

September 27, 2018

The Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church
201 S. Skinker Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63105

Dear Brothers:

We, the undersigned PCA Teaching Elders, send you this letter with the desire to address and remedy our concern that you, the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, supported and allowed your church building to be used to host the Revoice Conference in July 26-28, 2018. We believe that in hosting this conference with its stated purposes wounded the testimony of the Gospel, held the witness of the Presbyterian in America and our Confession to public disrepute when you: (1) allowed your facilities and pulpit to be used by the promoters, leaders, presenters, and plenary speakers of the 2018 Revoice Conference; (2) failed to diligently examine and certify the promoters, leaders, presenters, and plenary speakers of the 2018 Revoice Conference; (3) failed to prevent erroneous and unbiblical teachings and views from being promoted in your facilities and from your pulpit; and (4) failed, after the 2018 Revoice Conference had ended, to publicly repudiate these erroneous and unbiblical teachings and views.

We call upon you, the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church, St. Louis: (a) to repent of your sin for promoting and hosting the 2018 Revoice Conference; (b) to repent of your sin of endangering the sheep by knowingly hosting speakers with unbiblical views that are contrary to our Westminster Standards; and (c) to publicly repudiate any and all erroneous and unbiblical teachings and views that were presented by the speakers at the 2018 Revoice Conference, some of which are presented in this document.

Our *Book of Church Order* emphasizes the importance of the office of elder in the ministry of the Church as well as the duty of elders assembled jointly in a Session. The duties incumbent on all elders as undershepherds of Christ require us to be diligent to watch our lives and our doctrine in the exercise of our ministries (1 Timothy 3:16). For example, the *BCO* states:

8-3 - It belongs to those in the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to his charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein.

11-4 - Every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices which tend to the injury of the peace, purity, or progress of the Church.

12-5 - The church Session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church.

21-5 - Ordination Vow 7 addressed to Teaching Elders: Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relational, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make you overseer?

24-6 - Ordination Vow 4 addressed to Ruling Elders: Do you accept the office of ruling elder in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?

The authors of this letter contend that in promoting and hosting the 2018 Revoice Conference, the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church did knowingly allow erroneous and unbiblical teachings and views that we believe are contrary to the exposition of Scripture expressed in the PCA's Confession of Faith and Catechisms. Examples of the erroneous and unbiblical teachings and views of the speakers are listed below with our explanations and interactions. We ask that you review and consider these concerns.

CATEGORY 1

Violations of the 1st Commandment

Questions 104 and 105 of the *Westminster Larger Catechism*:

Q. 104. *What are the duties required in the first commandment?*

A. The duties required in the first commandment are, the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honoring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him; believing him; trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him; being zealous for him; calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and

submission to him with the whole man; being careful in all things to please him, and sorrowful when in anything he is offended; and walking humbly with him.

Q. 105. *What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the first commandment, are, atheism, in denying or not having a God; idolatry, in having or worshiping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God; the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of anything due to him, required in this commandment; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him; bold and curious searching into his secrets; all profaneness, hatred of God; self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God; using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means; carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal; lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God; estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God; praying, or giving any religious worship, to saints, angels, or any other creatures; all compacts and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions; making men the lords of our faith and conscience; slighting and despising God and his commands; resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us; and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature.

Substituting oneself as the arbiter of one's destiny in this life, rather than submitting to the will of the Creator, is a violation of the 1st Commandment, as it is to serve the god of self. Self-determination is a breaking of the 1st Commandment. *WLC* 105 deems "self-love" as a violation of the 1st Commandment. Therefore, to affirm an identity with anything sinful in the self is to practice the kind of self-love forbidden in *WLC* 105.

Example 1

Eve Tushnet, General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference:

"So I sat down and came up with a series of scripture passages that I think have helped **me and other gay people** to see where God is loving us and working in our lives in our experience of being gay. Uh, the, yeah, where will I, I'm gonna start with probably the longest section, n-uh this is, uh, I think one of the-the sort of things that it took me a while to realize was—and that is very hard for a lot of **gay people**, is that **God is working in our lives in and through our longings for same-sex love, intimacy, tenderness**, uh and to share, and to share our lives with someone of the same sex, uh,

this is—mm, yeah, this is actually something that's in scripture. Uh, Scripture uses, as I think we all know, uh, the image of marriage, between a man and a woman, to teach us what it is to love, and what it is to love God, and what it is for God to love us. Scripture also uses images of same-sex love.”¹

Note the reference to herself and others at the assembly who are in bondage to same-sex desires as “gay people” and that the longings for same-sex love, intimacy, and tenderness are “our longings” through which “God is working.” Scripture condemns same-sex desires in the use of the word *malakoi* in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, translated in the NASB as “effeminate.” In Peter’s first letter, he writes,

“Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:1-3).

