

# Pastoral Perspective

First Presbyterian Church (USA)

2008 Lenten Season

## Resources for Prayer and Fasting

- *The Struggle of Prayer*, Donald Bloesch. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980
- *A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer*, John Piper. Wheaton, IL: Cross Way Books, 1997
- *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Richard Foster. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988

**presbyterians for renewal**  
*Mobilizing the leaders of congregations within the PC(USA) to be biblically faithful and missionally minded in their service to Jesus Christ.*



www.pfrenewal.org

## Inside this issue:

A Call to Fast and Pray throughout the Lenten Season in 2008

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## A Call to the First Presbyterian Church (USA) in New Castle, Indiana

*A Call to Fast and Pray for the PC (USA)*

In the Old and New Testaments fasting and prayer occurred during times of national crisis, personal crisis, a sense of true sorrow over sin, and a need to humble one's self and return to God. People also fasted and prayed for God's help when facing new missionary challenges (Matthew 4:1-2; Acts 13: 3). Fasting involves abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. (*Celebration of Discipline*, p. 49)

The Lord implored the people of Joel's day to "Return to me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments. Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil." Joel 2:12-13



**How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.**  
**—Psalms 119:103, 105 (NIV)**

The church in our nation is facing crises that undermine its peace, unity and purity. These crises are complex, and will not be soon resolved by "mere human words" or verbal battles. At its core, the problem is spiritual, and therefore the spiritual solutions will come from Christ.

**Presbyterians for Renewal** is issuing a call: **Pastors, elders and members of congregations, presbyteries and synods are called to set aside one day each week during Lent for prayer, repentance and fasting.**

*This call is issued to all – from the single member to the entire church – as we seek together to hear and to participate in God's healing renewal, especially in those arenas in which we have influence and need to repent. The commitment to this season of repentance is for each person or church's own design and can be entered to at any point during Lent.*

From now on through the following weeks, we are encouraged to fast and pray for the realization of God's vision for the church in our community, nation and world. To God be the glory!

## PC(USA) High Court Rules "Fidelity and Chastity" Standard Remains Binding

**Tuesday, February 12** — The PC(USA)'s highest court issued a landmark decision that has direct bearing on the intense debate over ordination standards in the PC(USA). For the last twenty months, a confusing debate has raged on the meaning of a new "authoritative interpretation" (AI) of the constitution passed by the 2006 General Assembly. Indeed congregations have left the PC(USA) in the last months, citing this new AI as a primary cause. The new AI appeared as though it

would allow sessions and presbyteries to ordain candidates who were in open violation of our denomination's constitutional standards for ordination, including the biblical "Fidelity and Chastity" standard. In addition, two presbyteries had cited this new AI as justification for their decisions to allow open departures from the "Fidelity and Chastity" standard. However, in three recent rulings, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) has

affirmed that no ordaining body (session or presbytery) has the right to ordain a candidate who is in violation of constitutional standards, including the "Fidelity and Chastity" standard expressed in the *Book of Order* (G-6.0106b). With these new GAPJC rulings, we can now rest assured that our standards for ordination in the PC (USA) continue to reflect the clear teaching of Scripture and the plain meaning of our constitution. (See [www.GA2008.com](http://www.GA2008.com) for more.)