" (Mark 10:6-9). "Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous" (Hebrews 13:4).

Rescind the advocacy of abortion on demand and especially of late term abortion: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” (Jeremiah 1:5a, b). “For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13).

Reject the worldly wisdom that insists that “inclusiveness and diversity” serve as the hallmarks of the life of faith: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10a). “For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons [and daughters] of disobedience. Therefore do not associate with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:5-8).

Refuse the error of liberal/progressive ideology that substitutes light for darkness and darkness for light: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” (Matthew 7:15-16). “But false prophets arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1).

Recover a holy zeal to stand over against the self-aggrandizing, self-actualizing, self-serving pressures of the present cultural context: “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Colossians 3:12). “You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25b-28).

Replace meddling in civil affairs with prayer and evangelism: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceable and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4). “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent. . . . Whoever has an ear, let that one hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:5, 7).

We continue in prayer for our denomination, even as we look forward to seeing the evidence of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) taking our counsel to heart in acts of genuine repentance. We eagerly anticipate the day when we can lift this economic sanction.

Grace and peace,

(Signatures on Page 4.)