



VOLUME 2
ISSUE 2

THE PRESBYTERIAN
PLUMB LINE

The Presbyterian Plumb Line is an online journal published four times a year and designed to biblically inform the Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church about issues that impact our ability to govern under Christ's authority and faithfully shepherd the flock.

We strive to provide content that is accessible, firmly rooted in God's Word, spiritually guided, and committed to the highest standards of truth. Through viewpoint and observation, news items, sermons, book reviews, and other material, we seek to lead our denomination toward a more biblical expression of our Presbyterian conviction: that biblically informed elders, seeking the mind of Christ in the courts of the Church, is the most faithful way to align with God's plumb line.

The editors welcome all inquiries to info@presbyterianplumbline.org.

Volume 2, Issue 2
Contents

VIEWS

Note from Plumb Line Editors.....	2
OGA Responds to Jeff Jeremiah Letter.....	4
Limping Along (David Milroy)	6
The Same-Sex Crisis and How We Got Here (Don Fortson).....	12
Are All Sins Equal in the Sight of God? (David Weber)	18
A Moderator's Meanderings (Gordon Miller)	23

NEWS

"What's at Stake in the EPC?"	
Presbyterian Plumb Line Hosts Conversations on Biblical Fidelity and Ordination.....	27
Minority Report Submitted to the AIC	29
OGA Agrees to Changes in Financial Reporting	31
Kansas Church Joins the EPC.....	33

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

Editorial Board

Paul Bammel

Teaching Elder, Presbytery of the East. Ordained in the EPC since 2012.

Don Fortson

Teaching Elder, Presbytery of the Central Carolinas. Ordained in the EPC since 1991.

Peter Larson

Teaching Elder, Presbytery of the Midwest. Ordained in the EPC since 2008.

Gordon Miller

Ruling Elder, New River Presbytery. Ordained in the EPC since 2007.

David Weber

Teaching Elder, New River Presbytery. Ordained in the EPC since 2008.

Note from the Plumb Line Editors

One year ago, the Presbyterian Plumb Line published our very first issue. Since that time, the Lord has blessed this venture far beyond anything we imagined. In the past 12 months our website has attracted 16,500 visitors, 48,000 views, and 604 subscribers.

The Plumb Line was founded for two simple reasons: 1) to inform our elders, and 2) work for reformation. In the challenges faced by the EPC, we believe the church is best served when our elders are informed, aware, and grounded in Biblical truth. In all the news and commentary that we publish, we strive for a high standard of accuracy and integrity. We work hard to make certain that our articles are factual and truthful.

While the vast majority of our readers live in the United States, the Plumb Line has reached 65 different nations including Canada, Great Britain, China, Ireland, Germany, Brazil, and Puerto Rico. In addition, the Plumb Line has become a rallying point for those concerned about the direction of the EPC. Our “What’s at Stake,” Zoom meetings (two of them, so far) have received more than 1,000 views live and on YouTube.

The Plumb Line takes its name from the Bible. It comes from the Book of Amos 7:8, where God says to his people: “Behold, I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will spare them no longer.” A plumb line is not a tool for demolition but for building. It determines if a wall is straight or crooked. Without a plumb line, a building will collapse. In every age, the church must keep in alignment with the Word of God.

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

In this issue we have several articles on pertinent topics related to the Ad Interim Committee on SSA and ordination. If you are not up to date on where things currently stand, we recommend this fair and accurate summary in Ministry Watch: <https://ministrywatch.com/red-flag-and-red-line-in-the-evangelical-presbyterian-church>.

We also have news items on things going on in the EPC, and the “Moderator’s Meanderings” by Gordon Miller. We hope you will find these materials informative, engaging, and an encouragement in your walk with Christ.

As the editors of the Plumb Line, our goal is not to bash the church but to build it up. We are extremely grateful for your support and encouragement and ask that you please pray for us. Previous issues are available at www.presbyterianplumbline.org/archive, where they can also be downloaded in PDF format. As always, we welcome and value your comments.

If you would like to contribute to the Plumb Line financially or submit an article for consideration, we invite you to contact us at info@presbyterianplumbline.org.

OGA Responds to Jeff Jeremiah Letter

By The Presbyterian Plumb Line Editorial Board

In recent weeks, former Stated Clerk Jeff Jeremiah sent a personal letter¹ to all church sessions and former General Assembly moderators in the EPC. In his letter, Jeremiah expressed concern about the report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Same Sex Attraction, urging elders to get informed and involved to preserve Biblical orthodoxy.

In response, the Office of the General Assembly sent out an email² to multiple mailing lists in an attempt to diffuse the controversy. The letter, co-signed by the current Moderator, David Strunk, and Chairman of the National Leadership Team, Victor Jones, contained several false and misleading statements.

First, the OGA claimed that Jeremiah's letter had caused "confusion," with some believing it had been mailed out by the denomination. In fact, there was no confusion. In his letter, Jeremiah signed his name and clearly identified himself as the former Stated Clerk. Jeremiah further explained that he personally wrote the letter. He did not use an EPC letterhead, nor did he claim to be speaking for the denomination. Nothing about the letter was misleading. Where, then, is the confusion?

Second, the OGA accused Jeremiah (although not by name) of "advocating against the work of the General Assembly's Ad Interim Committee on the ordination of persons with Same Sex Attraction." During the General Assembly in June, the AIC urged elders to provide critique on their report. In his letter, Jeremiah was exercising his right to critique the report. In no way was he "advocating against" the work of the committee.

Third, the letter implies that Jeremiah violated the "... GA-approved and constitutional processes of the EPC." This is a serious allegation. However, the fact is that Jeremiah did not violate the EPC polity or process. When the General Assembly voted to create the AIC in 2024, the motion included a statement that, "It is the opinion and wish of the 44th General Assembly that no presbytery shall take action on petitions or matters before them that might touch on these areas of inquiry and exploration until the final report is received and acted upon by the 46th General Assembly." At the time, this statement was referred to as "a gentleman's agreement." Our current Stated Clerk has publicly recognized such an "agreement" is unenforceable.

However, no act of General Assembly (but especially the expression of an "opinion and wish") can take away the right of Presbyteries to consider or approve overtures. This basic right is guaranteed by our Constitution and cannot be swept away at the whim of the General Assembly vote. In truth, this "gentleman's agreement" was itself unconstitutional and a violation of our Presbyterian polity. In advocating a constitutional amendment to address same sex attraction,

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

Jeremiah is exercising his constitutional right. To imply that he has violated our process or constitution is simply untrue.

Fourth, the OGA letter seeks to reassure us that the AIC report is “still subject to revision” and that “... the final version of its work won’t be submitted until spring of 2026.” In other words, we should trust in the process and wait until spring when the final report is released. The problem, however, is that by spring it will be too late to submit an overture to amend the Constitution that will resolve this contentious matter at the 46th General Assembly. By that time, the deadline will have passed for submitting overtures asking the 46th Assembly to amend our Constitution. It is difficult to trust in the process when it seems calculated to avoid any substantial challenge prior to General Assembly.

Finally, the letter claims that Presbytery discussions around the AIC work “have been observed to be both substantive and respectful” and conducted in a “gracious manner.” However, the truth is that as recently as a week ago, the report had not been released in some Presbyteries. In other words, elders in some Presbyteries have been kept in the dark, not knowing the contents of the report. In addition, the “listening sessions” conducted in some Presbyteries have consisted mostly of presentations. In other words, a lot of the “listening” has been one-directional, leaving little time for questions or critique. In some Presbyteries, these listening sessions have seemed more like a selling job. The letter rightfully praises those who have participated in the AIC Presbytery discussions. Incredibly, it then chastises Dr. Jeremiah for daring to exercise the same rights each and every member of a Presbytery exercised at the AIC presentations!

