

**CHRIST CHURCH REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN RECONCILIATION COMMITTEE  
REPORT TO GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY – MARCH 2022**

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. – John 17:20-21*

*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. – Colossians 3:12-14*

**I. THE MANDATE OF THIS COMMITTEE**

On November 6, 2021, the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery took the following action:

That the moderator appoint a three-person committee to hear from the authors of the GLG 21-11 and the session to pursue reconciliation, and report back to the Spring meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Upon appointment, the CCRP Reconciliation Committee understood reconciliation as outlined in the *Book of Discipline* of the RPCNA:

If a member sins against another person, or if a member sins and this sin becomes known to another member of the church, the person sinned against or aware of the sin should go privately to the sinner and confront him. *If the sinner repents, there must be forgiveness and reconciliation, and the matter shall be closed. You have won your brother.*<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, this Committee understood our mandate to be that of a reconciliation committee, rather than an investigative or judicial committee. Whereas an investigative or judicial committee's primary aim is to look back, a reconciliation committee's primary aim is to look forward. Our tone is, therefore, seeking to be pastoral and practical; our objective, forgiveness and restoration.

**II. THE PROCESS OF THIS COMMITTEE'S WORK**

Upon our appointment, this Committee communicated multiple times via Zoom in order to ensure we were unified in our understanding of our mandate, to formulate a plan, and to seek the Lord's blessing in prayer. We then communicated with the CCRP Session, as well as the Enas and Swan families, to arrange a time to meet together.

Our process was to meet with each party separately and then altogether on the final night. Before meeting, this Committee communicated to both parties that it was our prayer and aim that each party will have a

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<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the 2021 Fall Meeting of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery*, BUSCOM Item #4 – Petition from Two CCRP Members (GLG 21-11).

<sup>2</sup> *RPCNA Constitution*, Book of Discipline, Chapter 2 “Dealing with Sin in the Church — Personal Responsibility,” Paragraphs 1-2, p. E-3. Emphasis added.

concrete understanding of what needs to be done for reconciliation to occur, what they personally need to do to accomplish this, and a route of how this will come to fruition. Being formed as a reconciliation committee, we communicated to both parties that our presupposition is that there is alienation between the Session and members of the congregation. In each meeting, therefore, our task was: (a) to pastorally seek to find the main point(s) of alienation whether it be miscommunication, oversight, mistake, or personal sins; (b) to seek necessary confession of said miscommunication, oversight, mistake, or personal sins; (c) to seek and receive forgiveness for miscommunication, oversight, mistake, or personal sins; and, (d) to have a plan of action where each party seeks to heal the relationship and show the necessary fruits of reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

The Committee first met with the Session and families in Indianapolis on the evenings of December 7, 2021, through December 9, 2021 – meeting first with the Session, then the families, and then with all parties together. After the first two evenings of our meetings, and in preparation for the third evening, the Committee prepared short-term steps for each of the parties which should be followed in pursuit of reconciliation.<sup>4</sup>

The steps for the Session were as follows:

- A. Confess particular actions and sins regarding the shepherding of Michael Lefebvre and the congregation; the first six which arose in discussion with the Session, with the seventh from the Committee:
  - 1) The need to have brought publications forward to the congregation sooner;
  - 2) The need to have more oversight over Michael's publications, confronting contra-confessional matters;
  - 3) The need to have read the materials more quickly and fully;
  - 4) The need to have interacted with the seminary more diligently;
  - 5) The need to have shared more openly the opposition to Michael's writings;
  - 6) The need to have not heeded problematic counsel which encouraged the keeping private Michael's problematic views regarding the Creation account; and,
  - 7) The need to have engaged the congregation with greater transparency and initiative.
- B. Communicate to the congregation (in some kind of congregational-meeting format) a timeline of the facts of what has transpired from the time of Michael's disclosing to Session his problematic writings through working with the Reconciliation Committee.
- C. Conduct regular family visitations.

The steps for the Enas and Swan families were as follows:

- A. Be ready and desirous to receive the confession of the Session, extending forgiveness and encouragement to the Session in their duties.
- B. Resolve to maintain a charitable framework toward the Session regarding their words and actions.

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<sup>3</sup> This paragraph was adapted from an email, dated Monday, December 6, 2021, communicating the CCRP Reconciliation Committee's understanding of our remit and approach, sent from this Committee to all the parties involved.

