

SEXUALITY AND ORDINATION: STATUS BEFORE AND AFTER THE 218TH GA, AND IF “B” IS ADOPTED

PRIOR TO GA218	AFTER GA 218	IF AMENDMENT “B” IS ADOPTED
<p>Constitutional Standards in Place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Scripture</i> 2. <i>Confessions</i> 3. <i>Book of Order</i> G-6.0106b: 	<p>Constitutional Standards in Place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Scripture</i> 2. <i>Confessions</i> 3. <i>Book of Order</i> G-6.0106b: 	<p>Constitutional Standards in Place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Scripture</i> 2. <i>Confessions</i> 3. <i>Book of Order, G-6.0106b, Revised</i>
<p>Authoritative Interpretations in Effect:¹</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1978 UPCUSA <i>Definitive Guidance</i>; 1979 (PCUS) 2. 1993 GA <i>Authoritative Interpretation</i> 3. 2006 (PCUSA): <i>Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108</i> 	<p>Authoritative Interpretations in Effect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2006 (PCUSA): <i>Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108</i> 2. 2008 (PCUSA): <i>Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108</i> 3. 1978, 1979, and 1993 statements declared without further force or effect 	<p>Authoritative Interpretations in Effect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2006 (PCUSA): <i>Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108</i> 2. 2008 (PCUSA): <i>Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108</i> 3. 1978, 1979, and 1993 statements declared without further force or effect
<p>PJC Decisions in Effect:²</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>FPC Washington v. Pby of Washington</i> (2008) 2. <i>Buescher, et al. v Pby of Olympia</i> (2008) 3. <i>Bush, et al. v Pittsburgh Pby</i> (2008):. 	<p>PJC Decisions in Effect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>FPC Washington v. Pby of Washington</i> (2008) 2. <i>Buescher, et al. v Pby of Olympia</i> (2008) 3. <i>Bush et al. v Pittsburgh Pby</i> (2008): 	<p>PJC Decisions in Effect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>FPC Washington v. Pby of Washington</i> (2008) 2. <i>Buescher, et al. v Pby of Olympia</i> (2008) 3. <i>Bush et al. v Pittsburgh Pby</i> (2008):
<p>Implications for Presbytery and Session Decisions <u>With regard to examination of candidates:</u> Candidates for ordination and/or installation are required to conform their beliefs and behavior to standards expressed in Scripture, the <i>Book of Confessions</i>, and the <i>Book of Order</i>. Among those standards is “fidelity and chastity” as defined in G-6.0106b and W-4.9001.</p> <p>Individual candidates for office may declare objections of conscience (either belief or behavior) to provisions of the church’s Constitution. Sessions and presbyteries are required to determine whether those objections constitute violations of “essentials of Reformed faith and practice” (G-6.0108 and 2006 <i>AI</i>).</p>	<p>Implications for Presbytery and Session Decisions <u>With regard to examination of candidates:</u> Candidates for ordination and/or installation are required to conform their beliefs and behavior to standards expressed in Scripture, the <i>Book of Confessions</i>, and the <i>Book of Order</i>. Among those standards is “fidelity and chastity” as defined in G-6.0106b and W-4.9001.</p> <p>Individual candidates for office may declare objections of conscience (either belief or behavior) to provisions of the church’s Constitution. Sessions and presbyteries are required to determine whether those objections constitute violations of “essentials of Reformed faith and practice” (G-6.0108 and 2006 <i>AI</i>).</p>	<p>Implications for Presbytery and Session Decisions³ <u>With regard to examination of candidates:</u> Candidates for ordination and/or installation would be required to give assent to the questions for ordination/installation in W-4.4003. In so doing, they affirm their adherence to the standards for office expressed in the Constitution. Explicit standards regarding fidelity and chastity in sexual behavior would no longer be part of these standards. However, since the affirmation of the ordination/installation questions include the pledge to “fulfill [one’s] office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under authority of Scripture, and continually guided by our confessions” (W-4.4003d), questions based on scripture and the confessions regarding belief and practice would be appropriate (G-6.0106b, revised).</p> <p>A session or presbytery, when examining a candidate, shall establish whether that candidate’s efforts to adhere to the standards of the Constitution are sincere.</p> <p>Individual candidates for office may declare objections of conscience (either belief or behavior) to provisions of the church’s Constitution. Sessions and presbyteries are required to determine whether those objections constitute violations of “essentials of Reformed faith and practice” (G-6.0108 and 2006 <i>AI</i>).</p>

