

Report of the **Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery** to 2023 Synod

We are supremely grateful for the gracious oversight of our Chief Shepherd, working through the courts and commissions of His Church to bring justice, mercy, and healing to our beleaguered presbytery. Below is a list of notable developments since last year's report, followed by a series of updates from our current ministry locations.

1. Bid farewell to three congregations: First RPC of Durham (Transferred to POA along with ministerial credentials for Rev. Butterfield and Rev. Poplin), First RPC of Grand Rapids (Disorganized), and Christ Church RP (Disorganized).
2. Dismissed two students under care: Jake Schwartz (Moved to POA) and Nathan Shaver (At His Request).
3. Received two new men under care: Joe Johnson (Orlando) and Cody Work (Elkhart).
4. Certified three men as eligible to receive a pastoral call, each of whom accepted a pastoral call to an RPCNA congregation: Allen Blackwood (Laramie), Aaron Murray (Marion), and Jonathan Sturm (Lafayette).
5. Ordained and installed two new teaching elders: Joshua Smith (Westminster RPC) and Aaron Murray (Marion RPC).
6. Released two men from their pastoral charges due to resignation: Craig Scott (Grand Rapids) and James Faris (Second RPC), whose ministerial credentials were dismissed at his request.
7. Appointed presbytery officers for 2023: Jon Hughes (mod.), Adam Kuehner (clerk), Nathan Eshelman (asst. clerk), Shawn Anderson (AIC mod.), Aaron Hartzler (AIC clerk).
8. Gave abundant thanks to God for raising up Elder Richard Blankenship (Second RPC) to serve with unrivaled diligence and excellence, far above and beyond the call of duty, for two consecutive years as our AIC clerk (2021-22).

ATLANTA RPC - MISSION (GEORGIA): We adopted this mission statement: "Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church aims to be a faithful church, in doctrine, worship, personal piety, church life, fellowship, outreach, and hospitality, with specific focus on downtown Atlanta, demonstrating the love of Jesus to all people, and seeking to impact the Atlanta metro area by modeling a covenantal Christ-like community and by the multiplying of other Reformed Presbyterian congregations." In late 2022, within a short period, we lost (via death and discipline) one-third of our membership. We grieve, but bow before the Lord. Prayer requests: outreach efforts; building renovations; a deacon or two; organizational plans.

BELLE CENTER RPC (OHIO): The Belle Center congregation has been blessed by new members by transfer, adult profession of faith, baptism, and baptized members making personal profession. Attendance, after taking a hit from Covid, is back to 2020 levels. We're thankful for a committed Session and deacon; we hope soon to be electing and eventually ordaining two more deacons. We are thankful, too, that the trial of sexual sin in our congregation has mostly resolved. The guilty member was suspended by Session, imprisoned by the magistrate, and died in prison, allegedly by a catastrophic accident. The family is on target for reunification in May or June. Our pastor and his wife are being blessed with grandchildren, and we anticipate at least two babies' birth in the congregation by the end of this year.

BLOOMINGTON RPC (INDIANA): The Lord has blessed our congregation tremendously in 2022. He continues to send new people to us for which we are very grateful. Our average worship attendance increased to 172 in the mornings and 119 in the evenings. We had six covenant children born in the congregation this past year, causing us to marvel at the way God has re-configured our congregation to include so many young families. Our growth has created space challenges with our existing building. We have hired an architectural firm to help us design an addition to our building.

Please pray for wisdom as we assess how best to use our resources to minister effectively in our community and on the Indiana University campus.

COLUMBUS RPC (INDIANA): The Lord has been good to Columbus RP. Pastor Hart has preached in Mark and Genesis. Visitation efforts have increased and been fruitful. Men's prayer, women's Bible studies, book clubs, and Lord's Day evening fellowship provide discipleship opportunities. Finances are strong. The congregation is experiencing unity. Membership is stable. One elder and one deacon were elected last year; we pray for more in the year(s) to come. Founding elder Ed Schisler retired from active service on the session after 44 faithful years. We pray for many more years of Christ sustaining Columbus RP.

CHRIST CHURCH RPC (BROWNSBURG, INDIANA): Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian (CCRP) was disorganized in October of 2022.

