

IRPC Advisory Committee

Report to Presbytery - Spring 2021

In early August 2020, our committee was asked to serve by the Immanuel RPC session and appointed by the Ad Interim Commission. We were given four tasks by the IRPC session: 1) Provide general counsel and oversight on incidents of abuse which had taken place; 2) Aid in the process of repentance and reconciliation; 3) Provide counsel regarding balancing the need for transparency and privacy; and 4) Review recommendations that result from the investigation. We were also given a copy of IRPC's Child Protection Policy and a preliminary investigative report by the IRPC session investigative team (Nate Pfeiffer and Zachary Blackwood) detailing multiple acts of abuse against multiple children in church settings.

From August 2020 to January 2021, our committee met a total of 26 times. On numerous occasions, we met with the IRPC session, as well as with various parties involved. Being an advisory committee, we sought to give the best counsel we could, both when requested and not requested. Regretfully, not all of our recommendations were followed by the IRPC session, including some of what we believe to be our most important words of counsel. Our concern over this decision was expressed in writing to them in early November 2020, along with some additional words of caution regarding the path they were currently pursuing in handling this situation.

Towards the end of 2020, we also sought to help key parties be reconciled to one another by offering a binding mediation proposal, but this was declined. Since our committee lacked presbytery's authority, one of these parties (along with another family) petitioned the Ad Interim Commission for the appointment of a judicial commission to investigate the situation. When our committee was asked to meet with the Ad Interim Commission regarding the possible formation of this commission, we expressed our agreement with the petition and fully supported the commission's appointment.

Though we cannot dismiss ourselves as a committee, on January 5, 2021, we informed the IRPC session that we planned to cease operating as an advisory committee effective immediately. Our reasons were as follows: 1) Since a judicial commission had been appointed, their session should work with them, seek their counsel, and be guided by their wisdom; and 2) Since some IRPC members were starting to worship at the RPC of Lafayette, our chairman now had a conflict of interest and could no longer serve. In February 2021, we met with the newly formed judicial commission per their request.

It has been our pleasure to serve in this capacity, though we grieve at the circumstances, and hope that the Lord has been pleased to use us in some way. Our prayers continue to be for the IRPC session and congregation.

Sincerely in Christ,

Adam Niess, chairman

David Hanson

Wade Mann

Recommendations

1. That this committee be dismissed.