Note that the identity of the Christian is to be one where the flesh and its desires are opposed. This is to live a life “for the will of God.” To call oneself a “gay Christian” is to cling to the old man, and the old identity. It is to have a self-defined purpose at odds with Scripture’s call “to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men.” It is to identify more with the “desire of the Gentiles...sensuality, lusts” than it is to identify with Christ. As the *WLC* teaches, this teaching is a violation of the 1st commandment because the one who embraces their same-sex desires is committed to an illicit self-love, placing self above God. To embrace any sinful desire as an identity—whether sexual or not—is to have another god by rejecting God’s Lordship.

Example 2 & 3

Nate Collins, General Session 2, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“Is it possible that **gay people** today are being sent by God, like Jeremiah, to find God’s words for the church, to eat them and make them our own, to shed light on contemporary false teachings and even idolatries, not just the false teaching of the progressive sexual ethic, but other more subtle forms of false teaching?”

“Is it possible that **gender and sexual minorities** who’ve lived lives of costly obedience are themselves a prophetic call to the church to abandon idolatrous attitudes toward the nuclear family, toward sexual pleasure?”

¹ Tushnet, Eve. Presentation in General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference, St. Louis, MO, July 26, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/Revoice2018GeneralSession1>.

“And after we have looked at these two examples, we will end with some points of application that might help **those of us who are great tradition, gay Christians** know how to lament.”²

Nate Collins, in speaking of those within the church as “gay people” and “gender and sexual minorities,” and “great tradition, gay Christians,” assumes a Christian can simultaneously hold to a self-identity of gay or any other gender and sexual minority (without definition this would include pedophiles or any other self-proclaimed “sexual minority”). To do this is nothing less than to cling to a sinful identity out of an illicit self-love, and so willingly to subvert one’s identity in Christ. This is to serve a false god.

Example 4

Wesley Hill, General Session 3, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“Shame, I think, is a recurring experience, for many of us who are **LGBT in Christ.**”³

Lesbian in Christ. Gay in Christ. Bisexual in Christ. Transgender in Christ. Again, this is to cling to the old-man and an identity that is at odds with identity in Christ. “Such were some of you...,” (1 Cor. 6:11) says the Apostle Paul. And, “...in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 4:22-24). That a Christian would coddle an old-self identity is to reject God with the false god of self-love. Shame, as Hill mentions, ought to lead to identifying in Christ alone, a proclamation and determination that one has ceased to identify with sin.

Additionally, *WLC* 105 identifies the “slighting and despising God and his commands” as a breaking of the 1st Commandment.

Example 5

Eve Tushnet, General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference:

² Collins, Nate. Presentation in General Session 2, 2018 Revoice Conference, St. Louis, MO, July 27, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/RevoiceConferenceGeneralSession2>.

³ Hill, Wesley. Presentation in General Session 3, 2018 Revoice Conference, St. Louis, MO, July 28, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/RevoiceConferenceGeneralSession3>.

“Uh, the final thing I want to say, uh, so, again, most of us, the large majority of us, are here because we are trying to live in obedience to the Christian sexual ethic, uh, this is such a dumb phrase, I apologize, but you guys kind of know what I mean, yes? Um, what is, for us, the basis of that obedience? Uh, it’s not typically that we’re particularly good at it. (audience laughter) Uh, I, y’know, so for, **for those of us who aspire to the fidelity of David** (more audience laughter, applause).”⁴

The intention of Miss Tushnet’s statement concerning David’s fidelity was, in fact, to make light of David’s infidelity. It was to use David’s infidelity as a justification for her statement that she and others were not particularly good at living up to the Christian sexual ethic of chastity and fidelity. David’s example stands as a stark warning to obey God, not as a justification to disobey God. To use David’s example in this manner was to slight and despise God’s commands.

Additionally, *WLC* 105 identifies “discontent and impatience at [God’s] dispensations” as a violation of the 1st Commandment.

Example 6

Eve Tushnet, General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“Uh, when we have, when we have kind of restored our image of God to be more true, more scriptural, more guided by the vision of love that scripture offers us, I think we will be closer to a world where you hear people casually say “oh, well, y’know, I grew up in the church, so when I **came out** I didn’t really have any doubt that God loved me, because I was raised Christian.”⁵

The idea of “coming out”—or proclaiming one’s sexual identity based upon his or her perverse sexual desires—is to institutionalize one’s discontent and impatience at [God’s] dispensations. In other words, to proclaim to all that one identifies as a homosexual, transgender, bisexual, etc., is to proclaim one’s discontentment with and impatience at God’s dispensation of male and female (Gen. 1:27). To live in a way that is at odds with our biological sex, given to us by God at birth, and to proclaim that as an identity, is nothing less than to throw off God and His commands. There is no possible way to live in accord with our sexuality when so boldly denying our bodily reality and the commands of God.

Example 7

Wesley Hill, General Session 3, 2018 Revoice Conference:

⁴ Tushnet, Presentation.

⁵ Tushnet, Presentation.

“Maybe it was when a friend **outed you** at school, in front of a group of friends **you weren’t ready to come out to.**”⁶

“Coming out” is to officially dispense with God’s dispensation of maleness and femaleness. It is erroneously to proclaim to the world that one’s sexual desires need not correspond to one’s maleness or femaleness. “Male and female he made them...” (Gen. 1:27) is connected intimately with God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply.” God purposed maleness and femaleness to the end of fruitfulness, companionship, and the avoidance of uncleanness. To come out purposes to reject this meaning and replace it with self-affirmation. This is to have another God: the self.

