

The Clerk's Report

2022 Fall Presbytery Meeting
Oct 7-8, 2022 @ Columbus RPC

Dear Fathers & Brethren,

In the spring of 2023, I will (if elected) be entering my tenth year at the clerk's table, having previously served as assistant clerk (2014-15) and, more recently, as clerk (2016-Present). Appended to this report are detailed job descriptions for these two roles. At present, I am devoting *well* in excess of 200 hours per year to clerk work. After much thought and prayer, I have concluded that this is no longer sustainable for me on a long term basis.

Having spent considerable time attempting to divide up the clerk-load into a third clerk's role (as suggested by the Realignment Comte, of which I am a member), I have been unable to come up with a proposal that would be realistic, sustainable, or desirable for me to manage, given my local church and family responsibilities. The tasks involved in this job are far too interrelated to simply divide up in that fashion, and the time it would take to coordinate all these moving parts would not be insignificant.

Therefore, I am hereby notifying the presbytery that 2024-25 will be the last year in which I intend to accept a nomination to serve as clerk or assistant clerk of the GLGP. This gives the court until **March 2025 (approx. 30 months)** to find a suitable replacement or alter its mode of operations. I want to thank everyone for their kind words of encouragement over the years. I have been immensely blessed by the privilege of serving you, and look forward eventually to continuing that service in a variety of other ways, as the Lord leads.

New and existing communications are as follows.

- **21-5**: Letter from Jo. Kessler (RPCL) expressing concern regarding GLGP's handling of IRPC judicial case.¹
- **22-17**: Complaint ~ Swan et al v. GLGP-AIC, received 9/16/22.
- **22-18**: Complaint ~ Enas v. CCRP Commission, received 9/16/22.
- **22-19**: Petition from RPC of Lafayette requesting authorization to call an additional teaching elder.²
- **22-20**: Petition from Bloomington RPC proposing a revision to the GLGP's Child Protection Policy

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That presbytery appoint the following parliamentarians for this meeting: J. Odom, J. O'Neill, F. Smith, (alt.), S. Rhoda (alt).
2. That presbytery adopt it as a standing policy to prohibit all audio and/or video recordings of its ecclesiastical reports and deliberations — excluding non-deliberative items, e.g. preaching (with the preacher's permission), Psalm-singing, ordination/installation services; and excluding the recording of oneself — without express permission from the court.
3. That presbytery receive the minutes of the Smith Ordination/Installation Commission and the Murray Exam Commission, along with the written report of the CCRP Shepherding Committee.
4. That presbytery return GLG 21-5 to its author, Jordan Kessler (RPCL), with thanks, referring him to synod's recent verdict.
5. That presbytery rule GLG 22-17 out of order (DCG II.4.3, E-15) due to its submission on 9/16/22, which is more than 30 days subsequent to the action complained against: namely, the AIC's appointment of commission members on 6/10/22.³
6. That presbytery, prior to hearing GLG 22-18 as outlined in the proposed agenda, vote on the receiving of the CCRP Commission minutes; after which, if the minutes are received without rescindment of the commission's decision to not sustain GLG 22-15, the court shall "decline to act" upon GLG 22-18 (BOD II.4.1, E-15) by returning GLG 22-18 to its authors, reminding all parties of their liberty to appeal presbytery's decision concerning GLG 22-15 to the higher court of synod (BOD II.4.10, E-17); this action being grounded upon at least two "sufficient reasons": (1) Hearing the complaint after receiving the commission minutes without rescindment of the action complained against would involve the presbytery in the tedious redundancy of adjudicating a complaint against an action which it has already affirmed; and (2) GLG 22-18 lacks the precision and clarity requisite for proper adjudication, being self-styled as a complaint (BOD II.4.3, E-15), yet hinging in substance upon the appeal of "a case already decided by a lower court [i.e. the CCRP Commission]" (BOD II.4.10, E-17), and featuring a petition (DCG 8.11, D-40) with recommendations far exceeding the reasonable repercussions of the specific action complained against, namely the CCRP Commission's decision "to not sustain GLG 22-15."
7. That presbytery authorize the RPC of Lafayette to call an additional teaching elder.
8. That presbytery restructure the ordinary process for reviewing Session/TGB minute books as follows:
 - A. All minutes shall be reviewed digitally by presbyters in advance of the annual spring meeting.

¹ GLGP Minutes (11/5/21): "That presbytery defer any consideration of GLG 21-5 (Jo. Kessler) until synod's judicial commission has finished its work."

² GLG 22-19 (9/15/22): "The Lafayette Session would like to ask the AIC to grant us permission to call an additional pastor." (Deferred to Fall Mtg.)

³ AIC Minutes (6/10/22): "It was moved, seconded, and passed, to appoint a three-member commission of presbytery: (i) to investigate issues raised by Christ Church RPC ("CCRPC") by communication GLG 22-14, (ii) to seek reconciliation, and (iii) to take any other appropriate and necessary actions to resolve issues raised by communication GLG 22-14. . . In a separate and related action, it was moved, seconded, and passed, to appoint the following as members of the above mentioned three-member CCRPC Commission: Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator, Bryan Dage, Steve Sturm." [CCRPC = CCRP]

- B. The moderator shall send his review appointments to the asst. clerk by Dec. 31; otherwise, the asst. clerk will appoint reviewers himself.
 - C. Session/TGB clerks shall submit digital minute files⁴ to the asst. clerk (or to the reviewers specified thereby) each year by Jan. 15, to be reviewed by the reviewers, who shall then forward the results to the asst. clerk no later than Feb. 15.
 - D. The results of the review process shall be reported in the spring clerk's report.
 - E. Session/TGB clerks shall bring physical minute books to the spring meeting of presbytery to be stamped by the asst. clerk, who shall be responsible for confirming all necessary signatures.
9. That presbytery appoint Nathan Eshelman to begin serving as assistant clerk at the 2023 spring meeting, following the election of a new moderator.
 10. That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda for this meeting.⁵
 11. That presbytery grant all RPCNA elders present, including all non-certified delegates from this presbytery, the privilege of the floor during the remainder of this meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Kuehner, Clerk

ASSISTANT CLERK'S DUTIES

1. Solicit, receive, and record congregational delegate certificates in advance of each presbytery meeting.
2. Create an attendance/voting roll in advance each presbytery meeting.
3. Receive and record all excused absences, noting them in the attendance/voting roll.
4. Oversee congregation/TGB minute book review process.
5. Take and record attendance and roll call voting during presbytery meetings.
6. Assist clerk and moderator counting standing votes during presbytery meetings.
7. Monitor designated time limits for reports and exams during presbytery meetings.
8. Annually review and update the presbytery roster for the GLG website and minutes of synod.
9. Oversee submission of congregational membership/financial and presbytery officer data to RP Trustees.
10. Collect 100-word reports from each congregation for Presbytery Report to Synod.
11. Respond to requests for information from various denominational agencies.

CLERK'S DUTIES

1. Send out reminders and updates to delegates list throughout the year, and answering various questions in response to these reminders, especially in connection with upcoming presbytery meetings.
2. Receive and grant requests for excused absences and communicate these to the assistant clerk to be noted in the attendance roll.
3. Solicit feedback and information from the C&CC chairman and various other delegates in preparation for the composition of the proposed agenda and clerk's recommendations.
4. Compose the proposed agenda for each presbytery meeting, seeking to promote maximum time-efficiency while incorporating requests from individual delegates and committee members as to timing and availability.
5. Compose and submit clerk's report before each presbytery meeting, with a list of recommendations.
6. Receive and distribute all last-minute submissions prior to each presbytery meeting, and integrating them as seamlessly as possible into the existing agenda.
7. Provide assistance and counsel to the moderator, the AIC, and various other committees/commissions as needed: before, during, or after presbytery meetings.
8. Call a presbytery meeting (at least theoretically) if/when necessary in the absence of the moderator.
9. Record, review, and submit presbytery minutes for posting on the presbytery website.
10. Organize and submit annual compilation of presbytery minutes in digital format to the synod review committee for approval.
11. Organize and print the annual compilation of presbytery minutes in hard copy format and bring the minute book(s) to synod to be stamped by the assistant clerk.
12. Solicit all necessary signatures of moderators and clerks in the official minute book(s) to be submitted to synod.
13. Maintain care/storage of existing minute books (purchasing binders/archive paper, expensing through J. Bishop) along with storage boxes full of past minutes.
14. Oversee collection of student and ministerial query signatures in the presbytery minute book for licensure, ordination, and installation.
15. Deliver past batches of GLGP minutes to RP archives for scanning and, upon receiving them back, deliver them to Bloomington RPC to be placed in the fire safe.

⁴ As noted under "E", these digital minute files need not include signatures. All signatures will be confirmed at the spring meeting by the asst. clerk.

⁵ The proposed agenda includes the consideration of GLG 22-18 alongside the other CCRP-related reports.

16. Function as documentary middle-man between the presbytery and the synod clerk, other presbyteries, other denominations, outside law firms, etc.
17. Forward various reports and communications from authors to the delegates email list at their request.
18. Format, classify, label, and distribute all presbytery communications in a timely and orderly manner.
19. Monitor/moderate delegates list according to its official usage policy, courteously flagging inappropriate content.
20. Cooperate with presbytery/synod legal counsel in connection with the preservation of documents related to potential lawsuits.
21. Correspond via email with other RPCNA clerks for mutual counsel, clarification, and standardization.
22. Compose and distribute ministerial credentials and letters of standing to delegates at their request in a timely manner.
23. Compose and distribute membership transfers from the roll of presbytery to local churches as requested by the Shepherding Committee and approved by the AIC.
24. Research and respond to thorny procedural and parliamentary questions from inquiring delegates, local members, complainants/appellants, etc.
25. Chair the internet maintenance committee, including oversight of the GLG Internet Maintenance Technician.
26. Respond to requests for information from various denominational agencies.
27. Train incoming assistant clerks who may initially be unfamiliar with their new job description.
28. Monitor and assist with the work of the assistant clerk wherever necessary to ensure that all of our work is completed adequately and on time.

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)

*Proposed Fall Mtg Agenda
Distr. 9/26/22*

CLERK

Adam Kuehner
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ASST. CLERK

Dale Koons
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2022 GLG FALL MEETING

Time: Fri Oct 7 @ 10:00 a.m. to Sat Oct 8 @ Noon

Place: Reformed Presbyterian Church of Columbus
550 N. National Rd. Columbus, Indiana 47201

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION (Fri 10/7 ~ 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) no break

1. **CALL TO ORDER** (Eshelman) *30 mins* [10:30]
 - A. Prayer of Constitution (Eshelman) *5 min* [10:05]
 - B. Preaching of the Word (Jake Schwartz)¹ *25 mins* [10:30]
2. **ATTENDANCE: ROLL CALL** (Asst. Clerk) *5 mins* [10:35]
3. **CLERK'S REPORT** (Kuehner) *10 mins* [10:45]
 - Oral Update, Outstanding Minute Book(s), Communications, Recommendations.
4. **FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS** (First-Time Delegates, Fraternal Delegates, Special Guests) *5 mins* [10:50]
5. **AD INTERIM COMMISSION REPORT** (Hanson/Blankenship) *5 mins* [10:55]
6. **CANDIDATES & CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE** (TBD) *35 mins* [11:30]
 - A. Oral Update & Recommendations *5 mins* [11:00]
 - B. Sermon Exam (See 1B Above) — Jake Schwartz (Floor Comments & Vote) *10 mins* [11:10]
 - C. Care Status Interview — Joe Johnson (Testimony, Q&A, Voice Vote) *15 mins* [11:25]
 - D. Report as a Whole (TBD) *5 mins* [11:30]
7. **INTERNET MAINTENANCE COMTE** (Kuehner) *10 mins* [11:40]
 - Oral Update, Recommendations
8. **REALIGNMENT COMTE** (Kuehner) *10 mins* [11:50]
9. **BELLE CENTER ADVISORY COMTE** (Kuehner) *5 mins* [12:00]
10. **IRPC-RELATED ITEMS** *30 mins* [12:30]
 - A. Congregational Report + Q&A (DeJong) *10 mins* [12:10]
 - B. Slander-Libel Comte Report — *Continued: Rec. 3* (Fearing) *10 mins* [12:20]
 - C. Judicial Commission Minutes (Camery) *10 mins* [12:30]
11. **PRAYER OF THANKS FOR LUNCH / RECESS** (Appointed by Moderator)

LUNCH BREAK (12:30-1:30 p.m.)

¹ If the corresponding C&CC exam recommendation is approved, this will constitute Mr. Schwartz's evidence of progress sermon.

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION (Fri 10/7 ~ 1:30 to 5:30 p.m.) break @3:35 p.m.**12. CALL TO ORDER / RECONVENE IN PRAYER** (Eshelman) 5 mins [1:35]**13. VISUAL ATTENDANCE** (Asst. Clerk)**14. CCRP-RELATED ITEMS** 115 mins [3:30]

- A. Commission Report + Recommendation² / Minutes³ (Sturm) 20 mins [1:55]
- B. Complaint Hearing (GLG 22-18) Enas v. CCRP Commission 65 mins [3:00]
 - 1. Plaintiff (22-18): Oral Presentation + Q&A (Author) 10 + 5 = 15 mins [2:00]
 - 2. Defendant (Comm.): Oral Presentation + Q&A (Author) 10 + 5 = 15 mins [2:15]
 - 3. Plaintiff (22-18): Closing Statement 2.5 mins
 - 4. Defendant (Comm.): Closing Statement 2.5 mins [2:20]
 - 5. Verdict: Entertain/Discuss/Vote ~ Motion to Sustain/Not Sustain GLG 22-18 (Floor) 30 mins [2:50]
- C. Oral Congregational Report + Q&A (Hart) 15 mins [3:15]
- D. Entertain/Discuss/Vote ~ Motion(s) re: Status of Congregation/Members⁴ 15 mins [3:30]

15. INTERCESSORY PRAYER 15 mins [3:45]

- A. Belle Center (Appointed by Moderator)
- B. Immanuel (Appointed by Moderator)
- C. Christ Church (Appointed by Moderator)

16. MID-AFTERNOON BREAK, OOTD@3:45pm 15 mins [4:00]**17. GRAND RAPIDS-RELATED ITEMS** 45 mins [4:45]

- A. Oral Congregational Report + Q&A (Rhoda) 15 mins [4:15]
- B. Visitation Comte Report + Q&A (McCollum) 15 mins [4:30]
- C. Entertain/Discuss/Vote ~ Motion(s) re: Status of Congregation/Members⁵ 15 mins [4:45]

18. INTERCESSORY PRAYER & RECESS 10 mins [5:30]

- A. Christ Church (Appointed by Moderator)
- B. Additional Items (Appointed by Moderator)

19. PRAYER FOR DINNER / RECESS COURT (Appointed by Moderator)**DINNER BREAK** (5:30-6:30 p.m.)**Psalm Sing w/ Open Mic Congregational Updates⁶ (6:45-8:00ish p.m.)**

² The commission's sole recommendation, "That presbytery receive this report", should be understood to include the reception of the minutes, since the minutes are appended to the report. However, in order to avoid confusion, the court would do well to amend this recommendation by common consent so as to explicitly note the receiving and spreading of the minutes.

³ If Clerk's Recommendation #6 is adopted, the receiving of the minutes will automatically remove Item 14B from the agenda.

⁴ DCG 2.9, "A congregation becomes disorganized when the session is reduced to less than two resident elders. Two elders will suffice to hold the organization. The presbytery may enable the congregation to continue its existence by appointing an elder(s) from a neighboring congregation to act with the remaining resident elder as a provisional session until such a time as a new elder(s) may be elected. An alternate procedure is to reduce the congregation to a preaching station under the immediate supervision of presbytery." 2.11, "...When a presbytery determines that a congregation is disorganized, title to all properties held by or for the congregation shall immediately be transferred to Synod's Board of Trustees who shall determine with the counsel of the appropriate presbytery the disposition of such properties and/or proceeds of the same."

⁵ DCG 2.9, "A congregation becomes disorganized when the session is reduced to less than two resident elders. Two elders will suffice to hold the organization. The presbytery may enable the congregation to continue its existence by appointing an elder(s) from a neighboring congregation to act with the remaining resident elder as a provisional session until such a time as a new elder(s) may be elected. An alternate procedure is to reduce the congregation to a preaching station under the immediate supervision of presbytery." 2.11, "...When a presbytery determines that a congregation is disorganized, title to all properties held by or for the congregation shall immediately be transferred to Synod's Board of Trustees who shall determine with the counsel of the appropriate presbytery the disposition of such properties and/or proceeds of the same."

⁶ Two Minutes (max): "What encouraging things is the Lord doing in your local congregation? How can we pray for you?"

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION (Sat 10/8 ~ 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.) *break @10:00am*

- 20. CALL TO ORDER / RECONVENE** (Eshelman) *5 mins* [8:35]
- 21. VISUAL ATTENDANCE** (Asst. Clerk)
- 22. PRESBYTERY YOUTH / FAM. CONF.**⁷ *70 mins* [9:45]
- A.** Covfamikoi Conf. Comte Report *10 mins* [8:45]
 - B.** CYPY Board Report *10 mins* [8:55]
 - C.** Appoint Presb. Youth Secretary⁸ *5 mins* [9:00]
 - D.** Appoint Presb. Youth Rep. to Synod *5 mins* [9:05]
 - E.** GLG 22-20 ~ Proposed CPP Revision *40 mins* [9:45]
 - 1.** Presentation of Paper (Author) *10 mins* [9:15]
 - 2.** Discussion & Deliberation (Floor) *30 mins* [9:45]
- 23. RESOLUTION OF THANKS COMMITTEE** *5 mins* [9:50]
- 24. READING OF THE MINUTES** (Kuehner) *10 mins* [10:00]
- 25. MID-MORNING BREAK, OOTD@10:00am** *15 mins* [10:15]
- 26. LOTS OF EXTRA TIME (if necessary)** *100 mins* [11:55]
- 27. PRAYER OF ADJOURNMENT** (Appointed by Moderator) *5 mins* [12:00] **Bag Lunch @ Noon** — *Follow Host Instructions!*

⁷ GLGP Minutes (11/5/21): “Mr. Dage introduced Item 1, Recommendation 1 (That the matter be deferred until the SJC report in light of the fact that the GLGP acted on this matter in June of 2021.), in response to GLG 21-9, a letter from the Johnson family requesting the temporary removal of Ben Larson from presbytery youth leadership. After some discussion, it was moved, seconded, and adopted to lay this recommendation on the table to entertain the following substitute: ‘That presbytery place Ben Larson on a temporary leave of absence from presbytery youth leadership until the synod judicial commission completes its work.’ It was moved, seconded, and adopted to amend the motion by adding the phrase ‘and that AIC appoint a youth secretary pro tem.’ The motion was adopted as amended.”

⁸ Now that synod’s IRPC judicial case has concluded, we must follow up on our actions last November (cf. preceding footnote) by approving permanent appointments (as opposed to *pro tem*) for the roles of (1) Presbytery Youth Secretary and (2) Presbytery Representative to the Youth Ministries Committee of Synod. Often these roles are filled by the same person. Please correct me if I’m wrong on this, but I believe Steve Rhoda is serving in the former capacity, and the Nelsons in the latter; both on a *pro tem* basis. This agenda item will allow us to follow up on our previous actions by approving permanent appointments to these roles, or agreeing on a reasonable mechanism to ensure that these appointments are made at the appropriate time.

**GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
2022/2023 AD INTERIM COMMISSION
REPORT TO PRESBYTERY
Fall Presbytery Meeting**

The Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery *Ad Interim Commission* for 2022/2023 was appointed at the March 2022 Annual Spring Meeting of Presbytery and consists of the following five members:

David Hanson, Moderator (TE, RPC of Southside Indianapolis, Indiana)
Richard Blankenship, Clerk (RE, Second RPC – Indianapolis, Indiana)
Robert McKissick (RE, Sycamore RPC (Kokomo, IN)
James Odom (RE, Sparta, Illinois RPC)
Thomas Reid (TE, Orlando, Florida RPC)

The Commission met six times to date between March, 2022, and September, 2022, on the following dates.

April 22, 2022
May 18, 2022
June 10, 2022
June 25, 2022
August 3, 2022
September 10, 2022

A copy of the draft minutes (pending approval) or the final approved minutes of each meeting was distributed to the delegates of Presbytery following each meeting.

Attached as a part of this report to Presbytery is a Topical Summary of actions taken by the *Ad Interim* Commission presented in a Topical Index to the Minutes. The original signed minutes of the meetings of the 2022/2023 *Ad Interim* Commission will be delivered to the Clerk of Presbytery for retention and to spread on the minutes of Presbytery at the Spring Presbytery meeting.

Recommendation:

1. That Presbytery receive this report.

Respectively submitted,

David Hanson, Moderator
Richard Blankenship, Clerk
Robert McKissick
James Odom
Thomas Reid

September 12, 2022

Attachment: 2022/2023 *Ad Interim* Commission Topical Summary of Actions Taken and Index to the Minutes

Note: Items in blue italics are items listed in minutes that have yet to be formally approved by the AIC. Approval of the minutes containing those items is pending.

**2022/2023 AD INTERIM COMMISSION TOPICAL SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
AND
INDEX TO THE MINUTES**

CONGREGATION OR TOPIC	SUMMARY OR DETAIL	MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #)
Ad Interim Commission	Appointment of Clerk	April 22, 2022 / 3
	Appointment of Clerk <i>pro tem</i>	May 18, 2022 / 1
	<i>Fall AIC Report to Presbytery to be drafted by Clerk and reviewed by AIC members prior to submission to Presbytery</i>	<i>September 10, 2022 / 7</i>
Atlanta RPC	Appointment of Judicial Commission and members of the Commission	April 22, 2022 / 5
Approval of AIC Minutes	April 22, 2022 Minutes	June 10, 2022 / 3
	May 18, 2022 Minutes	June 10, 2022 / 3
	June 10, 2022 Minutes	June 25, 2022 / 3
	June 25, 2022 Minutes	June 25, 2022 / 5
	<i>August 3, 2022 Minutes</i>	<i>September 10, 2022 / 3</i>
	<i>September 10, 2022 Minutes</i>	<i>Pending</i>
Allen Blackwood	Laramie RPC Pastoral Call to Allen Blackwood approved	May 18, 2022 / 3
Christ Church Brownsburg RPC	Committee to examine Communication GLG 22-13 regarding charges against James Faris appointed	May 18, 2022 / 7
	Commission appointed to investigate and address issues in Communication GLG 22-14	June 10, 2022 / 5
	Members of the above referenced Communication GLG 22-14 Commission appointed	June 10, 2022 / 6

CONGREGATION OR TOPIC	SUMMARY OR DETAIL	MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #)
Christ Church Shepherding Committee	No action taken on request for dismissal of Committee	August 3, 2022 / 9
CYPUP	Approval of CYPUP Board Members and Director <i>pro tem</i>	April 22, 2022 / 6
	Request to rule on CYPUP Leadership statement on GL-G Child Protection Policy declined	April 22, 2022 / 7
First RPC Durham	Approval of Call of Drew Poplin as Associate Pastor. Appointment of Drew Poplin Installation Commission	April 22, 2022 / 9
First RPC – Grand Rapids	Appointment of Stephen Rhoda as temporary Moderator	April 22, 2022 / 8
	Appointment of Bryan Dage and Jon Hughes as Provisional Elders	August 3, 2022 / 6
	Resignation of Stephen Rhoda as Provisional Elder accepted	August 3, 2022 / 7
Mark Goerner	Ministerial Credentials received from the St Lawrence Presbytery forwarded to the GL-G Candidates and Credentials Committee	May 18, 2022 / 8
Immanuel RPC	Communications regarding the Synod Judicial Commission transmitted to Synod	May 18, 2022 / 6
	Presbytery appointed Provisional Elders asked to report and give advice on developments and actions taken at July 2022 congregational meetings	August 3, 2022 / 10

CONGREGATION OR TOPIC	SUMMARY OR DETAIL	MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #)
Immanuel RPC (cont.)	<i>Report of Presbytery appointed Provisional Elders reviewed – no further action needed</i>	<i>September 10, 2022 / 6</i>
Marion RPC	Permission granted to make out a call for a second pastor to succeed Jason Camery	June 25, 2022 / 4
	Call of Aaron Murray sustained as a regular gospel call and approved for presentation.	August 3, 2022 / 3
	<i>Aaron Murray Ordination and Installation Commission appointed</i>	<i>September 10, 2022 / 4</i>
	<i>Moderator and alternate Moderator for the Aaron Murry Ordination and Installation Commission appointed</i>	<i>September 10, 2022 / 5</i>
Aaron Murray	Coldenham-Newburgh RPC Pastoral Call to Aaron Murray approved	May 18, 2022 / 4
	Aaron Murray Ordination Exam Commission appointed	August 3, 2022 / 4
	<i>Ordination and Installation Commission appointed</i>	<i>September 10, 2022 / 4</i>
	<i>Moderator and alternate Moderator for the Ordination and Installation Commission appointed</i>	<i>September 10, 2022 / 5</i>
Presbytery	Approval of Minutes of 2022 Annual Spring Meeting	April 22, 2022 / 4
	Fall meeting set for October 7 and 8, 2022 in Columbus, Indiana	August 3, 2022 / 5
Second RPC, Indianapolis	Jerry Foltz approved as interim Moderator of Session during James Faris' sabbatical leave(s)	August 3, 2022 / 8

CONGREGATION OR TOPIC	SUMMARY OR DETAIL	MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #)
Synod 2022	Certification of At-Large Teaching Elders	April 22, 2022 / 10
Westminster (IL) RPC	Approval of Pastoral Call to Joshua Smith approved	May 18, 2022 / 5
	End of Items	

Fall 2022 AIC Report to Presbytery v1.2

**GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
CHRIST CHURCH RP COMMISSION
REPORT TO PRESBYTERY
Fall Presbytery Meeting**

The Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian (CCRP) Commission was appointed by the Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery *Ad Interim Commission* on June 10, 2022, in response to Communication 22-14 from the Christ Church RP Session requesting “outside assistance”:

“It was moved, seconded, and passed, to appoint a three-member commission of presbytery:

- (i) to investigate issues raised by Christ Church RPC (“CCRP”) by communication GLG 22-14,
- (ii) to seek reconciliation, and
- (iii) to take any other appropriate and necessary actions to resolve issues raised by communication GLG 22-14.”

The Commission consists of the following three members:

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator (RE, Orlando RPC – Orlando, Florida)
Bryan Dage, Clerk (RE, Hetherton RPC – Johannesburg, Michigan)
Steve Sturm (RE, RPC of Southside Indianapolis, Indiana)

On June 21, 2022, at the Presbytery meeting at Synod, the Commission’s remit was expanded:

Adopted: “That presbytery refer GLG 22-15 (Complaint v. CCRP Session) to the Christ Church Commission (the “Commission”) for adjudication.”

The Commission met twelve times in constituted court:

July 20, 2022
July 28, 2022
August 3, 2022
August 10, 2022
August 13, 2022
August 15, 2022
August 17, 2022
August 31, 2022
September 7, 2022
September 12, 2022
September 14, 2022
September 21, 2022

A copy of the approved minutes of each meeting is included in *Appendix A*.

On August 5 and 6, the Commission visited the Christ Church congregation to conduct a series of in-person meetings. On the Lord’s Day of August 7, moderator Jonathan Schaefer gave a message from the Commission to the congregation following the morning worship service. The text of the message is included in *Appendix B*.

Appendix C includes the August 17, 2022 report the Commission distributed to the congregation through the CCRP Session describing the Commission’s remit, investigation, and conclusions. In summary, the conclusions are:

- That CCRP Session’s counsel to Mr. Enas “was a reasonable and wise communication for the good of Mr. Enas, the congregation of CCRP, [and] for the peace, purity and progress of the church.”
- That “the Commission does not sustain complaint 22-15.”

Following the distribution of the Commission’s report, the congregation was invited to submit questions or comments to the Commission via email. The Commission collected thirty-three written questions and comments submitted by CCRP members from August 8 through August 30. On September 12, 2022, the Commission distributed written responses to the four individuals who had submitted the questions/comments and cc’d the CCRP Session on the responses.

Since distributing the August 17 report to the congregation, the Commission has responded to questions and requests for counsel from the CCRP Session regarding the path forward for the congregation.

