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Rev. Judy R. Fletcher, Executive

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Congregations and Pastors
c/o Stated Clerk
Congregations in the Synod of the Sun

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because I care about you, I'm sharing observations about churches across our synod following General Assembly and our "Next Steps" meeting in Dallas last week.

With leaders from all 11 presbyteries in this synod, we worshipped, prayed and considered the needs of Presbyterians.

In congregation after congregation there are people like you trying to be faithful to Christ and diligent in mission and ministry. That was just as true before the Assembly.

Here is some of what I heard from the 65 presbytery representatives at our meeting in Dallas:

a. All 11 presbyteries affirmed that the *Book of Order* has not changed and the ordination of non-celibate gay and lesbian persons is still prohibited. Presbyteries expressed commitment to uphold our constitution.

b. Presbyteries recommitted themselves to be diligent in the whole process of accepting inquirers and candidates and of ordaining ministers to word and sacrament.

c. Participants reminded themselves to read the actual documents passed by the Assembly, like the paper on the Trinity, and not allow ourselves to be overly influenced by the public press and others who distort the facts.

d. I saw your presbytery leaders leave this gathering committed and enthused with new hope for the work in our churches and presbyteries.

Many people in this synod and elsewhere feel hurt by the actions of our denomination. I hope we will all be gentle with each other and sensitive to the variety of feelings our fellow Christians have. I personally am avoiding words like schism, crisis and brokenness and instead simply refer to these "fragile times" in the life of our church.

Friends, my belief and hope is that we will calm ourselves and our language and focus on being faithful to our God and on loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are still the same people,


forgiven sinners who love our God and who are striving to be faithful. Let's commit to doing what each of us can do to add to the health of our beloved Church.

Let us remember Paul's words to the Ephesians: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4: 1-3

I know so many of you and am grateful for your ministry and witness. Let us rise above the fray and prepare to say again, "Here I am, Lord, send me."

Please share this letter with your congregation. May God's richest blessings be with each of you and your congregation this day and in the days to come.

Sincerely in Christ,



Rev. Judy R. Fletcher
Executive
Synod of the Sun