<sup>4</sup> The following steps were provided during the meeting between both parties, December 9, 2021, and then were sent to all parties via email on December 10, 2021.

- C. Be patient toward the Session, allowing your leaders to lead; likewise, be patient through this process of reconciliation.

Additionally, the following long-term steps were advised for CCRP:

- A. Pursue the option of finding an intentional interim (or at the least regular, stated pulpit supply).
- B. Both parties are to continue to follow-up with this Committee [between the December and January meetings in order to help mediate communication].
- C. It is recommended that CCRP's congregational report to Presbytery should include information on how trust is being built and reconciliation is occurring within the life of the congregation.
- D. Session is to continue to take initiative on cultivating a spirit of transparency within the Session and congregation.

After prayer and discussion, the Session called for an informal congregational meeting after morning worship on Lord's Day, January 23, 2022, during which they verbally confessed these matters to the congregation, provided a clear timeline of the facts pertinent to the Session's oversight of Michael, and communicated clear steps for repentance and ways in which they desire to grow in their shepherding of the congregation. This statement was then provided in writing to the congregation and is attached as an Appendix to the report. This Committee gives thanks to God for evidence of His grace and kindness in strengthening the Session to confess their sins and infirmities to the congregation, as well as to lay out clear and practical steps to grow in their work as undershepherds.

The Committee met again in Indianapolis with the Session and families the evenings of January 23, 2022, through January 25, 2022 – meeting first with the Session, then the families, and then with all parties together. During these meetings, there were further conversations which were, though at times filled with disagreement, helpful in establishing open communication between the Session and families.

### **III. FURTHER COUNSEL REGARDING RECONCILIATION AND STRENGTHENING CCRP**

It would be naïve on the part of this Committee to believe that the work of reconciling these parties is concluded. But based upon the evaluation of this Committee's interactions with the Session and families, this Committee believes that what is now needed is not the work of a Presbytery Reconciliation Committee, but 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. 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. For each of the following principles, this Committee has also provided practical applications.

*For the Session:*

First, there is a need for the Session to grow in an active approach to shepherding the flock. The most important way in which this can develop, to which the Session has publicly stated their agreement, is by elders conducting regular, intentional visitations in the members' homes. Up to this point, the Session has maintained an informal and less structured manner of pastoral care; but 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 gives the Lord thanks that the Session has demonstrated great humility before God and love for the Bride of Christ by being eager and desirous to begin this work, as they have reached out further to the members of this Committee to learn more about systematic visitations. To aid the elders in equipping them for such work, in addition to receiving encouragement and counsel from their fellow presbyters, this committee would suggest studying, as a Session, through either David Dickson's *The Elder and His Work*, or Timothy Witmer's *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church*. Along this same subject, this Committee would encourage the CCRP Session to grow in their ability and readiness to have direct confrontation. This Committee witnessed among the Session what is perceived to be an unwillingness to have confrontational disagreement. But often the work of the elder requires a readiness to speak directly with clarity and courage regardless, and the lack thereof leads to a lack of communication and perceived lack of transparency. This is an area where, this Committee believes, our brothers need particular prayer and encouragement. But, by God's grace, as these men grow in their active shepherding, the whole congregation of Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian may flourish beyond what we could even desire – such is the work of God's kindness towards His Church. This Committee notes that at our January 25, 2022, meeting, the Session already showed improvement in their willingness to have difficult conversations and confront issues – for which we thank the Lord.

Second, there is a need for the Session to grow in theological discernment and zeal for doctrinal purity. This Committee believes that these men are called by the King of the Church to be the undershepherds of the particular congregation of CCRP. And being called, they are fully equipped for their task through the means God has provided. Regarding Michael Lefebvre's writings, the Session felt unprepared and unqualified to contend against their Pastor's contra-confessional and unbiblical views. 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. This Committee would encourage our brothers from Christ Church RP to reach out to fellow presbyters for help in finding resources on doctrinal matters they may be unfamiliar with, and for fellow presbyters to be quick in aiding our brethren. Furthermore, this Committee would recommend to the Session that they lead the congregation through a study of the Confession using G. I. Williamson's *The Westminster Confession of Faith: For Study Classes*, or through the Larger Catechism using J. G. Vos's *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*. 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. This Committee also gives thanks to the Lord for the Session's publicly-stated commitment to review the writings of their future minister, Lord willing, before their publication. Such resolve shows their desire to grow in this area, as well as demonstrates learning from past mistakes.