Recommendation:

1. That Presbytery receive this report.

Respectively submitted,

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
 Bryan Dage, Clerk
 Steve Sturm

Appendix A – CCRP Commission Meeting Minutes

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
July 20, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, July 20, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:04 PM.
3. By common consent, Bryan Dage was appointed clerk of the commission.
4. Discussion of main issues to explore, questions to answer and objectives to pursue. Each commission member will develop further thoughts and suggestions on these items to be discussed at the next meeting.
5. Discussion of schedule, including a visit to Christ Church. Tentative schedule involves worshiping at CCRP on a Lord's day and holding meetings on the following Monday and Tuesday. Possible dates discussed were August 6 and 13, to be determined.
6. Steve closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 8:41 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
July 28, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Thursday, July 28, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:03 PM.
3. The minutes of the July 20, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
4. Discussion of our thinking on the questions from the previous meeting. Jonathan will prepare a planned schedule and clarifying questions for the session and for the concerned families for the weekend visit of August 5-7. Bryan will attend these meetings via zoom.
4. Steve closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 8:57 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
August 3, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, August 3, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm (Clerk *pro tem*) (Bryan Dage excused absence due to illness).
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:03 PM.
3. Steve agreed to serve as clerk *pro tem* in Bryan's absence.
4. The minutes of the July 28, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
5. The draft of clarifying questions prepared by Jonathan in advance of the meeting were reviewed and discussed for each of the four scheduled meetings to take place August 5 and 6. The meetings schedule was confirmed.
6. An outline of topics to be addressed in the presentation to the congregation on Sunday afternoon was discussed. Jonathan's travel schedule for the weekend was reviewed.
7. Jonathan closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 8:57 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Steve Sturm, Clerk *pro tem*
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
August 10, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, August 10, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Bryan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:04 PM.
3. The minutes of the August 3, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
4. Discussion of the report to the congregation.
5. Jonathan closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 8:53 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
August 13, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Saturday, August 13, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Steve opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 2:31 PM.
3. Discussion of the report and schedule for its delivery.
4. Jonathan closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 3:17 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
August 15, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Monday, August 15, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 5:02 PM.
3. The minutes of the August 10 and 13, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
4. Editing and discussion of the report and schedule for its delivery.
5. Jonathan had to leave early for a session meeting.
6. Bryan closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 6:22 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
August 17, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, August 17, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Steve opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 12:34PM.
3. The minutes of the August 15, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
4. Final editing and discussion of the report. Report was adopted and scheduled for delivery.
5. Jonathan closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 1:32 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
August 31, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, August 31, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 8:17PM.
3. The minutes of the August 17, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
4. The Commission worked on responses to some of the questions and comments that have been received following the report of August 17.
5. Bryan had to leave the meeting early.
6. Steve closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 9:45 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
September 7, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, September 7, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:07PM.
3. The minutes of the August 31, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
4. The Commission continued work on responses to some of the questions and comments that have been received following the report of August 17.
5. Steve closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 9:53 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
September 12, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Monday, September 12, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, and Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Bryan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 8:43PM.
3. The minutes of the September 7, 2022 meeting were approved as written.
4. The Commission finalized responses to all of the questions and comments that have been received following the report of August 17. Jonathan will send out answers via email to the four parties who asked questions with their respective answers.
5. Steve closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 9:50 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
September 14, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, September 14, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm (Clerk Pro Tem). (Bryan Dage excused absence due to family illness)
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:03PM.
3. Steve agreed to serve as clerk *pro tem* in Bryan's absence.
4. The minutes of the September 12 meeting were approved as written.
5. The Commission reviewed questions received from the CCRP Session in preparation for a meeting with them following adjournment.
6. Steve closed in prayer and adjourned the court at 7:50 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Steve Sturm, Clerk *pro tem*
CCRP Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Christ Church RP Commission
September 21, 2022

The Christ Church RP (CCRP) Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met remotely on Wednesday, September 21, 2022.

1. Commission members present were: Jonathan Schaefer (Moderator), Steve Sturm, Bryan Dage (Clerk).
2. Jonathan opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:03 PM.
3. Minutes from September 14, 2022 were approved.
4. Discussion of final report and recommendations to Presbytery, and its distribution.
5. Minutes from September 21, 2022 were approved.
6. Steve prayed and adjourned the Court in prayer in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the Head and King of the Church, at 8:07 PM.

Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator
CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage, Clerk
CCRP Commission

Appendix B – Moderator Jonathan Schaefer Message to the CCRP Congregation, delivered orally on August 7, 2022

Message to the Congregation

On behalf of the Commission, I want to begin with a word of thanks for the kindness and care you have extended to us. Many hours of time have been dedicated to communications, some have provided many documents, some have taken time to write personal letters, or spent time on the phone with us, we have been fed, lodged, and transported and I am sure that many if not all of you have prayed for and about our efforts. For these and other loving gestures we are truly thankful.

We want to assure you that you are also being faithfully prayed for by brothers and sisters in several other congregations, including the ones we represent.

This weekend we met with Session on Friday evening from 6:15-8:15pm. Saturday morning from 10-12pm we met with Nathan Shaver and 2-5pm and 6-9:30pm Saturday afternoon and evening with met with members of the congregation.

We began meeting officially after COVIFAMIKOI Family Conference. If you haven't been to a family camp, I highly recommend it as a time of worship, praise, prayer, fellowship, recreation and for you young men and women perhaps a time to meet a like-minded Christian spouse, as I did at RP International Conference at Carleton College.

We have read over a large amount of the written material generated over the past year, discussed and prayed much over this current situation, and we remain hopeful that that the Lord will continue His work among you. The meetings this weekend have helped further clarify our understanding and our goal is to first leave you today with some words of encouragement and then to summarize our counsel and have that back to you electronically in two weeks.

Message of Encouragement

First, I think it is important to remember that the members of this congregation are co-laborers in Christ. We are wrestling with issues of dissention among believers in the same congregation. Having witnessed the confession of sin and the corresponding forgiveness, what remains appears to be disagreements on opinion and perspective, rather than continuing sin.

Disputes of this kind are not new to the body of Christ. In fact, the apostle Paul addresses one such issue in Philippians 4.

Philippians 4:2-7

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in [the cause of] the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle [spirit] be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4 deals with a situation wherein there was discord among two faithful believers, both with good intentions and serving Christ well. Before I get too much further, I need to talk about what I am not saying. I am not saying that there was no sin involved. I am not saying that there were not biblical principles that come into play. However, Paul does not address any sins committed.

Paul singles these members out by name, noting their faithful ministry but encouraging them to live in harmony in the Lord. He then asks his true companion to help these fellow believers resolve their conflict. I think it is significant that Paul implores the two women in conflict by name. I find it interesting that he leaves

the arbiter, the "true companion", urged to "help these women" unnamed. Some commentators think it could have been Timothy, others suggest it could have been Epaphras who carried the letter. Whether we name the arbiter or not, it is helpful to observe that this disagreement was important enough in the life of the church to admonish the parties publicly and solicit help to settle the matter, which echoes our commission's remit.

Paul's counsel was to:

- Rejoice in the Lord;
- Let your gentle spirit be known to all men;
- Be anxious for nothing, but pray; and
- Expect the Lord to bring the peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ.

We see many similarities between this situation and the situation that we are here to address. First, we are not questioning the intentions of those who find themselves at odds. We believe that all are seeking to honor Christ and move forward, yet there are differences in the way those at odds see the path forward.

We know that locally efforts have been made by both parties to resolve conflict, yet currently the remains at an impasse. Now, we have been appointed to come in and address the situation. Our message this to you now is the same:

- 1.) Rejoice in the Lord: we encourage you all to consider deeply the grace of the Lord evidenced in Philippians 2 – Jesus condescended to take on the lowly form of His own creation and being found in this low form, He the very Son of the Most High God humbled Himself even to that dreadful death on the Cross for the sins of people such as you and me, redeeming to Himself His own enemies to everlasting glory with Him in the Heaven of God for eternity.
- 2.) Let your gentle spirit be known to all men: we encourage you to all consider your own spirit before the Lord. His people are characterized by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the fruit of which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. This fruit does not come as payment in exchange for the agreement of others, it comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives through His sanctifying work in our hearts. These outworkings demonstrate His transforming work and our grateful, self-emptying response.
- 3.) Be anxious for nothing but pray: there is anxiety here present. This anxiety is deeply affecting not only the worship of God and ministry of this body of believers, but many others. We need to continue in fervent prayer. That is our work – to pray. This is so very humbling. We are people that want to take action and see our results, yet this is the Lord's body, not ours. He is not surprised by what has happened. What has happened is for His glory and perhaps unbelievably at times, our benefit.
- 4.) Expect the Lord to bring the peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ: we must live out our lives expectantly waiting for His peace to transform our hearts and minds in and toward Christ. Psalm 37 encourages believers to not worry, but to trust in the Lord and do good. We are to dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness, delighting ourselves in the Lord. When we trust Him and commit ourselves to Him, He will give us our heart's desires – Trust Him, He will do it!

Our hope is that this message of encouragement will resonate with you and in the coming days as you wait expectantly on our counsel. We encourage you to pray fervently over these words and rest in Christ, your salvation and peace.

Appendix C – Commission Report to CCRP Regarding GLGP Communications 22-14 and 22-15, August 17, 2022

CCRP COMMISSION

Report to CCRP Regarding GLGP Communications 22-14 and 22-15

Galatians 5:14-15. "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."

Commission Remit

This Commission was established by the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (GLGP) Ad-Interim Commission (AIC) on June 10, 2022, in response to GLGP Communication 22-14 from the Christ Church RP Session requesting "outside assistance":

"It was moved, seconded, and passed, to appoint a three-member commission of presbytery:

- (i) to investigate issues raised by Christ Church RPC ("CCRP") by communication GLG 22-14,
- (ii) to seek reconciliation, and
- (iii) to take any other appropriate and necessary actions to resolve issues raised by communication GLG 22-14."

On June 21, 2022, at the GLGP Meeting at Synod, our remit was expanded:

Adopted: "That presbytery refer GLG 22-15 (Complaint v. CCRP Session) to the Christ Church Commission (the "Commission") for adjudication."

The Commission's Work

The Commission had an initial email exchange and phone conference the week before the COVFAMIKOI family conference. Shortly after the conference, the Commission began meeting regularly by phone. Jonathan Schaefer, having served on the CCRP Shepherding Committee, was able to quickly provide several background documents to the other two members of the Commission. This written material was surveyed by Commission members independently in advance of our meetings where they were reviewed and discussed. A list of formal GLGP Communications, Reports, and related actions from GLGP meeting minutes that were considered are listed in the Appendix titled "Background".

While the review of written material was very helpful for our investigation of issues described in GLGP 22-14, the Commission agreed it would be wise to conduct an in-person visit with various parties at CCRP over a weekend to ask clarifying questions and to worship together with the congregation on the Lord's Day. The Commission scheduled and conducted a series of meetings on August 5 and 6:

- Friday, August 5 from 6:15 pm to 8:15 pm with the CCRP Session, including interim moderator Joel Hart.
- Saturday, August 6 from 10:00 am to noon with Interim Pastoral Assistant, Nathan Shaver.
- Saturday, August 6 from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm with individual CCRP members who responded to our invitation for an in-person conversation with the Commission.
- Saturday, August 6 from 6:00 pm to 9:30 pm with concerned members who signed the GLGP 22-15 complaint and responded to our invitation to meet.

The Commission also received a number of written communications from members before and during the visit. Due to family illness, Bryan Dage was unable to attend the meetings in person, but he did attend each scheduled meeting either by phone or video conference.

Our visit affirmed many of the assessments expressed by the CCRP Session's GLGP 22-14 request for the formation of the Commission. Despite significant effort invested by GLGP's Reconciliation Committee and the subsequent Shepherding Committee, the congregation remains deeply divided, perhaps more now than ever, over their "level of trust and confidence in the Session." More than one described CCRP as "two congregations." In the Saturday series of meetings, the Commission observed one "congregation" in strong support of Session's leadership, and the other "congregation" expressing significant questions concerning Session's overall fitness as elders. Disputes related to this division consume the Session's time and energy in a way that diminishes attention from other important matters like evaluating options for longer-term pulpit supply and investigating other meeting venues knowing the current landlord may sell the property with 60 days' notice. It is indeed a "time of great difficulty for the congregation" and the Commission agrees that "the future existence of the congregation" is at stake.

On the Lord's Day, the Commission members present were encouraged to find that deep divisions observed the preceding day were not evident in morning worship or the informal times before and after the service. There were many encouragements as attending Commission members were warmly welcomed, communed together, and noted the congregation engaging with each other and first-time visitors. Commission members present greatly appreciated Nathan Shaver's skillful preaching and evident shepherd's heart for every member and commend him for his good work. Jonathan Schaefer ended the Commission's visit with a message to the congregation following morning worship expressing gratitude for a warm welcome, describing the Commission's work thus far, explaining our next steps, and bringing encouragement from Philippians 4:2-7.

At the heart of our remit, prompted by GLGP 22-14 requesting our formation, and GLGP 22-15, complaining against a recent action of the CCRP Session is the May 23 letter of counsel from the Session to Mr. Enas. The remainder of this report addresses the appropriateness of that letter and a reply to the complaint about it.

Discussion of the May 23 Letter

The Commission notes the following concerning the May 23 letter:

1. The Commission finds that the May 23 letter is neither a 'dismissal', nor a judicial action. It is a shepherding action. Thus, it does not fall under the category of any of the formal judicial processes of the Book of Discipline. As RP Testimony 30.3 says, "Some

offenses may be resolved by informal counsel by one or more elders.” The Commission finds that the May 23 letter was a gracious attempt to resolve this conflict by informal counsel apart from formal judicial process.

2. Elders take all kinds of actions to shepherd their congregants that are not judicial in nature and are thus not specifically outlined in the Book of Discipline. The fact that their action is not spelled out in the RP Constitution does not mean that it is invalid.

3. The crux of the question regarding the May 23 letter is found in these words: “We [CCRP Session] need to shepherd you to a different congregation.”

The Commission finds that Session’s action is strong counsel to Mr. Enas, but it is counsel nonetheless. The Session will not be transferring Mr. Enas to another congregation against his will. They are asking him to accept this counsel or to work with them so that he can continue to remain a member in good standing of the church, and for the sake of peace in the church.

An analogy would be the case of a member who became convinced of (for example) credo-baptism. In that case, the session would seek to work with the individual, but if over time it became evident that that individual was not going to change their viewpoint, and if there was a disturbance in the congregation as a result of that member’s conviction and actions, the most reasonable course of action would be for the session to seek to shepherd that individual to a different branch of the true church (in this example, to some sort of a Reformed Baptist church), where they would be in tune with the leadership of the church and be able to thrive.

This is uncommon counsel. A session would not want to take this sort of action lightly, but only when it was necessary. The May 23 letter spells out the necessity in this case and lists five examples that demonstrate why they are taking this action.

Specifically, the CCRP Session has indicated that Mr Enas’s actions do not align with his membership vows. They desire Mr. Enas to be able to demonstrate a trust of the Session and a willingness to “submit to the direction and oversight of the CCRP elders”. The Commission finds that these are reasonable, biblical requirements also expressed in the subordinate standards of our RPCNA Constitution:

Hebrews 13:17. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Larger catechism 127 “The honor which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defense and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honor to them and to their government.”

DCG 7.13 “After the roll has been determined, all the communicant members of the new congregation shall stand and give assent to the Covenant of Communicant Membership and to this additional pledge:

‘Do you solemnly covenant with God and with one another that you will live together in brotherly unity as an organized congregation on the basis of the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America; that you will be obedient to the courts that are over you in the Lord; and that you will, by a godly life, seek to promote the purity, peace, and prosperity of the church as a whole?’”

Membership vow 4. “Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America? Do you recognize your responsibility to work with others in the church and do you promise to support and encourage them in their service to the Lord? In case you should need correction in doctrine or life, do you promise to respect the authority and discipline of the church?”

The Commission draws distinction between these requirements and Mr. Enas’s actions in the following ways:

1. The Commission observes a push for the purity of the church at the expense of peace and prosperity as a whole. Duties of members include, “...seek to promote the purity, peace, and prosperity of the church as a whole.” (DCG 7.13). This seems to also lift purity above WLC 127’s instruction to be “Bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love”. This prioritization is threatening to devour the entire congregation. We are commended in RPT 25:16 to “pray for and seek the purity and unity of the Church.” While a desire for the purity of the Church is a noble and necessary thing, the Commission is very concerned that in this case it has been to the detriment of church unity.
2. The Commission observes a disrespect for the Session that has grown out of mistrust and suspicion. This is contrary to the vow to, “Respect the authority and discipline of the church.” Mr. Enas maintains his submission to the Session, but by his actions, identified by the Session in the May 23 letter, and in numerous other documented actions, he demonstrates an unwillingness to do so.

Another detail not in the May 23 letter is that there appears to be an increasing level of division and discord within the congregation since the November 2021 communication to Presbytery. It is this Commission’s assessment that since that date, and indeed, since the ending of the Reconciliation Committee’s work in April 2022, that the trouble and sorrow in the congregation has only compounded, and with no end in sight.

The Session has a responsibility “to care for the interest of the congregation and of each member” (DCG 4.7). The Session has God-given authority to shepherd and care for the flock under their care. The Commission affirms that the Session would be remiss if they did not attempt to address this matter in the congregation.

If CCRP Session is concerned about Mr. Enas’ behavior, why are they allowing him to transfer to a different congregation rather than bringing charges and going through a formal judicial process?

Mr. Enas has stated that he lost confidence in the Session regarding the LeFebvre controversy and that despite ongoing efforts of both Session and Presbytery, he has not regained his confidence in the Session. The Session hopes that, in transferring him to a different congregation, he will be able to respect, trust, and submit to his new session and that no further action would need to be taken. This is an application of the wisdom of 1 Thessalonians 5:14, to assess a situation and apply the needed action, with a dose of patience. This demonstrates the Session's graciousness to Mr. Enas in not desiring to impugn his motives but to accept his statements at face value. The Commission sees as prudent the Session having a robust discussion with the session of Mr. Enas's new congregation in order to help them in their task of shepherding.

Regarding the queries and stipulations that the Session gave to Mr. Enas should he desire to stay at CCRP, the Commission finds that these are both appropriate and necessary for the peace of the congregation moving forward.

The Commission notes that both in the complaint of GLG 22-15 and in discussion with the signers of 22-15, the complainants have stated that it would be wrong to trust the Session, because the Bible says "not to trust in man". While it is true that we ought not to put our trust in princes, it is a shocking assertion that we ought not to trust any men, especially those that have been ordained to the office in the manner prescribed by our denominational standards. There is a world of difference between trusting elders, and putting trust in princes.

Without a basic level of trust, there can be nothing but division and quarreling. The absence of trust means suspicion of the Session: suspicion of their motives, of their actions, of their abilities. This open suspicion and lack of trust (which is clearly observable by the Commission) has bred a lack of respect for the elders, which has no place in God's church.

Regarding accepting the Reconciliation Committee's work, Mr. Enas has declared that he is not yet reconciled to the Session, even after a full confession of specific sins by the Session has been made on April 10, and Mr. Enas has offered his forgiveness in writing. BOD 3.3 tells us, "If the sinner confesses and repents, there must be forgiveness and reconciliation, and the matter shall be closed. You have won your brother. Such closure may include counsel or censure appropriate to the circumstances."

The Reconciliation Committee wrote in a March 26 letter, "As the elders are already following the steps of reconciliation, there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled." Mr. Enas, however, has expressed that he does not agree with the Reconciliation Committee on this and other points. The Commission finds Mr. Enas' lack of reconciliation at this point very concerning.

The Bible warns in passages such as 2 Timothy 3:2-3 of those who are "unappeasable" (ESV) or "unforgiving" (NKJV). The intent behind the Greek word here, ἄσπρονδοι, is one who is unwilling or unable to be reconciled – defined as 'admitting of no truce; implacable' or 'Of one who is unwilling to negotiate a solution to a problem involving a second party, irreconcilable.' Mr. Enas appears to have put himself in this position of being "irreconcilable", which is a dangerous place, and the Commission counsels Mr. Enas to give careful thought and prayer to his situation.

The Commission believes that the May 23 letter was a reasonable and wise communication for the good of Mr. Enas, the congregation of CCRP, for the peace, purity and progress of the church.

Response to 22-15

The Commission, responding to communication 22-15 (the complaint signed by Mr. Enas and others against the Session's May 23 Letter), notes the following:

The Commission rejects the 4 points from page 1 of the complaint:

1. Contrary to the claim in 22-15, the Session is not seeking to dismiss Mr. Enas, but to work with him to shepherd him to a congregation where he can hold his membership vows in good conscience.
2. Contrary to the claim in 22-15, the Session is not asking Mr. Enas to give "unqualified" trust to the Session. Though during discussion at the May 23 meeting, one elder used the adjective "unqualified", he retracted the word when he saw his meaning was not being understood. As discussed above, the signers of the complaint have stated that they do not believe it is right to "trust men" whether qualified or not. The Commission finds that the Session's questions to Mr. Enas to be affirmed ("*Do you trust the CCRP Session to shepherd you and your family, and do you have confidence in its ability to shepherd Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian?...*") are reasonable expressions of trust that are necessary and essential to healthy congregational life.
3. Contrary to the claim in 22-15, the Commission rejects the assertion that Mr. Enas was given an "unbiblical ultimatum". The Session has the authority to ask Mr. Enas to fulfill his membership vows, but first they offered a solution that they hoped might solve the problem.
4. Contrary to 22-15, the Commission rejects the claim that the Session's requirements for Mr. Enas, should he decide to stay at CCRP, are "unbiblical and ungodly". Specifically:
 - To be reconciled over a matter that has been settled and forgiveness offered – as discussed above, is a Biblical and confessional requirement.
 - To fulfill membership vow #5 by giving to the Lord's work of the CCRP congregation - "Contribute financially to the work of CCRP" is described by the complainants in 22-15 as a "dangerous requirement". This is not a dangerous requirement; it is a biblical requirement. Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:18. To argue, as was explained to the Commission that membership vow #5 wherein members promise to "give to the Lord's work as he shall prosper [them]" does not mean specifically the local church where they hold their membership is to twist the meaning and intent of those words.
 - To cease recording interactions without consent is a basic courtesy that is within the Session's purview to require.
 - To inform the Session in the future of the source and content of your counsel "from other presbyters if you believe the Session is not responding appropriately" is narrowly focused on who from ("presbyters") and when ("if you believe the Session is not responding appropriately") counsel is received. This requirement is prudent to avoid future occurrences of past contentions and allow Session to exercise Proverbs 18:17 with fellow presbyters.

Given the above reasoning, the Commission does not sustain complaint 22-15.

Final Words

Presbytery has provided a Reconciliation Committee to assist CCRP in the work of reconciliation. Following their work, a Shepherding Committee was appointed to provide ongoing encouragement in the recommendations of the Reconciliation Committee. This Commission has been appointed by Presbytery to take action on communications 22-14 and 22-15, which has been addressed above. The Commission writes this to affirm Presbytery's concern for CCRP and its desire that the congregation now lay aside its grievances, having received Presbytery's decision.

Since a portion of the Commission's remit includes "...any other appropriate and necessary actions to resolve issues raised by communication GLG 22-14", we understand that the Session, the interim pastoral assistant and the congregation may continue to require additional counsel and care as you move past these issues and once again take up the full ministry to members, adherents and your community.

It should be an encouragement to the congregation that your Session is trustworthy and faithfully laboring for your continued spiritual development. They have been growing in knowledge and righteousness and have been working hard to lead this congregation well. As you consider the Commission's findings and counsel, the Commission again charges the congregation to:

- Rejoice in the Lord;
- Let your gentle spirit be known to all men;
- Be anxious for nothing, but pray; and
- Expect the Lord to bring the peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ, and
- While you wait expectantly on the Lord, love the brethren fervently.

Praying with you for the peace of Zion,

The CCRP Commission

Bryan Dage,
Steve Sturm,
Jonathan Schaefer, Moderator

Appendix: Background

Listed below are a sequence of Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (GLGP) formal communications and actions related to Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian (CCRP) since November 2020.

November 20, 2020 **GLGP Communication 20-12**, Nathan Enas letter to GLGP alleging "...your work of discipline in the case of Dr. LeFebvre remains incomplete..."

2021 GLGP Spring Meeting – Adopted: "That presbytery defer any consideration of GLG 20-12 until all relevant complaints have been adjudicated by the synod."

2021 GLGP Fall Meeting – Adopted: "That presbytery return GLG 20-12 to its author, Mr. Enas, along with a copy of GLG 21-10 to relay the relevant synod decision(s) on the matter raised in his letter."

October 20, 2021 **GLGP Communication 21-11**, Enas and Swan petition to GLGP several allegations are stated including "...the CCRP Session failed to properly shepherd Michael...the CCRP Session neglected to properly shepherd the flock of God at CCRP..." includes a petition that GLGP form a committee "to investigate our concerns, provide counsel to both Session and concerned members of Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian pursuant to reconciliation, and report back with any pertinent recommendations..."

2021 GLG Fall Meeting – Adopted: "That the moderator appoint a three-person committee to hear from the authors of 21-11 and the session to pursue reconciliation, and report back to the Spring meeting."

March 4, 2022 Christ Church Reconciliation Committee (CCRP) reports and communication surrounding the 2022 GLGP Spring Meeting:

February 11, 2022 CCRP Reconciliation Committee Report - original distribution

February 14, 2022 Enas and Swan email re "Follow up to CCRC Report to Presbytery -- response requested"
"...we would like to briefly summarize one hurtful point and ask you to take corrective action..."

February 28, 2022 CCRP Reconciliation Committee Report - revised distribution

2022 GLGP Spring Meeting – Adopted: "That a two-man Shepherding Committee be appointed to meet at least every other month (either in- person, or by phone, Zoom, etc.) until either the next spring meeting of Presbytery or until a Pastor is installed at CCRP (whichever comes first), in order to aid and encourage both parties in following through with reconciliation; That the Presbytery pray for the strength, purity, unity, and peace of Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian — particularly that both the Session and the Enas and Swan families would be humble and find reconciliation through the powerful work of the Gospel in their lives; That this report be received by Presbytery; That this Committee be dismissed."

March 26, 2022 Dissolved Reconciliation Committee writes a letter to the CCRP congregation answering questions about the changes made to the report two days

before the GLGP Spring Meeting. At the end of the report, they state, “As the elders are already following the steps of reconciliation, there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled.” (GLGP 22-15, Appendix D)

April 28, 2022 **GLGP Communication 22-13**, Enas and Swan charges of sin
 “Attached you will find charges of sin against a member of your court, Rev. James Faris.”

2022 GLGP Meeting at Synod – Adopted: “That presbytery rule that the evidence presented in GLG 22-13 is insufficient to warrant a trial for a censurable offense”

July 30, 2022 Enas et al submit a complaint re GLGP’s action to Synod
 “We, the undersigned, wish to register a complaint regarding the ... action of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery (GLGP), on June 21, 2022...”

May 23, 2022 CCRP Session delivers a letter of counsel to Nathan Enas in person at a session meeting.

May 28, 2022 **GLGP Communication 22-14**, CCRP Session requests the Ad Interim Commission (AIC) appoint a presbytery commission for outside assistance
 “We would like to call on our brethren for assistance in this time of great difficulty for the congregation. This is an urgent matter. We have reached an inflection point in the life of the congregation, and the next steps may determine the future existence of the congregation, and/or whether the Session can continue to serve.”

June 10, 2022 GLGP AIC appoints CCRP Commission
 “It was moved, seconded, and passed, to appoint a three-member commission of presbytery
 (i) to investigate issues raised by Christ Church RPC (“CCRPC”) by communication GLG 22-14,
 (ii) to seek reconciliation, and
 (iii) to take any other appropriate and necessary actions to resolve issues raised by communication GLG 22-14.”

June 12, 2022 **GLGP Communication 22-15**, Enas et al complaint against CCRP Session
 “We, the undersigned, wish to file a complaint regarding an action of the Session of Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian (CCRP), which occurred on May 23, 2022 at a Session meeting.”

2022 GLGP Meeting at Synod – Adopted: “That presbytery refer GLG 22-15 (Complaint v. CCRP Session) to the Christ Church Commission for adjudication.”

August 5-6, 2022 Commission visits CCRP

IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
 January 6, 2021
 (via Zoom Conference Call)
 Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, Ian Wise

1. Jason Camery read Psalm 119:105-112 and constituted the court in prayer at 6:10 pm.
2. Motion passed to have Shawn Anderson serve as Clerk, and Ian Wise as Assistant Clerk.
3. Motion passed to approve draft of letter to the victims which will be emailed to them after this meeting.
4. Commission discussed an online repository to hold and share files. Shawn has set this up with a password.
5. Commission discussed the revised investigation template that Jason had drafted, giving support and affirmation.
6. Bob Burchfield shared his comments on the IRPC congregational meeting. Jason and Shawn were also present and shared comments.
7. Shawn gave his report of his call with Keith Evans.
8. Jason shared his report of his call with Jared Olivetti.
9. Jason brought the remit forward to consider which is:

It was moved, seconded and passed to establish a five-man Judicial Commission to investigate the degree of problems of child abuse at Immanuel RP Church, determine what counseling and any help that any perpetrators and victims, along with their families, and the Session and congregation may need and whether parties involved are cooperating with civil authorities (since the Department of Child Services and the Tippecanoe County Sheriff have been involved). They are also to give recommendations to Presbytery in the following areas: 1. Legal, 2. Ecclesiastical and 3. Pastoral. In addition, we call upon the churches and members of Presbytery who are becoming aware of this situation to practice grace, mercy, and patience. We would give assurance that much ministry has already taken place and the establishing of a Judicial Commission is for the purpose of ensuring good and just ministry in the future.

