

1                                   **PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
2                                   **STANDING JUDICIAL COMMISSION**

3  
4                                   **CASE 2020-05**

5  
6                                   **TE RYAN SPECK**  
7                                   **v.**  
8                                   **MISSOURI PRESBYTERY**

9  
10  
11                                   **DECISION ON COMPLAINT**

12  
13                                   March 3, 2022

14  
15                                   **SUMMARY OF THE CASE**

16  
17                   In July 2018, Memorial Presbyterian Church (PCA) (“Memorial”) in St. Louis hosted the  
18 first Revoice Conference (“Revoice 18”). Thereafter, several individuals, sessions, and  
19 presbyteries communicated concerns to Memorial and to Missouri Presbytery (“MOP” or  
20 “Presbytery”) regarding Revoice 18. In light of these concerns, in October 2018 the pastor of  
21 Memorial, TE Greg Johnson, and its Session requested that MOP accept, as a *BCO* 41 Reference,  
22 the Session’s request to investigate it with regard to the allegations pertaining to the hosting of  
23 Revoice 2018. MOP voted to approve a lengthy report issued by its investigative committee in  
24 May 2019. The report contained, among other things, nine theological judgments. Complainant  
25 complained against MOP’s adoption of the nine theological judgments in July 2019. MOP  
26 partially sustained his complaint in October 2019 and voted to reconsider its affirmation of the  
27 nine theological judgments at a future called meeting. Complainant unsuccessfully tried to add a  
28 question about adoption by gay couples and individuals to the matters to be considered at the future  
29 meeting.  
30

31                   In December 2019, at a meeting called to reconsider the nine theological judgments,  
32 Complainant raised a point of order concerning the procedures used by MOP’s Administrative  
33 Committee in preparation for the meeting, but Presbytery’s Moderator ruled the point of order not  
34 well taken, a ruling that was sustained after challenge. MOP reconsidered the nine theological  
35 judgments and adopted amended statements to eight of them, referring the ninth judgment to an  
36 ad hoc committee for reconsideration. In January 2020, Complainant complained against MOP’s  
37 actions at the December 2019 meeting, a Complaint which Presbytery denied in July 2020.  
38 Complainant then carried his complaint to the SJC. The Panel conducted the hearing on September  
39 14, 2021 and recommended that the Complaint be denied. The full SJC reviewed the case on  
40 March 3, 2022 and approved the following decision to sustain the Complaint in part and to deny it  
41 in part.  
42

1           **I. SUMMARY OF THE FACTS**

2  
3           07/26/18       Memorial hosted the three-day Revoice 2018 conference.

4  
5           09/07/18       The Session of Covenant PCA, Harrisonburg, VA sent a seven-page letter  
6 to the Memorial Session regarding Memorial's involvement in Revoice 2018.

7  
8           09/27/18       TE Andrew Dionne sent a letter to the Memorial Session, which was co-  
9 signed by 20 other PCA TEs. (At the time, TE Dionne was pastor of Trinity PCA in Spartanburg,  
10 SC. Trinity and TE Dionne left the PCA in May 2019 to affiliate with the non-PCA "Evangel  
11 Presbytery.") Among other things, the letter exhorted Memorial Session "to repent of [their] sin of  
12 promoting and hosting the 2018 Revoice Conference."

13  
14           10/10/18       TE Johnson and Session of Memorial sent a letter to MOP requesting  
15 Presbytery, among other things, to accept, as a *BCO* 41 Reference, the Session's request for  
16 Presbytery to investigate it with regard to the allegations pertaining to hosting Revoice 2018.

17  
18           10/16/18       At a Stated Meeting, MOP's Administrative Committee announced that  
19 "Presbytery had received a request for reference from Memorial Presbyterian's Session due to  
20 complaints the church has received due to the Revoice Conference" and that the Committee  
21 Chairman "had formed an investigative committee [hereinafter, "Committee to Investigate  
22 Memorial," or "CIM"] chaired by TE Ron Lutjens."

23  
24           10/25/18       Calvary Presbytery sent a 9-page letter to MOP.

25  
26           11/13/18       Southwest Florida Presbytery sent a 12-page letter to MOP.

27  
28           01/15/19       At a Stated Meeting, MOP heard the CIM report on its progress. Presbytery  
29 referred all letters pertaining to Revoice to CIM (including the letters already sent from Calvary  
30 Presbytery and Southwest Florida Presbytery).

31  
32           01/26/19       Savannah River Presbytery sent a one-page letter to MOP supporting the  
33 October 2018 letter from Calvary Presbytery.

34  
35           05/18/19       At a Called Meeting, MOP considered the 115-page CIM report, which had  
36 been previously distributed by email. MOP voted to approve the concluding statements and nine  
37 theological judgments ("9 Theological Judgments").

38  
39           07/08/19       TE Ryan Speck filed a complaint with Presbytery regarding the 9  
40 Theological Judgments. (This is not the complaint later carried to the SJC; this is a separate  
41 complaint that was not carried forward.)

42  
43           07/11/19       TE Greg Johnson and Memorial Session sent a two-page letter to Presbytery  
44 responding to the May 2019 CIM Report.

1           07/16/19       At a Stated Meeting, MOP appointed a committee to respond to Memorial  
2 Session's July 11 letter and appointed a Complaint Review Committee ("CRC1"), composed of  
3 TEs Polski, Porter and York and REs Myers and Lauerman, to review TE Speck's July 8  
4 Complaint.