*For the Families:*

After further consideration, this section of the report has been revised from the previous edition. The members of this Committee sincerely and publicly apologize to Nathan and Ginny Enas, and Kevin and Rachele Swan, for prejudicing their reputations by implying that they were hateful and stirring up strife. This was not our intent, and we ask for their forgiveness. The Enas and Swan 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. This Committee is very encouraged by the steps that are being taken by all in response to our meetings, and is confident in God's promise that he is working this to the good of the families, the Session, the congregation of CCRP, and our Presbytery. The desire for all parties – members of the Committee, Session and families – is for the prospering of CCRP. We are thankful for the propitious substitution and imputed righteousness of Christ, without which there is no hope for salvation. Thus, this Committee provides the following considerations and encouragements to the Enas and Swan families to aid in going forth with reconciliation.

During our conversations, there was disagreement between the Committee and the families on the meaning of “love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8b, Proverbs 10:12b) and “[Love] bears all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7a). This Committee believes that these verses are helpful for growing in our relationships, especially after there has been division. To the end of aiding the families in their meditation upon these verses, we recommend Matthew Henry's, Charles Bridges', George Lawson's, and Charles Hodge's commentaries upon these verses.

Likewise, there were times in our meetings when the families could have been perceived as being contentious, though this was not their intention. This Committee would encourage an ongoing mindfulness to examine not only what is being said, but how it is being said, that we should not give any unintended offense. To that end, this Committee recommends the families study through *Graciousness: Tempering Truth with Love* by John Crotts, which may be of help to them in this aspect.

*For the Presbytery:*

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 (either in-person or by phone, Zoom, etc.) in order to ensure that they are indeed following through on their tasks and growing in their active shepherding. This proposed Committee could, if deemed appropriate by Presbytery, be given this task until the next spring meeting of Presbytery, or until a Pastor is installed at CCRP, whichever comes first. It is the desire of this Reconciliation Committee to have a more long-term plan to aid this Session and congregation to grow through this very difficult season, and we believe that having other brothers come alongside these men would serve such a purpose.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

As the members of this Committee, as well as the members of the families, have stated to the Session of Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian, we believe that these men are those whom God has called to shepherd the flock of that particular congregation. Likewise, this Committee recognizes that the families who have brought forward this petition have a true love for Christ and the purity of the Church. 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. It is the desire of this Committee that God would be honored through the strengthening of these men in their work as undershepherds, the growth of these families in mercy and grace, and that the whole congregation would thrive in pursuing the chief end for which they were made – to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

**V. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1) That this report be received by Presbytery.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.
- 4) That this Committee be dismissed.

For the Peace and Good of Zion,  
Craig Scott, Chairman  
David Kleyn  
Drew Poplin



# Christ Church reformed presbyterian

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[www.ccrp.church](http://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

January 23, 2022

Dear Church Family,

The Session recognizes and understands that the last two and half years have been very difficult for our congregation. We all, including the Session, have been affected by Michael's decision to follow his convictions that Scripture and evolutionary processes are not incompatible. His convictions were the result of more than fifteen years of study of the Pentateuch, viewed through the lens of his knowledge of both ancient Hebrew and Middle eastern culture and law. We are convinced that he did not come to these conclusions lightly. He understood that these conclusions were inconsistent with one point in our denominational standards and brought him close to the edge of other standards, but believed he was within the system of doctrine described in our confessional documents, and therefore not at odds with his ministerial vows. He was fully aware that if the RPCNA were to determine that his positions were not congruent with his vows, he could not and would not remain in the denomination.

When the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, in September 2020, denied Michael's request for an exception to the RPCNA testimony, he made a choice to honor both his vows and his convictions and leave our church and the denomination. The judicial process that followed was unusual, unanticipated, controversial, and acrimonious. We all experienced the emotional and spiritual hurt of this separation. This hurt was reflected in different ways. Some

families chose to leave our congregation out of disagreement with Michael or out of disagreement with Presbytery, while some chose to accept the separation in disappointment. Others believed that Session failed to provide proper shepherding to both Michael and the congregation. The Enas and Swan families brought these concerns to the attention of Presbytery in the communication authored by these families. Although only these two families signed the communication, there may be others among the families that either left or stayed that also share in these same concerns.

