

2. Report of GLG Judicial Commission to Immanuel RP Church, March 13, 2021.
3. Report of the Immanuel Judicial Report (not accessible for print and inclusion due to security limitations; the clerk of the GLG Presbytery will need to supply this report).

**2021 Communication #21-17: Great Lakes/Gulf
re. Immanuel—Complaint vs. GLG by Immanuel Members**

To whom it may concern: As members of Immanuel RP Church in West Lafayette, Indiana, we have been grieved in recent months by events that have taken place within our congregation as well as subsequent actions taken by our Presbytery. A judicial commission was requested to investigate a situation of child abuse (minor to minor) and how it was handled by the elders of IRPC. We were thankful for the outside help, time, and commitment these men gave and looked expectantly toward their report and the work of Presbytery. Together we prayed for repentance, restoration, and a path forward for us as a church body.

We want to have the right attitudes and are willing to submit in the Lord to the authority of the Presbytery. There have been sins committed within our midst and by our elders. We have no desire to add sin to sin or to be hurtful. We desire to see repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. We long to learn from the experiences we have had.

Because most of what the commission was investigating is sensitive and much of Presbytery's deliberations and work was in executive session, we do not have knowledge to determine whether all the actions and the spirit and manner of the actions of Presbytery and the commission were completed in a manner worthy of the gospel and a court of the church.

However, we want to register our complaints where we have seen discrepancies and areas of concern. We believe that the actions of the Presbytery have complicated the issues in certain ways, which are laid out below:

- Conflict of interest: Three members of the Judicial Commission swiftly volunteered themselves as the prosecutors against the IRPC elders and were appointed. They stated that this was to save others working as prosecutors from needing to repeat all of the investigative work. However, they could have volunteered themselves for the shepherding committee which needed the same background information.

Members of the congregation are aware that the commission reported that the IRPC elders were involved in conflicts of interest, yet some of their own members have now created their own conflict of interest, which is inconsistent and troubling.

- Undue harshness: The punitive actions meted out to the elders of IRPC does not seem to correspond to the “*crime*.” No one among us debates the fact that our elders sinned and should face consequences. However, the commission’s report stated that there was no malicious intent or cover up; consequently, having all elders removed from office appears rather excessive. Although the church in Corinth had tremendous sins in their midst, the Apostle Paul overflowed in his expressions of love and declarations of the members’ concrete, confident status before the Lord despite all of their failings (1 Corinthians 7). We have not seen that same type of balance of love and rebuke from some members of Presbytery to all of the members of our congregation. The harshness of recommending resignations from all elders lacks a restorative component, which we find concerning.

Related to this, all the elders appear to have been dealt with in essentially the same manner and severity. It is hard to imagine that all six elders have acted in the same sinful ways and to the same extent. As with any situation involving wrong behavior, it seems that there must have been some variation in responses and behavior by six different individuals. While it could be possible that all should be removed from office, it would seem that there certainly ought to be some discrepancy in discipline for what certainly must have been a variation in handling these matters.

- Focus on punishment, rather than instruction and forward path: The situation involves grave sins. A shepherding committee is working with the elders and we are grateful for their involvement and are hopeful about the success of their labors. We are seeing steps of repentance such as public acknowledgement of sin and seeking forgiveness. We acknowledge that this work will take time. Yet the commission’s report to Presbytery focuses a great deal more on the punitive actions than the ways in which we as a congregation and our elders can learn and grow to become more able to deal with such matters in a godly manner. The likelihood of this type of situation occurring in other congregations at some point is high. We are hoping to see great opportunities for training and instruction. Presbytery could help establish goals for what the fruit of repentance includes and ways that we and the elders could receive training from those outside, courses to take, etc. But the commission’s work focuses almost entirely on making clear the elders were wrong and seemed adjudicative in nature which led to reputations being slandered and tainted. No loving discipline stops there, but the goal should always be restoration and growth. Yet we have observed disci-

pline with much less pastoral shepherding to train and instruct those who have failed.

