

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)

2023 SPRING MEETING — Official Minutes

BUSINESS SESSION #1 (Thu 3/2 @ 2:00 p.m.)

The Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery met for its annual Spring Meeting at 2:00 p.m. on March 2, 2023 at the Southside Reformed Presbyterian Church, located at 6969 S. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46217.

1. CALL TO ORDER / RETIRING MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

The moderator, Nathan Eshelman, called the court to order at 2:05 p.m. with the reading of Psalm 80.

- After calling upon God's name in prayer, he preached from the text on Asaph's plea of faith for God's work of restoration, asserting that our presbytery desperately needs to seek and experience this restoration through the tender healing mercies of Christ our Good Shepherd.
- Mr. Eshelman concluded in prayer, after which the court sang Psalm 80 in praise to God, and the moderator once again called upon God's name in prayer, constituting the court in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King at 2:52 p.m.

2. ATTENDANCE

The assistant clerk called the attendance roll and confirmed that a quorum was present.

- A question was referred to the parliamentarians regarding the implications of seating the ruling elder delegate from IRPC, given that the IRPC session does not presently have a moderator.

3. INTRODUCTIONS

The moderator gave opportunity for the introduction of first-time delegates and other guests of the court.

- Shawn Anderson introduced first time delegate Brentt VanSickle, a ruling elder from Sycamore RPC.
- Jerry Foltz introduced first time delegate Adam Doerr, a ruling elder from Second RPC.
- Steve Sturm introduced fraternal delegate, local URC pastor, Rev. Austin Reifel.
- Nathan Eshelman introduced first time delegate, Alejandro Ramirez, a ruling elder from Orlando RPC.

4. PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

The clerk, Mr. Kuehner, presented Nathan Eshelman with a bamboo book stand featuring an inscription of his name on the center, and space for all the delegates to sign, in honor of his faithful service as moderator over the past year.

- The clerk also noted that the previous moderator, Frank Smith, had been prevented from attending last spring's meeting for health reasons, and presented him with a framed *Back to the Future* movie poster depicting Doc Brown and Marty McFly, and sharing that during Dr. Smith's time as moderator in 2021, they had spent so much time working together that the Kuehner children had begun comparing them to Doc and Marty.
- The court gave a round of applause in response to each gift.

5. CLERK'S REPORT

Adam Kuehner presented the clerk's report, providing the first segment of his oral report, stating that the digital review of session minutes has been completed for all congregations except Hetherton and IRPC, with nothing found to be contrary to the law and order of the church. He reminded session clerks of their need to submit their physical minute books to the assistant clerk in order to be checked for signatures and stamped. Having concluded the initial portion of his oral report, the clerk, brought his recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1¹ was seconded, after which Steve Rhoda's name was removed from the list of parliamentarians at his request, by way of friendly amendment, and the amended recommendation carried.
- Recommendation 2² was seconded, discussed, and carried, after which the court entered into executive session at 3:31 p.m.

¹ Rec. 1 (Clerk): That presbytery appoint the following parliamentarians for this meeting: J. Odom, F. Smith, P. Pockras (alt), J. Hughes (alt), ~~S. Rhoda (alt)~~, W. Mann (alt), J. Hart (alt). [CARRIED]

² Rec. 2 (Clerk): That presbytery enter executive session in order to hear the rest of the clerk's oral report and to consider Recommendations 3, 4, and 5. [CARRIED]

- Recommendation 3³ was seconded, discussed, and carried.
- Recommendation 4⁴ was seconded and discussed, at which time the previous moderator briefly took the chair, so that the current moderator could make a speech. The recommendation carried, after which the moderator returned to the chair. Frank Smith⁵ and Dick Knodel registered their dissent from Recommendation 4.
- Recommendation 5⁶ was seconded, discussed, and carried.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried that the Internet Maintenance Committee be directed to ensure that all oversight in administrative headship of their work be contained in this presbytery. The moderator ruled that this would not preclude a non-elder from serving as Internet Maintenance Technician (IMT), as is presently the case.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to leave executive session at 5:25 p.m.

6. RECESS FOR DINNER

David Hanson addressed the court on behalf of the host congregation and called upon God in prayer, giving thanks for the food and recessing the court for dinner at 5:29 p.m.

³ Rec. 3 (Clerk): That presbytery confirm its understanding that the clerk is authorized to “handle correspondence” and to “have charge of all the papers and records belonging to the [court]” (DCG 4.4, D-28), meaning that, at the clerk’s discretion, due to the sensitive nature of certain documents, he may restrict access and transmission of such documents to the presbytery delegates only, and that these restrictions constitute binding counsel tendered in the Lord (QFO 9), unless or until reversed or modified by the Presbytery or its Ad Interim Commission, such that anyone who willfully violates these restrictions, has sinned against the court and may be subject to censure. [CARRIED]

⁴ Rec. 4 (Clerk): That presbytery, in keeping with the 2006 decision of GLGP and Synod (MoS, 142) to permit RPCI’s policy of discretionary access to session minutes, confirm that a session clerk’s duty to “furnish extracts from the minutes when ordered by the court” (DCG 4.4, D-28), to present session minutes “for review by the presbytery once a year” (DCG 4.5, D-29), to “transmit to the higher [court] all records and papers pertaining to [a complaint]” (BOD II.4.4, E-16), and to ensure that “ordinarily... minutes of the session are open to members of the congregation” (DCG 4.5, D-28) does not imply an unqualified or inalienable license for every individual to access or disseminate every such record for every conceivable reason, much less for non-members of the congregation and/or presbytery to procure previously unpublished or uncirculated minutes in an unauthorized manner for widespread publication without the court’s consent or knowledge. [CARRIED]

⁵ Frank Smith’s Dissent: The church courts have at times struggled with regard to pastoral duty and discretion vis-a-vis the nature of a court. What is a court and how is it to operate? In the words of the preliminary principles of the original American Presbyterian Book of Church Order, “since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever, but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church.” The phrase “approbation of an impartial public” implies that a court, by definition, is public. Its actions must be open to inspection by the general public. Indeed, the church is to model to the society what justice and righteousness should be, including the procedures. What is true in general is true in particular with respect to the people of the church. Not only must they be able to have confidence in the actions taken by the elders on their behalf, but they must also be able to know what those actions are—else how would they be able to exercise their right of complaint or seeking redress by memorial or some other means? The conclusion is that matters acted on by a court are not confidential. There are ways for elders in their several capacity to give counsel and exercise informal discipline, even in conjunction with other elders and by means of, in essence, having discussion as a committee of the whole, keeping minutes that could later be referenced, should the need arise. But when the elders act jointly in constituted court, those actions are and must be public. To the extent that Presbytery’s action on Item 4 undercut the public nature of church court minutes, I hereby dissent from said action.

⁶ Rec. 5 (Clerk): That presbytery form a three-man committee, appointed by the moderator, to contact Rev. Kyle Borg, the Winchester RPC session, and the Midwest Presbytery, respectively, on behalf of the GLGP to articulate our very serious concerns and ask that steps be taken in love to effectively persuade Rev. Borg to publicly repent and receive the freely and eagerly offered forgiveness of the GLGP and the IRPC session for his sin against these ecclesiastical bodies (not merely against the GLGP clerk) in admittedly publishing sensitive, password-protected GLGP judicial records — submitted by the IRPC session to the GLGP in connection with Rev. Borg’s own complaint against them — on the website, *Peace, Purity, Progress*, against the express instructions of the GLGP clerk. [CARRIED]

BUSINESS SESSION #2 (Thu 3/2 @ 6:40 p.m.)**7. CALL TO ORDER**

The moderator called the court to order at 6:40 p.m. with the singing of Psalm 122A and reconvened the meeting in prayer.

8. ATTENDANCE

The assistant clerk took visual attendance and confirmed that a quorum was present.

9. SPECIAL INTRODUCTIONS

The moderator gave opportunity for additional introductions.

- Dick Knodel introduced Rev. Archibald Allison, an OPC minister of the gospel, who briefly greeted the court.
- Wade Mann introduced first time delegate Robert Daniels, a ruling elder from Elkhart RPC.

10. PARLIAMENTARIANS

Frank Smith announced the parliamentarians' answer to the previous question about seating delegates whose session lacks a moderator, stating that there is no absolute prohibition for sessions in electing their own moderators, particularly under extraordinary circumstances, and so the IRPC delegate may be seated.

11. CLERK'S REPORT — *Continued*

Mr. Kuehner resumed the presentation of the clerk's report, notifying the court that the moderator and clerk had just received a letter of repentance from Kyle Borg (GLG 23-11B) seeking the forgiveness of the presbytery and the IRPC session, along with a request from Mr. Borg to address the court via Zoom to express his repentance personally.

- After some discussion, the moderator ruled that the court will hear from Mr. Borg at this time.
- This ruling was challenged and upheld by a vote of 20-13.
- Mr. Borg addressed the court via Zoom reading the content of his letter of repentance and asking for the court's forgiveness.
- The clerk urged the moderator to grant the court's forgiveness, in keeping with the previously adopted language of Clerk's Recommendation 5 ("that steps be taken in love to effectively persuade Rev. Borg to publicly repent and receive the freely and eagerly offered forgiveness of the GLGP"), yet noted that this would not preclude the appointment of the three-man Borg Resolution Committee, especially in relation to the IRPC session, nor would it prevent further action, such as a censure, if the court deems such action to be warranted [BOD I.3.3, E-4].
- The moderator granted Mr. Borg the court's forgiveness, employing the language of Clerk's Recommendation 5 ("the freely and eagerly offered forgiveness of the GLGP"), and the clerk led the court in prayer.

The court resumed its consideration of the list of recommendations from the clerk's report.

- Recommendation 6⁷ was seconded, discussed, and carried.
- Recommendation 7⁸ was seconded, discussed, and carried.
- Recommendation 8⁹ was seconded and carried.
- Recommendation 9¹⁰ was seconded and carried.

⁷ Rec. 6 (Clerk): That presbytery instruct the Nominating Committee to (A) Determine the congregations to be visited this year, (B) Consider the Geneva College Board of Corporators' nomination of Phil Pockras as GLGP Rep., (C) Replace the two departing members of the Membership Comte, (D) Replace the GLGP HMB Rep., (E) Nominate an IRPC provisional moderator, (F) Replace Jason O'Neill as GLGP Rep. on Synod's Finance Comte. [CARRIED]

⁸ Rec. 7 (Clerk): That presbytery instruct the incoming AIC to determine and disseminate the time and place for the fall meeting by 7/31/23. [CARRIED]

⁹ Rec. 8 (Clerk): That presbytery form a two-man committee, appointed by the moderator, to review the RPC of Lafayette's pastoral call to Jonathan Sturm and report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting. [CARRIED]

¹⁰ Rec. 9 (Clerk): That presbytery approve the following committee reports as submitted, without hearing oral reports: (A) Geneva College Board of Corp.'s Report, (B) Fearing Chaplaincy Report, (C) Home Mission Board Rep. Report. [CARRIED]

- Recommendation 10¹¹ was seconded, discussed, and carried.
- Recommendation 11¹² was seconded and carried.
- Recommendation 12¹³ was seconded and carried.
- Recommendation 13¹⁴ was seconded, discussed, and carried.
- Recommendation 14¹⁵ was seconded and carried.
- Recommendation 15¹⁶ was seconded and carried.
- Recommendation 16¹⁷ was withdrawn.
- Recommendation 17¹⁸ was moved, seconded, and discussed.

It was moved, seconded, and discussed to lay Recommendation 17 on the table to entertain the following substitute motion: “That presbytery, in response to Mr. Faris’ request ‘for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church’ (GLG 23-6), instruct the clerk to transfer Mr. Faris’ credentials to ZFC.”