5  
6           10/15/19       At its Stated Meeting, MOP considered the thirty-page CRC1 Report,  
7 which recommended sustaining part of the Complaint, as follows: "The finding of the CRC is  
8 that the MOP did err by failing to judge Revoice 18 for advancing positions contrary to the  
9 scriptures and our confessional standards and therefore we recommend that this aspect of the  
10 complaint be sustained." MOP partially sustained TE Speck's July 2019 complaint and voted to  
11 reconsider its affirmation of the 9 Theological Judgments at a future called meeting. TE Speck  
12 moved to put the following question on the December 7, 2019, called meeting docket: "Did  
13 Revoice 18 err by encouraging gay couples and gay individuals to adopt children, and, if so, is  
14 this a serious error that [MOP] needs publicly to correct and clearly warn against?" MOP voted  
15 against this motion. Presbytery also created an ad hoc study committee to create a short  
16 statement of affirmations and denials regarding human sexuality (hereafter, "A&D Committee.")  
17

18           10/18/2019   TE Speck emailed the MOP's Moderator, TE Tim LeCroy, asking him to  
19 consider adding to the docket of the December 7, 2019, called meeting the gay adoption question  
20 requested on October 15, to be discussed alongside the 9 Theological Judgments.  
21

22           11/30/2019   MOP's Stated Clerk emailed members of MOP, with documents attached,  
23 to prepare members for the December 7, 2019, meeting of MOP which had been called to  
24 reconsider the 9 Theological Judgments.  
25

26           12/07/2019   At the called meeting, TE Speck raised a point of order objecting to some  
27 of the procedures of MOP's Administrative Committee as out of order. MOP's Moderator ruled  
28 TE Speck's point of order not well taken; after a challenge to the ruling, MOP voted to sustain the  
29 ruling. MOP reconsidered the 9 Theological Judgments and adopted amended statements to eight  
30 of them, referring one question to an ad hoc committee to reconsider the question of "Queer  
31 Treasure." (Judgment 7) The newly amended and adopted statements included both affirmation  
32 and criticism of parts of Revoice 18. MOP authorized its Administrative Committee to draft a  
33 letter communicating these changes.  
34

35           01/03/20       TE Speck filed a Complaint with MOP against MOP's actions taken at the  
36 December 7, 2019, meeting (this is the Complaint which later became the basis of Case 2020-05)  
37 alleging the following errors:  
38

- 39           1.       Approval of Theological Judgments 1-5 and 9 of the "MOP Presbytery Ad Hoc  
40 Committee to Investigate Memorial Presbyterian Church for Hosting the Revoice 18  
41 Conference in July 2018" (CIM), which Complainant contends are contrary to the  
42 Scriptures and to the Confessional Standards of the Presbyterian Church in America; and  
43
- 44           2.       Denial of TE Speck's point of order regarding the Administrative Committee's  
45 (AdCom) handling of the December 7, 2019, meeting; and  
46

1           3.       Refusal to debate and rule on the propriety of gay couples adopting children, as  
2           advanced at Revoice 18.

3  
4                   Below are the six MOP Judgments complained against in the first item of TE  
5           Speck's Complaint.

6  
7           1.       We concur with the CIM's judgment that the evidence does not demonstrate the  
8           allegation that Revoice 18 grounded homoerotic desire and actions in Creation rather than  
9           in the Fall, thereby advocating for a position contrary to Scripture and our confession of  
10          faith, and one grave and serious enough that it needs to be repudiated by Memorial.

11  
12          2.       We concur that terms like "gay," "sexual orientation," "queer," "sexual minorities,"  
13          etc., are not always or necessarily unbiblical; and therefore, that Revoice 18's use of the  
14          terminology in question, though confusing to some and potentially unwise, was not a grave  
15          and serious doctrinal error.

16  
17          3.       We concur with the CIM's judgment that the evidence was such that this question  
18          as to whether a "gay beneath the gay" exists could not have been judged to be a key  
19          teaching of Revoice, but continues have the potential for becoming a grave and serious  
20          error if it begins to play a more central role, and thus we exhort those involved with Revoice  
21          to consider our position on this matter.

22  
23          4.       We concur with CIM and deny that it is always a grave and serious error worthy of  
24          repudiation to claim something which can be traced to our sin nature as in any sense a part  
25          of our "identity," of part of "who we are," as Revoice does with being SSA. While enduring  
26          patterns of brokenness and sin remain part of "who we are," of our "identity," as children  
27          of Adam, nevertheless sinful desires and deeds must be put to death. We concur that the  
28          core question is not: "Is that which rises from sin part of who you are?" but rather: "What  
29          are you doing with all the broken parts and places of who you are?"

30  
31          5.       We concur that (i) celibate SSA believers face complex barriers in developing  
32          friendships with people of the same gender and that, (ii) Christians must labor to empathize  
33          with this difficulty and that, (iii) it was unwise and hence an error of judgment rather than  
34          an error striking at the vitals of religion for Revoice leaders to be entertaining publicly the  
35          possibility of celibate partnerships without more careful boundaries proposed and that, (iv)  
36          TE Johnson adequately warned about the dangers of these type of friendships in his own  
37          Revoice 18 talk.

