

# Memorial from Grace Presbytery Regarding the 1996 General Assembly Statement on Homosexuality as Incompatible with the Christian Lifestyle

(adopted by the 2022 General Assembly, see GA Minutes, page 122)

WHEREAS the General Assembly approved a resolution in 1996 on "Homosexuality" as a theological and social practice statement to guide the lower judicatories (sessions, presbyteries, synods), and

WHEREAS this 1996 resolution stated that homosexuality is incompatible with the Christian lifestyle and that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church should not condone the ordination of practicing homosexuals as deacons, elders or ministers of Word and Sacrament (1996 GA minutes, page 313 -link below), and

WHEREAS at the end of the 1996 statement, the resolution paraphrases the CP constitution stating that only presbyteries (ministers CF 6.30) and church sessions (elders and deacons CF 2.91) conduct ordinations, and

WHEREAS the Confession of Faith states the responsibility of the General Assembly is to "bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously affecting the church" (CF 9.4.b), and give oversight to lower judicatories (CF 9.4. g), and resolve divisive issues (CF 9.4.k), and

WHEREAS the 1996 statement on homosexuality has been posted on the homepage of the General Assembly office's website for many years (<https://www.cumberland.org/gao> see "General Assembly Statement on Homosexuality"), leaving the impression that this is the position of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and

WHEREAS some ministers, church leaders, presbyteries and sessions interpret the General Assembly's statement on homosexuality to be nonbinding on church sessions and presbyteries, because the 1996 statement says it is "Not to be understood as a rule or principle for ordination," then the statement explains General Assembly cannot constitutionally "usurp the authority of presbytery or session to ordain," and

WHEREAS there are ministers, church leaders, presbyteries and sessions who are advocates and promoters of the ordination of LBGTQ+ persons, which does include homosexual practices, and

WHEREAS other ministers, church leaders, presbyteries and sessions interpret the 1996 General Assembly statement as clear guidance (oversight CF 9.4) for lower judicatories not to ordain practicing homosexuals, and

WHEREAS in the light of different views expressed about accepting or not accepting LBGTQ+ ordinations in presbyteries and church sessions, and in the light of different opinions about the meaning of the 1996 statement, and considering the possibility of ordinations that some and not others would accept, the General Assembly must assume its constitutional responsibility and give lower judicatories guidance on LBGTQ+ ordinations, and

WHEREAS the General Assembly can quickly bring clarity to this issue by simply accepting or denying this memorial, thus affirming or rescinding the 1996 statement about homosexuality as the position of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

**THEREFORE, be it resolved that:** Consistent with the 1996 General Assembly statement on homosexuality, the position of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church is that homosexuality as a practice is not in keeping with Christian lifestyle and that the ordination of church leaders who are practicing homosexuals is not compatible with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church's theology and moral values.

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IN 1996 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON  
HOMOSEXUALITY (General Assembly Minutes, page 313)

Whereas, in our society today, there are many issues which concern the people of God, one such issue being the rise in acceptance of and openness toward homosexual activity, and we, of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, believe there is a need to state clearly our understanding of the Biblical teaching about homosexual activity, and

Whereas, it is also our desire to set forth our position regarding the appropriate response of Christians and the church to this critical issue, especially in light of the trend in some Christian bodies toward the ordination of practicing homosexuals, and

Whereas we believe the scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired word of God, the source of authority for faith and practice, and therefore, contemporary sexual attitudes and behavior are to be judged in the light of the Bible rather than the Bible being reinterpreted, modified, or overturned by current cultural trends in thought and behavior,

Be it resolved that the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church go on record affirming that Biblical teaching makes it clear that the practice of homosexuality is a sin, yet with the understanding that while God loves the sinner, He hates the sin, and His grace is available to all, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" John 3:17

Be it further resolved, that since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with a Christian life style and since officers of the church must be "examples to the flock" the General Assembly go on record stating that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church does not condone the ordination of practicing homosexuals as Deacons, Elders or Ministers of Word and Sacrament; and

Be it further resolved, that the General Assembly state as its position that we, as Christians who are ourselves sinners redeemed by the grace of God, must reach out to those persons who are struggling with homosexuality, offering them Christian love, education, friendship, therapy and intercession to the end that they and we may experience true wholeness through the freeing, renewing grace of God in Jesus Christ.

This statement is to be understood as a theological and social statement and not to be understood as a rule or principle for ordination but never to usurp the authority of presbytery or session to ordain.