In conclusion, this letter contains statements that are erroneous and misleading. While claiming not to take sides, this letter is clearly a rebuke to Jeff Jeremiah, who served the EPC as Stated Clerk with distinction for 15 years. You don’t have to read between the lines to get the message: anyone who dares to criticize the denomination is out-of-bounds and not playing by the rules.

This letter is further evidence that our denominational leadership has become top-down and tone deaf. The truth is that every elder in the EPC has the right to speak on the serious issues facing our denomination, including Jeff Jeremiah.

¹ See <https://www.presbyterianplumbline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/JeffJeremiahLetterWithLinks.pdf>

² See <https://mailchi.mp/d835eea230d2/regarding-the-ad-interim-committee-on-ssa-13513475?e=df41fbd965>

Limping Along

*By David Milroy
TE, Presbytery of the Alleghenies*

“And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word” (1 Kings 18:21).

On August 27, the Ad-Interim Committee on Same-Sex Attraction (AIC) put forth three updated documents that are still under construction: the pastoral letter,¹ the position paper,² and the proposed change to the Book of Government.³ They have spent many hours on these documents, for which I am grateful. I have never been on such a committee. I imagine it is awkward and difficult work trying to write in the voice of nine people. I sincerely appreciate the commitment and the time invested by these brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is apparent, though, that at this point the report provides no clarity for sessions and presbyteries who examine same-sex attracted (SSA) candidates for office. The collective voice of the committee limps along between two different opinions. It has thus far failed to give direction on the pressing issue:

Do we ordain candidates to office who persist in SSA or who identify with their SSA? Or do we lovingly and firmly tell these candidates that they are disqualified if they profess, persist in, or identify with same-sex desires?

Here I offer a few critiques, beginning with the document which helps the church the most (and which carries the least authority), descending into the one that is least helpful (and would, if passed, carry the most authority).

Pastoral Letter

There is much to appreciate in this letter. It is compassionate while also calling those with SSA (as well as the rest of us) to repentance. One of my favorite lines is this:

Any experience of same-sex attraction then must be subordinated to our identity in union with Christ: our besetting sin may be same-sex lust, but we need to be repenting of that and seeking growth in sanctification as we turn away from it to Christ in a new obedience (page 5, lines 16-18).

Yes, and amen. But for ambiguity, there is nothing more confusing than these paragraphs:

That means that how one who experiences SSA describes oneself requires the exercise of wisdom. Consider for example the language of “gay Christian”. We recognize that some Christians may use the term “gay” in an effort to be more readily understood by non-Christians. The word “gay” is common in our culture, and we do not think it wise for churches to police every use of the term. If “gay Christian” is meant to refer to a Christian who affirms, engages or expresses solidarity with same-sex sexual activity or desire, it is an oxymoron and inappropriate. If it is meant to refer to the ongoing experience of a persistent, latent pull towards same-sex sexual temptation while one is making every effort by God’s grace to think and act according to God’s will, then it may be a useful descriptive term in some settings (page 5, lines 42-43).

We, however, affirm that those in our churches would be wise to avoid the term “gay Christian.” Although the term “gay” may refer to more than being attracted to persons of the same sex, the term does not communicate less than that. For many people in our culture, to self-identify as “gay” suggests that one is engaged in homosexual practice. At the very least, the term normally communicates the presence and approval of same-sex sexual attraction as morally neutral or morally praiseworthy (page 6, lines 1-15).

What are we to make of this? Do we use the term “gay Christian” or not? Churches shouldn’t police the term, but they should avoid it. It may refer to someone who’s practicing same-sex sex, or one who is not. But if it “normally communicates the presence and approval of same-sex sexual attraction,” why wouldn’t we police it, if by “policing it” we mean telling people not to use the term? Even the phrase “policing every use of the term” evokes the image of the scolding, nagging SNL Church Lady from the late 1980s (yes, I’m dating myself).

As Christians, any identification with our sin is unbiblical and foolish. This portion of the pastoral letter confuses the faithful and invites misinterpretation. I hope it is revised.

Position Paper

The position paper is written in a therapeutic register. In emotionally heated tones, it points the finger, Nathan-like, at the EPC man/woman in the mirror: “You are the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7). It is so self-condemning that it makes our staid Reformed denomination sound like a hotbed for lusty sins, grievous cover-ups, and bullying. I am sure there are sins. But I don’t know of any cover-ups or bullying. Perhaps the motive is to have a posture of humility, which is sort of an Iron Dome of defensibility (imagine the critique: “you’re too humble!”). But in reality, it is not humble. To be humble, as C.S. Lewis suggested in *Mere Christianity*, is not to think less of ourselves, but to think of ourselves less frequently. This paper points us to think often of ourselves, and when we do, to remember that we are really super very bad sexual sinners.

We, as evangelical Presbyterians, readily and sorrowfully confess our manifold violations of His Word: as a people, we have engaged in premarital sex, adultery, ungodly divorce, and sexual lusts of every sort, not only before coming to faith in Christ, but also afterward. As churches, we have at times sanctioned unbiblical marriages, violating the expressed will of God revealed in the Scriptures; and we sometimes have self-righteously condemned others for their sexual sins while committing our own. We stand in need of God's forgiveness and power to live holy lives. Our churches desperately need revival and a humble return to godly sexual practice. And so, with humble and repentant hearts, we return to the Lord, and we invite those both inside and outside the Church to join us in seeking God's blessing in our sexual lives (page 2, lines 26-35).

We desire to adhere fully to biblical sexuality. Out of love we remind ourselves and share with others the message of God's judgment upon all forms of sexual immorality. We also believe that there is no place for any form of cruelty, hate or denigration of those who either disagree with these positions or hold to other positions. We unequivocally condemn all injustices, sinful intimidation, and physical violence perpetrated against anyone because of sexual attraction or practice (page 3, lines 6-11).

Sheesh. Is this stuff really happening? "Physical violence perpetrated against [people] because of sexual attraction or practice?" Of course, we condemn these things. Does anyone think these are problems within our own denomination? If so, let's get the police involved and bring charges against these criminals. But if these problems do not exist, what is the purpose of writing about them? To me, the subtext suggests something like this: "How can we judge SSA candidates for office when we are so sinful ourselves?" This is a logical fallacy, of course, so it is left for us to intuit through the language of guilt and shame.

The primary problem with this section in particular and the position paper in general, is that *none of this has anything to do with same-sex attraction*. Even when there is an opportunity — a golden one — to address this topic, the position paper punts. The section entitled "Recovering from Sexual Brokenness" on pages 4-5 states,

Those in and out of the Church struggling with various forms of sexual disorientation or gender dysphoria should find God's people ready to walk lovingly with them in their struggles and to invite them to join us in following the Lord. Together as a people, we must all seek healing for our own lives and for each other's lives, discovering what it means to be godly men and women in the circumstances decreed by His providence. Glorifying God in our sexual lives will at times entail suffering or persecution of various sorts, but, by God's empowering grace, we aspire to obey Him with joy (page 5, lines 8-14).

