

# DiCanio's Written Defense to FPCNA Judicial Commission

Having answered questions for nearly 10 hours before a Free Presbyterian Church of North America (FPCNA) Executive Committee and Investigative and Judicial Commissions, Rev. David DiCanio also submitted a 9 page defense (in full below), on March 15, 2024, detailing reasons why he was not guilty of sin for producing a video showing the infiltration of Contemporary Christian Music into the FPC of Ulster.

I wish to respond, as requested, to the Presbytery charges filed against me by the Clerk on February 23rd, 2024 and detailed below:

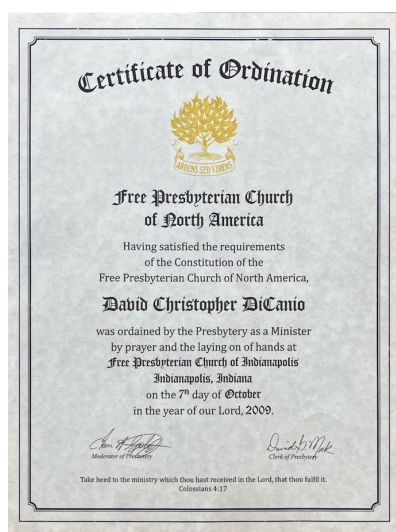
*Rev. David DiCanio, in the distribution of a video he produced concerning the influence of Contemporary Worship Music in the churches of the Ulster presbytery, acted improperly as a minister of the FPCNA in his failure to apply the principles of proper procedure in addressing alleged sin in ministers and members under the jurisdiction of our sister presbytery, the FPC of Ulster.*

*As an ordained minister, he is bound to act in accordance with the FPCNA BCO (F.O.G 2.8; 2.9; 10:5c and 10:6; also implied in the Introduction to the BCO, Relations with the Ulster Presbytery, sections e, f, and g.) Rev. DiCanio acted in violation of those principles which is a violation of the Fifth Commandment (Larger Catechism Q.127-132).*

*In presenting allegations of sin by a brother, the Christian is required to do so in a manner that endeavors to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph.4:1-6; 2 Tim.2:24-25; Gal.6:1). Accusations of sin against elders also require particular care (1 Tim.5:19,20). Rev. DiCanio failed to comply with these Biblical standards.*

*Filed by:  
Rev. Stephen Pollock  
Clerk of Presbytery  
(02/12/24)*

I stand accused of violating the Book of Church Order and also of failing to comply with a number of Scriptures. Various Scriptures and statements from the BCO are referenced in the language of charges filed against



After being accepted for training under the FPCNA in October of 1993, and being ordained October 7, 2009, Rev. David DiCanio returned his ordination certificate after being deposited from the gospel ministry on November 25, 2024, for the sin of contumacy.

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me, and in the initial Investigative Commission report which provides the basis for these charges.

I never expected that I would see the day when a Free Presbyterian minister who simply exposed the public actions of those who were openly thumbing their noses at the vow they had made to repudiate the incorporation of contemporary worship and song, would be brought up on charges for disobedience to Scripture for doing so.

In answering the charges above, I will first address the Scriptures cited against me, and then address the BCO issues. I wish to place on record that Code Of Practice sections 15.1.a, 15.1.c, 15.2.a.ii, require that the primary focus of any judicial disciplinary action by Presbytery is to involve a clear reference to the Scripture that has been violated. The charges laid against me signally fail in this requirement. Even in the language of the charges filed against me, alleged BCO violations take priority in the statement of the charges, and there is little explanation how the Scriptures cited have actually been violated by my actions. This lack of explanation makes any defense challenging.

## 1. Ephesians 4:1-6

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Eph 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph 4:4 *There* is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The language of the Presbytery charge draws attention specifically to the words of Eph 4:3. I am accused of failure in *endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. What I did by producing the video, I did with an earnest desire and endeavour to preserve the unity of the Spirit, as that unity is defined in God's word. The unity which the Holy Ghost produces, and in the context of which the bonds of God's peace operate among God's people to bind them together in unity, is always centered upon the truth of God and Biblical practice. The peaceful unity of saints promoted by the Spirit arises out of peaceful fellowship with God. I sought to preserve this by exposing the threat to it from ministers and elders who have promoted CWM material in their congregations.

