

Overture to the 87th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (2021)
From the Presbytery of the Southeast, approved at her stated meeting of April 2021

Whereas “the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers distinct from the civil magistrate” (WCF 30:1), and that “there is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ” (Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22, WCF 25:6);

Whereas the following are contrary to Scripture and injurious to our Savior’s exclusive rights to dictate to the church when, where, and how she should meet, conduct her services, and carry out her prophetic and witness bearing mandate in the world;

1. Applications of God’s Word maintaining that the civil government may dictate rules and regulations for the church or her pastors that infringe upon her worship, doctrine, and God-given ministry in the world to urge men to turn from their sins and idols to serve the living and true God, see Romans 13:1-7.
2. Applications of God’s Word maintaining that God gives civil government unlimited authority in areas beyond those pertaining directly to the sword of justice, crime and punishment, rewarding those who do good, and the taxation required to uphold the laws of the land, see Romans 13:1-7.

Whereas God has humbled kings for their rebellion and presumption (Dan. 4:34-37), testified to His constant warfare against statist totalitarianism and globalist hubris (Gen. 11:1-7, Rev. 14:9-12; 15:2; 17:14; 20:4), blessed His people when they have resisted ungodly dictates of men in order to obey Him (Dan. 3:18; 6:10; Acts 5:29, 41), and instituted the kingdom of His Son to overturn the kingdoms of this world (Dan. 2:44-45; Matt. 28:18; Rev. 11:15);

Whereas the civil magistrate has no God-given authority to forbid the church to gather for worship or fellowship, to forbid her to sing God’s praises in her worship, to forbid her to proclaim His authority over men and nations, nor to forbid her to testify to all civil magistrates His rule over them in His exalted position as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev 19:16); and that all men in all places of authority be earnestly exhorted to “Kiss the Son, lest they perish, when His wrath is kindled but a little” (Ps. 2:12);

And whereas, although we are commanded to “obey every ordinance of men” (1 Pet. 2:13) and to “give honor to whom honor is due” (Rom. 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:17), this does not warrant the state or its agencies to intrude into other jurisdictions that God has ordained, namely, the church and the family, but calls us to obey and honor God-given authority in its proper sphere. These commands in Scripture do not legitimize tyranny or statist overreach, for “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His word, or beside it in matters of faith and worship” (WCF 20:2). We ought always to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Be It Therefore Resolved that Christ’s ministers and elders be encouraged to resume all the stated worship services and ministries that He has commanded in His word; to do so wisely, remembering that God has not commanded us to meet in buildings normally set apart for worship, but to meet for worship where we can.

Be It Further Resolved that whereas some of our beloved pastors and churches are in places of severe and unjustified restriction upon their ministries and worship, that they be encouraged wisely to endeavor to resume public, corporate worship in ways that are perhaps unusual but are nonetheless legitimate. Whether in private homes or open fields, they must do so not as a political stand in arrogant defiance of civil authority, but in humble obedience to God (Acts 4:19-20).

Be it Further Resolved that her members be encouraged to obey His command to assemble together and not to forsake His worship (Heb. 10:25), and to honor Him even at the peril of their liberties and lives; thereby upholding His honor in the world and His exclusive authority in His church (WCF 25:2, see also Article 28 of the Belgic Confession).

Be it Further Resolved that the entire church be encouraged to humble herself under God's evident chastening of us, setting aside days of prayer and fasting to entreat the Head of the church to have mercy upon us, with the following emphases:

1. That He might preserve us in the liberty that He has purchased for us with His own blood, and that liberty for which our forefathers and mothers in the faith gave their lives to hand down to us.
2. That He might send seasons of refreshment from His exalted position at the right hand of the Father, pour His Spirit of wisdom, counsel, and might upon us, and draw multitudes to the hope of the gospel and everlasting glory by granting faith and repentance unto life (Acts 3:19-21).

Humbly and Prayerfully Offered for the glory of Jesus Christ over all men and nations, the maintenance of His exclusive authority in the church, and in solemn recognition that Satan and those led captive by him are doing all in their power to diminish His honor in the world (Ps. 2:2-3). The enemies of Christ continue to make war against His gospel, infringe upon His worship, persecute His people, and therefore erect again the old Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-7). Against this monument of human pride and rebellion, God has forever declared His warfare (Rev. 19:15). We bless His name that He has repeatedly delivered His people, and humbly encourage all brothers and sisters in Christ that we are called again in our times to oppose the kingdom of darkness with the sword of the Spirit, in defense of our Savior's church and kingdom (Eph. 6:11-13). This we must do even with our lives, should He call and bless us to suffer shame for His name or seal His truth with our blood (Acts 5:41), being strengthened by His promise, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:11).