

Reasons Our Church Will Be Withdrawing From the Presbyterian Church in America

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1. The toleration of Side B Gay Christianity, to include the hosting of the Revoice conference at a PCA church, the continued organizing and participation in Revoice conferences by members of the PCA, the presence of PCA pastors who have very publicly declared themselves to be “gay but celibate,” and the presence of other Side B gay-Christian candidates at the PCA’s seminary.

This year marked the 25th anniversary of my joining the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). While I was converted outside of the PCA, largely through radio ministries, it was in the PCA that I was introduced to Reformed theology, and it was in the PCA that I was mentored by very patient and very learned men. It was with the blessing of the PCA that I went to seminary, became a Ruling Elder and was eventually ordained first as a church planter, and then as the permanent pastor of that same church.

My children were born into this denomination, and baptized in it, and have never been a part of any other denomination. I have attended almost every General Assembly since 1997 and was honored to have served in Central Carolina Presbytery on both the Candidates Committee and as the moderator. At one time, I could say that almost all of my friends in the pastorate were in the PCA, and many still are.

So with all of that in mind, I hope you will believe me when I say I am sorry to announce that on Friday, December 13, 2019, the Session of Providence PCA in Fayetteville voted to recommend to the congregation that we withdraw from the PCA and affiliate with the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP). The final congregational vote will be on January 19, 2020. It is, of course, possible that the congregation will choose not to leave, but I think that is highly unlikely. I may have more to say more about my reasons for leaving the PCA at a later date, but the most pressing 12 reasons for going now are as follows:

1) The toleration of Side B^[1] Gay Christianity, to include the hosting of the Revoice conference at a PCA church, the continued organizing and participation in Revoice conferences by members of the PCA, the presence of PCA pastors who have very publicly declared themselves to be “gay but celibate,” and the presence of other Side B gay-Christian candidates at the PCA’s seminary.

2) The continuing presence of openly Federal Vision (FV) pastors within the PCA despite that theology having been condemned as erroneous by the GA.^[2]

3) The fact that the presbyteries of the men I mentioned above approve of this belief and practice, and because “Good Faith” subscription [3] allows presbyteries to determine what beliefs and practices they will allow within their bounds by a majority vote, there is precious little that can be done about it. The Standing Judicial Commission (SJC) treats any decision made by a presbytery using the proper procedure as practically inviolable. I warned that this would be the bad fruit of a decision to adopt “Good Faith” subscription at the GA in 2003. At the time I said:

“Brothers, we are about to make a decision we have arrived at as quickly as we possibly could, without the erection of a study committee or even the benefit of perfecting language. Once we have made it, I fear we will never be able to take it back. Once we pass this, our presbyteries will be empowered to grant exceptions to any doctrine we confess is taught in Scripture by a simple 51% vote. Once those exceptions are granted, precedent is set, and that doctrine will never again be an impediment to the ordination of any man. Gradually, but inevitably, our standards will be eroded.”

I believe that what I feared would happen then, is in fact occurring now.

4) The realization that regardless of its conclusions, the *in thesi* deliverance of the Study Committee on Sexuality will have exactly the same effect as the deliverance of the FV study committee and cannot change the practice of any presbytery or pastor in the PCA

5) The conviction that Pastor Greg Johnson’s initial post-GA Twitter assessment is correct and that ‘the younger pastors entering the PCA (particularly from our denominational seminary) are much more inclined to tolerate the presence of same-sex attracted (SSA) officers and members in the PCA than the older generation;’ and that therefore Johnson is correct in his assessment that in time those forces will win what he described as the “war” in the PCA.

6) The growing presence of an aggressive and organized “semi-confidential” progressive party in the PCA with deep ties to our permanent committees.

7) The determination by the administration as voiced in their “Strategic Plan” that they do not share the same ethos as the other North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) denominations and do not see any reason to be in the same body with them, along with the realization that neither I nor my congregation DO share that “NAPARC ethos” and wish to continue on in the same direction that the other NAPARC denominations are heading.