My actions to expose the impact of CWM on the FPCoU churches did not break this spiritual unity. Paul the Apostle clearly shows in Romans 16:17 that disunity is caused by those who depart from the Scripture. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark **them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine** which ye have learned; and avoid them" [Emphasis Mine]. The disunity comes from those who refuse to maintain the biblical stand they have vowed to uphold.

I have not moved at all from the truth regarding reverence in worship which I have vowed to uphold. I believe that this immovability is, in fact, what it means to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I have been called! I have steadfastly maintained, and the video contends for, the position which our own *Separated Unto the Gospel* and other constitutional

documents state:

"The devil has his own music, which the world—wittingly or unwittingly—employs to honor him. But **we believe that this kind of music has no place in the life of the Church**, which is not to be "conformed to this world," but "transformed" into the image of Christ (Rom. 12:2). We reject the modern-day notion that says in order to reach the world with the gospel, we need to use the world's music. **We therefore refuse to use** Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and any style of music that, in our estimation,

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**the incorporation of contemporary worship and song**, dress that is immodest and inappropriate, and rejection of the head covering for women." [Emphasis Mine]

"Tunes and music that identify with worldly environments have **no place in the worship of God**", FPCNA Directory of Worship 4.4.b

These are strong condemnations of CWM practices which I wholeheartedly endorse and defend, and which I vowed before God to uphold. The video I produced simply exposed how far some of my brethren in the Ulster Presbytery have moved away from their avowed position on music in worship.

The negative reaction to one being faithful to the truth, is often perceived

not only **denigrates Christ and His gospel**, but also reflects the spirit of the world, a spirit that is given over to entertainment instead of to the worship of God and the edification of the saints." [Separated unto the Gospel, Emphasis mine]

The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster says in their distinctives, which have been included in recent ordination vows, that they are:

**"Biblical in Worship**, believing that worship must be reverent, God-glorifying and Christ-exalting." They conclude: "Therefore, **we repudiate** the modern trends towards minimizing the preaching of the Word,

and presented as being schismatic. A biblical definition of schism indicates it to be division over petty matters, rather than over fundamental truth. This is illustrated in the behavior of the Corinthian believers described in 1 Corinthians 3:3: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Schism is an evil thing and not produced by a faithful, biblical stand for truth.

"In nature schism is the sin of introducing self-centred division in a church situation where there ought to be mutual love and tolerance. But this is not the nature of Biblical separation with its desire to preserve the purity of the gospel by separating from professing churches in which Christ and His finished work are denied." [FP-CoU, *Our stand on separation*]

Some argue that the promotion of CWM is not a fundamental issue like the working of apostasy in denominations like the PCUSA or the OPC (i.e. Federal Vision), but it is more a matter of one's personal preferences. Our moderator, in one of our emergency meetings, stated that "we have a difference of opinion in our church on this issue." But the stated opposition of our churches (FPCNA and FPCoU) to CWM indicates an historic application to CWM of what Paul states in Romans 16:18, that deceiving the hearts of the simple by "good words and fair speeches" is a serious issue that directly relates to the gospel.

## 2. 2 Timothy 2:24-25

2Ti 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient,

2Ti 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

The language of the Presbytery charges gives no specific indication of how I have failed to conform to the requirements of this passage. The aim of my video was to show FPCoU ministers what lay behind many of the sanitized (and some not so sanitized) CWM songs being sung in their pulpits. I was merely showing what was publicly available online, posted by churches officially. I truly thought ministers would be shocked at how far they've drifted when they saw all this material brought together, especially as the video demonstrates that

some elders were allowing blatant rock music into the church. I expected that they would attempt to address this issue. I do not at all concede that I failed to be “gentle...apt to teach... patient, in meekness instructing...” in producing my video. I made no harsh, accusatory comment whatever against any of the people in the video but in the simplest way, using their own published material, sought to teach those involved.