ELKHART RPC (INDIANA): ERPC praises God for His care over the past year. Session met 21 times including 3 meetings with the Deacons. Preaching focused on Luke. The Lord's Supper was held six times. SS Classes were provided for all ages. God blessed ERPC and Pastor Mann during his 4-month summer sabbatical. VBS was hosted in June. Wednesday dinners followed by Bible study and Kid's Group resumed in October. Several new families have been attending and a new elder was ordained and installed in January 2023. Pray for God to strengthen and sanctify the body, raise up workers for the harvest, and save the lost especially covenant children.

GRAND RAPIDS RPC (MICHIGAN): Grand Rapids RPC was disorganized in July of 2022.

HETHERTON RPC (MICHIGAN): Rev. Ray Morton had a sabbatical in 2022 during which time the pulpit was filled by resident TE (and Hetherton RE) Bryan Dage. Since then, Rev. Ray has been preaching in Daniel. Lord's Supper is observed twice a year (October and April). A new baby in March 2023 (baptism to be scheduled) yields total membership of 20, communicant membership 12. Average attendance is around 12.

IMMANUEL RPC (WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA): No report given.

LAFAYETTE RPC (INDIANA): God continues to bless us at RPC of Lafayette. We have continued to be faithfully fed by the Word of God. We are now studying 2 Timothy in our morning worship. We continue to be involved in jail ministry; college ministry; youth group; among other ministries. Within the last year we have been blessed with a new ruling elder, two new deacons, and we have called Jon Sturm to be our associate pastor; which he accepted. Our current membership is 163, an increase of 13 in the last year. We are very thankful for God's provisions. Thank you for praying for us!

MARION RPC (INDIANA): October 6th, 2022, Aaron Murray was ordained/installed as new pastor. The preaching consisted of sermons from Judges by Pastor Camery and Philippians by Pastor Murray. The Lord's Supper is celebrated on the 1st Lord's Day of each month. Members meet weekly at Pastor Murray's home for Bible study through the book of Joshua. In 2022 two were added as communicant members, and one was added to the congregation as a baptized member. As of the writing MRPC currently has 41 communicants, 17 baptized, and 3 adherents.

ORLANDO RPC (FLORIDA): In 2022, the Orlando Reformed Presbyterian congregation grew by 20 (10 communicant and 10 baptized) members and witnessed 3 baptized members transition to communicants by profession of faith. The Lord graciously provided 3 new elders (Mark Goerner, Kevin Duffey and Alejandro Ramirez) and a new deacon (Paul Knutson) to help serve the congregation. Session continued to work with Tom Reid on the development of a work in Gainesville,

Florida and recently Session approved moving forward with another work in Celebration, Florida. The congregation continues to be edified and encouraged through multiple opportunities for weekly study and fellowship.

SECOND RPC (INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA): *Some blessings:* The Gospel proclamation, that Christ lived among us, died on the cross for us, through preaching of James Faris and Jerry Foltz. Our calling of Jerry Foltz, with his Christ-centered story along with Monica's. We mourn the departure of James Faris with thanks for his years of fruitful ministry. Christ's building of a new generation of young families. Training men and women, through ministries and fellowship. Daily 7 a.m. prayer meeting, started during Covid. Christ builds His church through prayer. *Prayer request:* That the Lord would lead us to an additional pastor of His choice.

SELMA RPC (ALABAMA): The Selma congregation is continuing to carry on without a pastor and the Lord is still enabling us to persevere and endure. Regardless of the situation, the love for God's Word and the meaning of His Son, Jesus, dying on the cross for our sins, is exemplified through our desire to give Him the praise and the glory and try to be shining lights in this dark world. Although we lost our church to the tornado that struck on January 12, 2023, we did find a couple of places to meet for our Sabbath school classes and our morning worship. We met at Selma University for one Sabbath and Cornerstone Presbyterian has a smaller unused Sanctuary they are not using. So, we are there as long as they allow us to be. We thank God for them allowing us to use it and they wouldn't accept any monies at all. This is truly a blessing because it serves our needs. We do have services with them on some first Sundays because they have communion then and we also have services with them every fifth Sunday. We have established a GoFundMe account and a Clover account for those who want to contribute to our cause. Also, we have received monies from the insurance company and right now, we are trying to plan on what direction and what steps we need to take in replacing the church. We have a lot of decisions to make. We know that everything is in God's hands and His plans, so, we continually ask Him for guidance in all we do. To Him be all the Glory!!! Please keep us in your prayers.