10. Assignments:

- a. JASON – Collect all documents and correspondence from Immanuel session.
- b. JASON – Communicate with victims and gather any additional information they may want to provide.
- c. JASON – Contact law enforcement (ie. DCS and Tippecanoe Sheriff’s dept).
- d. IAN – Contact the Presbytery’s advisory committee (Hanson, Mann, and Niess) and receive their documentation and report.
- e. SHAWN – Contact Keith Evans and receive his documentation.
- f. SHAWN – Contact insurance provider to gather protocol/policy regarding sex abuse event.
- g. BOB – Contact Faith Baptist Church Counseling Center and get a report on the status of their counseling and interaction with the Immanuel Session.

11. A follow-up meeting to update on the progress of assignments was set for Thursday, January 14 at 6:00 pm for any commissioners willing and able to attend. Our next mandatory meeting was set for Thursday, January 21 at 6:00 pm for all commissioners.
12. Bob prayed and adjourned the court in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church at 8:10 pm.



Jason Camery, Moderator

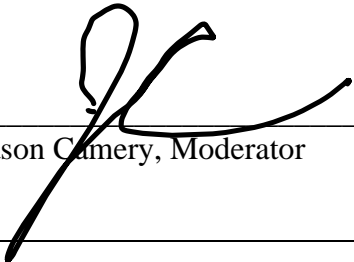


Shawn Anderson, Clerk


IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
 January 14, 2021
 (via Zoom Conference Call)
 Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, Ian Wise

1. Jason Camery read Colossians 3:1-11 and constituted the court in prayer at 6:05 pm.
2. Agenda was approved by common consent.
3. Motion passed to approve Minutes from January 6, 2021.
4. Commission discussed progress in assignments.
5. Jason and Adam Niess communicated via email about Mr. Bright's letter to Mr. Pfeiffer. Pastor Niess will talk with Mr. Bright.
6. Jason requested documentation from IRPC session.
7. Jason drafted a letter to the victims which was approved and sent out Jan 8. Commission discussed sending out regular (possibly weekly) communication. Content could include the phases of our procedure, the receiving and reading of documents, the building of a master timeline, etc.
8. Jason got in contact with Tippecanoe sheriff who shared that the case is presently open.
9. Ian contacted the advisory committee, and they plan to meet next week to put together a report to give to the commission.
10. Bob contacted Keith about a possible joint meeting with Keith and Josh Greiner.
11. Bob contacted Josh Greiner to ask for any information he had. Josh was willing to share and sent the details to Shawn and Ian.
12. Commission discussed the ability to access and navigate the shared folder on One Drive. Currently, the folder is helpful.
13. The Nance family contacted the Commission asking for a meeting. A meeting is set for tonight.

14. Cos Gardner asked a question about the postponement regarding ordination. The Commission did not see this as part of their remit. Cos was encouraged to be an encouragement to the church in his service to a hurting people.
15. The next mandatory meeting was set for Thursday, January 21 at 6:00 pm for all commissioners.
16. Ian prayed and adjourned the court in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church at 7:15 pm.



Jason Camery, Moderator



Shawn Anderson, Clerk

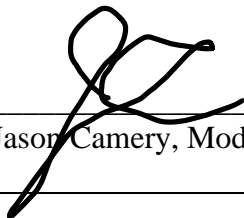
IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
 January 21, 2021
 (via Zoom Conference Call)
 Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, Ian Wise

1. Jason Camery read Proverbs 24:23-29 and constituted the court in prayer at 6:05 pm.
2. Agenda was approved by common consent.
3. Motion passed to approve Minutes from January 14, 2021.
4. Commission went over the content on the One Drive shared folder.
5. Commission discussed the contentious email exchange between session and some members of the congregation. Motion passed to communicate the following to the IRPC session and congregation:

...urge session that they are not to communicate with the congregation about this topic, nor the congregation with the session, while we are doing our work. All relevant congregational comments and questions are to be directed to the commission. Any relevant congregational communication to the session will be forwarded to the commission.

Jason will draft a letter with the above notice and get approval from the commission via email.
6. Josh will gather documents for us to request DCS release forms from victims.
7. Josh will gather information related to a PCUSA report on Child Abuse and Safety.
8. Commission discussed the rights of the parents of victims to not disclose information related to the nature of sexual abuse involved. While acknowledging this parental right, it is the commission's understanding that the scope of its investigation does include, minimally, a list of those abused and, where appropriate, that a report with civil authorities has been made.
9. At present, the commission has received information from all involved parties, except one victim family. Shawn will reach out to them.

10. Commission agreed that there ought to be a preliminary meeting with the session before meeting with other involved parties. Jason will set up a tentative meeting with the elders of IRPC without Jared.
11. A proposed list of interviewees was presented to the commission. There was common consent to the order with the understanding that if we need to deviate, then we can with common consent.
12. The next mandatory meeting was set for Thursday, January 28 at 6:00 pm for all commissioners.
13. Bob prayed and adjourned the court in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church at 8:30 pm.



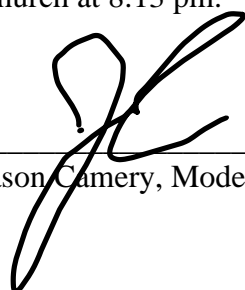
Jason Camery, Moderator



Shawn Anderson, Clerk

IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
 January 28, 2021
 (via Zoom Conference Call)
 Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, Ian Wise

1. Jason Camery read Ephesians 6:10-20 and constituted the court in prayer at 6:04 pm.
2. Agenda was approved by common consent.
3. Josh shared his notes regarding DCS release forms. Shawn will follow up with DCS in Tippecanoe county. He also forwarded a report on child sexual abuse from the PCUSA.
4. Commission considered a draft outline for our meeting with IRPC session and provided helpful comments and feedback in order to prepare for the meeting.
5. It was confirmed that IRPC has video conferencing capabilities.
6. Jason will follow up with a meeting between the commission and the Blocki family.
7. Shawn will follow up with a meeting between the commission and the Spirydovich family.
8. Jason will draft a communication to the IRPC congregation.
9. Shawn will set up a meeting between the commission and Keith Evans next week.
10. The next meeting was set tentatively for Thursday, February 4 at 6:00 pm for all commissioners.
11. Bob prayed and adjourned the court in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church at 8:13 pm.



Jason Camery, Moderator




Shawn Anderson, Clerk


IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
 January 30, 2021
 1893 E 600 N in West Lafayette, IN
 Shawn Anderson, Jason Camery, Josh Reshey, Zachary Blackwood, David Carr, Ben Larson,
 Keith Magill, and Nate Pfeiffer present in person. Ian Wise and Bob Burchfield present via video
 conference.

1. Jason Camery read 1John 3:11-24 and constituted the court in prayer at 9:43 am.
2. Agenda was shared with IRPC session and approved by common consent. Pastor Olivetti was not present; therefore the opinions of the session do not represent his opinions or interactions here.
3. The Commission opened with a word of sympathy regarding the tragedy and challenge that IRPC has faced in the past year.
4. The Commission shared their understanding of the purpose of the investigation, including allegations that have been made by former members, present members, members of the advisory committee, and Biblical counselors.
 - 1) Unwarranted and disproportionate concealment of nature & scope of abuse
 - 2) Providing too much freedom to the perpetrator
 - 3) Some would say that you have been abuser-centered, showing partiality to the benefit, advantage, and undue cover of abuser, prioritizing reconciliation with the abuser over protection of the flock.
 - 4) Others would accuse you of being ministry-centered, seeking to manage the impression of the leadership, protect the reputation and vision of the ministry, to the harm of the congregation.
 - 5) All of this would imply neglect of the victims.
 - 6) By our investigation we hope to determine the accuracy of these allegations and to highlight both what has been handled rightly and wrongly. It is helpful that you have already been able to identify a list of your sins by name.
 - 7) We acknowledge a difference between sins of neglect versus sins of concealment.
5. The Commission invited the session to share their allegations or concerns regarding how others have mishandled the case before them.
6. It was clarified that the Jan. 2, 2021 meeting was not a congregational meeting, but an informal meeting, which they call a church family meeting.
7. The Commission listed their objectives in the investigation. The following was shared:
 - a) This commission realizes that both the session and the congregation have viewpoints on how this case has developed. The commission is committed to hearing all parties fairly and with respect. We are open to suggestions, but we also reserve the ability to act on information and requests to ensure the best possible outcomes. If there is a misunderstanding in our actions, we are more than willing to hear those parties that need more clarification.
 - b) We will bring recommendations to the Presbytery based on our findings within three areas of concern: Legal, Ecclesiastical, & Pastoral.

- c) If your policy and procedure is found to be legitimate and appropriate, this will be reported to the Presbytery. And if the sin of concealment is found, then Presbytery will need to be informed to some degree and consequences are inevitable.
8. The IRPC session is troubled by the remit of the AIC, which has appointed this judicial commission to be like a study committee, unable to make a judgment on the case. Due to the confidential issues and sensitive nature of the case, the IRPC session would prefer the Commission to act judicially based on their findings.
9. The Commission and session continued to discuss many aspects of the case, sharing information to ensure that all understood the same facts. Follow up questions regarding procedure, present handling, leadership changes were all discussed.
10. It was agreed upon that the email communication between session and the congregation on this issue has been disruptive. The session updated their email list, and all email communications will be sent via the use of Bcc by the Commission.
11. Apart from the questions that the Commission answered at the meeting, the following questions were given for future counsel:
- How should the IRPC session facilitate helpful things to victims (ie. letters, communication, etc.)
 - Do you think it is wise to get an interim moderator for the session outside of Immanuel RPC?
 - Given the circumstances, should particular elders step down?
 - In light of raised concerns about the session's communication regarding the Pastor's sabbatical, how should the session address these questions?
12. Josh prayed and adjourned the court in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church at 1:43 pm.



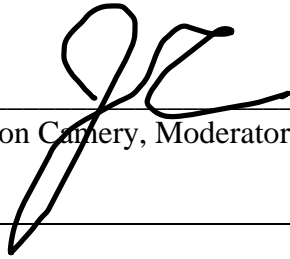
Jason Camery, Moderator



Shawn Anderson, Clerk

IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
 February 2, 2021
 (via Zoom Conference Call)
 Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, Ian Wise

- Jason Camery read Psalm 128 and constituted the court in prayer at 8:04 pm.
- Agenda was approved by common consent.
- Discussed questions for interviews from session.
- Discussed highlights of meeting with IRPC session.
- The next meeting was set tentatively for Thursday, February 4 at 6:00 pm for all commissioners.
- Shawn prayed and adjourned the court at 10:02 pm.



Jason Camery, Moderator



Shawn Anderson, Clerk

IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
February 4, 2021
(via Zoom Conference Call)
Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, Ian Wise, & Keith Evans

1. The meeting was recorded with consent of all parties.
2. Jason Camery read Acts 20.32-35 and constituted the court in prayer at 6:05 pm.
3. Commission interviewed Keith Evans until 8:28 pm.
4. Keith was dismissed and the Commission continued some business.
5. Jason will put together a list of responsibilities and needed interviews for the next 2 weeks, then send it out for the Commission's approval.
6. Jason will draft a letter to the congregation to help them understand that we will not be taking action before Presbytery, but investigate in order for action to be taken soon.
7. Ian will set up a meeting with the Advisory Committee.
8. The next meeting was set tentatively for Thursday, February 11 at 6:00 pm for all commissioners.
9. The Court adjourned at 8:45 pm.



Jason Camery, Moderator

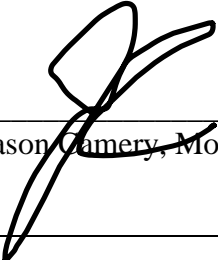


Shawn Anderson, Clerk


IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
February 9, 2021
(via Zoom Conference Call)
Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), & Ian Wise,
with David Hanson, Wade Mann, & Adam Niess

1. The meeting was recorded with consent of all parties.
2. Jason Camery read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 and constituted the court in prayer at 1:06 pm.
3. Commission interviewed the Advisory Committee. Bob closed the interview time with prayer at 3:41 pm.
4. The next meeting was set tentatively for Thursday, February 11 at 6:00 pm for all commissioners.

5. The Court adjourned at 8:45 pm.



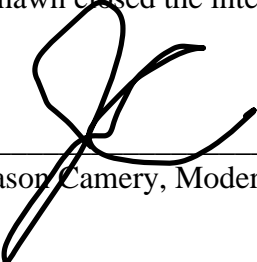
Jason Camery, Moderator




Shawn Anderson, Clerk

IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
February 13, 2021
1723 S 9th St, Lafayette, IN 47905
Shawn Anderson, Bob Burchfield, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, & Ian Wise

1. Jason Camery constituted the court in prayer at 9:10 am.
2. The Commission met with three victim families as well as members from the session of the RPC of Lafayette. The meetings were recorded with consent of all parties.
3. Shawn closed the interview time with prayer at approximately 5:15 pm.



Jason Camery, Moderator

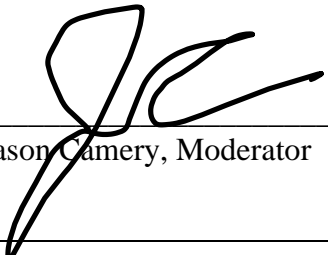


Shawn Anderson, Clerk


IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes
February 18, 2021
(via Zoom Conference Call)
Shawn Anderson, Jason Camery (mod.), Josh Reshey, & Ian Wise.

1. Jason Camery read 1Timothy 3:1-7 and constituted the court in prayer at 6:03 pm.
2. The following Minutes were approved by common consent:
 - a. Jan. 21, 2021;
 - b. Jan. 28, 2021;
 - c. Feb. 02, 2021;
 - d. Feb. 04, 2021;
 - e. Feb. 09, 2021.
3. The Commission discussed questions in the upcoming interviews with members of IRPC session.
4. Bob Burchfield joined the meeting at 8:03 pm.
5. A party joined the Commission at 8:40 pm to discuss their timeline and expectations. They were dismissed in prayer at 11:30 pm.

6. The Commission discussed the document “IRPC Session Docs for Commission”.
7. The Court adjourned at 11:42 pm.



Jason Camery, Moderator



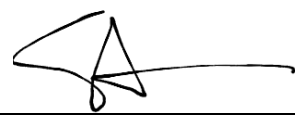
Shawn Anderson, Clerk

<p>IRPC Judicial Commission Minutes March 30, 2021 (via Zoom Conference Call) Shawn Anderson, Jason Camery (mod.), & Josh Reshey. Ian Wise absent.</p>
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1. Jason Camery constituted the court in prayer at 6:03 pm.
2. The following Minutes were approved by common consent:
 - a. Jan. 30, 2021;
 - b. Feb. 13, 2021;
 - c. Feb. 18, 2021.
3. The minutes of March 30, 2021 were read and approved by common consent.
4. The Court adjourned at 6:18 pm.



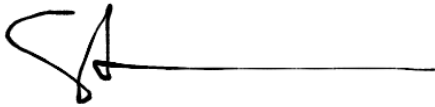
Jason Camery, Moderator



Shawn Anderson, Clerk

Commission for Aaron Murray's Ordination Exams <> Minutes
Via Zoom <> August 13, 2022

1. Adam Niess, Ken Nelson, Scott Damerow, Mark Hart, Tom Dinkledine, and Shawn Anderson were present via zoom
2. The court was constituted in prayer at 8:37 am.
3. Agenda was received by common consent.
4. Motion carried to elect Ken Nelson to serve as clerk.
5. Motion carried to set the time and place for Aaron Murray's Ordination Exams on Wednesday, August 17, 2022, at the Marion RP Church (1100 W Jeffras Ave, Marion, IN 46952) beginning at 6:30 pm.
6. For Mr. Murray's Expository Sermon on an Assigned Text, he will preach from Judges 17.
7. It was agreed by common consent that Mr. Phil Pockras will facilitate Mr. Murray's Personal Godliness exam
8. It was agreed by common consent that Mr. Ian Wise will facilitate Mr. Murray's Soundness in the Faith and Commitment to the RPC Testimony exam
9. It was agreed by common consent that Mr. Dick Knodel can join us via Zoom on Aug 17.
10. The court adjourned in prayer in Christ's name and authority at 8:45 am.



Shawn Anderson, Moderator



Ken Nelson, Clerk

Commission for Aaron Murray's Ordination Exams <> Minutes
Marion RP Church (1100 W Jeffras Ave, Marion, IN 46952)
August 17, 2022

1. Adam Niess, Ken Nelson, Scott Damerow, Mark Hart, Tom Dinkledine, Phil Pockras, Ian Wise, and Shawn Anderson were present. Dick Knodel was present via zoom.
2. Shawn Anderson read Acts 8:26-40 and those in attendance sang from Psalm 95A to the praise of God. The court was constituted in prayer at 6:41 pm in the name of Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the church.
3. The agenda was approved by common consent.
4. Motion carried so that privileges of the floor were granted to all ordained presbyters in the RPCNA.
5. Aaron Murray came forward to preach his ordination-level Sermon exam, called upon God's name in a prayer of illumination, read Judges 17, preached from the text, and concluded in the singing of Psalm 125, after which comments were received, and the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.
6. Aaron Murray received his ordination-level Soundness in the Faith & Commitment to the RPC Testimony exam from Ian Wise, who asked Mr. Murray questions and received answers, after which questions and comments were received from the floor and the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.
7. Aaron Murray came forward to receive his ordination-level Personal Godliness exam from Phil Pockras, who asked Mr. Murray questions and received answers, after which questions and comments were received from the floor and the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.
8. The court unanimously sustained Aaron Murray's ordination by roll call vote. The AIC will handle the time and place of Mr. Murray's ordination.
9. Motion carried to adjourn the meeting.
10. The clerk read the minutes (8/13, 8/16), and it was moved, seconded, and passed to adopt the minutes.
11. The court adjourned in prayer in Christ's name and authority at 8:17 pm.



Shawn Anderson, Moderator



Ken Nelson, Clerk

Commission for Aaron Murray's Ordination Exams Marion RP Church (1100 W Jeffras Ave, Marion, IN 46952) August 17, 2022	Attendance	Ordination Level Sermon Exam	Soundness of the Faith & Commitment to RPC Testimony Exam	Personal Godliness Exam	Vote for Ordination
Name					
Adam Niess	P	S	S	S	S
Dick Knodel	P	S	S	S	S
Ian Wise	P	S	S	S	S
Ken Nelson	P	S	S	S	S
Mark Hart	P	S	S	S	S
Phil Pockras	P	S	S	S	S
Scott Damerow	P	S	S	S	S
Shawn Anderson	P	S	S	S	S
Tom Dinkledine	P	S	S	S	S
(S)=sustain		9	9	9	9
(N)= not sustain		0	0	0	0
(A)=Abstain		0	0	0	0

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and Install Joshua Smith

The commission to ordain and install Joshua Smith as pastor of the Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church in Prairie View, Illinois, met on August 19, 2022.

1. Elders present from the five-man commission: Jack Baumgartner (chair), Jerry Foltz (clerk), Bob Koch, Steve Rhoda, and Craig Scott.
2. Jack Baumgartner opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:10 PM
3. Call to Worship (Psalm 95:6) and Invocation by Jack Baumgartner
4. Psalm of Praise 100A
5. Narration of the steps and final reading of the edict were read by Bob Koch
6. Members of Westminster RPC rose to confirm their call of Joshua Smith
7. Joshua Smith rose to signify his acceptance of the call
8. Pastor Wade Mann put the quires to Joshua Smith who confirmed them
9. Pastor Adam Kuehner received signature of quires from Joshua Smith
10. Ordination Sermon on 1 Corinthians 16:5-18 ("The Ministry of the Lord") was preached by Pastor Keith Evans
11. Congregation responded to the preaching of God's Word by singing Psalm 34C
12. Pastor Steve Rhoda gave the charge to the congregation
13. Pastor Craig Scott gave the charge to Joshua Smith
14. Elder Bob Koch led the court in prayer of ordination and installation as elders laid hands upon Joshua Smith
15. Congregation responded in praise by singing Psalm 122A
16. Pastor Joshua Smith gave the benediction (Num. 6:25-26)
17. Jack Baumgartner gave thanks and adjourned the Court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 8:50 PM

**Candidates & Credentials Committee
Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery
October 2022 Report**

Recommendations

1. That student exams be conducted according to the schedule outlined below.
2. That Nathan Shaver no longer be a student under care, per his request.
3. That Joe Johnson be given ten minutes to share his testimony and be received as a student under care.
4. That the suggested addition to the Student Handbook be approved.
5. That presbytery consider increasing the monthly stipend for students under care.
6. That our report be received.

Serving for Christ,

Joel Hart (2023)
Adam Niess (2024)
Craig Scott (2024)

Rich Holdeman (2023)
Jonathan Schaefer (2024)
Ian Wise (2024)

Student Exam Schedule

Student	Exam	Time*	Examiner / text
Jake Schwartz	Evidence of Progress Sermon	25/-/5	1 Corinthians 2:9-12

*Duration - The first number is the allotted time for the examiner's question, the second is for questions from the presbytery and the third is for discussion by the presbytery about the exam prior to voting.

Addition to the Student Handbook

To provide clarity, the committee suggests we add the following section to the Student Handbook:

Stipends for Students Under Care of Presbytery

Purpose

The costs of seminary education are significant. As part of the Presbytery's commitment to students under care, a monthly stipend may be provided under certain conditions.

Conditions on the provision of a monthly stipend

Students under care of Presbytery may be given a monthly stipend to assist with the costs of seminary training. In order to qualify for the monthly stipend, a student under care must be a full-time student of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Students are considered full-time if they are registered and complete a minimum of 9 credit-hours of seminary courses per semester. These courses may be any combination of distance learning or in-person courses, including independent studies for credit. In addition, students under care receiving such stipend should maintain a B average.

What is expected of the student under care receiving a monthly stipend

Importantly, each student should recognize that the Lord ultimately provides these resources and that they are often sacrificially given by members and other contributors. Due diligence and stewardship in studies should result.

GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
CHRIST CHURCH SHEPHERDING COMMITTEE REPORT TO PRESBYTERY
Fall 2022 Presbytery Meeting

A remit from Spring Presbytery dated March 3, 2022 was issued,

“That a two-man Shepherding Committee be appointed to meet at least every other month (either in-person or by phone, Zoom, etc.) until either the next spring meeting of Presbytery or until a Pastor is installed at CCRP (whichever comes first), in order to ensure and aid the Session in growing in their active shepherding of CCRP.”

Pastor Craig Scott, Grand Rapids RPC and Elder Jonathan Schaefer, Orlando RPC were appointed to serve as the two-man Shepherding Committee.

The Shepherding Committee met with CCRP Session on March 23, 2022. The Shepherding Committee met with the Enas and Swan families on March 26, 2022. In discussions among the Shepherding Committee, it initially seemed that the greatest obstacle to reconciliation was the CCRP Session’s initial response to the congregation in which they admitted to mistakes made but did not address each of the items put forward in the Reconciliation Committee’s revised report, confessing each sin specifically.

Following these interactions, the Shepherding Committee met again with the CCRP Session to address the matter of confessing specific sins, specifically. The CCRP Session received the counsel of the Shepherding Committee and on April 10, 2022, after morning worship, CCRP Session offered their confession of specific sins to the congregation and asked for forgiveness. The Enas and Swan families were not present at that morning’s service but were able to view the recording of the service and followed up shortly with an acceptance of the apology.

At this point, the Shepherding Committee was encouraged at this positive step needed to achieve reconciliation. However, shortly thereafter, April 28, 2022, Enas and Swan families approached CCRP Session with formal charges of sin against Pastor James Faris. CCRP Session did not support the charges but forwarded it on to Presbytery without endorsement. Around this time, Pastor Craig Scott left on a two-month sabbatical.

On May 23, 2022, CCRP Session met with Mr. Enas who also brought with him his wife Ginny and Deacon Todd Brown. The Interim Moderator, Pastor Joel Hart, the CCRP Session, Interim Pastoral Assistant Nathan Shaver and Elder Jonathan Schaefer were also in attendance. At this meeting, CCRP Session presented to Mr. Enas the need to shepherd him to another congregation wherein he could submit to the authority of that congregation’s session. CCRP Session offered the option to stay at CCRP on the conditions of an affirmative answer to the following two questions:

- 1.) Do you trust the CCRP Session to shepherd you and your family, and do you have confidence in its ability to shepherd Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian? Do you affirm this specifically in contrast to your October 2020 decision to leave Christ Church?
- 2.) Are you willing to submit to the direction and oversight of the CCRP elders, so that you can fully affirm your membership vows to this congregation with a clear conscience?

Shepherding Committee Report - 092222

Mr. Enas was given until Friday, May 27, 2022 to respond with his decision. Mr. Enas chose not to respond.

On May 28, the CCRP Session submitted a request to the AIC for a judicial commission to aid them in dealing with Mr. Enas. After providing their rationale to the AIC, the AIC appointed a Commission comprising: Jonathan Schaefer Ruling Elder, Orlando RPC (Moderator), Steve Sturm, Ruling Elder, Southside RPC and Bryan Dage, Ruling Elder, Hetherton RPC to fulfill the following remit:

"It was moved, seconded, and passed, to appoint a three-member commission of presbytery(i) to investigate issues raised by Christ Church RPC ("CCRPC") by communication GLG 22-14, (ii) to seek reconciliation, and (iii) to take any other appropriate and necessary actions to resolve issues raised by communication GLG 22-14. Communication GLG 22-14 is attached to and made a part of these minutes."

On June 12, 2022, Mr. Enas and several other signatories filed a complaint against the CCRP Session regarding their communications of the May 23 meeting. At the Presbytery meeting during the 2022 Synod, the remit of the appointed Commission was expanded to adjudicate the 22-15 complaint.

After an appeal that the work of the Shepherding Committee be subsumed under the remit of the CCRP Commission and dismissed was denied by the AIC, the Shepherding Committee suspended its activities to allow for the work of the CCRP Commission to move forward in priority.

In light of the departure of Pastor Craig Scott, the Commission's continuing work which is in many ways redundant to the work of the Shepherding Committee, the ensuing complaints against the CCRP Session and CCRP Commission and the current plans of the CCRP Session, the Shepherding Committee offers a single recommendation:

Recommendation:

1. That the Shepherding Committee be dismissed.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Scott, Moderator
Jonathan Schaefer

First RP of Grand Rapids Visitation Committee

Below is the report of the visitation committee to First RPC of Grand Rapids. The visitation committee read the report after the morning service at First RPC on July 10. After the reading of the report there was a time of discussion between the committee and the congregation. As Presbytery is aware, First RPC has since closed, for a variety of reasons set forth in the session minutes of First RPC on August 27, 2022.

The visitation committee asks to be dismissed.

First RP of Grand Rapids Visitation Committee Report

A. Summary of the Visitation Committee's Work

1. Remit

The Grand Rapids Visitation Committee was appointed by the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery at the request of three families and one individual, all members of First RP of Grand Rapids (FRPC), some of whom had expressed an intent to leave the congregation. The Committee was charged "to hear and discuss concerns raised and to offer aid and counsel for the benefit of the congregation." In pursuance of this remit, the Committee met with church officers, households, and individuals from FRPC to understand the situation that has unfolded in the congregation. The Visitation Committee is not a judicial committee and therefore does not have the jurisdiction or authority to make pronouncements on any judicial matters, should there be any.

2. Assessment of the Situation

The primary concern for the Committee at the beginning of its work was to address the disruption in relationships between the Session and certain congregational members. Although a number of concerns were raised, no one presented any formal charges. The Committee, without a formal investigation, has not seen evidence of spiritual abuse or manipulation by the Session that some were concerned about. Rather problems seem to have arisen from what we perceive to be miscommunication, misunderstandings, and mistakes made both on the part of Session and some of those who have left the congregation. This assessment of the situation influences the way we are offering aid and counsel for the benefit of the congregation. The Committee recognizes the difficulties that you, the congregation are facing, and desires to be a source of support and encouragement during these trials.

3. Response

Based on the Committee's assessment, the purpose of this report is to encourage and exhort both you, the congregation and the Session to pursue better communication, greater openness in discussing concerns and challenges, and a deeper pursuit of mutual trust between the Session and the congregation. We remind and encourage the Session as the responsible authority that, to the best of their ability, they are to be the initiators of any changes of approach or conversations that may be necessary to address situations that arise in and are affecting the congregation. We remind and encourage the entire congregation and Session that just as the cultivation of a field is a labor of love that takes patience, hard work, intentionality, and perseverance, so it is in God's field, the church. We exhort

all of you: despite challenges and setbacks, do not lose heart in the ministry of reconciliation with one another and in the work of building up the peace of Zion.

B. Exhortation on the Cultivation of a Healthy Church Atmosphere

In speaking with various members of the church, it is clear that there is a close fellowship within the church. You are a people that love to hear God's word preached and spend time together. You appreciate the seriousness of worship and the in depth preaching of God's word. However, the Committee also heard that while for the most part people were blessed by the preaching, there have been a few occasions where some members of the congregation have been concerned by what they deemed harsh or hasty words from the pulpit. We note that your Pastor has relayed to us that he has on occasion spoken carelessly, repented upon being made aware of it, and sought to grow in this area. The Committee also heard from members of the congregation that he has demonstrated improvement in regards to this and the Committee encourages him to continue to strive for wisdom and sensitivity regarding these matters.

