

Stated Meeting  
Presbytery of New Covenant  
November 16, 2024

We met in the Sanctuary of the historic First Presbyterian Church in Galveston. Moderator Bonnie Keith offered words of welcome and an opening prayer @ 10:09 am. A quorum was declared by Stated Clerk for Administrative Process, Rev. Lynn Hargrove. The Acknowledgement of Native Lands and Peoples was read by Bonnie Keith. The proposed docket was approved with the addition of a report from the Stated Clerk for Judicial Process. The Omnibus Motion was approved. The docket was approved as amended to lift out 24-M from the Proposed Amendments to the Constitution. Rev. Becky Downs, Pastor of the host congregation, welcomed commissioners and visitors to the church.

First time commissioners were welcomed with applause; corresponding members were Rev. Mitch Miller, Leader of the Synod of the Sun, and Rev. John Nelsen from the Tres Rios Border Foundation; New minister members were introduced and signed the “Book of Life”– Jolene Currie, Seth Saathoff, Andy Blair, Janell Blair.

Parliamentarian – John Lemen was appointed to be the Parliamentarian. Those appointed to be tellers were RE Jim Keith (Pasadena, First), RE Kathleen Duncan (LaPorte, St. James), RE Laura Phipps, and ???

Worship was led by a team of people with Mark Downs preaching. We celebrated communion. The offering was designated for the Montreat Conference Center after the devastation from Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina. Funds were given online, and by cash and check.

Committee on Ministry: Rev. Karen Estes, Moderator of the COM, presented two motions which were both approved. The first was for Rev. Tom Sharon to be granted status as Honorably Retired. The second was to approve the Minimum Terms of Call for 2025.

A service of recognition of retirement was held for both Tom Sharon and David Green. Both offered remarks about their ministries.

Celebration of Ministry was given by Rev. John Nelsen with Tres Rios Border Foundation (El Paso) highlighting issues along the border with immigration. He invited people to come to a Border Encounter with Abara.

Ecclesiastical Affairs Committee: Rev. Andy Gans presented the business items.

1. To approve the parity plan for 2025. Was approved
2. To approve amendment 24-A - regarding F-1.0403 – discussion was held with commissioners speaking both for and against the amendment. A voice vote was not conclusive so a written ballot was taken. Vote totals were 78 in favor, 36 against, 7 abstained. The motion carried.
3. To approve amendment 24-C – regarding G.20401b – discussion was held with commissioners speaking both for and against the amendment. A written ballot was taken. 45 for, 71 against, 5 abstentions.

4. To approve amendment 24-M – Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing on Ministries – discussion was held speaking both for and against. A voice vote was in favor.

While the ballots were being counted, we heard greetings from Rev. Mitch Miller, the newly installed leader for the Synod of the Sun. Mitch described his work across the 11 presbyteries in the 4 states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas and across the geographic bounds. He talked about opportunities with the Synod Partnership for Disaster Recovery.

Andy Gans offered a blessing for the meal. We will reconvene at 1:25 after lunch.

Moderator Bonnie Keith called us back to order at 1:30. She invited RE John Lemen, Stated Clerk for Judicial Process, to give a report. The investigating committee members, Rev. Cheryl Gans, Rev. Mark Downs, Rev. Steve Oglesbee, read the charges against Aaron Seay for sexual misconduct. Other committee members were RE Shelley Hernandez and RE Karen Spivey. Aaron renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The report follows these minutes. Questions were asked about the process and our responsibilities. Rev. Lynn Hargrove offered a prayer for Aaron and the victims.

GP + SC4AP Rev. Lynn Hargrove offered a “State of the Presbytery” address which was organized around the hymn, “Blest Be the Tie that Binds.”

General Council: Rev. Becky Downs offered the Anti-Harrassment/Racism Policy for approval. It passed by a voice vote.

Innovation and Vitality: RE Lynne Parsons Austin explained how the committee was formed, and the excitement for their work. She shared about the recent “Day of Celebration of Ministry and Mission” which was held at St. John’s. She invited congregational leaders to consider joining a cohort for Strategic Planning working with LEADConnects. This work will be underwritten by the presbytery as an investment in our congregations.

Nominating Committee: RE George James offered the report, with the additional of RE Marla Blanke (Orange, First) to serve in the class of 2027 on the General Council. The slate was elected.

Rev. Hector Rivera-Velez was installed as the Moderator of the Presbytery for 2025. Bonnie Keith bestowed the symbols of the office to Hector. She was applauded for her service as Moderator in 2024.

Hector closed the meeting with prayer and we adjourned at 2:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Lynn R. Hargrove*

Faithful Scribe

**Disciplinary Case PNC 2023-02 PC(USA) Presbytery of New Covenant**  
**vs.**  
**Aaron Seay**

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES\***

Whereas we, the Investigating Committee, have concluded our investigation in accordance with the Book of Order's Rules of Discipline and in accordance with our mutually agreed upon process.

And

Whereas, we, the Investigating Committee, have determined that there are probable grounds to believe offenses were committed.

And

Whereas, we, the Investigating Committee, have determined that the offenses can be reasonably proven.

