



From Sylvia's Desk

Living for Jesus

- Sylvia Dooling

Voices of Orthodox Women...

...is a network of Presbyterian women and men committed to working for the reformation and renewal of WOMEN'S MINISTRIES in The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Whenever possible, we will affirm and support the work of Presbyterian Women and other women's organizations within our denomination. However, when necessary, we will also oppose any effort to distort our historic Reformed faith in order to make it conform to the values of a contemporary culture that is in moral and intellectual free-fall.

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I have been singing a lot of "old" gospel songs lately. I've been singing them to my little granddaughter, Addison Grace, as she nods off to sleep.

One of my favorites is "Living for Jesus a Life that is True." It reminds me that I am responsible, as I am led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, for the life that I live *coram deo* – before the face of God. In this sense, I am not responsible for others – only for myself.

The place where God has put me, as I strive "to please Him in all that I do," is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). And, I am writing to say that, at this point in time, I have no intention of going anywhere else.

Why not? Let me give you four reasons.

My first reason, I have to admit, is a bit emotional. I was sixteen years old when my parents, along with my future husband's parents, led a sizable group of people out of a Presbyterian congregation in Southern California. Bob and I were still in High School when it happened, so we went with our families.

The church that we left had been my church-home since I was in the fourth grade. To me, unaware of the tensions my parents felt, it was a special place. I was growing in my life of faith. I was learning leadership skills. My friends were there. So the church split was a terribly painful experience for me. Many of my friends were torn out of my life. I would never see those people again. Had Bob's and my parents not been on the same "side," we might not be married today.

As a result of this experience, we both promised ourselves never again to be part of a schism. We fully understand the scope and ramifications of the conflict that currently marks our denomination. We also know that we have absolutely no control over the fact that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ have already left. But until the time comes when we are no longer able to keep our ordination vows, we intend to remain.

Reason number two. After we were married, and while Bob was attending Fuller Seminary, God called us back into the Presbyterian Church – through the same Presbytery in which our parents had led the schism. Understandably, a number of the Presbytery's members remembered the name Dooling, and there was an audible "gasp" when Bob was introduced as a potential candidate. It was a difficult time as we faced a number of appropriate hurdles to jump, trials to overcome, and relationships to mend. But there were several Ministers who faithfully walked beside us to help pave the way for our return.

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Third reason. It was not a perfect church to which we returned. (As Bob's Dad was fond of saying, "If you find a perfect church, don't join it. You'll spoil it.") Yet it has been the place where God, for more than forty years, has allowed us to serve. For example, I am both an ordained elder and deacon. And, among other things, that means that I took vows. Clearly, it could be argued that many of my fellow officers have broken their vows to uphold biblical and confessional standards, but I have not been released from mine.

Reason number four. More than sixteen years ago, God took me by the hand and led me, along with eleven other women, to form what has become a national network of Presbyterians called Voices of Orthodox Women

VOW was begun to be an influence for reform within our denomination in general and in the area of women's ministries in particular. Thousands of women and men across our denomination have become part of our network. And, until God says "enough," I intend to continue the work.

For all of these reasons and more, I am settled in my decision. I will continue to work alongside those in my presbytery with whom I agree and with whom I disagree. I don't pretend that this will be easy. I don't like conflict, and yet it is almost a given that the conflict will deepen. Still, I believe this is the place where God has called me to live and to serve.

Living for Jesus, a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me.

(Refrain)

*O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.*

Living for Jesus Who died in my place,
Bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace;
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading and give Him my all.

Living for Jesus, wherever I am,
Doing each duty in His holy Name;
Willing to suffer affliction and loss,
Deeming each trial a part of my cross.

Living for Jesus through earth's little while,
My dearest treasure, the light of His smile;
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem,
Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

Source: Thomas Chisholm 1917

Now What? A Pastor's Perspective

by Rev. Karen Lynn Woo,
Sutherland First Presbyterian Church

Upon hearing that Amendment 10A had passed, the matriarch of the church I serve said to me, "Well, shall we just turn over our keys to the Presbytery?"