The Committee also heard that there were some members of the congregation who felt unable to speak with their elders about concerns. This kind of barrier towards open communication can happen in any congregation for a number of reasons and can manifest itself in various ways. Without implying responsibility on the Session's part for this communication barrier, we want to inform the Session that this seems to be occurring with a few members, and encourage the Session to seek to proactively address it. When members have a hesitancy or even fear of speaking to the elders openly, it can become impossible for elders to even realize what is happening. It is important that the congregation feel able to approach their elders, sense an openness to be heard, and see follow through on matters discussed, if commitments are made.

So we want to remind and encourage the Session all the more of the following:

- Watchfulness regarding the words spoken both in and out of the pulpit.
- A gentleness and patience in and out of the pulpit, even when confronting and rebuking sin (2 Timothy 2:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
- Sharing of their own lives and even when appropriate their own struggles with the congregation (1 Thessalonians 2:8, Galatians 4:13-14, Romans 7:7-25).

The Committee was encouraged to hear the report from those within the congregation that the Session was already making great strides to pursue a greater openness and better communication with the congregation, whether from the pulpit or on a one-to-one basis. We believe that the Session loves and cares for you, the congregation of First RP, and the Committee further encourages you all to trust and support your elders, especially during this time of transition and uncertainty.

C. Advice for Dealing With Broken Relationships

The Committee recognizes that in these difficult times at First RP, there has been some confusion about how to respond properly in the midst of strained or broken relationships. We want to remind the congregation (including departed members) of biblical principles as they process what has happened and seek to move forward.

The goal for Christians in any conflict situation should be for reconciliation. “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” Romans 12:18

Prayer and the intention to seek reconciliation must result in communication, seeking to talk to estranged brothers and sisters. We encourage the elders and the congregation to seek reconciliation where relationships have been strained or broken. An attitude of Christian charity is to be demonstrated and a forgiving spirit is necessary. It is important to approach one another in a spirit of humility, recognizing that often there is offense on both sides and that it takes time to heal and regain trust in relationships.

In some circumstances, outside counsel and help may be necessary in considering how to approach another party regarding an offense. When seeking counsel (for example, from another minister in the denomination),

- Be clear that you are seeking counsel and not seeking to be a talebearer.
- Ask the counseling party not to pass on what you say, but to correct you if you speak wrongly about the other party or if you are slandering or talebearing.
- Come in humility and openness to receiving correction.
- Bring your concerns, but be willing to consider if they may be unwarranted.
- Consider the answer to Larger Catechism question 144, “The duties required in the ninth commandment are.... a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them...”

It must be remembered that all broken relationships affect not only the individuals and their families, but the whole congregation. So, all parties involved should make every effort at reconciliation.

One of the challenges in this situation is the question of Matthew 18. There is a disagreement between some among the congregation as to what extent Matthew 18 has been followed and to what extent Matthew 18 needed to be followed (i.e. in cases of alleged offenses that are deemed to be not private but public matters). Even though, at this point, matters have in some sense moved beyond one-to-one, we encourage those who have left without departing on good terms to be willing to speak to the Session at First RP and strive to be reconciled. In this, or any other situation where counsel or mediation are necessary, the Visitation Committee would be glad to help in the process of seeking reconciliation.

D. Exhortation Regarding the Congregation’s Future

As mentioned at the beginning, there is much uncertainty regarding First RP’s future, which has put a strain on the function of the church.

The committee recognizes the enormous pressure the Session and congregation are under due to a lack of finances to support a pastor, the need to find a new building, a potential change in leadership, and a decline in membership, all of which undoubtedly has put strain on relationships.

However, we also believe that despite the challenges, the congregation still has a reason and foundation upon which to continue. The committee, in having the opportunity to speak to several committed families, recognizes the potential of this church in Grand Rapids. The committee exhorts the congregation of First RP to hold fast and stay the course amid challenges and uncertainty. The congregation will have difficult decisions to make; nevertheless, the committee believes that the congregation has remaining life and an opportunity for further ministry.

Firstly, we recommend that the church request from Presbytery additional elders who have experience and so will be a support especially with a potential change in leadership.

After that, the congregation with the help of this additional leadership will need to ascertain the desire within its current membership on whether to continue as a body, recognizing that there will be a need to adapt to the challenges and uncertainties of the present time.

If the congregation desires to continue, it will need leadership and hearts of service at a local level. We would encourage the members of the congregation to step up and take on the daily and weekly tasks that keep the congregation running smoothly, whether that is hosting, setting up, greeting visitors, etc. We see the need for ordained leadership locally and so we encourage the congregation to consider whether the Lord has provided and called qualified men from the congregation to serve as ruling elders.

Finally, and most importantly, we urge the congregation to be in prayer for the session of First RP, for the future of the congregation, for wisdom and grace in relationships within the body, for strength and provision during these times, and for the Lord's blessing, for His glory, upon the ministry of this branch of His Church.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip McCollum, chairman

Richard Blankenship

Bryan Dage

Jon Hughes

**COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE SLANDER AGAINST IMMANUEL RPC
REPORT TO THE GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY
MAY 25, 2022**

I. Remit

The presbytery instructed this committee ““to investigate concerns of possible slander or libel against Immanuel RPC and its elders, including through the participation of RPCNA members, in recent media reports and make recommendations to presbytery.”

II. Facts

As is evident from the remit, the Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery is concerned that Immanuel RPC, its members, or its session have been wronged by one or more parties through violations of the 9th Commandment. The relevant sins from Westminster Larger Catechism 145 would include, “prejudicing...the good name of our neighbors,” “speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning”, “slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale-bearing”, “misconstruing intentions, words, and actions”, and “breach of lawful promises.”

While not included in the remit, this committee assumed these concerns result from public response to the accusations that the Immanuel session failed to respond rightly to sexual abuse perpetrated by one of the members of the congregation. In particular, the Indianapolis Star has reported extensively on the matter, which has brought widespread negative attention to Immanuel RPC. The Star’s sources included public records from the GLG Presbytery and Synod, interviews with many people involved in various ways, as well as internal communications from the IRPC session, some of which were clearly intended to remain private. Some of the Star’s sources were named and others were not.

Finally, the Synod Judicial Commission has affirmed that to one extent or another the IPRC sinned in its handling of this case.

Thus far, the presbytery has responded to these concerns by appointing this committee.

The question this presbytery must answer is, “What should the presbytery do about the negative reports against IRPC?”

III. Analysis

As we examined this situation, the committee began by focusing on what options the Constitution of the RPCNA gives for resolving the accusations of breaking the 9th Commandment.

a. Process

As a higher court, one of the first questions presbytery must resolve is the question of jurisdiction? Is the GLG Presbytery the proper court to handle this matter? The Directory for Church Government (DCG), chap. 4, par. 1 states, “The session is the court having original jurisdiction over the members of a congregation.” This statement leads us to the conclusion that normally investigations of the sins of members of the RPCNA should be conducted by the session to which the members belong.

The Book of Discipline (BOD) indicates this conclusion explicitly, stating,

“The presbytery has original jurisdiction in relation to suspension, deposition, or excommunication of teaching elders; the session in relation to all other. A higher court may direct a lower court to begin process; or the higher court may begin process or appoint a commission to do so, if the lower court has neglected or refused to begin process, or is otherwise incapable of proper action.” (*Book of Discipline*, Section II, chap. 1, par. 5)

The committee recognizes that the nature of slander may demand special considerations, but BOD addresses this situation:

“A court may begin process on the ground of a public report (*fama clamosa*) by appointing a special prosecutor. The public report is different from an idle rumor in that it is widespread, persistent, commonly known, and has the appearance of credibility. The charge will be stated in more general terms, but will conform in all respects to the rule for a specific accusation...To avoid any process on the ground of gossip, a committee may be first appointed to investigate the rumors. A person who considers himself slandered may request an investigation. The court may exercise its discretion in granting or refusing the request.” (*Book of Discipline*, Section II, chap. 1, para. 4)

There are several important directions in this paragraph.

First, we note that the court may begin process on the basis of a public report such as was given to the presbytery. But BOG and BOD jurisdictional guidance must control which court initiates investigations or judicial process. As shown above, both the BOG and BOD place the discipline of members under the jurisdiction of the session.

Second, to proceed on the basis of a public report, the BOD demands a properly stated charge. This charge must, “name the specific offense, the time, place and circumstances of its commission. It shall also provide a list of the witnesses and of all papers to be offered in evidence” (*Book of Discipline*, Sect. II, chap 2., par. 1).

Finally, the BOD deals specifically with the issue of slander, where the one considering himself slandered may request an investigation. But the BOD would still require a charge meeting the minimum standards listed above.

Based on this analysis, the correct process is that the parties-that-consider-themselves-slandered deliver charges to the appropriate session(s) for investigation. Only at such time as the session(s) having jurisdiction prove unable or unwilling to attend to the matter should it be given to the presbytery through the mechanisms of appeal, complaint, or referral as appropriate.

b. Wisdom

A second consideration is the wisdom of pursuing these accusations of breaches of the 9th commandment. The substance of the Star's reporting was the accusation that IRPC failed to fulfill her obligations to her members. The actions of this presbytery and the Synod Judicial Commission confirm this accusation is true. Because the accusations are true, it impossible to meet the minimum requirement for slander or libel, both which require false accusations.

Should there be further accusations of slander which deal with false reports, we should still consider the wisdom of pursuing the matter. The fact that the occasion for these media reports was precipitated by failure at the session and presbytery level must influence how we address these issues.

This committee would suggest the example of David in his dealing with Shimei when Absalom rebelled David. Shimei cursed David as he fled Jerusalem saying, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! The LORD has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood." (2 Samuel 16:7–8 ESV). David responded, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today." (2 Samuel 16:11–12 ESV).

As David knew, it was his sin with Bathsheba which brought about this occasion for cursing. Even though the particulars of the curse were false, the fact that David had brought a curse on his house through his actions were true. As a result, David treated the curse as a reproof from the Lord.

The hard truth in this situation is that our court is responsible for the occasions that led to these media reports. It is quite possible that some matters were overstated, and some things reported as true were indeed false. It is also possible that some of those who spoke with the media did so seeking to unjustly hurt the good name of IRPC. But the sins of IRPC and this court in failing to exercise discipline of our own members was the occasion for these reports. Therefore, this committee would recommend that the parties who consider themselves slandered first consider David's example before pursuing the matter further.

IV. Conclusion

As a result of these consideration, this committee deemed it unwise to pursue any further investigation at this time.

V. Recommendations

1. That presbytery instructs parties who believe they have been slandered deliver specified charges with a request for investigation to the session or sessions with jurisdiction.
2. That presbytery instructs all parties that if they find themselves unable to resolve matters of sin at individual level or session level, to bring them to presbytery through the establishes processes of appeal, complaint, or referral as appropriate.
3. The presbytery advises those who believe they are slandered to consider the possibility that God intends them to receive these damages to their good name as his loving correction.
4. That this committee be dismissed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Ross Fearing, Chairman

Mr. Dick Knodel

Internet Maintenance Committee Report

2022 GLGP Mtg @ Synod — Marion, IN
June 21-24, 2022

Dear Fathers & Brethren,

At our most recent spring meeting (3/3/22), presbytery appointed our committee “to oversee all presbytery internet maintenance functions.” In addition, the court opted to “establish the ongoing role of Internet Maintenance Technician (IMT) to be appointed each spring, with an annual stipend of \$500, to handle the technical details related to the Presbytery’s internet functions”, after which it voted to “approve the reappointment of IMT *pro tem*, Andrew Imeson, to serve as IMT until the Spring of 2023.” So far, we have been greatly blessed and impressed by Mr. Imeson’s assistance in managing and maintaining our presbytery internet functions. Thanks to him, our website now offers access to digital presbytery minutes dating back into the 1990s.

On 3/3/22, presbytery also decided to “refer the matter concerning the proper method of public access to presbytery documents [AIC Minutes, 10/22/21] to the internet maintenance committee, to report back with a proposal at the 2022 synod meeting of presbytery.” To this end, our committee met on 4/13/22 via Zoom to discuss the issue of accessing presbytery documents, along with several additional avenues for enhancing clerical efficiency. This discussion resulted in the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That presbytery remove the password-protection feature from its website,¹ with the understanding that any document classified by the court as sensitive or confidential shall neither be posted on the presbytery website, nor distributed via the delegates list without password-protection.²
2. That presbytery classify the presbytery roster, containing the personal names and addresses of its delegates and their families, as a sensitive document to be distributed via email, but not posted publicly on the presbytery website.
3. That presbytery authorize the IMC, in consultation with Mr. Bishop, to implement a user-friendly online travel expense reimbursement form in time for the 2023 spring meeting of presbytery.
4. That presbytery the ordinary process for certifying presbytery delegates³ as follows:
 - A. Session clerks shall receive the link to a Session Certification Form hosted via the presbytery website to be completed each year by January 31.⁴
 - B. Session clerks, on session’s behalf and with session’s approval, shall certify the name and valid credentials of each active elder on the session — *good for the entire calendar year* — indicating which elders are expected to serve as delegates at the spring meeting.⁵
 - C. Session clerks shall be responsible to notify the clerks in a timely manner, using this form, whenever a RE⁶ is added to, or subtracted from, the list of certified, credentialed elders on the session.

¹ At present, the GLGP website is not search engine indexable, meaning that it will not show up among search engine results. This feature would not change.

² If there are any items presently on our website which delegates believe should be removed, “speak now” as they say.

³ DCG 6.2 (D-31): “The session of each congregation within the presbytery shall send delegates to each meeting of presbytery; these would normally include a teaching elder and a ruling elder, but congregations with more than one hundred members (communicant and baptized) shall be entitled to an additional delegate. Each presbytery shall determine its policies for other certifications and for participation in the travel fund.”

⁴ At-large TEs will also receive a link with instructions for indicating whether or not they plan to attend the meeting. This is not included in our proposal because it is merely for informational purposes and does not involve formal certification.

⁵ This would certify all active REs throughout the entire calendar year. Those not designated to participate in a given meeting would automatically qualify to serve as alternates if necessary. The purpose of “certification” is to confirm an elder’s credentials along with the session’s will that he participate in a given meeting. Arguably, this is redundant in the case of TEs, since the presbytery already holds their credentials. Without seeking to determine this question one way or the other, the proposed process would include certification for all elders serving on local sessions, both ruling and teaching.

⁶ Since TE credentials are held by the presbytery itself, this would only be necessary with respect to REs.

- D. The IMT shall maintain the resulting database of certified, credentialed delegates on behalf of the clerks, including an official record of RE credentials within the GLGP
 - E. Prior to each *additional* meeting of presbytery, session clerks shall use this form to indicate which elders (REs + TEs) plan to attend the meeting, once again, as a courtesy to the presbytery clerks.
 - F. All certifications shall be confirmed via legally binding E-Signature technology, without any need for handwritten signatures, snail mail, and/or scanned PDFs.
5. That presbytery receive this report as a whole.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Kuehner, Ch.
Nathan Eshelman
Andrew Imeson, Cons.

Realignment Committee Report GLGP June Meeting 2022

As a committee, in our March meeting of Presbytery, we were charged with reviewing communications 22-2, 22-5, 22-6, 22-9, and to provide recommendations to Presbytery, on how to proceed. At that time, our recommendation was that communication 22-5, allow for Durham's transfer to the Presbytery of Alleghenies be approved and Presbytery agreed with our recommendation. Our second recommendation was that our realignment committee remain in place focusing on communications 22-2, 22-6, and 22-9, to interact with the broader presbytery to determine the next steps.

In regard to communications 22-6 & 22-9 dealing with the potential restructuring / dividing of our presbytery to reduce workload, we believe that this is not required at this time. Currently our Presbytery may see a reduction in the number of congregations, we believe there are other ways to immediately reduce the workload on our current clerk / assistant clerk, and finally we believe it would be better to work on improving relationships within the presbytery rather than separating churches due to relationship issues between the ruling / teaching elders of our presbytery. Based on this, it is our belief it would be in our presbytery's best interest to table recommendations 22-6 & 22-9 at this time and focus on communication 22.2.

In communication 22-2 Mr. Kuehner lays out the heavy workload we have in our presbytery. As stated in our previous report, this workload is partially the result of the number of students we have, the multitude of papers written (some due to the disagreements in our ranks), and the lateness of papers being submitted to presbytery. If we don't immediately address these issues, we can pose a real serious issue of not having men willing to serve as clerks within our presbytery.

With input from our committee and other men within presbytery, we believe there are some immediate actions that could be implemented to reduce the workload affecting our clerk, assistant clerk, and overall presbytery. These include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Immediately require all papers / reports / communications to be submitted 30 days prior to our Presbytery meeting date. The only exception would be a communication that is deemed critical by the AIC, this communication would be allowed to go forward.
- Implement the **position of a second assistant-clerk** to go along with the current clerk & assistant clerk roles. This would enable a sharing of responsibilities within the clerk's office and could also allow for an alternating of leadership from one meeting to another.
- Establish a **Shepherding Committee** that would be able to come along side congregations that express a need for shepherding due to unresolved issues within a congregation. The proposed Shepherding Committee would NOT function in any capacity as a judicial committee. The committee's work is solely advisory in nature to support the elders and sessions of the GLGP. The Shepherding Committee is to remain as a committee and not be transformed into a commission. Members would serve at length but have rotation to assure a cross-section for presbytery representation.

Session Advisory Committee Functions:

1. Serve as the first point of contact for emergency needs for elders and sessions that need counsel.
2. Handle informal issues with counsel before they go to the AIC.

- Look at a way to perform some of the Candidates & Credentials exams within committee and communicate the results with summaries to the broader Presbytery.

Considering our findings, we propose the following six recommendations to the Presbytery:

1. **Recommendation:** That communication 22-6 and 22-9 be laid on the table, believing that they are not required to be acted upon at this time.
2. **Recommendation:** That presbytery adopt as a standing policy that, apart from a special resolution (two-thirds majority vote), no written report, communication, student paper, or amendment thereto, shall be received by the court unless disseminated to the delegates (or submitted to the clerk) at least 30 full calendar days in advance of the meeting, with the sole exception of all clerical communications (e.g. clerk's report, proposed agenda, etc.).
3. **Recommendation:** That Presbytery allow for the election of a second assistant clerk of presbytery, and task the current clerk, assistant clerk, and the new assistant clerk to work out the division of workload amongst themselves.
4. **Recommendation:** Presbytery take our current "**shepherding**" committee which deals with those on the membership role of Presbytery and rename it the "**membership committee**", following which, appoint a new "**shepherding committee**", focused on dealing with shepherding needs within our presbytery.
5. **Recommendation:** Request the "**Candidates & Credentials**" committee develop a proposal that allows some exams to be performed within a committee structure communicating summary results to the Presbytery as a whole.
6. **Recommendation:** That the "**Realignment Committee**" be dismissed by Presbytery.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bob Bibby - Chairman
Kent Butterfield
James Faris
Adam Kuehner
Steven Work

Covfamikoi
9-13-22

Notes on Implementation of the New GLG CPP

- The Covfamikoi leadership team sought to implement the new CPP to the extent that circumstances allowed. In part because of the timing of the CPP's adoption relative to planning for the camp and in part because of the substance of the CPP itself, we were unable to implement the CPP in all respects. And, indeed, as we look to the future, it is difficult for us to see how we could run Covfamikoi in the current model and comply fully with every requirement in the policy. What follows is a brief account of our experience with the CPP.
- We were able to have each staff member complete the new “Children & Youth Ministry Worker Application” form. We were also able to run a background check on everyone who served in a staff position, including classroom teachers. In the supervision of children and youth, we were able to achieve the minimum of two youth workers per group, as well as the minimum worker to youth ratio of 1:10.
- However, we should note several points where the requirements of the CPP did not mesh well with the realities of running the conference:
 - We were recruiting conference staff right up to the start of the conference. As a result, it proved unrealistic to obtain a reference letter from a member of each staff member's session. Our approach was to email a member of each session and ask whether that person was aware of any reason that a person should not serve.
 - Besides staff, we depended on additional volunteers solicited during the conference itself to satisfy the required adult-to-child ratio. These volunteers often served for a limited amount of time (e.g., a single morning in the nursery or assisting with youth games). We judged that hitting the adult/child ratio was more important than obtaining background checks and a letter of reference, so long as at least one staff worker was present at all times with each group of children.
 - No provision has been made for implementation of the Presbytery's new background check requirement. So far as we know, there is no presbytery account with MinistrySafe, and no one designated to run background checks and manage permissions. Steve Rhoda had created a MinistrySafe account for CYPU out of CYPU funds. He offered to run the background checks through that account, which we did. However, we are uncomfortable with this arrangement as a long-term solution absent the endorsement of Presbytery because of the questions it raises about the appropriate maintenance of privacy.
- Thankfully, no concerns about abuse arose from this year's conference. However, we would note the concerns of our Youth Director about the CPP's reporting requirements. As the CPP reads presently, if rumors of abuse should arise, leadership of a presbytery youth event would be required to contact the local authorities, parents of anyone named in the allegations, and the moderators of those families' sessions. Only then is event leadership to “attempt to ascertain basic facts and take reasonable steps to safeguard potential victims.” As we consider what on-the-ground leadership looks like in actual practice, we would prefer a policy that allows for event leadership to focus first on a basic attempt to understand an allegation and to implement basic prudential safeguards (e.g., separating all parties named). Delaying these steps to communicate to a variety of parties puts undue pressure on leadership, risks delays that might endanger victims,

and increases the likelihood of unnecessary reputational harm for a rumor that immediately proves, when traced to its source, to have arisen from something misheard or misinterpreted.

- In light of our experience running the conference this year, we would recommend that Presbytery consider revising the CPP to accomplish the following:
 - Clearly distinguish between staff and volunteers, allow volunteers to count toward the required worker/child ratio, but require that a minimum of 1 staff member be present with a group of children at all times.
 - Create a Presbytery MinistrySafe account and designate who will be responsible for account management, or else require each presbytery ministry to create an account for that ministry (much as CYPUP has done).
 - Revise the steps for responding to allegations of abuse to allow event leadership to take immediate steps to safeguard potential victims and conduct a basic finding of fact before expanding the circle of communications.

Covfamiko Executive Leadership

Ken & Christy Nelson

Ross & Kaitlyn Cerbus

Stephen & Sarah Shipp

CYPUP Report – Fall 2022

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in Christ! The new CYPUP board has been meeting regularly since its formation this past spring and is hard at work. Here is an update on our work and the current season of CYPUP ministry:

1. We continue to seek a new director. A director's profile (i.e. job description) has been developed and approved by the board, but we don't have anyone yet to fill the position. If you have suggestions, please contact me.
2. We have held one event, which was "Spring Bash," since the Presbytery Child Protection Policy was set in place. The event was successful, and we worked hard at being in compliance with the policy.
3. We have decided not to try to do Fall Ministry Project, due to the lack of a director and challenges presented us by the Child Protection Policy.
4. In addition to the director's profile, we have been forming guidelines for the Youth Leadership Team, which is an essential piece to the function of CYPUP, especially with a largely volunteer director.
5. The 2022-23 Youth Leadership Team (YLT) has met several times now, without a director, but with appropriate adult supervision and leadership. The YLT has scheduled two events so far for the current season of ministry: a "Fall Party" in lieu of Fall Ministry Project, and plans have begun for Winter Conference 2022. We have event coordinators for these events and counselors will be recruited soon, the Lord willing, suggestions welcomed. Publicity material should be coming soon to your church, along with registration information, but please begin publicizing these two events with the youth of your congregation.
6. We have the capability to do background checks through [MinistrySafe.com](https://www.MinistrySafe.com). We have been in compliance with the Child Protection Policy for doing background checks and expect to be as we go forward.
7. Much of our time has been spent on comparing the Child Protection Policy with the actual realities at youth events. The toughest events for us to be in compliance are Fall Ministry Project, Winter Conference, and Theological Foundations Weekend. These three events are overnight events and comprise ostensibly 3/4 of our ministry. The challenges to compliance include: youth members traveling, required ratios between youth and leaders, overnight arrangements.
8. We are on the agenda for the October meeting of Presbytery, at which time we will be reporting and requesting advice for implementing the Child Protection Policy. We are working hard and trust that our efforts are appreciated.
9. CYPUP Board Members (AIC approved) are Kevin Duffey (Orlando RPC); Bryan Planalp (Columbus RPC); Steve Rhoda (Terre Haute); Anna Roberts (Christ Church RPC); Joy Whitt (Terre Haute RPC).

Upcoming CYPUP Events

1. Fall Party, Saturday, November 5, 2022, details forthcoming, but a one-day event (like Spring Bash).
2. Winter Conference, December 28-30, 2022, same location and general schedule as past years, details forthcoming

Please contact me directly with questions - Steve@Me1223.com; Home/Study: 812.917.7048; Mobile: 765.412.7786

Blessings in Christ,
Steve Rhoda

CYPU Report – Fall 2022

CYPU Board Chair

Report of IRPC Session to Fall 2022 Presbytery

Dear brothers in Christ,

This is a brief report to the presbytery concerning the current situation at IRPC, along with a brief history of the path which brings us to this point.

Following the spring presbytery meeting the session consisted of four local elders and three provisional elders. Three of the local elders had been elected and ordained shortly before the presbytery meeting, and one had been ordained last fall. The session perceived at that time that our understanding of the disposition of the many members of the congregation was insufficient to support our ability to shepherd the congregation appropriately. The congregation at that time had 173 members, 100 of them communicant.

In order to address this situation, the local session members spent much time and effort building relationships with the members of the congregation, and we as a session decided to distribute a survey to systematically assess many different questions, including the people's spiritual state with respect to the turmoil surrounding the congregation, needs for focus in worship, how to seek pastoral leadership, avenues for future ministry, and their disposition with respect to the denomination. The results of survey were in most ways very encouraging, and indicated a strong unity of purpose in the congregation, with one obvious and troublesome exception. The members' disposition with respect to the denomination showed very little unity. Some expressed a wish to take leave of the denomination immediately, others expressed the conviction that no circumstance would cause them to wish to take leave of the denomination, and others filled in most imaginable positions between these two extremes. The survey also showed a strong understanding of the concepts of Presbyterianism, and that most people indicated a strong commitment to these principles.

To help move the congregation forward in a positive direction and resolve this conflict, the session called two 'family meetings', which are congregational meetings without the possibility of motions or deliberation. These meetings were well attended, and most members of the congregation spoke to the grounds for their opinions, in ways which were compelling, respectful, and well expressed. This process allowed the congregation to continue together into the summer, though with two issues arising over the next couple of months. The first is a perception, well founded in some serious problems, that the congregation was basically treading water, finding it difficult to work together in a positive direction. The second is the presence of an upcoming congregational meeting.

Since the IRPC fiscal year follows the academic calendar, the annual meeting of the congregation was scheduled for the middle of July, and since these meetings allow for the congregation to address new business, it was very likely that there would be a forthcoming motion from the congregation to take leave of the denomination. In light of this, the local elders, outside of the context of the larger session, worked out a compromise motion to allow the congregation to move forward without addressing the ongoing conflict, until such time as

there would be a clearer sense of the possible path forward toward congregational health and ministry.

This compromise motion called for assembling various committees in the congregation to address various issues concerning the future of the congregation, while putting off the question of the denominational affiliation. These committees were to work through a number of questions, including seeking pastoral leadership and appropriate topics for classes, youth ministry questions, various legal and financial issues, the relationship of the leadership to groups outside of the congregation, and reconciliation with various parties with whom congregation is at odds. There was much deliberation at the meeting, but the motion passed with a strong $\frac{3}{4}$'s majority and no successful attempts to change the motion. Participation in this meeting was very high, with well over $\frac{3}{4}$ s of the local active communicant membership being in attendance. This has allowed the congregation to continue working together, though eight members in two families decided to ask for a transfer to the Lafayette congregation at that time. This outcome was reported to the AIC in August.

Since then, the committees have all been busily at work, finishing their proposals within the last two weeks. Also, as part of the motion, the congregation is petitioning for a follow-up meeting, which the session duly called for, to be held on the 30th of September.

From the synodical level, there are currently two synodical commissions working with the former session, one working with the former ruling elders, and one specifically charged with working with Jared Olivetti towards restoration. In addition, another synodical committee appointed by motion from the floor of synod this summer assembled members of the former synodical commission with the current IRPC session for a first step in drawing the commission and the congregation together. This meeting with the congregation occurred September 19th. During the meeting, the local members of the session acted as mediaries between the commission and the congregation, and engaged in a lengthy public conversation with visitors who were part of the former commission's work. As part of the preparation for this meeting, the congregation was asked for questions they would like asked of the commission (with the proviso that the questions could not impinge on the work of the two synodical commissions). This request drew out approximately 75 questions, from which six main topics were canvased in the public meeting. In general, this discussion was helpful and constructive, though the degree to which the large volume of questions could be addressed was not great.

