

05 June 2023

To the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America:

We, the undersigned, wish to register a complaint regarding the following action of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery (GLGP) via the Ad Interim Commission (AIC) on April 24, 2023:

“Having received confirmation from Zionsville Fellowship Church regarding Mr. Faris’ letter of standing, it was moved, seconded, and carried unanimously that he be removed from the roll of Teaching Elders of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery.” This action followed a previous related action of the full GLGP on March 3, 2023: *“That presbytery, in response to Mr. Faris’ request ‘for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church’ (ZFC), send a letter of ministerial standing, and instruct the AIC to dismiss James Faris from the roll of GLGP TEs upon confirmation of the ZFC clerk’s receipt and acceptance of that letter.”*

Not long ago, Synod admonished GLGP for the sin of dismissing teaching elder Michael Lefebvre from the roll of Presbytery without adjudicating credible charges of sin against him. Later, GLGP confessed this sin to Synod but said it was impossible to remedy their sin. On the floor of the recent GLGP meeting in March, two teaching elders referred to Synod’s admonishment for sin as a “slap on the wrist.” GLGP has repeated this error, dismissing former teaching elder James Faris, all the while knowing that there were credible charges of sin against him, which they refused to adjudicate or even substantively discuss (see Synod Communication #23-01). It appears that GLGP has not yet learned a vital lesson.

These actions of GLGP demonstrate their unwillingness to discipline themselves. At the recent GLGP meeting in March, GLGP voted to permit the trial of a church member by a session within the presbytery and also brought formal charges of sin against a teaching elder of another presbytery, but they continue to refuse to discipline themselves. As the Book of Discipline states, “Both teaching and ruling elders must establish full biblical discipline for the sake of order and peace in the congregation. Since it is their duty to mold and perfect mental and moral character, the elders must begin by disciplining themselves” (pp. E-1 to E-2). The Directory of Church Government concurs:

- Ordinarily, if a teaching elder undergoing judicial process leaves the denomination, charges against him should be tried. (DCG II.E.6.h)
- A teaching elder forfeits his ordination by ... conduct unbecoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Such actions warrant judicial process.) [DCG II.E.6.i]

We must also complain against said action of GLGP because GLGP transferred Mr. Faris’ credentials to an independent (non-presbyterian) church, presumably without mention of any charges of sin, both of which actions violate other principles of RPCNA church government:

- [Presbytery] shall ... transfer such credentials to other presbyteries. (DCG 6.13)

- Upon application, a teaching elder desiring affiliation with another denomination may be given credentials by his presbytery and a letter of standing by his session. If charges are pending, they shall be included. (DCG II.E.5.i)

In case someone objects that our complaint is invalid because it was not submitted in timely fashion, it is important to note a few facts:

- Although GLGP elected to dismiss Mr. Faris on March 3, 2023, GLGP did not actually dismiss Mr. Faris until AIC acted on April 24, 2023.
- Upon hearing informally about AIC's action, we requested the minutes of AIC's meeting from the Clerk of AIC on April 26, 2023. The Clerk of AIC notified us that he could not send the minutes until they were approved. However, he did not actually send us the minutes until June 1, 2023. This was our first official notification of AIC's action to dismiss Mr. Faris.
- We submitted this present complaint to AIC on June 5, 2023, prior to AIC's scheduled meeting. Any delay in our submission of this complaint is clearly unintentional and unavoidable on our part, and we trust AIC and Synod will understand and agree with us.

Recommendations

Obviously, this complaint joins several other related complaints against GLGP before Synod, one of which (Synod Communication #23-06) being from a teaching elder in GLGP, indicating that GLGP needs your assistance to admit past errors, make appropriate repairs, and learn how to exercise proper church discipline in the future.

To this end, we make the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. That Synod recuses GLGP from voting on any action related to this complaint.
2. That Synod admonishes GLGP for its eagerness to discipline others outside of GLGP while refusing to discipline its own presbyters.
3. That Synod establishes a commission to consider how to best help GLGP grow in its willingness and ability to discipline itself, as is fitting for those called to shepherd the flock of Christ, and then to help GLGP implement any corrective actions to accomplish this goal.

SIGNED,

Nathan Enas
Kevin Swan
Members, Roll of Presbytery (Great Lakes Gulf)