<p>Sessions and presbyteries are required to examine candidates and deal with objections of conscience on a case-by-case basis, and may not adopt resolutions, policies, or statements that paraphrase or restate provisions of the <i>Book of Order</i> and/or declare them as “essentials of Reformed faith and order” (<i>FPC Washington v Pby of Washington</i> and <i>Bush v Pittsburgh Pby</i>).</p> <p>Sessions and presbyteries are required to view departures from the “fidelity and chastity” requirements of G-6.0106b as violations of an essential of Reformed faith and practice (<i>Bush v Pittsburgh Pby</i>).</p> <p><u><i>With regard to acts of ordination or installation:</i></u> A session or presbytery may not ordain or install a person who refuses “to repent of any self-acknowledged practice the confessions call sin...” (G-6.0106b).</p>	<p>Sessions and presbyteries are required to examine candidates and deal with objections of conscience on a case-by-case basis, and may not adopt resolutions, policies, or statements that paraphrase or restate provisions of the <i>Book of Order</i> and/or declare them as “essentials of Reformed faith and order” (<i>FPC Washington v Pby of Washington</i> and <i>Bush v Pittsburgh Pby</i>).</p> <p>Sessions and presbyteries <i>may</i> consider whether a behavioral objection of conscience to any part of the Constitution, including G-6.0106b, constitutes a violation of an essential of Reformed faith and polity; however, they are not <i>required</i> to accept such departures (<i>2008 AI</i>).</p> <p>Nevertheless, the following still applies:</p> <p><u><i>With regard to acts of ordination or installation:</i></u> A session or presbytery may not ordain or install a person who refuses “to repent of any self-acknowledged practice the confessions call sin...” (G-6.0106b).</p>	<p>Sessions and presbyteries are required to examine candidates and deal with objections of conscience on a case-by-case basis, and may not adopt resolutions, policies, or statements that paraphrase or restate provisions of the <i>Book of Order</i> and/or declare them as “essentials of Reformed faith and order” (<i>FPC Washington v Pby of Washington</i> and <i>Bush v Pittsburgh Pby</i>).</p> <p>Sessions and presbyteries <i>may</i> consider whether a behavioral objection of conscience to any part of the Constitution constitutes a violation of an essential of Reformed faith and polity; however, they are not <i>required</i> to accept such departures (<i>2008 AI</i>).</p> <p><u><i>With regard to acts of ordination or installation:</i></u> Sessions or presbyteries may proceed to ordain and/or install those whom they deem worthy and whose examinations have been sustained. Nevertheless, sessions and presbyteries are themselves required to obey mandatory standards of the <i>Book of Order</i>.</p>
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DOCUMENTS CITED:

2007-2009 *Book of Order*, G-6.0106b

“Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”

2009-2011 *Book of Order*, G-6.0106b (Revised, if Amendment “B” is adopted)

~~“Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.~~ Those who are called to ordained service in the church, by their assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003), pledge themselves to live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, striving to follow where he leads through the witness of the Scriptures, and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions. In so doing, they declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church. Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate’s sincere efforts to adhere to these standards.”

1978 UPC Definitive Guidance/ 1979 PCUS Definitive Guidance

...To be an ordained officer is to be a human instrument, touched by divine powers but still an earthen vessel. As portrayed in Scripture, the officers set before the church and community an example of piety, love, service, and moral integrity. Officers are not free from repeated expressions of sin. Neither are members and officers free to adopt a lifestyle of conscious, continuing, and unresisted sin in any area of their lives. For the church to ordain a self-affirming, practicing homosexual person to ministry would be to act in contradiction to its charter and calling in Scripture, setting in motion both within the church and society serious contradictions to the will of Christ....*(entire text reprinted in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Minutes, 1986, Part I, pp. 1019-1024).*

1993 PC(USA) Authoritative Interpretation

“In the instance of the General Assembly rendering an interpretation of the Constitution, and particularly the interpretation of G-6.0106 (and in 1978, Section 37.03), the interpretation has the weight of constitutional law of the church until a new interpretation is offered by the General Assembly through one of its various means (e.g. amendment, new interpretation)...”

2006 PC(USA) Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108

- a. The Book of Confessions and the Form of Government of the Book of Order set forth the scriptural and constitutional standards for ordination and installation.
- b. These standards are determined by the whole church, after the careful study of Scripture and theology, solely by the constitutional process of approval by the General Assembly with the approval of the presbyteries. These standards may be interpreted by the General Assembly and its Permanent Judicial Commission.
- c. Ordaining and installing bodies, acting as corporate expressions of the church, have the responsibility to determine their membership by applying these standards to those elected to office. These determinations include:
 - (1) Whether a candidate being examined for ordination and/or installation as elder, deacon, or minister of Word and Sacrament has departed from scriptural and constitutional standards for fitness for office,
 - (2) Whether any departure constitutes a failure to adhere to the essentials of Reformed faith and polity under G-6.0108 of the Book of Order, thus barring the candidate from ordination and/or installation.
- d. [Whether the examination and ordination and installation decision comply with the Constitution of the PC(USA), and] [W][w]hether the ordaining/installing body has conducted its examination reasonably, responsibly, prayerfully, and deliberately in deciding to ordain a candidate for church office is subject to review by higher governing bodies.
- e. All parties should endeavor to outdo one another in honoring one another’s decisions, according the presumption of wisdom to ordaining/installing bodies in examining candidates and to the General Assembly, with presbyteries’ approval, in setting standards. **(PC(USA) Minutes, 2006, Part I, p. 514-515.)**