38  
39          9.       We concur with the CIM's judgment that although Memorial erred in failing to  
40          make clear to their congregation our doctrinal differences with Roman Catholicism before  
41          and after the Revoice 18 conference, it did not err in allowing Roman Catholics to speak  
42          in their church building under the aegis of Revoice, an outside organization, and therefore  
43          did not act in such a way as to strike at the vitals of religion.

1           01/21/20       At a Stated Meeting, MOP referred TE Speck's Jan. 2020 Complaint to a  
2 new Complaint Review Committee ("CRC2") composed of TEs Polski, TE Dey, RE Jones and  
3 RE Bauer. In addition, Presbytery discussed a draft from the A&D Committee.  
4

5           06/02/20       At a called meeting, Presbytery adopted the 49 Affirmations and Denials  
6 proposed in its A&D Committee Report. A&D Members included TEs Dan Doriani, Mark Dalbey,  
7 and Ryan Laughlin, and RE Sean Maney. The 8-page Report was posted at:  
8 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/197ZR63Fg\\_TCwOswHjjz7Il2JaF1O7mjI/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/197ZR63Fg_TCwOswHjjz7Il2JaF1O7mjI/view).  
9 The 49 A&D's were in two Parts:

10  
11           1. Concise Biblical Theology of Sexuality with Reference to Homosexuality (1-28).  
12

13           2. Homosexuality and Identity in Current Debate (29-49).  
14

15           07/21/20       At a Stated Meeting, MOP considered the forty-page CRC2 Report, which  
16 recommended denying all the specifications of error in the Complaint, but also recommended  
17 revising Theological Judgments 2 (Terminology) and 5 (Spiritual Friendships). Presbytery  
18 declined the Committee's proposed revision to Judgment 2 and adopted its recommended revision  
19 to Judgment 5. Presbytery then denied TE Speck's January 3, 2020, Complaint. It also heard the  
20 report of the Committee to Reconsider Queer Treasure (the one of the 9 Theological Judgments  
21 not approved on December 7, 2019), voting to find fault with this lecture given at Revoice 18.  
22

23           7/23/2020       TE Speck carried his January 3, 2020, Complaint to the General Assembly  
24 (Case 2020-05).  
25

26           9/14/2021       The Panel (Chairman RE John Pickering, Secretary TE Paul Bankson, RE  
27 Dan Carrell, and Alternates RE John Bise and TE David Coffin) conducted the hearing.  
28

## 29 **II. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES**

30

- 31           1. At its December 7, 2019, Called Meeting, did Missouri Presbytery (MOP) err in  
32 approving six theological judgments (specifically, Judgments # 1-5 and #9)  
33 recommended by CIM (Committee to Investigate Memorial)? Complainant's  
34 specifications of errors concern:

35  
36           MOP Theological Judgment 1 ("Origins of Homoerotic Desire")

37           MOP Theological Judgment 2 ("Terminology")

38           MOP Theological Judgment 3 ("The Gay Beneath the Gay")

39           MOP Theological Judgment 4 ("Gay Identity")

40           MOP Theological Judgment 5 ("Spiritual Friendship")

41           MOP Theological Judgment 9 ("Roman Catholic Speakers")  
42

- 43           2. Did the MOP err when it acted to deny TE Speck's point of order regarding the  
44 Administrative Committee's handling of the December 7, 2019 meeting?  
45

- 1           3. Did the MOP err when it acted to refuse to debate and rule on the propriety of gay  
2 couples adopting children, as Complainant suggests was advanced at Revoice 18?  
3

### 4 **III. JUDGMENTS**

5

- 6           1. Yes, particularly with regard to MOP Theological Judgments 2, 3, and 5.  
7           2. No.  
8           3. No.  
9

### 10 **IV. REASONING AND OPINION**

11

#### 12 **A. Issue 1 –Did Missouri Presbytery err in approving the Committee to Investigate** 13 **Memorial’s (CIM) Theological Allegations and Judgments on #1-5 and #9?** 14

15           Missouri Presbytery erred when it approved Judgments # 1-5 and #9 of CIM. Two  
16 matters account for Presbytery’s error. The first is that MOP employed incorrect criteria for  
17 review in adjudicating the allegations presented within the Complaint. The second is that MOP  
18 failed to act properly in light of what it found based even on those incorrect criteria. This is  
19 reflected in its actions on Theological Judgments #1-5, #9, and considered in light of the findings  
20 of CIM and the Complaint Review Committee (CRC). The matter of the incorrect criteria for  
21 review and the matter of MOP’s failure to act properly will be reviewed in turn.  
22