CATEGORY 2

Violations of the 7th Commandment

Questions 137 and 138 of the *Westminster Larger Catechism*:

Q. 138. *What are the duties required in the seventh commandment?*

A. The duties required in the seventh commandment are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behavior; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel; marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labor in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto.

Q. 139. *What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections; all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent or light behavior, immodest apparel; prohibiting of lawful, and dispensing with unlawful marriages; allowing, tolerating, keeping of stews, and resorting to them; entangling vows of single life, undue delay of marriage; having more wives or husbands than one at the same time; unjust divorce, or desertion; idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, unchaste company; lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, stage plays; and all other provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or others.

WLC 138 teaches that the 7th Commandment requires “chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behavior.” Note it mentions “words.” The very use of terminology meant to foster a

⁶ Hill, Presentation.

sexually-perverse identity is to use words in a unchaste manner. To encourage the use of such descriptors is to disregard *WLC* 139’s teaching that “all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto” are forbidden. It is to encourage “unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections.”

See examples 1-4 in CATEGORY 1.

Additionally, the *WLC* teaches that the 7th Commandment requires “marriage by those that have not the gift of continency,” and lustful desires, as well as actions, are a violation of continency. *WLC* 139 puts it negatively and forbids “entangling vows of single life” and “undue delay of marriage.” To suggest celibacy for those lacking the gift of continency is a violation of the 7th Commandment.

Example 5

Nate Collins, Introduction for Eve Tushnet, General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“Spiritual Friendship... is a gem... and, uh, it was an honor to, um, give them an opportunity to, um, (laugh) to respond to some things that you may have heard online (audience laughter), um, and they did so with gusto, and it was, uh, just amazing,...”⁷

Wesley Hill describes “spiritual friendship” as a heightened level of friendship between persons. In his book *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian*, Hill writes,

“Should we think of friendship as based, above all, on personal preference? Should we think of it as preserving its voluntary character and thereby vulnerable at every point to dissolution if one of the friends grows tired of or burdened by the relationship? Should we consider friendship as always freshly chosen but never incurring and substantial obligations or entailing any unbreakable bonds? Or should we instead—pursuing a rather different line of thought—consider friendship more along the lines of how we think of marriage? Should we begin to imagine friendship as more stable, permanent, and binding than we often do? Should we, in short think of our friends more like siblings we’re stuck with, like it or not, than like our acquaintances? Should we begin to consider at least some of our friends as, in large measure, tantamount to family? And if so, what needs to change about the way we approach it and seek to maintain it?”⁸

⁷ Collins, Nate. Introduction for Eve Tushnet in General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference, St. Louis, MO, July 26, 2018, <https://archive.org/details/Revoice2018GeneralSession1>.

⁸ Wesley Hill, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015), xv.

Further in the above book, Wesley Hill then speaks to a number of situations where his friendship with another male led to him falling in love. We understand Hill's desire to elevate friendship, but we also think that to elevate friendship to a substitute or replacement for marriage is to commend taking fire into the lap and expecting not to be burned. Friendships are by definition devoid of sexual tension. Romance falls into the realm of courtship and marriage. To elevate friendship as a placeholder for marriage while allowing romantic attraction to effect it is to desire to have one's cake and eat it, too. Marriage was given by God to those who lack self-control and burn (1 Cor. 7:9), not quasi-marriage, not quasi-friendship. Celibacy has long been shunned as both against nature and against God's Word in the Protestant and Evangelical church. "Spiritual friendship" confuses the picture and will inevitably lead to illicit sexual attraction between same-sex individuals. Celibacy for those lacking the gift of singleness is foolish. Therefore, to support "spiritual friendship" is to enforce the delay of marriage for those who burn.

Those who espouse covenanted, cohabiting friendship—"spiritual friendships"—are inviting men and women to violate the 7th commandment. *WLC* 138 teaches that we must shun "all occasions of uncleanness" and "cohabitation." And *WLC* 139 forbids "provocations to, or acts of uncleanness, either in ourselves or in others."

See example above (CATEGORY 2, Example 5)

Desires are also deemed to be sinful. To happily identify with sinful desires is to deny their destructive sinfulness. *WLC* 138 teaches that we are to be "chaste in...mind [and] affections."

See examples above, particularly CATEGORY 1, Examples 1-4.

CATEGORY 3

Violations of Chapter 13 of the Westminster Confession of Faith

To identify with and name oneself according to any sinful desire is to make peace with that sin. This is, in effect, to renounce the necessity and power of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, without which no man will see God. Chapter 13 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* states,

I. They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

II. This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence arises a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

III. In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

In Ephesians 4:22-25, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and Galatians 5:16-21 the Apostle Paul addresses the matters of sanctification clearly and comprehensively. He notes that the people of Ephesus had once walked as Gentiles do, and, in doing so, their minds were futile and darkened in understanding. As a result of this, their minds and hearts had become callous and sensual and greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But, the Apostle Paul calls upon these Christians to practice what our Standards refer to as sanctification. He not only tells the Ephesians to stop certain behaviors, but he tells them to be of a completely different mind. In putting off their old selves, these believers were also to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. Not only that, but he says they were to put away falsehoods and speak only truths with one another.

