



Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southside Indianapolis

May 9, 2023

Mr. Ben Manring
10285 S Auburn Hills Drive
Edinburgh, Indiana. 46124

Dear Ben,

We, the Southside Session, are formally writing to you to address your email with the subject line “West Lafayette church issue as related to our elder election” that was distributed to many in the congregation on April 7, 2023.

Our Lord and his apostles give commands in scripture to the church describing how we are to treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. A survey of numerous New Testament texts that include the words “one another” yield a wealth of wisdom. We are commanded to *love* one another, to pursue *unity* and *peace* with one another, and to demonstrate an attitude of *humility* and *deference* to one another. For example:

*This is My commandment, that you love **one another**, just as I have loved you.* John 15:12

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to **one another** with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to **one another**; ... Be of the same mind toward **one another**. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.* Romans 12:9-10, 16

*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with **one another** in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Ephesians 4:1-3

Our Catechisms’ exposition of God’s law makes it clear that the duties required, and the sins forbidden demand that we give careful attention when dealing with “the good name of our neighbor.”

LC Q. 144. *What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?*

A. The duties required in the ninth commandment are, **the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor**, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in **their good name**; sorrowing for and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

LC Q. 145. *What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all **prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors**, as well as our own, **especially in public judicature**; giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth; passing unjust sentence, calling evil good, and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the truth,

undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful or equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of the truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstructing intentions, words, and actions; flattering, vainglorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others; denying the gifts and graces of God; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession; unnecessary discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense; evil suspicion; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any; endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy; scornful contempt, fond admiration; breach of lawful promises; neglecting such things as are of good report, and practicing, or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

At our April 11, 2023, session meeting, the elders judged your email to be an uncharitable communication about brothers and sisters in Christ and disruptive to the peace and harmony of the church.

Uncharitable communication — In the email, you publicly brought into question the fitness of a man to serve as an elder, one who is a member in good standing and presently serving well as a deacon. *For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:13).* If elected by the congregation, he will in due time be examined by Session before proceeding to serve.

Disruptive to the peace and harmony of the church — In the email, you have shown disrespect for the courts of the church by taking it upon yourself to instruct the congregation directly how they should vote in the elder election. Session has given the instruction we deem appropriate and necessary for the elder election and left it as a matter of private judgment for communicant members to vote for qualified men. Our Presbyterian system of government provides a process for appealing decisions of a court. You have circumvented this process.

We as your elders and brothers in Christ judge that your April 7, 2023, email is worthy of censure. *Therefore, this Court of Christ's Church sadly and solemnly rebukes you for your sin. You are commanded to give evidence of sincere repentance, and to be more watchful, studying to know and do the will of God.*

We are praying that you will receive our rebuke with godly humility and follow with godly actions of repentance and reconciliation.

Yours in the Chief Shepherd,
The Session of Southside Indianapolis Reformed Presbyterian Church



Reformed Presbyterian Church
of Southside Indianapolis

September 5, 2023

Relevant Excerpts from Session Meeting Minutes for the October 6, 2023 hearing

April 11, 2023 – stated meeting

Ben Manring email

It was moved and seconded that session issue Ben Manring a letter of rebuke for his email sent April 7 to many in the Southside Indianapolis congregation that we judge to be an uncharitable communication about brothers and sisters in Christ and disruptive to the peace and harmony of the church. The motion carried.

May 9, 2023 – stated meeting

Meeting with Ben Manring

On April 25, 2023, Ben Manring was invited via email to meet with Session regarding his April 7, 2023, email to many in the congregation concerning the elder election. In email correspondence that followed the invitation it was further explained *“The session believes that we have things to say to you that are important to say in person and not via e-mail. We are not expecting you to respond within the initial meeting itself, so you don’t need to prepare anything ahead of time.”*

After Mr. Manring arrived at the arranged time, 7:30 p.m., the moderator called on Pastor Wise to pray for the meeting. Pastor Hanson read Session’s letter of rebuke to Mr. Manring and presented him with a printed copy. Mr. Manring was offered up to ten minutes to respond but he declined explaining ten minutes was not sufficient time for a response. Additional time was offered, the twenty minutes remaining before an order of the day at 8:00 p.m., but Mr. Manring explained he would need at least twenty-five minutes to respond.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to schedule a special session meeting for May 16 at 7:00 p.m. at the church for the purpose of giving Ben Manring up to 45 minutes to respond to Session's letter of rebuke. The moderator called on John Hanson to pray before Mr. Manring left the meeting.

May 16, 2023 – special meeting

Response to the letter of rebuke

Mr. Manring was given the floor and made a 40-minute presentation outlining his reasons for rejecting Session’s censure. He concluded with a notice that he would appeal to Presbytery unless Session apologized and rescinded the censure within ten days. The moderator called upon John Hanson to pray before Mr. Manring left the meeting.

Publicly informing the congregation

It was moved, seconded, and carried to inform the communicant members of the congregation by email of the rebuke, and to inform Mr. Manring in advance of the email distribution.

Relevant Excerpts from Session Meeting Minutes for the October 6, 2023 hearing (continued)

June 13, 2023 – stated meeting

Ben Manring Appeal and Complaint

It was moved, seconded, and approved by common consent that Ben Manring's June 3, 2023, Notice of Appeal and June 7, 2023, Complaint be transmitted to the Great Lakes - Gulf Presbytery.

July 11, 2023 – stated meeting

Ben Manring Appeal

It was moved, seconded, and approved by common consent that Ben Manring's July 8, 2023, Appeal be transmitted to the Great Lakes - Gulf Presbytery.