#### 23 **MOP’s Criteria for Review**

24

25           On December 7, 2019, at the recommendation of its Committee to Investigate Memorial  
26 (CIM), MOP adopted eight “Theological Judgments.” TE Ryan Speck filed Complaint against  
27 six of these Judgments (Theological Judgments #1-5, #9).<sup>1</sup> In presenting these recommendations,  
28 CIM employed criteria for review that it explicitly articulated in its committee report. CIM urged  
29 that “the core principles of justice enumerated in *BCO* Chapter 34 ought to govern ... the  
30 Memorial Session’s role in their decision to host Revoice 18; and ... those principles should also  
31 govern our assessment of the theological teachings of Revoice, as we found them in the talks of  
32 the Revoice 18 speakers and in their writings and teachings in other venues”. CIM further  
33 appealed to the “stipulations in *BCO* 40.5” as “relevant ... to this situation...”. *BCO* 40-5, CIM  
34 reasoned, “seems to have in view not simply doctrinal teaching of ministers that may be  
35 erroneous or divisive (which seems to be the focus of *BCO* 34.5), but any and all ‘constitutional’  
36 breaches that a lower court may have committed.” CIM therefore argued that they were to make  
37 a determination whether “the Memorial elders and pastor [are] guilty of an **important**  
38 **delinquency** and/or a **grossly unconstitutional proceeding** in allowing the outside group,  
39 Revoice, to use its facilities for its conference” ( emphasis in original). Any alleged errors could  
40 “not simply [be] errors, but errors so serious that they **strike at the vitals of religion** (in faith or  
41 morals) AND as well, **are industriously spread** (emphasis in original). Thus, CIM declared that  
42 “in our process we considered *BCO* chapters 29, 34, and 40 in determining whether either

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<sup>1</sup> CIM presented nine Theological Judgments to MOP. On December 7, 2019, MOP adopted eight of those Theological Judgments, and referred a ninth to a committee of Presbytery. TE Speck filed complaint against six of the remaining eight Theological Judgments.

1 Revoice or Memorial committed errors that strike at the vitals of religion or simply errors  
2 resulting from the weakness of human understanding.”  
3

4 CIM’s recommendations to Presbytery with respect to Theological Judgments #1-5, #9  
5 contain language explicitly reflecting these criteria – “grave and serious” (#1, #2, #3, #4), “error  
6 of judgment rather than an error striking at the vitals of religion” (#5), “strike at the vitals of  
7 religion” (#9). Since Presbytery adopted each of these motions, it thereby employed, whether  
8 intentionally or not, CIM’s standard in assessing the teachings of Revoice 18 that were before it.<sup>2</sup>  
9

10 But, in doing so, CIM and Presbytery conflated the language of *BCO* 34 and 40 into a  
11 single criterion. By so doing, they defined “any important delinquency or grossly  
12 unconstitutional proceedings” from *BCO* 40-5 as consisting only of “Heresy and schism...that  
13 strike at the vitals of religion and are industriously spread” as set forth in *BCO* 34-5. This is,  
14 however, an inaccurate reading of *BCO* 40-5 and thus was an erroneous criterion for MOP to  
15 apply to the teachings of Revoice. In conflating the language of *BCO* 34 and 40, CIM and  
16 Presbytery crafted a criterion for assessing the actions of courts of the PCA that is based on the  
17 Constitutional standard to be used when undertaking process against a teaching elder. There is  
18 no Constitutional reason that the latter should define the former. *BCO* 34 governs “special rules  
19 pertaining to process against a minister.” But the teachings in question at Revoice 18 were not  
20 being taught exclusively by member teaching elders of MOP. The individuals teaching at  
21 Revoice 18 were both officers and non-officers, within the PCA and outside the PCA. There is  
22 no Constitutional reason why the standard articulated in *BCO* 34-5 should have been applied  
23 beyond its narrow scope, that is, process concerning a PCA teaching elder. Further, in creating  
24 this new criterion CIM and MOP apparently overlooked Constitutional material regarding the  
25 responsibilities of the courts of the PCA that should have guided their application of *BCO* 40-5  
26 to this matter.  
27

28 The proper Constitutional criteria to be applied in matters arising under *BCO* 40-5 are  
29 those found at *BCO* 11-3,4 and at *BCO* 13-9(f) which deal with the responsibilities of courts.  
30 *BCO* 11-4 affirms that “every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline  
31 seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general to maintain truth and righteousness,  
32 condemning erroneous opinions and practices which tend to the injury of the peace, purity, or  
33 progress of the church.” *BCO* 11-3 permits “disputed matters of doctrine and order arising in the  
34 lower courts” to be “referred to the higher courts for decision,” while *BCO* 13-9(f). enumerates  
35 among the powers of Presbytery, “to condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or  
36 peace of the Church.” *BCO* 11-3 affirms, then, that when “disputed matters of doctrine” are  
37 Constitutionally brought from a lower court to a higher court, then the higher court may lawfully  
38 render “decision” with respect to those matters. *BCO* 13-9(f) articulates the proper criteria for  
39 evaluation. If an “opinion” is not only “erroneous” but also “injure[s] the purity or peace of the  
40 Church,” then Presbytery may lawfully “condemn” that opinion.  
41

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<sup>2</sup> In several places in this Reasoning, for the sake of brevity, we use the phrases, “the teachings of Revoice 18” or “the teachings of Revoice.” By those phrases we mean the teaching of some of the speakers at the Revoice 18 Conference.

## **MOP's Findings**

### *The Findings of MOP*

The importance of applying the proper Constitutional criteria surfaces when we consider Presbytery's motions with respect to the Theological Judgments that are the subject of this Complaint. The motions that MOP adopted with respect to these Theological Judgments reflect some measure of concern relating to teachings of Revoice 18 –

“Revoice 18's use of the terminology in question, though confusing to some and potentially unwise, was not a grave and serious doctrinal error” (Theological Judgment #2).