In Romans 12:2 the Apostle Paul explains what it means to “put away falsehoods and speak truth to one another,” warning us not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewal of the mind. In other words, the old sinful habits, thoughts, and desires that Christians developed via their fallen state (conformity to the ideas, morals and ethics of a sinful world) must be measured by the Word of God, cast out and replaced by the truth. We must also be careful to speak and to teach the truth of God's Word to others.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, the Apostle Paul states that many of the Corinthian Christians had at one time been numbered among those who were unrighteous and, so, would not inherit the kingdom of God. However, they had been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

and by the Spirit of our God. Hence, the Apostle’s wonderful proclamation: “Such *were* some of you; but you were washed...” (1 Cor. 6:11).

What we do not see or sense is the Apostle Paul leaving any room for Christians to identify themselves by their sins. He leaves zero room for “Greedy-Christians.” He leaves no room for “Swindler-Christians” who claim that the church has singled them out in the past and made them feel shame.⁹ He leaves zero room for “Drunkard-Christians” to claim that they are like Jeremiah, prophets speaking to the church about the evil “idolatry” of sober living.¹⁰ He leaves no room for “Adulterous-Christians” who don’t physically engage in adultery, but who still act the playboy or the hussy while carrying on emotional affairs. What the Apostle Paul does tell us is to “lay aside falsehood” (Eph. 4:25).

In Galatians 5:16-21 the Apostle Paul speaks of walking by the Spirit, not by the flesh because the flesh and the Spirit are against each other. The flesh keeps us from doing the things we want in the Spirit. The Apostle Paul clarifies what the works of the flesh are “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.” Thus, we see that Christians are called to set aside not only ungodly actions but impurity of thoughts, sensuality, and idolatry. Not only are we forbidden to idolize material things, but we may not idolize sex or sexuality.

The following areas and examples demonstrate the unorthodox views of 2018 Revoice Conference participants on the doctrine of sanctification.

1. Teaching that same-sex desires and temptations are anything less than sinful.

Example 1

Ron Belgau, writer and blogger, strong advocate for “spiritual friendship” who was a presenter at the 2018 Revoice Pre-Conference event on spiritual friendship, entitled “Learning to Desire Love”

“I believe that gay sex is sinful, and that **the desire for gay sex, though not itself sinful**, is a temptation that cannot be regarded as morally neutral.”¹¹

⁹ “I want to talk about the issue of shame. Shame, I think, is a recurring experience, for many of us who are LGBT in Christ.” (Wesley Hill, General Session 3, 2018 Revoice Conference).

¹⁰ “Is it possible that gay people today are being sent by God, like Jeremiah, to find God’s words for the church, to eat them and make them our own, to shed light on contemporary false teachings and even idolatries, not just the false teaching of the progressive sexual ethic, but other more subtle forms of false teaching? ...[such as] idolatrous attitudes toward the nuclear family, toward sexual pleasure?” (Nate Collins, General Session 2, 2018 Revoice Conference).

¹¹ Ron Belgau, “What Does “Sexual Orientation” Orient?,” *SpiritualFriendship Blog*, <https://spiritualfriendship.org/2013/09/27/what-does-sexual-orientation-orient>.

“A traditional Christian sexual ethic distinguishes between two things. First, it teaches that the desire to have sex with others of our own sex is a temptation to sin which is a result of the fall, but it is not, in itself, sinful.”¹²

Example 2

Wesley Hill, Plenary Speaker at 2018 Revoice Conference

“In one of his wonderful sermons on homosexuality and the church, the Anglican theologian Oliver O’Donovan said: ‘It is perfectly possible to think of desires as no matter for blame, and yet be persuaded that their literal enactment can never be their true fulfillment.’ I’ve thought about that sentence a great deal over the past few years. And I think it would be my way of trying to answer my friend Tim: Can we think of same-sex desire as no matter for blame and yet, at the same time, remain persuaded that its literal, physical expression in sexual intimacy is not the true fulfillment God has in mind for our desires? **That, at least, is what I understand myself to be trying to do.**”¹³

Example 3

Greg Coles, Worship Leader at 2018 Revoice Conference

“Is it too dangerous, too unorthodox, to believe that I am uniquely designed to reflect the glory of God? That my orientation, before the fall, was meant to be a gift in appreciating the beauty of my own sex as I celebrated the friendship of the opposite sex? That perhaps within God’s flawless original design there might have been eunuchs, people called to lives of holy singleness?”¹⁴

Example 4

Nate Collins, General Session 2, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“Or maybe you’re not happy with the way you understand others who are on this journey of **reconciling their faith and their sexuality.**”¹⁵

¹² Ron Belgau, “Gay”: Clarity or Obfuscation? (Part 1),” *SpiritualFriendship Blog*, <https://spiritualfriendship.org/2013/08/13/gay-clarity-or-obfuscation-1>.

