

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Fifty years ago, at the 1974 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., David Sindt stood on the Assembly floor and held a hand-written sign that read, "Is anyone else out there gay?" This act of bravery and call for justice birthed the organization that would eventually become More Light Presbyterians.

As we gather in Salt Lake City, UT, we are not just commemorating this 50-year milestone but also looking toward the future. The Olympia Overture (POL-01) represents a significant opportunity for the Presbyterian Church (USA) to continue its journey towards full inclusion, celebration, and care for LGBTQIA+ people in the church. This is not just a moment of progress but a beacon of hope, a testament to our commitment to justice and love.

The Board of Directors of More Light Presbyterians supports the work of the Polity Committee and its recommendations regarding both sections of POL-1. The Board recommends that the commissioners approve both parts.

Part A would expand the current list of categories against which our denomination must not discriminate. The current list in F.10403 includes "race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction." If approved, this section of the overture would add "gender identity and sexual orientation" to this list.

Part B of the overture recommends that G-2.0104b be changed to read, "the council responsible for ordination should examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination should 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-4.0404) and the principles of participation, representation, as found in F.41.0403."

In our reading, and based on conversations with the overture's chief advocates, Part B is concerned not with policing theological belief but with promoting behaviors of respect for all people across many lines of difference and privilege. If used effectively, it prompts conversations about a candidate's commitments to

serve in alignment with the denomination's stated policies and values, as well as a vision for an expansive and inclusive church. In 2024, expecting candidates to consider and articulate how to lead in a diverse denomination should be the bare minimum.

We, the Board, also wish to call attention to the fact that this overture protects other vulnerable populations. The transparency that Part B asks of our ordination candidates will help to unmask convictions at odds with a diverse church. This will serve our denominational goal of creating the unified church of differences we crave rather than a split one with two camps of similar-minded people who do not interact. Let us not be led by the fear of what might happen and instead respond to the harm that has occurred, in the way those who have been harmed have asked us to.

More Light Presbyterians stands on the shoulders of many prophetic leaders, communities, congregations, and coalitions. The Rev. David Sindt is one of those people, and there are many others whose names we know and whose names we do not know. Their courage and dedication have paved the way for us, inspiring us to continue the work of justice and love.

As the Brief Statement of Faith reminds us,  
*"In a broken and fearful world  
the Spirit gives us courage  
to pray without ceasing,  
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace."*

This call is well lived out in adopting Overture POL-01. May the Spirit give the General Assembly the courage to take this step towards justice and love.

In Grace and Peace,  
The Board of Directors of More Light Presbyterians

- Jessica Vazquez Torres (she/her/ella), Co-Moderator, More Light Presbyterians
- Mx. Kate Davoli (they/them), Ruling Elder, Pittsburgh Presbytery
- Rev. Ashley McFaul-Erwin (she/her), Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Chicago
- Rev. Brooke Scott (she/her), Teaching Elder, New Castle Presbytery
- Avery Arden (they/ze), Ordination Candidate, Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley
- Rev. Ófe Abreu Rosario (he/him), Teaching Elder, Presbytery of Olympia
- Dr. Matt Webb (he/him), Treasurer, More Light Presbyterians
- Rev. Ann Deibert (she/her), Teaching Elder, Mid-Kentucky Presbytery
- Rev. Adrian White (they/them), Teaching Elder, Mid-Kentucky Presbytery
- Rev. Pamela Anderson (she/her), Teaching Elder, Presbytery of San Francisco
- Rev. Michael Livingston (he/him), Teaching Elder, Retired.
- Cheri Choy (she/her), Member of More Light Presbyterians.