

**Special Meeting
of the Presbytery of Southern New England
Zoom Teleconference
April 21, 2020**

The Presbytery of Southern New England of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) held a Special Meeting via Zoom Teleconference on March 11, 2020.

The Presbytery was called to order by the Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Ruth Herron Smalt, and led in prayer by the General Presbyter, the Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, at 4:05 p.m.

QUORUM

A **QUORUM** was present. The Stated Clerk announced that the roll for this meeting was being formed through online registration for the meeting.

ATTENDANCE	Ministers-	56
	<u>Elders-</u>	<u>33</u>
	TOTAL-	89

MINISTERS PRESENT

The following minister members were present:

Thelma Burgonio-Watson	Wayne Eberly	Tracy Mehr-Muska
J. C. Cadwallader	Julie Emery	Carol Howard Merritt
Andre Castillo	Eileen Epperson	John Merz
Christine Caton	Anne Fuhrmeister	Anne Marie Meyerhoffer
Stephen Clark	James Glenn	Patrick Notley
Adele Crawford	Barbara Hager	Susan Olson
Terrlyn Curry Avery	Jan Hawkins	Deborah Packard
Alonso Dacunha	Thomas Hawkins	Jenny Peek
Richard Dannenfesler	Thomas Hughart	Susan M. Pfeil
T. J. DeMarco	Kathryn Kibbie Laird	Joan Priest
Gregory Doll	Dana Lindsley	Richard Reifsnnyder
Shelley Donaldson	Nancy McLaren	Paulo de Tarso Ribeiro
Brandi Drake	Jimmy McPherson	John Sandel

Jason Santalucia	Christa Dawn Swenson	Shannan Vance-Ocampo
Samuel A. Schreiner III	Christopher Tate	Kevin White
Cass Shaw	Mary Thies	Shannon White
Arthur Shippee	Susan Power Trucksess	Jeffrey Wood
Ruth Herron Smalt	Frances Unsell	Heather Wright
Virginia Smanik	David Van Dyke	

MINISTERS EXCUSED

The following minister members were excused:

Marilyn McNaughton	Lin Grace Rohr
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ELDER COMMISSIONERS

The following Elders represented the Churches of the Presbytery:

Ashaway: Babcock	
Barrington	
Brookfield: Valley	Cheryl Freeston
Cumberland	Peter Cameron, Betty Conlon
Darien: Noroton	
Farifield: First	Sue Donegan, Sib Law, Ivy McKinney, Clare Schimpf
Fall River: Calvary	
Granby: Pioneer Valley	
Greenwich: First	Lori Niehaus, Charlene Roberson, Faith Sommerfield, Christine Stewart Zadik
Groton: St. Andrew	Jean Degrooth, Dale Green
Hamden: New Haven Korean	
Hartford: First	
Milford: United	Janice Fletcher Yarson, Nadine Logan
New Canaan: First	Armin Thies
New Haven: Connecticut Korean	
New Haven: First	Timothy McCloskey
Providence	
Springfield: Martin Luther King	Leslie Parks

Stamford: First

Ellen McDonnell, Christina McIntyre, Nancy Winter

Stamford: Turn of River

Warwick: Greenwood

Emmy Kmet, Matthew Majeika, Wayne Meunier

Warwick: Woodbury

A. Douglas Ray

Waterford: Crossroads

John Succo

West Hartford: Westminster

Nicole Aronson, Arthur Riihimaki

Westerly: Dunn's Corners

Wilton

PRESBYTERY ROUNDTABLE

The following Elder members and officers from the Presbytery Roundtable were present: Lisa Baker (Springfield: MLK), Stephen Hart (Stamford: First), Dick Hasbany (New Haven: First), and Barbara Riihimaki (West Hartford: Westminster).

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS

Elder April Saber-Assad (Fall River: Calvary) was in attendance.

PRESBYTERY STAFF

Ms. Erika Plank Hagan, the Presbytery's Communications Manager, was in attendance.

VISITORS

Two hundred fifty (250) visitors registered for the meeting.

CHURCHES WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

Twelve (12) Churches were without Elder Commissioner representation.

