

**CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES COMMISSION
REPORT TO PRESBYTERY
DECEMBER 2, 2025**

The Congregational Issues Commission (CIC) held its final regular meeting of the year on October 28. As is customary, our meeting included conversation regarding particular congregations with whom we have been in contact as well as ongoing program items such as:

***Recovering from Financial Misconduct** – The CIC approved an initial draft of resource and program suggestions to be shared with the presbytery. That draft is attached to this report, and we encourage you to review it. It will also be posted on the CIC page of the Presbytery website. We continue to explore organizational, online and printed resources that might be helpful to congregational leaders, and we welcome your suggestions regarding such resources.

***2026 Commission Goals** – We identified commission goals for 2026...

- continuing work to refine financial misconduct recovery resources, as well as exploring similar resources for recovery from occasions of sexual misconduct and other boundary issues.
- exploring other areas in which the CIC might provide support to congregations (e.g. congregational grief, community traumas, congregational decline).

***2026 Commission Development** – We encouraged commission members to engage in skills development by accessing programs offered by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Commission members who participate in an LMPC program will be reimbursed by the CIC with the understanding that they will share their learnings with the commission and possibly with the wider presbytery.

As valuable as our program activities are, our primary purpose is to be available to presbytery congregations and their leaders to provide resources and support to enhance congregational life and ministry. Please reach out to any member of the CIC if you have questions about the commission's work in general or how the commission might be of resource or support to your congregation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Congregational Issues Commission
Richard Campbell, Jr
Roger Dermody
Candace Purdom
Katherine Redmond
Mike Ward (moderator)

Recovering and Healing After Financial Misconduct

Recovering from financial misconduct in a faith community requires addressing emotional, spiritual, and practical concerns. This document provides strategies, resources, and steps to support healing and rebuilding trust.

1. Spiritual and Emotional Healing

Counseling and Support Resources

- **Grief and Trauma Support:** Congregants may feel betrayed, angry, or disillusioned. Access to pastoral counseling, therapy, and support groups can help. Organizations like FaithTrust Institute and the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) offer faith-based counseling services.
- **Guided Prayer and Reflection:** Regular prayer meetings focused on healing, forgiveness, and spiritual guidance can help members process grief.
- **Bringing in a Trusted Counselor or Mediator:** Hiring a professional Christian counselor or mediator can help navigate the emotional and spiritual impact of the betrayal.

Healing Through Community Engagement

- **Community Forums and Listening Sessions:** Hosting open discussions with a neutral facilitator can help members express their emotions and restore trust.
- **Sermons and Bible Studies on Forgiveness:** Focus on themes of forgiveness, accountability, and God's sovereignty in difficult times.
- **Writing Letters of Lament and Hope:** Members can write letters expressing their emotions and aspirations for healing, which can be shared anonymously or as part of prayer activities.
- **Memorial or Symbolic Acts:** Establishing a symbolic gesture (e.g., planting a tree, creating a prayer garden) to mark the commitment to healing.
- **Reconciliation Retreats:** Organizing retreats focused on team-building, faith renewal, and forgiveness.

2. Financial Transparency and Restorative Practices

Restoring Trust Through Accountability

- **Conducting a Financial Audit:** Bringing in independent auditors ensures transparency and accountability.

- Establishing Strong Financial Oversight Policies: Implement best practices such as:
 - Dual signatories on financial accounts
 - Regular financial audits
 - Clear financial reporting to the congregation
- Denominational and Legal Support: Many denominational bodies provide resources for handling financial misconduct, including access to legal advisors and financial consultants.

Restorative Justice Approaches

- Mediated Dialogues: Facilitating conversations between leadership and congregants to acknowledge wrongdoing and outline concrete restoration steps.
- Drafting a Covenant of Integrity: Leadership can commit to ethical practices by signing and presenting a document to the congregation.
- Celebrating Milestones of Progress: Recognizing improvements in financial practices or trust building efforts encourages continued community healing.

3. Educational and Preventative Measures

Workshops and Training

- Financial Integrity Training: Hosting workshops on financial best practices through organizations like the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA).
- Ethics and Fraud Prevention Education: Educating leaders and members on ethical financial management and fraud prevention strategies.
- Transparency Workshops and Town Halls: Ensuring members understand church finances and are involved in future financial oversight.

Strengthening Internal Accountability

- Forming an Oversight Committee: A group of trusted members can monitor financial practices and promote transparency.
- Implementing Checks and Balances: Ensuring financial operations are subject to independent review.

4. Rebuilding Trust and Unity

Long-Term Recovery Strategies

- **Mission and Service Projects:** Engaging in community outreach and charitable activities to reinforce the congregation's collective purpose.
- **Trust Rebuilding Initiatives:** Hosting expert-led workshops on overcoming betrayal and strengthening relationships.
- **Acknowledging Emotional Impact:** Encouraging pastoral care and allowing congregants space to grieve.
- **Modeling Humility and Accountability:** Leadership should acknowledge any missteps and actively demonstrate a commitment to change.

5. Recommended Resources

(The CIC is currently gathering online and print resources, which will be added at a later date. Your suggestions are welcome.)

Final Thoughts

Recovering from financial misconduct requires transparency, accountability, spiritual healing, and community engagement. By implementing these strategies, faith communities can rebuild trust and emerge stronger, fostering a culture of integrity and r