Indeed, we have all sinned with respect to sexual morality. Who could argue? However, that does not make all sins equal in terms of rebelliousness against God and His created order, nor in effect. This is a perfect section to address SSA, to call those men attracted to men to repent, to call women attracted to women to repent. But there is no mention of it. Why?

Instead, there is a brief paragraph about gender dysphoria. But rather than addressing the fundamental confusion in our culture about the reality that male and female cannot be changed, there is instead a sentence about how we should walk lovingly with people afflicted with gender dysphoria. Yes, and amen. But where is the call to teach with clarity on this matter as a church? Where is the pleading with pastors to speak with courage about the truth of Christian anthropology? Where is the naming and condemning of the demonic ideology which teaches that our gender is something we choose for ourselves, that our bodies are merely instruments to be changed as we desire, and that our feelings override our biology? If this topic is going to be broached, there is so much more that needs to be said. What does the obedience entail that is mentioned, almost in passing, at the end of the paragraph with respect to obedience to Christ in our sexual lives? Isn't this the time to say to those who are same-sex attracted: "repent and to trust the Spirit's sanctifying work?" Shouldn't it be stated that this sanctification includes great hope for the removal of unnatural lusts and disordered affections?

The most fascinating aspect of the position paper as it now stands is that *it never mentions same-sex attraction*. Not once. For a committee entitled "Ad-Interim Committee on Same-Sex Attraction and Ordination Standards," it is more than a little odd that SSA would be completely ignored in its position paper.

Proposed Amendment

This is the most troubling of the documents. It is the one with binding authority. And once again, it does not definitively address the matter at hand. Belaboring the point, the reason the AIC was formed was to address this issue: *should we, or should we not, ordain those who persist in SSA, or those who identify with their SSA?* To date, the committee will not say one way or the other. The committee proposes this language four times, in four different places:

Faithful conformity to [Jesus'] character, obedience to him as Lord, and steady progress in spiritual growth (page 1).

It then proposes this language for BoG 9-3a.:

Officers must conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity (see Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 138-139; D.1-10) in their descriptions of themselves, their convictions, character, and conduct (page 2).

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

None of this is objectionable, but *it doesn't address the pressing issue*. It can be interpreted in whatever way presbyteries or sessions desire. It is unfortunately reminiscent of the PC(USA)'s language in their constitution, when they allowed the ordination of practicing homosexuals and lesbians with amendment 10-A in 2010. Before the passage of 10-A the constitution stated:

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.

With the passage of 10-A the PC(USA) constitution was amended to:

Standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (G-1.0000). The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.14.0240; G-14.0450) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.

It was an obfuscating, cynical move to open the door to the ordination of practicing homosexuals with the language "submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life." I am not saying that the AIC's work will allow practicing homosexuals to be ordained. But the language choice is similar to 10-A in the sense that it allows presbyteries to ordain SSA officers precisely because of what it does not say. It speaks in generalities, when specifics are needed.

An Onramp or a Guardrail?

There are some, perhaps many, in our denomination who believe that we are obliged to welcome candidates for office who are same-sex attracted in an ongoing, persistent way or who claim their same-sex attraction as a discrete identity provided they do not act on these attractions. I think they are wrong, and that if their perspective wins the day will have disastrous effects on our denomination — immediately and in the future.

In 1978, the PC(USA) approved the ordination of "celibate homosexuals" with these words:

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

“Persons of homosexual orientation are not automatically disqualified from ordination ... so long as they do not engage in homosexual practice and maintain celibacy.”

Of course, the PC(USA) ended up going down the slope all the way to the bottom. We will be stepping onto that same slope if we opt to ordain SSA candidates. That slope is seriously steep, and once the slide begins it is nearly impossible to scramble back up the hill. But that isn't the point of this essay.

I would actually be more comfortable if the committee stated clearly, “we unreservedly recommend the ordination of SSA candidates who are not practicing and we recommend that identifying as a ‘gay Christian’ not be held against such candidates.” Why? Because then we would have something to debate at GA. The lines for debate would be clearly drawn. The AIC would in that case be recommending an onramp. I am in favor of a guardrail, and would use all means provided to try to persuade our GA commissioners that a guardrail is what we need, not an onramp.

But as it stands, it will be difficult to have the debate next summer. Without a clear recommendation on SSA and ordination, all we can debate at GA is whether to accept or reject recommendations that do not address the matter. It causes our denomination to limp along with no clear guidance. And if we fail to debate this matter at GA next summer, it will be a very serious failure indeed.

It will lead to referring the decision to the presbyteries. Some will then choose to ordain SSA candidates, and others will not. This is the so-called “local option,” which would be better termed the Judges 21:25 option: “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” It will certainly result in SSA officers being ordained which will then result in many difficult things — churches leaving, charges brought, division, acrimony. It is a terrible option because it will undermine the peace, unity, and purity of the EPC.

The work of the AIC has so far provided neither a guardrail against SSA nor an explicit onramp. This is a profound problem that will prevent serious debate about a very important issue. I hope this changes, and changes soon. We cannot go limping along to Denver next summer.

¹ See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/AIC_Pastoral-Letter.pdf

² See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/AIC_Position-Paper.pdf

³ See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/AIC_Book-of-Government.pdf

The Same-Sex Crisis and How We Got Here

By Don Fortson

TE, Presbytery of the Central Carolinas

The EPC is facing a major crisis regarding the ordination of candidates who experience same-sex attraction, identify as gay, or claim a fixed homosexual orientation. The question is: how did we get here and when did we stray from our Biblical and confessional standards? A key factor behind the crisis: the EPC's Position Paper on Homosexuality (PPH)¹ has been ignored.

On December 6, 2022, Stated Clerk Dean Weaver issued a document titled "Guidance from the Stated Clerk" (GSC)² — a response to questions about the inquiry of Rev. Greg Johnson and Memorial Presbyterian Church in St. Louis for membership in the EPC's Mid-America Presbytery. As word got around the EPC about Johnson and Memorial, there was an outcry of resistance to entertaining any thought of accepting this pastor and congregation into the EPC.

Johnson is a celibate same-sex attracted (SSA) pastor, who has publicly owned his homosexual orientation, and written a book explaining his version of gay theology.³ Memorial Church is known for its ministry to gays (which is admirable), but the congregation has sponsored the controversial Revoice conferences that articulate unbiblical concepts about homosexuality. Johnson and Memorial caused massive disruption in the PCA⁴ and there was legitimate concern that the same thing would happen if they were admitted into the EPC.

At the beginning of the GSC was this question: "What is the EPC's position on ordination for same sex attracted persons?" The Stated Clerk's response to this question was disturbing. The guidance specified:

"It is the guidance of the Stated Clerk that same-sex attraction by itself does not disqualify a candidate from consideration for ordination."

Given the fact that the catalyst for this guidance was the request by pastor Greg Johnson and Memorial Church to be received by Mid-America Presbytery (EPC), it is unmistakable that the Stated Clerk's intention was to encourage the reception of Memorial and Johnson into the EPC. Instead of a red light, Mid-America was given a green light by the Stated Clerk.

It was perplexing that the GSC made no reference to the PPH, which is the denomination's only position paper that specifically addresses the question of ordination and its relationship to homosexuality. It is likewise puzzling that the PPH is nowhere cited in the Ad Interim Committee (AIC) revised report — especially since numerous EPC elders pointed out this oversight in the AIC's request for feedback this past summer. Why was the position paper most directly addressing the question at hand considered irrelevant? It can be argued that one reason the GSC and AIC ignored

the PPH is that it would have steered them in a direction they did not want to go. The AIC report mirrors the GSC in its recommendation that SSA candidates may be examined for ordination in the EPC. All this effort by the AIC and we end up right back to the Stated Clerk's original advice?

