



July 2014

Pastoral Letter to Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church

The governing body of First Church, the Session, held a special meeting recently to reflect on the actions of the General Assembly of our denomination. The emotions expressed included sadness, anger, shock, disappointment, and more. There was one overriding concern: How could a denomination which historically has had a high view of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and of Scripture, take so many actions which seem to run counter to the plain sense of the Bible? The concerns raised by the General Assembly are so troubling because they seem to strike at the very foundations of the church.

Let me make three things clear from my perspective:

First, I am grateful that the spiritual leaders of this church are willing to engage the difficult issues of our time.

Second, I want everyone—everyone—who comes to First Church to feel welcome and to experience the warmth of God's embrace.

Third, these are not mutually exclusive propositions. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is infinitely more important than whatever issue is making headlines on a given day. Above all else, we are for Jesus and His Gospel of Grace and Truth.

The struggles of our denomination are no surprise to Jesus. He is sovereign and eternal. He knows our thoughts. He never gives up on us. On the night when he needed them the most, his closest friends deserted him. Yet he remained faithful, and used those inconstant friends to build his church.

So yes, let's struggle with the issues of our day. Let's not shrink from following Jesus where he leads. Let us never cease to speak His Truth in love. Let us always be known first what for we stand for, not what we are against.

Tim Keller puts it this way: "Jesus is not a Pharisee about Pharisees; he is not self-righteous about the self-righteous. Nor should we be toward others."

God bless you and God bless First Presbyterian Church.

Yours in Christ,

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