- Partiality and lack of care for the entirety of the congregation:
 - ▷ The presbytery has shown partiality to some members over others. Leviticus 19:15 states “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.” When we were invited to join the Presbytery meeting on Saturday via Zoom, those of us who joined saw a victim family in the meeting, and yet other victim families were having to watch on Zoom and were not invited to attend.
 - ▷ The report given to our congregation by the commission declared that they were taking a victim-centered approach. This seems to be a biased position from which to complete an investigation. Also, upon hearing testimony at our congregational meeting a week after Presbytery, we have concern that the report is not impartial but rather is biased.
 - ▷ The congregation was harmed by the report to Presbytery and Presbytery’s subsequent actions because it “forced” victim families, who had concerns with the report, to disclose their identity publicly. Victim families either had to sit in silence with concerns about the report or to disclose their identities to speak to it.
 - ▷ Harm was caused by the manner in which we, the congregation, were informed and cared for in light of the commission’s recommendations. The general congregation that had no particular involvement in the case was not privy to the commission’s report given to our Presbytery, but we were allowed to listen in on Zoom to the Presbytery meeting. This is where we learned the commission was recommending every single elder resign. We had no forewarning, no explanation, and no access to ask questions. We are concerned over the seeming lack of compassion and communication. No email was sent from the commission making themselves available to our congregation for immediate questions.

Due to these concerns, we, as an interested party of congregants of Immanuel RP Church, respectfully submit our complaint to Synod about the actions taken by Presbytery at the March 2021 meeting. We humbly ask that Synod review the actions taken on the judicial commission’s recommendations. We recognize that we do not have knowledge of many workings of these events and are unable to verify and determine whether all of the actions and the spirit and manner of the actions of Presbytery and the commission were completed

in a manner worthy of the gospel and a court of the church. We can compare what we have seen with the Great Shepherd and assess actions based on King Jesus and his Word. These areas mentioned above contain discrepancies and concerns which we believe do not line up with Christ and ask that you look into these *complaints* as a higher court. We request of Synod:

1. The overturning of [Great Lakes/Gulf] Presbytery's actions in the judicial commission's recommendations 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9.
2. The removal of the prosecutors.
3. The consideration of another investigation by the higher court into all these matters—from the initial issues in the congregation and session, through the investigation and report, to the subsequent recommendations and actions by the Presbytery.

Synod ought to assist the Presbytery in finding a wiser, more godly response to these past events. We continue to pray and ask the Lord to give wisdom to his church and look to King Jesus.

Respectfully submitted: Maureen Aladejebi, Oluyemi Aladejebi, Anna Allgaier, David Allgaier (Deacon), David Boudia, Sonnie Boudia, Avery Brame, Ben Brame, Emily Bretscher, Robyn Carr, Mari Doerr, Cos Gardner (Deacon), Rachel Gardner, Anna Giesler, Heather Glenn, Anjelica Groves, Jon Held (Deacon), Kimberly J. Held, Jon Calvin Rudolph Held, Myra Faith Held, J. David Held, Meghan Held, David Inouye, Harriett Inouye, Ashley Karshen, Josh Karshen, Jessica McCullough, Corban Murphy, Alexandria Murphy, Anna Larson, E. Lillian Larson, Cassie Lindenberger, Charlie Olivetti, Isabel Olivetti, Grace Pfeiffer, Isaac Pfeiffer, Luke Pfeiffer, Paul Rider, Christina Riepe, Amanda Saunders, Bart Saunders, Emma Saunders, Melisa Saunders, Adam Soldati, Kimiko Soldati, Cariann Spirydovich, Nadia Spirydovich, Maja Spirydovich, Sergei Spirydovich, Matt Wilburn, Shauni Wilburn

At 10:48 a.m., the Synod Court returned to the Report of Judicial Committee #1. The moderator reminded the Court of these special rules for our remaining deliberation:

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Special rules for the remainder of Judicial Committee #1

- In all cases, any discussion will be limited to one minute, and one speech per delegate allowed.
- In all cases, voting will happen at the end of discussion without amendments.

There are five remaining recommendations.