

November 14, 2020

The Session of New Hope Presbyterian Church met for the First Meeting of trial of Mr. Jason R. on Saturday November 14, 2020 at the church offices located at 5305-C Jefferson Pike Frederick, MD 21703.

Teaching Elder present: Rev. Francis VanD. (moderator). Teaching elder joining by Zoom link was Rev. Steve H. Ruling elders present were Messrs. Karl K., David M., Dennis C., Joel P., John W. (clerk).

Also present: Mr. Jason R.

Visitors present were Messrs. John Van M., Matthew R., Billy R..

Visitors joining by Zoom link: Ann B., Belle W., Margie W., Ken H., Laura VanD., Farrah W., Glenn J., John M.

Mr. VanD. opened the meeting reading from Hebrews 12:9-11 and offered prayer at 9:03.

Mr. VanD. read the warning of BD IV. A.1.a as follows:

This body is about to sit in a judicial capacity and I exhort you, the members, to bear in mind your solemn duty faithfully to minister and declare the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and to subordinate all human judgments to that infallible rule.

Mr. VanD. read the charges as follows:

Charges and Specifications Against Mr. Jason R.

Charge 1: We, the members of the Session, charge Mr. Jason R. with the offense of violating the ninth commandment by not protecting the good name of others.

Scripture References: Exodus 20:16, Ephesians 4:15 "...speaking the truth in love...", Ephesians 4:29 "but only such [talk] as is good for building up..., that it may give grace to those who hear....," James 4:11 "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers."

Constitutional References: WLC Q 144 "preserving and promoting... the good name of our neighbor...", WLC Q 145 "detracting..., reviling...."

Specification 1: On April 22, 2020, Mr. Jason R., without the advice or permission of New Hope Session, sent a personal email to the members and regular attenders of New Hope Church defending himself, delineating his grievances and disagreements with New Hope Session, and explaining his concerns with New Hope Session's response to his complaint prior to Presbytery even processing it.

Witness: Document 1 (Mr. Jason R. email to church), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 2: On April 22, 2020, Mr. Jason R. cast aspersions on Mrs. Aimee B's good name by writing about private conversations in his email to New Hope Church members and regular

attenders: “they have stated to me and in session their [Session’s] concerns about her [Mrs. Aimee B’s] writing that are of the same vein as the concerns that members of GC [Genevan Commons] have.”

Witness: Document 1 (Mr. Jason R. email to church), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 3: Mr. Jason R. cast aspersions on Mrs. Aimee B. when, on or about April 21, 2020, he shared The Backstory and his understanding of matters at New Hope Church with an OPC officer not from New Hope Church. Based on Mr. Jason R’s communication of the situation with him, that officer wrote “Mrs. Aimee B has been laboring in her own session and in the OPC to develop some way to bring charges against me and others for opposing her. To do this, they have assembled (dissembled?) snippets of this and that for years. And now, she has accomplished the removal of one of her own elders without proper discipline procedures for not adequately supporting her. On Good Friday, members of Mrs. Aimee B’s church began receiving a mailed document in which the session presented its written case against Genevan Commons to its congregation as part of its work to divest the elder who displeased Mrs. Aimee B. by his membership in Genevan Commons....”

Witnesses: Document 2 (The Backstory), Document 3 (Daily Genevan Blog), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 4: Mr. Jason R. cast aspersions on New Hope Session when, on or about April 21, 2020, and without the advice or permission of New Hope Session, he shared The Backstory and his understanding of matters at New Hope Church with an OPC officer not from New Hope Church. Based on Mr. Jason R’s communication of the situation with him, that officer wrote “Mrs. Aimee B. has been laboring in her own session and in the OPC to develop some way to bring charges against me and others for opposing her. To do this, they have assembled (dissembled?) snippets of this and that for years. And now, she has accomplished the removal of one of her own elders without proper discipline procedures for not adequately supporting her. On Good Friday, members of Mrs. Aimee B’s church began receiving a mailed document in which the session presented its written case against Genevan Commons to its congregation as part of its work to divest the elder who displeased Mrs. Aimee B. by his membership in Genevan Commons....”