Currently, we do not know what will arise from the congregational meeting on the 30th of September. We would appreciate your earnest prayers for the Lord's leading in this matter. We intend to update the presbytery at the time of the fall meeting, and will present appropriate recommendations and petitions at that time.

Ken de Jong, for the IRPC Session

First Reformed Presbyterian Church

Session Meeting

Via Zoom

August 27, 2022 @ 4:40 PM

Participants

Craig Scott, Jake Schwartz, Steve Rhoda

Minutes

1 - Craig Scott constituted the court by prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King, at 4:40 PM.

2 - Session approved the meeting minutes for August 2, 2022 as amended, and August 21, 2022 as amended.

3 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to suspend all local ministry effective Monday, August 29, 2022. This decision is in light of God's providence to call Pastor Craig Scott to another ministry; the Spirit's leading of Jake Schwartz to move to Pittsburgh for further training for the ministry; the lack of other local elders; and the expressed and known decision of a large majority of the congregation to seek church membership elsewhere.

4 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to withdraw the request to Presbytery for the assignment of additional provisional elders.

5 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to transfer the membership of Sean and Laura McDonald, with the following note of concern: "We the Session of First Reformed Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, entrust to you the membership and spiritual care of the McDonalds. While Sean and Laura had previously been a blessing to our congregation for many years, the manner of their departure from us has been unconscionably hurtful and divisive and has contributed significantly to the closure of our ministry. We hope they will find with you a greater contentment, a more appropriate willingness to submit to ordained leadership, and a deeper commitment to their membership vows in the church of Jesus Christ. Please plan to give them your cautionary care as they continue their fellowship, and now membership, within your congregation."

6 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to dismiss the membership of William and Savannah Luke, with their baptized children, with this notification attached: "As we recognize significant doctrinal concerns and points of error within the Eastern Orthodox church, we express our utter dismay that William Luke, while pursuing a degree from Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and an internship with First RPC, Grand Rapids, suddenly chose earlier this year to withdraw from all Reformed fellowship and accountability to take up ardent loyalty to Eastern Orthodoxy, without any consultation with us as a Session. Having sought to minister to him, and though current circumstances prevent us from carrying out any further ministry of discipline, we

can only declare that William and Savannah Luke have been unfaithful to their vows of membership and remain, as of this declaration, unresponsive to our attempts to minister to them."

7 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to transfer all the remaining membership of First RPC, Grand Rapids, to the role of presbytery. Names and contact information will be sent to the Clerk of Presbytery, and Session will provide instruction to members on how to request transfer of their membership in the future to a specific local church.

8 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to cancel the church's rental agreement with Zion Protestant Reformed Church. If there are outstanding fees or penalties, they will be paid from the church's remaining funds.

9 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to send funds specifically designated for missions, mercy ministry, the Craig Shoemaker fund, and the church building fund, to RP Global Missions; and all leftover funds go to the balance which is turned over to Synod.

10 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to authorize Jake Schwartz to pay any outstanding bills from the church funds, with joint approval from Elder Steve Rhoda; and to turn over remaining church funds to the Synod of the RPCNA, on October 1, 2022; thus closing the church's bank account. Bank statements and receipts from the past six months will be submitted as funds are turned over to Synod.

11 - Session confirmed with Craig Scott that their moving expenses will be covered by the Free Church of Scotland Continuing.

12 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to reimburse Craig \$180 for property storage, and medical of \$50, and to forgive the outstanding loan of \$1,100.

13 - A letter of resignation was received from Craig Scott in order to accept a call. Session has accepted it with great thanks for his years of service. Resignation is effective upon dissolution of Session in a future meeting.

14 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to transfer the membership of Daniel Cross to the Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

15 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to give Joe and Meleah Tubergen four copies of the church's 1912 psalters, and to sell the remaining 31 psalters to Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary at \$5 each.

16 - Session records that the physical minute books were given to Namsik Yang for safekeeping.

17 - It was moved, seconded, and approved to adjourn. Craig Scott adjourned the meeting by prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King, at 6:30 PM.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Craig J. Scott, Teaching Elder, Moderator

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Harley J. Schwartz, Ruling Elder, Clerk

My name is Jordan Kessler and I am a member of the Lafayette RP Church. I am writing to Presbytery because of concerns I have with how the Immanuel situation is being handled at the Presbytery level. This is affecting the local level, specifically the relationship between Lafayette RPC and Immanuel RPC.

As a member of a church in the Presbytery, I am concerned about how the process worked to get to a trial. Based on the plan of having a prosecution and a trial, it would appear from the outside looking in that Immanuel session covered up abuse and also showed no remorse for their actions or repentance. The commission declared the Immanuel session was not involved in a cover up. I know from conversations I've had at a bible study that my family attends with Immanuel and other separate conversations with other friends of that congregation, the session did admit to wrongs and repent. To me, presbytery should be trying to restore the session and the congregation. Instead it seems like some at Presbytery have skipped necessary steps to restore a hurting church and instead have moved to tear it down and rebuild. So why press for the harshest punishment to a congregation when the session has admitted to wrong, sought forgiveness, and wants restoration along with the majority of the congregation? Second Corinthians 7:10-11 shows us an example of what to do when Godly grief leads to repentance. Many in Immanuel's congregation feel that instead of presbytery coming in to help heal and restore the situation, they instead came in to tear down and rebuild. It's easy from the outside looking in to see why they are upset. Also, add on that a couple victim families had to come out publicly to support their session because the commission didn't give their side enough time at presbytery and I think some hurt, resentment, and anger is warranted.

At the local level, there should be some concern about Immanuel and Lafayette's relationship currently and moving forward. There have been some things said from our session at presbytery that have caused real hurt. At Lafayette, the session also debriefed the congregation during second hour on things that transpired at presbytery (which is very common and has happened for as long as I can remember). The things that were able to be shared and other commentary given by some members of the session painted a picture that was very one sided against Immanuel's session. Lafayette has also been getting a handful of families from Immanuel during this time. During this time, it has become very clear how one side of the issue feels and that message has gotten out clearly while very little to none of the defense viewpoints has been shared. This is not helping the relationship at all between the two churches. There is anger and hurt from Immanuel congregation toward Lafayette that I believe is warranted. With two churches this close together, there needs to be unity. This is as broken as I've seen the two congregations. There can be problems with having two churches so close together but for the most part, there has been shared activities and

shared services and general unity from the two congregations. That has, for the most part, all gone away as of now.

It would be my hope that the commission and presbytery as a whole would reconsider having this go to a trial. It is my belief that there are steps that can and should be taken before going to the trial. The session has taken steps to move toward reconciliation and I believe that presbytery should help in aiding that process and not go straight to the worst case scenario which the trial would be. I believe that's what the Immanuel congregation would like also. A side benefit of that is it would also give Lafayette session time to try to come alongside and begin to heal the relationship with Immanuel and hopefully the two congregations can become unified again.

I know this is a tough matter for all involved. From all I've heard it appears there have been mistakes made by many parties throughout all of this. It isn't that surprising with the seriousness of the issue, with this being the first time, at least to my knowledge, anything like this has happened in our presbytery. I would just hope that an abundance of grace, wisdom, and forethought would be considered before rash decisions or punishments be handed out and that we would exhaust all other avenues before going to a trial.

The disunity between Lafayette and Immanuel is more than likely two sided, but I'm writing as a concerned Lafayette member.

Thanks for taking the time to read this. I will continue to pray for you men as you continue the difficult work of leading our presbytery and the churches that make up our presbytery. God Bless.



Christ Church reformed presbyterian

www.ccrp.church • Phone. 317-456-2551

Mailing address: P. O. Box 34182, Indianapolis, IN 46234

Meeting location: 5075 N. Raceway Road, Indianapolis, IN 46234

May 28, 2022

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

The CCRP Session is thankful for the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery's support over recent years. In October 2021, Presbytery appointed a Reconciliation Committee to pursue reconciliation between the Session and two households. Then, in March 2022, Presbytery appointed a two-man shepherding committee to provide continued counsel and guidance. There has been good fruit borne out of the work of both committees. The Session has confessed sin and mistakes in shepherding, asked for forgiveness from the congregation, and has committed to new courses of action in its care for the congregation.

After the conclusion of its work, the Reconciliation Committee counseled the congregation, *"...there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled. It has been a very difficult two years for everyone associated with CCRPC and it is now time to put the past behind and move on in love, peace, and unity as the congregation seeks to serve Christ."*

However, interactions in recent weeks with the members involved have confirmed that we have reached an impasse over the affirmation and acceptance of the Reconciliation Committee's recommendations, the members' level of trust and confidence in the Session, and, in turn, our ability to shepherd these members (and potentially other members) in unity at CCRP.

We believe further outside assistance is necessary because the Session is too much a party to this conflict. Furthermore, factors such as operating without a local teaching elder, the recent resignation of one ruling elder, health limitations, and work constraints limit the Session's ability to maintain the ministry while also addressing this conflict. Finally, the nature of the work extends beyond the remit of the current Shepherding Committee, and the availability of our Interim Moderator (both of which have contributed time generously and without complaint).

We would like to call on our brethren for assistance in this time of great difficulty for the congregation. This is an urgent matter. We have reached an inflection point in the life of the congregation, and the next steps may determine the future existence of the congregation, and/or whether the Session can continue to serve. We ask that Presbytery appoint a judicial commission to take original jurisdiction of the issues of conflict between the CCRP Session and members, visit the congregation, and to make formal binding recommendations regarding the situation. CCRP will reimburse the Presbytery for all expenses incurred by this commission.

Recommendation:

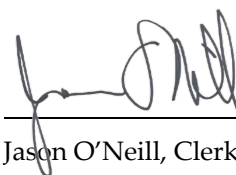
That Presbytery to appoint a judicial commission to take original jurisdiction of the issues of conflict between the CCRP Session and members, and to make formal binding recommendations regarding the situation.

In Christ,

The CCRP Session



Joel Hart, Interim Moderator



Jason O'Neill, Clerk

12 June 2022

To Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery:

We, the undersigned, wish to file a complaint regarding an action of the Session of Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian (CCRP), which occurred on May 23, 2022 at a Session meeting. The entire Session (moderator Hart and elders Koons, Judd, Bird, O'Neill) was present. Session invited Nathan Enas and his wife, Ginny Enas, both members of CCRP, and permitted Mr. Enas to invite one (and only one) guest. Mr. Enas invited Todd Brown (CCRP deacon), who was also in attendance. Nathan Shaver (CCRP Interim Pastoral Assistant) and elder Jonathan Schaefer (CCRP Shepherding Committee) were also present. The Session meeting was scheduled in order to "clarify these matters," which "matters" are described in a sequence of emails (see Appendix A). The "matter" initiated by Mr. Enas was for a member of Session to help explain to Mr. Enas why elder Sean Bird had recommended privately after worship (on May 15, 2022), without any explanation, that Mr. Enas leave CCRP and begin attending another congregation, suggesting Sycamore RPC. Session's action began when elder Koons read a letter (Appendix B) on behalf of Session to Mr. Enas.

In summary, our grievances with Session's action, expressed in their letter to Mr. Enas, include the following:

1. Session sought to dismiss Mr. Enas from communicant membership at CCRP without any disciplinary process, or any appeal to Scripture or even the Constitution of the RPCNA. Their only appeal was to a perceived lack of trust in Session and lack of heeding their counsel and guidance. Instead of praising God for the sacrifices of Mr. Enas (and others) to help the Session come to godly sorrow for sins they committed, they utilized a partial history of past events, and select recent events, to achieve their unbiblical goal (ie, dismissal without Biblical discipline) for a sheep under their care.
2. In lieu of dismissal (Session's preferred option), Session required Mr. Enas to affirm an unqualified trust in the Session's ability to shepherd him, his family, and the entire congregation. This requirement is unbiblical, undermining the very trust they sought to enjoin.
3. Session offered Mr. Enas an unbiblical ultimatum, that is, a false dilemma, creating a false appearance that Mr. Enas had only two righteous options at his disposal. They pressured him to make a decision during the meeting, without giving him any advance idea about the meeting agenda or their demands. When Mr. Enas refused to agree to their ultimatum during the meeting, they gave him 4 days to respond to their demands. When Mr. Enas responded to Session after 4 days, requesting additional time for thought, prayer, and counsel, the Session promptly (the following day) sent a petition to Presbytery, asking for a judicial commission to solve the "impasse" caused by "members' level of trust and confidence in Session," referring directly to their recent demands on Mr. Enas.
4. To provide evidence of unqualified trust in Session, they required Mr. Enas to perform acts that may appear reasonable, but are actually unbiblical and ungodly requirements based on falsehoods and uncharitable responses to Mr. Enas and his efforts to be faithful to Christ and His body and bride, the church.

Explanatory commentary

We need not remind Presbytery of the difficult straits that CCRP has been through for the past several years. Over half of the congregation that existed prior to the LeFebvre controversy has left the congregation, and some ordained elders of CCRP who once had vowed to uphold the Scripture as summarized in our Constitution have even left the RPCNA entirely. For several years, some CCRP members have asked their Session to reflect on what happened that resulted in such devastation, and the members of Session consistently defended their actions and shepherding, before and after Mr. LeFebvre resigned and left the RPCNA. It is fair to posit that, if Session had quickly and humbly admitted their failures and sins to CCRP and sought to

quickly make amends and repairs, CCRP could be in much better spiritual and administrative condition to proceed forward in the mission given the church by King Jesus. It is also fair to say that, had said church members not sought the assistance of Presbytery, Session would likely never have been led to confess their sins in relation to their shepherding of the church, including our former pastor. We praise God that Session has come to such resolve to confess their sins, but are sad at how long it has taken to come to this important milestone in the reconciliation process, and sad at how reconciliation is proceeding following their confessions.

Presbytery knew that confession was only the beginning, not the end, of the reconciliation process. As the CCRP Reconciliation Committee stated in its report to the Spring 2022 Presbytery, "It would be naïve on the part of this Committee to believe that the work of reconciling these parties is concluded." This realization led Presbytery to appoint a Shepherding Committee for CCRP "in order to aid and encourage both parties in following through with reconciliation" for an entire year (Minutes from 2022 Spring meeting, footnote 37, page 7 of 15). Indeed, the Session has benefitted from both Committees, as seen by Session's public confession on Jan. 23, 2022 with the assistance of the Reconciliation Committee (see Minutes from 2022 Spring meeting, pp. 275-282), followed by a more detailed public confession on Apr. 10, 2022 with assistance from the Shepherding Committee (Appendix C). The members who raised concerns have also greatly benefitted from the assistance given by Presbytery, both formally through the appointed Committees, and informally through the counsel and encouragement of many presbyters throughout the Presbytery (and beyond).

On April 29, 2022, Mr. Enas and Kevin Swan submitted charges of sin to CCRP Session against Rev. James Faris. One week later, Session asked Messrs. Enas and Swan to attend a Session meeting scheduled for May 12, 2022, stating that, "We will be taking up the communication you submitted for referral to Presbytery. We would like for you to be present so we can discuss the communication with you." This Session meeting turned out to be "informal" since the moderator, Rev. Hart, had recused himself from any Session action related to Rev. Faris. After hearing counsel of the elders to not pursue charges against Rev. Faris, and after discussing the topic for a few hours, Rev. Hart joined the meeting, and elder O'Neill then asked Messrs. Enas and Swan, "Are we now united and reconciled?" (referring to language in a letter from the Reconciliation Committee to CCRP; see Appendix D). This question was obviously weighty, but also surprising, since Session had given no prior indication that they would ask such a question at this meeting. Mr. Enas tried to defer the question for a later meeting to allow for more thought and prayer, but when members of Session pressed him for an answer, Mr. Enas answered the question in the negative, stating that more work was needed (just as the Reconciliation Committee had stated 3 months earlier in their report to Presbytery). However, Session did not schedule a new meeting to discuss what still remained to achieve reconciliation. Instead, they hastily met with Mr. Enas less than 2 weeks later and declared he should either leave CCRP, or affirm an unqualified trust and submission to the Session.

We must ask, is this how shepherds of the flock of Christ are commanded to shepherd, especially given all the troubles CCRP has already experienced? Many people have asked concerned members like Mr. Enas to be patient with Session as the members of Session grow in faithfulness to their solemn vows. But does this kind of pressure and avoidance of due process from Session demonstrate exemplary patience with the sheep in their care?

We will now address the specific evidences that Session used to justify their actions to "shepherd" (ie, dismiss) Mr. Enas "to a different congregation":

1. Session: Mr. Enas does not agree that the issues raised by him and other members of CCRP "are now settled."

Answer: The implication here is that, if someone disagrees with Session or a Committee, that person must leave the congregation. This conclusion should be disturbing to the church. Both the Reconciliation Committee and the Shepherding Committee have confronted the Session, and Session has confessed some of their sins, but no one has

said confession is sufficient for reconciliation. Even the Session has laid out a plan to bear the “fruits of repentance.” The Reconciliation Committee stated Session needed to “grow in an active approach to shepherding the flock.” Their letter to Mr. Enas is certainly “active,” but it is not righteous.

2. Session: Mr. Enas refused to heed Session’s counsel to “pursue a different path toward reconciliation” with Rev. James Faris.

Answer: While we might appreciate it if the Scriptures were more clear on various topics (eg, eschatology, demonology), they cannot be clearer on the topic of sin. Every page of Scripture declares human depravity and God’s just mercy. King Jesus, our Redeemer and Judge, gave clear instructions to His people in Matthew 18:15-17, and God’s people throughout Scripture applied this process. Mr. Enas has sought to obey Christ in the matter of brother Faris, following the law and order of the church, so it is perplexing and offensive for a church court to seek to dismiss Mr. Enas from the church for not obeying their counsel to the contrary. Instead, shepherds of Christ’s flock should lead the way to implement Christ’s law and counsel, and help the sheep who are obeying Christ.

3. Session: Mr. Enas insisted on adding “reconciliation” as a topic about which our Interim Pastoral Assistant would be expected to offer counsel to church members, in spite of counsel from the Reconciliation Committee.

Answer: We have already addressed what the Reconciliation Committee actually advised the Presbytery to do: send a Shepherding Committee to CCRP “in order to aid and encourage both parties in following through with reconciliation.” Mr. Enas was merely attempting to be transparent with the Interim Pastoral Assistant, affirming that Presbytery and members of CCRP believe that reconciliation is still needed at CCRP. We believe asking Mr. Enas to leave CCRP clearly demonstrates the need for ongoing reconciliation.

4. Session: Mr. Enas covertly records meetings without the consent of the other parties involved.

Answer: We believe recording meetings of the courts is good for several reasons. First, no human we know can remember all of the conversations and speeches that transpire in a 1 hour meeting, let alone 3-5 hour meetings, such as Mr. Enas and others have had with Session and committees of Presbytery. Multiply the meetings and add them up over months and years, and the task of accurately recalling (or even notating during meetings) the important content is impossible, especially when someone is being asked to answer important questions and consider what others are saying. Second, recording meetings provides a true representation of what was said. Since words and language matter, knowing the precise words people say is an important aspect of knowing truth. And such truth will quickly dispel lies or inaccurate representations of what words transpired in a meeting. Third, recordings can be used for sanctification and growing in grace. As we listen to recordings of ourselves and others, we can reflect on what was said and how it was said, and then seek God in word and prayer for how to grow in grace in our speech. Fourth, recordings provide necessary accountability for how people converse in meetings. Sinful speech should not be allowed in church courts, and recordings provide a Godly basis for ensuring that speech is edifying. Fifth, even the courts of the world are public, and complete audio or written transcripts are created by paid recorders. Finally, since we always speak in God’s presence, we should always speak in such a way that glorifies God and that we would be happy for others to hear as well. As our Lord commands, “But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation” (James 5:12). Mr. Enas has never abused any recording he has made, and Session should not ask him to leave the church for his work to preserve true records of important court meetings for Godly uses.

5. Session: Mr. Enas has a “continued debating and critical spirit about the Session’s actions and competence.”

Answer: First, Mr. Enas has been very discrete with his criticisms about Session, expressing them in accordance with the law and order of the church. Records of his concerns and criticisms can be found in the documents he has submitted to the courts of the church. He has not engaged others with these criticisms unless he has been asked in good faith. Second, if Session commits errors (as in their recent letter to Mr. Enas), it is the duty of Christians to confront those errors, and, yes, some debate may ensue and certainly some critique must be made. If this “spirit” is truly sinful, then Session has a duty to help Mr. Enas identify and mortify this sinful “spirit” through discipline, not send him off to another church.

It is important to note that Session never appeals to any Scripture to support its demands. If Session really believes these “evidences” require either dismissing Mr. Enas or requiring him to affirm his unqualified trust in them, they should seek to apply Biblical discipline to Mr. Enas in love so that Mr. Enas can grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Such discipline cannot be applied according to their own whims and personal scruples. Rather, such discipline must be “in the Lord,” that is, according to God’s infallible Word and not the wisdom of man. And dismissal of a member should only follow the proper handling of sin as delineated in the Book of Discipline.

Next, we will address Session’s demands for Mr. Enas to be able to continue worship and fellowship at CCRP.

1. Session: Trust Session to be able to shepherd Mr. Enas, his family, and the entire congregation, contradicting Mr. Enas’ earlier statement that he had “lost confidence” in the Session.

Response: First, we must obey Scripture, which repeatedly tells us not to trust in man. For example, “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.” (Psalm 146:3) and “Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD’” (Jeremiah 17:5). Rather, we must trust the Lord God Almighty and Him alone: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:7). To make a vow to trust in the abilities of a group of men is foolish, and for the shepherds of Christ’s flock to require such a vow is self-contradictory. Second, both committees sent by Presbytery over the past year have observed and declared the breakdown in trust between the Session and multiple families. This is why CCRP needs the Presbytery’s assistance and counsel. Even if Scripture required it, to require one member to declare unqualified trust in Session clearly does not resolve the breakdown in trust nor does it achieve the desired reconciliation. Third, Session appears to be weaponizing an honest, written declaration from Mr. Enas, instead of trying to rebuild the “lost confidence” Mr. Enas expressed. After denying to Mr. Enas (and other members) for almost 2 years any wrongdoing in overseeing Mr. LeFebvre and CCRP, representatives of Presbytery (and, we trust, the Holy Spirit) finally helped Session see that they did commit sinful errors of neglect. We are glad that Session confessed their sins, but should the trust that was depleted by their repeated denials instantly be restored, and then further be required as a condition of membership in a congregation of the Church of Christ? We think not, and Session’s recent letter to Mr. Enas reinforces the very distrust they are asking Mr. Enas to forswear.

2. Session: Submit willingly to the elders in keeping with your membership vows.

Response: When we take the Covenant of Communicant Membership, we “promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America,” and we “promise to respect the authority and

discipline of the church” in case we need correction in doctrine or life. Mr. Enas has already affirmed this vow, and has never been accused of breaking this vow. If the Session’s demand of Mr. Enas is consistent with his vows, then he has already affirmed their demand by taking the ordinary vows. If the Session’s demand is not consistent with his vows, then the onus is on the Session to explain how their demand is different from our ordinary vows, why it applies uniquely to Mr. Enas, and how it is “based upon the Scriptures.”

3. Session: Accept the Reconciliation Committee’s counsel, move forward from debates and complaints about Mr. LeFebvre’s publications, and cease to mention “things that have been settled.”

Response: Mr. Enas spent many hours with the Reconciliation Committee and other church members during the past year. This Committee came to CCRP because Mr. Enas and others petitioned Presbytery to investigate Session’s shepherding. Mr. Enas has considered their counsel and has taken much of it to heart (eg, buying and reading the book called “Graciousness” by John Crotts). However, some parts of their counsel are debatable (eg, what is the “correct” interpretation of “love covers a multitude of sins”?). We don’t believe that accepting all of their counsel must be a requirement for continued membership at CCRP. In any event, Mr. Enas has not debated or complained “about Mr. LeFebvre’s publications” in recent months, particularly since Presbytery approved the CCRP Shepherding Committee. Rather, he has been seeking help for those members of Session who have not resigned, that they may grow in their ability to shepherd the flock of Christ. Such growth will be an ongoing process, and Presbytery has admitted its important role in this process by sending a Reconciliation Committee and, now, a Shepherding Committee.

4. Session: Contribute financially to the work of CCRP.

Response: This is a dangerous requirement to make of a member of the church of Christ. The Scripture teaches that “God loves a cheerful giver,” and our Session has rightly taken pains to not make financial demands of the church members. Now, they have apparently changed years of teaching and practice to coerce money out of a particular church member. They have never before talked to Mr. Enas about his giving habits. They apparently assumed that, when Mr. Enas stopped giving to the church via checks, he stopped contributing altogether. This assumption is false, and they made no effort to verify their assumption or discuss the matter with Mr. Enas. Instead, they believed the worst about him, even after cashing a sizable check from Mr. Enas a whole month before giving their letter to Mr. Enas.

5. Session: Cease the practice of recording interactions without consent of the parties.

Response: We explained earlier the general goodness of recording meetings of the courts. Unless our reasoning is incorrect, this requirement must be considered inappropriate.

6. Session: Inform Session regarding who is counseling Mr. Enas and what counsel his counselors are providing.

Response: This requirement is inexplicable. What right does Session have to require this kind of information in order to be a member in good standing of Christ’s visible church? Certainly, they can request such information, but the prerogative to answer must remain with the church member. Making this practice a condition of continued membership in a church is inappropriate.


Finally, we should also mention that Session has not operated without leadership and counsel. Since our pastor resigned, Session has been moderated by Rev. Faris and Rev. Hart. Under Rev. Faris as moderator, the CCRP Session declared that they disagreed with the concerns raised by certain members, but it was these very concerns that motivated Presbytery to send Committees to CCRP and uncover unconfessed sins committed by Session. Also, as moderator at CCRP, Rev. Faris consistently attempted to silence CCRP members' attempts to ask for Presbytery's help. Now, under Rev. Hart as moderator, the Session has levied false accusations and made unbiblical demands of a member in good standing. We must complain that such leadership within our congregation is not helpful at promoting righteous peace and unity of the faith. We greatly appreciate Presbytery supplying an interim moderator for our Session in our time of need, but we beseech Presbytery for a moderator who will facilitate robust, Biblical reconciliation, not create roadblocks to reconciliation, as in the case of the Session's recent letter to Mr. Enas.


Complaints such as ours are not meant to construe every act of these elders as evil. We applaud all of these men for the good they have done in the church of Christ, and we trust Presbytery will do the same. However, these men are sinners like all of us, and their ungodly actions need to be addressed for the sake of Christ's name and the good of his flock.

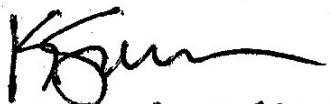
This is the purpose of this complaint, and we trust you will hear our complaint and attend to it with due sobriety and care.

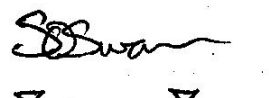
Sincerely,


Nathan Enas

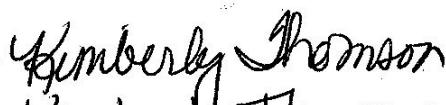

Ginny Enas


Lydia Enas

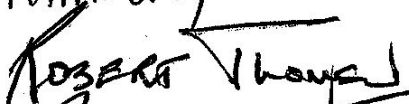

KEVIN SWAN



Solomon Swan


Rachelle Swan

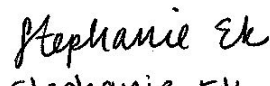

Kimberly Thomson

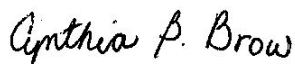

Lauren Thomson

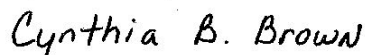

ROBERT THOMSON


Caroline Thomson



Adam Ek


Stephanie Ek


Cynthia B. Brown


Cynthia B. Brown


Todd Brown


TODD BROWN

Appendix A: Email exchange between Mr. Nathan Enas and CCRP elders**Nathan Enas**

May 15, 2022 at 9:19 PM

 NE

Request for help

[Hide](#)

To: Duane J Judd, Dale Koons, Jason O'Neill,

Cc: Sean Bird, Joel Hart, Craig Scott, Jonathan Schaefer, Nathan Shaver,

Bcc: Ginny Enas

Duane, Dale, and Jason,

After worship this morning, Sean Bird very gently asked to talk with me privately, so I agreed and we went outside near the pulpit door. Basically, he asked me to take my family and join another church, suggesting Sycamore RP in Kokomo. Perplexed at his counsel, I repeatedly tried to discover his reasons for asking me to do this, but I never received an answer. He did affirm that this was his personal advice, not a message from CCRP Session. However, since he is an elder, I thought this was serious enough to bring to your attention and ask for your help, not as a court, but just as Sean's fellow elders on Session.

Would you please help me understand what motivated Sean's request and his reasons why we should leave CCRP? If God wants us to join another church, I certainly want to follow His guidance, but I trust we all agree that such a choice requires much prayer, counsel, and discernment, and should not be made hastily or without compelling reasons.