- A point of order was raised, asserting the substitute motion to be unconstitutional, per DCG 3.II.E.5.i (D-21), since Zionsville Fellowship Church is an independent congregation and not a “denomination”.
- The moderator ruled in favor of the point of order, thereby declaring the motion to be out of order.
- The moderator’s ruling was challenged and overturned by a vote of 14-19.
- The following delegates registered their dissent: Jon Hughes, Adam Kuehner, Phil Pockras, Dick Knodel, Josh Smith, Frank Smith, Alejandro Ramirez, Greg Damerow, and Bruce Bowers.
- The following delegates notified the court of their intent to file a complaint against this action of the court: Adam Kuehner, Phil Pockras, Josh Smith, Frank Smith, Alejandro Ramirez, Greg Damerow, and Bruce Bowers.
- The motion to entertain the substitute carried by a vote of 20-12, after which the court discussed the substitute.

It was moved, seconded, discussed, and carried to amend the motion by adding the phrase: “with a rebuke for his email as recorded in GLG 23-8, and an encouragement to seek the peace and unity of the church in whatever ecclesiastical situation he finds himself in.”

- The motion was then divided into Part A and Part B, with Part A presently before the court.
- It was moved, seconded and discussed to refer Part A of the motion to synod for counsel.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried by two-thirds majority to table this discussion until the following day (Friday).

The court resumed its consideration of the clerk’s remaining recommendations.

¹¹ Rec. 10 (Clerk): That presbytery counsel the Synod Board of Trustees (DCG 2.11, D-6), in keeping with the wishes of the former CCRP congregation in Brownsburg, Indiana, to hold the remaining funds from the disorganized CCRP congregation for up to five years for a new work in Marion County or one of its eight bordering counties. [CARRIED]

¹² Rec. 11 (Clerk): That presbytery transmit GLG 22-22 and GLG 22-23 to synod without endorsement. [CARRIED]

¹³ Rec. 12 (Clerk): That presbytery formally dismiss the CCRP Commission with thanks. [CARRIED]

¹⁴ Rec. 13 (Clerk): That presbytery instruct its clerks to look into the synod’s requirements for annual congregational financial audits and report back to the presbytery no later than the spring of 2024. [CARRIED]

¹⁵ Rec. 14 (Clerk): That presbytery refer GLG 23-5 to the three-man, moderator-appointed Business Committee of the Day [BUSCOM] to examine the complaint (with pertinent records), to interact with the parties (as able), and to report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting. [CARRIED]

¹⁶ Rec. 15 (Clerk): That presbytery refer GLG 23-1, 23-2, 23-3, and 23-9 to a three-man, moderator-appointed IRPC Committee of the Day to examine each communication (with pertinent records) and report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting. [CARRIED]

¹⁷ Rec. 16 (Clerk): That presbytery refer GLG 23-8 to BUSCOM to advise whether or not its contents warrant any further action(s) by the presbytery (e.g. BOD I.3.1/2, E-4; BOD II.1.3/4, E-9), and to report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting. [WITHDRAWN]

¹⁸ Rec. 17 (Clerk): That presbytery, in response to Mr. Faris’ request “for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church” (GLG 23-6), instruct the clerk to send ZFC a letter of ministerial standing, but not to *transfer* Mr. Faris’ credentials to ZFC. [LAID ON THE TABLE]

- Recommendation 18¹⁹ was seconded, discussed, and modified by friendly amendment to replace the phrase “Business Session 2” with the phrase “Business Session 3”, after which it carried.
- Recommendation 19²⁰ was seconded and carried.
- Recommendation 20²¹ was seconded, discussed, and carried.

12. ELECTION OF THE MODERATOR

It was moved and seconded to nominate Jon Hughes as moderator.

- It was moved, seconded, and carried to close the nominations, after which the court elected Mr. Hughes to the moderator’s chair without vocal dissent.

13. ELECTION OF THE CLERK(S)

It was moved and seconded to nominate Adam Kuehner as clerk.

- It was moved, seconded and carried to close the nominations, after which the court elected Mr. Kuehner to continue serving as clerk without vocal dissent.
- Nathan Eshelman assumed the role of assistant clerk from Dale Koons, after which the court showed its appreciation for Mr. Koons’ many years of faithful service by rising with applause.

14. AD INTERIM COMMISSION REPORT

David Hanson presented the AIC report, bringing its recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1²² carried.
- Recommendation 2²³ carried.

15. INTERNET MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Adam Kuehner presented the Internet Maintenance Committee report, bringing its recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1²⁴ carried.
- Recommendation 2²⁵ carried.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

16. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

Frank Smith presented the report of the Membership Committee, bringing its recommendations before the court, and noting that each recommendation would need to be seconded, since he is the only remaining committee member.

- Recommendation 1²⁶ was seconded and carried.

¹⁹ Rec. 18 (Clerk): That presbytery instruct the moderator to announce the following appointments by the start of Business Session 2 3 at the latest: (A) Business Committee of the Day [BUSCOM]: 3 (B) IRPC Committee of the Day: 3 (C) Nominating Committee: 3 (D) Finance Committee: 3 (E) Resolution of Thanks Committee: 2 (F) Time and Place Committee: 2 (G) Lafayette Call Review Committee: 2. [CARRIED]

²⁰ Rec. 19 (Clerk): That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda for this meeting. [CARRIED]

²¹ Rec. 20 (Clerk): That presbytery grant all RPCNA elders present the privilege of the floor during the remainder of this meeting. [CARRIED]

²² Rec. 1 (AIC): That Presbytery receive this report. [CARRIED]

²³ Rec. 2 (AIC): That the minutes of this *Ad Interim* Commission be spread on the minutes of Presbytery. [CARRIED]

²⁴ Rec. 1 (IMC): That presbytery reappoint Andrew Imeson as Internet Maintenance Technician until the Spring 2024 meeting of presbytery, with an annual stipend of \$500. [CARRIED]

²⁵ Rec. 2 (IMC): That presbytery dissolve this committee and delegate its remit (To oversee all presbytery internet maintenance functions, including the work of the IMT, along with any additional items assigned by presbytery) to the clerks of presbytery. [CARRIED]

²⁶ Rec. 1 (MC): That Stephanie Thomson Ek be transferred to Indy Reformed Church (URCNA) with our blessing. [CARRIED]

- Recommendation 2²⁷ was seconded and carried.
- Recommendation 3²⁸ was seconded and referred to the Nominating Committee.
- Recommendation 4²⁹ was seconded and carried, thereby receiving the report.

17. TREASURER'S REPORT

It was noted that the treasurer's report has been moved to the following day, and will be presented, God willing, by Mark Hart.

18. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT

Adam Niess presented the Candidates & Credentials Committee report, bringing its recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1³⁰ carried.
- Recommendation 2³¹ was referred to the Nominating Committee.
- Recommendation 3³² was referred to the Nominating Committee.
- Recommendation 4³³ carried, thereby receiving the report.

BIBLE EXAM — J. JOHNSON (SUSTAINED W/O VOCAL DISSENT)

Mr. Niess announced that Joe Johnson passed his written Bible exam with distinction, after which the court sustained the results of the exam by voice vote without vocal dissent.

CHURCH HISTORY PAPER — J. JOHNSON (Sustained without Vocal Dissent)

The court sustained Joe Johnson's church history paper by voice vote without vocal dissent.

CHURCH HISTORY PAPER — J. STURM (Sustained without Vocal Dissent)

The court sustained Jonathan Sturm's exegesis paper by voice vote without vocal dissent.

PERSONAL GODLINESS EXAM — J. JOHNSON (Unanimously Sustained)

Joe Johnson came forward to receive his Personal Godliness exam from Aaron Murray, answering questions from Mr. Murray and from the floor, after which comments were received from the floor, and the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.

PASTORAL AND EVANGELISTIC GIFTS EXAM — J. STURM (Unanimously Sustained)

It was moved, seconded and carried to extend the time to conduct Jonathan Sturm's Pastoral & Evangelistic Gifts exam.

- Jonathan Sturm came forward to receive his Pastoral and Evangelistic Gifts exam from Rich Holdeman, answering questions from Mr. Sturm and from the floor, after which comments were received from the floor and the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.

19. EVENING RECESS

Ross Cerbus addressed the court on behalf of the host congregation regarding housing accommodations, after which the moderator recessed the court in prayer at 9:34 p.m.

²⁷ Rec. 2 (MC): That Deidra (Dee Dee) Shaw be transferred to First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Macon, Georgia, with our blessing. [CARRIED]

²⁸ Rec. 3 (MC): That the Nominating Committee nominate three new members of the Membership Committee. [CARRIED]

²⁹ Rec. 4 (MC): That this report be approved. [CARRIED]

³⁰ Rec. 1 (C&CC): That student exams be conducted according to the schedule outlined below. [CARRIED]

³¹ Rec. 2 (C&CC): That Joel Hart and Rich Holdeman be nominated to continue serving on the Committee. [CARRIED]

³² Rec. 3 (C&CC): That a replacement for Craig Scott be nominated to serve on the Committee. [CARRIED]

³³ Rec. 4 (C&CC): That our report be received. [CARRIED]

BUSINESS SESSION #3 (Fri 3/3 @ 8:30 a.m.)**20. CALL TO ORDER**

The moderator called the court to order with the singing Psalm 72F and reconvened the court in prayer at 8:45 a.m.

21. ATTENDANCE

The assistant clerk took visual attendance and confirmed that a quorum was present.

22. MODERATOR APPOINTMENTS

The moderator announced the following committee appointments.

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| <u>BUSCOM</u> James Odom (Ch) Shawn Anderson, Jerry Foltz | <u>Lafay. Call Rev. Comte</u> David Hanson Josh Smith | <u>Finance Comte</u> Joel Hart (Ch) Greg Damerow, Bruce Bowers | <u>Resolution of Thx Comte</u> Christ Stockwell (Ch) Robert Daniels Alejandro Ramirez |
| <u>IRPC Comte OTD</u> Frank Smith (Ch) Aaron Murray, John Hanson | <u>Nominating Comte</u> Ken Nelson (Ch) Ross Cerbus Steven Work | <u>Time and Place Comte</u> Dick Knodel (Ch) Ian Wise | |

23. ATTENDANCE

The assistant clerk took visual attendance and confirmed that a quorum was present.

24. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT — *Continued*

Adam Niess resumed his presentation of the Candidates and Credentials Committee Report.

EXPOSITORY SERMON 2 EXAM — J. STURM (Unanimously Sustained)

Jonathan Sturm came forward for his expository sermon 2 exam, read Revelation 8:1-5, preached from the text on our need to fill heaven with our prayers, and called upon God's name in prayer, after which the court sang Psalm 65A, shared comments from the floor, and unanimously sustained the exam by roll call vote.

25. MODERATOR APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Hughes announced his appointments for the Borg Resolution Committee: Joel Hart (Ch), Bob Bibby, Scott Hunt.
- Later in the meeting, the moderator announced that Joel Hart had declined to serve on this committee, after which he was replaced by Adam Doerr, with Bob Bibby serving as chairman of the committee.

26. READING OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The clerk read the minutes from Business Sessions 1 and 2, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to adopt the minutes as amended.

27. PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

Jerry Foltz shared a point of personal privilege concerning Richard Blankenship's wife Linda, who is gravely ill and presently receiving hospice care, after which Jerry led the court in prayer for this matter.

28. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT — *Continued*

Adam Niess resumed the C&CC report, inviting Joe Johnson to come forward for his Theology 1 exam.

THEOLOGY 1 EXAM — J. JOHNSON (Unanimously Sustained)

Joe Johnson came forward to receive his Theology 1 exam from Jerry Foltz, answering questions from Mr. Foltz and from the floor, after which comments were received from the floor, and the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.

29. MOTION FROM THE FLOOR (Carried)

It was moved, seconded, and carried that the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, noting the evident blessing of the Holy Spirit upon the retiring moderator's preaching, hereby spreads a copy of Dr. Eshelman's sermon upon the minutes.

30. PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

David Whitla shared a point of personal privilege, informing the court that Rev. Ted Donnelly is nearing eternity, and asking for prayer, which was offered up by the moderator following the mid-session break.

31. MID-SESSION BREAK

The court took its mid-session break at 10:40 a.m. and resumed the meeting at 10:59 a.m. with the singing of Psalm 87, after which Mr. Hughes reconvened the court in prayer, and interceded for Ted Donnelly and his family, giving thanks to the Lord for using Rev. Donnelly's ministry to bless the church for so many years.

32. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT — *Continued*

Mr. Niess resumed his presentation of the Candidates and Credentials Committee report.

THEOLOGY 2 EXAM — J. STURM (Unanimously Sustained)

Jonathan Sturm came forward to receive his Theology 2 exam from Shawn Anderson, answering questions from Mr. Anderson and from the floor, after which comments were received from the floor, and the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.

33. CONGREGATIONAL REPORTS

The court took up the hearing of congregational reports in reverse alphabetical order, as specified in the agenda.

WESTMINSTER RPC (Received)

Josh Smith presented the Westminster congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

TERRE HAUTE RPC (Received)

Russell Lodge presented the Terre Haute congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

SYCAMORE RPC (Received)

Bob McKissick presented the Sycamore congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

SPARTA (Postponed)

The moderator appointed Phil Pockras to pray for Rev. Bob Morrow during the upcoming prayer time, and noted that the Sparta congregational report has been postponed until later in the meeting.

SOUTHFIELD (Received)

Adam Kuehner presented the Southfield congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

34. INTERCESSORY PRAYER

The court entered into a time of intercessory prayer, led by Philip McCollum (Westminster), Steven Work (Terre Haute), Phil Pockras (Sparta, Bob Morrow), Joel Hart (Sycamore), and Rich Holdeman (Southfield).

35. DISABILITIES MINISTRY REPORT

Rich Johnston presented a report on behalf of Synod's Disabilities Ministry Committee, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

36. LAFAYETTE CALL REVIEW COMMITTEE

David Hanson presented the report of the Lafayette Call Review Committee, recommending that the court sustain RPC's pastoral call to Jonathan Sturm as a regular gospel call, after which this recommendation carried.

37. CONGREGATIONAL REPORTS — *Continued*

The court returned to the hearing of congregational reports.

SOUTHWEST OHIO RPC (Received)

Greg (aka "Scott") Damerow presented the Southwest Ohio RP (SWORP) congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

38. PRAYER & RECESS FOR LUNCH

David Schisler led the court in prayer for the SWORP congregation and for the Vincze family (in light of the recent passing of Elder Timothy Vincze's mother), and recessed the court for lunch at 12:27 p.m.

BUSINESS SESSION #4 (Fri 3/3 @ 1:30 p.m.)**39. CALL TO ORDER**

The moderator called the court to order at 1:34 p.m. with the singing of praise to God and reconvened the court in prayer.

40. ATTENDANCE

The assistant clerk took visual attendance, confirming that a quorum was present.

41. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT — *Continued*

Adam Niess resumed his presentation of the C&CC report.

CHURCH HISTORY EXAM — J. STURM (Unanimously Sustained)

Jonathan Sturm came forward to receive his Church History exam from Steve Rhoda, answering questions from Mr. Rhoda and from the floor, and receiving comments from the floor, after which the exam was unanimously sustained by roll call vote.

LICENSURE TO RECEIVE A CALL — J. STURM (Unanimously Sustained)

The court unanimously sustained Jonathan Sturm's licensure to receive a call.

- Jonathan Sturm affirmed the licensure queries as administered by Steve Sturm, and signed the queries in the minute book, after which Joel Hart led the court in prayer, licensing Mr. Sturm as eligible to receive a call in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the only Head and King of the church.
- David Whitla issued a charge to Mr. Sturm on behalf of the court regarding the preacher's call from Christ and reminded him of the privileges, responsibilities, and limitations of licensure.

PRESENTATION OF PASTORAL CALL

The clerk presented Mr. Sturm with the pastoral call from RPC of Lafayette, and the moderator reminded him that he has two weeks to notify the clerk of his response to the call.

42. IRPC RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

Nathan Eshelman presented the report of the IRPC Resolution Committee, bringing its recommendations before the court, including a third recommendation not included in the written report.

- It was moved, seconded, and carried that presbytery enter executive session to hear this report, after which the court entered executive session at 2:35 p.m.
- Recommendation 1³⁴ was discussed, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried by two-thirds super-majority to move the previous question, and Recommendation 1 carried without vocal dissent.
- Recommendation 2³⁵ was modified by the committee to replace "Dan Perrin" with "Matt Wilburn", after which it carried and was implemented.
- Recommendation 3³⁶ carried.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.
- Nathan Eshelman led the court in prayer, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to leave executive session, which the court did at 2:56 p.m.

43. IRPC COMMITTEE (OTD) REPORT

Frank Smith presented the report of the IRPC Committee (of the Day), bringing Recommendation 1A³⁷ before the court, after which the recommendation was discussed.

³⁴ Rec. 1 (IRPC-RES): The committee be continued and to report back to the synod-time meeting of presbytery. [CARRIED]

³⁵ Rec. 2 (IRPC-RES): That Mr. Dan Perrin Matt Wilburn be given five minutes to speak on the floor of presbytery. [CARRIED]

³⁶ Rec. 3 (IRPC-RES): That presbytery counsel the Trustees of Synod to make no claim against the property of IRPC. [CARRIED]

³⁷ Rec. 1A (IRPC-OTD): That the Anderson complaint (GLG 23-2) be heard tomorrow, with ten minutes for the complaint, twenty minutes for the defendant, and ten additional minutes for the complainant, followed by thirty minutes for debate, with provision for five minute extensions by simple majority.

- It was moved and seconded to lay the recommendation on the table to entertain the following substitute: “That presbytery form a five-man judicial commission appointed by the moderator with authority to institute (and, as needed, bring to completion) judicial process against Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn for their respective roles in the publicly known decision and/or action of the IRPC session to serve communion to Jared Olivetti while he remained under suspension by the synod.” This motion was defeated, thereby returning the discussion to Rec. 1A.

44. MID-SESSION BREAK

The court took its mid-session break at 3:25 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 3:48pm with the singing of Psalm 32D and a prayer by the moderator to reconvene the meeting.

45. IRPC COMMITTEE (OTD) REPORT — *Continued*

Frank Smith resumed his presentation of the IRPC Committee (of the Day), withdrawing Recommendation 1A and bringing Recommendation 1B³⁸ before the court on behalf of the committee.

- It was moved and seconded to lay the current recommendation on the table to entertain the following substitute: “That the Anderson Complaint (GLG 23-2) be referred to the IRPC Resolution Committee to make use of it in its work of advising the IRPC session.” This motion was defeated.

46. WITHDRAWAL OF COMPLAINT AND CHARGES

The moderator announced that the assistant clerk has consulted with Rev. Kyle Borg and that Rev. Borg has submitted a formal notice to the court (GLG 23-12) withdrawing his charge and complaint against the IRPC session.

47. IRPC COMMITTEE (OTD) REPORT — *Continued*

Frank Smith resumed his presentation of the IRPC Committee (of the Day) Report, and the court returned to its discussion of Recommendation 1B, after which the recommendation was defeated.

48. CLERK’S REPORT — *Continued*

Mr. Kuehner resumed his presentation of the clerk’s report, enabling the court to return to its discussion of Part A³⁹ of the substitute motion⁴⁰ currently on the floor, which previously had been substituted for Clerk’s Recommendation 17.⁴¹

- Part A of the substitute was defeated, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to lay Part B on the table to entertain the following substitute: “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.”
- The substitute motion was discussed, along with many heartfelt expressions of love and appreciation for Mr. Faris and his ministry over the years, after which it carried, and Aaron Murray led the court in prayer for Mr. Faris.

The clerk informed the court that it remains unclear as to whether or not presbytery has transmitted GLG 22-16⁴² to synod, per the requirements of the constitution.

- It was moved, seconded, and carried to transmit GLG 22-16 to synod without endorsement.

³⁸ Rec. 1B (IRPC-OTD): That presbytery refer the hearing of the Anderson Complaint (GLG 23-2) to a five-man commission to adjudicate the matter according to the following format: ten minutes for the complaint, twenty minutes for the defendant, and ten additional minutes for the complainant, followed by thirty minutes for debate, with provision for five minute extensions by simple majority. [DEFEATED]

³⁹ Part A of the Substitute Motion (on the floor): That presbytery, in response to Mr. Faris’ request ‘for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church’ (GLG 23-6), instruct the clerk to transfer Mr. Faris’ credentials to ZFC. [DEFEATED]

⁴⁰ Substitute Motion (Parts A + B): That presbytery, in response to Mr. Faris’ request ‘for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church’ (GLG 23-6), instruct the clerk to transfer Mr. Faris’ credentials to ZFC, and with a rebuke for his email as recorded in GLG 23-8, and an encouragement to seek the peace and unity of the church in whatever ecclesiastical situation he finds himself in.” [DIVIDED]

⁴¹ Rec. 17 (Clerk): That presbytery, in response to Mr. Faris’ request “for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church” (GLG 23-6), instruct the clerk to send ZFC a letter of ministerial standing, but not to *transfer* Mr. Faris’ credentials to ZFC. [LAID ON THE TABLE]

⁴² GLG 22-16: A complaint from N. Enas v. GLGP for not accepting charges against J. Faris at its meeting in June 2022.

- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the clerk's report.

49. MOTION FROM THE FLOOR (Defeated)

It was moved and seconded that the court take up GLG 23-8.⁴³ This motion was defeated by a vote of 12-13, after which the court sang Psalm 25B.

- The following delegates registered their dissent to the court's decision not to take up GLG 23-8 and gave notice of their intent to file a complaint: Adam Kuehner, Frank Smith, Josh Smith, Alejandro Ramirez, and Shawn Anderson.

50. MOTION FROM THE FLOOR (Carried)

Mr. Hart moved a reconsideration of the overturning of the moderator's ruling the previous day (Thursday) during the clerk's report regarding the unconstitutionality of moving to transfer a minister's credentials to an individual congregation.

- Mr. Hart informed the court that he had previously voted in the majority, after which it was also confirmed that the seconder had also voted in the majority on the previous day.
- The motion to reconsider carried, thereby reaffirming the moderator's ruling that a motion to transfer a minister's credentials to a local congregation, rather than a denomination, is out of order, per DCG 3.II.E.5.i (D-21).

51. CONGREGATIONAL/TGB REPORTS — *Continued*

The court returned to the hearing of reports from congregations and temporary governing bodies (TGB).

Selma RPC

Adam Niess presented the Selma congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

Atlanta RP Mission Church (TGB)

Frank Smith presented the report of the Atlanta TGB, bringing its recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1⁴⁴ was seconded and referred to the Finance Committee
- Recommendation 2⁴⁵ was seconded and referred to the Finance Committee
- Recommendation 3⁴⁶ was seconded and referred to the Nominating Committee.
- Recommendation 4⁴⁷ was seconded and carried, thereby receiving the report.

52. ATLANTA JUDICIAL COMMISSION

Frank Smith presented the report of the Atlanta Judicial Commission, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report, thereby spreading the commission minutes on the minutes of presbytery.

53. CONGREGATIONAL REPORTS — *Continued*

The court returned to the hearing of congregational reports.

Second RPC

Jerry Foltz presented the Second RPC congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

Southside RPC

John Hanson presented the Southside RPC congregational report, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

54. PRAYER AND RECESS FOR DINNER

The court entered into a time of intercessory prayer, led by Adam Niess (Selma), Phil Pockras (Second RP), Frank Smith (Southside), and Jeff Brotherton (Atlanta), who also recessed the court for dinner at 5:37 p.m.

⁴³ GLG 23-8: A communication from K. Evans sharing an email from J. Faris re: J. Olivetti's restoration to communion.