Both the GSC and the AIC report endorse changing the EPC's historic position on homosexuality and ordination. The EPC's position is openly expressed in the PPH which we will examine below.

Position Paper on Homosexuality

If one looks for the PPH on the EPC website, it is not there. Here's the backstory:

In 2014-2015, EPC churches from around the country were contacting the Office of the General Assembly looking for protection from anti-discrimination lawsuits filed by local authorities. Legal counsel provided language for churches to insert into their bylaws or articles of incorporation. The NLT discussed the public visibility of the PPH which was on the website. Meanwhile, in 2016 the General Assembly approved the preliminary Position Paper on Human Sexuality and recommending "that the current position paper on Homosexuality be removed from our EPC website and *made available upon request*." There was a motion to remove "making the position paper available upon request" but it was defeated. Apparently, some in the EPC wanted the PPH to be gone, but the majority of the Assembly wanted continued access to the PPH, as it remained the position of the EPC on this issue.⁵ If the EPC no longer agrees with a position paper, it can rescind it. For example, the Position Paper on Capital Punishment was rescinded in 1995.⁶ The PPH has never been rescinded by the General Assembly.

The original PPH was written in 1986. A second iteration in 1994 highlighted an appendix, "Christian Ministry to Homosexuals."⁷ The founders believed that the EPC should take a strong stand on homosexuality in light of what was happening in the culture and the PC(USA) and also be intentional in ministry to homosexuals. The old UPCUSA (northern church) had completed a two-year study on homosexuality in 1978. There was a majority liberal report affirming and a conservative minority report. It forbade practicing homosexuals from ordination, but allowed celibate homosexuals into ministry. The minority report was approved by the GA, but the nose of the camel was already in the tent. By 1980 the UPCUSA GA had approved a Gay Caucus. Bart Hess and Ward Church listed this as one of their reasons for leaving the UPCUSA and helping found the EPC in 1981 as a Presbyterian alternative.

Scripture is the Standard

The text of the PPH begins with a statement that the Bible is our moral authority:

"The question of what is moral has become a confused issue in our society. Even some Christian churches and their leaders are granting moral legitimacy to homo-

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

sexuality The EPC asserts that God's law alone as revealed in the Holy Scriptures is to be our basis for morality."

Neither scientific studies nor personal experience can form the basis of morality for the Christian Church. The Word of God alone is sufficient for the task of defining what is moral and what is immoral. "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

In its overview of Biblical teaching, the creation story is foundational in the PPH as its authors describe the Genesis account as "God's perfect design for marriage and sexual expression." Commenting on Genesis chapters 1 and 2, the PPH states:

"Here we find the very foundation of human sexuality and discover the distinctives that give man and woman their God-ordained sexual identities."

SSA individuals claim a homosexual identity of some sort, which is contrary to what Scripture teaches about humanity's creation. Even after the fall, when men and women are born in bondage to sin, they still retain their created complementary identities as male and female. After conversion, a person's pre-Christian self-perception as SSA, gay, or homosexual is transformed by the Gospel. New converts learn from Scripture that they were created with a complementary sexual identity as either male or female, and they renounce a pre-Christian false identity as a homosexual person. A believer claiming to have continuing SSA and identifying as gay is confused and has not fully understood or experienced the good news of the transforming grace of Christ.

Addressing homosexuality in Old Testament texts, the PPH quotes the Leviticus 20:13 reference of the "destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities given over to homosexual lust and murderous hostility." The PPH rebuffs vain attempts to discredit the straightforward meaning of Genesis 19:4-18 by those falsely claiming that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their inhospitality. The PPH rightly terms this fanciful reinterpretation as "absurd" and "inexcusable." The Old Testament is clear in its condemnation of same-sexuality; the PPH does not try to hide, soften, or explain away these texts. This clarity is what the contemporary Church requires in an age of confused and twisted man-made sexualities.

In discussing New Testament texts, the PPH underscores how Jesus did not dismiss the Old Testament law but "authoritatively interpreted the Mosaic Law" and "strengthened it." It's not enough to refrain from outward acts — "Jesus declared that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28). Of course, this principle applies to homosexual lust as well.

In Jesus' ethic, sinful desires and sinful acts are inseparable — each making one guilty before God's law. Claims that SSA is not the same thing as homosexuality simply do not square with Scripture. Unnatural sexual desires, i.e., sexual desires for someone of the same gender, is not

less of a perversion of God's design in nature than acts of sexual perversion. As Jesus's words imply, to have lust for someone of the same sex is to have committed sexual acts in the heart with that person.

The PPH fully quotes Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Commenting on the Romans text, the PPH states: "Romans 1:26 points back to the relations God established at the dawn of human history, that of husband and wife being one flesh." Romans 1:26 describes how men and women "exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones." Natural relations are those intended by God from creation and cannot be equated with the unnatural desire of same-sex attraction.

Victory Over Sin

The PPH states,

"... redemption from homosexuality is mercifully offered in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The word of hope that the church presents is that through the death and resurrection of Christ, God offers sinners both the forgiveness of sin and the power to live a life pleasing to him (Romans 8:1-4)."

This statement underscores that Scripture speaks of both forgiving grace and transforming grace. The distinctive Reformed understanding of sanctification is about overcoming, not being permanently stuck in ongoing patterns of sin — including SSA. The Westminster Confession states:

"Although the old nature temporarily wins battles in this warfare, the continual strengthening of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ enables the regenerate nature in each believer to overcome. And so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (WCF. 13.3)

Growing in grace by the sanctifying Spirit of Christ would be an expectation of anyone aspiring to be a Deacon, Ruling Elder, or Teaching Elder in a Presbyterian congregation.

The PPH states,

"As Christians who are ourselves sinners redeemed by the grace of God, we must reach out to those persons who are struggling with homosexuality, offering them the word of hope that is the Gospel to the end that they may experience true wholeness through the freeing, renewing grace of God in Jesus Christ. 'So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.' (John 8:36)."

How could a professing Christian claiming a gay identity and ongoing unnatural sexual desires claim to be experiencing "true wholeness through the freeing, renewing grace of God in Jesus

Christ”? Christ indeed sets us free, which is what the new birth is all about. A Christian brother or sister with continuing struggles in understanding their sexuality biblically is not suitable to be a Deacon, Elder, or Pastor. Could a SSA person say “follow my example” like Paul? Members of our Christian family with persistent sexuality confusion need love and discipleship, not the recklessness of being ordained into leadership positions.

Ordination and Homosexuality

The first generation of EPC elders were concerned about standards for ordination as it related to homosexuality. The original 1986 PPH concluded:

“Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian lifestyle, and since officers of the church must be “examples to the flock” we cannot condone the ordination of practicing homosexuals to Deacons, Ruling Elders, or Teaching Elders.”

The 1994 revision of the PPH expressed it this way:

“Unrepentant homosexual behavior is incompatible with the ordination vows for the offices of Deacon, Ruling Elder, and Teaching Elder.”