SOUTHFIELD RPC (MICHIGAN): Membership and attendance continue to grow at a sustainable pace. In November, the session appointed five diaconal interns to serve in 2023 with a view to possible future nomination. Pastor Kuehner leads a theology course for those interested in future ministry roles. Two of our members participate in RPGM's Next Steps program and three plan to attend RP Mission trips this summer. Our budget increased by 20% over last year, reaching an all-time high. We are humbled and thankful to God for His abundant goodness, and remain hopeful as we continue to seek and serve him in the year ahead.

SOUTHSIDE RPC (INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA): At the end of 2022, total membership was 300, an increase of 23. Our congregation continues to be well-fed from God's word each week. Pastor Hanson completed preaching through his main series from the Gospel of John. Pastor Wise continued preaching through 1Kings, then 2Kings, followed by Lamentations. Session completed visitations begun in 2020 interrupted by the pandemic. Visitation feedback resulted in new weekly Men's Ministry meetings. The Master Plan Committee worked with our design team to reach several milestones for the Site Improvements Project introduced at 2021's annual congregational meeting. Construction is scheduled to begin in Spring 2023.

SOUTHWEST OHIO RPC (SWORP) Local church history always involves victories and defeats. With the approach of Fall, God in his wisdom shut down our prospective Christendom Bible College project. It was a great discouragement. But then, a bit later in the Fall, Kaiya Knodel became our church's first baptized child to make a profession of faith and become a confessing member of SWORP. We cried, and the year felt better! Our greatest joy is the exhilaration of maintaining a vital

preaching site and living church – exhibiting the Kingdom of God – in this evil world! What a privilege! Praise the Lord!

SPARTA RPC (ILLINOIS): God provided for Sparta RPC through some hard events and blessed us with recent encouragements. Last year we mourned the loss of Ross and Emily Fearing's stillborn daughter. We also mourned the retirement of longtime ruling elder and former pastor, Bob Morrow due to his declining health. God encouraged us with the addition of a young family and recent officer elections. Please pray that God would strengthen us through new leaders and grow our outreach into Sparta.

SYCAMORE RPC (KOKOMO, INDIANA): 2022 was a year of growth for us. We currently have 44 communicant members and 46 baptized members. We averaged 67 in AM attendance and 45 in PM. We completed our sermon series on Romans. Further, the Lord answered our requests in our weekly prayer meeting beyond our asking and expectation. Brentt VanSickle has joined the session. The Lord's blessed our diaconal ministry (growing in mercy ministry and improving/maintaining a 100 year-old building) and our Christian education ministry. 2023 marks our pastor's tenth year in service to God's Word.

TERRE HAUTE RPC (INDIANA): We are doing well in Terre Haute by God's grace through Christ. We have challenges but continue to carry out a Gospel ministry under the Great Commission of our Lord. We worship on the Lord's Day at 10:45am and 5:00 m; Sunday School at 9:30 am. On the first Sunday of each month we sit together at Christ's Table in the morning, enjoy lunch, and worship God again at 2:00 pm. Outreach, fellowship, and Bible study ministries continue throughout the week. We have four ministry teams: Facilities, Fellowship, Missions, and Outreach. Professing: 27; Baptized: 13; Adherents: 6.

WESTMINSTER RPC (CHICAGO, ILLINOIS): The Lord continues to bless us. Throughout last year many have begun regularly attending and have become very active in the life of the congregation. Our current membership is 16 communicants and 7 baptized. We also have 10 adherents. Our average attendance is 27. Since Pastor Smith arrived in August we have completed a series through Philippians and have begun a topical series on Worship. We regularly observe the sacraments: celebrating one baptism and the Lord's Supper during our communion seasons. We do regular outreach and evangelism within the local community. We pray the Lord will continue to work in and through us to mature our faith and to reach the Chicagoland area for Christ's Crown and Covenant.