

Proud to be a Presbyterian

I would like to offer a contrary view to Rick Evans' Dec. 21 letter "Swimming against Presbyterian current." As a lifelong Presbyterian (80 years), I am proud to be a part of a church that does not turn away from difficult issues about which we are seldom in agreement, but which are central to the human condition in our time.

Presbyterians have not abdicated our insistence on the right of the nation of Israel to exist in peace, free from terrorist attacks. But we also recognize the rights of Palestinians, and we have protested the indignities to which the Palestinian people have been subjected.

It is careless to say that Presbyterians endorse the tactics of Hezbollah. We have talked with Hezbollah leaders because they are the chosen leaders of a large population, and we believe that communication with those who may be our adversaries is essential to addressing problems of human community.

Presbyterians did not vote to divest our holdings in companies doing business with Israel. We voted to study this as a possible strategy to raise questions about tactics. After due consideration, we rejected this strategy. Presbyterians are likewise critical of many policies of our own government, but this does not mark us as "against" the United States.

As for the study paper that considers new language concerning the Trinity, a straightforward study of Scripture reveals a rich variety of names for God, and shows that nowhere is God named "Trinity" – this is a product of post-biblical reflection and argumentation.

The serious student of the life and ministry of Jesus and the meaning of Christian discipleship finds diversity of language – significantly shaped by historical context and demands of changing situations.

Historically, Presbyterians have taught that no human institution holds the last word in the language of faith but that we must seek humbly for fresh, authentic understandings of the Scripture and Christian discipleship, in light of experience with the guidance of the Spirit.

If continuing decline in the Presbyterian Church is due to contested issues of no easy resolution, or from efforts to achieve authentic voice in issues of modernity, I would not for a minute turn away from such challenges for the sake of enhanced popularity and membership increase. To do so would be a betrayal of Jesus Christ, whom we seek to serve and to follow.

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