I must admit, it would have been easy for me to say "yes" since I have told every church I've served during my eight years of ministry that if ever such an amendment passed I would have to give up my ordination. I do not believe elders of the church should be preaching or teaching it is okay for God's people to practice, without remorse or repentance, that which I read in God's Word as sin. Nevertheless, I did not say "yes." What I said was, "We need to seek God's Will because it doesn't matter what I want or you want. What matters is what God wants. When we look at God's Word we see that sometimes He calls His people to stand and fight. At other times He says, 'Get out of town for I am about to destroy it!' We need to seek God's face and find out which of these two options He wants us to pursue."

That process began a few weeks ago at a town hall meeting during which I explained what I had learned at "The Gathering" in Minneapolis and the New Form of Government under which the church is now called to abide. During that talk the participating members agreed the Session should consider two immediate options:

(1) Put into our By-Laws verbiage stating the church's intent to consider only those who abide by the terminology of G-6.0106b in the former Book of Order for church leadership positions and

(2) to create an Overture to overturn Amendment 10A. Last week we polled the congregation in worship to see if they agreed with Option #1. They did. Tonight the Session voted to overture the Presbytery of Central Nebraska at its October meeting to concur with the Presbytery of Central Florida's overture to amend G-2.0104a by inserting the words "*including living either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness*" immediately prior to the last sentence. In a Presbytery which voted FOR the passage of Amendment 10A by a wide majority, such an overture by a church of less than 50 members seems rather like the boy David drawing near to the giant Goliath with only a shepherd's crook, a sling shot, and five smooth stones. The odds are not in our favor; but with God's help, perhaps the vote will go in a different direction this time.

Navigating the troubled waters of Amendment 10A is not easy, especially for pastors. The idea of leaving a denomination in which one was raised and ordained is painful. The idea of staying in a denomination which not only preaches and teaches but applauds lifestyles which

are contrary to God's Word is unthinkable. The Church is called to be a light to the world. Instead, the world is engulfing the light of our churches and filling our pews with its propensity for immorality, rationalizations, and other gods. Yet hope abides in the power of our triune God who allows even His people to fall when, in disobedience, they turn from Him with unrepentant hearts. Always . . . always . . . when this happens, God begins anew with a remnant. Perhaps the church I serve can be used by God as such a remnant.

Eight years ago, during my first three months as a pastor, some out-of-state visitors asked me if I taped my sermons. "Why would I do that?" I asked. "Because," they said, "you preach from the Bible and so many of today's pastors don't." For me, their words confirmed the failure of our teaching elders to PREACH the Word of God. On the flight between Denver and "The Gathering" in Minneapolis, I was seated next to a gentleman who had grown up in the church yet did not know God's Word addressed the issue of homosexuality. For me, his words confirmed the failure of our teaching elders to TEACH the Word of God.

To this end, though I am ready to leave the denomination, I continue to preach and teach God's Word to the flock which God has called me to shepherd in this time and place. "It doesn't matter if one is physically drawn to one of the same sex or one of the opposite sex," I have told them. "What matters is this: Are we willing, in obedience to God, to abstain from sexual relations with one who is not our spouse as defined by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6 where He says, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." I have reiterated to them the words of Romans 1:24-32 which says in part, ". . . God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . . Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another . . . They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die--yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them." I have reminded them of the words of Hebrews 4:12-14, "Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart; and before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account." The recognition that a lack of Scriptural knowledge may have played a part in tipping the scale for the passing of Amendment 10A has resulted in an added push to teach God's Word at the church I serve

[Perspective: continued from page 3]

through Adult Bible Study, Sunday School, and three youth groups with the hope that upcoming generations will be less likely to be swayed by the flesh as they hold fast to God's Word. A mid-week Men's Bible Study is being considered for the same reason.

While I am tired of the fight and ready to move to the Fellowship's proposed Tier 4 new denomination, my Call, in part, is to lead the church in discerning God's Will for THEM. So for now I am continuing to work at helping the church develop a closer, deeper walk with God, obtain a better understanding of His Word, and find new ways to reach the lost in our community while we prayerfully seek

God's Will for the church and wait to see what will happen at the next gathering of the Fellowship of Presbyterians and the upcoming General Assembly.

