

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On the final day of the 218th General Assembly meeting in San Jose, California, I can only imagine the variety of responses to this Assembly that exist within the churches of Eastminster Presbytery. Some are no doubt pleased that this Assembly took bold steps that may result in more inclusive ordination standards. Others are likely saddened and angered by these actions. Still others are probably wondering what all of this means.

A great many actions took place at this Assembly. Ordination was by no means the only issue to be dealt with by the commissioners. Nonetheless, the ordination issues are the ones that will no doubt receive the most attention. As General Presbyter, I pledge to provide our ministers, elders, and members, a variety of opportunities to learn the full implications of G.A. actions and to dialogue about how Eastminster Presbytery will respond. At this point in time, these are the things we know. The 1978 and 1979 authoritative interpretations are no longer in force and a new authoritative interpretation was approved by this Assembly. Authoritative interpretations do not go to presbyteries for concurrence. Nonetheless, our constitutional (Book of Order) standards have not changed. This General Assembly *recommends* changes to our ordination standards, but a majority of presbyteries *must concur* with the recommendations for the changes to be made. One of the actions taken by the General Assembly is to recommend changes to the so-called “fidelity and chastity” statement in the Book of Order. Eastminster Presbytery will have the opportunity to vote on this recommendation. For your information, I have attached the texts of the actions relating to ordination as well as the comments of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution of the PC(USA).

I encourage your attendance at the July 8 meeting of Eastminster Presbytery at the Westminster Church in Akron. We will have an opportunity to hear from and ask questions of our four commissioners to the 218th General Assembly.

Regardless of your response to the actions of the 218th G.A., I remind you that the purpose of our presbytery is clear: “to create and nurture growing, healthy, missional congregations.” Our commitment together is to serve and glorify Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

In Christ’s service together,
Dan Schomer