

## **A Communication from the 2021 Synod Judicial Commission** March 2, 2022

The 2021 Synod Judicial Commission (SJC) desires to address the whole denomination about unfortunate matters surrounding the case dealing with the Immanuel RP Church in West Lafayette, Indiana (hereafter IRPC). Many of you in the denomination are probably not aware of some of these things, yet there are many folks who are, or who may have taken part in them. These serious matters are outside of and are swirling around the IRPC case. For us on the SJC, it is clear that the matters at IRPC were wrought by the evil one within this congregation, and now these grievous events have inflamed a certain cross-section of our denominational family to engage in sinful communications. These inappropriate and unchristian behaviors from inside and outside of IRPC, from so many different sectors of our body, are fresh evidence of our fallen nature. If ever we needed confirmation of the divisive and destructive work of Satan within the church, we need not look far from our RPCNA boundaries.

When the SJC first began our task, we were reminded of a treasured book by Jeremiah Burrough's called *Irenicum: Healing the Divisions Among God's People*. In mining wisdom from that work, the men reflected on these and other quotations from Burrough's introduction, "To the Reader":

- "Every man is angry that others are not of his mind."
- "Good men cause afflictions to good men; every man is plotting, working, and winding for himself."
- "Standing in the gap is more dangerous & troublesome than getting behind the hedge. In the latter place you may be more secure and under the wind, but it is better to be where God looks for a man."
- "Some come into the gap not to shore it up, but to keep it open, yea, to make it wider. The Lord deliver me from such a spirit. God knows I would rather die than be a cause of so great an evil."
- "Peace is precious to me. I feel the sweetness of it and am willing to do what I can to honor it. The public conflicts, contentions, and disturbances abroad in church and commonwealth are very grievous."

"*Healing Divisions*" is increasingly a great need in our denomination. While the SJC is focused on one specific set of jurisdictional topics, the divisions within the RPCNA have been multiplying. Burrough's comments are so true and we need to heed them. Satan desires to divide us, but the Lord hates division. For any of our courts looking for a theme to operate under in 2022—whether at the session, presbytery, or denominational level—we propose "*Healing Divisions*."

Sadly, the sinful divisions and un-Christlike words are coming from both inside and outside of our denomination. There are some within our own denomination who have taken to public or social media to amplify their communications to the dishonor of Christ and His Church. This has led to brothers and sisters being set against each other,

and congregations and their elders, or elders of sister churches being divided. The result is a breakdown of love and trust among God's people.

As a denomination, we are NOT standing in sufficient union against our formidable foe, Satan, and we have not rallied the forces against his infiltration and destructive intent. Where is the shield wall? Where are the reinforcements? For those of you watchmen who are standing on the ramparts, it is time to blow the trumpets & alert the people—we are under full attack! Let's pray together! Let's sound the alarm. The gates of hell cannot withstand Christ and His Church!

We want to encourage sessions, congregations, presbyteries, small groups, pastors, and elders to be communicating to our people that there is a great danger at play in our modest denomination. Satan hates the truth that we love, & he is arrayed against our victor King. Will you and your congregation join in this?

***A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*** (John 13:34-35)

Some particular things for your urgent prayer:

- For the SJC as we seek to shepherd the judicial process currently underway.
- For both the Prosecution & Defense in this case; we desire to understand the truth and all the truth. These men are brothers & co-laborers in the gospel; this is very hard duty for all.
- For the families who have been most directly hurt or affected by the events and actions in and around '*this matter*.'
- For the IRPC congregation which has sought to endure while various courts of the church (above the local session) have been addressing '*this matter*' now for more than a year.
- For improved/improving relationships between the Immanuel & Lafayette congregations—now strained by the heavy burdens of these events and the wiles of the evil one.
- For the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery which has been under '*friendly fire*' around this and other matters and has the strain of division.
- For the healing of ALL divisions—whether personal, ecclesiastical, or denominational—wherever discord has taken root.
- For the glory and honor of Christ, Zion's only King and Head.

#### The 2021 Synod Judicial Commission

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RE Dr. John Bower, Covenant RP Church, Aurora, OH

TE Mr. Brian Coombs, Messiah's Church, Clay, NY

RE Mr. Tom Fisher, SJC Clerk, Cambridge RP Church, Cambridge, MA

TE Mr. Kelly Moore, Tri-Lakes Reformed Church, Colorado Springs, CO

RE Mr. Tom Pinson, Springs Reformed Church, Colorado Springs, CO

RE Mr. Keith Wing, SJC Moderator, College Hill Reformed Church, Beaver Falls, PA

Alternates

TE Mr. Micah Ramsey, Eastvale RP Church, Beaver Falls, PA

RE Mr. Andrew Silva, Dallas RP Church, McKinney, TX