Post script: The presbytery voted for the session's overture in the affirmative, which concurs with the overture from Florida. This is a time of rejoicing for this small church.

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Finding His Way in the Midst of Change

Two friends, Debbie and Jim Berkley*, recommended *Of Gods and Men*, a movie that I watched several weeks ago. It has helped shape my thoughts about staying in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), although my church is leaving. I had already determined to stay in obedience to the call of doing renewal work; nonetheless, the movie allowed me to discern several ways of continuing in the midst of troubling circumstances which includes the loss of most of the orthodox churches in my presbytery.

The movie was inspired by a true story. Monks of the Cistercian order working among friendly Muslims in Algeria are faced with the choice of leaving or staying when radical Islamists move into their area. While the sad ending is beyond any experience that any Presbyterian would ever face or even imagine in the United States, it is the monks' attitude, routine, and search for answers from God that I found so helpful.

The attitude consists of facing the reality of the situation. The monks live in the midst of a people they love, working and worshiping in the same way they and past members of the monastery have for years. And yet they know that change is occurring and will probably deepen into very dark times. Not only do they accept the reality of change; they prepare to face it by seeking the will of Christ and the needs and desires of their neighbors. These two issues – God's will and neighbor's needs – are often intertwined.

Jesus, the Lord of his Church, has not ceased caring for members of the PC (USA). It is true, he may weep over the denomination, but he calls many of us to weep with him rather than leave. We may not stop proclaiming the gospel both within and beyond the denomination. If brokenness increases, his grace is a ready supply.

The monks continue with their daily routine. They run a medical center for their Muslim neighbors; they plow

fields, cook and wash dishes, take care of bees and sell the honey at a local market. They enjoy the celebrations of their Muslim neighbors, read books, and hold delightful conversations with each other and those they help. Best of all is the constant routine of prayers and chanting. Worship holds all of the daily routine together.

This is important. The routine of morning coffee, devotions, and writing are the ways my day begins. The normal daily routine that each person experiences is a gift from God. So in the midst of change there is acknowledgement of purpose, pleasure, and duty. Best of all, in the midst of change, there is a relationship with the eternal God whose promises, plans, and ways do not change.

Finally, the monks individually and as a group seek the will of God. At first, some want to leave – in fact, insist on leaving. One monk experiences what is called the dark night of the soul; he no longer feels the presence of God. Another is very certain of the need to stay. But each, in the end, comes to that place where he feels at peace with his decision to stay, which is anchored in both his relationship with Christ and his vocation. As one monk puts it, "how could he go back to the life he lived before coming to Algeria – to plumbing, and the fire department?" Or, and truer still, another in seeking prays in acknowledgement, "we come to you Jesus through suffering and death."

And so we do; our baptism is a sign that we have died with Christ and live only through his resurrected life. It was his joy to die for us; so "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2), we find our pleasure living in the circumstances he has given us. The road ahead is changing but the one who walks beside us does not change.

~ by Viola Larson

*Jim is a Teaching Elder.

Debbie is a VOW board member.

A Momentary Coruscation

There is a lot going on in the PC(USA) these days, and sadly, much of it is not positive. However, there has been a bright spot for me during the last 3 ½ years. During that time, I was privileged to serve on General Assembly's Special Committee on the Heidelberg Catechism. The committee was appointed by Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the 218th GA. Originally, the committee's task was to study five suspected translation errors in "Heidelberg" as it is currently found in our *Book of Confessions*.

The committee was made up of German Scholars, Theologians, Teaching and Ruling Elders, and other Academicians. As a cross-section of our church, the committee's members held a variety of theological opinions. That is usually the nature of GA committees. However, in spite of our differences it quickly became apparent to me that we were all committed to producing as accurate and usable a translation of the 16th Century document as possible.

So, rather than take a band-aid approach to "fixing" a few apparent problems, we discussed the possibility of a new translation. However, this is a huge commitment that can take years to produce. Then, we were presented with the opportunity to join ecumenically with a team from the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church of North America who were working on the same project – a new translation of "Heidelberg." They welcomed the consultative process, and together we have completed a new translation. By the way, this expansion of our task was approved by the last Assembly. This coming Assembly will vote on recommending the new translation to the Presbyteries. One of the best parts of the new translation for me is the inclusion in the body of the document the Scrip-

ture references that appeared both in the original German and the earliest Latin version.