“We concur with the CIM's judgment that the evidence was such that this question as to whether a ‘gay beneath the gay’ exists could not have been judged to be a key teaching of Revoice, but continues to have the potential for becoming a grave and serious error if it begins to play a more central role, and thus we exhort those involved with Revoice to consider our position on this matter” (Theological Judgment #3).

“We concur that i) celibate SSA believers face complex barriers in developing friendships with people of the same gender and that, ii) Christians must labor to empathize with this difficulty and that, iii) it was unwise and hence an error of judgment rather than an error striking at the vitals of religion for Revoice leaders to be entertaining publicly the possibility of celibate partnerships without more careful boundaries proposed and that, iv) TE Johnson adequately warned about the dangers of these type of friendships in his own Revoice 18 talk.” (Theological Judgment #5)

Importantly, the language of concern in the motions cited above was left in place by the findings of a subsequent committee, the Second Speck Complaint Review Committee [CRC2], and the actions of MOP on the July 21, 2020 recommendations of that committee.

Although MOP registered concern with respect to the teachings of Revoice 18 in view in Theological Judgments 2, 3, and 5, it declined to take further action than it did. MOP unnecessarily restrained itself by the incorrect criteria for review that it opted to follow in evaluating the teachings of Revoice 18. Consequently, it did not take adequate action with respect to the errors that it had identified (Theological Judgments 3, 5), and with respect to teachings that it identified as “confusing to some and potentially unwise” (Theological Judgment 2).

### *The Findings of Committees of MOP*

Significantly, the committees of MOP (CIM, CRC) registered greater concern in their findings than did MOP in its adopted Judgments. Consider first the findings of CIM. With respect to the teachings addressed by Theological Judgment 2, CIM noted, “we do agree that the way Revoice and Side B believers in general use terms has been confusing to many in our churches, and we expressed regret that they were not more sensitive to this confusion”; “These



1 terms [“like ‘gay,’ ‘sexual orientation,’ ‘queer,’ and ‘sexual minorities’”] [have] potential to  
2 cause offense and division within the church”; and “We sincerely wish that Revoice leaders  
3 would have had a greater sense of the responsibility they carry to explain their use of terms more  
4 fully to the church they profess to need.” Compare the subsequent and confirmatory finding of  
5 CRC2, “some of these terms [‘gay,’ ‘sexual orientation,’ ‘queer,’ ‘sexual minorities’] may well  
6 have been used at Revoice 18 in such a way in which they were inconsistent, unwise and  
7 confusing to many observers of the conference, thereby contributing to the disturbance of the  
8 peace of the church.”  
9

10 With respect to the teachings addressed by Theological Judgment 3, CIM noted, “The use  
11 of terms such as ‘same-sex-attracted’ or ‘gay’ in the way Revoice 18 and many Side B people  
12 use them ... indulges in needless and potentially dangerous speculation”; “If one takes these  
13 terms the way that Revoice and many Side B people take them ... then the allegation is true that  
14 Revoice has committed at least an error of imprudence by indulging in needless and potentially  
15 dangerous speculation, and it remains to be seen whether this error will be used in such a way as  
16 to strike at the vitals of religion”; “Revoice leaders and speakers do use terms that historically  
17 were synonymous with ‘homosexual desire’ in a way that expands them to include morally good  
18 features that are claimed to be underneath or behind the illicit sexual desires. These terms include  
19 ‘homosexual,’ ‘same sex attraction,’ ‘gay,’ and ‘homosexual attraction.’ This leads them to say  
20 that not everything about ‘being gay’ or ‘same-sex-attracted’ has to do with sinful sexual  
21 desires”; “[the danger is that] this speculation [regarding morally benign qualities tied to  
22 homosexual desire] appears to us to be the prospect of this becoming a central plank in the  
23 thinking and approach of some of Revoice’s leaders” ; and “We feel constrained to warn against  
24 any expansion of the terms ‘same-sex-attraction’ and ‘being gay’ with its creation of a category  
25 of ‘gayness,’ understood as a way of experiencing the world. This seems to us to be a potentially  
26 dangerous error of speculation; yet we cannot say with unwavering confidence that we believe it  
27 to be an error so serious and obviously destructive of good morals and sound doctrine that we  
28 judge it to be an error which ‘strikes at the vitals of religion’ in the areas of doctrine and morals.  
29 We do believe it to be at least a lesser error of indulging in necessary and potentially dangerous  
30 speculation, something we are warned against as believers (see 1 Timothy 1:3-4).”  
31

32 With respect to the teachings addressed by Theological Judgment 5, CIM noted, “we  
33 concluded that entertaining celibate partnerships was unwise – at least *to whatever degree* they  
34 were being given *serious* consideration. CIM regarded this as an error of judgment and not of  
35 doctrine...” (emphasis in original); “[I]t is ... our judgment that, to the extent that Revoice event  
36 entertains the possibility of ‘celibate partnerships’ ... it has erred in offering unwise, unedifying  
37 relational arrangements to SSA Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12)”; and “[W]e ... believe that  
38 [Revoice] are open to the danger of a preoccupation with technical boundaries on physical limits  
39 in friendships to the neglect of the deeper inner dynamic involved in SSA romantic coupling, and  
40 the way it mimics the longing and the personal pull toward the other person that draws a man and  
41 woman together toward an exclusive intimacy that is designed by God to move them toward  
42 marriage.”  
43

