

**ADDENDUM TO THE CONSENT AGENDA
January 19, 2008**

Report of the Stated Clerk

MOTION: The following letter and report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee to the Stated Clerk concerning a Request for Vindication under the provisions of the Rules of Discipline (D-9.0000) be entered into the minutes of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon Stated Meeting of January 19, 2008.

(Informational Note: The Investigating Committee met with the Rev. Shelly Moe, incoming Committee on Ministry (COM) Chair and the Stated Clerk on January 8th to present their report letter and to advise them of their recommendations. As a result the Investigating Committee's letter report and recommendations have been included on the Agenda for the January 22, 2008 meeting of the Committee on Ministry.)

October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee
Presbytery of Grand Canyon **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

January 8, 2008

Elder Richard Coffelt
Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Grand Canyon
4423 N. 24th Street, Suite 200
Phoenix, AZ 85016

Re: Report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee
Justin Schlesinger-Devlin Request for Vindication

Our investigating committee was appointed in order to respond to a "request for vindication," provided for in our Rules of Discipline, submitted to the Presbytery by Reverend Justin Schlesinger-Devlin. He stated that he has been harmed by rumors and gossip concerning him that are circulating within John Calvin Presbyterian Church.

After conducting twenty interviews with individuals, and examining documents submitted to us, we make the following observations.

The majority of church members are fully supportive of their pastor, and until quite recently, were unaware of any rumors or gossip concerning him. The rumors that have circulated concern: 1. his fidelity to the Word of God, especially in his preaching; and 2. his personal behavior. With regard to the second area, we have not been able to pinpoint the original source of the few comments reported to us. We do not believe that there is any substance to them. Our only response is to remind all members of the church of the clear Biblical admonition concerning the importance of guarding our speech.

In the first area, Justin Schlesinger-Devlin's fidelity to the Word of God, we found that there are some church members who believe that he has neglected to emphasize some important matters. While they do not accuse him of teaching false doctrine, they believe that he has not given proper attention to the call for true repentance. They claim that in his strong emphasis on the free grace of God, he has failed to call for a costly response to that grace. Those who believe that repentance is missing in his preaching have a strong

sense of the prophetic ministry of a fellow church member (a former member of Session), and believe that Justin is not sensitive to this prophetic ministry.

The majority of those we interviewed believe that Justin Schlesinger-Devlin's preaching is consistent with Reformed theology. The theological disagreement is partly a difference in emphasis between grace and repentance. But there may be a more substantive matter at stake. The question might be asked, "Is our repentance something that we offer to God, in effect meeting God halfway? Or is our repentance itself a gift of grace, made possible only through the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit?" We realize that there are diverse viewpoints within our tradition. In this matter we believe that the pastor's emphasis on grace is a faithful expression of Reformed theology.

We are concerned that those who sincerely disagree with their pastor, whether it is a mere difference of emphasis or a more substantive matter, have been quick to speak about him in a dismissive way. There is a vast difference between recognizing a sincere theological disagreement, and concluding that a pastor is not preaching the Word. We hope that they will strive, insofar as their consciences will allow them, to "go the extra mile" in support of their pastor, and to allow God to speak to them through his ministry. Should their consciences not permit them to do this, we hope that they will "further the peace, unity, and purity of the church" by keeping silence or peaceably withdrawing.

We are also concerned that the pastor, and his numerous supporters, may have made errors of judgment. In the heat of tension leading to higher levels of conflict, it is difficult to maintain healthy relationships and to refrain even from the appearance of using improper methods. Those who disagree with the church leadership continue to need pastoral care. We hope that the majority of the congregation who appreciate their pastor's ministry will reach out in compassion toward those who have been more critical, and that all of their actions will be marked by integrity.

Finally, we strongly recommend that the Presbytery continue its involvement with this congregation. We recommend the establishment of an administrative commission for this church. Since there is substantial division within the Session in the matters discussed above, we question their ability to lead the church. We hope that the Committee on Ministry will pay very close attention to this church in the next few months, and will give serious consideration to all possible ways in which the Presbytery may further its peace, unity, and purity.

In response to the charge given to us, we report that we find no reason to file charges against Reverend Justin Schlesinger-Devlin. Rather, we vindicate him from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him.

Yours in Christ Service,

S/ Elder Amy Davis-King
On Behalf of the Investigating Committee

Cc: Rev. James Bruening
Elder Carolyn McBurney
Rev. W. Gale Watkins