8) The administration’s distaste for NAPARC, and their unwillingness to hear the admonitions of other NAPARC denominations is made all the more alarming by their preference for and support of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), an

increasingly left-of-center political lobbying organization with hardly any Reformed churches in its membership.

9) The growing presence of the Social Gospel, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Intersectionality, and Social Justice Warrior (SJW) preaching and teaching in the PCA and in particular in its seminary, college, and permanent committees to include electing a moderator who teaches and writes about CRT for a living.

10) The conviction that not only would the process of reforming the PCA be almost impossible, but that the forces in favor of reform are unwilling to go to the lengths that would be needed, to include removing committee heads, firing professors, mobilizing the people in the pews, withholding askings, and abandoning a policy of “niceness” in their debates and writing. At a time when we need Luthers, it seems that all we have are Bucers.

11) The belief that compromise is now so ingrained in the psyche of the PCA that their committees will not be willing to stand up and say “NO” to an increasingly hostile anti-Christian culture if that means enduring the same kind of abuse, loss of property, loss of social status, and even imprisonment and death that our Presbyterian brethren in China currently face.

12) The fact that some of the families in my congregation had indicated that they could no longer stay in the PCA in good conscience and that either we leave the PCA or they would have to find new church homes.

On hearing of our decision to join the ARP I have no doubt that some will be concerned that their book of church order allows for congregations to elect women to serve as deacons. We were also concerned about that provision and the Providence session and diaconate went over this subject at length in debate and in discussions with the local ARP representative. We concluded that the decision to allow sessions to choose whether they will have women deacons was made when the ARP was headed towards liberalism in the 1960s (the decision was made in 1968) and that since that time the denomination has decisively turned around, is conservative, and is becoming even more solid as conservatives join and liberals retire. This was evidenced in their willingness to deal decisively with liberalism at Erskine College and Seminary.

Our hope is that in the future it will be possible to remove the clause allowing for women deacons entirely. So, in essence, the consensus was that the ARP is moving away from women’s ordination, not towards it, and our session is in agreement that we will never have female officers in any event. Our session and diaconate were very interested in assessing the arc (towards liberalism or towards conservatism) of the denominations we looked at rather than where they were in their practice at this moment in time and concluded that the arc of the ARP is going in the right direction.

I should add that while I feel regret at having to leave the PCA, I am not bitter at having to do so, and my esteem for my brothers who want to stay and fight the good fight to the very end remains undiminished. Brothers, I hope you will believe me when I say I have stayed for as long as I possibly could and that to continue to stay at this point would involve wounding both my conscience and our congregation.

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[1] Side B Christianity is used to refer to professing believers who claim to be same-sex attracted; acknowledge that homosexuality is not God's design for sexual expression and is a disorder resulting from the Fall; that some can and will marry, while others will choose to be celibate but will continue to identify as "gay-Christians." Side A Christianity views homosexuality as appropriate for professing Christians to engage in; that homosexual practices in the context of same-sex marriage are honorable; and that the Church should allow homosexual relationships as an acceptable expression within the Christian faith.

[2] "Report of the Ad-Interim Study Committee on Federal Vision, New Perspective, and Auburn Avenue Theologies" can be read [here](#) and [here](#).

[3] See BCO 21-4:

e. While our Constitution does not require the candidate's affirmation of every statement and/or proposition of doctrine in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, it is the right and responsibility of the Presbytery to determine if the candidate is out of accord with any of the fundamentals of these doctrinal standards and, as a consequence, may not be able in good faith sincerely to receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures (cf. BCO 21-5, Q.2; 24-6, Q.2).

f. Therefore, in examining a candidate for ordination, the Presbytery shall inquire not only into the candidate's knowledge and views in the areas specified above, but also shall require the candidate to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the Confession of Faith and Catechisms in any of their statements and/or propositions. The court may grant an exception to any difference of doctrine only if in the court's judgment the candidate's declared difference is not out of accord with any fundamental of our system of doctrine because the difference is neither hostile to the system nor strikes at the vitals of religion.