¹³ Wesley Hill, “True Fulfillment,” *SpiritualFriendship Blog*, <https://spiritualfriendship.org/2016/03/23/true-fulfillment>.

¹⁴ Greg Coles, *Single, Gay, Christian: A Personal Journey of Faith and Sexual Identity* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2017), 46-47.

¹⁵ Collins, Presentation.

We are disappointed that the members of the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church were not able to quickly recognize the error here and refute it. Sin is more than an action. Sin is a matter of the heart. This is readily apparent when we consider the sin of covetousness. Covetousness is nothing more than the desire one has for that which is not theirs. One does not need to steal it or try to swindle another out of it. One just needs to desire in their heart what belongs to another. We also see that Jesus teach on adultery when speaking with the religious leaders. He told them, “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). Desires within the heart—not merely actions—are sinful in God’s eyes.

Some may note that Jesus was tempted by Satan, but was still sinless, therefore, being tempted doesn’t make one culpable. The difference is that Satan made an external attempt to tempt Jesus, however, Jesus was not in any way tempted in His heart to fall into sin. Jesus never mulled it over. He immediately, without demurring, rejected Satan’s temptations. The doctrine of Christ’s impeccability reminds us that Jesus was not afflicted by a fallen nature as men born via ordinary generation. Therefore, he did not have sinful desires welling up from within Himself—though, in every way that we face external temptation, He was tempted, yet without sin. John Owen helps navigate this doctrine:

“Now, what is it to be tempted? It is to have that proposed to a man’s consideration which, if he close [with it], it is evil, it is sin unto him. This is sin’s trade: Ἐπιθυμεῖ—“It lusteth.” It is raising up in the heart, and proposing unto the mind and affections, that which is evil; trying, as it were, whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it will carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. Now, when such a temptation comes from without, it is unto the soul an indifferent thing, neither good nor evil, unless it be consented unto; but the very proposal from within, it being the soul’s own act, is its sin.”¹⁶

If a person sets out to tempt us into sin, and we give no place for that sin, then we indeed have not fallen into sin. However, when we covet someone else’s wife or new kitchen, this comes from within our hearts. When we look at a person lustfully, this is a case of our giving way to sinful desires and they come from within us. James 1:14-15 makes this clear saying, “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

Same-sex attractions, while certainly a pitiable struggle, none-the-less, come from within the heart of sinful and fallen people and are sinful in and of themselves. They, as our standards note (*WCF*,

¹⁶ *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 6, *Temptation and Sin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 194.

Ch. 13) are therefore to be “by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them...destroyed, and the several lusts thereof...more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” And, “In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

2. Teaching that same-sex attraction is something other than a manifestation of man’s sinful state following his fall; that same-sex attraction is a design of God, or something that God sees as useful in promoting His kingdom.

Example 1

Greg Coles, Worship Leader at 2018 Revoice Conference

“Is it too dangerous, too unorthodox, to believe that I am uniquely designed to reflect the glory of God? **That my orientation, before the fall, was meant to be a gift in appreciating the beauty of my own sex** as I celebrated the friendship of the opposite sex? **That perhaps within God’s flawless original design there might have been eunuchs, people called to lives of holy singleness?**

“We in the church recoil from the word gay, from the very notion of same-sex orientation, because we know what it looks like only outside of Eden, where everything has gone wrong. **But what if there’s goodness hiding within the ruins?** What if the calling to gay Christian celibacy is more than just a failure of straightness? **What if God dreamed it for me, wove it into the fabric of my being as he knit be together and sang life into me.**”¹⁷

It is Reformed and orthodox Christian doctrine that God created all things good (Genesis 1:31) and that Adam’s sin brought various corruptions and perversions into the world (1 Corinthians 6 and Galatians 5). Thus, God has not oriented people towards any sort of sexual perversions prior to the fall. These are corruptions of God’s design and desires. God has not dreamed any such perversion, like same-sex attractions, and woven them into the fabric of anyone’s being as a “goodness hiding in the ruins.” God has not designed sin for His glory. What we do know is God made them male and female and made the woman for the man.

Example 2

¹⁷ Coles, *Single, Gay, Christian*, 46-47.

Eve Tushnet, General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“I sat down and came up with a series of **scripture passages** that I think have helped me and other gay people **to see where God is loving us and working in our lives in our experience of being gay.**”¹⁸

While God can and does work in and through our experiences of sin (Prov. 16:4, "the LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble," cp. also Psalm 76:10), we are in no way permitted to presume or require that he do so in our own case ("What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" Rom 6:1-2). God demands that we drive sin and ungodliness out of our lives in order that we might be useful to him ("Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, *set apart as holy*, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work," 2 Tim 2:21, *emphasis* added). This is because God is "Holy, Holy, Holy" and will not tolerate sin (cf. Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts...who was, is, and is to come.").

