

1 **PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**

2 **STANDING JUDICIAL COMMISSION**

3 **Judicial Case 2020-12**

4 ***COMPLAINT OF TE RYAN SPECK***

5 **v.**

6 ***MISSOURI PRESBYTERY***

7 **DECISION ON COMPLAINT**

8 **October 21, 2021**

9 **SUMMARY OF THE CASE**

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17 In July 2018, Memorial Presbyterian Church (PCA) in St. Louis hosted the first Revoice  
18 Conference. Thereafter, several individuals, sessions, and presbyteries communicated concerns to  
19 Memorial and to Missouri Presbytery. In light of these concerns, in October 2018, the pastor of  
20 Memorial PCA, TE Greg Johnson, and the Session of Memorial PCA each requested investigations  
21 (*BCO* 31-2 and 41-1) of the allegations. Presbytery directed different committees to investigate  
22 the concerns and allegations, and it heard reports from these committees during several Presbytery  
23 meetings over many months. In July 2020, Presbytery heard and considered a 97-page report from  
24 its committee conducting a *BCO* 31-2 investigation of allegations against TE Johnson. The  
25 committee recommended Presbytery decline to find a strong presumption of guilt on each of four  
26 allegations, and Presbytery adopted those committee recommendations. TE Ryan Speck filed a  
27 Complaint against those decisions, and it was considered by a Presbytery judicial commission. In  
28 his Complaint, TE Speck contended:

29  
30 [The Presbytery] Committee erred in its *BCO* 31-2 investigation of TE Greg  
31 Johnson by failing to act “with due diligence and great discretion [to] demand  
32 from [TE Johnson] satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting [his]  
33 Christian character” (*BCO* 31-2). Namely, that TE Johnson did not adequately  
34 answer some questions posed to him, and what he did answer provides sufficient  
35 evidence to raise a strong presumption of guilt that his views are not in conformity  
36 with the Scriptures and the Westminster Standards and, therefore, warrant  
37 institution of judicial process.

38  
39 In October 2020, Presbytery adopted the recommended judgment of the commission and  
40 denied the Complaint, which TE Speck then carried to the SJC. The Hearing was conducted before  
41 the full SJC at its Stated Meeting in Atlanta on March 25, 2021.

42  
43 After the Hearing, a question arose as to whether the Record of the Case was complete. The  
44 SJC appointed a committee of six members to return a recommendation on the question. A month  
45 later, the SJC adopted four committee recommendations, which included rescinding the previous  
46 ruling that the Record was complete and sending a letter to Presbytery’s Representative with 25

1 questions for TE Johnson. TE Johnson responded to each, and both parties then filed five-page  
2 Addendum Briefs addressing those responses.

3  
4 The SJC chairman reconvened an SJC meeting on July 13, 2021, and randomly drew names  
5 for a drafting committee. The committee filed its report on September 21, 2021. On October 21,  
6 2021, the SJC voted to deny the Complaint, as shown in the Decision below.

7  
8 **I. SUMMARY OF THE FACTS**

9  
10 1994 Missouri Presbytery (hereafter “Missouri”) produced a report titled “*Faithfulness to*  
11 *God’s Standards: The Lord’s Calling to Homosexually-Inclined Christians*” which  
12 was an update to a 1980 RPCES Report titled: “*Pastoral Care for the Repentant*  
13 *Homosexual.*”

14  
15 2017 Missouri produced an extensive revision and expansion of the 1994 report, and titled  
16 it, “*Homosexuality and the Gospel of Grace: Faithfulness to the Lord’s Calling in an*  
17 *Age of Sexual Autonomy.*” The Report was 240 pages, with an additional 260 pages of  
18 appendixes, and was posted on Missouri’s website:  
19 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iBLGL\\_2YhsIcI9\\_kZCBxLZHSYXWhFeLQ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iBLGL_2YhsIcI9_kZCBxLZHSYXWhFeLQ/view)  
20

21 05/28/18 TE Johnson published “*Reply to ‘Queer Culture in the PCA?’*” on the Aquila Report  
22 defending the upcoming Revoice conference (in response to a post by TE Al Baker,  
23 “*Queer Culture in the PCA?’*” published three days prior).

24  
25 07/15/18 CrossPolitic Podcast conducted a 1-hour interview of TE Johnson.

26  
27 07/26/18 Memorial Presbyterian Church (hereafter “Memorial”) hosted the three-day Revoice  
28 2018 conference. TE Johnson taught one breakout session, the transcript of which was  
29 in the Record of this Case.

30  
31 09/07/18 Session of Covenant PCA, Harrisonburg, VA sent a seven-page letter to the Memorial  
32 Session regarding Memorial’s and TE Johnson’s involvement in Revoice 2018.

33  
34 09/27/18 TE Andrew Dionne sent a letter to the Memorial Session, which was co-signed by 20  
35 other PCA TEs. Among other things, the letter exhorted Memorial Session “to repent  
36 of [their] sin of promoting and hosting the 2018 Revoice Conference.”

37  
38 10/10/18 TE Johnson and Session of Memorial sent a letter to Missouri requesting a *BCO* 31-2  
39 investigation regarding allegations against TE Johnson and requesting Presbytery to  
40 accept, as a *BCO* 41 Reference, the Session’s request for Missouri to also investigate it  
41 with regard to the allegations pertaining to hosting Revoice 2018.

42  
43 10/16/18 At a Stated Meeting, Missouri created an ad hoc Committee to Investigate Memorial  
44 (“CIM”) and tasked it with “investigating TE Greg Johnson ... as well as the Memorial  
45 Session, according to the provisions of *BCO* 31.2 and *BCO* 41.1-4, after concerns were  
46 expressed against it for allowing Revoice 18, an organization outside of the jurisdiction

1 of Memorial and outside of the PCA, to hold a conference at its church in July  
2 2018.” Members included TEs Ron Lutjens (Chair), Bruce Clark, Sean Maney, Ryan  
3 Speck, and Mike Williams, & REs Kyle Keating, George Poland, and Frank Theus.

4  
5 10/25/18 Calvary Presbytery sent a 9-page letter to Missouri.

6  
7 11/13/18 Southwest Florida Presbytery sent a 12-page letter to Missouri.

8  
9 01/15/19 At a Stated Meeting, Missouri heard the CIM report on its progress. Missouri referred  
10 all letters pertaining to Revoice to the CIM (including the letters already sent from  
11 Calvary Presbytery and Southwest Florida Presbytery).

12  
13 01/26/19 Savannah River Presbytery sent a one-page letter to Missouri supporting the October  
14 2018 letter from Calvary Presbytery.

15  
16 05/18/19 At a Called Meeting, Missouri considered the 115-page CIM report, which had been  
17 previously distributed by email. Missouri voted to approve the concluding statements  
18 and nine judgments. Excerpt from Minutes: “TE Johnson shared his testimony to  
19 provide some context for his decision to host Revoice. He noted he wanted to share  
20 before the testimony with the Fathers and Brothers before it is published in *Christianity*  
21 *Today* on Monday.”

22  
23 07/08/19 TE Ryan Speck filed a Complaint with Presbytery regarding CIM’s nine judgments  
24 approved at the May 18 meeting.

25  
26 07/11/19 TE Johnson and Memorial Session sent a two-page letter to Presbytery responding to  
27 the May 2019 CIM Report.

28  
29 07/16/19 At a Missouri Stated Meeting, TE Johnson provided a report from Memorial’s Session  
30 to the Presbytery. A committee was appointed to respond to Memorial’s response  
31 (“CRM”).

32  
33 08/10/19 Westminster Presbytery sent a 4-page letter to Missouri.

34  
35 08/--/19 SE Alabama (SEAL) Presbytery sent 5-page letter with allegations to Missouri. Later,  
36 an “Unofficial” 21-page Addendum from SEAL was sent to Missouri.

37  
38 09/12/19 TE Speck met with Missouri’s Complaint Response Committee (“CRM”) for the  
39 hearing on his July 2019 complaint.

40  
41 10/15/19 At its Stated Meeting, Missouri partially sustained TE Speck’s July 2019 complaint  
42 and voted to reconsider its affirmation of the nine judgments in the CIM report at a  
43 future called meeting.