Nor have I breached the command “the servant of the Lord must not strive”. That which is forbidden here is a quarrelsome, cantankerous attitude; the very opposite of the gentle, patient, teaching work which is necessary to “earnestly contend for the faith”, Jude 1:3. I have certainly contended for true Biblical worship, as every faithful believer is commanded to do; and I have contended for the stated position of our churches with reference to CWM; but I have not been guilty of the carnal striving condemned by the Apostle here.

### 3. Galatians 6:1

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Again, there is no specific explanation given of exactly how I am in breach of the duties outlined here by the Apostle. I insist that I have acted spiritually rather than carnally; I have also been careful to guard myself from temptation in this matter.

I do not admit that this issue of CWM being adopted by ministers is at all a case of a man being “overtaken in a fault”. Paul’s language suggests an inadvertent fall into sin when one is taken unawares. The use of CWM by these men is not inadvertent or the accidental error of the naïve. Rather, judging from their public social media activity, it is their habitual practice. Their actions are not accidental but deliberate. My video exposes the activity of men and young people who have persistently promoted CWM online, in the public, and in their congregations, for all to see. The reason they have acted as they have is because they do not see anything wrong with it. The men who were mentioned in my video have been involved for some time with this music, and I have evidence that they have continued to publicly promote their musical preferences even after my video expose appeared.

However, this text and Scripture generally, clearly requires God’s people to work for the restoration of a brother who has fallen into sin. Such restoration can only be effected by the Biblical process that begins with the exposure of sin, followed by confession and repentance, and ends with restoration. It is the spiritual response – as opposed to a carnal response – of the Christian to follow this Biblical

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pattern of dealing with sin.

It is true that some men have preached against it. It is also true that other men are concerned enough about it that they have promoted seminars to address the issue. But this is not the extent of what we are commanded to do when the world has so deeply infiltrated the church. The reality is men have allowed this to

continue in the church for years, and within the last 5 or so years it has become so much worse. Little has been done to oppose and act against this trend toward CWM.

### 4. 1 Timothy 5:19

The words of 1 Timothy 5:19-20 are also cited as Biblical support for the charges against me. “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.” Once the accusation has been established as fact, the duty of verse 20 follows: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” According to the language of the charges against me, I did not exercise the “particular care” which is required by this Scripture in such a proceeding.

We are to conclude from these verses that one may only proceed to “rebuke before all” an elder when the accusation against him is substantiated. This is the sole “particular care” that is required in the text. In the case where evidence has to be sought for and carefully examined, there will be a time for due process between receiving the accusation and proceeding to the public rebuke. On other occasions, however, no such prolonged investigation is necessary because sufficient evidence is immediately apparent. In such a case it is appropriate to proceed from accusation to rebuke without any delay. This is how Paul acted in Antioch with Peter. See Galatians 2:11-14. To act as Paul did and rebuke to the face a man who had failed to walk according to the gospel he believed, does not breach the duty prescribed in 1 Tim 5:19-20. Rather, it conforms perfectly with it.

I exercised the most scrupulous care in substantiating any accusation implied in the video. The research done was meticulous. I am convinced that any perceived accusation made by my video is fully and irrefutably supported by the evidence I cited in it. If required, I can produce much more evidence, much of it even more damning, to the same effect.

I contend that my video merely showed the clear evidence of what was transpiring in our churches. The evidence is public and plain for all to see, quite apart from my video. I used the evidence that those involved provided in their own public social media posts. There is absolutely no question of its veracity, the integrity of the footage, or its authenticity. I produced the video because I believed that despite the availability of the necessary evi-

dence in the public domain, men who do not frequent social media were unaware of this evidence which showed how bad things had become.

Further, based upon the conversations I had with senior ministers on both sides of the ocean, I formed the inescapable conclusion that men were unwilling to deal with this issue. I felt faced by an unavoidable question: What does one do when God's servants will not deal with clear evidence of departure from God? The only response is to do what Paul did with Peter, Barnabas, and the others in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14) and expose public sin in a public manner. This is what I did.

### BCO issues

I am also charged with breaching various BCO protocols. This is a less serious aspect of the charges though it seems to have been given undue priority in the language adopted by Presbytery. I do not accept that I can be charged with BCO infractions when I am not in breach of Scriptural practice. To criminalize my actions using the BCO when they are exonerated by Scripture, is to elevate the BCO to a level higher than Scripture.