Witnesses: Document 2 (The Backstory), Document 3 (Daily Genevan Blog), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Charge 2: We, the members of the Session, charge Mr. Jason R. with the offense of violating the command to keep the unity and peace of the church (Ephesians 4:3), a sin aggravated by being a violation of his ordination vow to “seek the peace, the purity, and the unity of the church.”

Scripture References: Exodus 20:16, Ephesians 4:3.

Constitutional References: WLC Q 144 “...keeping of lawful promises...,” WLC Q 145 “...breach of lawful promises...,” FG 25:6.b(4).

Specification 1: Session expressed concerns about Mr. Jason R's character and shepherding directly to him, spending some time on it at its January 7th meeting, a significant amount of time on it in its January 15th meeting, most of its January 25th meeting, as well as detailing the concerns in a letter from New Hope Session to Mr. Jason R. dated February 6, 2020. Mr. Francis VanD. also wrote a personal letter to Mr. and Mrs. Jason R. dated January 30, 2020 which addressed some of these concerns, and Mr. David M. and Mr. Francis VanD. had a lengthy conversation with Mr. Jason R. on January 4, 2020 about these concerns as well. However, Mr. Jason R. has not addressed these concerns to date.

Witnesses: Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M., Mr. Francis VanD., Document 4 (Session's Feb 6 letter).

Specification 2: On February 25, 2020 Session requested Mr. Jason R. to write out his "concerns with where Session erred in policy/procedure matters, along with why [he] believed they were wrong." No response was received, although on March 25, 2020 a complaint against Session's actions was filed by Mr. Jason R.

Witnesses: Document 6 (Session's concerns request), Document 7 (Complaint), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 3: On March 4, 2020 Mr. Francis VanD., on behalf of Session, asked Mr. Jason R. to meet with Session on March 14th to ask several questions. On March 9, 2020 Mr. Jason R. responded that that date didn't work. On March 9th Mr. Francis VanD. asked for "a few Saturdays or Tuesdays that work for you" and received no response.

Witnesses: Document 8 (Session date request), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 4: On or about April 21, 2020, Mr. Jason R., without the advice or permission of New Hope Session, sent a document (The Backstory) intended only for members and regular attenders of New Hope Church to an OPC officer outside of New Hope Church and the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, who had a vested interest in it and subsequently posted it on his website, which made this a public affair well beyond the boundaries of our local church.

Witnesses: Document 2 (The Backstory), Document 3 (Daily Genevan Blog), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 5: On April 22, 2020, Mr. Jason R., without the advice or permission of New Hope Session, sent a personal email to the members and regular attenders of New Hope Church defending himself, delineating his grievances and disagreements with New Hope Session, and explaining his concerns with New Hope Session's response to his complaint prior to Presbytery even processing it.

Witnesses: Document 1 (Mr. Jason R. email to church), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 6: In a Session meeting on May 5, 2020, Mr. Jason R. stated that he could not sit under Mr. Francis VanD's preaching, nor take communion from him. Mr. Jason R. had absented himself from January 26th to May 5th, and continued to do so until September 13th, 2020.

Witnesses: Mr. David M., Mr. John W.

Charge 3: We, the members of the Session, charge Mr. Jason R. with the offense of violating the fifth commandment by failing to protect the flock of God.

Scripture References: Exodus 20:12, 13, Acts 20:28 “Pay careful attention to... all the flock...”

Constitutional Reference: WLC Q 130 “...careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong..., danger...”

Specification 1: Mr. Jason R. said he saw warnings like “Mrs. Aimee B. being promoted in the OPC. Guard your families and churches” written about Mrs. Aimee B’s speaking at the Machen Retreat and Conference Center’s ladies retreat, which were posted on or about August 15th, 2019, on the Genevan Commons Facebook group, and on the Machen Center’s homepage. He failed to alert her to these matters.

Witnesses: Mrs. Aimee B., Mr. David M., Document 9 (Screenshot Warning).