1 At the same meeting, several requests for investigation of TE Johnson were referred to  
2 the already existing CRM (formed three months earlier). CRM was instructed to begin  
3 a *BCO* 31-2 investigation of TE Johnson.  
4

5 Presbytery also created an ad hoc study committee to create a short statement of  
6 affirmations and denials regarding human sexuality (hereafter, “A&D Committee.”)  
7

8 11/25/19 Session of Covenant PCA, Fayetteville, AR sent a 5-page letter to Missouri.  
9

10 12/07/19 At a Called Meeting, Missouri reconsidered the nine theological judgments from the  
11 May 2019 CIM Report, and adopted amended statements to eight of them, referring  
12 one question to an ad hoc committee to reconsider the question of “Queer Treasure.”  
13 The newly-amended-and-adopted statements included both affirmation and criticism  
14 of parts of Revoice. Missouri authorized its Admin Committee to draft a letter  
15 communicating these changes.  
16

17 12/22/19 Session of Grace & Peace PCA, Anna TX sent a 3-page letter to Missouri.  
18

19 01/11/20 Central Georgia Presbytery adopted Overture 2 and “requests the 48<sup>th</sup> General  
20 Assembly assume original jurisdiction of the case of the investigation by Missouri  
21 Presbytery of Greg Johnson and the session of Memorial Presbyterian Church with  
22 regard to theological error and involvement in the 2018 Revoice Conference.”  
23

24 01/21/20 At a Stated Meeting, Missouri approved modifications to the reporting of actions taken  
25 on the CIM report—modifications that reflected Missouri’s actions taken at its October  
26 15, 2019 Stated Meeting and its December 7, 2019 called meeting. The Presbytery also  
27 authorized the Administrative Committee to issue an open letter related to these actions,  
28 which was eventually titled “*An Open Letter from the Administrative Committee to the*  
29 *Churches of the PCA and the broader Christian Church.*” The letter and the updated  
30 CIM report were, and are, posted online at  
31 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XyxAwY-ACZsVS-pe\\_barvg2\\_wI9BBJsB/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XyxAwY-ACZsVS-pe_barvg2_wI9BBJsB/view)  
32

33 Below is an excerpt from the Open Letter.  
34

35 Here is a summary of our actions over the past two years .... In late 2018  
36 we convened a committee to examine and respond to Revoice and  
37 Memorial Presbyterian Church's involvement in the conference. That  
38 committee presented its findings at a called meeting of Presbytery in  
39 May of 2019. At that meeting we approved nine theological judgments  
40 and one judicial judgment regarding Pastor Greg Johnson and Memorial  
41 Church. As part of that action, Memorial and Pastor Johnson were  
42 required to respond to the report and a new committee was convened to  
43 work with them on our findings and judgments. That committee work  
44 is ongoing. Additionally, we received requests from two presbyteries  
45 and two local church sessions of the PCA to investigate Greg Johnson  
46 in particular. Those requests were referred to the existing committee and

1 that work is ongoing. When the work of that committee is completed,  
2 they will recommend to the Presbytery whether there is a strong  
3 presumption of guilt of Memorial and Pastor Johnson. If there is a strong  
4 presumption of guilt for either party, we will proceed to a trial.  
5

6 Missouri also considered a draft of the Report of the A&D Committee and heard the  
7 Report of the CRM. Missouri's Moderator informed Presbytery about Overture 2 from  
8 Central Georgia.  
9

10 01/25/20 Savannah River Presbytery adopted Overture 4 concurring with Calvary's Overture 2  
11 and requested the same assumption of original jurisdiction "with regard to theological  
12 error and involvement in the 2018 Revoice Conference."  
13

14 02/01/20 Platte Valley Presbytery sent a one-page letter to Missouri regarding Missouri's 2017  
15 report, "*Homosexuality and the Gospel of Grace*" and what might be Missouri's  
16 understanding of WCF 6.5 regarding sin.  
17

18 04/20/20 Missouri's Stated Meeting was cancelled due to Covid.  
19

20 05/2020 The GA's Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality published its 60-page report.  
21 Members included TEs Bryan Chapell, Kevin DeYoung, Tim Keller and Jim  
22 Weidenaar & REs Derek Halvorson, Kyle Keating, and Jim Pocta.  
23 <https://pcga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/AIC-Report-to-48th-GA-5-28-20-1.pdf>  
24

25 06/02/20 At a Called Meeting, Presbytery adopted the 49 Affirmations and Denials proposed in  
26 its A&D Committee Report. A&D Members included TEs Dan Doriani, Mark Dalbey,  
27 and Ryan Laughlin & RE Sean Maney. The 8-page Report was posted at:  
28 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/197ZR63Fg\\_TcWoswHjjz7II2JaF1O7mjl/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/197ZR63Fg_TcWoswHjjz7II2JaF1O7mjl/view)  
29 The 49 A&D's were in two Parts:  
30

- 31 1. Concise Biblical Theology of Sexuality with Reference to Homosexuality
- 32 2. Homosexuality and Identity in Current Debate  
33

34 07/21/20 At a Stated Meeting, Presbytery heard the 97-page Report of the CRM (investigating  
35 allegations against TE Johnson) and adopted its 8 recommendations. It was posted:  
36 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/18\\_vvpZg2PwRFwBjwAg4fGp-bhJXh8Mhm/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18_vvpZg2PwRFwBjwAg4fGp-bhJXh8Mhm/view)  
37

38 The CRM reported the following had been its understanding of its task.  
39

40 The first part of the work Presbytery assigned to us in the summer of  
41 2019 was to meet with the Memorial Presbyterian Church (MPC)  
42 Session to clarify the commendations, recommendations, and  
43 requirements which Missouri Presbytery had addressed to Memorial  
44 after it (MOP) adopted the same at its called meeting on May 18, 2019.  
45 This part of our work was completed in the delivering of our report ...  
46 at the stated meeting on January 21, 2020.

1  
2 The second part of the work assigned to us by Presbytery in the fall of  
3 2019 was to conduct an investigation after receiving requests from  
4 several church courts outside our Presbytery to do a *BCO* 31-2  
5 investigation of TE Greg Johnson and his teaching. Eventually four  
6 letters requesting this were received by Missouri Presbytery (MOP).  
7 They came from Southeast Alabama Presbytery, Westminster  
8 Presbytery, and the Sessions of Covenant Church in Fayetteville,  
9 Arkansas and Grace & Peace Presbyterian Church in Anna, Texas.  
10 Those letters can be found in the Appendix at the end.

11  
12 The CRM recommended Presbytery adopt the following:

13  
14 While TE Greg Johnson has, at times, neglected to do all he could to  
15 clarify the meaning of his views and teaching, nevertheless, we the  
16 Missouri Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America, judge each  
17 of these allegations made against him to be untrue ... and find no warrant  
18 for a trial since we find no strong presumption of guilt [on any of the  
19 four allegations].

20  
21 Allegation 1: Denies that same-sex-attraction is sinful and thereby fails  
22 to properly distinguish misery from the sin which give rise to  
23 it. (*Presbytery voted 44-1-4 to find no strong presumption of guilt for*  
24 *this Allegation.*)

25  
26 Allegation 2: Compromises and dishonors his identity in Christ by self-  
27 identifying as a same-sex-attracted man. (43-1-6)

28  
29 Allegation 3: Denies God's purpose and power to sanctify SSA believers  
30 by minimizing the pursuit of orientation change from homosexual to  
31 heterosexual. (41-2-8)

32  
33 Allegation 4: Cannot meet the biblical "above reproach" qualification for  
34 the eldership since (a) homosexual inclinations are sin proper and are  
35 more heinous for being "against nature," and since (b) TE Johnson  
36 identifies as a homosexually inclined man. (41-6-4)

37  
38 The other CRM recommendations adopted by Presbytery were as follows:

39  
40 MSP - We are grateful for TE Greg Johnson's acknowledgment that has  
41 not always been as careful in expressing himself in his teaching as he  
42 should have been. We hereby encourage and exhort Greg, our brother  
43 in Christ, to take great care, going forward, to qualify what ought to be  
44 qualified, and to clarify all his views when he speaks or writes,  
45 especially on the matter of sexuality; and when it is called for, to explain

1 what he is not saying as well as what he is, especially with those who  
2 have taken offense with things he has said, or are likely to.

3  
4 MSP - We hereby commend TE Johnson for his commitment to the  
5 authority of God's Word in his life and teaching for his faithful ministry  
6 to the flock of God at Memorial Presbyterian Church, and for his zeal  
7 to see unbelievers savingly encounter Jesus Christ's love through the  
8 ministry of the Church, especially people in secular LGBT  
9 communities.

10  
11 MSP - We hereby declare that TE Johnson has been and remains an  
12 honorable member in good standing of Missouri Presbytery.

13  
14 MSP - We receive Parts 1 and 2, which are the summaries of the  
15 allegations and the arguments behind the committee's judgments, as  
16 useful for Session study and for the perfecting of the Church's  
17 understanding of the Scriptural teaching on sexuality and how it can be  
18 rightly applied in our 21<sup>st</sup> century setting.

19  
20 Presbytery also heard the report of the Committee to Reconsider Queer Treasure (the  
21 one theological judgment of the CIM not approved on December 7, 2019), voting to  
22 find fault with this lecture given at Revoice 18.

23  
24 09/17/20 Presbytery received a different complaint from TE Speck regarding Presbytery's  
25 adoption of the CRM's finding no strong presumption of guilt on any of the four  
26 allegations.

27  
28 10/20/20 At a Stated Meeting, Presbytery created a BCO 15-3 judicial commission to consider  
29 TE Speck's September 17 Complaint, and to propose a judgment.