At the end of the PPH is a summary of Biblical teaching on homosexuality:

“The witness of God’s Word in both the Old and New Testaments is clear, declaring that the practice of homosexual behavior, including lust, is a grievous sin, and that any who continue to engage in such activity face the consequences of God’s condemning judgment.”

Note the linking of homosexual lust (SSA) with homosexual behavior as equally grievous sin in God’s sight. The PPH is reiterating the Westminster Larger Catechism answer to question 139: “the seventh commandment forbids: adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural desires” The L.C.Q. 139 proof texts for “sodomy and all unnatural desires” are Romans 1:24, Romans 1:26-27, and Leviticus 20:15-16.⁸

Though not stated explicitly in the AIC report, there seems to be an assumption that SSA is so deeply rooted it is beyond one’s control or the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Notice that on page 14 of the August 27 edition of “Pastoral Letter, Comparison, Presbytery Distribution”⁹ in the left (current Pastoral Letter) column you will find the AIC deletes the following: “In some cases, ~~SSA persons experience a transformational healing of orientation.~~” In its place the AIC proposes, “In some cases, those who experience SSA will not only grow in resisting same-sex desires, but may be open to biblical marriage and/or develop opposite-sex sexual desires.”

Seeing these two statements side by side, any reasonable person would conclude that the AIC's change is minimizing the transforming power of the Spirit.

According to the AIC, as long as a person is not yielding to unnatural desires they experience, they should be able to serve in church leadership. In other words, SSA is OK provided one is abstaining from homosexual relations. This assumption runs counter to what Scripture teaches about homosexuality. According to the Bible and historic Christian teaching, homosexual desires are intrinsically disordered, i.e., diametrically opposed to God's creative design for the sexual complementarity of male and female. You are in fact your biology in God's eyes. A professing follower of Christ experiencing ongoing SSA has significant spiritual and emotional problems that need pastoral and psychological counseling. Contrary to our culture's lie that homosexuality is normal, SSA is a distortion of personal sexuality and identity and would therefore be disqualifying for ordination. Our culture tells us that homosexuality is an unchanging fact of our nature, but Jesus says to us: "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Conclusion

The final report from the AIC will be available in Spring 2026. Given the amount of negative feedback across the EPC to the AIC report, we hope the final report will reject the conclusion of the 2022 GSC "that same-sex attraction by itself does not disqualify a candidate from consideration for ordination." Instead, the AIC could uphold historic orthodoxy and restore unity to the EPC through a final version of their report consistent with Scripture, the Westminster Standards, and the Position Paper on Homosexuality — all of which provide clarity on the question of SSA and ordination. The clear answer is "No." That should have been the counsel offered in 2022.

¹ See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Position-Paper-On-Homosexuality.pdf

² See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/SSA_Stated-Clerk-Guidance_12.6.22.pdf

³ Greg Johnson, *Still Time to Care: What We Can Learn from the Church's Failed Attempt to Cure Homosexuality* (Zondervan, 2021).

⁴ See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/the-pca-and-greg-johnson-the-real-story

⁵ See Minutes of the 36th General Assembly of the EPC, available at <https://epconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/J-GAMinutes/GAMinutes36.pdf>, p. 54.

⁶ See Minutes of the 14th General Assembly of the EPC, available at <https://epconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/1994-Minutes.pdf>, p. 95.

⁷ All quotations from the Position Paper on Homosexuality are taken from the 1994 edition, unless otherwise noted.

⁸ All quotations from the Westminster Standards are taken from *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms in Modern English* (Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 2004), available at <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/WCF-Online-Version.pdf>

⁹ See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/AIC_Pastoral-Letter-Comparison.pdf

Are All Sins Equal in the Sight of God?

*By David Weber
TE, New River Presbytery*

While teaching a Wednesday night class a few months ago on Kevin DeYoung's *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality*, I made a clarifying comment about the relative weight of different sins. Leaning on the wording of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, I explained that some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

It is more heinous to physically commit adultery than merely to lust. It is worse for a man to strike a woman than to strike another man, and worse still for a man to strike a young child. Worst of all would be for a father to maliciously strike his own daughter. All sins are not the same.

In relation to homosexuality, I explained that it is more grievous in the sight of God to commit homosexual sin than heterosexual sin, because these sins differ in kind. Following the class, a student thanked me for clarifying the issue. She told me that she had always been taught all sins were equal in God's sight, but it had never made sense to her either Biblically or experientially.

That conversation got me thinking about how deeply this misconception has shaped our thinking within the church. We live in an age that seeks to flatten moral distinctions — to make all sins equal, and in doing so to make us unable to discern their relative weight. Yet the Word of God and our confessional standards affirm that some sins are indeed more grievous in the sight of God than others.

Understanding this truth is not merely a matter of theological precision, it is deeply practical. It is essential to the health of the church, and particularly the health of church leadership. If we cannot distinguish the relative weight of sins, we will have no ability to discern who can fulfill the requirements for ordination.

For example, if one man struggles to be patient with his children and another struggles to keep from physically abusing them, we must be able to say that one of these struggles is disqualifying and one is not. One man needs encouragement and growth; the other needs counseling and perhaps a restraining order. If we cannot tell the difference, we are unfit to discern who should serve as an officer in Christ's church.

In the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, we are facing a crossroads concerning the ordination of those who experience ongoing same-sex attraction. Much of the debate is clouded by confusion over the relative weight of sin. I have heard some argue that if we disqualify those with homosexual desires, then we must also disqualify those with heterosexual desires. And if those

who experience heterosexual desire are disqualified, then no one could be ordained. But this reasoning misunderstands the distinction between the heinousness of different kinds of sin.

Are all sexual sins equal in the sight of God? And if not, how should that reality inform our current debate concerning the ordination of those who continue to experience unnatural same-sex desires?

Why Has This Confusion Arisen?

The idea that “all sins are equal” most likely stems from a misapplication of two deeply Biblical truths. First, all sin separates us from God. Even the smallest transgression makes us lawbreakers (James 2:10) and therefore rightly subjects us to God’s wrath and curse (Romans 6:23). God is holy, and no sin can stand in His presence.

Second, no sinner is beyond the sovereign grace of God. The Lord graciously called the murderous Saul to Himself and forgave the “chief of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Whether murderer, addict, liar, homosexual, or idolater, God forgives all who come to Him. He washes us in the blood of Christ and frees us from sin’s dominion.

However, these truths do not mean that all sins are equal in kind, degree, or consequence. To say otherwise is to ignore both Scripture and our Confession of Faith.

Biblical Evidence for Degrees of Sin

Scripture repeatedly affirms that there are degrees of sin and guilt. In Ezekiel 8, the prophet is carried by the Spirit into the temple courts of Jerusalem where the Lord unveils a shocking series of visions. Ezekiel first sees the elders of Israel burning incense to engraved images. Then he witnesses women weeping for the pagan god Tammuz. Finally, he sees men bowing down to the sun in the very courts of the Lord’s house. After each revelation, God says, “*But you will see still greater abominations than these*” (Ezekiel 8:6, 8:13, 8:15).

The progression is deliberate. The Lord shows Ezekiel how sin intensifies — moving from hidden chambers of idolatry to open desecration of His sanctuary. The language of “greater abominations” reveals that rebellion can deepen in gravity, and that sin becomes more heinous as it approaches what is most sacred.