44 With respect to the teachings addressed by Theological Judgment 4, MOP concluded,  
45 “We concur with CIM and deny that it is always a grave and serious error worthy of repudiation  
46 to claim something which can be traced to our sin nature as in any sense a part of our ‘identity,’

1 of [*sic*] part of ‘who we are,’ as Revoice does with being SSA. While enduring patterns of  
2 brokenness and sin remain part of ‘who we are,’ of our ‘identity,’ as children of Adam,  
3 nevertheless sinful desires and deeds must be put to death. We concur that the core question is  
4 not: ‘Is that which rises from sin part of who you are?’ but rather: “What are you doing with all  
5 the broken parts and places of who you are?” But CIM’s findings with respect to Theological  
6 Judgment 4 raised concerns that MOP’s action did not: “[W]e believe that the language of ‘gay  
7 Christian’ ... poses a particularly challenging problem for both the Revoice project and its  
8 critics. We encourage Revoice and those who would adopt such language to do so with great  
9 care, recognizing its potential to cause offense and division within the church.”

10  
11 Consider next the findings of CRC. The Complaint Review Committee (CRC), which  
12 was appointed to hear an earlier (July, 2019) complaint of TE Speck against actions of MOP  
13 taken on recommendation of its CIM, registered particular concerns with Revoice 18. As to  
14 same-sex friendships, “The majority on the CRC along with the CIM itself ... were very  
15 concerned with this way [i.e. the way advocated at Revoice 18] of applying the truths that are in  
16 this passage [i.e., 1 Sam 18:3, Ruth 1:16-17] and concluded that applying texts in this manner  
17 was a significant hermeneutical error that needed to be clearly corrected and warned against by  
18 the MOP and MPC.” As to a particular speaker’s specific statement with respect to gay  
19 orientation – “Without wishing to disparage the speaker whatsoever (who herself acknowledged  
20 that she was engaging intentionally in speculation) the CRC nonetheless must conclude that, in  
21 this confined moment, speculations were put forward that caused damage to the peace and purity  
22 of the church and possibly to the souls of her members.” As to so-called gay culture, “The CRC  
23 concurs with complainant’s concerns, based primarily on the language of WCF 20-1 and its  
24 supporting proof texts, that [a Revoice speaker] went too far in suggesting that believers in Christ  
25 should closely identify with and willfully associate themselves with even the so-called ‘non-  
26 homoerotic’ aspects of LGBTQ/Queer Culture and in so doing did indeed make assertions that  
27 ‘struck at the vitals of religion.’” As to use of language, “We ... believe that some of the terms  
28 being used are so provocative and so widely misunderstood that believers ought to be  
29 extraordinarily careful in their use and perhaps even refrain from using them at all, especially  
30 when speaking in public venues.”

31  
32 CRC no less registered broad concern with the way in which Revoice 18 had disrupted  
33 the church. In its October, 2019 report to Presbytery, CRC acknowledged that “the peace of the  
34 church ... had been highly disturbed by some aspects of what was said at the *Revoice 18*  
35 conference”; [W]e judge that some of the matters of controversy at *Revoice 18* were of ... a  
36 variety of error (whether they be errors “arising from the weakness of human understanding” or  
37 “striking at the vitals”), ... widely misunderstood by the wider church and ... damaging to the  
38 peace of the church;<sup>3</sup> “there was such grave confusion in the church about what some of the  
39 speakers at *Revoice 18* meant by what they were saying that it became incumbent on the MOP to  
40 be more clear about its own views in those areas where the confusion was greatest.”

41  
42 The failure of MOP to deal properly with the issues raised in the Complaint is magnified  
43 by two additional points. First, the concerning teachings did not occur in isolation. In other

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<sup>3</sup> The CRC makes this statement of its comment that MOP was hasty in its action in May, 2019. MOP, in October, 2019 “rescinded” its May, 2019 action and called a December, 2019 meeting to “reconsider the nine judgments of the CIM.”

1 words, it was not a situation where one individual made a concerning statement on one day in  
2 one area of the Presbytery, while another individual offered a different concerning statement on a  
3 separate issue on another day in another part of the Presbytery, while a third individual made a  
4 concerning statement on yet another issue in yet another part of the Presbytery. All of the  
5 statements cited in the Complaint and in the various reports of MOP committees and  
6 commissions were made at the same Conference dealing with the same general topic. Thus, it is  
7 most reasonable to judge the level of error and level of potential harm by considering the  
8 cumulative impact of the errors and concerns across the whole of the Conference. In disposing  
9 of the allegations by dealing with each one as a separate entity and stating, in essence, that if  
10 there was an error in the specific area it was only minor, MOP apparently missed the fact that the  
11 cumulative impact of those errors could and did add up to a major concern.  
12