APPROVAL OF CALL

By consent, the Presbytery **APPROVED** the call as presented by the Stated Clerk:

Notice is hereby given for a **Special Meeting** of the Presbytery of Southern New England to be held on **Tuesday, April 21, 2020**, at 4:00 p.m., via **Zoom teleconference**. This special meeting is being called in accordance with the PSNE Bylaws by action of the Presbytery

Roundtable, for the purpose of hearing the Decision and Order of the Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission in the matter of *PCUSA vs. the Rev. Sean Miller* (Disciplinary Case 2019-01), as required by the Rules of Discipline.

ENROLLMENT AND INTRODUCTIONS

By consent, the Presbytery **ENROLLED** the following ministers as a Corresponding Members:

The Rev. David A. Baer – Presbytery of the Palisades

The Rev. Erin Keys – National Capital Presbytery

Ms. Erika Plan Hagan, the Presbytery Communications Manager, provided a brief introduction to Zoom.

REPORT OF THE PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION

The Stated Clerk proceeded to report the decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission. After reading the Preamble to the Rules of Discipline (D-1.0101), the Clerk read the Decision and Consent Order in the matter of the *Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) vs. the Rev. Sean Miller*, which is spread upon the minutes below:

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**PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION
OF THE PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through)		
Presbytery of Southern New England,)		
Accuser,)		DISCIPLINARY CONSENT ORDER
v.)		FOR ALTERNATIVE FORM OF
Sean Miller,)		RESOLUTION
Accused.)		Disciplinary Case 2019 - 01

Arrival Statement

This disciplinary case first came before the Permanent Judicial Commission (PPJC or this Commission) of the Presbytery of Southern New England (PSNE or Presbytery) as an Original Jurisdiction matter, in November 2019, based on Allegations of Abuse of Pastoral Authority made by Ruling Elder, Lisa Baker and Teaching Elders, Susan Pfeil and John Sandel (Accusers) against Teaching Elder, Sean Miller (Miller or Accused) for the purpose of determining, “whether the accused shall be placed on a paid administrative leave during the resolution of the matter.” (D-10.0106)

This case now comes before this Commission to adjudicate a proposed Alternative Form of Resolution (AFR) between the Accused and the Investigating Committee (IC) as a possible means to bring this matter to a close.

Jurisdictional Statement

This Commission finds that it has jurisdiction render a Decision on the proposed AFR.

History

On November 9, 2019, the Stated Clerk of PSNE informed the Moderator of PPJC that allegations of Abuse of Pastoral Authority including engaging “in an extramarital affair with a current Ruling Elder of First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich, [CT]” had been filed against Sean Miller, a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich, Connecticut of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and a member of PSNE.

On that same date, the Stated Clerk of PSNE forwarded to the Moderator of PPJC, by electronic means, Form No. 26, *A Statement of Alleged Offense*, filed with the Stated Clerk by the Accusers and an additional supporting document of evidence against the Accused.

On November 11, 2019, the Moderator of PPJC designated Teaching Elder, Barbara Hager and Ruling Elder, Peter Benner¹, current members of PPJC, as the two persons who, on behalf of PPJC and guided by *Book of Order* D-10.0106a, would determine whether placing Miller on Paid Administrative Leave was the appropriate action to take for all parties concerned.

On November 15, 2019, Barbara Hager and Peter Benner met with Miller to discuss the matter of Paid Administrative Leave and to provide “the accused the opportunity to be heard” under *Book of Order* D-10.0106a. The outcome of this meeting was an agreement among Miller, Hager and Benner that a Determination that Miller be placed on Paid Administrative Leave pending the completion of the process was the appropriate course of action.

On November 16, 2019, Barbara Hager and Peter Benner formally signed on behalf of the PPJC the Determination of Administrative Leave Document that outlined the requirements and restrictions to put in place for the duration of the Disciplinary Process.

On December 8, 2019, the Accused sent an email to the Stated Clerk of PSNE requesting a one-time alteration in the Administrative Leave Restrictions so that he could attend his son’s Christmas concert, “to be held on December 20th, in the Sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich,” and stating that he would, “attend from 9:15am until 10:00am, stay for a picture with my family, and then leave immediately.”

Later that same date, the Stated Clerk of PSNE forwarded this request to the Moderator of the PPJC for its consideration and action.

