

My name is Jordan Kessler and I am a member of the Lafayette RP Church. I am writing to Presbytery because of concerns I have with how the Immanuel situation is being handled at the Presbytery level. This is affecting the local level, specifically the relationship between Lafayette RPC and Immanuel RPC.

As a member of a church in the Presbytery, I am concerned about how the process worked to get to a trial. Based on the plan of having a prosecution and a trial, it would appear from the outside looking in that Immanuel session covered up abuse and also showed no remorse for their actions or repentance. The commission declared the Immanuel session was not involved in a cover up. I know from conversations I've had at a bible study that my family attends with Immanuel and other separate conversations with other friends of that congregation, the session did admit to wrongs and repent. To me, presbytery should be trying to restore the session and the congregation. Instead it seems like some at Presbytery have skipped necessary steps to restore a hurting church and instead have moved to tear it down and rebuild. So why press for the harshest punishment to a congregation when the session has admitted to wrong, sought forgiveness, and wants restoration along with the majority of the congregation? Second Corinthians 7:10-11 shows us an example of what to do when Godly grief leads to repentance. Many in Immanuel's congregation feel that instead of presbytery coming in to help heal and restore the situation, they instead came in to tear down and rebuild. It's easy from the outside looking in to see why they are upset. Also, add on that a couple victim families had to come out publicly to support their session because the commission didn't give their side enough time at presbytery and I think some hurt, resentment, and anger is warranted.

At the local level, there should be some concern about Immanuel and Lafayette's relationship currently and moving forward. There have been some things said from our session at presbytery that have caused real hurt. At Lafayette, the session also debriefed the congregation during second hour on things that transpired at presbytery (which is very common and has happened for as long as I can remember). The things that were able to be shared and other commentary given by some members of the session painted a picture that was very one sided against Immanuel's session. Lafayette has also been getting a handful of families from Immanuel during this time. During this time, it has become very clear how one side of the issue feels and that message has gotten out clearly while very little to none of the defense viewpoints has been shared. This is not helping the relationship at all between the two churches. There is anger and hurt from Immanuel congregation toward Lafayette that I believe is warranted. With two churches this close together, there needs to be unity. This is as broken as I've seen the two congregations. There can be problems with having two churches so close together but for the most part, there has been shared activities and

shared services and general unity from the two congregations. That has, for the most part, all gone away as of now.

It would be my hope that the commission and presbytery as a whole would reconsider having this go to a trial. It is my belief that there are steps that can and should be taken before going to the trial. The session has taken steps to move toward reconciliation and I believe that presbytery should help in aiding that process and not go straight to the worst case scenario which the trial would be. I believe that's what the Immanuel congregation would like also. A side benefit of that is it would also give Lafayette session time to try to come alongside and begin to heal the relationship with Immanuel and hopefully the two congregations can become unified again.

I know this is a tough matter for all involved. From all I've heard it appears there have been mistakes made by many parties throughout all of this. It isn't that surprising with the seriousness of the issue, with this being the first time, at least to my knowledge, anything like this has happened in our presbytery. I would just hope that an abundance of grace, wisdom, and forethought would be considered before rash decisions or punishments be handed out and that we would exhaust all other avenues before going to a trial.

The disunity between Lafayette and Immanuel is more than likely two sided, but I'm writing as a concerned Lafayette member.

Thanks for taking the time to read this. I will continue to pray for you men as you continue the difficult work of leading our presbytery and the churches that make up our presbytery. God Bless.