13 Second, while MOP did take action to try to make sure that the Congregation of  
14 Memorial Presbyterian Church was alerted to possible errors and that steps were taken to  
15 mitigate the possible harm to the peace and purity of that Congregation as a result of those errors,  
16 it is not evident that MOP dealt appropriately with its responsibility to take similar steps with  
17 regard to the broader Church. Certainly, the question of the breadth of impact of erroneous  
18 teachings at Revoice 18 was raised with the Presbytery. Significantly, the chair of CIM declared  
19 to MOP in January, 2019 “his sorrow over his own passivity in failing to ask Presbytery ... to get  
20 involved in the Revoice controversy, especially after it was over, when our brothers at Memorial  
21 could have benefitted from our counsel, encouragement, and inquiry, and when it ought to have  
22 been clear to him that the controversy was proving to be so divisive and widespread that it  
23 virtually constrained Presbytery’s involvement.” Similarly, the communications from various  
24 individuals and courts throughout the Denomination gave indication that the peace and purity of  
25 the broader church were being impacted. Yet, while MOP was, commendably, willing to interact  
26 with those communications, there is no evidence that Presbytery clearly stated to the broader  
27 church that it recognized the errors that were taught at Revoice 18 and the impact of those  
28 teachings. Further, it is not clear that Presbytery sought to do what it could to mitigate the  
29 impact of those erroneous teachings on the peace and purity of the Church. We recognize that  
30 this lack of response by MOP may well have come about because of their use of the incorrect  
31 criteria as discussed above, but that does not change the fact that MOP did not do what it needed  
32 to do to protect the peace and purity of the broader Church, particularly in light of the  
33 responsibilities set forth in *BCO* 11-3, 4.<sup>4</sup>  
34

35 The Record shows, therefore, that more than one committee of Presbytery acknowledged  
36 multiple teachings at Revoice 18 to have been erroneous in themselves and disruptive to the  
37 peace of the Church. Similar concerns were registered about the conference as a whole. MOP  
38 adopted language that, if anything, was milder and weaker than statements (cited above)

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<sup>4</sup> *BCO* 11-3, “When ... according to Scriptural example, and needful to the purity and harmony of the whole Church, disputed matters of doctrine and order arising in the lower courts are referred to the higher courts for decision...” *BCO* 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 .... These courts are not separate and independent tribunals, but they have a mutual relation, and every act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole Church performed by it through the appropriate organ.”

1 appearing in its committees' reports to Presbytery. But even so, Presbytery adopted language  
2 that, according to the Constitutional criteria set forth in *BCO* 11-3, 4 and 13-9(f), required it to  
3 take action that it neglected to take.

4  
5 **B. Issue 2 –Did Missouri Presbytery err when it acted to deny a point of order**  
6 **regarding its December 7, 2019 meeting?**  
7

8 Complainant argues that MOP violated its own standing rules when its Stated Clerk  
9 circulated materials prepared by MOP's Administrative Committee in advance of the December  
10 7, 2019, meeting. According to Complainant, MOP's Standing Rule 8.3.C. limits the  
11 Administrative Committee to a purely administrative role; it is "specifically forbidden to institute  
12 new work." Complainant argues that the portion of the materials circulated comprised of what  
13 the Stated Clerk described in his email to the members of Presbytery as "briefs on the nine  
14 theological questions we will be considering" constituted impermissible "new work."  
15 Complainant also objects to the characterization of the briefs by the Stated Clerk as having been  
16 prepared by "[t]he CIM in conjunction with the Administrative Committee" because the CIM  
17 had been dismissed with thanks by MOP some six months earlier. Complainant finds the latter  
18 matter particularly irksome because Complainant was himself a member of the CIM, and he was  
19 not invited to participate in the preparation of the briefs. Finally, to add insult to injury, "select  
20 CIM members were allowed the last 5 minutes of each debate time in order to speak for approval  
21 of each of the 9 Judgments." Complainant raised a point of order concerning these matters at the  
22 beginning of the December 6, 2019, meeting, but the Moderator ruled it not well taken, and his  
23 ruling survived a challenge by vote of the Presbytery.  
24

25 Since the facts are not disputed, the question or whether MOP's actions violated its  
26 Standing Rules is a pure question of law, but unlike the other questions of law in this case, it is  
27 not a question to be decided under the PCA's Constitution. It is, instead, a question to be  
28 decided under MOP's Standing Rules, and the leading authority on that subject, MOP, has  
29 already ruled. It is not the place of the SJC to instruct MOP on what its own Standing Rules  
30 mean. In any case, by voting to uphold the Moderator's ruling, MOP set aside any violation of  
31 its Standing Rules by effectively modifying them for purposes of the materials circulated by the  
32 Moderator. We will not disturb that decision.  
33

34 It is possible, of course, that MOP's actions also violated the *BCO*, and we do have the  
35 authority and responsibility to interpret and apply the *BCO* without deferring to MOP's  
36 interpretation. The *BCO* contains no "new work" prohibition for administrative committees  
37 generally, so that part of Complainant's argument fails to advance. But the *BCO* does contain  
38 clear rules for the appointment and dismissal of committees. To that extent, the Stated Clerk's  
39 email was in error; the briefs were not prepared by the CIM at all, as the CIM no longer existed.  
40 However, they were evidently prepared by men who had been members of the CIM and who had  
41 evidently voted in the majority on the CIM concerning the CIM's report. Had the Stated Clerk's  
42 email described the briefs as being prepared by "men who were members of the CIM in  
43 conjunction with the [Administrative Committee]," Complainant would have had no basis to  
44 object regarding the CIM reference. It strains credulity, however, to believe that presbyters'  
45 votes on the 9 Theological Judgments were swayed by the mistaken impression that the full CIM  
46 had participated in the preparation of the briefs rather than some of its members who supported

1 the CIM's report, particularly since Complainant brought the inaccuracy of the Stated Clerk's  
2 email to the attention of the Presbytery at the beginning of the meeting. We conclude that the  
3 Stated Clerk's error was harmless error as to the outcome of the vote, although understandably it  
4 was not harmless to the feelings of the Complainant. It appears to be an error of the type for  
5 which a personal apology would be appropriate, and which should be accepted absent evidence  
6 of malice on the part of the Stated Clerk, which Complainant has not alleged. Finally, there is  
7 the issue of permitting former members of the CIM to have the last 5 minutes in debate.  
8 Presbyteries are free to structure debate on matters of this nature as they see fit within the  
9 governing rules, and we see nothing in the rules to prohibit this process as adopted by MOP.