⁴⁴ Rec. 1 (ATL): That Presbytery grant \$4,000.00 for the work of Atlanta RPC for 2023. [REFERRED]

⁴⁵ Rec. 2 (ATL): That Presbytery provide \$2,000.00 for the expenses of the Atlanta Commission. [REFERRED]

⁴⁶ Rec. 3 (ATL): That the membership of the Atlanta Commission consist of the current members. [REFERRED]

⁴⁷ Rec. 4 (ATL): That the report of the Atlanta Commission be approved. [CARRIED]

BUSINESS SESSION #5 (Fri 3/3 @ 6:45 p.m.)**55. CALL TO ORDER**

The moderator called the court to order at 6:47 p.m. with the singing of Psalm 144B, and reconvened the court in prayer.

56. ATTENDANCE

The assistant clerk took visual attendance and confirmed that a quorum was present.

57. PRESBYTERY YOUTH REPORT — C.Y.P.U.

Steve Rhoda presented the report of the CYP.U. Board, introducing the members of the CYP.U. leadership team.

- It was moved, seconded, and carried to grant the members of the CYP.U. leadership team the privileges of the floor to present their portion of the Presbytery Youth Report.
- David Erney informed the court regarding various CYP.U. ministry events, including Theological Foundations Weekend.
- Duncan Blank informed the court regarding the recent CYP.U. winter conference and various other youth ministry events.

Steve Rhoda resumed his presentation of the report, bringing the board's recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1⁴⁸ carried, after which Bryan Planalp took the podium for the remainder of the report.
- Recommendation 2⁴⁹ carried.
- Recommendation 3⁵⁰ carried.
- Recommendation 4⁵¹ was referred to the Finance Committee.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report, after which the court gave Steve Rhoda a standing ovation for his diligent and faithful work with the youth of the presbytery.

⁴⁸ Rec. 1 (CYP.U.): That (1) Bryan Planalp will become the President of the CYP.U. Board, (2) Stephen Rhoda will remain Director of the CYP.U., and (3) An additional CYP.U. board member will be named. [CARRIED]

⁴⁹ Rec. 2 (CYP.U.): That presbytery approve (1) Changes to the Youth Ministry Staff Application Form: (a) Removing the experience questions; our proposed revision is attached. (b) Changing the form requirements so that rather than a letter of recommendation from pastor or elders, there is a standard attestation that is sent to pastor or elders to confirm (by signing) or reject. (2) Purchasing a Docusign account and using it to administer this form electronically. (a) This will work on the web or via the Docusign app. (b) Presbytery may want to consider whether the Docusign account should be owned by the CYP.U. or by the presbytery itself (i.e., should it be shared across all presbytery events). (c) Docusign is \$25 per month per seat, so purchasing one seat would cost \$300 per year. (d) We would like to ask presbytery to fund this cost in our CYP.U. budget. The benefits will be speed, ease, and uniformity. (3) CYP.U. Board will create a process to administer the forms and collect the documentation. Sending and collecting the forms will be time-consuming at first, as all youth workers will have to be processed, but should become easier over time as youth workers assist at multiple events. [CARRIED]

⁵⁰ Rec. 3 (CYP.U.): That presbytery approve (1) CYP.U. Board review of the CPP to seek clarification and recommended minor adjustments. Some areas to be reviewed include: (a) In II.B.2, what does it mean to "administer a GLGP youth program"? Does this refer to event coordinators, or anyone present at the event to oversee the youth (event coordinator, counselors, drivers, cook)? (b) In III.A, "Staff" and "Volunteer" have different requirements, and volunteer does not mention background check or the application form. However, the rest of the policy and context seems to assume that volunteers will also fill out the application form; is that the intent? (i.) In III.A.2.c, what does it mean for volunteers to "remain under Staff supervision"? Does this mean line of sight, or just generally under their oversight at an event? Would counselors at the high school winter conference be Staff or Volunteers? (c) Regarding the application form, if the pastor is a close relative of the applicant, should we require that the form be approved by an unrelated pastor or elder rather than a relative? (d) The CPP does not say how frequently to administer background checks, or if the application form ever needs to be redone. Our assumption is that background checks need to be redone every three years, and that the application form is a one-time event. Is this correct? (e) Do the bathroom guidelines in III.D.3 apply to high school age youth? Youth was defined as "those the age of 18 years of age or younger". (f) In III.C.2, what is an "approved adult"? Could this be added to the definition section? Is this someone who has to fill out the application form? [CARRIED]

⁵¹ That presbytery provide \$3000 for the work of the CYP.U. in 2023. [REFERRED]

58. ASSISTANT CLERK'S REPORT

The assistant clerk informed the court regarding the process of stamping minute books in confirmation of the digital review process which had taken place in the weeks leading up to the meeting.

59. ATLANTA JUDICIAL COMMISSION REPORT — *Continued*

It was moved, seconded, and carried to dismiss the Atlanta Judicial Commission with thanks.

60. IRPC COMMITTEE (OTD) REPORT — *Continued*

Frank Smith resumed his presentation of the IRPC Committee (of the Day), bringing Recommendation 1C⁵² before the court on behalf of the committee.

- It was moved, seconded and carried to amend the motion by inserting the phrase “scheduled for a time certain tomorrow”, thereby bringing the amended version of Recommendation 1C⁵³ before the court.
- The amended motion was discussed, after which the previous question was called, and this was defeated by a vote of 15-12, failing to reach the required two-thirds super-majority.
- The court continued its discussion of the amended motion, after which it carried, and the moderator announced that the Anderson Complaint (GLG 23-2) will be heard tomorrow following the preaching of the word.

61. BUSINESS COMMITTEE (OTD) [BUSCOM] REPORT

The BUSCOM report came before the court, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to enter executive session at 7:58 p.m., with Scott Hunt registering his dissent from this action.

- The previous moderator took the chair, since the current moderator is an elder on the session complained against.
- James Odom began reading the committee's written report, after which a point of order was raised, that the complaint should first be heard by way of statements by the prosecution and defense, rather than hearing the committee's analysis of the complaint.
- The moderator ruled against the point of order, after which further discussion ensued concerning the best path forward and the committee agreed to move directly to Recommendation 1,⁵⁴ which carried.
- The moderator ruled that certain relatives of the complainant are neither parties nor counsel to the case, and therefore may not present in executive session.
- The prosecution presented its case for ten minutes, after which the defense presented its case for ten minutes.
- James Odom resumed his presentation of the committee's written report, after which the complainant was given a further opportunity to address the court and answer questions.
- The Southfield delegates informed the court that they would be abstaining from the vote, after which Recommendation 2⁵⁵ carried without vocal dissent, meaning that the complaint was not sustained.
- The moderator explained to the complainant his rights and options regarding an appeal to synod.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to dismiss the committee, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried that presbytery leave executive session at 8:55 p.m., at which time the moderator resumed the chair from the previous moderator.

62. DISSENT FROM A PREVIOUS ACTION

Frank Smith read aloud his written dissent from the action of the court on the previous day to adopt Recommendation 4 from the clerk's report (See Footnote 5 above.)

⁵² Rec. 1C (IRPC-OTD): That the hearing of the Anderson Complaint (GLG 23-2) be according to the following format: 5 minutes for the complaint, ten minutes for the defendant, and five additional minutes for the complainant, followed by ten minutes for debate, with provision for five minute extensions by simple majority. [AMENDED]

⁵³ Rec. 1C (IRPC-ORD) [Amended]: That the hearing of the Anderson Complaint (GLG 23-2) be scheduled for a time certain tomorrow according to the following format: 5 minutes for the complaint, ten minutes for the defendant, and five additional minutes for the complainant, followed by ten minutes for debate, with provision for five minute extensions by simple majority. [CARRIED]

⁵⁴ Rec. 1 (BUSCOM): [That] The GLG Presbytery permits Mr. Allison to address the court for up to 10 minutes concerning this complaint. [CARRIED]

⁵⁵ Rec. 2 (BUSCOM): That the GLG Presbytery not sustain this complaint. [CARRIED]

63. MOTION TO EXTEND THE TIME (Carried)

It was moved, seconded, and carried to extend the time to hear the treasurer's report and the reading of the minutes.

64. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mark Hart presented the treasurer's report on behalf of presbytery treasurer, Jim Bishop, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

65. PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

The clerk asked Mr. Hart's forgiveness for inadvertently forgetting to invite him forward to give his report earlier in the evening, as he had previously promised to Mr. Hart.

66. READING OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Mr. Kuehner read the minutes, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to adopt the minutes as amended.

67. EVENING RECESS

The moderator recessed the court in prayer for the evening at 9:37 p.m.

BUSINESS SESSION #6 (Sat 3/4 @ 8:30 a.m.)**68. CALL TO ORDER**

The moderator called the court to order at 8:33 a.m., reconvening the court in the name of Jesus, the only King and Head of the church.

69. ATTENDANCE

The assistant clerk took visual attendance, confirming that a quorum was present.

70. MODERATOR APPOINTMENTS

The moderator noted that Adam Doerr will replace Joel Hart on the Borg Resolution Committee. The assistant clerk communicated to Bob Bibby that he will chair that committee, and Mr. Bibby agreed to this assignment.

71. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT — *Continued*

Adam Niess resumed his presentation of the Candidates and Credentials Committee report.

EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS SERMON — J. JOHNSON (Unanimously Sustained)

Mr. Joe Johnson came forward to preach his evidence of progress sermon, read Romans 1:1-7, preached from the text on the Good News of the Gospel (The Promise of the News, The Son of the News, The Spread of the News), and called upon God's name in prayer, after which the court sang Psalm 103D in praise to God, offered comments from the floor, and unanimously sustained the exam by roll call vote.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the Candidates and Credentials Committee report as a whole.

72. COMPLAINT HEARING (GLG 23-2): ANDERSON v. IRPC SESSION

Frank Smith, chairman of the IRPC Committee (of the Day), introduced the hearing of the Anderson Complaint.

- It was moved and seconded to enter executive session. This motion was discussed on the floor, and was defeated by a vote of 12-17.
- Wade Mann reminded all those present in the room of the presbytery's policy which prohibits audio or video recordings of these proceedings without express permission from the court.

The complainant, Shawn Anderson, delivered his first five minute presentation, after which the respondent, Matt Wilburn, delivered his ten minute presentation, followed by the complainant, Mr. Anderson, who delivered his five minute closing statement, at which point the moderator instructed the court that it had ten minutes for deliberation and decision by way of questions and comments.

- During this ten minute period, it was moved and seconded that presbytery hereby sustains Specification 1 of the complaint against the actions of the IRPC session in that it violated the synod's upholding of Mr. Olivetti's censure of suspension of church membership privileges, and that presbytery hereby annuls the decision to admit Jared Olivetti to the Lord's Table.

- This motion (Motion 1A) was divided into Part 1A⁵⁶ and Part 1B⁵⁷, with Motion 1A remaining before the court.
- Discussion continued, at which point a speaker directed a question to one of the parties for clarification regarding a comment made in his presentation, after which a point of order was raised to limit discussion to the motion itself, which was upheld by the moderator.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to lay on the table the discussion of Motion 1A, in order to debate and discuss the complaint as specified in the original motion, after which the court will return to the motion on the floor.
- The complaint was discussed, along with questions for Mr. Anderson and Mr. Wilburn regarding their presentations.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to extend the time for five minutes, after which the discussion continued.
- It was moved and seconded that presbytery refer the complaint to synod, after which this motion was discussed and defeated by a vote of 7-21, with James Odom registering his dissent, and the court returning to discuss Motion 1A.

73. MID-SESSION BREAK

The court took its midsession break at 10:27 a.m. and resumed the meeting at 10:48 a.m., at which time the moderator called the court to order with the singing of Psalm 105A, and announced that the court would briefly take up a motion with respect to the Sparta congregation.

74. MOTION FROM THE FLOOR

It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the Sparta congregational report without hearing an oral report, thereby referring their recommendation for a provisional elder to the Nominating Committee.