As you know, the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has established a committee to assist in pursuing reconciliation between the Session and the Enas and Swan families, and perhaps other families, regarding the concerns raised in the communication. The Committee is comprised of Craig Scott (TE – Grand Rapids, MI), Drew Poplin (TE – Durham, NC) and David Kleyn (RE – Southside, IN). We are thankful for the time that the Committee has invested into pursuing the long-term health and stability of our congregation, and we pray that the efforts in this process will bear fruit for the good of our congregation, and to the Glory of God. The Committee thus far has met individually with the Session, the Swan and Enas families, and with both parties together. In these meetings, we have continued the ongoing discussions from the last eighteen months about the circumstances, shepherding, and church processes surrounding Michael's publications.

These have been good, and at times, hard conversations. While it is fair to say there is not agreement on all points, we deeply care about, and are working toward reconciliation. Over the past weeks, the Session has taken opportunity to discuss and consider together the events of the past two years. What follows is intended to be a transparent reflection on areas where we did not



shepherd as well as we could have, what we have learned in hindsight from this process, and steps we are taking to move forward in the future.

Out of these conversations, the Session has been encouraged to communicate with the congregation regarding these matters by presenting a timeline of the interactions regarding Michael, and also to reflect on the Session’s shepherding of Michael and the congregation during this time.

**Timeline Regarding Michael’s Publications**

Over the past three years, there have been a number of ecclesiastical processes, documents, and communications written from a wide variety of sources. While we have endeavored to provide updates and make documents available to the congregation, the timeline of events and interactions is no doubt confusing.

The Presbytery Committee has encouraged the Session to set forth a clear record of the events pertaining to Michael’s publications. The following timeline summarizes the Session’s interaction with Michael on these matters, and actions taken by the church courts.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>June 2017</b>	Michael provides an update to Session on his upcoming research regarding the introductory chapters of Genesis.
<b>July 2017</b>	Michael makes a presentation on Genesis at a Center for Pastor Theologian symposium in Chicago.
<b>July 2017 – September 2018</b>	Michael provides updates to Session on the status of his research, at various intervals.
<b>September 2018</b>	Session solicits counsel from outside presbyters on the oversight of Michael’s publications.
<b>October 2018</b>	“Adam Reigns in Eden” is published by the Center for Pastor Theologians in a volume titled “Essays on the Historical Adam.”

<b>December 2018</b>	Michael makes a presentation at a Biologos conference in Baltimore.
<b>August 2019</b>	“The Liturgy of Creation” is published by Intervarsity Press Academic
<b>September 2019</b>	“Cracking the Code of Cadence: The Genre of Genesis” is published at biologos.org
<b>November 2019</b>	The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery receives a communication from the St. Lawrence Presbytery asking for an evaluation of Michael’s publications.
<b>November 2019</b>	The Session writes a pastoral letter to the congregation, apprising it of Michael’s publications, and the communication received from the St. Lawrence Presbytery.
<b>November 2019</b>	Presbytery establishes a committee to review the St. Lawrence Presbytery Communication and recommend a course of action to Presbytery.
<b>March 2020</b>	<p>The initial committee reports back at the March meeting of Presbytery. Presbytery appoints a study committee to review Michael’s publications and to bring a report of its recommendations.</p> <p>A second article, entitled, “First Human or First King? The Introduction of Adam in the Eden Narrative” is published by Biologos.</p>
<b>April 2020</b>	Michael resigns from the Board of Trustees of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary.
<b>August 2020</b>	The Study Committee releases its report and recommendations to presbytery.
<b>September 2020</b>	Presbytery meets to consider the Study Committee recommendations. Presbytery acts to disallow Michael’s exceptions to the Reformed Presbyterian Testimony. Ecclesiastical charges are filed, and a judicial process ensues.
<b>October 2020</b>	<p>Michael resigns as the pastor of Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian Church.</p> <p>Presbytery convenes for a special meeting. At this meeting, Presbytery releases Michael’s ministerial credentials to himself, and discontinues the judicial process.</p>

<b>November – December 2020</b>	Various Presbyters file three complaints against Presbytery’s actions to Synod.
<b>June 2021</b>	Synod acts on the complaints received, and rules that Presbytery acted in error when it released Michael’s ministerial credentials to himself.
<b>October 2021</b>	The Enas and Swan families request that Session refer a communication to Presbytery regarding Session’s oversight of the LeFebvre publications. The communication is forwarded to Presbytery without endorsement by the Session.
<b>November 2021</b>	Presbytery receives the Enas/Swan communication and establishes a committee to assist in pursuing reconciliation among the parties at Christ Church
<b>December 2021</b>	The Reconciliation Committee meets with the Session and Enas and Swan families, and it recommends actions to facilitate reconciliation.