10  
11 **C. Issue 3 –Did Missouri Presbytery erred when it acted to decline a proposal for**  
12 **debate at its December 7, 2019 meeting?**  
13

14 Complainant objects that MOP, at its October 15, 2019, meeting, voted down his  
15 proposal to consider at the December 7, 2019, called meeting the question of statements at  
16 Revoice 18 concerning the adoption of children by gay couples. He notes that the Complaint  
17 Review Committee that considered his July 8, 2019 Complaint (not the complaint at issue in this  
18 case, but the prior complaint) stated in its report that it agreed with Complainant "that the MOP  
19 owes a clearer statement to the church in relation to its views on non-traditional adoptions and  
20 especially adoptions by actively homosexual 'married' couples." (quoting report of MOP's  
21 Complaint Review Committee). He also emphasizes the comments of one invited guest at a  
22 Revoice 18 workshop who stated that she was "thrilled" to see gay couples adopting children.  
23 However, as detailed in the Complaint, the CIM apparently spoke with the leader of the  
24 workshop in question, who said that "the comment was made in the context of talking about  
25 whether it was better to leave unadopted children in the state foster care system until they 'age  
26 out' of it, or be in favor [of] allowing gay couples to adopt them." (quoting CIM report). The  
27 CIM report went on to state that "[W]hile we can understand how someone might take a  
28 comment like that to be a general endorsement of gay couples adopting children, we consider it  
29 unwarranted to construe an off-hand remark, made in the context of that very particular  
30 conversation – and by only a guest of the speaker – as an endorsement made by the workshop  
31 and thus by Revoice."

32  
33 We are sympathetic to Complainant's desire for his Presbytery to consider an important issue  
34 raised by a comment made by a guest at a Revoice 18 workshop. However, that is insufficient  
35 reason for us to order a presbytery to take up a question of this nature. If Complainant had  
36 shown that adoption was a central issue of Revoice 18, or even that multiple speakers had spoken  
37 in favor of it, we would want to know why MOP did not include that issue in its 9 Theological  
38 Judgments. But that is not the case. One comment by one guest of a speaker at a conference,  
39 taken out of context, is not enough to require a theological determination by a presbytery.

40  
41 **D. Amends**  
42

43 This matter is remanded to MOP Presbytery with instructions that it "hold a new hearing"  
44 (BCO 43-10) which need focus only on the following matters: "What steps must MOP take to  
45 make clear to the broader Church the errors that were identified in Presbytery's various  
46 investigations with regard to some of the teachings at Revoice 18, particularly with regard to

1 Theological Judgments 2, 3, and 5, and what steps must MOP take to fulfill its responsibilities to  
2 protect the peace and purity of the broader Church under *BCO* 11-3, 11-4 and 13-9(f) in light of  
3 those errors?"

4  
5 In its new review, we encourage Presbytery to consider interacting with the May 2020  
6 Report of the General Assembly's Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality and how specific  
7 statements of some speakers at Revoice 18 may have differed from the propositions in that  
8 Report. We understand the AIC Report had only been published for two months when  
9 Presbytery declined to sustain this Complaint, and we recognize the Report does not have  
10 Constitutional status.

11  
12 The Statement of the three Issues, the Judgments on Issues 2 and 3, and the Reasoning for  
13 Judgments 2 and 3, are largely as they were proposed by the Panel, as drafted by RE John  
14 Pickering, and amended and approved by the Panel. Judgment 1, the Reasoning for Judgment 1,  
15 and the Amends are largely as they were proposed as a substitute by TE Guy Waters and RE  
16 Frederick Neikirk. The SJC adopted amendments to several parts and adopted the final decision  
17 on the following roll call vote:

18			
19	Bankson <i>Concur</i>	M. Duncan <i>Concur</i>	Neikirk <i>Concur</i>
20	Bise <i>Concur</i>	S. Duncan <i>Concur</i>	Nusbaum <i>Concur</i>
21	Cannata <i>Concur</i>	Ellis <i>Concur</i>	Pickering <i>Dissent</i>
22	Carrell <i>Concur</i>	Greco <i>Concur</i>	Ross <i>Concur</i>
23	Chapell <i>Concur</i>	Kooistra <i>Concur</i>	Terrell <i>Concur</i>
24	Coffin <i>Dissent</i>	Lee <i>Concur</i>	Waters <i>Concur</i>
25	Donahoe <i>Concur</i>	Lucas <i>Concur</i>	White <i>Concur</i>
26	Dowling <i>Concur</i>	McGowan <i>Concur</i>	Wilson <i>Concur</i>
27	(22-2-0)		
28			
29			