

# Noroton Presbyterian Church

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Just this year the denomination we belong to, The Presbyterian Church in the USA, has passed a new resolution which will change the national standards which have guided the process of selecting deacons, elders and pastors. Members have asked us, what does this mean for Noroton? Nothing in this new provision will force Noroton to change any of our qualifications for our church leaders. The session wants you to know that **we are maintaining the “fidelity to marriage between a man and a woman and chastity in singleness” guideline for all officers and pastors.** This has been our guideline for all of our history and your pastors believe that it best communicates the Biblical Tradition and the worldwide standards of leadership maintained in the Christian Church.

The new policy allows local bodies to determine who they believe are fit to become their officers and pastors. While most Presbyterian churches have tried to welcome people from all walks of life who are looking for a Savior and willing to learn the ways of Christ, our churches have always held our officers and pastors to the highest standards of integrity and morality. The provision of our denomination’s constitution used to be that our elders, deacons and pastors, “*are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic standard of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and woman, or chastity in singleness.*” That provision was recently replaced with new language which will now read, “*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... Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.*” While this language is ambiguous, many observers now believe that some churches will choose to ordain to church leadership positions sexually active heterosexuals or same sex individuals in committed relationships. This issue is part of a 30-year debate in the Presbyterian Church and while this change in our constitution was not a great surprise, it is definitely a shift in our polity (which is how a church governs itself). While it may sound like a change in our denomination’s theology, it is actually a change in our polity, acknowledging that there are divergent theologies in the denomination we belong to. Each church may now determine the type of leadership they believe is spiritually and morally right for them.

The session has decided to study this matter so we can assess the impact this change will have on the Presbyterian Church. If our members have any questions or concerns about this or any matter, please speak with a pastor or an elder. We also encourage all of us to pray for our church, our mission partners and our denomination as we sort through the implications of this change. Finally, let’s give thanks that the Holy Spirit is still alive and active in local congregations like our own and in our network of relationships with other believers and our mission partners. Proverbs 3:5, 6 is a great source of guidance and strength when we find our selves in times of transition,

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
And lean not on your own understanding;  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
And he will make your paths straight.*

Your Pastor, Partner and Friend,  
Sam Schreiner