

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