

Denominational Concerns Open Forum #3

# **The Meaning and Importance of Church Discipline**

# Basics of the Church Discipline

How does the Church hold itself accountable under God?

Tonight you will hear about:

- The disciplinary system of the PC USA
- Our approach to Church discipline at First Presbyterian
- Our approach to Church discipline within Central Washington Presbytery

# Church discipline within the PC USA

Our disciplinary system

## The Church Court System of the PC USA

- Permanent Judicial Commissions
- Four levels
  - The Session
  - The Presbytery
  - The Synod
  - The General Assembly
- Appeals

# Church discipline within the PC USA

A recent history of constitutional changes within the PC USA

## Ordination Policy History

- The Authoritative Interpretation of 1978
- The Fidelity and Chastity Clause-1996
- The Peace, Unity and Purity Report-2006
- The Authoritative Interpretation-2008
- Our current stance-local ordination and national recognition

# Church discipline within the PCUSA

Recent judicial actions and their implications

- Ordination Standards
  - Paul Capetz
- Three personal cases
  - Carol Howard Merrit
  - John Shuck
  - Two examinations on the floor of Beaver Butler

# Church discipline within the PCUSA

Recent actions related to the ministry of proclamation

- General Assembly policy statements and their effects
- The Stated Clerk's Office
- The PC USA Washington Office
- An example from our statement on Israel

# Church Discipline at FPCW

Disciplinary policy at FPCW

- A Matthew 18 and 5 approach
  - Level one-dealing directly with the person
  - Level two-dealing directly with the person with a mediator
  - Level three-dealing directly with the person with the Session mediating
- All discipline is to have these goals:
  - The restoration of the sinner-Galatians 6:1
  - The exercise of mercy-Jude 20-25, James 2:12-13
  - The building up of the body-1 Thessalonians 5:8-11
- Ideally, all discipline will be dealt with on level one and no one but leadership will know about it.

# Church Discipline at FPCW

Disciplinary policy at FPCW

The core of discipline at FPCW

- Clear belief statements to which we subscribe
- Trained Biblical leadership
- The will to practice discipline
- The love to practice discipline

# Church Discipline in Central Washington Presbytery

The track record of our Presbytery

- The Presbytery's stance on discipline
- The Presbytery's record of discipline
- The Presbytery's limitations within the realm of discipline

# The Implications of the Church Discipline issue

What does all this mean?

- FPCW is committed to the exercise of Godly, restorative, merciful discipline as prescribed in the Scriptures.
- The Presbytery has done everything in her power to stand with us in this regard.
- The PC USA can argue that it has technically enforced its own Constitution but it lacks the constitutional ability to enforce the Spirit or clear intent of its own Constitution.