

EXECUTIVE REPORT: REVIEW OF INVESTIGATION OF REV. DAN CLAIRE AND ASSOCIATED ACTION BY THE DIOCESE OF CHRIST OUR HOPE

I. SCOPE OF WORK AND EXECUTIVE REPORT

Grand River Solutions was hired by the Anglican Diocese of Christ our Hope (Diocese) to review the investigation into complaints brought in 2020 against Reverend Dan Claire, the Rector of the Church of Resurrection, and to evaluate the Diocese's handling of those complaints. This process included reviewing documents and meeting with individuals who requested the opportunity to share their perspective on the Diocese's handling of the complaints and investigation.

This Executive Report includes information regarding the decisions made by Diocesan leaders, and the impact of those decisions on the parties and others within the community. It is important to note that this is not an investigative report substantiating or disproving the underlying allegations against Reverend Claire, nor does this report determine whether Reverend Claire violated any policy or provision of the Diocese of Christ our Hope Constitution and Canons (Canons).

II. METHODOLOGY: RECORDS REVIEWED AND PERSPECTIVES HEARD

The Diocese, principally Rt. Reverend Dr. Steven A. Breedlove, Bishop Ordinary for the Diocese, provided Grand River Solutions with the following categories of documents:

- Written statements from 2020 provided to Bishop Breedlove by individuals with concerns regarding Reverend Claire's behavior and purported misconduct.
- A report dated August 31, 2021 presented by Reverend Robert Pardon and Judith Pardon, entitled "The Final Report of the Canonical Investigators Regarding the Reverend Daniel Claire and Allegations of Spiritual Abuse" (the "Investigation Report").
- The November 22, 2021 Final Report and Godly Admonition from Bishop Breedlove, along with Bishop Alan Hawkins and Jessica Patton, representing the Diocesan Council.
- Email correspondence from October 2019 until March 2022 between Bishop Breedlove and individuals involved in the investigation, including the investigators, complainants, Reverend Claire (respondent), reporting parties, and witnesses regarding, among other things, the complaints, the decision to initiate an investigation, the investigation process, the status of the investigation, and post-investigation actions.
- Email correspondence between Bishop Breedlove and Reverend Claire's supporters/advocates after the investigation was completed.
- Audio recordings of Zoom meetings with Diocesan Leaders and complainants in February 2022.
- Drafts of correspondence and other documents from 2020 - 2022 regarding the complaints, the investigation process, and action taken during the post-investigation period.

In addition to information provided directly by the Diocese, each participant in the underlying investigation was contacted by Grand River Solutions and invited to sign an authorization for release of records in the possession of the investigators, Reverend Bob Pardon and Judy Pardon (collectively the “Pardons”). All but three of the participants signed an authorization. After these releases were signed and delivered, Grand River Solutions received various records from the Pardons pertaining to the applicable person’s participation in the investigation, including:

- video recordings of the investigative interviews.
- notes taken by the Pardons during the interviews and investigation process.
- documents provided to the investigators during the investigation.

Participants in the investigation (whether a party or witness) were also provided the opportunity to share documents in their possession with Grand River Solutions.

The Diocese also sent an email message to a listserv with about 1,000 community members inviting any interested person to contact Grand River Solutions and share their concerns regarding the underlying investigation and/or the Diocese’s handling of the situation. Through this process, Grand River Solutions received and reviewed five written statements, and conducted six meetings with interested persons via Zoom – either individually or as couples.

III. BACKGROUND: COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATION

In 2020, Bishop Breedlove received complaints from multiple parties about Reverend Claire. The first series of allegations was brought directly to Bishop Breedlove by a former presbyter of the Church of the Resurrection (Complainant 1). Bishop Breedlove informed Complainant 1 that Scripture (1 Timothy 5:19) prevented him from initiating an investigation against clergy without two or more witnesses.

Several months later, Bishop Breedlove was contacted by other persons with additional concerns regarding Reverend Claire. In some instances, Bishop Breedlove was told of the concerns directly from the person who had allegedly suffered harm, and in others he learned of the allegations indirectly from third parties who were reporting concerns on behalf of others. With one exception, the complaints Bishop Breedlove received about Reverend Claire were broad claims alleging he abused his position of spiritual authority. Several of these complaints referenced a discrete set of incidents from August/September 2020 that involved Reverend Claire’s alleged interactions with a parishioner which the reporting parties believed was inappropriate.

Upon receiving these subsequent reports, Bishop Breedlove determined it was appropriate to commence an investigation into allegations of ecclesiastical (pastoral) abuse or spiritual abuse. Bishop Breedlove contacted Bishop Chuck Gillin, Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese of the Northeast & Mid-Atlantic of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and he agreed to serve as the canonical investigator. In December 2020, Bishop Breedlove selected the Pardon to conduct the investigation under Bishop Gillin’s supervision. The Pardons provided Bishop Breedlove with a curriculum vitae and represented that they had over 30 years of relevant professional experience.