For me, the work was a joy. That's because I have always deeply appreciated "Heidelberg." It is a valuable learning tool that teaches the essentials of the reformed Christian faith. It is logical and precise. But best of all, it is thoroughly scriptural. And, what greater pleasure could I have had than to spend numerous hours with "Heidelberg" in one hand, my Bible in the other? I also was deeply appreciative of the time the committee spent discussing a variety of foundational issues. We peered together into the past, discussed theological fine-points, and debated the meaning of a variety of scripture texts. Even though most of our work was done by e-mail and conference calls, and even though we did not always agree, we enjoyed a respectful camaraderie – something that is also important to me.

My prayer is that General Assembly will pass this recommendation on to the presbyteries with a unanimous vote, and that the presbyteries will vote with enthusiasm to make the proposed changes. What a gift to be able to engage in conversation and deliberation about an important part of our *Book of Confessions*, and that without intense controversy.

For me, serving on this committee has been one of those "momentary coruscations" about which C.S. Lewis wrote – momentary flashes of insight into how the Body of Christ should always work. I am thankful for the experience. It is one that I will treat as a gift as I continue to work with folks in my own presbytery with whom I do not always agree. Maybe we can experience the same spirit of respect and civility as we walk together through thorny patches in a deeply-divided denomination.

~ Sylvia Dooling

Partners

In these tumultuous times in the lives of Presbyterians we must not lose our focus on an important aspect of God's calling to us—a concern for what God is doing in the world and for what part we are called to play. This is a huge subject that cannot be addressed fully in one article. I would like to focus on one part—our relationship to our fellow Christians around the world, particularly those with whom God has given us long relationships.

Presbyterians have a history of faithful mission. As a result, we are linked to many partner churches around the world. Our partners generally come from cultures where relationships are not short or shallow. We can learn from them the importance of learning from and depending on one another in the body of Christ. But we can only do that if we maintain the connections. And many of those partners want to do just that. Even in cases where denominations are breaking official ties with the PCUSA, at lower levels Presbyteries and congregations are finding ways to continue long-valued relationships. And they need to know that there are many Presbyterians here who share their convictions!

Many of our partners are in difficult situations. Some, in places like Iraq, face persecution; those in places like Pakistan also face natural disasters; others struggle with the same pressures of secularization that we face. It is critical that we continue to uphold and support our brothers and sisters. Moreover, we need them! We can learn from them faithfulness in difficult times; we can learn how to seek peace with other religions while at the same time faithfully sharing our faith; we can learn to stand firm on the truths of Scripture. This is not the time to withdraw from our international partners, but to find ways to maintain relationships.

Finally, we need to continue to work alongside our partners in sharing the gospel with those who have not yet heard. Well over two billion people in the world won't hear the good news of Jesus unless someone crosses cultural barriers to share with them. God still is calling all followers of Jesus to share that good news, and we do it more faithfully as we do it with our partners.

~ Bill Young, Executive Director of
Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship

A book published by the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation dismantles the foundations of Christianity:
a review by Viola Larson of

Gathering Those Driven Away: a Theology of Incarnation by Wendy Farley

Westminster John Knox Press, which identifies itself as the “the academic and trade imprint of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation,” has published *Gathering Those Driven Away: a Theology of Incarnation*, which destroys every essential of Christian faith. The author, Wendy Farley, in an attempt to overcome biblical views about sexual morality, uses various alternate movements which predictatively lead away from Holy Scriptures. As *Presbyterian News* puts it:

The reflections in this volume work on the hypothesis that the institutional churches and their canonical theologians do not represent the only lineage of apostolic witness from whom we know something about the mystery of incarnation. African American, white, Hispanic, Asian women, women battered or silenced, queers, the afflicted, the poor, the imprisoned can trace their own witness to the idle tale of women who were dismissed by male disciples.