30  
31 11/10/20 The Complaint Review Commission met and adopted a decision denying TE Speck's  
32 September 17 Complaint, with supporting rationale.

33  
34 11/16/20 At a Called Meeting, Presbytery approved the Complaint Commission's proposed  
35 denial of TE Speck's September 17, 2020 Complaint. The vote was 43-6-1.

36  
37 12/02/20 TE Speck carried his September 17, 2020 Complaint to the General Assembly (Case  
38 2020-12).

39  
40 01/18/21 SJC Officers declared the Complaint administratively in order (OMSJC 9.1.a), ruled  
41 the Complaint should be heard by the full SJC instead of a Panel (OMSJC 9.3), and  
42 ruled the Record of the Case was complete and the Complaint was judicially in order  
43 and ready for Briefs and a Hearing (OMSJC 9.1.b).

44  
45 03/09/21 Complainant filed his 10-page Preliminary Brief.  
46

1 03/12/21 SJC met by teleconference. SJC deleted 430 pages from the Record, as shown below  
2 in an excerpt from those Minutes:  
3

4 *2020-12 Speck v. Missouri Presbytery*. The SJC discussed the contents  
5 of the Record of the Case (ROC). The following motion was made,  
6 seconded, properly amended and adopted without objection: That the  
7 Commission delete from the ROC in Case No. 2020-12 the paper  
8 entitled “Homosexuality and the Gospel of Grace: Faithfulness to the  
9 Lord’s Calling in an Age of Sexual Autonomy” (ROC 46-445) as a  
10 paper not having a “bearing on the complaint” (*BCO* 43-6) and being  
11 “extraneous to the matter before the Commission” (OMSJC 7.4.b) and  
12 the Standing Rules of Missouri Presbytery (ROC 16-45). The SJC takes  
13 judicial notice of the Report and Standing Rules; therefore, the Parties  
14 and SJC members may reference them in argument, but SJC members  
15 are not required to read those documents to qualify for the Case.  
16

17 In response to inquiries from SJC members, the Chairman ruled that  
18 SJC members from presbyteries submitting *BCO* 34-1 Overtures were  
19 not disqualified from Case No. 2020-12 or Case No. 2020-05 by virtue  
20 of their presbyteries’ Overtures.  
21

22 03/15/21 Respondent filed his 10-page Preliminary Brief.  
23

24 03/25/21 Hearing was conducted before full SJC in Atlanta with all 24 judges present. (TEs  
25 Coffin and Lucas joined by teleconference.) Complainant Speck, his assistant, TE  
26 Dominic Aquila, and Presbytery’s Representative, TE Tim LeCroy, were present.  
27 Presbytery’s Clerk observed online.  
28

29 After the Hearing, the SJC moved into the Committee of the Whole and later rose from  
30 the Committee of the Whole. Below is an excerpt from the Minutes:  
31

32 Chair reported that the committee of the whole approved a motion to  
33 recommend that the Commission rescind the declaration that the case is  
34 judicially in order, for the limited purpose of perfecting the record with  
35 answers to written questions propounded by members of the  
36 Commission. *OMSJC* 7.4(f). The Parliamentarian advised that this  
37 motion and process were in order. The committee of the whole  
38 approved a motion to recommend the statement of the judgment  
39 consisting of ROC page 3, lines 8-28, reformatted in the proper form for  
40 a statement of the issue. The Commission further agreed without  
41 objection to postpone consideration of the final report of the committee  
42 of the whole until the Commission next meets at the call of the Chair.  
43 The Chairman appointed the following committee to collect and collate  
44 questions from members of the Commission and to draft parameters to  
45 be communicated to Presbytery to perfect the Record of the Case ...  
46



1 04/13/21 The six-man SJC Questions Committee filed its 30-page Report. In the course of the  
2 Committee preparing its Report, SJC members submitted a total of 103 questions, from  
3 which the Committee recommended selecting 25.

4  
5 04/30/21 Reconvened SJC Meeting. SJC adopted recommendations from the Questions  
6 Committee in the following areas.

7  
8 The SJC rescinded the Officers' previous *OMSJC* 11.1.e ruling that the Record in Case  
9 2020-12 is "complete and sufficiently documented," thereby suspending the Officers'  
10 [January 2021] ruling that the Case is "judicially in order."

11  
12 The SJC agreed to send a letter to Presbytery's Respondent, adopting the procedure  
13 outlined therein for responses to questions and supplemental [addendum] briefs, per  
14 the authority of *OMSJC* 7.4.b and 7.4.e.(3) below.

15  
16 *OMSJC* 7.4.b -The hearing body may delete any portions of the Record  
17 as submitted that violate justice or due process, a provision of the *BCO*  
18 or Roberts Rules of Order, or that are extraneous to the matter before  
19 the Commission. The hearing body may also require the addition of  
20 material to the Record that is relevant to the Case. Deletions and  
21 additions shall always be recorded in the minutes of the hearing body,  
22 with the approved rationale for the change. Any deletions or additions  
23 shall be reported to the parties and may be addressed in argument from  
24 the parties in any hearing requested by a party on the ROC.

25  
26 *OMSJC* 7.3.e.(3). After oral argument [on a ROC dispute] the parties  
27 shall be dismissed and the Panel or Commission shall make a decision  
28 as to whether in fairness and justice the Record of the Case should be  
29 corrected.

30  
31 The SJC adopted the Committee's list of [25] questions for TE Johnson, as amended,  
32 to be sent to Presbytery's Representative.

33  
34 Below is the text of the letter sent to Presbytery's Representative, which was also sent  
35 to the Complainant.

36  
37 In the SJC's deliberations on Case 2020-12, the SJC decided the  
38 Record does not yet appear to be "complete and sufficiently documented"  
39 (*OMSJC* 11.1.e) and that fairness and justice dictate the accused should  
40 have a chance to provide additional documentation for the Record (per the  
41 principle of *OMSJC* 7.4.e.(3)) Therefore, the SJC rescinded the SJC  
42 Officers' previous ruling that the Record was complete and sufficiently  
43 documented, thereby also suspending the ruling that the Case was  
44 judicially in order at present. Here is the procedure we will now follow.

45 We are sending the attached questions to you as Presbytery's  
46 Representative with a request that you invite TE Johnson to consider

1 providing written answers, which would be added to the Record per  
2 OMSJC 7.4.b: “The hearing body may also require the addition of  
3 material to the Record that is relevant to the Case.” We have copied the  
4 Complainant on this letter.

5 We understand that you, as Presbytery’s Representative, are  
6 empowered to represent Presbytery in the perfection of the Record. Note  
7 that Question #15 in the “Additional/General” category calls for a  
8 response from Presbytery’s Representative. It is also included in the list  
9 for TE Johnson, in case he needs to assist you with the answer.

10 If TE Johnson chooses to answer the attached questions, please send  
11 his response document to the SJC within 14 days after his confirmed  
12 receipt of the Questions. Please use the email addresses below. If TE  
13 Johnson is able to respond before the deadline, we would welcome it. If  
14 TE Johnson declines, please notify us promptly.

15 If a Response Document is provided, it would be added to the Record,  
16 but there would not be a need to re-brief or have another  
17 Hearing. However, if either you or the Complainant wish to file an  
18 addendum to your previous Brief, dealing only with any additional  
19 information provided by TE Johnson, the Complainant’s filing deadline  
20 would be seven (7) days after his receipt of the Response Document from  
21 the SJC, and the Respondent’s would be ten (10) days after his receipt of  
22 the Response Document from the SJC. Any such additional Briefs are  
23 limited to five-pages.

24 If there is no Response Document to add to the Record, the SJC  
25 Chairman would reconvene a SJC meeting and the SJC would plan to  
26 continue with post-hearing adjudication of the Complaint.

27 The SJC does not believe another hearing is required, even if TE  
28 Johnson responds to the questions. However, the SJC would schedule  
29 another Hearing, on the additional material only, if requested by one of  
30 the parties within 7 days after his receipt of the last additional Brief filed.

31  
32 The introduction to the SJC’s 25 Questions read as follows:  
33

34 The SJC believes it is necessary to attempt to clarify the Record of the Case  
35 because its magnitude (over 600 pages covering multiple years of writing,  
36 speaking, and judicial processes) makes it difficult to ascertain if specific  
37 representations of perspectives of TE Johnson are his actual or present  
38 theological convictions. We understand from the Record:

- 39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45
- he has acknowledged some of his perspectives have matured over time;
  - he has acknowledged some were poorly stated due to time limits, situational pressures, or extemporaneity;
  - some representations of perspectives are made unclear by imprecision or disagreement over what aspect of sin is being referenced in specific statements;

1 - some representations have been extrapolated by critics but denied by  
2 Johnson.

