

November 4, 2017
New Business

Dear Presbytery of Grand Canyon.

I am concerned that we are uprooting ourselves from our own theological, confessional tradition more than we realize. Further, this will tend to accelerate with the departure of so many conservative churches. It moves us away from profound historic and constitutional convictions especially as stated in chapter two of "The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity" in our Book of Order. I urge us to consider that the faith is essentially and necessarily both progressive and conservative. (see also Col. 2:6-7 and Jude 3)

Changes have and continue to take place slowly but consistently, even relentlessly, and add up to substantial differences in the way we understand and practice the faith. This has and will have far reaching consequence for our Presbytery. They require a full and open discussion because they involve the most central convictions to which we will cling in an uncertain future. We speak here of the soul of the Presbytery which we must tend with great care and together.

Therefore:

1. I ask again that we engage with ECO and the Fellowship, through study of the essential tenets document so important to them. I believe this engagement with our estranged sisters and brothers is critical to our rootedness going forward. I urge us to consider that we need each other in order to have a more complete grasp of the faith.

2. In the document circulated at Presbytery and adopted by the Leadership Team the work of the Theological Task Force was framed this way:

The set of affirmations would draw upon the following resources that traditionally guide us in our use of Scripture and practice of the faith (what we believe and do):

- Foundations of Presbyterian Polity (in our *Book of Order*),
- The classic sources of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions and catechisms composed in the reformation period (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries),
- The confessions composed in the 20th century with special emphasis on reconciliation.

Is the work proceeding along these lines or has it been reframed?

3. Historically and constitutionally we have said that the church is "apostolic," and defined by its "recognition of the canon of Scripture." "Sola Scriptura" is an essential commitment in the Reformed Tradition." (F-2.03)

"Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever: the Word of God is truly preached and heard, the Sacraments are rightly administered, and ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered." (F-2.04)

To this we add in our ordination vows:

c. 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?

Are we still rooted in these convictions or are changes being pursued?

4. Finally, I had asked that the Presbytery being allowed to vote on the charter for the theological task force and on its membership but this was taken up by the leadership team. Frequently this seems to be the case; work is taken into the leadership circles of the Presbytery and then guided by those in a position to do so. We have created this vertical way of doing business. Can we please move to a more horizontal (flatter) way and bring this critical theological work closer to the full Presbytery in it beginning and movement forward and not just at the end?

Sincerely,
Rev. T. H. Lineweaver
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