A similar principle appears in John 19:11. As Jesus stands before Pilate, He declares, “*He who delivered Me over to you has the greater sin.*” Pilate is guilty, yet Jesus distinguishes degrees of culpability. Pilate sins through cowardice and expedience; the Jewish leaders and Judas sin through betrayal and unbelief. They commit the greater sin because they acted against greater light.

This same logic undergirds Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23. Condemning their hypocrisy, He says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness." God's commands are all righteous, yet some carry greater moral weight because they touch more directly on His character and the well-being of His people.

Taken together, these passages demonstrate that God distinguishes between lesser and greater sins. Sin is not a flat landscape; it rises in degrees of guilt and consequence. The nearer one stands to the truth, the greater the responsibility and therefore, the greater the sin when that truth is rejected.

The Westminster Standards

The Westminster Shorter Catechism affirms this Biblical truth:

Q. 83: Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

A. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

The Larger Catechism expands on this in Questions 150–152, teaching that sins are made more or less heinous by the circumstances, by the person offending, the parties offended, the nature and quality of the offense, and the time and place in which it occurs (WLC, Q.151).

Applying these categories to the question of ordaining a candidate who experiences homosexual desires, we see several relevant principles:

From the person offending: Sins are more grievous "if they be of riper age, greater experience or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others." Ministers are called to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3). When the shepherd himself is marked by disordered desire, it is particularly grievous. Our debate is not about whether same-sex attraction disqualifies one from salvation, but whether one marked by such disordered desires can rightly guide others.

From the parties offended: A sin is more heinous "if immediately against God, His attributes, and worship." Homosexuality explicitly rebels against God's created order. Heterosexual desire is a God-given desire; it has a proper aim and end. The sexual desire of a husband for his wife and a wife for her husband is good. When wrongly aimed, it is sinful but it remains a corruption of something good. Homosexual desire, by contrast, is an affront to God as Creator. This rebellion against God may explain why Leviticus categorizes homosexuality as an "abomination" (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

From the nature and quality of the offense: A sin grows more heinous if it is “against the light of nature.” Paul describes homosexual lusts in precisely this way: “exchanging natural relations for those that are contrary to nature” (Romans 1:26). One of the designed purposes of sexual desire is procreation. Homosexual acts are inherently sterile; they are, by kind, disordered and contrary to nature itself.

From the circumstances of time and place: Sin is worsened “if it be in public or scandalous.” In our cultural moment when the world celebrates pride in what Scripture calls shameful, the public affirmation of such desires by a minister is especially scandalous. We cannot allow even a hint of affirmation of homosexual desire, for to do so would publicly discredit the church’s witness to Biblical ethics.

Taken together, we see that same-sex attraction and desire are clearly more heinous in the sight of God than desires created and blessed by Him for uniting one man and one woman in marriage. This is not to argue that heterosexual sin is not heinous, nor that degrees of heterosexual sin cannot be disqualifying for ordination. Rather, it is to say that homosexual desire, by its very nature, is different in kind and must be addressed differently. We could say the same for other disordered sexual desires that Scripture calls abominations such as incest (Leviticus 18:6-17), bestiality (Leviticus 18:23), and cultic prostitution or sexual acts associated with idolatry (Deuteronomy 23:17-18).

Conclusion: Guarding the Flock

The editors of the Plumb Line have rightly stated:

“Neither a person who self-identifies as a ‘gay Christian,’ nor one who continues to experience ongoing same-sex attraction — regardless of how they label it — should be considered a qualified candidate for ordination in the EPC.”¹

This position is not born of prejudice or fear but of pastoral and Biblical fidelity. Ordination is not a right; it is a calling to exemplify holiness. While we show compassion to those who wrestle with same-sex attraction, we must also uphold the Biblical qualifications for office.

If a candidate’s desires remain persistently disordered in a way Scripture calls “against nature,” ordaining him would confuse the flock and compromise the church’s witness.

Why is the presence of homosexual desire in a pastor different from heterosexual desire? Because it is unnatural. It manifests the fall’s deeper corruption. It represents a disorder of affection that is, by its very nature, contrary to creation and to God Himself.

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

There are indeed degrees of evil in sin. To guard the ministry of the EPC, we must recover the Biblical wisdom to discern them. Let us stand firm upon the Word of God and guided by the wisdom of our Confession as we remain resolved to maintain the purity, peace, and unity of Christ's church.

¹ See www.presbyterianplumbline.org/a-red-line-on-ordination-and-same-sex-attraction-in-the-epc

A Moderator's Meanderings

By Gordon Miller
Moderator, 34th General Assembly

“Meanderings” definition: Rambling or passing from one topic to another.

I hope you find the following collection of articles, quotes, quips, and Scripture to be informative, edifying, and thought-provoking. This information is not as thorough or detailed as the other articles in the Plumb Line. But I hope to stimulate honest and open debate on a variety of topics and challenges facing the church — especially the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. With cultural changes coming at ever-increasing speed, all of us on the Plumb Line Editorial Board desire that believers will stand firm, rooted in Scripture. I pray that you read this content in the spirit intended: love for Christ and for each other.

Note: The views and opinions expressed here are mine alone, and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the full Editorial Board of the Plumb Line.

Books You Might Enjoy

Temptation and Sin

The Works of John Owen, Vol. 6. Banner of Truth Trust, 2020.

We all need a challenge from time to time. Owen’s writings are noted for their thoroughness, profundity, and rich spiritual insights. Example: “... be killing sin or it will be killing you.” The challenge we all face in the 21st century is our tendency to not take sin seriously. Owen will force you to look afresh at a scriptural understanding of sin and its deadly consequences, and demand that you be about the business of the mortification of sin. Especially relevant as we as a denomination give serious thought to how to look at temptation and concupiscence as we await the report of the AIC. Not an easy read, still striving to finish before the next General Assembly! “To master his works is to be a profound theologian” (Charles Spurgeon).

Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis

by Greg Bahnsen. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1998.

What’s better than one challenging book for the upcoming holidays? Two challenging books! As the weather turns cold, what better way to spend an evening than sitting by the fireplace with your favorite beverage and a book which will stretch your mind. If you are into apologetics, Van Til and Bahnsen are “A-listers” whether you are a presuppositionalist or not.

Bahnsen takes selected portions of Van Til's writings and guides the reader to a fuller understanding of Van Til. If it was the World Series, Bahnsen is the play-by-play guy as well as the color commentator as he explains and defends Van Til's writings. The author dives deeply into the general topic of apologetics and Western philosophy as he builds the case for presuppositional apologetics.

Articles of Interest

"Christianity's Real Crisis Isn't Atheism — But a Far more Sinister Deception"

Arch Kennedy

"Align, Lifestyle by Blaze Media" August 21, 2025

www.theblaze.com/align/christianitys-real-crisis-isnt-atheism-but-a-far-more-sinister-deception

Synopsis: "Progressive Christianity molds faith to fit culture, rather than calling culture to repent and follow Christ." Using language that sounds Biblical, it trades the authority of Scripture for the approval of culture. Kennedy gives several examples of how recent cultural trends infect the church. Suggested text for any number of issues facing the church is to ask yourself who or what is being appealed to. If it's Scripture, proceed. If it's theology or doctrine, proceed. If it's a cultural trend or movement, tread carefully.