3  
4 Thus, the SJC offers TE Johnson the opportunity to answer questions with  
5 reference to the specific Allegations in the Complaint now before the  
6 Commission. Below are 25 questions arranged by the Allegations, with a  
7 fifth category titled “Additional/General.”  
8

- 9 05/11/21 Presbytery answered the SJC Question about the Q&A in the Record between the  
10 Missouri investigative committee and TE Johnson from Fall 2019 and early 2020. This  
11 was the one question from the SJC directed to Presbytery out of the 25 questions sent  
12 down.  
13
- 14 05/20/21 TE Johnson provided a 23-page document responding to the SJC’s 25 Questions.  
15
- 16 05/27/21 Complainant filed a five-page Addendum to his Preliminary Brief.  
17
- 18 05/31/21 Respondent filed a five-page Addendum to his Preliminary Brief. Neither party  
19 requested another Hearing.  
20
- 21 07/13/21 Reconvened SJC Meeting. Five names were pulled at random to comprise a Drafting  
22 Committee tasked to present a proposed decision. Committee included TEs Coffin  
23 and Lee, and REs Donahoe, Dowling, and Neikirk.  
24
- 25 09/21/21 SJC Drafting Committee filed its report to the SJC.  
26
- 27 10/21/21 SJC’s Fall Stated Meeting in Atlanta.  
28

29 **II. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES**

- 30
- 31 1. Did Presbytery violate *BCO* 31-2 in the manner of its investigation of the  
32 allegations?  
33
- 34 2. Did Missouri Presbytery clearly err at its meeting on July 21, 2020, when it  
35 declined to commence process on any of the following four allegations?  
36
- 37 2.a. Allegation 1: *SSA & sin* - TE Johnson “denies that same-sex-attraction  
38 is sinful and thereby fails to properly distinguish misery from the sin  
39 which give rise to it.”  
40
- 41 2.b. Allegation 2: *Identity* - TE Johnson “compromises and dishonors his  
42 identity in Christ by self-identifying as a same-sex-attracted man.”  
43
- 44 2.c. Allegation 3: *Sanctification* - TE Johnson “denies God’s purpose and  
45 power to sanctify SSA [same-sex-attracted] believers by minimizing  
46 the pursuit of orientation change from homosexual to heterosexual.”

1  
2 2.d. Allegation 4: *Qualification* - TE Johnson “cannot meet the biblical  
3 ‘above reproach’ qualification for the eldership since (a) homosexual  
4 inclinations are sin proper and are more heinous for being “against  
5 nature,” and since (b) TE Johnson identifies as a homosexually-  
6 inclined man.”

7  
8 **III. JUDGMENT**

- 9  
10 1. No  
11 2.a. No  
12 2.b. No  
13 2.c. No  
14 2.d. No

15  
16 **IV. REASONING AND OPINION**

17  
18 This Reasoning and Opinion briefly explains why the SJC did not find that Presbytery was  
19 unreasonable in its decisions declining to indict.

20  
21 **Issue 1 - BCO 31-2 Investigation**

22  
23 *BCO 31-2.* It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care  
24 over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great  
25 discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports  
26 affecting their Christian character. This duty is more imperative when those who  
27 deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation.

28 If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong  
29 presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and  
30 shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case. This  
31 prosecutor shall be a member of the court, except that in a case before the Session,  
32 he may be any communing member of the same congregation with the accused.

33  
34 The Record demonstrates Presbytery sought to exercise the requisite “due diligence and  
35 great discretion” in seeking explanations from TE Johnson regarding the four allegations. There  
36 is no evidence that Presbytery committed clear error in its procedures in this area. Whether the  
37 explanations provided were satisfactory is a different issue that will be addressed next.

38  
39 **Issue 2 - Four Allegations** - The SJC does not find that the Presbytery clearly erred in its exercise  
40 of judgment when it declined to commence formal judicial process (i.e., declined to order an  
41 indictment and appoint a prosecutor) on any of the four allegations.

42  
43 Below are those four allegations, followed by quotes from the Complaint in support of  
44 those allegations. The SJC then provides examples of TE Johnson’s explanations/responses on  
45 each allegation. These examples include 9 statements from TE Johnson to the Missouri Presbytery  
46 investigating committee and 19 answers to questions (shown in italics) from the SJC. The excerpts

1 from the statements before MOP make plausible the conclusion that it was not unreasonable for  
2 the Presbytery to decline to indict. This judgment is supported by the excerpts from TE Johnson's  
3 answers to the questions posed by the SJC, questions posed to clarify the Record of the Case  
4 because its magnitude (over 600 pages that included multiple years of writing and speaking by TE  
5 Johnson, as well as various allegations, Presbytery reports, and judicial processes) made it difficult  
6 to ascertain if specific representations of perspectives of TE Johnson were his actual theological  
7 convictions.

8  
9 **Allegation 1**

10 "TE Johnson denies that same-sex-attraction is sinful and thereby  
11 fails to properly distinguish misery from the sin which give rise to it."

12  
13 Related to this allegation, Complainant contends the following:

- 14  
15 - "TE Johnson draws a false analogy between the merely physical and passive  
16 condition of cancer and the spiritual and active orientation of homosexuality that  
17 goes far beyond mere suffering due to the curse."  
18  
19 - "TE Johnson does not believe one can really repent of this corruption (i.e., the  
20 homosexual orientation), since he was made or born this way genetically (CRM  
21 Report, p. 10). Such "movements of internal corruption" we should flee or resist,  
22 not mortify or confess (p. 11). You can only "ask forgiveness for a sin, for an  
23 action, a word, a thought, a deed, a choice ... " (CRM, p. 17)."  
24  
25 - "... TE Johnson misplaces same-sex attraction into the category of original sin  
26 and not into the category of actual transgressions."  
27  
28 - "TE Johnson appears to have created a middle ground between the Roman  
29 Catholic view of concupiscence and the Protestant view of actual transgression.  
30 He calls the enticement to sin sinful (unlike Roman Catholicism), but he denies  
31 that inward enticement is itself a sin."  
32  
33 - "... TE Johnson consistently affirms that apart from the conscious act of the will,  
34 a sinful desire is not "a sin" that requires formal, true repentance (e.g., CRM, pp.  
35 9-10, 15-16, 20). Same-sex attraction is "not 'a sin' unless there is volition,"  
36 according to TE Johnson (CRM, p. 16)."  
37

38 If the Record demonstrated that the above statements were an accurate summary of TE  
39 Johnson's views, it would have been proper to sustain the Complaint. Based on the Record,  
40 however, the SJC finds that it was not unreasonable for Presbytery to conclude that TE Johnson  
41 does not hold these positions and that he affirms the sinfulness of fallen desires, including all  
42 sexual attractions a person might have to someone not their spouse.

43  
44 Thus, for example, in response to a question from the Presbytery's investigating committee, TE  
45 Johnson stated the following:  
46

1 GJ: I don't recall saying that same-sex attraction is a morally neutral condition. I  
2 have repeatedly stated otherwise. Any time I sense an internal sexual or  
3 romantic pull toward anyone God has not given me—including any male by  
4 definition—I have to recognize that pull for what it is. It is an effect of the fall,  
5 yes, but more precisely it is the pull of what St. Paul terms the flesh. It's a motion  
6 of the internal corruption that remains in the believer throughout this life. "This  
7 corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated"  
8 (see WCF 6.4-6). This temptation is "original corruption" and is "properly  
9 called sin," even when it does not lead to "actual sin." Apart from Christ, I  
10 would carry the guilt of original corruption."  
11

12 In addition, in responding to the following questions posed by the SJC to complete the  
13 Record, TE Johnson stated the following:  
14

15 *SJC 1.b. Do you concur that any illicit desire or inclination in your heart (even if it arises unbidden*  
16 *from the corruption of nature and does not result in an outwardly sinful act), is properly identified*  
17 *as sin, brings guilt upon you, and must be confessed, repented of, and mortified? (ROC 923, Q #2)*  
18

19 Yes, I concur. Sin is not merely transgression of the law of God. Sin is any want of  
20 conformity unto it. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are  
21 sinners. I agree with WCF 6 that internal corruption is properly called sin. We are  
22 to turn humbly to God in repentance always, both on account of what we do and on  
23 account of what we are.  
24

25 *SJC 1.c. Do you believe that you should repent of (i.e., confess as contrary to righteousness,*  
26 *acknowledge as personal guilt, sorrow for, and strive to forsake) any corruption of your heart that*  
27 *is present in you due to original sin, as well as to repent particularly of any particular sins (ROC*  
28 *928, In 1ff.)?*  
29

30 Yes, to both questions. I agree with WCF 15.5.  
31

32 *SJC 1.d. Do you attempt, by saying that "the Christian is called to repent of (that is, to confess*  
33 *and forsake) actual sins ... and to proactively 'mortify' original corruption (as well as all the*  
34 *actual sins flowing from it)" [see ROC 928, In 1ff.] to segregate some aspect of original corruption*  
35 *as a category of sin that does not carry personal guilt or does not require repentance characterized*  
36 *by confession, mortification, and forsaking?*  
37

38 No. That is not my intention. All sin, whether original or actual, carries personal  
39 guilt and requires all of this.  
40

41 *SJC 2. MOP's Committee concluded, "We believe it has been and continues to be TE Johnson's*  
42 *view that homoerotic desire is sinful – not as "a sin," an ungodly volitional act, but as indwelling*  
43 *sin, a particular manifestation or "motion" (WCF VI.5) of our original corruption." (ROC 924)*  
44 *How do you define "motion" and how does that definition comport with other uses of the term*  
45 *"motions" in the Standards (i.e., Larger Catechism 147 and 148)?*  
46

1 In *WCF* 6.4, the Assembly distinguished between the “original corruption”  
2 conveyed to all humanity and the “actual transgressions” which “proceed” from  
3 that corruption. This original corruption includes four elements within the  
4 confession, namely that “we are utterly indisposed,” “disabled,” “made opposite to  
5 all good” and are “wholly inclined to all evil” (*WCF* 6.4). As part of our original  
6 corruption, the confession here distinguishes this “inclination” to evil from the  
7 “actual transgressions” that proceed from it.

