



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 30, 2011

Conservative Presbyterians Form Alternative Fellowship

Now that pro-gay liberals in the Presbyterian Church (USA) have succeeded in their 30-year efforts to allow the ordination of gays, a small but influential group of conservative churches have decided to give up the fight to change the Book of Order back to the way it was since 1997 when the original ban was approved.

The original language required clergy to live “in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.” The [new language](#) requires clergy only to “submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life.”



In an open letter from [the Fellowship](#) on May 4th, announcing their intention of “starting a new Reformed body without leaving the PC(USA)” the steering committee explained:

The landscape continues to change with the imminent passage of Amendment 10-A. [This change in language] will have the effect of an earthquake...[and] provides a not-so-subtle shift in words, from “Obedience to Scripture” to being “Guided by Scripture.” We as a Fellowship choose to remain obedient to Scripture and [be] guided by The Book of Order.

Author and minister Mark Roberts [noted that](#) “Guidance implies far less than obedience,” and viewing the Bible as only a source of guidance “appears to put Scripture on a par with other sources of guidance.”

Rev. Janet Edwards, a Presbyterian minister in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, also serves as Co-Moderator for More Light Presbyterians, which has been pushing for “full inclusion” of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in PC(USA) for years. In her [Huffington Post article](#), she noted that:

Our church has taken a bold step towards inclusion that brings the third largest mainline Christian denomination more in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ; that His love embraces all...

I see this vote as one indication of a moral awakening in America. I say moral awakening because many people of faith across the country and world are opening their eyes to the many wonderful gifts and the faithful service that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals bring to our many religions...

This historic moment...didn’t come in a vacuum. It came after thousands of individual honest conversations and a deep study of the written Word of God. The moral awakening of mainstream Christianity won’t continue without thousands more...

The Fellowship, in its efforts to remain part of PC(USA) and still remain true to the Book of Order, stated that “We are committed to starting a new Reformed body without leaving the PC(USA),” while admitting that “we live in a tension with many of the cultural trends of our time.” Accordingly, the



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Fellowship is withdrawing from “old fights” about sexuality, but remains open to “any who leave the PC(USA) now. ”

The Fellowship also noted that such efforts to remain part of PC(USA) may only be temporary: “This is the time for new covenanted fellowships within and perhaps beyond the PC(USA...)”

The decision to separate but remain within the church was carefully considered. On its [website](#), the Fellowship explains:

Our PC(USA) denomination has been in steady decline for 45 years, now literally half the size of a generation ago. Over the past year, a group of PC(USA) pastors has become convinced that to remain locked in unending controversy will only continue a slow demise, dishonor our calling, and offer a poor legacy to those we hope will follow us. We are determined to get past rancorous, draining internal disputes that paralyze our common life and ministry. We want to change course in a Christ-honoring way, forming a new way for our congregations to relate, recapturing more of what it means to be the body of Christ. We call others of like mind to envision a new future for congregations that share our Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical heritage.

The Fellowship follows the [Union in Christ: A Declaration](#) which states, in part:

We turn away from forms of church life that discount the authority of Scripture...

In these times of moral and sexual confusion we affirm the consistent teaching of Scripture that calls us to chastity outside of marriage and faithfulness within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman.

Thus the battle between darkness and light continues, even into the church itself. By choosing the right instead of the expedient, the Fellowship reflects its commitment to its understanding of the Scriptures, remaining true to the cause of Christ in a sinful and declining world.



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