On December 9, 2019, the Moderator of the PPJC forwarded this request to Barbara Hager and Peter Benner to consider whether to approve or disapprove this request. This request was approved.

On December 10, 2019 the Stated Clerk of PSNE informed the Moderator of the PPJC that the Investigating Committee wished to forward a written comment to the PPJC for the members of the PPJC designated to attend to matters related to the Determination of Administrative leave to consider along with the Accused’s request for alteration. This information was subsequently shared by the Moderator of the PPJC with Peter Benner and Barbara Hager.

On Thursday, February 6, 2020, the Stated Clerk of PSNE received, from the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Southern New England, an additional written statement of an alleged offense concerning the Accused and referred that statement to the same Investigating committee.

The IC, after performing a thorough inquiry, entered into conversation with the Accused in pursuit of an AFR, as provided for in the Rules of Discipline (D-10.0202(j)). On, March 17, 2020, the IC, drafted a Document titled, *Recommended Actions for the Rev. Sean Miller* which,

¹ Elder Peter Benner resigned from the Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission on January 30, 2020 for health reasons. He took no part in this case or any deliberations about this case after that date.

after being signed by each member of the IC and the Accused over the course of the next 6 days, was forwarded to the Stated Clerk of PSNE.

On March 24, 2020, the Stated Clerk of PSNE forwarded the proposed AFR to the Moderator and Clerk of the PPJC. After internal discussion between the Moderator and the Clerk of the PPJC, the Moderator, on March 25, 2020, forwarded the Proposed AFR to the members of the PPJC and set a date for deliberation and decision on the proposed AFR on April 4, 2020.

On April 4, 2020, the PPJC met by Zoom Web Conferencing to deliberate and issue a Consent Order for the Proposed AFR.²

PROPOSED AFR

Recommended Actions for the Rev. Sean Miller

Investigative Committee
Presbytery of Southern New England
Recommended Actions for the Rev. Sean Miller

Guided by the principles of church discipline, as stated in D-1.0101, we the members of the Investigative Committee, make the following recommendations with regard to the charges brought against the Rev. Sean Miller.

We find that Rev. Miller did abuse his pastoral authority, contrary to Holy Scripture and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Further, we find that Rev. Miller did fail to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church, contrary to Holy Scripture and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (W-4.0404). His actions in pursuing an inappropriate relationship with [name withheld]* crossed professional boundaries and caused hurt and division within the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich, CT.

Therefore, in accordance with D-12.0104, we recommend that the pastoral relationship between Rev. Miller and the First Presbyterian Church of Greenwich, CT, be dissolved, effective immediately. We further recommend that Rev. Miller be temporarily excluded from ordered ministry for a period of no less than three (3) years from the date the Permanent Judicial Commission approves these recommendations, and according to the terms below.

- At the beginning of the exclusion period, and at the expense (including travel and lodging) of the Presbytery of Southern New England, Rev. Miller shall engage the services of LeaderWise Counseling in New Brighton, MN, to receive an in-depth psychological and leadership assessment. The assessment shall consider the following:

² This meeting of the Presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission was not held in person due to the restrictions put in place by the various state and local authorities in response to the Novel Corona Virus.

* The text of the decision has been redacted to remove the name of a person who was not a party to this matter. The original text is in the custody of the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Southern New England.

1. What is the state of Rev. Miller's emotional and psychological well-being?
 2. What underlying issues or deficits contribute to Rev. Miller's behavior, and what is needed to address them?
 3. To what extent does Rev. Miller understand the impact of his behavior? To what extent is he contrite and willing to make amends to those he has injured?
 4. To what extent does Rev. Miller understand the boundaries he crossed and the pain those violations caused to others?
 5. To what extent does Rev. Miller grasp the significance and meaning of boundaries and the power imbalances of leadership?
 6. Under what circumstances could Rev. Miller engage in pastoral ministry with a reasonable expectation of success?
 7. For what vocations other than pastoral ministry might Rev. Miller be well-suited?
- Following the assessment period, and at his own expense, Rev. Miller shall continue to receive psychological counseling to address whatever issues or concerns are raised by the counselor(s) at LeaderWise. Rev. Miller shall choose an accredited professional therapist who holds a Ph.D. in psychology. This individual must be approved by the Committee On Ministry before Rev. Miller begins treatment.
 - During the exclusion period, Rev. Miller may, at the discretion of the Committee On Ministry, seek employment in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that is not of a pastoral nature (that does not require ordination as a minister of word & sacrament).
 - Six (6) months prior to the end of the exclusion period, if he still desires to return to pastoral ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Rev. Miller shall, at the expense (including travel and lodging) of the Presbytery of Southern New England, engage the services of LeaderWise Counseling in New Brighton, MN, to receive a final assessment of his psychological fitness.
 - Based on the final assessment of LeaderWise Counseling, the Committee On Ministry shall determine whether Rev. Miller may return to pastoral ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
 - If and when Rev. Miller is allowed to return to pastoral ministry, his Pastor Information Form shall reflect that he has been found guilty of the charges leveled against him in this case.