The charges cite FPCNA BCO (F.O.G 2.8; 2.9; 10:5c and 10:6; also certain "implications" in the introduction to the BCO, Relations with the Ulster Presbytery, sections e, f, and g).

I believe in the value of a BCO; however, I am deeply disturbed that any such document can be used to prosecute a Biblical response to sin among God's people. I do not believe that it is in the spirit of our BCO, and certainly was not the mind of the founders of our church, that such a scenario should arise.

I stand accused, according to the multiple parts of the BCO referenced, of failing to act as "required" and follow official channels through Presbytery before addressing issues of gospel compromise among Free Presbyterian ministers or churches in our sister denomination in Ulster.

I cannot see that the BCO demands such a requirement.

**Firstly, sections e, f, and g** of the BCO Introduction do not **require** ministers in North America to bring matters of concern through Presbytery; they only detail what the Presbytery "shall be able" to do and "may" do. The language of these BCO sections merely define options that either presbytery is at liberty to use.

Section "e" speaks of matters of

discipline, not matters of concern or public sin. "Disciplinary actions of either Presbytery will be reported to... by the other.... Disciplinary proceedings against a minister ordained by one Presbytery but serving under the auspices of the other shall be conducted by a judicial commission composed of equal numbers..."

Section "f" says that "each Presbytery **shall be able** to make repre-

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sentation to the other on any matter that it considers of particular importance to its members or testimony." [Emphasis Mine]. It does not say the members of presbytery are required to do so, still less that they are liable to prosecution for failing to do so.

Section "g" again says similarly that, "The two Presbyteries **may appoint** special joint committees to study and report on issues..." [Emphasis Mine]

**Secondly, I have not opposed sections 2.8; 2.9 and 10.5c and 10.6**

Section 2.8; 2.9 have not been violated. I have agreed to submit to my brethren in the procedures leading up to, and during this judicial commission. Any vow to submit to the "principles, practices and procedures" of the BCO is necessarily subject to the higher claim made by the plain requirements of Scripture.

Section 10.5 c and 10.6 allows the presbytery to "deal with any complaints" and "look into" the conduct

of those under its care. I am not in any way opposed to this. I am under the care of FPCNA and therefore I am submitting to its jurisdiction. It has the right to decide to investigate me, but it does not have the right to require that my criticisms of men outside its jurisdiction are required to first be submitted for its approval. FOG 10.6 deals specifically with the Presbytery's duty in the case of those under its care who face complaint or criticism from another member of the Presbytery. This statement cannot be made to apply to such exposure of wrongdoing by some individuals in the Ulster Presbytery as was set forth in my video.

**Larger Catechism Questions 127-132 – The Fifth Commandment – requirements and duties between Superiors, Inferiors, and equals.**

Again, there is no specific statement in the charges of how these Larger Catechism statements apply to me. I am therefore at a serious disadvantage in trying to defend myself against that section of the charges which state that I have broken the fifth command of God's Moral Law. In the absence of any indication of exactly what the Presbytery is using these Catechisms to accuse me of, I can only make some general comments in response. I would also like to place on record that my case involves issues of greater importance even than the fifth commandment. The Biblical worship of God and its pollution by idolatrous compromise, is a first table issue and therefore within the structure of the Moral Law, is to be regarded as a more serious matter. It seems disproportionate to pursue an alleged fifth commandment breach in the face of a plain breach of the first and second commands.

**I note first that Questions 127 and 128** qualify the obedience required by a reference to "**lawful** commands and counsels" [Emphasis Mine]. I have tried to comply with the directives and counsels of the Presbytery as far as I could. I did recognize in a letter to the officers of the Ulster Presbytery that, with the benefit of hindsight, there may have been a better way for me to do what I did. I also recognized that the title on the file name, which had offended some, could have been accompanied by a clearer explanation to show what "In-cense Unto Baal" was specifically referencing. What I could not do, however, was to give the blanket apology for the video that it appeared the North American Executive Committee was

asking me for. Being convinced I have clear Scriptural warrant for my actions, I cannot regard the requirement by Presbytery for an apology for those actions, as a lawful command or counsel.