75. COMPLAINT HEARING (GLG 23-2): ANDERSON v. IRPC SESSION — *Continued*

The court resumed its discussion of the motion previously on the floor regarding the Anderson Complaint.

- It was moved, seconded, and carried to call the previous question, and this carried by two-thirds majority.
- Motion 1A carried by a vote of 28-1, thereby sustaining Specification 1 of the Anderson Complaint (GLG 23-2), with James Odom registering his dissent from this action.⁵⁸
- Motion 1B of the motion came before the court, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to amend the motion to add the phrase “and instruct the lower court to not continue to allow him to come to the Lord’s Table.”
- The amended version of Motion 1B⁵⁹ carried, with James Odom registering his dissent.

76. IRPC COMMITTEE (OTD) REPORT — *Continued*

Frank Smith resumed his presentation of the IRPC Committee (of the Day) report, bringing before the court the committee’s second recommendation (Rec. 2),⁶⁰ which was discussed and carried.

- The court proceeded to discuss the committee’s third recommendation (Rec. 3),⁶¹ which carried, with James Odom registering his dissent.

⁵⁶ Motion 1A (23-2 Hearing): That presbytery hereby sustains Specification 1 of the complaint against the actions of the IRPC session in that it violated the synod’s upholding of Mr. Olivetti’s censure of suspension of church membership privileges. [CARRIED]

⁵⁷ Motion 1B (23-2 Hearing): That presbytery hereby annuls the decision to admit Jared Olivetti to the Lord’s Table. [AMENDED]

⁵⁸ James Odom’s Dissent: “It belongs to the session alone to admit to membership in the church” (DCG-1-2, D-2). The local session is in charge of the table (DPW-3-11, F-13). Therefore it is out of order for a higher court, without being in the member’s presence, and thereby lacking necessary evidence to make the determination that a member’s “manner of life is notably inconsistent with their Christian profession,” to exercise a prior restraint upon a session to exclude a member from the table. Such an order creates a potential conflict of vows for both the session in charge of the table and the member obligated by vow to observe the appointed sacraments. By offering this as a sanction (BOD-4-1-C, E-5), the Constitution thereby contains a potential conflict. Synod has taken original jurisdiction, imposed this conflict, and therefore should be responsible for discipline in this matter and potential response to conflict of laws.

⁵⁹ Motion 1B (23-2 Hearing) [Amended]: That presbytery hereby annuls the decision to admit Jared Olivetti to the Lord’s Table, and instruct the lower court to not continue to allow him to come to the Lord’s Table. [CARRIED]

⁶⁰ Rec. 2 (IRPC-OTD): That presbytery receive Mr. Odom’s petition (GLG 23-8) for information. [CARRIED]

⁶¹ Rec. 3 (IRPC-OTD): That presbytery hereby rebukes elders Sam Carr and Josh Karshen for voting to admit Jared Olivetti to the Lord’s Table. [CARRIED]

- It was moved, seconded, and carried that presbytery instruct the IRPC session not to admit Jared Olivetti to the Lord's Table until the synod's censure of suspension is lifted. James Odom registered his dissent.
- It was moved (but failed to receive a second) that presbytery instruct the IRPC Resolution Committee to follow up with the IRPC session on the rebuke issued by the court, and report back to the presbytery with its counsel at its next meeting.
- It was moved and seconded that presbytery create a three-man AIC-appointed shepherding committee to follow up with the IRPC session on the rebuke issued by the court, and report back to the presbytery with its counsel at its next meeting. This motion was defeated by a vote of 10-15.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the report of the IRPC Committee (OTD).

77. MOTION FROM THE FLOOR (Carried)

It was moved and seconded that a three-man AIC-appointed committee evaluate the differences between the forgiveness granted at this meeting to Mr. Borg and the response to requests for forgiveness made at previous meetings.

- A point of order was raised that this motion is new business and is not germane, at which point the moderator ruled that the motion is germane, after which the motion carried.

78. FINANCE COMMITTEE

Joel Hart presented the Finance Committee report, bringing its recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1⁶² carried.
- Recommendation 2⁶³ carried.
- Recommendation 3⁶⁴ carried.
- Recommendation 4⁶⁵ carried.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report as a whole.

79. COVFAMIKOI CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Ken Nelson presented the report of the COVFAMIKOI Conference Committee, noting that the 2022 attendance was about 100 less than the previous conference, and announcing that the 2023 conference will be held on July 15-20 with Rev. George Gregory as the main speaker.

- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report as a whole.

80. TIME AND PLACE COMMITTEE REPORT

Ian Wise presented the report of the Time and Place Committee, bringing its recommendation before the court: "That next year's spring meeting be held at Second RP from February 29 to March 2, 2024." This motion carried, thereby setting the time and place for next year's spring presbytery meeting.

81. NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Ken Nelson presented the report of the Nominating Committee, providing some points of explanation, and bringing the committee's recommendations before the court.

- Recommendation 1⁶⁶ carried.
- Recommendation 2⁶⁷ was referred to the AIC.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report as a whole, which is as follows.

⁶² Rec. 1 (FinCom): That the Selma RP church be exempted from an assessment for 2023. [CARRIED]

⁶³ Rec. 2 (FinCom): That the monthly stipend for seminary students be raised from \$300/month to \$500/month. [CARRIED]

⁶⁴ Rec. 3 (FinCom): That the complete funds for budget items pertaining to the CYPUP be funded on a quarterly basis. [CARRIED]

⁶⁵ Rec. 4 (FinCom): That the budget as proposed be adopted. [CARRIED]

⁶⁶ Rec. 1 (NomCom): That presbytery adopt the following slate of names as proposed in the report. [CARRIED]

⁶⁷ Rec. 2 (NomCom): That presbytery appoint a provisional elder for Sparta RPC. [CARRIED]

Ad Interim Commission

Shawn Anderson (Ch)
Jerry Porter
G. Scott Damerow
Aaron Hartzler
Alejandro Ramirez

Cand. & Cred. Comte*Class of 2025*

Joel Hart
Rich Holdeman
Adam Kuehner

Class of 2024

Adam Niess (Ch)
Jonathan Schaefer
Ian Wise

Home Mission Board Rep.

Josh Smith

Church Extension Comte

Nathan Eshelman
Jason Camery
Bryan Dage

Financial Officers

Treasurer: Jim Bishop
Asst. Treasurer: Mark Hart

Membership Comte

Frank Smith (Ch)
Philip McCollum
Chris Stockwell

Interim Moderators

Selma: Adam Niess

Provisional Elders

Sparta: Open

Visitation Committees*Southwest Ohio RP*

Adam Doerr (Ch)
Jeff Brotherton
David Schisler
Southfield
Wade Mann (Ch)
Brentt VanSickle
Russell Lodge

Inter-Church Liaison

Dick Knodel

Synod Finance Comte

Jon Hughes

Geneva Board of Corporators Rep.

Phil Pockras

Atlanta TGB

Steven Work (Ch)

G. Scott Damerow

Frank Smith

Dick Knodel

Tim Vincze

T.J. Pastille

Covfamikoi Conf. Comte

Director: Ken Nelson

Manager: Ross Cerbus

Advisory: J. Schaefer, N.

Eshelman, D. Hanson

CYPU Board*Class of 2025*

Bryan Planalp (Pres.)

Anna Roberts (Treas.)

Kevin Duffy

Aaron Murray

Class of 2024

Joy Whitt

CYPU Director

Steve Rhoda

Youth Min. of Synod Rep.

Steve & Mary Rhoda

82. RESOLUTION OF THANKS COMMITTEE

Chris Stockwell presented the Resolution of Thanks Committee report, after which the resolution⁶⁸ was adopted.

83. PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

David Whitla shared a point of personal privilege, announcing that Professor Ted Donnelly had passed into glory earlier that day, and read a statement⁶⁹ from the Donnelly family.

84. ASSISTANT CLERK'S REPORT — *Continued*

The assistant clerk read his report, which is as follows:

- The Minute Books were all reviewed electronically and the following books were stamped with counsel: Atlanta (one set of signatures still needed), Belle Center, Bloomington (signatures needed), Elkhart, Lafayette, Marion, Second Indianapolis (Get a proper Minute Book), Southfield, Southside, Southwest Ohio, Sycamore, Terre Haute, Orlando.
- The following Minute Books were not stamped or signed: Columbus, Hetheron, Immanuel, Sparta, Westminster.
- The Minutes of the disorganized congregations of Christ Church and Grand Rapids were stamped and signed. There are seven missing signatures from Grand Rapids. These Minutes will be sent to RP Archives to be stored.
- It was moved, seconded, and carried to receive the report.

⁶⁸ Resolution of Thanks: Whereas the Southside Indianapolis Reformed Presbyterian Church has generously hosted the Spring meeting of the Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery with great charity and much kindness; Whereas SSRPC has shared with us their wonderful building to aid the fulfillment of our agenda over three days; Whereas SSRPC has welcomed us warmly, fed us fully, and housed us hospitably; Whereas SSRPC has served the Church well to advance the Kingdom of Christ; Now therefore, we offer to our beloved sister church our heart-felt gratitude, expressing our deep appreciation for the blessings they have bestowed upon us; and we offer to God our thanksgiving for SSRPC; along with our prayers that our great God and Father will prosper the Gospel ministry in Indianapolis, sustaining by His Word and Spirit our fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, of SSRPC, for their continued faithfulness and fruitfulness unto the coming of the Kingdom of Christ on earth until His glorious return to make all things new. — Chris Stockwell (Reformed Presbyterian Church of Lafayette) Robert Daniels (Elkhart Reformed Presbyterian Church) Alejandro Ramirez (Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church)

⁶⁹ Statement: "Our beloved husband & Dad passed peacefully into glory early this afternoon. We are so thankful that his suffering is now over and he is at home with his Saviour. We thank you for your continued prayers & care during this time. Lorna, Catherine, Ruth & Warren, John & Sarah. 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

85. READING OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The assistant clerk read the minutes from the current business session, after which it was moved, seconded, and carried to adopt them as amended.

86. PRAYER OF ADJOURNMENT

The court sang Psalm 133B and the moderator adjourned the court with prayer at 12:05 p.m. in the name of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.

Moderator of Presbytery

Clerk of Presbytery

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GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY
SPRING MEETING, MARCH 2-4, 2023
SOUTHSIDE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
 Attendance and Roll Call Voting Records
 LEGEND: P-present; S-Sustain; NOT-Not Sustain, ABS-Abstain,
 A-Affirm

| Congregation | First Last Name | Status | Notes | Session 1 Mar 2, 2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. ATTENDANCE | Session 2 Mar 2, 6:45 p.m.-9:00 p.m. ATTENDANCE | Session 3 Mar 3, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. ATTENDANCE | Session 4 Mar 3, 1:45 p.m.-5:30 p.m. ATTENDANCE | Session 5 Mar 3, 6:45 p.m.-9:00 p.m. ATTENDANCE | Session 6 Mar 4, 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. ATTENDANCE | Joe Johnson Personal Gpdliness Time: 20/10/5 | Jonathan Sturm Pastoral & Evangelistic gifts Time: 20/10/5 | Joe Johnson Evidence of Progress Time: 25/5 | Jonathan Sturm Expository Sermon 2 Time: 25/5 | Joe Johnson Theology 1 Time 1 20/10/5 | Jonathan Sturm ExTheology 2 Time: 20/10/5 | Jonathan Sturm Church History Exa, Time: 20/10/5 | Jonathan Sturm Licensure to Receive a Call |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| SWORP | Dick Knodel, Jr. | TE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ○ | ✓ | ○ | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| SWORP | Steven Work | TE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| SWORP | Scott Damerow | RE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | EXC. | S | S | EXC. | S | S | S | S | |
| Sparta | Ross Fearing | TE | | ABS | ABS | | | | | Absent | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Sparta | James Odorn | RE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Abstin | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| X Sycamore | Shawn Anderson | TE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Abstin | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Sycamore | Robert McKissick | RE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | S | S | AB | S | S | S | S | |
| Sycamore | Brenitt VanScickle | ALT | ALT | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| X Terre Haute | Steve Rhoda | TE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ○ | | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Terre Haute | Russell Lodge | RE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Terre Haute RPC | Josh Reshey | RE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Westminster | Josh Smith | TE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Men in Synod Service | David Whittle | TE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Ministers, Retired | Richard Johnson | TE | | ✓ | ✓ | ○ | ✓ | ○ | EXC | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| Socm | Tony Magnuson | RE | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | AT ✓ | ✓ | S | S | S | S | S | S | S | |
| TE Total | | 23 | | | | | | | S | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| RE Total | | 24 | | | | | | | NOT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ALT Total | | 2 | | | | | | | ABS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 49 | | | | | | | A | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | |

Alt: Dave Magnuson

Adon K
 Dick K
 John-Hux
 Mr. Smith -
 Frank Smith
 Alva Ramon
 Damon
 Bruce Bowen

39 20 = 2/3

Psalm 80: Restore us, O LORD God of Hosts
Rev. Dr. Nathan Eshelman

There's a certain level of honesty that is needed when we assess where we are as a presbytery. It has been said that in the last several years—a vacuum of leadership has happened among us—and this has caused us to ask who we are as a presbytery. There was a time when Roy Blackwood was younger and this presbytery was being built by church planting and discipleship. RB told the story of Second Indy growing and their session requesting money from the synod for chairs and psalters and the synod told them no. Church planting was a new idea for many.