Upon approval by the Permanent Judicial Committee, the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Southern New England shall inform the Presbytery of our findings and recommendations in this matter. This document also addresses the later charge filed against Rev. Miller by the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Southern New England.

Finally, throughout our investigation we have been concerned and dismayed by the level of unsubstantiated rumors and gossip that have affected all parties involved. We encourage the Session of First Presbyterian Church to be thoughtful and deliberate in addressing this concern and actively encouraging a healthy and faithful congregational culture.

Submitted March 17, 2020


Stephen M. Hart (Mar 19, 2020)

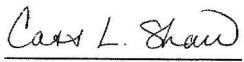
Elder Stephen Hart


Deborah A Packard (Mar 19, 2020)


Rev. Deborah Packard


Jason Santalucia (Mar 19, 2020)

Rev. Jason Santalucia



Rev. Cass Shaw


Sean Miller (Mar 22, 2020)

Rev. Sean Miller

DRAFT

Decision and Consent Order

The seven members of the Commission (Rev. Patrick Notley, Moderator; Rev. Barbara Hager, Clerk; Rev. Julie Emery; Rev. Eileen Epperson; Elder Ellen Taylor Sisson; Elder Robin Mahan; Elder Timothy McCloskey) each issued a verbal vote on whether to approve or disapprove the Proposed AFR pursuant to *Book of Order* D-10.0202 j(3). The recorded vote is seven in favor of Approval; zero not in favor of Approval, zero abstaining. Having reached a 2/3's majority of the Commission, the Proposed AFR is declared Approved.

Therefore, having reviewed the *Recommended Actions for the Rev. Sean Miller* document, presented to this Commission by the Investigating Committee, and having reached a 2/3's majority of the Commission voting in favor of the *Recommended Actions for the Rev. Sean Miller*, it is the Decision of this Commission that this Disciplinary Consent Order for Alternative Form of Resolution become the Consent Order for the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbytery of Southern New England in the Disciplinary Matter of *Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through the Presbytery of Southern New England v. Sean Miller*.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that all recommended actions contained in this Disciplinary Consent Order for Alternative Form of Resolution be approved and enacted.

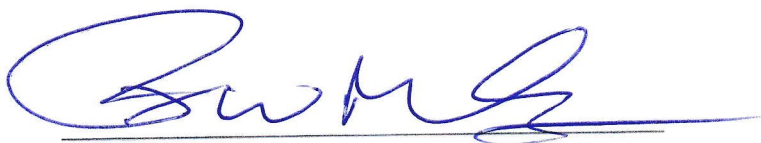
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Southern New England shall read this Disciplinary Consent Order in its entirety at the first stated meeting of the Presbytery following the receipt of this Disciplinary Consent Order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Southern New England shall enter the full Disciplinary Consent Order upon the minutes of the Presbytery.

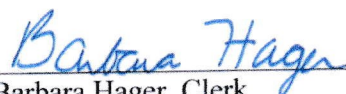
Recusals

Commission member Christina McIntyre recused herself from this matter and took no part in any meeting, determination, deliberation or Decision of this matter.

Dated the 4th day of April 2020.



Patrick W. Notley, Moderator
Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbytery of Southern New England



Barbara Hager, Clerk
Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbytery of Southern New England

CLOSING PRAYER AND ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business proper to this Special Meeting, the Moderator asked the General Presbyter, the Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo, to lead the Presbytery in prayer, after which the meeting was **ADJOURNED** at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David A. Baer, Stated Clerk