**I was glad to note the language of Larger Catechism question 130:** "What are the sins of superiors [toward inferiors?]" It reads, "the neglect of the duties required of them... encouraging, or favoring them in that which is evil... careless exposing, or leaving them to wrong, temptation, and danger..." Here is a simple statement of what ministers who promote CWM have done with reference to those under their care. When they allow sinful, worldly music to continue in the church, they are "leaving them [particularly our youth] to wrong, temptation, and danger". I believe that, personally, I have actually avoided being guilty of a breach of this command by speaking out against CWM and its evil influence over God's people.

**In the context of my duty under the fifth commandment,** to those directly or indirectly under my care, I have felt the weight of what the Lord said to Eli for failing to restrain his sons, "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." (1 Samuel 3:13). Failure to preserve the worship of God from the malign influence of idolatry will surely affect generations after us. It is in this very context that God says He will visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:5).

**Larger Catechism Question 130** also says it is wrong for superiors to be "dissuading, discouraging, or discountenancing them in that which is good; correcting them unduly." Johannes G. Vos, in applying this says, "Excessive or immoderate correction of inferiors, even when they are at fault, is wrong." It is not clear if I am being accused of this or not. However, I cannot see that what I did in producing the video was immoderate. It was done gently and with much restraint, careful thought and prayer.

The reality is, that those exposed by the video saw nothing wrong at all with their music. Since putting out the video I have evidence from the social media postings of singers we included in the video, that they have continued to promote CWM. I think it is safe to say that all the youth appearing in our video are supporting CWM.



Free Presbyterian Church of North America

December 4, 2024

Dear Rev. DiCanio,

It is with profound sadness that I inform you that you have been deposed from the ministry of the Free Presbyterian Church of North America. This is due to your failure to comply with the admonition to repent of the sin of contumacy. That admonition was presented to you in the report of the Judicial Commission (10-24), ratified by the Presbytery of the FPCNA, November 25, 2024.

I would ask that you send me your ordination credentials in the next few weeks. According to our Book of Church Order F.O.G. 2.11 you can request to retain your credentials. "In those cases where a minister resigns or is removed under discipline, not only from a particular charge but from the pastoral office, he shall surrender his ordination certificate to the clerk of presbytery—except that the presbytery may at its own discretion, in response to his written request, permit a minister to retain his ordination certificate." If that would be your mind, I will accept an email and present the request to the presbytery.

The Mission Board and the NGO overseeing the work in Liberia will administer the details of the deposition. A representative will be in contact with you in due course.

I pray that all of this will work out to the furtherance of the gospel, according to the Lord's sovereign will.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Stephen Pollock  
Clerk of Presbytery

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### Concluding thoughts

During the two-year period of re-searching the material to produce the video, I sought the Lord very carefully about the matters before me. I thought very carefully about possible ramifications and asked the Lord for direction. In John 12:42-43 I was struck with what I took to be a clear word from the Lord:

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” I was reminded of a life verse I chose when very young; a verse that has meant much to me in the ministry. Ephesians 6:6-7: “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

I am driven to say with Peter and John of old, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20); and also the words of Peter and the other Apostles, who said, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

I respectfully submit that what our Presbytery should be doing is to insist to the Ulster Presbytery that they challenge their ministers, elders and members who publicly promote CWM, and who, by doing so, are leading astray the next generation of the church. I submit that we should be giving our Ulster brethren an ultimatum that they either deal firmly and directly with this as a matter of urgency, or we will be required to separate according to the Biblical duty laid out in 1 Corinthians 5:4-7 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14.

It is my conviction that our church will forfeit the blessing of God, and jeopardize its very right to exist, by ignoring the obvious departure from our historical and Biblical roots which my video exposes. Complacency towards the world's idolatrous influence upon the worship of God's people exacts a heavy price. We can only avoid such terrible cost by again responding obediently to the call Moses gave at the foot of Sinai: “Who is on the Lord's side?”

Respectfully Submitted,  
Rev. David DiCanio