



Langhorne Presbyterian Church

Sharing the Life of Jesus

Langhorne, Pennsylvania · langhornepres.org · Bill Teague, Pastor

January 17, 2012

Dear LPC Family and Friends,

Tomorrow, Elder Doug Jenkins and I will leave Philadelphia for just a little over 48 hours in Orlando, Florida, for what is being called the Covenanting Conference of the [Fellowship of Presbyterians](#).

First, we ask for your prayers as we join over 2,100 fellow Presbyterians for this short time together.

Secondly, we would like you to know a little about what we expect to take place in Orlando. You may recall that just about a year ago a group of concerned pastors issued [a letter to the denomination](#) naming some concerns about a long-term drift away from our core beliefs and missional commitments. They also proposed some steps that might be taken by those who agreed with their assessment – steps that were creative, positive and life-giving. They hoped to create a broadly based Fellowship of Presbyterians that might, in time, provide a denominational home for congregations that for missional and theological reasons could no longer maintain their membership in our PCUSA – congregations that would seek formal *separation* from the denomination. But they also envisioned a network or association of continuing PCUSA congregations that would allow for *differentiation* from some of the current policies and directions of the larger denomination.

The first gathering of the Fellowship of Presbyterians was held in Minneapolis last summer. Doug and I attended and were extremely encouraged by the depth of fellowship, worship and faith we experienced. We told our session about our experience and the plans for a second gathering in Orlando in January. The elders voted to endorse our participation in this second event. Though no other formal votes have been taken, my sense of the Session is that at this point we feel a need for LPC to *differentiate* itself from some of the decisions and directions of the PCUSA.

I concur. Specifically, I am concerned about theological drift – we simply have a hard time confessing Jesus as Lord and declaring the Bible's authority in our lives. I see institutional dysfunction – we have passed a series of measures that say our only standard is no standard, not just in the contentious areas of ordination and human sexuality, but across the board. We seem confused about our missionary call – the most recent edition of *Presbyterians Today* magazine reported the arrest of a PCUSA official for civil disobedience in a protest against the details of the debt limit settlement last summer and a local church's planting of an organic garden and construction of a labyrinth on their front lawn as best case examples of evangelism (January/February 2012, pages 6 and 31).

As we understand it, in Orlando Doug and I will be given the opportunity to endorse the final versions of the Theological and Polity Statements of the Fellowship of Presbyterians (copies of the draft versions are available [here](#) and [here](#)). This endorsement, should we choose

to make it, will be on our behalf only. The Session has not authorized us to make any commitments on its behalf. We will report our findings to the Session and should the elders decide to continue their exploration of ways we might relate to the Fellowship of Presbyterians, we would expect to provide forums and materials to keep you informed.

These are difficult times for our denomination and the need to differentiate ourselves from some of its actions and some of what it has come to stand for is both widely and sadly felt. But just as we differentiate *from* certain things, so we differentiate *to* being a joyful body of believers marked as those seeking to worship, grow, connect, serve and share in the name of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanks for your prayer and for your hope!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill".

Bill Teague