At the end of April 2021, the investigators traveled to Washington, D.C. and conducted 12 interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted in-person and video recorded. Often, the person was interviewed alone, but a handful of people were interviewed as couples. Persons interviewed included: the complainants, people who had reported complaints on behalf of others, Reverend Claire (the respondent),

and several individuals Reverend Claire and the reporting parties had identified as potential witnesses. Both Reverend Claire and the reporting parties identified other persons they believed should be interviewed but were not.

The Investigation Report was completed and delivered to Bishop Breedlove (via Bishop Gillin), on September 15, 2021. The Investigation Report was sent as several documents each containing a different section, including:

- a cover page (1 page)
- "Introduction" (8 pages)
- "Ten Characteristics of Spiritual Abuse and Abusers" (68 pages)
- "People Interviewed for This Investigation" (5 pages)
- "Overview of Two Specific Cases" (3 pages)
- "Conclusion (5 pages)
- "Recommendations" (3 pages)

The introduction of the Investigation Report, stated three goals:

- (1) To safeguard the mission and ministry of the Church of the Resurrection
- (2) To hear all accusations from the complainants and seek justice for the victims, if proven valid.
- (3) The hopeful restoration of the Reverend Daniel Claire and his ministerial calling.

After receiving a copy of the Investigation Report, Bishop Breedlove expressed concern about its structure and contents. In an effort to remedy this concern, he worked to distill its findings into a "redacted" report, which he then sent to members of the Diocesan Council. In sending that document to members of the Diocesan Council, Bishop Breedlove wrote in an email that "[i]t was hard to redact well because the investigators went far beyond their remit of collecting data and took on the role of psychological/spiritual analysis and labelling"

In November 2021, Bishop Breedlove presented Reverend Claire with a "Final Report" stating that the complaints did not constitute canonically actionable behaviors but that they were sufficiently serious to warrant the issuance of a Godly Admonition.

In December 2021, Bishop Breedlove wrote the complainants and acknowledged that the Investigation Report was "complicated and lengthy and [had] required several weeks to digest and distill into clear allegations." Bishop Breedlove also informed the complainants that Reverend Claire had the right to respond to the complaints, and the right to advocacy. Bishop Breedlove stated that he had "established a two-step process for response which includes an early January [2022] face-to-face meeting [with Reverend Claire], and if necessary" another meeting with Reverend Claire later that month.

Between December 2021 and March 2022, Bishop Breedlove participated in many meetings and exchanged numerous emails with the complainants, reporting parties, Reverend Claire, Reverend Claire's advocates, and others, about their respective frustrations associated with the investigation and the Diocese's management of the situation.

IV. CONCERNS WITH THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS

We determined that there were several areas of concern with the underlying investigation. In keeping with 1 Timothy 5:19, the investigation process did not start until several persons came forward to report concerns. This delayed the start of the investigation and likely contributed to a confused scope.

Any investigation requires a clear scope, as the investigators then use that scope as the guideline to determine what documents, facts, and witnesses may be relevant, and use the scope as a means of determining what questions need to be asked, and what additional information to gather. The respondent is able to use the scope to understand how best to meaningfully respond to the allegations, and the institution (here, the Diocese) uses the scope to determine the sufficiency of the investigation. The lack of scope may have been caused, in part, by the lack of specificity in the allegations – some of the examples provided in the reports to Bishop Breedlove contained limited facts and referenced concerns involving unnamed others who were allegedly impacted by Rev. Claire’s actions. When allegations are not specific, the investigator cannot know more about what follow-up questions to ask, or what specific additional evidence to seek. Further, without specifics, it would not be possible for Reverend Claire to meaningfully respond to each of the allegations, thus further diminishing the Diocese’s ability to rely upon the Investigation Report.

There were other procedural concerns as well, such as the lack of written notice to Reverend Claire outlining the scope of the investigation, the specific canon(s) at issue, and an overview of the investigation process. A well-written notice of investigation can serve as a useful tool for the parties and investigators throughout the process. For example, a well-written notice provides a guide for investigators by defining the allegations, thus helping the investigators to make a sound investigation plan, develop lines of questioning and begin to analyze the underlying elements in order to determine what sorts of relevant documentation or evidence might exist. Similarly, the investigators’ role was unclear; it seems that the investigators viewed themselves as a sounding board for individuals with grievances against Reverend Claire and appear to believe they were charged with diagnosing the alleged behavior or Reverend Claire himself.

The Investigation Report itself also contained several flaws. While it is apparent that the Pardons are knowledgeable about church dynamics they did not effectively conduct either fact-gathering or fact-finding. Instead, the Investigation Report suggests that the Pardons tried to diagnose Reverend Claire but did not analyze evidence to make factual findings and then provide the rationale for those findings, nor did they develop a timeline, or connect findings to any specific Canons that may have been violated. Thus, there was no way to know if the Investigation Report supported a finding that Reverend Claire did, or did not, violate any specific Canons. Further, without an analysis and rationale for the findings, neither the Diocese nor the parties could understand how the evidence had been analyzed to arrive at a conclusion.