Example 3

Nate Collins, General Session 2, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“Is it possible that gay people today are being sent by God, like Jeremiah, to find God’s words for the church, to eat them and make them our own, to shed light on contemporary false teachings and even idolatries, not just the false teaching of the progressive sexual ethic, but other more subtle forms of false teaching? Is it possible that **gender and sexual minorities who’ve lived lives of costly obedience are themselves a prophetic call to the church to abandon idolatrous attitudes toward the nuclear family, toward sexual pleasure?**”¹⁹

All true Christians should be taken aback at this assertion by Mr. Collins. Likening sinners to Jeremiah in order to palliate their sinfulness is wicked. The Session should have stopped this immediately.

Example 4

Wesley Hill, General Session 3, 2018 Revoice Conference:

¹⁸ Tushnet, Presentation.

¹⁹ Collins, Presentation.

“Gay people have been called into fellowship with God.”²⁰

This may be true in that God desires that none perish (2 Peter 3:9). However, God also requires faith and repentance. Mr. Hill in no way even intimates that faith and repentance are necessary. He implies in his statement that God is offering to lower His standard of holiness and call those who are in unrepentant sin into fellowship with Him (Habakkuk 1:13—“You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?”).

Furthermore, our Standards (*WCF*, Ch. 13) state that “the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

God calls upon mankind to destroy sin in his life through the Word and the Spirit. We do not see God calling any person to use their sins to bring glory to Himself. God is holy and requires holiness. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. To teach otherwise is cruelly wrong and a damnable heresy.

3. Teaching that one may stop practicing a sinful behavior while still harboring an affinity for that sin in their hearts. More specifically, that it is biblical for a person to cease having homosexual relations while still maintaining the other fallen aspects that are related to that condition, such as effeminacy in men and masculinity in women and/or unnatural longings for relationships with people of the same sex or self-identifying as “gay”, “lesbian”, “LGBT”, etc.

Example 1

Eve Tushnet, General Session 1, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“I sat down and came up with a series of scripture passages that I think have helped me and other **gay people** to see where God is loving us and working in our lives in **our experience of being gay.**”

“Uh, the, yeah, where will I, I’m gonna start with probably the longest section, n-uh this is, uh, I think one of the-the sort of things that it took me a while to realize was—and that is very hard for a lot of **gay people**, is that **God is working in our lives in**

²⁰ Hill, Presentation.

and through our longings for same-sex love, intimacy, tenderness, uh and to share, and to share our lives with someone of the same sex.”

“I think one of the biggest things that convinces gay people that there is no future for them in the church, that God has no future for them, is specifically that **in the area of their, their longings for love, intimacy, and connection with someone of the same sex, they see no place for that in God's plan.**”²¹

Example 2

Wesley Hill, Plenary Speaker at 2018 Revoice Conference

“Can we think of same-sex desire as no matter for blame and yet, at the same time, remain persuaded that its literal, physical expression in sexual intimacy is not the true fulfillment God has in mind for our desires? **That, at least, is what I understand myself to be trying to do.**”²²

“It wasn't, for me, a matter of whether to be gay or Christian; I knew that I was both, somehow, and that eventually, not then, I'd have to figure out how to square that circle.”²³

Example 3

Greg Coles, Worship Leader at 2018 Revoice Conference

“But I began to realize that my sexual orientation was an inextricable part of the bigger story God was telling over my life. My interests, my passions, my abilities, my temperament, my calling—there was no way to sever those things completely from the gay desires and mannerisms and attitudes that had developed alongside them. For the first time in my life, I felt free to celebrate the beautiful mess I had become.”²⁴

Male effeminacy, female “butchness,” same-sex desires, and homosexual behaviors are all corruptions brought about by the fall. Leviticus states that homosexual behavior is an abomination, while Deuteronomy 22:5 and 1 Cor. 6:9-10 address effeminacy. In Deuteronomy 22:5 we see crossdressing called an abomination, and we realize that God has not simply stopped at the sexual behavior, but He

²¹ Tushnet, Presentation.

²² Hill, “True Fulfillment.”

²³ Hill, *Spiritual Friendship*, 18.

²⁴ Coles, *Single, Gay, Christian*, 43.

has gone on to include the heart issues of effeminacy in men (dressing like a woman) and masculinity in females (dressing like a man) and same-sex “orientation.”

The warning against leaving off proper sex roles is repeated in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 11:13-16 where the Apostle Paul states that God and nature teach us that long hair on a man is a disgrace to him and that long hair is a woman’s glory, which she should not cut off nor shave. From this we understand clearly that “Side B” Christians were designed by God to live their God-given sexuality, male or female. Sin corrupted both, and like any other sinner they are called to hate the sin and strive to kill it in all its forms.

The matter of self-identifying as “gay,” “lesbian,” “LGBT,” “sexual-minorities,” etc., was prevalent throughout the presentations as well the additional writings of the presenters. The fact that such terms were used as means of identification for participants, even going so far as to conjoin Christian to the terms “Gay-Christian,” “LGBT-Christian,” etc., is indicative of a faulty view of sanctification, which 1) leaves those listening under the impression that their identity is defined by who they wish to have sex with and 2) that fallen and sinful desires are acceptable to and even appreciated by our holy and righteous God.

