

CASE No. 2022-12

BCO 34-1 PETITIONS RE: MISSOURI PRESBYTERY

DECISION ON PETITIONS

March 2, 2023

This case came before the SJC by way of two Overtures requesting the General Assembly to assume original jurisdiction, under *BCO* 34-1, to address alleged doctrinal errors of TE Greg Johnson, then a member of Missouri Presbytery. Overture 36 came from Southeast Alabama Presbytery, which through a commission voted on April 14, 2022 to submit its request. Overture 37 was submitted by Grace Presbytery, which approved the Overture on May 10, 2022.

At a called meeting of its congregation on November 18, 2022, the Church that TE Johnson serves, Memorial Presbyterian, voted to withdraw from the PCA. TE Johnson and two other TEs requested that their names be “removed from the rolls” of Missouri Presbytery in accord with *BCO* 38-3a.

These actions led to a called meeting of Missouri Presbytery on December 6, 2022, when it acknowledged Memorial’s departure and dismissed it as a member of Presbytery. It also approved the requests of TE Johnson and the other two TEs to have their names removed from the Presbytery rolls, effective immediately. Presbytery further determined not to conduct the case that had recently begun with the appointment of a committee to conduct a *BCO* 31-2 investigation of TE Johnson. (The text of Presbytery’s December 6, 2022 public letter announcing its actions is attached to this Decision.)

In view of these developments, the SJC lacks authority to assume original jurisdiction, for the PCA itself no longer has jurisdiction over TE Johnson. This Decision was recommended by an SJC committee and the SJC approved the Decision by vote of 22-1 on the following roll call vote. Ruling Elders indicated by ^R.

Bankson	<i>Concur</i>	Eggert ^R	<i>Concur</i>	Neikirk ^R	<i>Concur</i>
Bise ^R	<i>Concur</i>	Ellis	<i>Concur</i>	Pickering ^R	<i>Concur</i>
Carrell ^R	<i>Concur</i>	Garner	<i>Concur</i>	Ross	<i>Concur</i>
Coffin	<i>Concur</i>	Greco	<i>Concur</i>	Sartorius	<i>Concur</i>

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Donahoe ^R	<i>Concur</i>	Kooistra	<i>Concur</i>	Terrell ^R	<i>Concur</i>
Dowling ^R	<i>Concur</i>	Lee	<i>Concur</i>	Waters	<i>Concur</i>
M. Duncan ^R	<i>Dissent</i>	Lucas	<i>Absent</i>	White ^R	<i>Concur</i>
S. Duncan ^R	<i>Concur</i>	McGowan	<i>Concur</i>	Wilson ^R	<i>Concur</i>

Missouri Presbytery

December 6, 2022

Dear Friends in the PCA,

On Friday, November 18, 2022, Memorial Presbyterian Church in St. Louis voted to withdraw from the PCA at a duly called meeting of the congregation. Concurrent with this, one of its TEs, Doug Mendis, asked that he be honorably retired by the Missouri Presbytery, while its other three TEs (Greg Johnson, Keith Robinson, and Sam Dolby) requested that their names be “removed from the rolls” of the Missouri Presbytery, according to the provisions of BCO 38-3a.

At a special called meeting of the Missouri Presbytery on December 6, 2022, the presbytery acknowledged the departure of and dismissed Memorial, granted TE Mendis’ request to be honorably retired, and approved the requests of TEs Johnson, Robinson, and Dolby to have their names removed the rolls of the Missouri Presbytery with immediate effect (per BCO 38-3a). In the case of TE Johnson, while the Missouri Presbytery had recently empowered its moderator to appoint a committee to conduct a BCO 31-2 investigation of TE Johnson, it determined after healthy debate “not to conduct the case (BCO 38-3a)” due to concerns regarding the potential impact of a lengthy investigation and how this might affect the long-term purity and peace of the church.

Memorial is still in the process of discerning its future denominational affiliation. For more information regarding Memorial’s specific reasons for departure or its future plans, please contact Memorial Church directly. Questions concerning other pending judicial actions pertaining to Memorial or TE Johnson should be directed to the office of the Stated Clerk.

APPENDIX T

As we seek to move forward, we want to underline the varying perspectives within our presbytery concerning Memorial's departure.

First, we want to underline our sadness at Memorial's departure. Setting aside the most recent controversies, Memorial has been a part of the PCA and the Missouri Presbytery for over 40 years and over that time many faithful friends have ministered the gospel from the bosom of this historic congregation. We will miss their partnership in this most central of all enterprises and we wish them well as they seek a new denominational home.

Second, we want to underline our agreement with Memorial that the decision they have taken is in the best interest of all parties, including Memorial, the Missouri Presbytery, and the Presbyterian Church in America.

Over the last several years, tension has grown between Memorial and many of its denominational partners as Memorial sought to reach and disciple people who experience same-sex attraction and/or gender incongruence. These tensions were particularly occasioned by the heavy involvement of Memorial and TE Johnson with the Revoice conference, the church's outreach to the local arts community—including LGBT artists—through The Chapel ministry, and by statements made by TE Johnson in various venues since the conclusion of the previous SJC case (SJC 2020-12).

Over the last two years in particular, leaders of the Missouri Presbytery have been in regular dialogue and prayer with leaders at Memorial, including TE Johnson, concerning many of these issues. While recognizing Memorial's unique position in reaching into the secular LGBT community, many in our presbytery had serious concerns about the wisdom and long-term implications of the strategies employed by Memorial and its leaders, believing that some might not be sufficient to guard and maintain the peace and purity of the church.

As these discussions became more focused, each party concluded that a mutually agreed separation was the only course forward since the deep differences between Memorial and the Missouri Presbytery on the matters in question could not ultimately be reconciled. As a result, we also agreed that it was best for Memorial's TEs to pursue their respective callings outside of the boundaries of the PCA.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In making the decision to support Memorial and its TEs' withdrawal from the denomination, we pray that many of the tensions that have disturbed the peace of our denomination over the past several years might now begin to dissipate and lead to a season of renewal, during which we can focus on our positive mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ in obedience to our Lord's Great Commission. We also pray that the Lord would give wisdom and grace to the leaders of Memorial Church as they walk forward in faith.

Finally, your brothers in Missouri Presbytery want to underline our continuing desire to actively and eagerly participate in the PCA as we move forward into our 50th year celebrations. In this regard, we heartily affirm the report of the AIC on Human Sexuality and continue to strive to protect the peace and purity of the church to the best of our ability.

The Missouri Presbytery

CASE No. 2022-13

MR. WADE MILLER

v.

HILLS & PLAINS PRESBYTERY

DECISION ON COMPLAINT

October 20, 2022

The SJC finds the above-named Complaint Administratively Out of Order, and finds it cannot be put in order, because the Complainant filed his Complaint with the Session after the 60-day deadline of *BCO* 43-1.

Reasoning: The Session action complained against occurred on May 19, 2021 when the Session sent Mr. Miller a letter indicating it stood by its previous decision to permit a certain non-church yoga class to meet on church property. That date began the timing requirement of *BCO* 43-1 for Mr. Miller. He did not file his *BCO* 43-1 Complaint to Session until six months later, on November 20, 2021. There was no new Session action identified on this matter in the 60 days preceding Mr. Miller's Complaint filed on November 20, 2021 with the Session.