The Investigation Report sent to Bishop Breedlove in September 2021 lays bare the shortcomings of the Diocese’s management of the complaints and the investigators’ process. The Investigation Report lacked any of the components typically found in an investigative report. For example, the Investigation Report did not include or identify:

- factual allegations against Respondent.
- the specific policy/policies or canon(s) alleged to have been violated.
- comprehensive summaries of statements from complainants, the respondent, or witnesses.

- a list of documents gathered.
- findings of fact, with a rationale for those findings.
- credibility or reliability assessments when competing facts could not otherwise be reconciled.
- analysis and rationale determining whether the factual findings support a determination that the specific policy or canon was violated.

Based on a review of the records it appears that Bishop Breedlove then stepped into the role of the investigator because the investigators had failed to effectively gather facts and analyze the allegations against Reverend Claire. While the edited report may have removed the investigators' unrequested diagnostic evaluation, what remained was opinions or conclusions about the respondent, not facts that would support a determination as to whether there was sufficient evidence to support a finding that Canonical law was, or was not, violated. Put simply, Bishop Breedlove's effort to sift through the Investigation Report did not change the fact that the investigative record was deficient.

V. COMMENTS RECEIVED REGARDING THE INVESTIGATION AND THE DIOCESE'S HANDLING OF THE COMPLAINTS

Those who submitted written statements or asked to speak with Grand River Solutions identified concerns that touched on a number of common themes. First, many noted that the Diocese was investigating "spiritual abuse" but did not have any shared, mutually agreed-upon definition. Others noted the lack of clarity as to whether and when allegations should warrant an investigation. For example, one of the investigation participants noted that "even now we don't have a good idea of the type of behavior that warrants an investigation." Community members also expressed frustration with aspects of the investigation process, including the "lack of transparency and clarity throughout."

Others described the expectation that parties maintain confidentiality as a "gag order" and said that it created operational challenges at the local level because they essentially had to "lead with incomplete information" and "little outside support" or communication from the Diocese.

Several individuals brought forward concerns about fairness for the person accused, noting that Reverend Claire, as respondent, did not know "the details of the complaints and the identities of the accusers from early on in the process."

People with different views on whether the investigation was warranted expressed considerable disappointment with Bishop Breedlove's management of the complaints and investigation. One person indicated that "pretty much all of [the witnesses] are deeply unhappy with how the Diocese handled" the investigation. Another stated Bishop Breedlove "mishandled [the investigation] in a way that has been destructive to everyone: complainants and accused." A third shared that personally they were "horrified how Bishop Steve has treated" Reverend Claire and that he should have recused himself from the matter.

While some perspectives were influenced by their stance on whether they believed an investigation was warranted, there was a common view that the Diocese needed to take ownership over what had happened and apologize to those impacted.

- I "hope the Diocesan missteps are publicly owned and they issue an apology to those who were impacted by the misfeasance"

- “If justice is to be done, the Diocesan Bishop and Diocesan Council of Diocese of Christ our Hope must make a public, formal apology to Rev Claire, stating clearly their errors in this process, and making clear publicly his innocence of the charges brought against him.”

Some suggested that the only way to effectively put this to rest would be to conduct a new properly scoped investigation or otherwise clear Reverend Claire of any wrongdoing.

- The “Diocese needs to either clear Dan’s reputation effectively or investigate and determine guilt or innocence.”
- “If the Diocese deems it wisest to pursue further investigation before ruling, we ask that you re-conduct a full investigation, to the extent it is within your jurisdiction, on the claims of pastoral shortcoming.”

VI. UNDERLYING INVESTIGATION AND NEXT STEPS

At this time, the initial allegations against Reverend Claire remain unresolved. Given its flaws, the Investigation Report is not sufficiently reliable as the basis for coming to conclusions regarding whether there is sufficient evidence to conclude that all or any of the allegations against Reverend Claire are supported by the evidence. As noted above, this is generally because the investigation did not have a clear scope, did not include findings, the questions asked of witnesses and parties were not appropriately tailored to gather relevant evidence, and the process did not provide Reverend Claire with the ability to meaningfully respond to specific allegations.

The Diocese must first examine each of the factual allegations against Reverend Claire to determine whether any of them, if true, would be a violation of Canonical law. If so, those specific allegations should become the subject of a new investigation, with a clear delineated scope set forth in writing, and that writing then shared with Reverend Claire and the investigator.

As to any concerns raised by a parishioner that would not be investigated, this does not mean that the concern is invalid. Those concerns that are tied to performance, but not canonical law, can still be addressed through training, monitoring, or any other steps designed to improve Reverend Claire’s ability to carry out his duties in a manner that best meets parishioners’ needs and meets Diocese expectations. Also, for any allegations that would not then be investigated, an authorized member of the Diocese should explain why that particular concern would not be investigated.