"My Conversion to Christ & The Cost of Leaving My LGBTQ+ Lifestyle"

Rosaria Butterfield

"Institute for Faith and Culture" October 2, 2025

<https://instituteffc.org/my-conversion-to-christ-the-cost-of-leaving-my-lgbtq-lifestyle>

Dr. Butterfield tells of her incredible journey from same sex attraction to freedom in Christ. Following in Paul's footsteps, not only had she been on the wrong side, she attacked those whose faith of which she was so critical. She was gay and gay was good. While her conversion was not as dramatic as Paul's, she is now one of the leading speakers against Side B and its various mutations. Too often we doubt the incredible transformation that is possible when we are brought to the foot of the cross. Rosaria was gay, taught gay at the college level, lived the gay lifestyle — until she met Jesus.

"Bowing to the Machine"

Jeremy England

"Tablet Magazine" October 23, 2025

www.tabletmag.com/sections/belief/articles/bowing-machine-ai-idolatry

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

Even as an old curmudgeon, I recognize advances in technology are most often useful to humanity. Useful and inevitable. Whatever one thinks of Artificial Intelligence, it's here and is not going away. The author asks, "will it liberate and enrich us, or will it destroy us? Will we be served by AI or controlled by AI?" Drawing on the wisdom of the Old Testament, England points out how easily AI may become the next great golden idol.

Quotes

"Our virtues are, most often, only vices in disguise."

— Francois de La Rochefoucauld, 17th century French moralist and author.

"Despite their professed principles, both liberal Christianity and militant secularism are in fact quite intolerant of traditional religion, which both regard as an unfortunate hangover from an earlier time, something which retards the maturity of the human race. Thus, public battles over morality and society — abortion, euthanasia, pornography, the nature of education, and many other things — will become sharper rather than diminish."

—Touchstone Senior Editor James Hitchcock in an editorial he wrote for Touchstone in 1993. Quoted in Touchstone, September/October 2025.

(If you do not subscribe to Touchstone, A Journal of Mere Christianity, I recommend you give it a try.)

Humor

Your friends and I wanted to do something for your birthday. So we're having you put to sleep. (I know, a little on the dark side.)

A man and his wife were sitting in the living room and he said to her, "Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug." His wife got up, unplugged the TV and threw out all of his beer. (From the late, great Howard Shockley).

Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on your front door daily.

Practical Observations Concerning the AIC

1. I suspect the committee has received criticism from all sides of the debate. Moral of the story: no good deed goes unpunished.
2. We have made much of what can or cannot fit within the “ethos” of the EPC. I love the fact we get along for the most part, and look forward to our meetings where grace abounds, for the most part. I do not doubt for one second it is the goal of our members to live in peace and unity. As a member of the New River Presbytery, I recognize some were troubled by the filing of our overture that eventually gave rise to the AIC. Yet I am puzzled that little discussion appears to take place concerning peace and unity when addressing the efforts to join our denomination that have lit the fuse of disunity and conflict. While I have mellowed with age, I still struggle with habits learned in years of practicing law in the courtrooms of North Carolina. With that said, I would not join a club where my presence would upset the ethos of that organization and disrupt its peace and unity.
3. It pains me to think we may be headed to division. To those who sincerely believe Side B is acceptable, is it worth the cost to our denomination?
4. I have tried to understand those who disagree with me or find my being an editor of the Plumb Line disagreeable. I commit to remembering the love all of us have for this denomination and to do the best I can to always act out of love for our denomination.
5. Does anyone else find the recent letter from Moderator David Strunk and NLT Chairman Victor Jones confusing? While correctly recognizing the right of attenders at AIC/Presbytery meetings to comment on the work product of the AIC, they seem to be upset that Dr. Jeremiah has chosen to exercise the same right.

I welcome comments on the above reflections, including any criticism. Leave a public comment at www.presbyterianplumbline.org/a-moderators-meanderings-5 or send your emails to info@presbyterianplumbline.org

“What’s at Stake in the EPC?” Presbyterian Plumb Line Hosts Conversations on Biblical Fidelity and Ordination

The Presbyterian Plumb Line (PPL) recently hosted two Zoom meetings entitled “What’s at Stake in the EPC?” that have drawn more than 1,000 views on the PPL’s YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@thepresbyterianplumbline).

Featuring members of the PPL editorial board and former EPC Stated Clerk Jeff Jeremiah, the discussions brought together pastors, ruling elders, and concerned members to consider the denomination’s direction regarding same-sex attraction (SSA) and ordination.

Citing Amos 7:7-8, TE Peter Larson began by reminding everyone that “a plumb line is a tool for building ... our goal is not to bash the Church. Our goal is to build her up and make it better.” This reflects the heart of the PPL: educating elders, strengthening the church, and pursuing reformation with both grace and truth.

Concerns were raised regarding the recent drafts of the Ad Interim Committee on Same-Sex Attraction and Ordination Standards (AIC) reports. The main concern centers on the belief that the AIC’s revisions are “vague and permissive,” potentially opening the door to ordaining candidates who experience ongoing SSA.

TE Don Fortson explained, “Our concern is that the EPC is in danger of drifting away from our doctrinal beliefs and core biblical values.” TE David Weber emphasized this, saying, “Ordination is a high calling,” noting that it should be reserved for those “who embody the teachings and doctrine of the Bible and serve as a model.”

TE Jeff Jeremiah encouraged active participation by ruling elders, praising them as “the conservative conscience of the EPC.” He added, “This is a fight for the future of the EPC ... in this conflict, we are arguing unashamedly for fidelity to Biblical and confessional truth.” Jeremiah expressed hope that every congregation would be represented at the upcoming Assembly, declaring, “We’re standing up for what Jesus has already told us about His Church — a radiant church without stain or wrinkle.”

As Presbyteries continue to discuss the work of the AIC, with recommendations scheduled for consideration at the 46th General Assembly in June 2026, PPL editors encouraged readers to examine and consider signing the Red Line Statement at <https://sites.google.com/view/epcopenletter/redlinestatement>. This declaration affirms that “the high calling of ordination is incompatible with a settled identification as a ‘gay Christian’ or with ongoing patterns of same-sex attraction.”

The editors cautioned that adopting the AIC report in its current form could lead to division and potential departures, but they also expressed hope that open dialogue and decisive action could preserve denominational integrity. Weber reminded participants that “position papers and pastoral letters are not binding,” encouraging Sessions to consider submitting a constitutional amendment to the EPC’s Book of Government as an overture to their Presbyteries in order to enshrine this stance.

“What’s at stake,” Fortson concluded, “is nothing less than the EPC’s faithfulness to God’s Word and our witness before a watching world.”

Minority Report Submitted to the AIC

Members of Ad Interim Committee on Same Sex Attraction and Ordination (AIC) visited several fall presbytery meetings for “listening sessions” to receive further feedback on the August 27 edition of the AIC report. While this revised report was available to presbyteries in August for distribution, some presbyteries have yet to distribute this revision to their TEs and churches.

In some presbyteries, it is reported that AIC members simply made a pro-AIC presentation and provided little time for questions. In other presbyteries ample time was provided for multiple REs and TEs to voice their ongoing concerns and offer suggestions for positive modifications to the report which would make it more acceptable across the EPC.

One piece of AIC feedback, offered in several presbyteries, was an appeal for a Minority Report to be presented to the General Assembly that would provide a constitutional amendment similar to the one offered by New River Presbytery at the 44th General Assembly. The original New River Presbytery overture was an amendment to Book of Government (G.9-3C), which reads as follows: “Men and women who identify as homosexual, even those who identify as homosexual and claim to practice celibacy in that self-identification, are disqualified from holding office in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.”