8  
9 Of course, if the inclination to sin were itself “actual transgression,” then that would  
10 have applied to any potential sexual attraction to someone God has not given us,  
11 whether male or female. But the divines chose to categorize the inclination to sin  
12 as a facet of original corruption, and not as actual transgression. (We are morally  
13 culpable either way.) ...

14  
15 Here, the point would be that both the corruption and its promptings, proposals, or  
16 initiatives (its temptations) are truly and properly sin—and not merely human  
17 weakness, contrary to the Roman Church. As A.A. Hodge explains in his  
18 commentary on the chapter, “The great burden of pollution and guilt is felt to  
19 consist not in what we have done, but in what we are—our permanent moral  
20 condition rather than our actual transgressions.”

21  
22 *SJC 4. What does it mean to say that SSA is “of sin” but not “a sin”? Is something that is merely*  
23 *“of sin” morally culpable before God?*

24  
25 That is language I adopted from the 2017 Missouri Presbytery report on sexuality.  
26 The distinction is not between degrees of culpability, but between degrees of  
27 volition. We are culpable both for what we do (transgression) and also for what we  
28 are (any lack of conformity unto). Since sexual temptation (of any kind) arises from  
29 our own heart, we are always culpable. “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil  
30 desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (James 1:14). I use the phrase “a sin” in its  
31 vernacular sense as a synonym for “actual sin.” When speaking of the motions of  
32 original corruption, I am more likely to speak of “indwelling sin.” Temptations are  
33 “of sin” in that they are “motions of” original sin/internal corruption.

34  
35 *SJC 5. Do you have any disagreement with WCF 6.4, 6.5 or 6.6 in its formulation and description*  
36 *of sin, actual or original? If so, identify any differences in detail.*<sup>1</sup>

37  
38 I have no differences with the formulation in *WCF* 6.4, 6.5 or 6.6. I have leaned  
39 heavily on these categories in my teaching on the topic of sexuality in recent years.

---

<sup>1</sup> *WCF* 6.4 From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.  
*WCF* 6.5 This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and subdued; yet both it, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.  
*WCF* 6.6 Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

1  
2 **Allegation 2:**

3 “TE Johnson compromises and dishonors his identity in Christ  
4 by self-identifying as a same-sex-attracted man.”

5  
6 Related to this allegation, Complainant contends the following:

- 7  
8 - “When asked about the question of identity or self-conception (within the  
9 context of the 2019 GA affirmation of the Nashville Statement), TE Johnson  
10 side-stepped the question entirely (CRM Report, p. 26).” [ROC 5, line 157-158]  
11  
12 - “TE Johnson may not describe himself as a "gay Christian" personally and  
13 publicly, but he never declares such a self-designation to be wrong and contrary  
14 to God's Word. He refuses to do so, it seems. Why?” [ROC 6, line 189-191]  
15

16 If the Record demonstrated that the above statements were an accurate summary of TE  
17 Johnson’s views, it would have been proper to sustain the Complaint. Based on the Record,  
18 however, the SJC finds that it was not unreasonable for Presbytery to conclude that TE Johnson  
19 does not hold these positions and that TE Johnson’s statements, responses, and explanations—  
20 taken as a whole—do not undermine or contradict his identity as a new creation in Christ.  
21

22 Thus, for example, in responding to the Presbytery’s investigating committee, TE Johnson  
23 stated the following:

24  
25 GJ: I have avoided the couplet "gay Christian" because of its historical connection to  
26 the Gay Christian Network, an affirming group. Also, it's not my Christianity  
27 that's gay. It's my sexual orientation that is. ... For me, my fallen sexual orientation  
28 is not my identity. As I wrote in CT, "My sexual orientation doesn't define me.  
29 It's not the most important or most interesting thing about me.  
30

31 GJ: If by identity, you mean the core identity that defines me, the identity that then  
32 becomes what I aspire more fully to be, then no Christian should have a fallen  
33 sexual orientation as their core identity. Our core identity as Christians is that we  
34 have been adopted as sons of Father into his family. That's the objective identity  
35 that names and claims me and to which I owe my life, my love and my treasure.  
36

37 GJ: If a believer were celebrating their fallen sexuality, then there's obviously a  
38 problem with that.  
39

40 GJ: [From an email to someone who posted a critique of Johnson’s Christianity Today  
41 testimony.] You express well how you cannot understand why anyone would  
42 celebrate a sin-identity as part of the Christian experience, and I agree. I have no  
43 interest in celebrating the sinful impulse of indwelling sin that so disorders my  
44 sexuality. I simply want to acknowledge that reality, not to celebrate it ...  
45



1 In addition, in responding to the following questions posed by the SJC to complete the Record,  
2 TE Johnson stated the following:

3  
4 *SJC 6.a. Because “All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith,  
5 have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory” (WCF 26.1)  
6 and all Christians have an obligation to honor that union with the profession of our identity in  
7 Christ as well as our obedience to him, have you compromised that profession by changing your  
8 [previously expressed] view that Christians “ought to reckon their identity, their conception of  
9 self, in a way that is indexed to the once-for-all judgment Christ has executed against sin, the  
10 world and Satan in his death and resurrection” (see ROC 827; 968, ln 9-12)?*

11  
12 No. Jesus is everything to me. ... Every sermon I preach is a proclamation of the  
13 saving lordship of Jesus Christ and his calling to live out our new identity in him.

14  
15 *SJC 6.b. Have you changed your agreement with Statement 9 in the Ad Interim Study Committee  
16 Report on Human Sexuality? If you have, present differences, please explain them.*

17  
18 I have no disagreement with Statement 9 of the Ad Interim Study Committee Report  
19 on Human Sexuality, provided that it is held alongside the other statements in the  
20 AIC report. ... In fact, I have no disagreement with the underlying theological or  
21 moral structure of the entire report. The concerns I will voice will be pastoral and  
22 missiological in nature.

23  
24 *SJC 6.c. Regardless of whether you agree with Complainant that the Bible never describes  
25 believers with a sinful modifier, given your understanding of Biblical emphases indicated in [the  
26 two questions] above, along with your own testimony that serious misconceptions can occur with  
27 Christian’s unqualified identification of themselves as “gay” or “SSA” or “homosexual,” do you  
28 understand how you might avoid misunderstanding and bring peace to the church by using  
29 wording such as that suggested by concerned brothers below (1 Cor. 8:12-13)?*

30  
31 *E.g., #1 “This does not mean that Christians do not continue to struggle with sin all their life  
32 long. It means that such a believer ought not consider himself a drunkard Christian or an  
33 adulterer Christian or a homosexual Christian but rather a Christian who struggles with the  
34 temptation to drunkenness, adultery, or homosexuality....” [emphasis added, ROC 576, ln  
35 256ff.]*

36  
37 *E.g., #2 “I’m a Christian fighting against sexual lust, or pride, or worshiping idols, or lying,  
38 or gossiping” (ROC 6, ln 181-2).*

39  
40 *If you will not use such wording as suggested in these examples, please explain why?*

41  
42 I have never once described myself as a “gay Christian.” Even in my GA speech, I  
43 said, “I am still same-sex attracted.” And when speaking about myself, I have  
44 always qualified whatever term I have used. ... I have never spoken of my sexual  
45 orientation without also speaking of my agreement with biblical teaching and my  
46 commitment to walk with Jesus in celibacy. ...

1  
2 The AIC notes that the term may be used as “a factual observation about one’s  
3 experiences,” but that believers should be mindful that others may assume  
4 something more by the term (AIC 30, lines 4-5-8). But I want to be heard by my  
5 fathers and brothers. Some of my detractors have claimed I identify as a “gay  
6 Christian,” but they have never been able to quote me as such. It is a couplet I have  
7 not and do not use. Those who do use it have their reasons, and I do not judge them  
8 or quarrel over words. (We owe them the judgment of charity. Most are merely  
9 trying to say they are “gay” and they are “Christian.” They are not typically  
10 intending to modify “Christian” or promote some new form of Christianity that is  
11 “gay.”) Still, I have always avoided this couplet. ...