The truth is Farley uses mysticism, Gnostic texts, Buddhist thought, radical feminism, and queer theology to accomplish her goals. And all of her definitions gleaned from “the idle tale of women” are really from Gnostic texts written later than the canon of scripture.” Her definitions include defining God as Erotic Abyss and insisting that he is not a being or personal. She writes, “God is not a being, even a super being; God is not a being at all.” She defines the Word of the gospel of John as Wisdom and Sophia, while separating the Word from Jesus.

Jesus, defined without the use of Scriptures, becomes only a man infused with a greater amount of the Spirit. At the same time humanity is seen as already infused with divinity, and salvation is simply remembering that you are divine. Jesus’ redemptive death on the cross is relegated to a source of control and violence. Farley writes of atonement: “Instead of conveying the message that God is love, Jesus becomes more tyrannical than the most violent and jealous tribal deity.” Clearly, Farley’s Jesus is a different Jesus, while her views of humanity open the door to sin as a means of connecting with God.

If all are divine and God is defined as Erotic Abyss, sexuality can become a useful tool. Writing of contemplation and how it connects one to God, Farley oversteps its usefulness and methodology. At one point she turns it away from its Christian roots and combines it with Eastern Tantric thinking, which makes use of sex as a means of experiencing God. Using what is defined by progressive theologians as queer theology, she supports sexual acts as a means of experiencing God.

The PC(USA), the Presbyterian Publishing Company, and *Presbyterian News* have all disregarded any commitment to care for the people of God in publishing and promoting *Gathering Those Driven Away: a Theology of Incarnation*.

Farley’s concoction of heretical texts and erotic methodology is not Christianity. All that a faithful follower of Christ holds dear is crumpled, mangled, and dumped in *Gathering Those Driven Away*. For the broken sinner, which we all are, there is no hope, because there is no redemption – only false knowledge about one’s forgotten divinity. Farley is leading hungry sheep into barren pastures. The love of God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is love that meets the sinner where she is, but forgives and changes her as she walks in the newness of an abundant life.

Praying for the Persecuted Church

What if you were arrested, tortured, burned out, or otherwise persecuted for...

- having a Bible in your possession?
- singing Christian hymns?
- answering questions about Christianity?
- refusing to pay idol worship fees?
- refusing to deny Christ?
- holding prayer meetings or Bible study in your home?
- holding a worship service outdoors?
- bringing another to Christ?
- refusing to denounce Christ?

In many countries in the world today Christians are martyred for their faith. Believers face violence, imprisonment, death threats, and death itself. November is the month of the International Day of Prayer for persecuted Christians.

For more information about this program, go to IDOP.org. And then visit some of the other sites to learn more about the Persecuted Church.

Christian Freedom International
Christians in CrisisCompass Direct
Compassion Radio
International Christian Concern
Open Doors
Persecution.org
Persecution.net
Persecution Project Foundation
The Voice of the Martyrs

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. Hebrews 13:3

Girl Preacher → *Scholar Chick*

For about eleven years (can it really be that long?!) now I have been writing the Girl Preacher column for the VOW newsletter. The title came from a conversation I had with my Insurance Agent when I moved into my first call to be the solo pastor of two small rural congregations in Southeast Kansas. When I told him what my occupation was, he eyeballed me and said, “We don’t get many girl preachers around here!” Since that providential day, my service to the Lord as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) has led me through the closure of one of those Kansas churches, out to the beautiful and wild region of Southeast Alaska to serve for eight years as an Associate Pastor in Juneau and the moderator of the Session for the PC(USA) church in the Alaska Native village of Angoon. As the dust settled in the Juneau church, after a difficult Head of Staff transition, and our wonderful new Pastor was established, and construction started to add classroom, library, and fellowship space, I realized that it was time to embark on what I had spoken of to my Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), in our first meeting, as my “second calling.” I had told them I believed I was a person with two callings – to be a pastor and to be a professor. So, after pastoring for ten years and knowing I had done what I was called to do as the Associate Pastor of Christian Education and Discipleship at Chapel by the Lake, I applied to graduate school and was accepted to study for a PhD in New Testament at Fuller Seminary, supervised by Rev. Dr. Marianne Meye Thompson.