Those who identify as “Gay-Christians” are betraying their hearts’ first allegiances, which is to their sinful sexual desires. We recognize that “Side B” proponents advocate abstaining from acting out on these desires, however, “Side B” proponents are, by referring to themselves as “gay,” nonetheless, focusing in on their sexual nature and allowing it to define them rather than Christ.

Our identity is in Christ, sinners who have been redeemed from a life lived in bondage to sin.

See also: Ephesians 4:24 - “And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Galatians 3:26 - “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.” Philippians 3:20 - “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Colossians 3:1-3 - “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Furthermore *WCF*, Ch. 13 states, “the dominion of the whole body of sin is [to be] destroyed,” and,

“This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence arises a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of

strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Our confession tells us that even the ancillary effects of same-sex attractions are to be mortified. Thus, there is no place for lifting-up a portion of one’s fallen nature to be praised, celebrated, or embraced.

4. Teaching that “human flourishing” is more important than holiness in God’s sight.

Example 1

Eve Tushnet, Plenary Speaker at 2018 Revoice Conference

“A lot of the stories I heard at the conference [Gay Christian Network Conference] were stories of moving from a ‘Side B’²⁵ sexual ethic lived out in judgement, condemnation, shame, and despair, to a ‘Side A’ ethic lived out in hope, welcome, and trust. That’s a story of someone becoming more Christian, not less.”²⁶

Example 2

Wesley Hill, General Session 3, 2018 Revoice Conference:

“We hosted a conference, at the seminary where I teach, not nearly this big, unfortunately. But, a similar conference. We wanted to think about how to pastorally care for people who are **lesbian and gay, and bi and trans, and same-sex-attracted, or whatever label you have. People who are non-straight. How do we help them to flourish in the church?**”²⁷

Mr. Hill asks how we “pastorally care for” people who are “non-straight” so that they can “flourish” in the church. The concept of human flourishing is often misunderstood. While human “flourishing” (or the blessed life: Gk., *makarioi*, “blessed”) is promised by God throughout the Scriptures, it distorts His Word to suggest we may somehow pursue the blessed life apart from God’s holiness. On the contrary, we may only hope to “flourish” inasmuch as we seek to obey His Holy Will: “Blessed (*ʾašre*) is the man

²⁵ The “Side B” sexual ethic states that those with same-sex attractions should live within the orthodox Christian perspective, which says that homosexual acting out is sinful. They advocate celibacy. Those on “Side A” believe that acting out homosexually is not sinful. Miss Tushnet is stating in the above passage that when one moves into acting out homosexually it is actually sanctification (becoming more Christian) if that person overcomes “judgment, condemnation, shame and despair” when doing so. There is a very thin veil between side A and side B, and many advocates of side B have “switched” to side A.

²⁶ Eve Tushnet, “O Wanderer, Come Home: Notes from the Gay Christian Network Conference,” *Patheos Blog*, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/evetushnet/2015/01/o-wanderer-come-home-notes-from-the-gay-christian-network-conference.html>.

²⁷ Hill, Presentation.

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD..." (Psalm 1:1-2a); and "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing (*brākā*) from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation," (Psalm 24:3-5); and "Blessed (*makarioi*) are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matthew 5:8. It is God's *brākā* which results in our *'asre* or *makarioi*. We flourish and are blessed as He blesses our divinely enabled efforts to pursue holiness.

With this in mind, faithful pastoral care will not shrink back from explaining the whole will of God in this matter of blessedness (cp. Acts 20:20, 27) but will "watch out" for the flock in such matters, as they are easily deceived and led astray: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood," Acts 20:28. Failure to do so will not only prevent "non-straight" people from flourishing, it will also result in staining such pastors hands and ministries with the bloodguilt of those whom they have been called to care for (Acts 20:26; cp. Ezekiel 33:1-6).

Because eternity is at stake, faithful pastoral care in this matter of blessedness or "flourishing" must also not limit "obedience" merely to sexual abstinence, or the non-practicing of homosexual sex, while leaving sanctification in their total mental, spiritual, and emotional lives aside. To do so is to fall far short of communicating Jesus' own standard of flourishing or blessedness, which is nothing less than that of God Himself (Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect"). To do so risks invoking our Savior's direct condemnation: "Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). To do so risks committing the error of the prophets in Jeremiah's day: "They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14). It also falls short of our standards teaching on sanctification, in which growth in Christ involves a "...work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness" (*WSC* 35). It is the "whole man" and all his affections which are in view with Christ's call to discipleship.

This is the blessed life promised by Jesus: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). Consequently, any pastoral help given to someone which encourages him, in the name of "flourishing" or "blessedness" to find "satisfaction" by turning deeper into his sin rather than, "in the whole man," dying "more and more unto sin" and "living unto Christ" is not faithful pastoral care because it is not true sanctification. If it is not sanctification, it cannot be blessed by God, nor can it be described in any sense as "human flourishing." As a result, faithful

pastoral care will not fail in these things. It will also avoid using the misleading phrase "human flourishing" in the context of caring for "non-straight" persons.

