



THE PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION
of
THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SESSION OF BEVERLY HEIGHTS CHURCH, et al. v.
PRESBYTERY OF THE ALLEGHENIES VI

ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

[January 31, 2025]

This commission has reviewed the sixth complaint¹ filed by the session of Beverly Heights Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (the “Complainant”) against the Presbytery of the Alleghenies (the “Respondent”).²

Section D.14-8A.2 of the *Book of Order* gives this commission the authority to strike portions of the complaint and “proceed forward.” Accordingly, we strike the text beginning on page 10 of the complaint with the words “In addition, on 10/18/24 the AC...” and concluding on page 11 of the complaint with the words “why is the session now being held in contempt?” Such text alleges that the Respondent erred by charging the session with failing to abide by the Respondent’s order to cooperate with a financial review. However, on August 1, 2024, this commission found that compelling such a financial review was a proper exercise of the Respondent’s presbyterial authority, and we decline to revisit that determination.

Subject to the foregoing modification, we find under section D.14-8A of the *Book of Order* that the complaint states grounds on which relief may be granted. The Respondent

¹ The complaint alleges, among other things, that the Respondent erroneously instructed the Complainant “to call a congregational meeting prior to December 7, 2024 in order to complete the second [*Book of Government* section] 5-10 meeting and conduct a vote as requested for dismissal into independence with an improper list of members approved to vote.”

² The session claimed to file its complaint “on behalf of the Members of Beverly Heights Presbytery Church...” and then listed the one-hundred and two persons it considered members. Although a particular session may have standing to complain about its presbytery’s actions, members of the relevant congregation do not.

shall (a) appoint one or more representatives to defend the complaint, and (b) direct its appointed representative(s) to file with this commission an answer to the complaint no later than midnight on March 3, 2025. The answer shall respond to each allegation in the complaint, as modified, and shall set forth with specificity all defenses on which the Respondent relies. In addition, the answer shall specifically and succinctly address the following questions:

- (1) Has the Complainant held a constitutionally valid first gathering under *Book of Government* section 5-10B?³
- (2) If the answer to the first question is “yes,” who are the active members of Beverly Heights Church entitled to vote at the second gathering under *Book of Government* section 5-10C?

The Respondent shall also provide the record of the case as required in section D.14-8C of the *Book of Order*.

Without leave of this commission, the Complainant shall not hold, and the Respondent shall not order the Complainant to hold, any additional votes or gatherings under *Book of Government* section 5-10.

³ Section 5-10B of the *Book of Government* requires that the meeting at which the motion to be dismissed is first put must be recessed (adjourned) for no less than three months and no more than six months, to a date determined at that meeting. The meeting is then to be reconvened under Section 5-10C.