12  
13 My actual daily struggle with sexual temptation is no different from other Christian  
14 men. I look away when tempted. I don't take that second glance. I meet with an  
15 elder weekly for accountability. I avoid unmonitored internet connections. I invest  
16 in Christian friendships in which I am known. I have Covenant Eyes on my phone.  
17 That experience is required of any Christian man walking in repentance. Being  
18 same-sex attracted does not increase my struggle against sexual temptation, per se.

19  
20 Again, as the AIC on sexuality states,

21  
22 “How then should we think of the language of sexual orientation? Insofar  
23 as the term orientation is used descriptively to articulate a particular set of  
24 experiences, namely the persistent and predominant sexual attractions of an  
25 individual, it can remain useful as a way of classifying those experiences in  
26 contrast to the experiences of the majority of other people” (AIC p.30 line  
27 41 – p.31 line 1).

28  
29 **Allegation 3**

30 “TE Johnson denies God's purpose and power to sanctify SSA believers  
31 by minimizing the pursuit of orientation change from homosexual to heterosexual.”

32  
33 Related to this allegation, Complainant contends the following. (See also the discussion in  
34 Allegation 1.)

- 35  
36 - The problem arises when those who claim that same-sex attraction is so strong,  
37 that it is such a significant part of their lives, that they find their identity in this  
38 disposition. Further, they claim that this one particular sin is the only one that  
39 cannot be changed through the process of sanctification.

40  
41 If the Record demonstrated that the above statement, and those in Allegation 1, were an  
42 accurate summary of TE Johnson’s views, it would have been proper to sustain the Complaint.  
43 Based on the Record, however, the SJC finds that it was not unreasonable for Presbytery to  
44 conclude that TE Johnson does not hold these positions and that TE Johnson affirms the reality  
45 and hope of progressive sanctification.

1 Thus, for example, in response to a question from the Presbytery’s investigating committee,  
2 TE Johnson stated the following:  
3

4 GJ: God can do anything. He can do miracles. But the normal pattern in this fallen  
5 world is that this is a lifelong struggle. I know I will be delivered from temptation  
6 when my Lord Jesus brings me to glory. I know of no promise in the Bible that  
7 believers will no longer experience temptation in this life. Read Paul in Romans  
8 7. He was not delivered from temptation in this life. As the confession expresses  
9 so succinctly (WCF 6.5) “This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain  
10 in those that are regenerated.” As Calvin explained in his discussion of Romans  
11 6, “So long as you live, sin must needs be in your members. At least let it be  
12 deprived of mastery. Let not what it bids be done.” This also lines up with the  
13 experience of most believers who are same-sex-attracted.

14 Longtime Harvest USA director Tim Geiger has stated that he has also never  
15 seen same-sex attraction go away—in himself or anyone else. I suspect there are  
16 cases out there. But ordinarily this is a lifetime struggle.  
17

18 In addition, in responding to the following questions posed by the SJC to complete the  
19 Record, TE Johnson stated the following:  
20

21 *SJC 8.a. Because our Confession acknowledges that, though our “sanctification is ... yet*  
22 *imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth*  
23 *a continual and irreconcilable war” (WCF 13.2); “in which war, although the remaining*  
24 *corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the*  
25 *sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace,*  
26 *perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (WCF 13.3), do you affirm that it is possible for God to*  
27 *reduce or eliminate same-sex attraction from the inclinations and desires of a believer (see ROC,*  
28 *943 ln 31ff.)?*  
29

30 Yes, it is possible for God to reduce homoerotic temptation from the inclinations  
31 and desires of a believer. It is also possible for God to eliminate such temptations,  
32 although this has been much, much rarer in practice. ... I have known others like  
33 myself who, while still only ever distracted by the same sex, have found the  
34 frequency of these distractions has lessened through the decades. While that may  
35 be partly a function of aging, I would like to think progressive sanctification has  
36 played a role in this.  
37

38 But struggle against sexual temptation is typically lifelong, whatever one's  
39 orientation, especially with men. ...  
40

41 As the AIC Report on Sexuality explains:  
42

43 The error of some Christian approaches to same-sex sexual desire has been  
44 to tie faithfulness to the elimination of homosexual temptation (or even the  
45 development of heterosexual desire) as though if Christians really did  
46 enough therapy, had enough faith, or repented sufficiently, God would

1 deliver them in some final and complete way, changing their orientation  
2 (AIC p.25, lines 11-14).

3  
4 *SJC 8.b. Do you affirm that it is proper to expect that “through the continual supply of strength  
5 from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow  
6 in grace,” even if total elimination of sinful inclinations is uncommon?”*

7  
8 Yes, I affirm this. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,  
9 are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For  
10 this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is a lifelong  
11 process. “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on  
12 to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Philippians 3:12).  
13 “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified,” scripture states (1 Thessalonians  
14 4:3).

15  
16 Again, the degree of change has most often been less than we had hoped. I for  
17 example wanted a wife and children, but what I got instead was half a century of  
18 virginity and lots of spiritual children. I have grown in my love for Jesus, in prayer,  
19 in intimacy with God. My anger has turned to gentleness, my impatience to  
20 longsuffering, and my endless lust to mere distractions.

21  
22 I can affirm exactly what this passage states, and it has been my own experience,  
23 that the regenerate part is overcoming and I have grown in grace, though the total  
24 elimination of sinful inclinations has not occurred. I look forward to this in glory.

25  
26 *SJC 8.c. Do you affirm that the process of sanctification – even when accompanied by many  
27 weaknesses and imperfections (WCF 16.5, 6), with the Spirit and the flesh warring against one  
28 another until final glorification (WCF 13.2) – should give Christians biblical cause to “expect to  
29 see the regenerate nature increasingly overcome the remaining corruption of the flesh, but this  
30 progress will often be slow and uneven” (ROC 850 lines 26-27, from AIC Statement 7).*

31  
32 Yes, I affirm this. Jesus does change lives, and that change is progressive. ...  
33 Nothing I have stated has ever been intended to suggest otherwise. ... Spiritual  
34 growth is toward holiness, not necessarily toward heterosexuality. And progressive  
35 sanctification, while absolutely real, remains partial in this life. In his 1646  
36 *Mortification of Sin*, John Owen cautions us, “To mortify a sin is not utterly to kill,  
37 root it out and destroy it, that it should have no more hold at all nor residence in our  
38 hearts.... This is not in this life to be accomplished. An utter killing and destruction  
39 of it ... is not in this life to be expected.” Rather, Owen sees ongoing struggle as a  
40 means of God's ministry to us. “God, by our infirmity and weakness, keep[s] us in  
41 continual dependence on him for teaching and revelations of himself out of his  
42 word, never in this world bringing any soul to the utmost.” As *WCF* 6.5 states so  
43 succinctly, “This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are  
44 regenerated.” If, as I have argued, same-sex attraction is part of our “original  
45 corruption”—specifically the part about being “inclined to all evil” (*WCF* 6.4), then

1 we should not be surprised to have to battle the motions of such underlying  
2 corruption until delivered into glory at death.

3  
4 The above quote from the AIC report continues with this same precise and  
5 necessary qualification.

6  
7 “Moreover, the process of mortification and vivification involves the whole  
8 person, not simply unwanted sexual desires. The aim of sanctification in  
9 one's sexual life cannot be reduced to attraction to persons of the opposite  
10 sex (though some persons may experience movement in this direction), but  
11 rather involves growing in grace and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

12  
13 Yes, sanctification is real and progressive, even while the flesh and Spirit continue  
14 their war. In this war, grace has the winning hand.

15  
16 *SJC 8.d. Do you affirm with our Confession that “they, who are once effectually called, and*  
17 *regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really*  
18 *and personally,” since the ... “dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several*  
19 *lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and*  
20 *strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness” WCF 13.1”)*

21 *And do you by this affirmation, acknowledge that you will preach and teach that Christians who*  
22 *struggle with SSA should believe that the dominion of sin in their lives is broken, and that they can*  
23 *expect for the attraction to be weakened and mortified as they are strengthened by the Word and*  
24 *Spirit in the practice of true holiness?*

25  
26 Yes. I do affirm with our Confession that “they, who are once effectually called,  
27 and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further  
28 sanctified, really and personally,” since the ... “dominion of the whole body of sin  
29 is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and  
30 mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces  
31 to the practice of true holiness.”

32  
33 All Christians should believe that the dominion of sin in their lives is broken,  
34 though it is the lusts that are weakened in WCF 13.1. Christians can expect for the  
35 lusts of the heart to be weakened and mortified as the believer is strengthened by  
36 the Word and Spirit in the practice of true holiness.