Sincerely,

Nathan

Jason O'Neill

May 19, 2022 at 9:49 PM

 JO

Re: Request for help

[Hide](#)

To: Nathan Enas,

Cc: Duane J Judd, Dale Koons, Sean Bird, Joel Hart, Craig Scott,
Jonathan Schaefer, Nathan Shaver

Nathan,

As you noted in your e-mail, Sean's conversation was a personal word of counsel, and not a statement from the Session. As Sean was speaking personally, we don't have anything to add at this juncture as a group. You are of course, free to follow-up with Sean to better understand his comments.

In Christ,

-Jason

Nathan Enas

May 19, 2022 at 10:21 PM

NE

Re: Request for help

[Hide](#)

To: Jason O'Neill,

Cc: Duane J Judd, Dale Koons, Sean Bird, Joel Hart, Craig Scott,
Jonathan Schaefer, Nathan Shaver

Hi Jason,

Thanks for your reply. As I said in my email, I have already asked Sean repeatedly for an explanation.

Just to clarify, I am not asking for Session to add anything. I am just asking for at least one elder to help resolve a mystery.

May I ask for a short meeting before or after worship this Sunday with me, Sean, and another elder? I trust it won't take long.

Nathan

Jason O'Neill

May 21, 2022 at 9:03 PM

JO

Re: Request for help

[Hide](#)

To: Nathan Enas,

Cc: Duane J Judd, Dale Koons, Sean Bird, Joel Hart, Craig Scott,
Jonathan Schaefer, Nathan Shaver

Nathan-

We have discussed this, and we believe it would be best to meet with you as a Session to clarify these matters. We won't be able to meet with you tomorrow, but we'd like to meet with you on Monday evening at 7:30 p.m. at the church building. Ginny is also welcome to attend, as well as one other guest if you would like.

-Jason

Appendix B: Letter from CCRP Session to Mr. Nathan Enas

May 23, 2022

Dear Nathan,

We want to affirm our love and care for you and your family. You are a founding member of this congregation, and we honor your sacrificial contribution to our fellowship. We regularly pray for your family and earnestly seek the Lord's blessing for you all. However, we have come to a point that we need to have a difficult, but important conversation about how we can best shepherd you going forward.

In July 2020 you sent a communication to the Session stating that you had "lost your confidence in the CCRP Session" and had begun to seek out alternative options for worship. Then in October 2020, you wrote us to tell us that you were leaving Christ Church, were seeking to join another congregation, and anticipated transferring your membership once a new congregation was found. At that time, you said "Some of my requests have not yet been addressed, and I would appreciate it if you would help bring them to closure, but this is in your hands, and I will not press you further for your response." Around that time, you stopped attending worship services at CCRP and stopped contributing financially to the congregation. After this, you returned at least twice to the congregation, once to contest the proposed severance package for Michael LeFebvre, and once for the congregational interview with Tre' Cranford.

Then, in October of 2021, you communicated your intent to return to worship at CCRP, in conjunction with the preparation of a communication to Presbytery alleging negligence on the part of Session that could lead to "hard feelings between us." You returned to worship one week before asking Session to transfer your communication to Presbytery. At this point there was no indicating that your level of confidence in the Session and your fundamental need to transfer to a new congregation was unchanged.

The CCRP Session, while stating disagreement with the characterization of the allegations in your communication, did not oppose the communication in Presbytery, and participated fully in the reconciliation process that ensued. We spent many hours meeting with and listening to you and the reconciliation committee. In response, we communicated with the congregation, asking for forgiveness for mistakes made in our shepherding, and committing to new courses of action. Then, in March, after discussions with the newly formed Shepherding Committee, we more specifically confessed and repented of sin related to that shepherding. At the end of this process, the members of the Reconciliation Committee issued the following counsel to the congregation "there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled. It has been a very difficult two years for everyone associated with CCRPC and it is now time to put the past behind and move on in love, peace, and unity as the congregation seeks to serve Christ." This counsel supplemented the Committee's counsel to the families who signed the original communication "to be careful of the appearance of a debating spirit and to practice the correct interpretation of 'love covers a multitude of sins.'"

In light of these events, and our recent interactions, it seems clear to us that despite these efforts you have not regained your confidence in the Session, you do not trust the Session to shepherd you in your spiritual walk, and you are not willing heed the Session's counsel and guidance. This is evidenced to us specifically by the following examples:

1. Your statement at our last meeting that you do not agree with the Reconciliation Committee and Shepherding Committee that the issues at the heart of the October communication are now settled and the congregation should move on from these controversies.

2. Your refusal to heed counsel regarding submitting charges against James Faris to presbytery, and to pursue a different path toward reconciliation (note that Joel Hart, Interim Moderator, is recused from matters concerning the Faris charges and does not join in this observation).
3. Your insistence on inserting language about "pursuing reconciliation" into the job description for the Interim Pastoral Agreement, in spite of the Reconciliation Committee's counsel that the congregation move on from those points of disagreement.
4. Your covert recording of conversations and meetings without the consent of the other parties involved.
5. Your continued debating and critical spirit about the Session's actions and competence with members of the Session and others.

Based on the totality of these events and observations it is our assessment that for your own spiritual good, we need to shepherd you to a different congregation — one to which you can submit to with a clear conscience.

While this is a grievous occasion — we have fellowshiped together with you for many years — we believe it to be the best course of action. If you do wish to continue in fellowship, with this congregation, you will need to be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative:

1. Do you trust the CCRP Session to shepherd you and your family, and do you have confidence in its ability to shepherd Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian? Do you affirm this specifically in contrast to your October 2020 decision to leave Christ Church?
2. Are you willing to submit to the direction and oversight of the CCRP elders, so that you can fully affirm your membership vows to this congregation with a clear conscience?

If you cannot affirm these questions, it should be clear that a change to another congregation is in order. If you can affirm these queries, then the Session will stipulate the following actions as evidence of progress in this regard:

1. Accepting the Reconciliation Committee's counsel and moving forward from the debates and complaints surrounding Michael LeFebvre's publications; ceasing to bring up things that have been settled.
2. Financially contributing to the work of CCRP as the Lord prospers you.
3. Ceasing the practice of recording interactions without the consent of other parties.
4. Informing the Session of the source and content when seeking counsel from other presbyters if you believe the Session is not responding appropriately regarding possible future complaints concerning actions of the Session.

We know this is a serious and difficult conversation, but we believe it is our responsibility to encourage you in your spiritual growth, which in this case means shepherding you to a place you can worship with greater trust of the leadership, unless you can continue in full affirmation of the questions and actions above.

In Christ,

The CCRP Session

Appendix C: Confession of sins by CCRP Session during worship, April 10, 2022

As we approach our prayer of confession today, we'd like you to hear this word about sin and repentance from our Session.

We spoke to you in January about the Session's oversight and shepherding surrounding Michael's publications. At that time, we addressed errors in shepherding that caused offense within the congregation, asked for your forgiveness, and committed to specific actions in the spirit of repentance. Through our discussions with the Shepherding Committee, we understand that it would be helpful to better define our categories. To be clear, our mistakes and errors were sin.

We sinned by not being more open with the congregation by failing to involve them earlier in Michael's publications and by failing to inform them of opposition to his writings (#1,5,7). We sinned by not being more diligent in our review of Michael's writings and more confrontational with him regarding contra-confessional issues (#2,3). We sinned by not pursuing a more diverse group of counselors earlier in this process (#4,6).

We failed to uphold the high standards to which Jesus calls his under shepherds. We recognize this and repent of these sins; we do ask for your forgiveness; and we will continue to walk forward in faith by God's grace in the ministry of the gospel.

Appendix D: Email from Craig Scott with attached letter from CCRP Reconciliation Committee (March 26, 2022)

Dear CCRPC Session and Enas and Swan families,

It has come to our attention that members of CCRPC have raised questions regarding the CCRPC Reconciliation Committee and the revised report. This is understandable, therefore attached is a very brief summary of the background to the revised report. I am sending this to you all first. Session is at liberty to send the explanation to individuals or the whole congregation.

On behalf of the dissolved CCRPC Reconciliation Committee,

Craig Scott

Attached letter:

Dear Christ Church RPC,

The following is a brief statement and explanation of the context of changes to the CCRPC Reconciliation Report.

Timeline

In the first week of February a member of the committee proposed a first draft for the report. The other committee members believed this to be a good report, but it omitted a few items pertinent to reconciliation. These items were then added, and the outcome was the original report sent to presbytery. On February 24, the member who composed the first draft felt convicted that he could not fully endorse the report and desired the first draft to be submitted. The committee discussed whether this should result in a majority and minority report or accommodate for the sake of unity. It was decided to accommodate for the sake of unity and the revised report was then communicated to presbytery.

It is pertinent to state that on February 26 the Enas and Swan families communicated with a member of the committee by Zoom to express offense at some of the language and content of the original report. The committee's language and content were in no way intended to publicly harm anyone's character, so an apology to this effect was made in the revised report. In the estimation of the committee, although the language and some content were omitted in the revised report, the substance remained the same (see below). The committee also apologized on the floor of presbytery for the procedure of revision. This apology was due to the improper timing of the revision with only two days before presbytery and with no prior dialogue with the CCRPC session over the revision.

Substance

As stated above, the committee believes the substance of the report remained the same. In the report the ruling elders were instructed to communicate to the congregation a timeline of events and confess any mistakes, corrections, or sins they believe they committed. The elders were also instructed to improve upon their method of shepherding with more regular household visitations and begin a new study on a confessional standard. The Enas and Swan families were instructed to be patient and charitable towards the elders as they follow their steps of reconciliation. The families were also instructed to be careful of the appearance of a debating spirit and to study and practice the correct interpretation of love covers a multitude of sins.

Hope

As noted in the report, the committee believes if both parties follow the steps of reconciliation, then healing, forgiveness, and peace will abound in CCRPC. The ruling elders have already communicated their confession to the congregation in January, commenced a study on

Timothy Whitmer's The Shepherd-Leader, started a plan to increase household visitations, and are planning a future study of a confessional document. As the elders are already following the steps of reconciliation, there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled. It has been a very difficult two years for everyone associated with CCRPC and it is now time to put the past behind and move on in love, peace, and unity as the congregation seeks to serve Christ.

The CCRPC Reconciliation Committee (dissolved)

Craig Scott

Drew Poplin

David Kleyn

Dear brothers of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery,

We are complaining about the presbytery's assignment of Jonathan Schaefer as the chair of the Commission sent to CCRP to investigate GLG 22.15.

In March, Presbytery sent CCRP a Shepherding Committee to assist our Session in their leadership and the reconciliation process with families in the church. As the chair of this committee, Jonathan Schaefer was aiding our Session. On May 23, Mr. Schaefer sat in on the meeting (via zoom), supporting the Session as they read a document that informed Nathan Enas he should either leave the church or agree to custom vows. Session sent Mr. Schaefer an advance copy of this document.

The Session's actions on May 23 prompted 14 members to sign GLG 22.15 against our Session. Since, as an advisor to the Session, Mr. Schaefer did not counsel them to pursue a different direction before the meeting, nor did he speak against their actions during or after the conference (in fact, later, he said their measures were reasonable in a phone call with Mr. Enas), we believe he supported the Session's actions.

The signers were all shocked to learn that Mr. Schaefer was to be the chair of the Commission to investigate our complaint. How could he be seen as an impartial judge when he was not only involved in but supported the very action that offended us?

Ten days before the Commission's arrival, Kevin Swan asked Mr. Schaefer about this conflict via email (Appendix A) but did not receive a reply. Later, during the Commission meeting, Mr. Schaefer said he didn't respond because he was offended at the harshness of Mr. Swan's email and the accusation of his bias. Mr. Swan simply stated that Mr. Schaefer was directly involved in the actions that drove us to file a complaint, so he clearly shouldn't be the chair of the Commission sent to deal with it; this should not be offensive.

In our August 6th meeting with the Commission, four other families voiced their concerns about Mr. Schaefer's conflict of interest. Mr. Enas even said we were concerned for Mr. Schaefer, as his involvement could have the "appearance of evil" it jeopardized all the work and time everyone was putting into this process. Mr. Schaefer pointed out that everyone was biased—including the members who signed the complaint. Mr. Swan agreed but reminded him we were not the judge in this case and that it would be equally ludicrous if Mr. Swan were the chair of the Commission.

Ultimately, our concerns were ignored.

Mr. Schaefer obviously should have recused himself. We assume Presbytery was unaware of this conflict when they appointed Mr. Schaefer, and Mr. Schaefer said he did not declare it to you. The signers of the complaint do not believe Mr. Schaefer has led the Commission fairly. The Commission's report has further wronged us—particularly Mr. Enas. In direct response to this report, five families are no longer worshipping at CCRP, and Nathan Shaver (interim pulpit supply) announced that his family is leaving at the end of the month.

Presbytery should reject the Commission's report and assign a non-involved Commission to investigate GLP 22.15.

Signed: Kevin Swan
Ginny Enas

Rachelle Swan
Nathan Enas

Stephanie Ek
Adam Ek

Appendix A

Sent: 2022-07-27 12:25:53 UTC

To: Jonathan Schaefer <jonathan.f.schaefer@outlook.com>, CC: Steve Sturm <stevesturm@pobox.com>, Bryan Dage <bryan.dage@gmail.com>, Nathan Eshelman <n.p.eshelman@gmail.com>, and Nathan Enas <enasnate@gmail.com>

Subject: A few items

Jonathan,

I'm not cc'ing the elders on this question.

My family is concerned that you have already demonstrated a bias in favor the elders in our unfortunate situation.

A couple of things stand out.

Via Zoom, you supported the elders as they attempted to force Nathan to either leave the church or sign a highly questionable document. This was the very act that prompted so many CCRP members to sign the complaint against our elders that has been deferred to your commission. For you to possibly agree the families, you would have to condemn your own participation in that event. You have an apparent conflict of interest here.

Secondly, the event that triggered the elders asking Nathan to leave the church was when, after an exhausting three-hour discussion of the Faris situation, Jason casually asked, "So...are we reconciled?" Nathan and I both said there was still work to do, that the inappropriate behaviors called out in the committee's report would need to be demonstrably changed over time, but that we were willing to keep working on it.

This was the "ah-ha!" moment for the session. They claim that the Reconciliation Committee said we should be reconciled, because the session finally confessed their sins. And, since Nathan is still concerned over the elders' behavior, he is not "letting go" of things that were supposed to be forgiven. This gave them their chance to either silence him on these issues or remove him from the congregation.

In the Reconciliation Committee's report, you will come across observations such as these:

It would be naïve on the part of this Committee to believe that the work of reconciling these parties is concluded.... It is the belief of this Committee that as the leaders lead well, and as those who follow receive shepherding well, the flock of Christ will be well-tended.

...what is most needed for reconciliation is humility and patience; commitment to follow through with these steps; as well as the need to build up the relationships between the Session, the Enas and Swan families, and the whole congregation.

Your most recent email displayed what appears to be a bias in favor of the elders' belief that we should already be reconciled when you say,

The original contemplation of the Shepherding Committee's work was a bi-monthly check in with the parties to provide encouragement along the path of reconciliation, which based on the Reconciliation Committee's work **I thought was largely complete.**

The work of reconciliation is far from complete. This is what Nathan and I were telling the elders that evening—there is still work to be done. We have seen some positive changes from the elders, but their recent behavior (which you were a part of) has undone all the hard work to build a foundation upon which we can be reconciled.

I suspect no one in Presbytery knew you were part of the event that inspired the complaint. I don't know why you accepted the role in the commission, when it seems the proper thing to do would have been to recuse yourself.

In short, how are the families to expect an unbiased examination of our grievances when the person heading the commission was involved in the offense? It appears ludicrous, and in a secular court, it would never stand, but I'm open to what you have to say.

Ultimately, my hope for justice, truth, and peace doesn't lie in men, but in Christ, who cares more deeply for His church than I do.

In Him,
Kevin



Christ Church reformed presbyterian

www.ccrp.church • Phone. 317-456-2551

Mailing address: P.O. Box 34182, Indianapolis, IN 46234

Meeting location: 5075 N. Raceway Road, Indianapolis, IN 46234

September 22, 2022

Dear Mr. Kuehner,

Please find the attached complaint regarding the report of the CCRP Commission signed by a communicant member of CCRP.

The signatory submitted this communication to the attention of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery and the CCRP Session on September 16, 2022. The Session acted on September 22, 2022, in constituted court, to transmit this complaint to Presbytery.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason O'Neill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "O".

Jason O'Neill, Clerk

cc: Joel Hart, CCRP Interim Moderator

16 September 2022

To the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery:

This letter is a complaint against the recent action of the Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian (CCRP) Commission given in their report, which was distributed to CCRP on Aug 17, 2022. Their action was to not “sustain complaint 22-15” which is disappointing on its face, since I believed (and still believe) that our complaint (22-15, from 14 members/adherent of CCRP) against an action of the CCRP Session is valid and seeks a vital corrective to a breakdown of Biblical discipline in our church.

Biblical Reconciliation and How It Is Achieved

First, I want to help clarify what Biblical reconciliation is. A good summary is found in our Book of Discipline:

“When the court sees satisfactory evidence of true repentance, it shall restore the person with the same solemnity and publicity that attended the imposition of the censure, and lead its members in granting its forgiveness. Such repentance would include satisfactory attempts at reconciliation and restitution to any parties sinned against.” (BOD I.6.2, page E-8) I realize that no formal censure has been imposed in the case of the CCRP Session, but this Session committed and confessed sins. Biblically, this is only the beginning, not the end, of reconciliation. I will try to explain why.

Sin produces debt, as our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” When God reconciled His people to Himself in Christ, God paid our infinite debts through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. By doing this, God brought us judicially back in harmony, back on speaking terms, back in fellowship with Him, so that we may “counsel again” (re-council or re-concile). This is reconciliation that results from justification, and occurred positionally before we even existed. When this reconciliation resulting from justification is applied to us upon regeneration, personal faith in Christ, and confession/repentance, we are actually and experientially reconciled to Him. However, we continue to sin, and we have a continuing need to confess and repent as part of our sanctification. In this case, we have an additional duty to pay back debts to those we sin against. If we steal, we must repay what we have stolen, plus penalties. If we lie, we must repay with truth and repair any damage caused by the lie. If we misuse God’s name, we must repair any damage caused. If we make an idol, we must destroy the idol and replace it with true worship. Such debt payments are called restitution, and are vital to restoring relationships. This is reconciliation that results from sanctification.

God commands that such restitution be paid willingly from a broken and contrite heart. If the sinner fails to make the repairs of restitution, this indicates a failure to make proper confession and repentance in his heart. However, when we confess, then make restitution, this brings about Biblical reconciliation.

In the case of Session at CCRP, they confessed their sins, and we forgave them. But their sins damaged our relationship and created a deficit of trust from the congregation to its elders. As I told Session in my email (July 19, 2020), “I have lost my confidence in the CCRP Session.” Almost two years later, when Session confessed their mistakes this past January 23 (with the help of the Reconciliation Committee), they published a plan (calling it the “fruits of repentance”) to make repairs and rebuild trust and confidence in them. Following further confession of sins on April 10 (with the help of the Shepherding Committee), there were some positive signs, as they began to deliver on some of their promises, and we grew in hope that

repairs would be made and our confidence would be restored. However, on May 12, 2022, almost 4 months after our last joint meeting with the Reconciliation Committee, at the end of a long Session meeting to discuss another (controversial) topic, elder Jason O'Neill said the following:

“So, we don't have very long for a conversation, we need to cut this off in just a few minutes. But, we haven't sat down with you since the Reconciliation Committee. At the end of that process, after they were dismissed, the Reconciliation Committee sent the letter about the timeline, their reports, the steps the Session were to take, which we're trying to take. The end here is that “there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled. So, I guess, one of the questions that I'm personally curious is, “do you feel that that's the case: are we now united and reconciled?””

We responded that, although there were some encouraging signs, there were also some discouragements, and so there was more work to be done on accomplishing what Session committed to doing to lead to reconciliation.

Joel Hart, interim moderator of Session, apparently agreed that reconciliation is a process, when he concluded, “The Committee encouraged you guys to be patient and charitable toward the elders as they follow the steps of reconciliation. ... I would just encourage you, as the Session is busy and challenged on many fronts, to be patient as they think through the best ways of implementing the steps they've been called to implement by the Presbytery.”

To be clear, we had been patient and charitable since the Reconciliation Committee met with us, and since Presbytery approved their findings and recommendations. No one has disputed this. Yet, within 2 weeks of this Session meeting, the Session, in constituted court, read me a letter stating that I needed to find another congregation, or affirm my full trust in them, and demonstrate my trust by making certain promises that other members are not required to promise, even when they knew they had not fully accomplished “the steps of reconciliation.”

So, I ask this court the question elder O'Neill asked me: “are we now united and reconciled?” If so, I ask you to demonstrate that Session has fully accomplished the steps of reconciliation. If not, I ask you to censure Session for their impatient, uncharitable, and sinful letter of May 23, and the Commission for their erroneous defense of the Session. This is not only for righteousness' sake, but to deter future sins among elders, and to demonstrate to the church of Christ that confession of sin is not sufficient to reconcile brothers who have been alienated by sin, especially when elders have sinned against the sheep that the elders are called to nurture, protect, and teach.

Significant Errors Made by the CCRP Commission and CCRP Session

Error #1: Mr. Enas owes trust to Session.

“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.” (Psalm 118:8-9)

First, there is not a single instance in Scripture or in our Constitution of a command to trust in man. In order to command me or anyone to trust in another man, and thereby bind my conscience, the Commission and the Session will need Scripture. They gave no such reference because there is no such reference. On this basis alone, Session's command, and Commission's support, violate God's word.

Consider an analogy. My children naturally trust me, their father, because I have cared for them since conception. If they tell me they no longer trust me, do I then command them to trust me or else leave my house? Of course not. As the superior in the situation, my duty is to discover how trust has been damaged. It may be my sin that has caused the breakdown in trust. If I confess my sin to my children, is it then correct to command them to trust me? Of course not. Making restitution and correcting my errors will rebuild trust.

It is the same in the church. We trusted our Session for 15 years, and they appeared to treat us decently. We did not interact with the church courts once in this entire time. Only when our former pastor's contra-confessional writings were published, and our pastor gave me a copy of one of them, did I begin to realize that Session had neglected to shepherd us and our pastor in his theology and practice, and only then did my trust begin to waver. When I confronted them in love, they defended our pastor and themselves for 18 months, and only confessed sin after we requested Presbytery to investigate and give them counsel. During this 18 months, we spent hours and hours trying to get answers from them, trying to understand how could all this trouble have happened to our church which had been so blessed prior to this. They never asked us how they could rebuild the trust we had once given them implicitly, like children to parents. They have never thanked me for bringing this matter to Presbytery. But they have mocked me in public for saying that my complaints demonstrated my love for them.

I say this next statement carefully, but emphatically: How dare Session — who neglected my family and church for years, who abused me for months while I tried to get answers from them, who have turned my fellow church members against me and my family, who have avoided discipline at all costs — how dare they command me to trust them! And how dare this Commission defend such a Session and emphasize this Session's erroneous and abusive command. This command should demonstrate to Spirit-led and honest men that there is a great deficit of love, theological understanding, and wisdom in some of the elders of this Presbytery.

By the way, for the benefit of the Commission, and for those who agree with them, there is NOT a “world of difference between trusting elders and putting trust in princes.” They are all men placed in authority by God's ordinance. Just read the Westminster Larger Catechism:

Q. 124. Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment?

A. By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

Error #2: Mr. Enas must submit to Session and all church courts, including the Commission itself.

The Commission rightly quoted Scripture and the Constitution on page 4 in their report. But they interpreted these quotations wrongly and selectively, making their applications to me erroneous in the present situation. Each quote has a key phrase that the Commission overlooked. I will copy their quotes and underline the key phrase:

Hebrews 13:17. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Larger catechism 127 “The honor which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behavior; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due

submission to their corrections; fidelity to, defense and maintenance of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honor to them and to their government.”

DCG 7.13 “After the roll has been determined, all the communicant members of the new congregation shall stand and give assent to the Covenant of Communicant Membership and to this additional pledge:

‘Do you solemnly covenant with God and with one another that you will live together in brotherly unity as an organized congregation on the basis of the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America; that you will be obedient to the courts that are over you in the Lord; and that you will, by a godly life, seek to promote the purity, peace, and prosperity of the church as a whole?’”

Membership vow 4. “Do you promise to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America? Do you recognize your responsibility to work with others in the church and do you promise to support and encourage them in their service to the Lord? In case you should need correction in doctrine or life, do you promise to respect the authority and discipline of the church?”

The Commission emphasized submission and obedience, but they neglected to qualify these words properly. Submission and obedience are only commanded by God “in the Lord” only, as those who are accountable to God. The Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 30.2) summarizes this important doctrine as follows:

“To these officers, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed: by virtue whereof, they have power respectively to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.”

John Calvin put it this way, in his Institutes of the Christian Religion (chapter 11.1): “This command concerning remitting and retaining sins, and that promise made to Peter concerning binding and loosing, ought to be referred to nothing but the ministry of the word.”

In other words, authority is not inherent in any man. Rather, authority among men is only derived from God’s command, and the authority only exists in God’s word. When men command what God commands, God’s authority is present, and all men must obey. However, men ought not seek to bind one’s conscience where God has not. Our Confession (chapter 20.2) states:

“God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.”

The CCRP Session and Commission both apparently believe that I may be violating my conscience in being a member of CCRP. The Commission wrote, “the Session is not seeking to dismiss Mr. Enas, but to work with him to shepherd him to a congregation where he can hold his membership vows in good conscience.” But I declare that I have never offended my

conscience or God's word in my church membership, and these ministers of God's courts should not declare otherwise.

Error #3: The Commission believes purity and peace/unity can conflict with each other.

The Commission stated, "While a desire for the purity of the Church is a noble and necessary thing, the Commission is very concerned that in this case it has been to the detriment of church unity." It is possible to have an ungodly peace and unity. Just observe all of the modern unity of the wicked, seeking to disregard God's law in public and private. But God commands purity and righteousness first, and as a fruit of righteousness, He grants peace to His people. Again, God has spoken:

- "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33)
- "Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever." (Isaiah 32:16-17)
- "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

A more insidious problem in this church is elders who do not lead in righteousness and humility, calling evil what is good, and calling good what is evil. Our Session began well, confessing their sins, making a plan to lead well, and then beginning to execute the plan. And we were waiting patiently and praying for them to succeed. It is sad they grew weary in doing well, and then turned on me, leading others to believe I am the problem, yet without any preventive or corrective discipline. Now the Commission has joined in their error.

Error #4: The Commission's work has the appearance of partiality.

The Commission's report is so biased, it will not stand in the Day of Judgment. How can I be so sure? Because I sat with 7 other concerned members of CCRP and the Commission for over 3 hours (August 6), during which the CCRP members did most of the talking; but the only words or ideas that the Commission mentioned from this meeting in its report were a few of my words that the Commission twisted to support their erroneous conclusions. This is not justice, and appears to be partiality in its worst form, in which God cannot be pleased. How can I be so sure? God has spoken in His word:

- "You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality." (Deuteronomy 16:19)
- "Partiality in judging is not good." (Proverbs 24:23)
- "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality." (1 Timothy 5:21)

Error #5: The Commission states that Mr. Enas has broken his vow, yet the Commission has not charged him with sin.

The Commission made following statements in their report:

- "The CCRP Session has indicated that Mr Enas's actions do not align with his membership vows."
- "The Commission observes a disrespect for the Session that has grown out of mistrust and suspicion. This is contrary to the vow to, "Respect the authority and discipline of the church." Mr. Enas maintains his submission to the Session, but by his actions, identified

by the Session in the May 23 letter, and in numerous other documented actions, he demonstrates an unwillingness to do so.”

- “This open suspicion and lack of trust (which is clearly observable by the Commission) has bred a lack of respect for the elders, which has no place in God’s church.”
- “The Commission finds Mr. Enas’ lack of reconciliation at this point very concerning.”
- “Mr. Enas appears to have put himself in this position of being “irreconcilable”, which is a dangerous place, and the Commission counsels Mr. Enas to give careful thought and prayer to his situation.”

Taking these statements at face value, one must conclude that the Commission believes that I have broken my vows to God and the church, that I am breeding disrespect for the elders, and that I am unwilling and even unable to reconcile with Session. Just like it is sin to break a marriage vow, so it is sin to break a vow to the Bride of Christ. As our Confession (chapter 22) states,

4. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation. It cannot oblige to sin: but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man’s own hurt. Nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics, or infidels.
5. A vow is of the like nature with a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the like religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness.

Yet, the Commission gave me the following answers (email dated Sept 12) to my follow-up questions concerning their report:

“Does the Commission believe the Session has charged me with sin?

Answer: No.

In your report, did the Commission charge me with sin (formally or informally)?

Answer: No.”

I don’t believe I have broken my vows, but apparently both the Commission and Session do. It is inappropriate to publicly castigate me as a putative sinner, but not take appropriate loving disciplinary action as Christ commands. Either they should retract their statements publicly as erroneous, or they should act on their beliefs. This duplicity is certainly a cause for God’s judgment on His church.