In the more recent history of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, we have seen Dave Long rather surprisingly die; Gordon Keddie retired, stayed away from the courts of the church, and then got quite ill. Rich Holdeman got cancer and that changed some plans for sure. We saw Barry York go to seminary, later followed by Keith Evans and David Whitla taking away from leadership in our congregations. We have had something of an unspoken divide between the larger congregations which are suburban and our smaller ones that are urban or rural. That's been described to me, rightly or wrongly, as a "power struggle." We may have some differing views on subscription issues—leading to some saying that we have two different *systems of doctrine* among ourselves; that blossomed in a very cantankerous exam process of Sam Ketcham, which furthered the divide and added fuel to our fires.

Over the last couple of years we have been plagued with the issues surrounding Michael Lefebvre and Jared Olivetti, both of whom are no longer pastoring. We have seen ruling elders that we trusted removed from office, including one who was a father in the presbytery. We have seen a dark satanic attack and fleshy abuse upon children. The last three moderators have either resigned or suffered serious health problems while serving. We have watched the closures of several churches, the last two being Christ Church and Grand Rapids. The name of the presbytery has been dragged through the proverbial mud in the press, lawsuits have occurred, relationships have been fractured. Immanuel voted to leave the denomination; JF resigned and deaths have shocked us and caused us to hurt and meditate deeply: Eric Bibby and Jon Held being the most recent.

In the meantime, not one church has been planted in about a decade and various relationships are fractured—within leadership and within the presbytery's congregations and families. Most recently we refused to celebrate to sacrament of the Lord's Supper together; it didn't happen although it was tentatively scheduled.

Many of you sit here today exhausted in your ministry, experiencing a certain level of distrust; maybe you brought a new ruling elder delegate with you and are secretly embarrassed; maybe shamed to be a part of this or at least saddened by the last several years of our presbytery culture and ministry.

Some of you here can still hear Roy Blackwood’s voice when I say, “Christ will built his church,” but maybe that auditory memory is fading distantly as the noise of where we are rings in your ears. Is that truth fading among us? Do we believe or do we merely long to believe?

What do we need as a presbytery? Fathers and brothers, I want to draw your attention to Psalm 80 and I would refer you to the refrain of the Psalm that is said three times in Psalm 80.

“Restore us, O God; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!”

What do we need as the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA—what do you need as an officer within this presbytery?

“Restore us, O God; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!” I would like to meditate on this Psalm with you and apply it to our context.

The Psalm itself is a difficult Psalm. It is Psalm that laments, that cries out, that is filled with despair as the ancient church of the time lay fractured, discouraged, and broken.

Why did this happen?

Why would God allow for this to occur?

What is God doing among us?

Why has he allowed us to get this low?

This Psalm unfolds our need and our remedy, presbytery. We need to own this Psalm as a song of Zion for us and our time.

A Plea of Faith

I want to draw your attention in the first place to verses 1-3. *“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, Stir up Your strength, And come and save us!”*

In these verses we see firstly “a plea of faith;” our first heading is a plea of faith. Someone may say that the Psalm is dark and depressing and maybe even from a place of unbelief or lack of assurance—but I want you to see that despite the dark nature of the Psalm—as his experience among the people of God has been dark—he cries out to God from a place of faith. There’s some markers here.

Notice the word “shepherd” in verse 1. The word shepherd is a sweet word in the text that shows that the psalmist is trusting and pleading by faith. For it was the shepherd that brought these sheep through the valley of the shadow of death. There is darkness, trials, difficulty, enemies—and yet the plea of faith says: *“Hear us O shepherd. Hear us O shepherd.”*

Despite the troubles, the psalmist does not step off of the fact that God's presence is known and there is an experiential component to this plea of faith. Look again at verse 1: "You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!"

We see an acknowledgment of the leadership of the Shepherd over the church: you lead Joseph like a flock.

And we see the experiential reality of the people of God: he reigns between the cherubim and the with the benediction of God—that great glory that comes down to us though his word—glory pouring forth down from his throne.

Only through the mercy seat, that place of atonement, does the psalmist come—and here he experiences the presence of God. And as he experiences this trouble and cries out for help from a place of faith: "*Stir up, O Lord. Stir up, and save!*"

The word "stir" can also be translated as "turn." *Turn us O Lord.* Not turn the circumstances. Not turn the hearts of the guy next to me. Not turn a blind eye to our problems or our maltreatments of one another: "*Turn us towards you, O Lord that we might be saved.*" Turn. Convert. Grant repentance. Stir and turn.

One late-medieval writer said, "*Convert our rebellious wills to thee... show thy countenance that we may know thee; show thy power that we may fear thee; show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee; show thy goodness that we may love thee.*" — Savonarola

This plea of faith is a plea for Jesus to come to his church and to stir her up—to turn her—to convert and save her. The experiential realities of God's presence is known and his shepherding is acknowledged.

A Posture of Brokenness

But in the mist of this faith—things are not right. Things are not good. The people of God—are broken. In the second place I want you to notice verses 4-13 and 16. Secondly we see "a posture of brokenness."

"O Lord God of hosts, How long will You be angry Against the prayer of Your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears, And given them tears to drink in great measure. You have made us a strife to our neighbors, And our enemies laugh among themselves.

You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, And caused it to take deep root, And it filled the land. The hills were covered with its shadow, And the mighty cedars with its boughs. She sent out her boughs to the Sea, And her branches to the River. Why have You broken down her

hedges, So that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit? The boar out of the woods uproots it, And the wild beast of the field devours it. It is burned with fire, it is cut down; They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.”

It is as if the psalmist—Asaph—as a prophet—speaks on behalf of the entire church and he says: we have two problems:

1. Spiritual depression.
2. A broken witness.

As a church we are broken and downtrodden, O Lord. Notice how the psalmist comes to this understanding of spiritual depression. Look at verses 4-5, “*O Lord God of hosts, How long will You be angry Against the prayer of Your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears, And given them tears to drink in great measure.*”

From the experience of the church, the Lord is angry and against the prayers of his people—he is feeding them bread and drink in an abundance of tears—the church is in a posture of brokenness.

Within this posture of brokenness, the public witness of the church has been trampled and made of no effect. Verse 6 says the church is a strife to the neighbors and a laughingstock of the enemies of God.

You see fathers and brothers, the experience of the posture of brokenness that Asaph experiences is quite similar to your experience—our experience as a presbytery.

Our pride has been trampled.
 Many spirits have been broken.
 Ministers contemplate other vocations.
 Elders question the value of voluntary service.
 Friends have turned on friends.
 Has our voice been quieted?
 Neighbors laugh in scorn.

Fathers and brothers—we are nothing and we have been brought low. We are broken and in need of repair. We are confounded and left bewildered.

We are *unhappy* in the most biblical sense.

And we ask ourselves why?
 Why are we spiritually depressed?
 Why do we have a broken witness?
 What can help us to grasp this more deeply?

It is all so overwhelming—who can even grasp what Asaph contemplates?

For clarity, by way of illustration, Asaph says to you: “The church is a garden. God himself planted the vines and they grew tall. There was a time when the roots were deep and the soil was rich. Even when you looked up to the hills—the shadows that came from this garden were cast high—for the vine was extraordinary and all knew of her glory.”

Some of you men were here then. Some of you have been through days of glory and days of rich soil and days of great harvest and days when you would walk into synod and there in the depths of your chest you knew that you were part of something special that God was doing—for you were men of “the GLG.”

But the illustration of Asaph goes on: Her hedges are broken down. People are walking by and plucking her fruit. Wild boars have made their way into the garden and are gnawing the vines—destroying her. Fires have come and burned the garden and so much of it was in need of being cut down.

The garden that once was glorious is now in need of total repair.

Why’d this happen, pastors? Why did this happen, elders?

Are you angry that it has occurred? Are you ready for extending discipline and admonishment? Are you discouraged; spiritually depressed; with a broken witness?

The psalmist bypasses the excuses and the blame and the shifting of guilt—and he goes right to the doctrine of God’s providential care over his church.

“For God has done this.”

It is outside of my purpose in this sermon to interpret this providence for us—why has all this happened? I will not propound the mysteries of who is to blame and what year things turned and which deaths are noteworthy and what appointments and pulpit exchanges effected the life the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery the most—but I will say this, which is found within the Psalm and is the most consistent and best doctrine related to God’s providential care: God has done this. God did this.

Notice that? Look at the psalm.

You are angry.
 You have fed them with tears.
 You have made us a strife.
 You brought forth the vine.
 You caused it to deeply root.
 You caused it to grow.
 You broke down her hedges.

Did you hear that? You broke down her hedges.

God has done this, presbytery. God has done this. So what ought we to do?

Concerning spiritual depression, Martyn Lloyd Jones once said, “Go directly to God and seek His face, as the little child who is miserable and unhappy because somebody else has taken or broken his toy... So if you and I find ourselves afflicted by this condition, there is only one thing to do, it is to go to Him, If you seek the Lord Jesus Christ and find Him there is no need to worry about your happiness and your joy. He is our joy and our happiness, even as He is our peace. He is life, He is everything... Seek Him, seek His face...” —Spiritual Depression

A Promise of Visitation

And this exactly where the psalmist goes next. We see thirdly, “A promise of visitation.” A promise of visitation... We see this in verses 14-15 and 17-19.

“Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, And visit this vine And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted... Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself. Then we will not turn back from You, Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.”

And then that refrain that appears three times: *“Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!”*

The promise here is a promise that when the God of hosts—the Lord of armies visits his vine that promise of revival will come. Restore us. Cause your face to shine! We shall be saved.

As God is here called upon to look down from heaven upon his church we are shown that this is a Christ-centered promise that Jesus Christ will be at the center of our restoration and our revival of visitation from the Lord. The revival needed as a presbytery is a great visitation from the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

David Dickson once said, *“Neither the church... needeth any more security for their stability and perpetuation, but Christ; for now when the vineyard is burnt, and the visible church defaced... Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself... The perpetuity of the church... is founded upon the sufficiency of Christ... Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand; so will not we go back from thee.”* —Psalm 80 Commentary

When Christ stands to restore this vine—when this promise of perseverance and promised prosperity is realized through the church throwing herself at the love and mercy and restorative graces of this Christ—then we own this promise: *“Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!”*

Christ restores his church—visitation and revival come through him.