37  
38 Typically, a believer who is same-sex attracted can expect the same degree of  
39 freedom from sexual temptation that a straight believer can ordinarily expect  
40 through progressive sanctification. We are new creations in Christ. We are no  
41 longer slaves to sin that we must obey its commands. God will not allow us to be  
42 tempted beyond what we are able but will provide a way of escape. Jesus said we  
43 must pick up our cross daily and die. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. A  
44 godly character is formed through decades of faithfulness and obedience.

1 At the same time, again, the confession is nuanced, balancing these words with the  
2 qualification that “This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet  
3 imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part;  
4 whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the  
5 Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (WCF 13.2). We must hold both of these  
6 realities or we leave the flock either enslaved by sin (on one side) or crushed by  
7 unrealistic and unbiblical expectations on the other.

8  
9 I know octogenarians who tell me they are still distracted when a beautiful woman  
10 walks in the room. But they have seen genuine increased freedom from the pull of  
11 sexual temptation, albeit less than they might have wanted or hoped for. John  
12 Murray—also a lifelong celibate until he married during his retirement at the age  
13 of sixty-nine—explained: “There is a total difference between surviving sin and  
14 reigning sin, the regenerate in conflict with sin and the unregenerate complacent  
15 with sin. . . . It is one thing for sin to live in us; it is another for us to live in sin.”

16  
17 *SJC 9. Do you affirm your agreement with the Statement #7 in the Report of the Ad Interim Study*  
18 *Committee on Human Sexuality? If you have present differences, please explain them.*

19  
20 I think Statement 7 is beautifully written and well nuanced. I am in full agreement  
21 with it.

22  
23 *SJC 10. On ROC 943, in response to [MOP] Committee Question 5a, you respond that delivery*  
24 *from same sex attraction would take a “miracle” and that “the normal pattern in this fallen world*  
25 *is that this is a lifelong struggle.” You then cite Paul’s statements in Romans 7 as evidence of this*  
26 *ongoing struggle. But Paul also continually calls us not only to cease from sin, but to live in*  
27 *accordance with God’s Law. For example, Ephesians 4:28 requires not just avoiding theft (or*  
28 *temptations to steal) but a positive commitment to “labor, doing honest work.” Similarly,*  
29 *Ephesians 5:4 does not call us only to avoid filthy talk, but to speak “thanksgiving” (its opposite).*  
30 *More generally, the Ten Commandments not only forbid sin, but enjoin righteousness. Do you*  
31 *believe it is (ordinarily, outside of a miracle) impossible to give up a proclivity to murder? Theft?*  
32 *Lying? If not, how is it that same sex attraction is different from all these other sins?*

33  
34 When I state that “sexual orientation does not typically change,” I am not saying  
35 that God doesn't change lives. Look at TE Tim Geiger. Look at TE Allan Edwards.  
36 Look at RE Luke Calvin. Look at RE Jim Pocta. None of these brothers claims to  
37 have been freed from the presence of same-sex temptation. ... All of these are  
38 walking miracles and proof of the gospel's power to radically reorient a life to God.  
39 My point has been and remains that none of this is evidence of a gay-to-straight  
40 cure. ...

41  
42 Same-sex sexual attraction is very similar to opposite-sex sexual attraction.  
43 Opposite-sex sexual attraction for someone other than your spouse is also a motion  
44 of the corrupt nature tempting you to sin. As such, it too is properly called sin. That  
45 sexual pull toward your neighbor's wife is not morally neutral. It is sin to mortify.

1 But it doesn't typically go away, either. It may be weakened, but it is rare that a  
2 Christian man does not feel sexual temptation. ...

3  
4 Just as we don't instruct believers attracted to the opposite sex to expect all sexual  
5 feelings to disappear, we cannot expect that of believers with same-sex attraction.  
6 The absence of temptation is not a standard that straight men have ever lived up to.

7  
8 The Bible does present to us a movement from sin to its opposite. But the opposite  
9 of homosexual sin is not heterosexual sin. The opposite is holiness. ...

10  
11 The AIC report suggests this physiological component by trying (sic) homosexual  
12 orientation not merely to original/indwelling sin, but also to our state of misery.  
13 "The origins and development of sexual desire remain complex and, in many ways,  
14 mysterious. It is possible to conceive of the experience of same-sex attraction as  
15 simultaneously a part of the remaining corruption of original sin as well as the  
16 misery of living in a fallen world, one of the ways our bodies themselves groan for  
17 redemption (Rom. 8:22-23; WCF 6.6; WLC 17-19)" (AIC p.28 line 5). Fallen  
18 biology may account for much of this reality. "However, we must also acknowledge  
19 ... the ways in which the Fall has shaped our biological and social development"  
20 (AIC p.27, lines 37-39).

21  
22 **Allegation 4**

23 "TE Johnson cannot meet the biblical 'above reproach' qualification for the eldership  
24 since (a) homosexual inclinations are sin proper and are more heinous for being 'against nature,'  
25 and since (b) TE Johnson identifies as a homosexually-inclined man."

26  
27 If the Complainant had demonstrated, for example, that the minister was involved in  
28 homosexual behavior, cultivated unrepentant lustings, taught that either of those were not sinful,  
29 or was not continually seeking to mortify those temptations, it would have been proper to sustain  
30 the Complaint. The Record demonstrates it was not unreasonable for Presbytery to conclude that  
31 TE Johnson pursues Spirit-empowered victory over his sinful temptations and actions, just as  
32 another man must do with heterosexual temptations toward someone not his wife.<sup>2</sup>

33  
34 Thus, for example, in response to the Presbytery's investigating committee, TE Johnson stated the  
35 following:  
36

---

<sup>2</sup> At the Hearing, the Complainant indicated he questioned whether the ESV accurately translates 1 Cor. 6:9 when it uses the phrase, "men who *practice* homosexuality." However, the footnote in the ESV indicates: "The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts."

In the 48<sup>th</sup> GA's AIC Report on Sexuality, footnote 4 for Statement 1 reads as follows: "Paul coined the term *arsenokoitai* (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10) from the use of two related terms in the Septuagint version of Leviticus 18 and 20. The basic meaning is "man-bedders" or men who have sex with other men. ... The combination of *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*, uniquely used in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 6:9, likely refers most directly—as per the ESV footnote—to the active and passive partners in consensual homosexual activity. For more extended discussion, see Chapter 5 in Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015)."

1 GJ: The 5th General Assembly of the PCA in 1977 declared that “a practicing  
2 homosexual continuing in this sin would not be a fit candidate for ordination or  
3 membership in the Presbyterian Church in America.” ... Within the PCA, the  
4 categories were “practicing homosexual” and “non-practicing homosexual.”  
5 Only the former category was barred from membership and ordained ministry.  
6

7 GJ: So how do I view my orientation? Well, it's obviously fallen. No one ever had to  
8 convince me of that. ... This means that mortification of sexual sin has been a  
9 daily part of my Christian experience these last thirty years. That means fleeing  
10 temptation; I've never been able to join a gym or enter a locker room. That means  
11 redirecting thoughts. That means accountability. (I've met with an elder every  
12 Thursday for the past 18 years for prayer. He gets my Covenant Eyes report to  
13 help me stay faithful.)  
14

15 GJ: I'm a sinner and so it feels wrong for me to appeal to any righteousness I may  
16 have. I'm a virgin who—as I said in my GA floor speech last year—mortifies my  
17 indwelling sin daily. But my sin is ever before me. I can mention the more than a  
18 decade since I've looked at porn, but I know Proverbs 6:16-19. The point is that  
19 we don't judge based on what sinful temptation a minister experiences so much  
20 as what he does with that temptation. If a minister of the gospel faithfully  
21 mortifies his temptation toward gay sex or slander, developing over decades a  
22 character that consistently if imperfectly does what God wants (and not what  
23 indwelling sin wants), that is a character that others close to him will see as being  
24 above reproach. But the minister himself feels like a “wicked man” with no hope  
25 but in God's sovereign grace to “save me from this body of death.” ... [I]f a  
26 minister instead engages in actual gay sex or actual slander, then Paul's logic  
27 would seem to indicate that such a minister is unfit for office. And much more  
28 seriously, without particular repentance, they have no basis for an assurance of  
29 salvation.  
30

31 In addition, in responding to the following questions posed by the SJC to complete the  
32 Record, TE Johnson stated the following:  
33

34 *SJC 11. In light of the PCA's statements on homosexuality, Scripture, and the Westminster*  
35 *Standards, how can a same-sex attracted/homosexual elder, who is chaste, be considered above*  
36 *reproach?*  
37

38 I don't see too much difference from how one ordinarily concludes that a minister  
39 is above reproach. It is not temptation that disqualifies a man—then we would all  
40 be disqualified. As Al Mohler writes, “Every single human being who has  
41 experienced puberty has a sexual orientation that, in some way, falls short of the  
42 glory of God.” It's a level field at the foot of the cross.  
43

44 What places a minister above reproach is the Lord's work in developing a Christian  
45 character trained through perseverance to trust and obey Jesus Christ in the face of  
46 temptation. That includes love for God, the pursuit of holiness, the practice of



1 godliness, personal integrity, humility, self-sacrificial love for people, wise use of  
2 spiritual gifts, biblical and confessional orthodoxy and the approbation of God's  
3 people.

