



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 10, 2012

Conservative Presbyterians Block PCUSA Proposal for Marriage Redefinition

The Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), one of the nation's most liberal and morally drifting denominations, has voted to maintain, for the time being, its definition of marriage as "a civil contract between a man and a woman," narrowly defeating a proposal forwarded at its 220th General Assembly to change the definition to "a covenant between two people." The 52-percent margin of victory for maintaining a scriptural definition of marriage reflects the division that exists in the mainline denomination, which has been pressured for years by homosexual activists among its clergy and membership to embrace homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. While the assembly narrowly re-affirmed traditional marriage and continued to ban clergy from officiating at same-sex "weddings," it also called for "[serious study and discernment](#)" over the next two years regarding the theology of Christian marriage — which means that homosexual activists will redouble their efforts over the next two years to force the denomination to embrace same-sex "marriage."



Prior to the 338-to-308 vote in favor of traditional marriage, the denomination's Civil Union and Marriage Issues Committee had voted 28-24 in favor of redefining marriage to include homosexual partnerships. PCUSA members on both sides of the debate seemed to agree that the most recent vote merely postpones a major split over the issue. "It's inevitable that at some point our General Assembly will vote in favor of redefining marriage," the Rev. Mateen Elass, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Edmond, Oklahoma, and an opponent of the change, told the [Christian Science Monitor](#). "This decision has just given some respite to the denomination before it faces an onslaught of departures."

Rick Ufford-Chase, a former moderator of the General Assembly and a proponent of the change, told the *Monitor* that the move "to affirm long-term, committed, same-sex relationships ... as blessings from God is both the right way to go in the long-run, and inevitable. There are more and more people, of all ages, who are changing their minds about this important matter."

As reported in [The New American](#), a year ago the PCUSA voted to allow practicing homosexuals to serve as clergy, and in October 2011 [ordained its first openly homosexual minister](#). The decision to hold the line on the biblical definition of marriage highlighted the tension that exists between conservative



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Christians and gay PCUSA members. “Some of us weep while some of us rejoice,” General Assembly Moderator Neal Presa said after the vote. “We are a divided church.”

Michael Adee, executive director of the homosexual activist group More Light Presbyterians, told the [Associated Press](#) that the outcome of the vote was “a heartbreaking moment, a disappointing moment.... It’s a moment to grieve and it’s also a moment when we pick up and keep doing the work. The conversation isn’t over.”

By contrast, Jodi Craiglow, a conservative PCUSA member from Ohio, addressed Adee and others frustrated by the vote, saying, “I must affirm definition of marriage as between one man and one woman. As much as my heart breaks for your pain and frustration, I must simply hold to the standard of the God I love.”

Adee disregarded such heartfelt views, declaring: “We have more work to do to show those who oppose full inclusion how truly wonderful the gifts that committed, married same-sex couples bring to our church. We’re inspired by the progress we’ve made together and are just as committed to continuing this work, together.”

One group of delegates to the assembly called for the restoration of the PCUSA’s 1996 standard that required “fidelity in the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness” for all clergy — a proposal that was firmly rejected. Instead, reported the [PCUSA News Service](#), delegates “approved a statement saying the Assembly acknowledges that the PCUSA ‘does not have one interpretation of Scripture on this matter.’”

Reflecting on the latest assault on biblical Christianity within his denomination, Alan Wisdom of [Theology Matters](#), a conservative Presbyterian organization, wrote that “once again, the PCUSA General Assembly has stepped back from the precipice of redefining marriage. Yet, the closeness of the vote warns us against complacency. We know we will face the same debate in 2014 and beyond. Faithful Presbyterians must be ready to engage that debate, with truth and grace, over the long haul.”

Photo of the 220th PCUSA
General Assembly in Pittsburgh: AP Images



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