Specification 2: Mr. Jason R. said he saw a comment on the Genevan Commons Facebook group on or about August 15, 2019, to members saying, “think we should identify as women for the conference and make this another Genevan commons Meetup?” Mr. Jason R. said he saw posts written in late 2019 threatening offensive and defensive measures to be taken against Mrs. Aimee B. because “we are in a war for the heart and soul of our churches and communities.” He failed to alert her to any of these things.

Witnesses: Mrs. Aimee B., Mr. David M., Document 10 (Screenshot GC Meetup), Document 11 (Screenshot Offensive Measures).

Specification 3: Mr. Jason R. acknowledges seeing comments about Mrs. Aimee B. on the Genevan Commons website that he calls rude. He saw Mrs. Aimee B’s book mocked by being retitled “Why Can’t We Be Naked?” While he had the opportunity to, Mr. Jason R. has not spoken or written to the offenders to protect Mrs. Aimee B’s honor and reputation.

Witnesses: Mrs. Aimee B., Mr. David M., Document 12 (Screenshot Book).

Charge 4: We, the members of the Session, charge Mr. Jason R. with the offense of violating the ninth commandment by speaking with doubtful and equivocal expressions, in other words, being disingenuous.

Scripture References: Exodus 20:16, James 5:12.

Constitutional References: WLC Q 144, “...sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully speaking the truth...,” and WLC Q 145, “...speaking the truth... in doubtful and equivocal expressions...”

Specification 1: On March 25, 2020 in Mr. Jason R’s Complaint, he states that he “made a serious effort to correct the error short of entering a complaint” while having given no answer to Session’s February 25, 2020 request to him to write out his “concerns with where Session erred in policy/procedure matters, along with why [he] believed they were wrong.”

Witnesses: Document 7 (Complaint), Document 6 (Session concerns request), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 2: On April 22, 2020, Mr. Jason R. wrote in his unsolicited email to New Hope Church members and regular attenders that “I desire for others to speak to me about concerns that they might have. Please feel free to reach out.” However, when various members wrote to him, including but not limited to Mrs. S., Mrs. VanD., and Mrs. W., they received no response.

Witnesses: Document 1 (Mr Jason R. email to church), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M., Mrs. S., Mrs. VanD., Mrs. W.

Specification 3: On April 22, 2020 in his unsolicited email to New Hope Church members and regular attenders, and on other occasions, Mr. Jason R. expressed “a desire for reconciliation” and “I earnestly pray for resolution and miraculous healing.” However, he has not responded to New Hope Session’s request for a list of his concerns (February 25, 2020), for dates to meet (March 9th), and to read and discuss a book (February 25, 2020), and has made no movement or effort to work with Session to this end apart from filing a complaint.

Witnesses: Document 1 (Mr. Jason R. email to church), Document 6 (Session concerns request), Document 8 (Session date request), Mr. Karl K., Mr. David M.

Specification 4: On September 19, 2020, when asked on the floor of Presbytery if he had been regularly attending New Hope Church, Mr. Jason R. failed to answer with a clear “no” despite not attending New Hope in person or online from January 26th to September 13, 2020, despite regularly attending another local church in person, and despite having stated on May 2, 2020 in a Session meeting that he could not sit under Mr. VanD’s preaching. Rather, he spoke of how he tried to keep up with a few members via phone, and was keeping his distance due to Covid-19 concerns related to his parents’ health.

Witnesses: Mr. Karl K, Mr. David M.

originally filed November 2, 2020 and edited and finalized on November 7, 2020 and signed by the clerk and moderator of the Session on November 13, 2020.

Mr. Jason R. was then given a copy of the charges and all supporting documents.

The witnesses to be cited by the Session were listed as the Session, Mrs. Aimee B., Gingy S., Laura VanD., Farrah W.

Mr. Rundell asked if he could have someone outside the OPC serve as an advisor, understanding that he cannot serve as counsel or have the floor to speak.

The next meeting of trial was agreed upon by all parties to be Saturday January 16, 2020 at 9:00AM.

Common consent was given to adjourn the first meeting of trial at 9:26 AM.

The first meeting of trial was closed in prayer at 9:28 AM by Mr. VanDelden.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Wise Clerk of Session