Final comments

This Presbytery is broken. Righteousness and justice are under attack from within. Christian love has been imprisoned. There is a dark cloud enshrouding the people of God. From my vantage point, the responsibility for this damage rests squarely on your shoulders. You are not all individually responsible, but if you do not speak out against injustice, you will share in the blame of this court.

In the past, there have been calls for prayer and fasting and repentance, but I have not seen the fruits of repentance. I see worldly divisions, insensitivity to the horrors of sin, a vacuum of brotherly love and “speaking the truth in love,” crumbling churches, and sheep without a shepherd.

God is shaking this Presbytery. This Presbytery has proven repeatedly that it cannot discipline its own elders, despite being presented with evidence of wrongdoing. The cases of LeFebvre, Olivetti, and now Faris are crying out to you. God’s discipline is palpable. Humility, repentance,

and restitution are a sure path to God's mercy; but obstinance and complacency will be your doom, and many will suffer as a result. And the glorious Name of our blessed Redeemer will be further blasphemed among the nations. Instead of a City on a Hill, whose light cannot be hidden, and whose Messiah is lifted up for all to see and fear, there will be a white-washed tomb full of lifeless bones.

There is yet a Day of salvation. It is called Today. But that Day is quickly fading, and darkness approaches. The time to act is now. Jesus says, "Act like men!" (1 Corinthians 16:13) and "My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:38)

The words of Jesus to His church are completely relevant to today:

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" (Revelation 3:1-6)

Recommendations

1. That Presbytery not receive the report of the CCRP Commission.
2. That Presbytery adjudicates the written evidence of sin in the CCRP Commission's report, demonstrated above, and censures (with expectation of proper restitution) the Commission in justice for the good of the Commission, for the good of those who have been sinned against (including Mr. Enas) by their actions, and the glory of Christ in His church, for whom Jesus died.
3. That Presbytery appeal to Synod to create an impartial judicial commission to investigate and adjudicate the sins of neglect and abuse committed by the Session at CCRP against past and present members and guests of this congregation, along with any necessary restitution;
4. That Presbytery humbles itself, confesses its corporate sins of neglecting discipline, justice, and sanctification, and establishes an enduring restitution commission to seek out those saints this Presbytery has harmed so as to pursue restitution and repair for the sake of Christ's blessed Name and Body.

For Christ's crown and covenant,

Nathan Enas
Member, Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian

Appendix 1

Some Relevant Points from a Recent Sermon on Forgiveness, by Nathan Eshelman (May 8, 2022)

- “Forgiveness requires accountability in the Scriptures, because if we are not going to hold a sin against another person, that means that we have to negotiate the terms of that forgiveness according to God’s word.”
- “Forgiveness is not a pass for you to continue to sin against another person.”
- “Forgiveness is not forgetting.”
- “Forgiveness does not mean that everything is back to normal. There may be things that are needed for reconciliation, things that need to be worked through.”

Appendix 2

Divergent Answers to Some Key Questions

Key question #1: Must reconciliation follow immediately (or even quickly) after confession and repentance and forgiveness?

Answer from CCRP Commission: “Yes”

- “Regarding accepting the Reconciliation Committee’s work, Mr. Enas has declared that he is not yet reconciled to the Session, even after a full confession of specific sins by the Session has been made on April 10, and Mr. Enas has offered his forgiveness in writing. BOD 3.3 tells us, “If the sinner confesses and repents, there must be forgiveness and reconciliation, and the matter shall be closed. You have won your brother. Such closure may include counsel or censure appropriate to the circumstances.”
- The Reconciliation Committee wrote in a March 26 letter, “As the elders are already following the steps of reconciliation, there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled.” Mr. Enas, however, has expressed that he does not agree with the Reconciliation Committee on this and other points. The Commission finds Mr. Enas’ lack of reconciliation at this point very concerning.
- “To be reconciled over a matter that has been settled and forgiveness offered – as discussed above, is a Biblical and confessional requirement.”

Answer from CCRP Session: “Yes”

- “We know this is a serious and difficult conversation, but we believe it is our responsibility to encourage you in your spiritual growth, which in this case means shepherding you to a place you can worship with greater trust of the leadership, unless you can continue in full affirmation of the questions and actions above.” (Letter read to Mr. Enas in Constituted Court, May 23, 2022)
- “The Session has confessed sin and mistakes in shepherding, asked for forgiveness from the congregation, and has committed to new courses of action in its care for the congregation. ... However, interactions in recent weeks with the members involved have confirmed that we have reached an impasse over the affirmation and acceptance of the Reconciliation Committee’s recommendations, the members’ level of trust and confidence in the Session, and, in turn, our ability to shepherd these members (and

potentially other members) in unity at CCRP.” (Communication 22-14, Letter to Presbytery from CCRP Session, May 28, 2022)

Answer from Scripture: “No”

- “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed. And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong.” (Numbers 5:5-7)
- “Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.” Nathan then said to David, “You are the man! ... Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.”” (2 Samuel 12: 5-14)
- “Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:8-10)

Answer from RPCNA Constitution: “No”

- “When the court sees satisfactory evidence of true repentance, it shall restore the person with the same solemnity and publicity that attended the imposition of the censure, and lead its members in granting its forgiveness. Such repentance would include satisfactory attempts at reconciliation and restitution to any parties sinned against.” (BOD I.6.2, page E-8)

Key Question #2: Who is causing the trouble at CCRP?

Answer from CCRP Commission: “Mr. Enas is causing the trouble at CCRP.”

- “The CCRP Session has indicated that Mr Enas’s actions do not align with his membership vows. They desire Mr. Enas to be able to demonstrate a trust of the Session and a willingness to “submit to the direction and oversight of the CCRP elders”. The Commission finds that these are reasonable, biblical requirements also expressed in the subordinate standards of our RPCNA Constitution.”
- “The Commission observes a push for the purity of the church at the expense of peace and prosperity as a whole.”
- “The Commission observes a disrespect for the Session that has grown out of mistrust and suspicion. This is contrary to the vow to, “Respect the authority and discipline of the church.” Mr. Enas maintains his submission to the Session, but by his actions, identified by the Session in the May 23 letter, and in numerous other documented actions, he demonstrates an unwillingness to do so.”
- “This open suspicion and lack of trust (which is clearly observable by the Commission) has bred a lack of respect for the elders, which has no place in God’s church.”
- “The Commission finds Mr. Enas’ lack of reconciliation at this point very concerning.”

- “Mr. Enas appears to have put himself in this position of being “irreconcilable”, which is a dangerous place, and the Commission counsels Mr. Enas to give careful thought and prayer to his situation.”

Corollary answer from Commission: “Session is not causing the trouble at CCRP.”

- “[Session] are asking him to accept this counsel or to work with them so that he can continue to remain a member in good standing of the church, and for the sake of peace in the church.”
- “The CCRP Session has indicated that Mr Enas’s actions do not align with his membership vows. They desire Mr. Enas to be able to demonstrate a trust of the Session and a willingness to “submit to the direction and oversight of the CCRP elders”. The Commission finds that these are reasonable, biblical requirements also expressed in the subordinate standards of our RPCNA Constitution.”
- “This demonstrates the Session’s graciousness to Mr. Enas in not desiring to impugn his motives but to accept his statements at face value.”
- “Regarding the queries and stipulations that the Session gave to Mr. Enas should he desire to stay at CCRP, the Commission finds that these are both appropriate and necessary for the peace of the congregation moving forward.”
- “The Commission believes that the May 23 letter was a reasonable and wise communication for the good of Mr. Enas, the congregation of CCRP, for the peace, purity and progress of the church.”
- “Contrary to the claim in 22-15, the Session is not seeking to dismiss Mr. Enas, but to work with him to shepherd him to a congregation where he can hold his membership vows in good conscience.”
- “The Commission finds that the Session’s questions to Mr. Enas to be affirmed ... are reasonable expressions of trust that are necessary and essential to healthy congregational life.”
- “The Session has the authority to ask Mr. Enas to fulfill his membership vows, but first they offered a solution that they hoped might solve the problem.”

Answer from the CCRP Reconciliation Committee: “CCRP Session is causing the trouble at CCRP.”

- “For the Session, there are two long-term changes which will help guard against the lack of diligence in shepherding both the members and pastor of the congregation in the future, being mindful that elders have a particular responsibility and authority in the Church, which holds them to not only a higher standard, but also a stricter judgment.”
- “There is a need for the Session to grow in an active approach to shepherding the flock.”
- “It is the counsel of this Committee that having systematic pastoral visits ensures each family is receiving care, relationships are built between the elders and households of the congregation, and each member is given an opportunity to speak openly but privately with the elders. By regularly engaging each household in their home, asking about their growth under the means of grace and of their walk with the Lord, the elders and members alike will grow in their communication and care.”
- “This Committee would encourage the CCRP Session to grow in their ability and readiness to have direct confrontation. ... the lack thereof leads to a lack of communication and perceived lack of transparency.”
- “There is a need for the Session to grow in theological discernment and zeal for doctrinal purity. ... This Committee would seek to exhort and encourage these men in their duty as elders to guard the purity of both the doctrine and life of the Church; and, in areas which they are theologically weak, to diligently study as issues arise. ... Doing so would be an aid not only to the Session, but to the congregation, that they too would

have a greater understanding of and zeal for reformed theology as confessed in the Westminster Standards.”

- “And indeed, there was warrant for [bringing a petition to Presbytery regarding Session], as the Session of CCRP did neglect in part to shepherd both the Pastor and the congregation through this difficult tribulation.”
- “One further application for the Presbytery, which would aid our brothers in their growth in these areas, is to form a two-man Shepherding Committee, which would meet at least every other month with the Session ... in order to ensure that they are indeed following through on their tasks and growing in their active shepherding.”
- “This Committee submits that what is most needed for reconciliation is humility and patience; commitment to follow through with these steps; as well as the need to build up the relationships between the Session, the Enas and Swan families, and the whole congregation.”

Appendix 3

Some Important Background Narrative

To understand the basis of Communication 22-15 and this present complaint, we need only recall the Revised Report of CCRP Reconciliation Committee, which was received by Presbytery during Business Session #3 on March 3, 2022. (I recommend re-reading this report, and even the original, but overridden, report from that Committee.) In this report, the Committee stated:

“It would be naïve on the part of this Committee to believe that the work of reconciling these parties is concluded. ... this Committee believes that what is now needed is ... commitment and follow-through to humbly grow in the following ways. For the Session, there are two long-term changes which will help guard against the lack of diligence in shepherding both the members and pastor of the congregation in the future, being mindful that elders have a particular responsibility and authority in the Church, which holds them to not only a higher standard, but also a stricter judgment. Likewise for the families, this Committee has provided two encouragements which will aid in going forward with reconciliation.”

Note that the Committee admits that reconciliation is not concluded as of March 3 when Craig Scott delivered the report. It is also very important to note that, as of January 23, the CCRP Session had already read a public letter of confession to the entire congregation following Lord’s Day worship, in which letter, Session laid out their plan (called “Fruits of Repentance — Steps for the Future”):

1. “Enact regular pastoral visits”
2. “Develop [editorial] expectations” for future pastors
3. “Restart regular fellowship events” (stopped for Covid)
4. “Provide more comprehensive updates of Presbytery and Synod activity”
5. “Provide input and assistance to Presbytery” in improving unclear policies and processes related to controversial viewpoints
6. “Work with Reconciliation Committee ... to pursue reconciliation within the congregation”

Even though they repented in this letter, they still knew that there was work to be done to “pursue reconciliation” in the congregation (step 6). This reflects an important Biblical concept: confession of sin is necessary for reconciliation, but confession is not sufficient to produce (or

require) reconciliation. This notion is revealed clearly in the “less formal” section I of the Book of Discipline, “when the church member ... has admitted his sin,” as follows:

“When the court sees satisfactory evidence of true repentance, it shall restore the person with the same solemnity and publicity that attended the imposition of the censure, and lead its members in granting its forgiveness. Such repentance would include satisfactory attempts at reconciliation and restitution to any parties sinned against.” (BOD I.6.2, page E-8)

Hence, Session properly committed to perform practical steps that would demonstrate the “fruits of repentance”. Their confession and repentance were essential, and their plan of steps toward reconciliation was encouraging, but Session did not immediately or even expeditiously carry out their plan. They performed steps 2 and 3 quite readily, and attempted step 4 with some hiccups, but they have failed in, arguably, the most important steps (1 and 6). As of writing this complaint, Session has not yet conducted a “regular pastoral visit” with my family (or any family who has formally complained), and, yet, they believe all the prerequisites for reconciliation have been accomplished.

I pause to ask, Is this proper behavior for the representatives of God’s people, who are called to be above reproach?

As to step 6, when the Reconciliation Committee submitted their “revised” report to Presbytery, James Faris (then moderator of CCRP Session) and the Second RP Session immediately and very quickly wrote and submitted a letter to Presbytery challenging the Reconciliation Committee’s revised report and its recommendation to send a follow-up “Shepherding Committee” to CCRP for an entire year to “ensure and aid the Session in growing in their active shepherding of CCRP”. In Mr. Faris’ speech at Presbytery, he stated that “as interim moderator I can tell you that there are those, and this was reported to the [Reconciliation] Committee, this was one of the communications from one of the [CCRP] elders, who said — and he may be happy to say it here, too, but it was said to the Committee as well as to the other elders — that this is just not an acceptable solution, this is the sort of thing that may be the death knell of this congregation.” It is very significant that, at the very same Presbytery, following Mr. Scott’s report and the speech of Mr. Faris against the revised report, CCRP elder Dale Koons rose to state that he would be resigning from Session, and he intimated that another elder might soon resign. As it turned out, Mr. Koons did not resign as he stated, but CCRP elder Andrew Falk did resign from Session, and the denomination, within 2 weeks of Presbytery (on March 13 after Lord’s Day worship). Indeed, at Presbytery, Mr. Faris also resigned as interim moderator of CCRP Session.

Again, I pause to ask, Does this sound like a Session eager to “work to pursue reconciliation within the congregation”? Does this sound like the beginning of a quick and successful effort to accomplish reconciliation? Were I and the other members of CCRP expected to be encouraged by these events at our near-term prospects for reconciliation?

Yet, even during the same Presbytery, there were forces at work to diminish our prospects even further. Mr. Scott, under duress on the floor of Presbytery to defend the Committee’s work, changed the original recommended remit of the Shepherding Committee from “ensure and aid the Session in growing in their active shepherding of CCRP” to “aid and encourage both parties in following through with reconciliation.” (Whether this change was made decently and in order, without convening the entire Committee, I will leave to the experts.) While this change certainly fit with a hypothesized narrative that the troubles at CCRP were a combination of the sins of both the complaining families and their elders, I testify that the families were not quarrelsome or any of the other terrible accusations levied against them throughout this entire affair. As the Reconciliation Committee wrote in their apology in the revised report, the “families brought forward their petition, at great expense, out of fervent love for Christ and the

purity of His Church. And indeed, there was warrant for doing so, as the Session of CCRP did neglect in part to shepherd both the Pastor and the congregation through this difficult tribulation.”

Finally, with regard to the work of the Reconciliation Committee, which Adam Kuehner praised on the floor of Presbytery as “unprecedented”, I must emphasize one important fact that may have escaped this court. On March 3, Presbytery dismissed the Reconciliation Committee per Recommendation #4. Yet, this “dissolved” Committee, with no more commission from this court, acted to send a letter to CCRP (on March 26), but apparently not to Presbytery. It is this letter that has been repeatedly quoted by Session and the Commission, in which the dissolved Committee concludes,

“As the elders are already following the steps of reconciliation, there is no reason why the entire congregation should not be united and reconciled. It has been a very difficult two years for everyone associated with CCRPC and it is now time to put the past behind and move on in love, peace, and unity as the congregation seeks to serve Christ.”

It is not clear what exactly the dissolved Committee meant, but an equally valid interpretation is that they were expecting full completion of the “steps of reconciliation” prior to “the entire congregation [being] united and reconciled.” Yet, Session and the Commission have quoted this unofficial statement to “prove” that the Committee thought reconciliation should be completed now, and that any complaints or questions or even mentions of “reconciliation” should cease.

Nevertheless, our hope is in Yahweh our God who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 146:5-6) Hence, the families at CCRP were encouraged that there were still written commitments from Session and a newly appointed Shepherding Committee to help our church on the road to reconciliation. Indeed, within about 3 weeks, the Shepherding Committee (i.e. Craig Scott and Jonathan Schaefer) met with Session and, then, with the two concerned couples. When this Committee finished listening to us, Mr. Schaefer said he had a good idea of what was needed. Thankfully, at the next Lord’s Day worship, Session included a confession of their particular sins particularly during the prayer of confession. This was very encouraging, and we were hopeful that the “fruits of repentance” and the “steps of reconciliation” would be pursued zealously and publicly for the encouragement of all. Sadly, this did not happen.

September 21, 2022

Dear brothers in Christ:

This communication petitions the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (GLGP) to update the GLGP Child Protection Policy (CPP), replacing the current version with the version attached. This proposed update seeks to edit the existing policy to address the difficulties that we discovered when we attempted to implement the current policy.

I served on the original CPP committee and then as Youth Director for Covfamikoi. I witnessed firsthand some of the practical challenges that arose as the Covfamikoi leadership team sought to implement the CPP. In conversation with others who have been involved in presbytery youth ministry (or who have considered becoming involved but have declined because of uneasiness about the CPP in its current form), I have observed a growing consensus about some of the unintended consequences the policy currently in effect.

When the CPP committee undertook its work, it was with full awareness that experience would likely reveal areas for improvement. This petition is offered in that spirit. It seeks to build on the work that has been done, strengthen the policy's efficacy, while also mitigating some of the accidental impediments to ministry.

The updated version proposed here offers a variety of superficial changes, simplifying and streamlining, and making language more consistent. For example, I have attempted to clean up the definitions section and then to use those terms consistently through the document. I have also eliminated some section headings (e.g., III.B, III.C, IV)—not by changing the substance, but by incorporating all essential points elsewhere.

More substantively, this proposed revision addresses two major issues:

- 1) *It distinguishes between staff and volunteers.* The proposed revision maintains the higher bar for staff (e.g., background check and session endorsement), but would give more flexibility to event leadership to recruit extra help for more limited roles at an event. For example, at Covfamikoi, it has been the longstanding norm to solicit volunteers during the conference—e.g., an extra person to help for a couple hours one day with one of the children's classes. In my proposed revision, when working with a group of children, at least one staff member would have to be present at all times, but event leadership would be able to supplement with volunteers to meet the target adult-to-student ratio.
- 2) *It distinguishes between initial response and full investigation.* In a case of suspected abuse, the current policy requires that communication *precede* the safeguarding of children. Step 1 directs event leadership to contact local authorities, the parents and guardians of anyone involved, and the moderator(s) of their session(s). "Step 2" then reads: "After reporting the matter to the proper persons, event leadership shall attempt to ascertain basic facts and take reasonable steps to safeguard potential victims." While the desire for transparency is laudable, this ordering of steps risks delaying event leadership's initial response to rumors of abuse—a response that should include not only some basic finding of fact but the immediate implementation of prudential safeguards to minimize the likelihood of harm to potential victims. The present ordering of steps also risks making reporting less effective in cases where event leadership lacks the basic knowledge needed for the report to carry its full weight. The proposed alternative would allow event leadership to respond immediately to rumored abuse, try to get some basic handle on what may have happened, and then to communicate accordingly. See Section IV in the revised version.

I have recommended several more minor changes as well:

- 1) *Ratios.* I have suggested a target adult-to-youth ratio of 1:8 for younger children five and younger and 1:12 for youth, ages 6+ (vs. 1:10 for youth of all ages in the current policy). See III.C.1 in the proposed revision.
- 2) *Session endorsement.* One of the issues we ran into with Covfamikoi was needing a letter of recommendation for staff members (see III.A.2.c in the current CPP). However, we found ourselves recruiting almost up to the start of the conference, leaving little time to gather a full-fledged recommendation. It would preserve the essential intent and be far more workable in practice for event leadership to ask a pastor whether they are aware of any reason a person should not serve.
- 3) *Overnights.* The current CPP forbids any staff from sharing “the same sleeping space with that child or youth” unless they are a parent or guardian of the youth. (See III.D.2.c.) However, for overnight events, such as Fall Ministry Project or Winter Conference, the avoidance of one risk creates a greater one: unsupervised youth. The alternative is to cease ministry on the established model.
- 4) *Movies and humor.* Movies and humor do call for discernment on the part of event leadership and staff. However, as a matter of policy, this section is particularly difficult to enforce and open to differences in interpretation, which is why provisions of this sort are not typically found in child protection policies. See III.D.8-9 in the current CPP.
- 5) *Transportation.* The proposed revision clarifies that transportation to and from an event is the parent’s responsibility. See the current CPP III.D.13.

As with the original CPP committee, I do not think this proposed update marks the final word on the presbytery CPP. But from personal experience and conversation with others who have been involved in presbytery youth ministry, I believe that it offers an improvement over the status quo—one that will more fully reconcile the twin aims of preserving ministry and safeguarding children.

Stephen Shipp
Ruling Elder, Bloomington Reformed Presbytery Church



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery takes the protection of her covenant children very seriously. The Covenant of Baptism, noting that children are a possession of God entrusted to the care of his or her parents, requires watchful protection of covenant children by the entire church.

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."
~ Matthew 19:14 ~*

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)

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I. INTRODUCTION AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

A. Purpose

These procedures and policies have been developed to ensure a safe, loving environment conducive to the protection and care of children during youth ministry programs of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (GLGP) of the RPCNA.

B. Biblical Mandate

Matthew 19:14 - Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

John 21:15 – So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

Ephesians 5:3 - But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.

C. Confessional Foundation

Confession of Faith 1.6 – . . . There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

Testimony XXIV.30 – Education of children is primarily the responsibility of parents, though they may delegate part of this responsibility to the church or other agencies . . .

Directory for Church Government I.8 – Members should willingly consecrate their talents and gifts to the service of Christ. They should prayerfully consider accepting a position in the church when called to do so.

II. SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

A. The Scope of This Policy

This Policy applies to GLGP programs for youth under the age of 18. This Policy provides basic guidelines that are to be read and interpreted in light of the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Those responsible for presbytery youth programs may create additional or stricter procedures.

The policy applies as well to vulnerable adults.

B. Definitions of Key Terms

- 1) **Child Abuse** – Child neglect, child physical abuse, or child sexual abuse.
 - a) **Child Neglect** – Depriving a minor of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, safety, and medical care.
 - b) **Child Physical Abuse** – Any use of violence or threats of violence toward a minor, apart from the proper and biblical sphere of a parent’s loving and corrective discipline of their child.
 - c) **Child Sexual Abuse** – Any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, or emotional) between a minor and another person in which the minor is being used for the sexual arousal, molestation, or gratification of the perpetrator or any other person.
- 2) **Event Staff (“Staff”)** – Anyone eighteen (18) years of age or older who is approved to administer a GLGP youth program under the terms of this Policy.
- 3) **Presbytery Youth Leadership (“Leadership”)** – Any GLGP-sanctioned leadership of an official GLGP youth program (e.g., Covfamikoι Director, Youth Secretary, Youth Committee).
- 4) **Volunteer.** Any adult (18 years or older) or youth, ages 13-17 year of age, approved under this policy to assist in the care of youth at a GLGP youth program.
- 5) **Vulnerable Adult** – Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend, or is otherwise particularly susceptible to coercion or abuse (e.g., those who are mentally or physically disabled).
- 6) **Youth (a.k.a., children, minors).** Those the age of 18 years of age or younger.

III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Selection of Workers

Only approved and Staff and Volunteers may serve in the various youth ministries of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

- 1) In order to be eligible to serve as Staff, a person must:
 - a) Be aged eighteen (18) years of older;
 - b) Be a communicant member in good standing of a congregation of the RPCNA for the past six months;

- c) Submit the Youth Ministry Application and Disclosure Form (see Appendix B) to event leadership; and
 - d) Complete a criminal background check through the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery's MinistrySafe account;
 - e) Satisfy the training requirements of event leadership.
- 2) In order to be eligible to serve as a Volunteer, a person must:
- a) be at least 13 years old;
 - b) be a member in good standing of an RPCNA congregation; and
 - c) must remain under Staff supervision.

B. Maintenance of Records

Staff and Volunteer applications, disclosure statements, and up-to-date background checks are to be stored in the Presbytery's MinistrySafe Account.

C. Supervision and Visibility

- 1) Wherever possible, a ratio of 1 Staff or Volunteer to every 12 students should be maintained during any presbytery youth programming. For children five and younger, Leadership should make every reasonable effort to achieve a ratio of approximately 1 adult for every 8 children.
- 2) Regardless of group size, Leadership must assign at least one approved adult who must be present with any group of youth at all times.
- 3) Where there are only two Staff or Volunteers in a group, they must be from different households.
- 4) Some youth classes or small groups may have only one approved adult in attendance during the class session. In this case, there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. In addition, designated personnel should be on call to provide supervision and assistance as needed.
- 5) Clear visibility should be maintained at all times, and doors left unlocked while rooms are in use.
- 6) Personnel should avoid being alone with a child in a room.
- 7) Two or more personnel designated by Leadership may speak with a single child when appropriate (e.g., for counseling or discipline) as long as clear visibility is maintained and any doors left open or unlocked.

8) Staff and Volunteers should engage in active supervision while youth are under their care.

D) Restroom Guidelines

1) *Children five years of age and younger* should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, personnel should escort children in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. Personnel should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. Personnel should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

2) If a child is taking longer than seems necessary or calls for help, Staff should assist, but leave doors open.

3) *For youth over the age of five*, when possible, at least one male Staff or Volunteer should take two or more boys to the restroom and at least one female Staff or Volunteer should take two or more girls. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the youth back to the classroom when the youth are done.

E) Check-in and Check-out

Presbytery Youth Leadership will create a process for children fifth grade and younger to be signed in and out only by a child's parents/guardians, or individuals approved by them who are at least 13 years of age or older.

F) Discipline

1) Correction should be calm, respectful, and discrete; it should not be harsh or belittling.

2) Staff will not administer physical discipline and will only restrain a child if judged necessary to prevent physical injury.

3) Parents should be contacted for any serious or persistent discipline issues.

4) Staff may restrict participation in particular activities. Decisions about suspension or expulsion from a program will be made by Leadership.

G) Transportation of Children

1) It is the responsibility of parents, not Staff or Leadership, to secure transportation to and from events.

2) During an event, if transportation is required, before a Youth may ride in a staff member's personal vehicle, the driver must be approved by Leadership and the parents must give consent. Staff must also possess adequate liability insurance.

3) When youth are transported during events for presbytery youth activities, they shall be transported in groups of three or more youth, with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle.

H) Overnight Trips

Boys and girls should be lodged separately, with at least two male Staff for the boys and two female Staff for the girls.

I) Sick Children

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all involved in presbytery youth programs. To that end, parents will be encouraged to be considerate and not to have their children participate if they have common symptoms of a contagious illness (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea).

Youth who are observed by Staff to be ill will be separated to the extent possible and their parent or guardian will be asked to pick the child up.

J) Medications

1) Except in a medical emergency, Staff will not administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under their care absent a plan that includes prior written consent. Nor may children administer any medications to themselves or others absent a plan that includes prior written consent. In no case may one child share a medication with another child.

2) Families participating in a youth program will be required to complete a Medical Release Form. Leadership or Staff will work with families to have a medical action plan on file for youth with a known condition that may require treatment during an event (e.g., need for an inhaler or epi-pen).

K) Accidental Injury

In the event that a child is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

a) For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, Volunteers will provide basic first aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

b) For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent(s) and/or guardian will immediately be summoned by Staff in

addition to Leadership (or designee). If Staff or Leadership judge necessary, an ambulance will be called.

c) For injuries requiring treatment by a medical profession, Leadership will ensure relevant personnel complete an incident report.

L) Training

Leadership must review the child protection policy with Staff.

M) Communicating the Presbytery Child Protection Policy

This Policy is to be made available to anyone attending a GLGP youth program.

IV. REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE

- A) Anyone suspecting abuse or neglect must report that suspected abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities as required under applicable law.
- B) Anyone suspecting that abuse has occurred during a presbytery youth program and involving a participant should immediately notify Leadership so that the matter may be responded to in a timely manner and reasonable precautions be taken.
- C) Leadership will promptly seek to ascertain the basic facts.
- D) Unless there is clear and immediate indication that the accusation is without merit, then Leadership will relieve the suspected offender of all responsibilities involving contact with youth, pending further review. Leadership will implement measures to separate the alleged offender from the alleged victim for the duration of the presbytery event, as well as to prevent unsupervised contact by the accused with other youth.
- E) Once leadership has conducted its initial inquiry and taken initial steps to safeguard potential victims, leadership will promptly notify the parents or guardians of any youth involved, whether an alleged abuser or an alleged victim.
- F) Leadership will notify the chairman of the Ad Interim Commission (AIC) of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery (GLGP), which will ensure that the GLGP's insurance carrier is notified, as well as the moderators of the sessions of the parties to the allegations.
- G) Any other initial steps taken in response to an allegation of child abuse or neglect will be directed by the AIC (e.g., designating a media spokesperson), consistent with its authority and the *Constitution of the RPCNA*.
- H) All steps taken by presbytery leadership will be documented and will be taken without undue delay.

