

Statement from the Presbytery of the Peaks Regarding Disciplinary Action at First Presbyterian Church, Lynchburg

The Presbytery of the Peaks is aware that the report of the Permanent Judicial Commission regarding Rev. Dr. Peter Thompson has drawn significant public attention. We want to address this matter directly, because transparency and accountability are core values of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The Presbytery's disciplinary process is an ecclesiastical proceeding — it addresses violations of church governance, policies, and the ethical standards to which our ordained leaders are held. Its purpose is to lead others to repentance and address concerns of justice for those who have been wronged. The fact that this report is public demonstrates that our denomination takes these matters seriously and does not sweep them aside.

To be clear: no one at First Presbyterian Church of Lynchburg engaged in behavior that led to physical harm. This case involved failures to maintain proper professional boundaries within the congregation's youth program and to follow established reporting protocols when concerns about the welfare of children came to light. These are serious policy failures, and they were treated as such. When the concerns were brought to the attention of the presbytery, an Investigating Committee was promptly formed. After a thorough investigation, during which all relevant parties were interviewed, it was determined that the congregation's Child Protection Policy and the denomination's requirements for reporting and professional boundaries had not been followed.

This case has served as a wake-up call — a reminder that even well-intentioned ministry can create unsafe conditions when professional boundaries are not well maintained, particularly in an era when social media and digital communication have fundamentally changed how adults and young people interact. Our denomination requires boundary training for our leaders. In response to this mandate, the Presbytery of the Peaks has taken concrete steps to strengthen protections for children and youth of all our congregations, including mandatory boundary training for ministers and church leaders across the presbytery, and we are working in partnership with the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Lynchburg to ensure that comprehensive safety protocols are firmly in place.

The safety of children and vulnerable persons in our congregations is our highest priority. We are committed to ensuring that every church in the Presbytery of the Peaks is a place where families can trust that their children are protected, and we will continue to hold our leaders to PC(USA) standards and to act swiftly and transparently whenever those standards are not met.

I would ask that we all keep this matter, and all those who are involved, in prayer. Maintain an open heart and mind, and if you feel you must engage in social media related to the situation, please be kind. Ugly comments are neither helpful nor Christlike.

Rev. Dr. Don Makin
Interim General Presbyter
Presbytery of the Peaks