Brothers, this is our greatest need as a presbytery—this is our greatest need as we walk through the darkness together with the Great Shepherd as our guide: Christ will stand and restore. Christ will stand and shine his face. Christ will stand and we will be restored.

I want to leave us with five applications as we go into this meeting this weekend. Five applications for us to examine and to own as the great needs that flow from this gloriously dark and lamenting psalm.

One: God has done this: he has broken us and humbled us. No matter what we believe are the reasons—we can be assured that where we are as a presbytery comes from his very fatherly hand. Answer 27 of the Heidelberg Catechism says, “Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which he upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand.”

I would call upon you to search your hearts—to confess this great truth and be humbled before God. For God has broken pride and self-reliance.

Two: Revival in our presbytery is needed: the refrain is for you to own. Meditate often this weekend on this great cry of Asaph: “Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!” Own it, plea for it, confess the need for it, pray earnestly for it. How often do we have not because we ask not—Revive us O Lord. For we have come to the end of ourselves. There will be times this weekend when we need to pause and sing—own this psalm. Cry for God to visit this his vine!

Three: In dark providences we are called here to look to Christ. In the midst of darkness the shepherd will stand and shine his light upon us. We must not give up and we must not lose heart—we instead must provide our hearts promptly and sincerely to Jesus Christ—and to look to him as our only hope as a presbytery.

Four: It is no surprise to any of you that we are in need of aid from on high; we need Christ’s presence in our presbytery—maybe now more than ever. We need to be restored. Often we think we can manipulate and “fix” our problems but God calls us to plead rather than provoke. It is time to put aside provocation and begin to plead. Would you plead with me? The time of provocation is behind us—we now need to plead.

Five: Know that when we have repented, when we’ve turned, Christ will carry us through. We are broken—we are a bruised reed among those that stand. Thomas Watson once said, “The Lord has always been most solicitous for his bruised ones. As the mother is most careful of her children who are weak and sickly, He shall gather the

lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. Those who have been spiritually bruised, who like lambs are weakly and tender, Christ will carry in the arms of free grace.” —Godly Man’s Picture

Friends, it is time to let Christ carry us—for we are broken, yet there is a cry for visitation—carry us, O Lord.

Brothers, we must plead by faith. We must confess our posture of brokenness. We must cry out for the promise of visitation.

Revive us, O Lord.

One hundred years ago in the Presbyterian Church, the midst of great controversy and conflict, J. Gresham Machen asked this very important question:

“Is there no refuge from strife? Is there no place of refreshing where a man can prepare for the battle of life? Is there no place where two or three can gather in Jesus’ name, to forget for the moment all those things that divide ... to forget human pride, to forget the passions of war, to forget the puzzling problems of...strife, and to unite in overflowing gratitude at the foot of the Cross?”

He answered that question by saying, “If there be such a place, then that is the house of God and that the gate of heaven. And from under the threshold of that house will go forth a river that will revive the weary world.” —Christianity and Liberalism

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!

Amen.

**GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
2022/2023 AD INTERIM COMMISSION
REPORT TO PRESBYTERY
Spring 2023 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 nine times between March 2022, and March 2023, on the following dates.

| | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| April 22, 2022 | September 10, 2022 |
| May 18, 2022 | November 16, 2022 |
| June 10, 2022 | December 10, 2022 |
| June 25, 2022 | February 7, 2023 |
| August 3, 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 for spreading on the minutes of Presbytery at the Spring 2023 Presbytery meeting.

Recommendation:

1. That Presbytery receive this report.
2. That the Minutes of this *Ad Interim Commission* be spread on the minutes of Presbytery.

Respectively submitted,

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

February 10, 2023

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

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

| CONGREGATION OR TOPIC | SUMMARY OR DETAIL | MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #) |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Ad Interim</i> Commission | Appointment of Clerk | April 22, 2022 / 3 |
| | Appointment of Clerk <i>pro tem</i> | May 18, 2022 / 1 |
| | Fall AIC Report to Presbytery to be drafted by Clerk and reviewed by AIC members prior to submission to Presbytery | September 10, 2022 / 7 |
| | Final, February 2023 AIC Report to Presbytery approved for submission to Presbytery. | February 7, 2023 / 9 |
| | | |
| 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 |
| | August 3, 2022 Minutes | September 10, 2022 / 3 |
| | September 10, 2022 Minutes | November 16, 2022 / 3 |
| | November 16, 2022 Minutes | December 10, 2022 / 3 |
| | December 10, 2022 Minutes | February 7, 2023 / 3 |
| | February 7, 2023 | February 7, 2023 / 10 |
| | | |
| 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 |

| CONGREGATION OR TOPIC | SUMMARY OR DETAIL | MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #) |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Christ Church Brownsburg RPC (Cont.) | Notation recorded that virtually all physical property of Christ Church has been distributed to various congregations in the Presbytery. | November 16, 2022 / 13 |
| | | |
| 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 |
| | | |
| James Faris | Request for transfer of his credentials to Zionsville Fellowship Church in Zionsville, IN, sent to March 2023 full Presbytery meeting for consideration | December 10, 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 |

| CONGREGATION OR TOPIC | SUMMARY OR DETAIL | MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #) |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| First RPC – Grand Rapids (Cont.) | Request for transfer of Joe and Meleah Tubergen’s membership to Providence Reformed Church returned to First RPC – Grand Rapids Membership Committee for counsel | November 16, 2022 / 12 |
| | Approval of Joe and Meleah Tubergen’s request for transfer of their membership to Providence Reformed Church (RCA) in Grand Rapids, Michigan | December 10, 2022 / 4 |
| | AIC Clerk directed to express to the Tubergens the AIC’s concern over their becoming a part of the Reformed Church in America | December 10, 2022 / 5 |
| | Approval of Dick and Rieta Bonner’s request for transfer of membership to Reformation OPC of Grand Rapids, Michigan | February 7, 2023 / 5 |
| | Approval of Rebekah, Alastair, and Margaret Scott’s request for transfer of membership to the US Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing | February 7, 2023 / 6 |
| | Approval of Jake and Lydia Schwartz’s request for transfer of membership to Providence RPC in Pittsburgh, PA | February 7, 2023 / 7 |
| | Approval of Roy Clark’s request for transfer of membership to Reformation OPC of Grand Rapids, Michigan | February 7, 2023 / 8 |

| CONGREGATION OR TOPIC | SUMMARY OR DETAIL | MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #) |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 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 |
| | Report of Presbytery appointed Provisional Elders reviewed – no further action needed | September 10, 2022 / 6 |
| | Resignation of Presbytery appointed Immanuel RPC Provisional Elders, Ken DeJong, John Hanson, and Terry Magnuson, accepted | November 16, 2022 / 4 |
| | | |
| 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 |
| | Aaron Murray Ordination and Installation Commission appointed | September 10, 2022 / 4 |
| | Moderator and alternate Moderator for the Aaron Murray Ordination and Installation Commission appointed | September 10, 2022 / 5 |

| CONGREGATION OR TOPIC | SUMMARY OR DETAIL | MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #) |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Marion RPC (Cont.) | Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and Install Aaron Murray returned to Commission for clarification | November 16, 2022 / 5 |
| | Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and Install Aaron Murray received to be spread on the minutes of Presbytery | December 10, 2022 / 6 |
| | AIC informed of Teaching Elder Aaron Murray appointed as Moderator of the Marion RPC Session. Marion Session encouraged to report to the March 2023 meeting of Presbytery what Jason Camery's membership is on the Marion Session. | February 7, 2023 / 4 |
| | | |
| 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 |
| | Ordination and Installation Commission appointed | September 10, 2022 / 4 |
| | Moderator and alternate Moderator for the Ordination and Installation Commission appointed | September 10, 2022 / 5 |
| | | |
| 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 |
| | Complaint of Enas and Swan against Presbytery policy on recording minutes sent to full Presbytery to be processed. (Communication GLG 22-22) | November 16, 2022 / 10 |
| | | |

| CONGREGATION OR TOPIC | SUMMARY OR DETAIL | MINUTES (DATE & ITEM #) |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Presbytery (Cont.) | Complaint of Enas against Presbytery regarding the handling of complaint against Christ Church RP Commission sent to full Presbytery to be processed. (Communication GLG 22-23) | November 16, 2022 / 11 |
| | | |
| Second RPC, Indianapolis | Teaching Elder Jerry Foltz approved as interim Moderator of Session during James Faris' sabbatical leave(s) | August 3, 2022 / 8 |
| | Resignation of Pastor James Faris accepted | November 16, 2022 / 6 |
| | Pastoral relationship between Second RPC and James Faris dissolved | November 16, 2022 / 7 |
| | Approval given to call a Teaching Elder/Pastor to replace James Faris | November 16, 2022 / 8 |
| | Teaching Elder, Jerry Foltz confirmed as Moderator of Second RPC Session | November 16, 2022 / 9 |
| | | |
| 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 | |

2022/2023 AIC Report to Presbytery v1.8 Final

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
April 22, 2022

The *Ad Interim* Commission (“AIC”) of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on April 22, 2022, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were David Hanson (Moderator, Southside RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Richard Blankenship (Clerk, Second RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Robert McKissick (Sycamore RPC, Kokomo, IN), James Odom (Sparta RPC), and Tom Reid (Orlando RPC).
2. David Hanson 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 7:35 pm.
3. By common consent, Richard Blankenship was appointed Clerk of the AIC.
4. By common consent, Items 59 through and including Item 85 of the minutes of the Annual Spring meeting of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery held March 3, 2022, to March 5, 2022, were approved.
5. By common consent, the request of the Atlanta RPC TGB for a three-man judicial commission to process and adjudicate charges against one of the members of the Atlanta RPC was approved.

In a separate and related action, it was moved, seconded, and approved to appoint the following as members of the three-man Atlanta RPC Judicial Commission:

Frank Smith, Moderator
Greg Burgreen, Clerk
Drew Poplin

with the Moderator of Presbytery authorized to appoint any alternate members of the Commission as needed.

6. By common consent, at the request and recommendation of Steve Rhoda, CYPUR Director Pro Tem, the following were approved as CYPUR leadership:

Board Members: Stephen Rhoda, Chairman
Kevin Duffey
Brian Planalp
Anna Roberts
Joy Whitt

CYPUR Director Pro Tem: Jacob Long

7. By common consent, the AIC declined to act on the request from CYPU leadership to rule on their statement regarding compliance with the newly adopted GL-G Child Protection Policy, because the request lies beyond the authority of the AIC.
8. By common consent, the request from the Session of First RPC-Grand Rapids for the appointment of Stephen Rhoda as temporary moderator of the First RPC-Grand Rapids Session from April 11, 2022, through June 12, 2022, was approved.
9. By common consent, the call of Drew Poplin as Associate Pastor of First RPC of Durham was approved as a regular gospel call made in accordance with the law and order of the church, to be forwarded to Mr. Poplin. The Congregational Meeting Minutes, Roll of Communicant Members, and Pastor's Call and Financial Agreement are attached to and made a part of these minutes.

In a separate but related action, given that Mr. Poplin has expressed his intent to accept the call, it was moved, seconded, and approved to appoint a five-man Drew Poplin Installation Commission, consisting of the following:

Kent Butterfield, Chairman (TE, Durham)
 Eric Hallfors (RE, Durham)
 Shawn Anderson (TE, Sycamore)
 Bob Bibby (RE, Lafayette)
 Frank Smith (TE, Atlanta)

Alternates: Adam Kuehner (TE, Southfield)
 Jason Camery (TE, Marion)

The Clerk of AIC, in consultation with the Installation Commission Chairman, is authorized to establish the date, time, and place of the Installation Service and prepare the Edict for Installation of a Teaching Elder.

10. By common consent, the following At-Large Teaching Elders are certified as delegates to the meeting of Synod meeting June 21, 2022, to June 24, 2022, at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, IN:

Andrew B.
 Brian Dage
 Rich Johnston
 Dennis Prutow
 Thomas Reid
 Bill Roberts
 Zachary Smith
 Steven Work

It was further approved that, in the event of any oversight regarding the list above or the need for additional certifications, the Moderator and the Clerk of AIC are authorized to address the certification of any additional at-large teaching elder Synod certifications after the date of this meeting.