4  
5 I do experience same-sex temptation. (I call it same-sex distraction because I'm just  
6 trying to serve my Lord when it tries to distract me from that.) I know other pastors  
7 in this denomination that experience other temptations like the temptation to  
8 slander. Those who have gay sex and those who slander are both listed 1  
9 Corinthians 6 among those who “will not inherit the kingdom.” The Hebrew  
10 scriptures similarly call gay sex an abomination to the LORD (Leviticus  
11 18:22). The same scriptures call “spreading strife among brothers” an abomination  
12 to the LORD (Proverbs 6:16-19). There are additional sins that also get this same  
13 categorization.

14  
15 The point is that we don't judge by what sinful temptation a minister experiences in  
16 his heart so much as by what he does with that temptation. Does he proactively  
17 mortify his sin?

18  
19 If a minister of the gospel faithfully mortifies his temptation toward homoeroticism  
20 or slander (or lust, or anger, etc.), developing over decades a character that  
21 consistently if imperfectly does what God wants (and not what indwelling sin  
22 wants), that is a character that others close to him will see as being above reproach.

23  
24 I have been a leader in the same congregation for 27 years. I am known. They view  
25 me as above reproach, as does the presbytery in which I have been member these  
26 past 19 years—and before that, an intern for about six years. They see all the effort  
27 I put into honoring God with my sexuality. They know how I see sin always  
28 crouching at my door, requiring me to remain always prepared to battle it. They  
29 know I have never been sexually active. I have never held hands, snuggled or  
30 looked longingly into someone's eyes. They know I have only kissed once, and that  
31 was with a girl in high school before I knew the Lord. They know I have not looked  
32 at porn in over 17 years. They know the same ruling elder and I have met for coffee  
33 and to pray every Thursday morning for twenty years, and that he gets my Covenant  
34 Eyes report. They know I never go near a gym or locker room to avoid any potential  
35 temptation or even distraction. They know how I proactively work on having close,  
36 long-term Christian friendships in order to proactively mortify the loneliness that  
37 might occasion sexual temptation. They know how I respect men and women as  
38 image bearers of God and live in joyful submission to my savior Jesus Christ. They  
39 have seen all the fruit of the Spirit in me. Those who know me honor God's work  
40 in my life and see in it hope that the gospel truly has power to change us. That is  
41 the approbation of God's people for a regenerate sinner's life lived in saving union  
42 with Jesus Christ in a way that is above reproach. ...

43  
44 The Presbyterian Church in America itself declared in 1977 only that “practicing  
45 homosexuals”—as distinct from non-practicing homosexuals—were not suitable  
46 candidates for ordination. Three years later, the 1980 RPCES report on

1 homosexuality specifically rejected any categorical exclusion of “repentant  
2 homosexuals” from church office. This year's AIC report states the same position,  
3 “Insofar as such persons display the requisite Christian maturity, we do not consider  
4 this sin struggle automatically to disqualify someone for leadership in the church  
5 (1 Cor. 6:9-11, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9; 2 Pet. 1:3-11),” (AIC p. 31, lines 29-31).

6  
7 Our AIC report on sexuality commends those of us who have persevered in the face  
8 of homoerotic temptation:

9  
10 Our brothers and sisters who resist and repent of enduring feelings of same-  
11 sex attraction are powerful examples to us all of what this ‘daily  
12 mortification’ looks like in ‘the best of believers.’ We should be encouraged  
13 and challenged by their example and eager to join in fellowship with them  
14 for the mutual strengthening of our faith, hope, and love. (AIC p.23, lines  
15 30-33).

16  
17 The [AIC] report offers further commendation of those who model for the rest of  
18 the church what costly obedience looks like.

19  
20 Finally, we rejoice with our brothers and sisters who, while experiencing  
21 ongoing attraction to the same sex and living in a culture which would  
22 encourage them to embrace and act on those attractions, instead pursue lives  
23 of faithfulness through chastity and obedience to Christ by daily echoing  
24 Jesus’s words of “not my will, but yours, be done” with respect to their  
25 sexuality (Luke 22:42). In this, they model for us all what it means to heed  
26 Jesus’ teaching: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and  
27 take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). May it be that thanks to the  
28 finished work of Christ, and at the end of our sometimes faltering and  
29 imperfect obedience, we each hear the divine accolade: “Well done, good  
30 and faithful servant.”

31  
32 *SJC 12. Is homosexuality a heinous sin? If so, why? If not, why not? (Please support your answer*  
33 *from the Standards and interact with Larger Catechism 150-151)*

34  
35 Sins are not all equally heinous (WLC 150). But they are all heinous. Having sex  
36 with someone of the same sex is very heinous. Before we ever get to the Standards,  
37 the Bible is clear on this point. For a man to lie with another man as one lies with a  
38 woman, it is an abomination. Paul picks up the Hebrew of Leviticus—*arsenokoitai*,  
39 literally “male bed”—to prohibit it in no uncertain terms as sin that that will keep a  
40 man out of the kingdom.

41  
42 A sin can be aggravated by any number of factors. Sexual immorality is a heinous  
43 sin. But the sin can be aggravated, for example, by that immorality being with  
44 another man's wife. Or with someone in our church, where we were in a position of  
45 spiritual leadership over them. Sexual immorality with someone of the same sex  
46 would be yet another aggravation. I do not see the list in WLC 151 as exhaustive.

1  
2 All other things being equal, I would consider homosexual immorality to be more  
3 heinous than heterosexual immorality on account of the way it further warps God's  
4 creational norm for sex. As in *WLC 151*, it goes against the "light of nature."  
5 Romans 1 notes it is unnatural.

6  
7 *SJC 14. In your Revoice Breakout Session you said "And other people have a calling to glorify*  
8 *God with unwanted same sex attraction or gender dysphoria or intersex condition. And that*  
9 *calling, because it's a calling from God to suffer, is a holy calling and a holy vocation." Further,*  
10 *you compare these situations to one who is in an empty marriage and one who has leukemia. (ROC*  
11 *464). Whatever your answer, what is the Biblical or Confessional basis for designating this as a*  
12 *calling or vocation?*

13  
14 If I thought for a moment that my struggle with same-sex attraction was a random  
15 experience, bad luck, something outside of my heavenly Father's care, I would have  
16 no hope. It is because it is a calling from my Father that I can follow his wise  
17 instruction and trust and obey him through this calling. ...

18  
19 To be perfectly clear, I was not saying that sin is a holy calling, but that the life-long  
20 struggle against a particular indwelling sin on account of a fallen sexual orientation—  
21 and enduring the suffering that results from that—is a holy calling. I didn't have to  
22 spell that out because my audience were Christian leaders at a conference that for  
23 Christians who are same-sex attracted and committed to the biblical sexual ethic.

24  
25 *SJC 17. (#25 of the Questions the SJC sent down, because some of the questions had multiple*  
26 *parts.) Do you think any of your public statements have upset the peace of the PCA, and if so, do*  
27 *you have any thoughts on how you might restore peace to our denomination?*

28  
29 Certainly, in addition to what I mentioned above, there have been some posts or  
30 comments in social media that I regretted. I either deleted them and apologized, or I  
31 kept them up with an added apology and clarification. As I said above, I will continue  
32 to work with my presbytery in seeking their wisdom as to how and where I should  
33 issue further apologies and clarifications. I want nothing more than the purity and  
34 peace of the PCA.

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**Conclusion**

Based on the Record, there was no reversible error in the decisions reached by Missouri Presbytery regarding the four allegations. It was not unreasonable for Presbytery to judge that TE Johnson’s “explanations” on the four allegations were “satisfactory.” (BCO 31-2).

The SJC approved the decision on the following roll call vote:

Bankson <i>Dissent</i>	M. Duncan <i>Dissent</i>	Neikirk <i>Concur</i>
Bise <i>Dissent</i>	S. Duncan <i>Dissent</i>	Nusbaum <i>Concur</i>
Cannata <i>Concur</i>	Ellis <i>Concur</i>	Pickering <i>Concur</i>
Carrell <i>Concur</i>	Greco <i>Dissent</i>	Ross <i>Concur</i>
Chapell <i>Concur</i>	Kooistra <i>Concur</i>	Terrell <i>Concur</i>
Coffin <i>Concur</i>	Lee <i>Concur</i>	Waters <i>Concur</i>
Donahoe <i>Concur</i>	Lucas <i>Absent</i>	White <i>Dissent</i>
Dowling <i>Dissent</i>	McGowan <i>Concur</i>	Wilson <i>Concur</i>
(16-7-0)		