### **Regarding Communication to the Congregation**

The Session’s intent from the outset was to prevent the controversy and debate surrounding Michael’s publications from becoming a distraction to the local ministry at Christ Church. In that effort, after receiving outside counsel from others, we decided not to purposely introduce Michael’s publications to the congregation, lest we possibly also introduce division and controversy into the life of the congregation. We did not intend to be opaque, since the publications would eventually be in the public forum, but we did not actively communicate with the congregation about the writings prior to their publications.

We now see this decision to be a mistake. In our recent conversations, we have heard how this decision was deeply troubling to some members of the congregation. We understand that it was hurtful to hear about these publications from outside sources instead of from our own Session. It was disorienting for our members to discover that these materials had been published for some time before they were announced to the congregation.

We perceive how it could be concerning to see that a portion of Michael's theological work was being conducted outside of the view of the congregation. We have heard the terms "betrayal" and "blindsided" as members have spoken of how they felt upon discovering and reading Michael's publications.

We hear and understand the disappointment caused by our decision not to inform the congregation of Michael's upcoming writings prior to their publication. We regret that this decision sowed distrust between the Session and some members and created an appearance of non-transparency regarding the Session's interactions with the congregation. We are sorry that these decisions caused harm to our relationships, and we ask for your forgiveness.

### **Lessons Learned – Regarding Outside Communication and Counsel**

The Session's oversight of Michael's publications was framed by our understanding of "system subscription." The RPCNA ministerial vows require that elders subscribe to the "system of doctrine" prescribed in our confessional documents, but do not require "strict subscription" to every point of doctrine. The denomination has never precisely defined the parameters of "system subscription." As we have already noted, Michael believed that his convictions were within the bounds of his ordination vows.

In hindsight, knowing what we do now about the level of controversy these publications created within the congregation, the presbytery, and denomination, it would have been beneficial for the Session to have solicited outside counsel and advice earlier and more broadly on these publications. Doing so would have provided a better understanding of the broader view of these

issues within the Presbytery. It would have helped identify areas – such as with the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary – where breakdowns in communication occurred. It would have helped us to better articulate the opposing view of Michael’s publications to the congregation. Perhaps most importantly, it would have helped us to better anticipate the developments regarding this case, so we could address them with the congregation in a more proactive way.

### **Fruits of Repentance – Steps for the Future**

Going forward, our desire is to work to repair damaged relationships and to learn from the experiences over the last two years. In response to what we have learned, the Session is intending to take the following steps in shepherding the congregation:

- Enact regular pastoral visits: We have conducted visitation both formally and informally in the past, but we have not conducted regular visits for some time. In the coming weeks, we will develop a visitation schedule agreeable to our members to aid in our shepherding of the congregation.
- Develop more structured expectations for the editorial review of publications for our next pastor: We have begun to draft a structure for this policy in advance of our next pastoral call. This is an area where both the Session and the Search Committee will have input.
- Restart regular fellowship events: In the midst of the pandemic, we have effectively discontinued regular fellowship events. We feel the lack of these events in our relationships, and we will work to safely hold fellowship regular events to promote communication and relationships within the congregation.

- Provide more regular updates to the congregation on Presbytery and Synod meetings. We have provided written, and some verbal updates on specific issues of concern in the past. Going forward, we will plan to provide more comprehensive updates of Presbytery and Synod activity, and provide more opportunity for members to have questions answered about the work of the church courts.
- Provide assistance and support to Presbytery: We are ready and willing to provide input and assistance to Presbytery to the extent that it addresses unclear policies, and seeks to provide a smoother, and better defined process for receiving, evaluating and addressing controversial viewpoints.
- Continue to work with the Reconciliation Committee: We will continue to work with the committee assigned by Presbytery to pursue reconciliation within the congregation.

We have sought to shepherd you, the flock of God, as Jesus Christ has led us. However, we recognize that our efforts to do so are imperfect. Please know that we love you and care for all of you deeply. We have prayed for you, and we will continue praying as a chief part of our work. We long for the unity that Christ brings, for “how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). We find our hope in Jesus, who calls us to come to him, and take his yoke upon us, and learn from him, for he “is gentle and lowly in heart,” and we will find “rest for [our] souls” and the “peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Matthew 11:28-29; Philippians 4:7). May he guide, bless, and build us as part of his church.

Humbly in Christ,

The CCRP Session