When Uzzah sought to steady the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6), God had no concern for Mr. Hill's version of "human-flourishing." Rather, His holiness was vindicated. When Achan disobeyed God at Jericho and kept treasures for himself (Joshua 7), God had no concern for human-flourishing. Thirty men died on the next raid at Ai. God's holiness was vindicated. When David sinned by numbering the people of Israel (2 Sam. 24), God had no concern for human-flourishing. Seventy thousand people were struck down by the Angel of the Lord. His holiness was vindicated. When Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5), God had no concern for human-flourishing. His holiness was vindicated. When we partake of the Lord's Supper unworthily (1 Cor. 11), God has no concern for human-flourishing. His holiness is vindicated through the opposite of human-flourishing. God is "Holy, Holy, Holy," and His holiness reigns supreme.

Our Standards (*WCF*, Ch.13) tell us that we are to practice true holiness, destroying the several lusts thereof, without such holiness no man shall see the Lord: "the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

CONCLUSION

We are grieved that much of Christendom and the secular world have witnessed a member church of the Presbyterian Church in America host an event which clearly stood *against* Scripture's witness. Many brothers privately and publicly pled with your Senior Pastor, Greg Johnson, prior to the event that you consider not hosting the conference. You did not heed our sincere pleas. Unbiblical teachings and views contrary to the Westminster Standards were taught and promoted by speakers who presented their views under your oversight.

As fellow elders, we call upon you, the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church, St. Louis: (a) to repent of your sin of hosting the 2018 Revoice Conference; (b) to repent of your sin of endangering the sheep by knowingly hosting speakers with unbiblical views contrary to our Standards; and (c) to publicly repudiate any and all erroneous and unbiblical teachings and views that were presented by the speakers at the 2018 Revoice Conference as expressed in this document.

Specifically, we call upon the Session of Memorial Presbyterian Church, St. Louis to repudiate the following teachings that have been put forth by promoters, leaders, presenters, and plenary speakers of the 2018 Revoice Conference, and which have been addressed in this letter:

1. The teaching that people may allow their sexuality or anything else to take the place of God in their hearts.
2. The teaching that same-sex desires and temptations are anything less than sinful.
3. The teaching that same-sex attraction is something other than a manifestation of man's sinful state following his fall; that same-sex attraction is a design of God, or something that God sees as useful in promoting His kingdom.
4. The teaching that one may stop practicing a sinful behavior while still harboring an affinity for that sin in their hearts. More specifically, that it is biblical for a person to cease having homosexual relations while still maintaining the other fallen aspects that are related to that condition, such as effeminacy in men and masculinity in women and/or unnatural longings for relationships with people of the same sex or self-identifying as "gay", "lesbian", "LGBT", etc.
5. The teaching that "human flourishing" is more important than holiness in God's sight.

We pray that you will receive this letter in humility so that we, as brother elders in the Lord, may seek together the peace, purity, and progress of Christ's church. We await your response which can be sent to the following address and email address.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Andrew Dionne (Calvary Presbytery)
Trinity Presbyterian Church
500 Oak Grove Road
Spartanburg, SC 29301
adionne@trinityspartanburg.com

<i>Andrew Dionne</i>	TE Andrew Dionne	Calvary Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Tyson Turner</i>	Rev. Tyson Turner	Gulf Coast Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Al Baker</i>	TE Al Baker	Evangel Presbytery	9/28/18
<i>David J. Bayly</i>	TE David J. Bayly	Ohio Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Phillip Henry</i>	TE Phillip Henry	New Jersey Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Andrew Halsey</i>	TE Andrew Halsey	Covenant Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Michael Foster</i>	TE Michael Foster	Calvary Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Jerid Krulish</i>	TE Jerid Krulish	Pacific Northwest Presbytery	9/28/18
<i>Rev. Dewey Roberts</i>	Rev. Dewey Roberts	Gulf Coast Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Rev. James R. Shaw II</i>	Rev. James R Shaw II	Savannah River Presbytery	9/27/18
<i>Dominic Aquila</i>	TE Dominic Aquila	Rocky Mountain Presbytery	9/27/18

Charles Scott Williams

Rev. Dr. Charles Scott Williams Central Florida 9/28/18



Jason Wiltse Savannah River 9/28/18

Michael Frazier, Th. D.

Rev. Dr. Michael Frazier Nashville 10/2/18

Paul Solder

Teaching Elder Evangel Presbytery 9/28/18

Logan Almy

TE Logan Almy Savannah River 9/28/18



TE Geoff Gleason Savannah River Presbytery 9/28/18

Thomas T. Joseph

TE Thomas T. Joseph LCPC, Evangel Presbytery 9/30/18

James Calderazzo

TE James Calderazzo

Gulf Coast Presbytery

10/3/18

Steven L Mayes

TE Steven L mayes

Evangel Presbytery

10/3/18

Jeff Lowman

TE Jeff Lowman

Evangel Presbytery

10/3/18