- I) All communications related to any alleged child abuse or neglect shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those involved, including the alleged child victim and the person suspected of child abuse, while at the same time ensuring that those responsible for addressing the situation, including civil authorities, remain fully informed. The identities of minors will be withheld and protected.

- J) Presbytery will seek forgiveness and reconciliation in Christ between all parties involved in an investigation or trial, and the restoration of the penitent to communicant membership in the Church, in accord with the *Constitution of the RPCNA*.

V. APPENDIX A: STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING ABUSE

Below are online resources from each state's (under the jurisdiction of the Great Lake Gulf Presbytery) government outlining mandatory reporting requirements and giving points of contact for each state for reporting at the time of this writing; links and information may be updated and should be checked for the most up-to-date information. Furthermore, www.childwelfare.gov provides a centralized library for state laws and handbooks.

Alabama

<https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-protective-services/written-report-of-suspected-child-abuse-neglect-for-mandated-reporters/>

Florida

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/>

Georgia

<https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx>

Illinois

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/safekids/reporting/Pages/index.aspx>

Indiana

<https://www.in.gov/dcs/contact-us/child-abuse-and-neglect-hotline/>

Kentucky

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dCBS/dpp/cpb/Pages/default.aspx>

Michigan

https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_7119_50648_44443-157836--,00.html

North Carolina

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/child-protective-services/about-child-abuse-and-child-neglect>

Ohio

<https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/reportchildabuseandneglect.stm>

South Carolina

<https://dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/report-child-abuse-and-neglect/>

Tennessee

<https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-safety/reporting/faqs.html>

VI. APPENDIX B: FORMS
YOUTH MINISTRY STAFF APPLICATION FORM
GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)

All information on this application will be kept confidential. If you have any questions about the application, please call or email the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event.

I. Basic Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Date of birth: _____ SSN: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

How many years have you been a communicant member of the RPCNA? _____

Are you currently a communicant member of the RPCNA in good standing? _____

Current Congregation: _____

II. Experience

Describe any relevant experience working with youth.

List any involvement you have had in youth programs in the last 5 years.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Contact (email/phone)</i>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

III. Character References

Applicants must include a letter of recommendation from a member of their session.

In addition, list two individuals who can attest to your character and, if possible, have observed your interactions with children and youth. References must be 18 or older and may not be members of your household.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>

IV. History

Have you ever been: *(circle one)*

- Arrested for any reason? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime involving minors? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a moving violation in the last 3 years? Yes / No

Is there any reason why you should not work with minors? Yes / No

*If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” please explain on a separate sheet of paper.

V. Affirmations

Place your initials on each line.

_____ I have carefully read the GLGP Child Protection Policy.

_____ I recognize that the GLGP is relying upon the accuracy of the information contained herein. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that all the information that I have provided is completely true and correct, to the best of my knowledge.

_____ I authorize GLGP to contact any person or entity listed in this application and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide GLGP with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

_____ I further authorize GLGP to conduct a criminal background investigation and/or child abuse investigation if further investigation is deemed necessary.

_____ I voluntarily release GLGP and any such organization or entity listed herein by me from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

VI. Attachments

Please remember to include the following with this application form:

1. A copy of your driver’s license.
2. *(If necessary)* Explanation of answers.

Applicant Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature (if applicant is under 18)

Date

For Administrative Use Only

Date Submitted and Received: _____

Date Background Check Submitted: _____

Date Background Check Results Received: _____

Application Approved _____

Application Denied _____

Date of Application Approval or Denial _____

MEDICAL RELEASE FORM
GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)
THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL

 Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery Youth Program

 Child's Name

 Date of Birth

M F
 Sex

 Parent's/Guardian's Name

 Parent's/Guardian's Name

 Parent's/Guardian's Phone

 Parent's/Guardian's Phone

 Address

Alternative Emergency Contacts

 Primary Emergency Contact

 Secondary Emergency Contact

 Primary Contact Phone Number

 Secondary Contact Phone Number

 Primary Contact Street Address

 Secondary Contact Street Address

 Primary Contact City, State, Zip

 Secondary Contact City, State, Zip

Medical Information

 Hospital/Clinic Preference

 Physician's Name

 Physician's Phone Number

 Insurance Company

 Policy Number

 Allergies/Special Health Considerations

GLG Child Protection Policy 14

I authorize all medical and surgical treatment, X-ray, laboratory, anesthesia, and other medical and/or hospital procedures as may be performed or prescribed by the attending physician and/or paramedics for my child and waive my right to informed consent of treatment. This waiver applies only in the event that neither parent/guardian can be reached in the case of an emergency.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

I give permission for my child to attend the youth program of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. I release the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery and individuals from liability in case of accident during activities related to the youth program as long as normal safety procedures have been taken.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

<p><i>For Administrative Use Only</i></p> <p>Date Received: _____</p>



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery takes the protection of her covenant children very seriously. The Covenant of Baptism, noting that children are a possession of God entrusted to the care of their parents, requires watchful protection of children by the entire church.

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."
~ Matthew 19:14 ~*

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)

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I. INTRODUCTION AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

A. Purpose

These procedures and policies have been developed to ensure a safe, loving environment conducive to the protection and care of Christ's lambs during Children and Youth Ministry functions of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA.

B. Biblical Mandate

Matthew 19:14 - Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

John 21:15 – So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

Ephesians 5:3 - But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

C. Confessional Foundation

Confession of Faith I.6 – . . . There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

Testimony XXIV.30 – Education of children is primarily the responsibility of parents, though they may delegate part of this responsibility to the church or other agencies . . .

Directory for Church Government I.8 – Members should willingly consecrate their talents and gifts to the service of Christ. They should prayerfully consider accepting a position in the church when called to do so.

II. SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

A. The Scope of This Policy

This Policy applies to all functions sponsored by or under the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery in which adults and youth are working directly with children ages newborn up to 18 years old or vulnerable adults. This Policy enumerates the **minimum** requirements for child protection at all functions of Presbytery involving minors or vulnerable adults. Those responsible for organizing and overseeing particular events of Presbytery are at liberty to produce and enforce stricter procedures. Furthermore, this Policy is to be read and interpreted in light of the *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*.

In the event that a reasonable exception needs to be made to this Policy due to the Lord's providence in hindering a particular policy or procedure from being followed by an approved worker during a particular Children or Youth Ministry function of Presbytery, such an exception should be communicated to the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing

the event, prior to said event. In the event that prior notification is not possible, said notification shall occur within twenty-four hours.

B. Definitions of Key Terms

- 1) **Approved Worker** – Anyone 18 years of age or older who is approved to assist with a Presbytery Children or Youth program as an employee or volunteer, under the terms of this Policy.
- 2) **Child Abuse** – Child neglect, child physical abuse, or child sexual abuse.
 - a) **Child Neglect** – Depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, safety, education, or medical care.
 - b) **Child Physical Abuse** – Any use of violence or threats of violence toward a minor with the imminent risk of serious physical harm or death.
 - c) **Child Sexual Abuse** – Any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, or emotional) between a minor and another person when the minor is being used for the sexual arousal, molestation, or gratification of the perpetrator or any other person.
 - i. *Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.
 - ii. *Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.
- 3) **Children** – Particularly, minors from newborn to 12 years of age.
- 4) **Children and Youth** – All persons under the age of 18. Also called minors.
- 5) **Presbytery Youth Leadership** – Any Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery-sanctioned leadership of an official children’s or youth program (e.g., Covfamikoι Director, Youth Secretary, Youth Committee).
- 6) **Vulnerable Adult** – Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend or is otherwise particularly susceptible to coercion or abuse (e.g., those who are severely mentally or physically disabled).
- 7) **Youth** – Particularly, minors from 13 to 17 years old.

8) Youth Volunteer – Youth, age 13 to 17, who are approved under this policy to assist in the care of children at Presbytery Children ministry function.

III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Who may work in Presbytery Children and Youth Ministries

Only Approved Workers may serve in the various Children and Youth Ministries of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

- 1) An Approved Worker is one who:
 - a) is an adult (18 years or older) communicant member in good standing of a congregation under the jurisdiction of the RPCNA;
 - b) has submitted a completed worker Application and Reference Letter (see also, Appendix B, p. 14) to the Presbytery Youth Leadership;
 - c) has completed a criminal background check through MinistrySafe.
 - d) Approved Workers are required to satisfy the training requirements to be determined by the Presbytery Youth Leadership (see III.A.4) below).
- 2) Policy on Youth Volunteers:
 - a) If a youth desires to assist the approved workers in a Presbytery Children's Ministry function, that person shall be at least 13 years old and a communicant member in the RPCNA;
 - b) The youth must also submit a Worker Application to the leadership of the respective Presbytery Children and Youth Ministry; and,
 - c) The youth must provide a letter of recommendation from his or her Session.
 - d) Youth assisting the approved workers must remain under the supervision of an approved worker at all times.
- 3) Worker applications, disclosure statements and up-to-date background checks are to be kept on file within the Presbytery's MinistrySafe Account.
- 4) Mandatory training requirements for Approved Workers will be left to the discretion of those responsible for organizing and overseeing each particular Children and Youth Ministry function of Presbytery.

B. Who may not serve in Presbytery Children and Youth Ministries

1) Definition

Presbytery Youth Leadership will use the screening process defined in this report to evaluate the suitability of candidates to serve as Approved Workers or Youth Volunteers. Those who have not completed the proper application procedure or

have been deemed ineligible by Presbytery Youth Leadership upon the completion of the application process, will not be permitted to serve in Presbytery Children and Youth functions.

2) Determination of ineligibility

If anything is questionable or concerning in the application or background check, Presbytery Youth Leadership will determine eligibility for the applicant on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. This screening process is also subject to review by the elders of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. Generally, the sort of issues that would bar an applicant from serving with children and youth include: convictions for offenses involving minors, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, or other similar violations of God’s Law, or failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form.

C. General principles for protection of children and youth

1) Clear communication between the children, youth, workers, parents, and elders is vital to ensuring the ongoing protection and flourishing of Christ’s lambs.

2) Workers, parents and elders shall be actively vigilant at all times, seeking to protect Christ’s lambs from harm. The safety of children and youth is to be of the utmost priority.

3) Confront and report suspicious behavior (see also, Section IV, p 10).

4) Visibility is important. For example, any windows should remain cleared, if at all possible, so that outside view is not obstructed. Similarly, when appropriate, doors shall remain open and shall be unlocked.

5) To increase accountability, multiple approved workers should be present. The more workers at a given place and time, the better.

6) Approved Workers shall strive to be above reproach in all their dealings with the children and youth, as well as the elders to whom they are accountable.

7) Whether those who are not approved workers are allowed to be on the premises of a particular Children and/or Youth Ministry function of Presbytery will be left to the discretion of those responsible for organizing and overseeing that event. They shall not be permitted to supervise the children and youth under any situation.

D. Policies and procedures for Presbytery Children and Youth Ministries

1) Policy on the required number of approved workers

a) There should be a minimum of two unrelated (meaning not from the same household; e.g., not only a husband and wife) approved workers to supervise children and youth. This is often referred to as the “Rule of Two.” For smaller youth group settings where this is not possible, there should always be at least three together in any situation: either one leader with at

least two youth, or two leaders with one youth. If there is only one youth present, said meeting shall occur in a public setting.

b) If one of the two adults must leave the room, either a parent or another approved worker is to remain in the room, if possible.

c) When possible, for groups of children and youth exceeding ten, one additional approved worker should be present for each ten children and youth. For example, if there are 11-20 children, there should ordinarily be a minimum of three approved workers to be present; for groups of 21-30 children, there should ordinarily be a minimum of four approved workers to be present. Youth volunteers may assist the workers, but do not count toward the required workers at a particular Children's Ministry function of Presbytery.

d) Children and youth should be supervised and not allowed to isolate themselves individually or in a group without the appropriate supervision. This policy is in effect during all organized sessions of Presbytery Children Ministry functions. During sessions set aside for family free-time, parents are responsible for the supervision of their children.

2) Procedures for overnight retreats and events

a) Information on the event (e.g., location, time, agenda) is to be made available to the elders of the Presbytery and parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the children and youth attending the Presbytery ministry function.

b) Except regarding the case of a husband and his wife, males and females shall be lodged separately.

c) Unless the approved worker is the parent or guardian of a child or youth, he or she is not permitted to share the same sleeping space with that child or youth.

d) There is to be ample privacy provided for children and youth for changing clothes and carrying out hygienic activities (e.g. showering). Adults shall not change at the same time and shall not be present in the same room when children and youth are changing clothes and carrying out hygienic activities.

3) Check-In and Check-Out Procedures

Presbytery Youth Leadership will create a process for their particular ministry whereby children fifth grade and younger are to be signed in and out of a Presbytery Children and Youth Ministry Function only by a child's parent(s), guardian(s), or individuals at least 13 years of age approved by the child's parent(s)/guardian(s).

4) Safety Procedures for children in the nursery

a) No one other than approved workers and parents/guardians may enter the nurseries. If a child with special needs has a particular caregiver (whether a member of his or her family or otherwise), one of the approved workers should be informed in order to best accommodate that child. Unless the parent/guardian is an approved worker, they shall leave the nursery after dropping off/picking up the child.

b) Children who are dropped off should remain in the nursery or classroom except in the event of group activities, in the case of emergency or necessity, and when the child is picked up by his or her parent or guardian.

5) Bathroom Policy for Children

a) *Children younger than five years of age* should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, approved workers should escort children in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. One of the workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should remain outside the bathroom and the escort the children back to the classroom when the children are done.

b) *For children over the age of five*, if possible, at least one male approved worker should take at least two or more boys to the restroom, and at least one female approved worker should take at least two or more girls. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom when the children are done.

c) If a child is taking longer than seems necessary or calls for help, an approved worker may assist, but is to leave all doors open.

6) Policy regarding the discipline of children and youth

a) Workers shall not administer physical discipline (e.g., spanking). Workers may provide verbal correction as well as restriction from participation in particular activities as methods of discipline, but said correction and restrictions shall not be done in private. The aim of discipline is to provide an opportunity to introduce children and youth to the Gospel.

b) If the child or youth persists in misbehavior beyond the ability of the Approved Workers, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child should be contacted and asked to remove their child from the event.

7) Policy regarding workers providing counseling to children and youth

There may be times when a worker will need to provide counseling to a child or youth. It is best for two or more approved adults to provide counsel, but if that is not possible, counseling should always be done in an environment with clear visibility (e.g. outdoors or somewhere with the

doors open). When counseling a child or youth, the approved worker should maintain discretionary confidence whenever appropriate. When in doubt, the approved worker should inform the parent of that youth. Counselors shall be mindful of areas of discussion which are subject to state mandatory reporting laws.

8) Policy on movies and entertainment

a) Workers will use discernment when viewing movies with children and youth, and will obtain approval from the appropriate Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event.

b) Words, thoughts, and actions should be in conformity with God's Law (see *Larger Catechism* 112-113, 138-139, and 144-145). Workers are to be careful concerning the activities in which they partake, and about which they discuss, including movies, social media, music, books, and games.

9) Policy on the use of humor

Humor is a useful tool in Children and Youth Ministry, and shall be seen as a means of making connections, engaging the minds of children and youth, and building relationships. Workers, children and youth shall avoid all humor which is degrading for someone else, sexual in nature, or involves the use of harsh sarcasm. None of this is helpful for creating an environment of godliness and flourishing (see Ephesians 4:29, 5:4).

10) Sick Child Policy

a) It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children and youth of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. Parent(s) and guardian(s) are encouraged to be considerate of others and not to have their children participate if they have common symptoms of a contagious illness (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea).

b) Children and youth who are observed by workers to be ill will be separated to the extent possible, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted to request that the child be picked up immediately.

11) Child Medication Policy

a) Generally, workers are not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children and youth under our care. Children and youth are not permitted to administer any medications to themselves or others, or share medications with others. Rather, medications should be administered by the child's or youth's own parent or guardian whenever possible. For exceptional circumstances, see below.

b) Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted by parents of children and youth with potentially life-threatening conditions (e.g., asthma

or severe allergic reactions) and will write an action plan to have on file with the Presbytery Youth Leadership.

c) Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide written permission for a designated approved worker to administer medication before leaving the child in the care of the approved workers. Prescription medication should be labeled with the child's name; date the prescription was filled; name and contact information of the prescribing health professional; expiration date; medical need; instructions for administration, storage, and disposal; and name and strength of the medication. Labeled medications (over-the-counter) should be brought by the parent/guardian in the original container. The label should include the child's name, dosage, relevant warnings as well as specific, legible instructions for administration, storage, and disposal.

d) All Children participating in Presbytery Children Ministry functions are required to fill out a Medical Release Form.

12) Policy on Accidental Injuries

In the event a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps shall be followed:

a) For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from the event.

b) For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will immediately be summoned by an approved worker. If necessary, an ambulance will be called. The Presbytery Youth Leadership will be notified of the event.

c) For injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional, Presbytery Youth Leadership will complete an incident report pursuant to the requirements of the Presbytery's Insurance Policy.

13) Policy on approved workers providing transportation during Presbytery Children and Youth Ministry Functions

a) When driving, all traffic laws and seat belt rules are to be obeyed. All drivers shall be licensed and insured.

b) Parental permission and the approval of the Presbytery Youth Leadership must be obtained prior to transporting a child to any location.

c) Transportation shall be in groups of three or more, with at least one approved worker in each vehicle.

14) Worker Training Requirements

a) All approved workers shall review the Child Protection Policy.

b) Presbytery Youth Leadership are at liberty to stipulate further training requirements for the particular event under their oversight (e.g. Ministry Safe training videos).

E. Counsel on communicating the Presbytery Child Protection Policy

- 1) This Policy is to be communicated alongside the informational materials distributed for each upcoming Children and Youth Ministry function of Presbytery.
- 2) This Policy is to be accessible at Children and Youth Ministry functions of Presbytery.

IV. STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR

There are times when behavior is exhibited in which formal allegations of child abuse would not be admissible (steps for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse are provided in Section V below), yet an individual's behavior causes an instinctual concern and raises the suspicion of possibly inappropriate and/or predatory behavior. It is good and loving that we should seek to have evil restrained and warn our neighbor: "Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:7). Whereas Section V (see below) is reactive, Section IV is proactive. If a worker, elder, child or youth is seen exhibiting suspicious behavior, the following steps may be taken according to reasonable precaution and Christian prudence.

Step 1: If possible, confront the individual as soon as suspicious or problematic behavior is observed; but at a minimum, report any such suspicious or problematic behavior to event leadership and Presbytery Youth Leadership (Ephesians 5:3 "There must not be even a hint of sexual immorality ...").

Step 2: If dealing with a minor (whether the minor is the offender or the offended), the director overseeing the event shall speak to the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) to inform them of what is suspected to have taken place.

Step 3: Report any suspicious or problematic behavior to the event leadership. That person will then contact the individuals' Session(s) in a timely manner, so that there may be both pastoral care and particular vigilance among the overseers of Christ's flock.

Step 4: Event leadership and that individual's Session shall then investigate the matter in a timely manner and take reasonable precautions.

V. STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Whereas Section IV (see above) addresses how to respond to non-criminal, yet suspicious, behavior, Section V addresses how to respond to and report allegations of child abuse (whether neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse). If an allegation of child abuse relative to an event that occurred during a Children or Youth Ministry function of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery or an allegation involving a child is raised, the following Steps are to be carefully, yet swiftly, taken.

Step 1: The following should be immediately contacted:

- 1) The local authorities – consult the local state’s mandatory reporting requirements (See Appendix A, p 14; and Appendix B, p 20) to determine which local authorities the matter should be reported to;
- 2) Event leadership shall ensure that the parent(s) or guardian(s) of all minors involved (accuser and/or accused) are contacted;
- 3) Event leadership shall ensure the Moderator of the Session(s) of the involved parties are contacted.
- 4) *Note*, The elders and all parties involved (accuser, accused, workers and presbyters) are to work in full cooperation with civil authorities according to their proper sphere, as well as with ecclesiastical authorities according to their proper sphere. It is neither the role nor jurisdiction of presbyters to assume the role of criminal investigation. All parties involved are to be mindful that one’s duty before the Lord, as required in both the fifth and ninth commandments, is to speak the truth at every opportunity without equivocation. To that end, there is a form for the preliminary documentation of alleged child abuse or neglect (See Appendix B, p 20).

Step 2: After reporting the matter to the proper persons, event leadership shall attempt to ascertain basic facts and take reasonable steps to safeguard potential victims. If the accusation of child abuse is credible (meaning that there is no clear and immediate cause for dismissal of the accusation), then for the sake of being above reproach in all matters, as well as for the protection of Christ’s lambs, the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event will not permit that person to participate in that Presbytery children and youth ministry function.

- 1) Specifically, if an approved worker is accused of child abuse, and the accusation is credible (meaning that there is no clear and immediate cause for dismissal of the accusation), he or she should immediately be given a leave of absence from his or her position by the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the ministry event.
- 2) If worker(s) or elder(s) are not reasonably following through with these “Steps for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse” (e.g. if a worker or elder with knowledge of the allegation does not report the allegation to the proper civil authorities), then those worker(s) or elder(s) should be given a leave of absence from the function of their position as it relates to Children and Youth Ministries. These workers or elders may be reinstated to their service according to the will of Presbytery.
- 3) To be given a leave of absence is not to be understood as formal censure. Furthermore, all communications related to any alleged child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those involved, including the alleged child victim and the person accused of child abuse; while at the same time ensuring that

those responsible for addressing the situation, including civil authorities, remain fully informed.

Step 3: A member of the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event, or someone designated by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, shall contact the insurance provider within 24 hours of the allegation and document all information per the requirements of the insurance company.

Step 4: If a person (either a minor or a worker) is removed from Presbytery functions due to an alleged incident of abuse which happened during a Presbytery function, a member of the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event, or someone designated by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, is to ensure the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) whose children and/or youth were present at that function are informed (via email, phone or in-person) of the nature of the allegation within 48 hours. The names of all parties involved (both the accuser and the accused) are to be withheld and protected.

Step 5: The Clerk of the Presbytery is to be notified by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, or someone designated by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, within 48 hours of the allegation. The Clerk is then to contact the Ad-Interim Commission. The Ad-Interim Commission shall prepare a brief statement within 72 hours of their notification. The Ad-Interim Commission shall communicate to Presbytery that a media statement has been made; and that, if asked about the allegations by news reporters, the Moderator of the Ad-Interim Commission (or another member of the Ad-Interim Commission) shall act as spokesman, while all other officers and members of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery are to refrain from speaking to the media except to refer them to the designated spokesman.

Step 6: Elders shall ensure that all parties involved (accuser, accused, and any possible victims), as well as all members of the Church, are able to receive the necessary pastoral care.

Step 7: An investigation is to be carried out by Presbytery regarding the incident and follow-up steps which were taken. If the allegations are established to be true, a report should be given to Presbytery, outlining the incident, follow-up investigation, any further recommendations, and care that is being provided to the families involved. The nature of the offense is to be disclosed, but the identities of all minors are to be withheld and protect.

Step 8: Upon the conclusion of investigation:

- 1) If there is an acquittal of all allegations, Presbytery will seek to encourage the reconciliation of all parties involved and the acquitted will be restored to his or her standing in the Church.

- 2) If there is admittance of guilt by the accused party, or upon the finding of guilt in accordance with the Book of Discipline, church discipline should be carried out by the court of original jurisdiction and the appropriate censure applied for the purpose of upholding the honor of Christ, seeking the repentance of the sinning

brother or sister, bringing justice to the victim(s), and warning all in the visible church against such heinous sin.

Step 9: In the event of an allegation of abuse, Presbytery should review this Policy in order to ensure that Christ's lambs are being protected and to inform areas in which Presbytery leadership may grow more vigilant.

VI. APPENDIX A: STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING ABUSE

Below are online resources from each state's (under the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery) government outlining mandatory reporting requirements and giving points of contact for each state for reporting at the time of this writing. Links and information may be updated and should be checked for the most up-to-date information. Furthermore, www.childwelfare.gov provides a centralized library for state laws and handbooks.

Alabama

<https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-protective-services/written-report-of-suspected-child-abuse-neglect-for-mandated-reporters/>

Florida

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/>

Georgia

<https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx>

Illinois

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/safekids/reporting/Pages/index.aspx>

Indiana

<https://www.in.gov/dcs/contact-us/child-abuse-and-neglect-hotline/>

Kentucky

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dCBS/dpp/cpb/Pages/default.aspx>

Michigan

https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_7119_50648_44443-157836--,00.html

North Carolina

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/child-protective-services/about-child-abuse-and-child-neglect>

Ohio

<https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/reportchildabuseandneglect.stm>

South Carolina

<https://dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/report-child-abuse-and-neglect/>

Tennessee

<https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-safety/reporting/faqs.html>

VII. APPENDIX B: FORMS

**CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRY WORKER APPLICATION
GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)**

All information on this application will be kept confidential. If you have any questions about the application, please call or email the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event.

I. Basic Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Date of birth: _____ SSN: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

How many years have you been a communicant member of the RPCNA? _____

Are you currently a communicant member of the RPCNA in good standing? _____

Current Congregation: _____

II. Experience

Describe any relevant experience working with children and youth.

List any involvement you have had in children and youth programs in the last 5 years.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Contact (email/phone)</i>
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_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

III. Character References

Applicants must include a letter of recommendation from a member of their session.

In addition, list two individuals who can attest to your character and, if possible, have observed your interactions with children and youth. References must be 18 or older and may not be members of your household.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>

IV. History

Have you ever been: *(circle one)*

- Arrested for any reason? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime involving minors? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a moving violation in the last 3 years? Yes / No

Is there any reason why you should not work with minors? Yes / No

*If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” please explain on a separate sheet of paper.

V. Affirmations

Place your initials on each line.

_____ I have carefully read the GLGP Child Protection Policy.

_____ I recognize that the GLGP is relying upon the accuracy of the information contained herein. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that all the information that I have provided is completely true and correct, to the best of my knowledge.

_____ I authorize GLGP to contact any person or entity listed in this application and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide GLGP with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

_____ I further authorize GLGP to conduct a criminal background investigation and/or child abuse investigation if further investigation is deemed necessary.

_____ I voluntarily release GLGP and any such organization or entity listed herein by me from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

VI. Attachments

Please remember to include the following with this application form:

1. A letter of recommendation from a member of your session.
2. A copy of your driver's license.
3. *(If necessary)* Explanation of answers.

Applicant Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature (if applicant is under 18)

Date

For Administrative Use Only

Date Submitted and Received: _____

Date Background Check Submitted: _____

Date Background Check Results Received: _____

Application Approved _____ Application Denied _____

Date of Application Approval or Denial _____

MEDICAL RELEASE FORM
GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)
THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL

 Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery Children and/or Youth Ministry Function

 Child's Name

 Date of Birth

M F
 Sex

 Parent's/Guardian's Name

 Parent's/Guardian's Name

 Parent's/Guardian's Phone

 Parent's/Guardian's Phone

 Address

Alternative Emergency Contacts

 Primary Emergency Contact

 Secondary Emergency Contact

 Primary Contact Phone Number

 Secondary Contact Phone Number

 Primary Contact Street Address

 Secondary Contact Street Address

 Primary Contact City, State, Zip

 Secondary Contact City, State, Zip

Medical Information

 Hospital/Clinic Preference

 Physician's Name

 Physician's Phone Number

 Insurance Company

 Policy Number

 Allergies/Special Health Considerations

GLG Child Protection Policy – 19

I authorize all medical and surgical treatment, X-ray, laboratory, anesthesia, and other medical and/or hospital procedures as may be performed or prescribed by the attending physician and/or paramedics for my child and waive my right to informed consent of treatment. This waiver applies only in the event that neither parent/guardian can be reached in the case of an emergency.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

I give permission for my child to attend the Children and/or Youth Ministry Function of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. I release the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery and individuals from liability in case of accident during activities related to the Children and/or Youth Ministry Function as long as normal safety procedures have been taken.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

For Administrative Use Only

Date Received: _____

PRELIMINARY DOCUMENTATION OF ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Name of Complainant	Date of Report	Time of Report
Address of Complainant	Telephone Number	Email Address

CHILD(REN) INFORMATION

Name of Alleged Victim	Date of Birth	Age	M / F Sex
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Name of Alleged Victim's Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

Address of Alleged Victim Telephone Number

Name of Alleged Victim	Date of Birth	Age	M / F Sex
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Name of Alleged Victim's Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

Address of Alleged Victim Telephone Number

ALLEGED PERPETRATOR INFORMATION

Name of Alleged Perpetrator	Date of Birth	Age	M / F Sex
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Name of Alleged Perpetrator's Parent(s) or Guardian(s) (if Alleged Perpetrator is a minor)

Address of Alleged Perpetrator Telephone Number