TE Rufus Burton, a member of the AIC, made a presentation on the AIC revised report to the Presbytery of the Central Carolinas at its September 26, 2025, meeting. During the Q&A time, a number of REs and TEs spoke. TE Don Fortson made this statement:

“With the newly revised report now in hand, it is obvious that the committee is not inclined to offer such a Book of Order amendment which clarifies that only heterosexuals may serve in church office. Therefore, I appeal to the committee in fairness to provide a Minority Report which offers the elders of the EPC an opportunity to vote on such a constitutional amendment — an opportunity that was denied to them at the 2024 General Assembly.

This is a fair-minded request. Minority Reports are an important part of Presbyterian history, and our polity allows for them. Free speech and the right to present one’s views and vote your conscience is a fundamental value of Presbyterian government. A vote at General Assembly for either a Majority or a Minority Report will give the EPC a clear choice on where we want to stand as a denomination on same-sex attraction and ordination. If we don’t have the opportunity to vote on a Minority Report, the EPC will simply kick the can down the road, waiting to see which presbytery will be the first to accept or ordain a gay minister.

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

I implore the committee — in addition to the revised report we have, give us a Minority Report with a constitutional amendment that is consistent with the spirit of the New River Presbytery overture brought to the 2024 General Assembly. If the committee offers two full reports, it will remove ambiguity for commissioners at the 2026 General Assembly. Elders will be able to make an informed decision about the future of our denomination. Will we allow ordained same-sex attracted officers in the EPC or not? By adding a Minority Report, everyone will be able to vote on that specific question. A Majority Report says YES, a Minority Report says NO. Vote your conscience.

Please be reasonable with the brothers and sisters among us who do not think it is Biblical to have same-sex attracted ministers, elders, or deacons in our churches. Give us the chance to vote for a Minority Report. The EPC deserves a real choice. I'm asking for fairness to the host of us who do not believe persons with ongoing SSA are qualified for church office. Give us a chance to vote on this issue directly by having a minority report.

When TE Cameron Shaffer convened the AIC group, it was promised that there would be persons from both sides of the issue on the AIC. In other words, those supportive of the New River Presbytery overture would be represented on the AIC. Since the revised AIC report is quite obviously opposed to the New River Presbytery overture, one would think that there are committee members representing the other side who would be willing to support a minority report putting forward a constitutional amendment similar to the original New River Presbytery overture.

For this reason, some EPC TEs have drafted a Minority Report and presented it to members of the AIC on October 9 for their consideration. Will any member(s) of the AIC provide this option for REs and TEs who want to vote directly on the question of SSA and ordination in the EPC?

OGA Agrees to Changes in Financial Reporting

In response to concerns raised by eleven churches in the Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest, the EPC Office of the General Assembly (OGA) has agreed to make significant changes in financial reporting.

In a statement released on November 13, the OGA described the commitments they have made to expand and improve financial transparency:

- In addition to quarterly financial reports with details of the overall budget, the GA office will also include a link to the EPC Connect website with more detailed information on quarterly and year-to-date accounting, equivalent to the report received by the National Leadership Team.
- Quarterly financial reports will include a narrative to provide context and to explain actual-to-budget variances of more than 10 percent.
- Annual financial reports to General Assembly will create a separate set of financial reports for the three corporations within the EPC: General Assembly, World Outreach, and Benefit Resources, Inc. Previously, these had been grouped together making it difficult to understand.
- There will be several changes to budget presentations at General Assembly. In addition to the annual audit report, the GA staff will include a narrative to help explain income and expenses. The narrative also will include metrics to connect spending with outcomes.
- In addition, the National Leadership team agreed to address questions related to how unrestricted reserves are spent and how these expenditures are reported. The NLT agreed to discuss potential guidelines for such reporting, and to offer possible Acts of the Assembly to the 46th General Assembly to establish a threshold and standard for such reporting.

The agreement followed an October 13 meeting held in Gig Harbor, Wash., between the OGA and the eleven churches. The OGA was represented by Stated Clerk Dean Weaver, CFO Pat Coelho, Moderator David Struck, Moderator-Elect Jack Cathey, Julie Hawkins, and Joe Kim. The churches were represented by teaching and ruling elders John Carpenter, Brad Tedrow, Bill Hemming, and Mike McMillan.

The churches first raised concern about financial transparency in October 2024. In February 2025, the churches sent a letter to the National Leadership Team. In particular, the churches wanted to know why the OGA had failed to give account for \$1.2 million in unrestricted reserves that were spent during a three-year period between 2021 and 2024, and why these expenditures had not been previously reported.

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

During the 45th General Assembly, the churches met privately with representatives from the OGA and agreed to hold a future meeting to answer questions and discuss financial concerns.

“The extensive effort to meet face-to-face was well worth it,” said TE John Carpenter. “The conversations were substantive and there was much agreement around increased reporting that would be helpful to understand the mission and vision of the EPC.”

Moderator Dave Strunk praised the eleven churches for bringing the financial issues to light. “I’m grateful to these fellow presbyters for lovingly pushing us to be better, and for desiring that these conversations take place face-to-face.”

The statement released by the OGA indicated that there is still one point of disagreement regarding the degree of disclosure of individual GA staff compensation.

Kansas Church Joins the EPC

Submitted to the Plumb Line by Ben Ray, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Derby, Kan.

The latest changes to the Book of Order in the PC(USA) were the last straw for First Presbyterian Church in Derby, Kan. With much prayer and discussion, first among Session and then with the congregation, the vote was taken on April 6, 2025, to move to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The motion overwhelmingly passed and the process began.

Beginning conversations with Great Plains Presbytery were exciting and helpful. The help we received in the transition into Great Plains from the Stated Clerk, as well as other pastors and elders, was very encouraging. We were overwhelmed with the amount of prayer and love we felt from other churches within the Presbytery of Great Plains as we were moving into the EPC.

From the congregational vote to the PC(USA)'s Presbytery of Southern Kansas setting up an Administrative Commission (AC) to work with the Transition Team from FPC was quick work. It was not easy work, but it did bring our congregation together and solidified our decision to leave.

I have been the pastor in Derby since August 2000. I had been very active within the presbytery, even serving on administrative commissions for two other churches that had left and moved to the EPC. A paper on Gracious Separation for a church wanting to leave had been written and adopted into the manual of operations for the presbytery to help both entities work for the good of the Kingdom of God. But that was not followed this time.

Knowing that the process might not be as easy as it had been in the past, FPC's transition team moved the congregation forward with updates and encouragement that a move could be made. The final demand from the presbytery was \$500,000 cash payment to leave with all properties, assets, and rights that would normally belong to the presbytery.

The Session moved forward with a plan to acquire the money needed to move to the EPC. After paying off a \$1.6 million loan in April, the congregation was now faced with another \$500,000 to raise in 90 days. The "Best Gift" campaign was set in place asking the people of the congregation to give a one-time gift to help bring the amount that they would need to borrow to make the payment. Excitement built within the congregation and within 4 weeks, all \$500,000 had been raised and deposited in the bank for the payment to be made! All praise to God from whom all blessings flow!

When asked what it meant that the money had come in so fast and so willingly from 70 different families, the leadership of FPC simply said; we have 501,700 "YES" votes to move to the EPC!

The Presbyterian Plumb Line

Derby was received as a new local church in the Great Plains Presbytery on September 26, 2025, and we are excited and blessed to be part of the global movement of evangelistic Presbyterians!