2008 PC(USA) Authoritative Interpretation of G-6.0108

“[The 218th General Assembly (2008) affirms the authoritative interpretation of G-6.0108 approved by the 217th General Assembly (2006). Further, the 218th General Assembly (2008), pursuant to G-13.0112, interprets] the requirements of G-6.0108 [to] apply equally to all ordination standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Section G-6.0108 requires examining bodies to give prayerful and careful consideration, on an individual, case-by-case basis, to any departure from an ordination standard in matters of belief or practice that a candidate may declare during examination. However, the

examining body is not required to accept a departure from standards, and cannot excuse a candidate's inability to perform the constitutional functions unique to his or her office (such as administration of the sacraments).” (PC(USA) *Minutes, 2008, Part I, p.380*)

FPC Washington v Pby of Washington, Remedial Case 218-15 (2008)

“Since it is impossible to read the Confessions without encountering allegations of sin for thoughts or actions which may no longer be considered sin, or at least no longer be considered the "serious" departure referred to in the Book of Order, G-6.0108a (such as provisions pertaining to Sabbath observance and interest on loans), Resolution A is in conflict with G-6.0108a and the long-established policy that what is essential must be determined by case-by-case consideration rather than by blanket and unviable prohibitions.

Partial Text of Washington Presbytery Resolution A:

THEREFORE, for the sake of the peace, unity, and purity of the church, the Presbytery of Washington adopts and shall function according to the following resolution: It is an essential of Reformed polity that the Presbytery of Washington comply with and adhere to the standards for ordination adopted by the whole church and expressed in the Book of Order. Therefore, any departure from ordination standards mandated* in the Book of Order, unless repented of, shall bar a candidate from ordination and/or installation by the Presbytery of Washington. (Italics in original text)

[*ordination standards mandated in the Book of Order include those instructions designated by the terms "shall", "is/are to be", "requirement" or "equivalent expression".] (PC(USA) *Minutes, 2008, Part I, p.324*)

Buescher, et. al. v Pby of Olympia, Remedial Case 218-09 (2008)

Headnote 2: “Statements of "Essentials of Reformed Faith and Polity": Attempts by governing bodies that ordain and install officers to adopt resolutions, statements or policies that paraphrase or restate provisions of the Book of Order and/or declare them as "essentials of Reformed faith and polity" are confusing and unnecessary, and are themselves an obstruction to constitutional governance in violation of G-6.0108a.”(PC(USA) *Minutes, 2008, Part I, p.316*)

Bush, et al. v Pby of Pittsburgh, Remedial Case 218-10 (2008)

Headnotes:

1. No Departures from "Fidelity and Chastity" Requirement: Candidates and examining bodies must follow G-6.0108 in reaching determinations as to whether the candidates for ordination and/or installation have departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity. Such determinations do not rest on distinguishing "belief" and "behavior," and do not permit departure from the "fidelity and chastity" requirement found in G-6.0106b.

2. Examinations of Candidates: Ordaining and installing bodies must examine candidates for ordination and/or installation individually. The examining body is best suited to make decisions about the candidate's fitness for office, and factual determinations by examining bodies are entitled to deference by higher governing bodies in any review process.

3. Statements of "Essentials of Reformed Faith and Polity": Attempts by governing bodies that ordain and install officers to adopt resolutions, statements or policies that paraphrase or restate provisions of the Book of Order and/or declare them as "essentials of Reformed faith and polity" are confusing and unnecessary; and are themselves an obstruction to constitutional governance in violation of G-6.0108a.” (PC(USA) *Minutes, 2008, Part I, p.319*)

¹ An Authoritative Interpretation is a statement so designated by action of a General Assembly that interprets one or more provisions of the *Book of Order* in a manner binding on the governing bodies of the church (G-13.0103r). AIs interpret but do not change the text of provisions of the *Book of Order*. Any General Assembly may interpret the *Book of Order* by simple majority vote, and the interpretation of a previous General Assembly can be altered or set aside by a subsequent General Assembly by majority vote. For relevant contents, see “Documents Cited” section.

² Decisions of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission also interpret provisions of the *Book of Order* in a manner binding on synods, presbyteries, and sessions. Their decisions may be superceded by action of the General Assembly. For relevant contents, see “Documents Cited” section.

³ Statements in this column are opinion. While the Association of Executive Presbyters believes that they reflect the likely situation if Amendment “B” is adopted, the actual application of such an action is defined by the General Assembly and/or its Permanent Judicial Commission.