We, the Investigating Committee, find that Aaron Seay, engaged in behavior that we, the Investigating Committee, have determined violates the ethical and moral obligations set forth in Scripture, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Constitution, as well as the Presbyterian Church USA's Standards of Ethical Conduct.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) charges you, Aaron Seay, the Former Coordinator of Youth Ministry for the Presbytery of New Covenant and member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with the following:

**A. SEXUAL ABUSE CHARGES**

You, Aaron Seay, did commit offense of sexual abuse on several occasions as follows:

1. On or about the 1st and 3<sup>rd</sup> days of June 2021, you were alone with Victim One in a vehicle while traveling to a Pre-Synod Youth Workshop meeting in Denton, Texas and while traveling from a Pre-Synod Youth Workshop meeting in Denton to your respective homes. You knew Victim One had recently turned 18. Through your position with Presbytery, you knew Victim One as a 16-year-old participant in Youth activities and as a 17-year-old volunteer in Youth leadership positions. As an 18-year-old, Victim One was still considered to be a Youth by Synod rules. During the trip on June 3, 2021, Victim One confided with you that she had been a rape victim, and you discussed with Victim One your use of drugs (including cocaine) and alcohol and your sexual experiences while at Texas State University.
2. On or about July 2 through 8, 2021, you had sexual relations with Victim One prior to and during the Junior High Jubilee Conference at Mo Ranch. This included sexual intercourse in

a Mo Ranch hotel room. On these occasions, you drank alcohol to intoxication in the presence of Victim One and you coerced the victim to consume alcohol and become intoxicated. You also disclosed personal information to Victim One regarding your use of drugs and alcohol and promoted said use.

3. On or about July 9, 2021, you, had sexual intercourse with Victim One during the weekend of the San Marcos college party. You also drank alcohol to intoxication in the presence of Victim One and coerced the victim to consume alcohol to intoxication at the party.
4. Following July 8, 2021, through June 19, 2023, you continued your sexual relationship with Victim One, repeatedly discouraging her from ending the relationship, and encouraged Victim One to lie to third persons about the fact that you actually began the sexual relationship with Victim One during the Junior High Jubilee Conference at Mo Ranch.

The witness to the above offenses is Victim One.

5. During May of 2022 (the 2021-2022 Program Year of PYCC), you committed the offense of sexual abuse of Victim Two, whom you knew had recently turned 18. You were alone with her at the New Covenant Presbytery office and asked the victim inappropriate personal questions about her prior romantic relationships, convinced her to play a sexual game and remove her shirt, and encouraged her to lie down on the floor and remove her bra.

The witness to this offense is Victim Two, who made outcry to third-party witnesses.

**Each of the above offenses violated:**

- the ethical and moral obligations set forth in Scripture;
- the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Constitution, Section D7.0901: *“Sexual abuse is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone without the capacity to consent, or any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position; and,*
- the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Section I, Statements 2, 4, and 6; Section II, Statements 2 through 5; the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Section I, Statements 1 through and 4; the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), and Section II, Statements 1 through 4, and 11.

**B. CHARGES RELATED TO LYING:**

You, Aaron Seay, committed the offense of lying on several occasions as follows:

6. Beginning September 9, 2021, and thereafter, you lied to witnesses by telling them that you began a dating relationship during the Junior High Jubilee Conference at Mo-Ranch, and that

before that event, your relationship was a friendly one only; and you hid the truth of your sexual relationship with Victim One during the Junior High Jubilee Conference at Mo Ranch.

There are witnesses to this offense.

7. On October 6, 2021, you lied to the Friends of Northwoods Presbyterian Church when you authored and published a letter to same in which you mischaracterized the nature of your sexual relationship with Victim One during the Junior High Jubilee Conference at Mo Ranch as a friendly one only and you hid the fact that you had sexual relations with Victim One during the conference.

There is a witness and documentation regarding this offense.

**The above offense violated:**

- the ethical and moral obligations set forth in Scripture;
- the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Constitution; and,
- the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Section I, Statement 2; and the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), and Section I, Statement 1.

**C. CHARGES RELATED TO FAILURE TO COMPLETE A COMMITMENT:**

8. From October 6, 2021, through the end of your employment with Presbytery of New Covenant, you falsely represented that you would complete Boundary training then failed to complete same. You stated in your October 6, 2021, letter to Northwoods Presbyterian Church that you would undergo the training. Instead, you viewed only a portion of a Boundaries video in 2022, but never complete the training. There is a witness regarding this event.

This misconduct is a violation of:

- the ethical and moral obligations set forth in the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Constitution and Scripture; and,
- the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Section II, Statement 12.

There is a witness and documentation regarding this offense.

**Disciplinary Case PNC 2023-02 PC(USA) Presbytery of New Covenant**  
**vs.**  
**Aaron Seay**

**\*DISPOSITION/STATUS OF THE CASE**

On September 14, 2023, the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Sugar Land requested a Book of Order D-7.0401(a) Reference of the disciplinary case of their accused member, Deacon Aaron Seay, to the Presbytery of New Covenant. The Permanent Judicial Commission of the presbytery met on September 22, 2023, deliberated on the request of the church and accepted the Reference. The Disciplinary Case PNC 2023-02 Investigating Committee was established, trained and conducted its investigation.

On October 15, 2024, these charges were signed by the Investigating Committee, filed with the Stated Clerk for Judicial Process, and presented to the Presbytery of New Covenant Permanent Judicial Commission.

On November 4, 2024, Aaron Seay renounced the jurisdiction of the PC(USA). He is no longer a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Due to these circumstances, this summary report to presbytery has not included the names of witnesses nor the full details of the charges. The full set of charges will be sealed for future use in the event the accused chooses to return to the PC(USA), at which time this disciplinary case would resume in the Presbytery of New Covenant by moving forward with preparations for trial.

Members of the Disciplinary Case PNC 2023-02 Investigating Committee include: Rev. Mark Downs, Rev. Cheryl Gans, RE Shelley Hernandez, Rev. Stephen Oglesbee, and RE Karen Spivey.

John A. Lemen  
Stated Clerk for Judicial Process  
Presbytery of New Covenant