I am now at the start of my second year of study and have come to realize, especially as I have worked with other students as both colleague and TA, I am not entering a new calling. This work is really an extension of the one primary calling the Lord has given me—to teach and encourage people to read and hear, understand, and live his Word. This was my call as a pastor, and it is the same call leading me toward becoming a professor.

The transition from pastor to scholar has not been an easy one. Neither has the transition from the Southeast Alaskan Rainforest Archipelago to the Southern California

Desert that, for now, is still part of the Mainland. My dog reminds me every day as he drops himself to the park grass in the middle of his before-dinner walk that second floor two-bedroom apartment living is a far cry from six-bedroom manse by the lake with a big back yard living. (The good thing is that there are still squirrels to hunt.)

Perhaps the toughest pastor-to-scholar transition has been from multi-tasking to singular focus. There is certainly more work to do as a PhD student than can ever be done, always one more article to read or book to mine, but it all circles around a common subject. It is not like a day pastoring when you may visit someone in the hospital in the morning, meet a struggling single mom for lunch, help connect a homeless person who stops by the church with some resources, plan a Deacon’s training seminar, outline a Sunday school class, and gather snacks and game supplies for the Kid’s group that evening. Speaking the Word of God into each of those situations requires a much different approach than does a ten-week course on one Gospel and a sustained research project on what may be one verse or even one word in that Gospel. One is like putting up a pop-up tent at various campsites and the other like constructing a cathedral in one location. Both are needed blessings for the shelter and nurture of the saints, but the skills for setting up camp and those for constructing stone walls with flying buttresses don’t really transfer. So I am being challenged to settle down my pop-up tent thinking into super-detailed, long-haul, cathedral-construction thinking.

Taking time to comb the Scriptures, to ask new questions, gain new insight, and dwell on a text, topic, or word for a sustained time is both a challenge and a joy. This endeavor is trying my patience and exercising dormant thought patterns, stretching them to their limit and into new territory. Through the process I hope that I am being “transformed by the renewing of my mind” (Romans 12:2) – transformed from a pastor who loved to profess into a professor with the heart of a pastor. Which leads to another challenge of this transition—what to call this column—we really cannot call it “Girl Preacher” any more—how about “Scholar Chick”?

~ The Reverend Tracee Hackel

We encourage you to tell others about VOW and to invite them to place their names and addresses on the VOW mailing list. Also, as we can communicate more frequently and more economically by e-mail, we would like to have your e-mail address. Feel free to drop me a note at SDooling@vow.org.

Be sure to visit our website at <http://www.vow.org>.



VOW

Voices of Orthodox Women

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Change Service Requested

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FAITH AND LIFE

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Recent action of the General Assembly and presbyteries has the Presbyterian Church (USA) in great anguish. I am sad.

I have friends who are leaving the PC(USA). Other friends are greatly relieved that now at last “good and talented” people they know can be ordained into church leadership in our denomination. Some friends, I think incorrectly, are saying “Oh good, the fighting is over at last.” All of these attitudes are troubling to me. They break my heart.

I have been a Presbyterian my entire life. This denomination has held me, fed me, and provided opportunities to worship and serve the Living God for 74 years. I am one of the blessed who were privileged to be taught in Sunday School during my formative years from the very sound curriculum called *Faith and Life*. This proved to be a firm foundation on which I have been able to build and grow in my personal faith and life. It instructed me at an early age that we Presbyterians have depth to our faith and that it does matter what we believe. It began in me an interest and love for church history and how important that “Great Cloud of Witnesses” is to us in the 21st century.

For at least 30 years I have been at odds with some, and often many, of the paths that the GA has recommended we follow. I have been greatly disappointed in the actions of many denominational leaders.

And yet, these same actions of the denomination spurred me into ever deeper study of the Bible, the Reformation, John Calvin, and Reformed Theology. I am far from knowledgeable, but in my mind Christianity as expressed in the Reformed Tradition is more true to scripture than any other tradition. And, the Presbyterian Church (USA) holds closer to that tradition than any other present denomination in the United States. Therefore, I am staying in the PC(USA) for now. I continue to pray that we will repent, reform, and return to the plain meaning of scripture for faith and life.

Kathryn Churchill,
VOW Board Member