The certifications will be prepared by the AIC Clerk and provided to the Clerk of Synod and to the Clerk and Assistant Clerk of the GL-G Presbytery. The certifications shall be attached to and made a part of these minutes.

11. The Minutes were reviewed.
12. By common consent, adjournment was approved.
13. James Odom prayed for the Atlanta RPC and the CYPU leadership.
14. Robert McKissick prayed for Craig Scott, his sabbatical, and First RPC-Grand Rapids, Drew Poplin and his installation as Associate Pastor of First RPC-Durham, 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 8:50 pm.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

AIC 4.22 - 5

First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham
Congregational Meeting Minutes
April 2, 2022, 4:00 PM

Kent Butterfield (Moderator), Eric Hallfors and Drew Poplin (Clerk) met, along with the congregation of First RPC Durham, at the Church Meeting Place (1316 Watts St, Durham, NC 27701).

1. The Moderator, Pastor Butterfield, called the meeting to order and then constituted the court in prayer in the Name and by the authority of the Lord Christ Jesus at 4:08 pm.
2. Elder Poplin took non-verbal attendance by sight and announced that a quorum was present with 20 communicant members (out of 36 active, resident communicant members) in attendance.
3. The Moderator inquired to the congregation, "Does the congregation desire to move forward with the election of an Associate Pastor and up to two Deacon(s)?" To which the congregation answered in the affirmative without any dissent.

4. The Moderator read the edict.

The Session having decided to conduct an election for an associate pastor and deacon (up to two deacons to serve) on the 2nd day of April in the year of 2022, at 4pm at 1316 Watts Street, Durham, NC.

Members unable to be present may send absentee votes to the meeting enclosed in a sealed envelope, or given or mailed/emailed (each vote must be from a separate email address) to the Moderator/Pastor of Session at the church address. The envelope shall bear the name of the communicant member, and shall be addressed to the session. Absentee votes are valid only on the first electing ballot.

Given this 9th day of March in the year 2022, by order of the Session.

5. The Moderator explained the voting process and then process for examination of any deacon-elects. The Moderator then read the prospective call for the Associate Pastor. The floor was open to any questions or discussion. There were neither questions nor discussion from the floor.
6. A service of divine worship was held. The Moderator called the congregation to the worship of the Triune God from Psalm 135:1-3, and then called upon God's name in prayer. The congregation sang Psalm 125 to the praise of God. Pastor Butterfield then preached from Matthew 13:31-32 upon the theme of Christ building His Kingdom, after which Pastor Butterfield called upon God's name in prayer and the congregation sang Psalm 133A.
7. Nominations for an Associate Pastor were taken. The Session nominated Drew Poplin. There were no other nominations from the floor.
8. Nominations for Deacons were taken. The Session nominated Jeff Kassler and Nicholas Albano. There were no other nominations from the floor.
9. The active communicant members cast their ballots for the election of an Associate Pastor and up to two deacons. While the ballots were being counted, the congregation sang Psalms.

10. The ballots being counted, the congregation voted to elect Drew Poplin as Associate Pastor (with a total of 28 votes affirmative, out of 28 votes cast).
11. The ballots being counted, the congregation voted to elect Jeff Kassler (with a total of 28 votes affirmative, out of 28 votes cast) and Nicholas Albano (with a total of 26 votes affirmative, out of 28 votes cast) to the office of Deacon.
12. The Clerk read the minutes for this congregational meeting. Motion carried to approve the minutes for the congregational meeting, April 2, 2022, as read and amended.
13. Pastor Butterfield led the congregation in prayer for the Lord's blessing upon this congregation, the business conducted at this meeting, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America; and then adjourned the court in the Name and by the authority of the Lord Christ Jesus at 5:27 pm.

ROLL OF COMMUNICANT MEMBERS OF FIRST RPC DURHAM

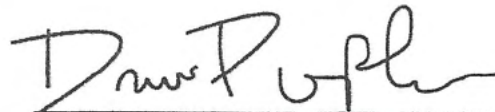
| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Adams, John (Inactive) | DeSoto, Ranleigh+ |
| Albano, Nicholas* | Godwin, Hermonta* |
| Anderson, Hunter Grace | Hallfors, Denise* |
| Baybutt, Esther* | Hallfors, Eric* |
| Baybutt, Ida* | Hunter, Lawrence* |
| Baybutt, Rick* | Jackson, Bill+ |
| Baybutt, Stephen* | Jackson, Donna+ |
| Baybutt, Vickie* | Julien, Mikayla |
| Baybutt, Walter† | Kassler, Brendan+ |
| Branch, Andrew* | Kassler, Jeff* |
| Butterfield, Alicia* | Manring, Levi |
| Butterfield, Christopher* | Manring, Autumn |
| Butterfield, Kent* | Murphy, John* |
| Butterfield, Rosaria* | Oakley, Ashley |
| Cornejo, Ana | Oakley, Tyler* |
| Cornejo, Jeanne+ | Perez, Julian |
| Cornejo, Nic (Inactive) | Perez, Ana |
| Cornejo, Roger+ | Poplin, Anna* |
| DeSoto, Amillia+ | Poplin, Drew* |

* Indicates present at the meeting

+ Indicates submitted an absentee ballot



(Kent Butterfield, Moderator)



(Drew Poplin, Clerk)



First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham

1316 Watts Street
Durham, NC 27701

Pastor's Call and Financial Agreement

We, the First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham, 1316 Watts Street, Durham, North Carolina, under the care of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, desiring to call an associate pastor to take the spiritual oversight of us in the Lord; and satisfied that your spiritual attainments, intellectual abilities and soundness in the faith and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church are fitted to our capacities, do now, with the concurrence of Presbytery, call you, Drew Poplin, to undertake the office of pastor (associate pastor) among us. Upon your accepting this call and performing the duties of your office as set forth by the Constitution, we promise you all due respect and support in the Lord.

We hereby promise to pay you \$37,800 annually, in the event of your accepting this call, and performing the duties of a pastor among us payable in 12 installments of \$3,150 each. Of this compensation 60% is designated as an allowance for furnishings and appurtenances for your dwelling as set forth by Section 107 of the I.R. Code.

We include the following in the compensation package:

1. Salary/Housing Allowance - \$37,800 paid in monthly installments
 2. Medical - \$6,000 per year paid in monthly installments
 3. Retirement Contribution - \$4,500 per year paid in monthly installments with increases following at the least the Synod required minimum amount. This will be paid directly into an established IRS approved fund set up by the associate pastor.
 4. *Reimbursement for ministry expenses according to current church policy.*
- Four weeks will be provided for vacation time each year. Time will also be given for Synod and Presbytery meetings each year. A Sabbatical every 5 years will be considered along with the length of the Sabbatical as is affordable by the congregation.

We promise to review annually with you the adequacy of this compensation prior to the adoption of the congregation's budget meeting to take into account the cost of living increase.

In witness thereof, we subscribe this call and financial agreement, the 2nd day of April in the year 2022 in the presence of these witnesses:

Attestation of a Call and Financial Agreement

I hereby certify that this call and financial agreement were made out on the date therein specified in accord with the law and order of the church.

Pastor Kent Butterfield, Moderator

Signatures of Communicant Members approving the call:

Elders:

1. *Kent Butterfield*
2. *Earl Harty*



First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham

1316 Watts Street
Durham, NC 27701

Communicant Members:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Nicholas Alpano | 2. Rosaria Butterfield |
| 3. John Kessler | 4. Andrew Branch |
| 5. Richard Baylutt | 6. Alicia Butterfield |
| 7. Richard C Baylutt | 8. Christopher Butterfield |
| 9. Denise Dion Halfon | 10. Adelaide Baylutt |
| 11. Zyla M Oakley | 12. Richard Baylutt |
| 13. Anna V Poplin | 14. Stephen D. Baylutt |
| 15. William T Gardner | 16. Richard Baylutt |
| 17. Lawrence Burke | 18. Amilia DeSoto |
| 19. Gummy Gadei | 20. Eloisa Jackson |
| 21. Bel D. M. | 22. Jani Mahony |
| 23. Mikayla Julien | 24. Ashley Oakley |
| 25. Autumn Manning | 26. Brandon |
| 27. Roger D Corneo | 28. Jeanne Corneo |
| 29. Richard Baylutt | 30. Don R Camp (Anastasia Corneo) |
| 31. | 32. |
| 33. | 34. |
| 35. | 36. |

Baptized Members.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Abraham B. | 2. Constance B. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. |
| 9. | 10. |
| | 11. |
| | 12. |
| | 13. |
| | 14. |
| | 15. |



First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham

1316 Watts Street
Durham, NC 27701

Adherents:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. James Contable | 2. Anna Jise McJowan |
| 3. Carrie Bay | 4. Clifa Z. Pimen |
| 5. Christi Brinson | 6. Timothy Brinson |
| 7. Haddon Fox | 8. Jilly Klein (Fox) |
| 9. J. M. J. | 10. Robin Mays |
| 11. Thomas Neal | 12. Erin Neal |
| 13. | 14. |
| 15. | 16. |
| 17. | 18. |
| 19. | 20. |
| 21. | 22. |
| 23. | 24. |
| 25. | 26. |

**EDICT FOR INSTALLATION OF REV. DREW POPLIN
IN THE
FIRST REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DURHAM**

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has received a call made by the First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham upon Drew Poplin to be their Associate Pastor and has sustained it as a regular gospel call. He has signified his intention to accept the call. Notice is hereby given that the 10th day of June in the year 2022, has been fixed as the time for his installation, with certification that the Presbytery will proceed in the same, unless some valid objections be offered to the Presbytery, which is to meet at First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham on the 10th day of June in the year 2022.

The meeting for the installation will be held at 7:00 p.m. at First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham, 1316 Watts Street, Durham, North Carolina 27701.



Clerk of the Ad Interim Commission
F. Richard Blankenship, III



Moderator of the Ad Interim Commission
David Hanson

By order of the Presbytery this 25th day of April in the year 2022.

Certification of Teaching Elders to Synod for Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

1 message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 26, 2022 at 1:17 PM

To: jmmlawrence@aol.com, A K <ak@streetsermon.org>, Dale Koons <dlkoons49@gmail.com>


Cc: David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>

John,

Attached is the Certificate of Teaching Elders to Synod from the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

If you have any questions or need any additional information please let me know.

richardblankenship3@gmail.com

 **Cert to Synod 4.22.pdf**
313K

RPCNA Form 3 – Certificate of Teaching Elder to Synod

The **Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery** has certified the following teaching elders to the meeting of Synod, meeting **June 21-24** of **2022**, starting at **8:30 a.m.** on **June 21** at Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, Indiana).

Andrew B.
Rich Johnston
Thomas Reid
Zachary Smith

Bryan Dage
Dennis Prutow
Bill Roberts
Steven Work

Given this **22nd** day of **April** in the year **2022**, by order of the Presbytery.



F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of the Ad Interim Commission



David Hanson
Moderator of the Ad Interim Commission,



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Updated Great Lakes-Gulf Certification of Teaching Elders to Synod

1 message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Wed, May 11, 2022 at 11:30 AM

To: jmmlawrence@aol.com

Cc: David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, A K <ak@streetsermon.org>

John,

Attached is a Revised and Updated Certificate of Teaching Elders to Synod from the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

The certification attached includes those Teaching Elders certified under the previously submitted certificate of April 22, 2022 and can replace the previously submitted certificate.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

richardblankenship3@gmail.com

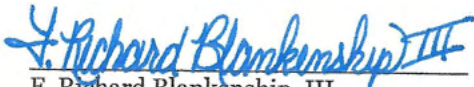
 **GLGTEC~2.PDF**
394K

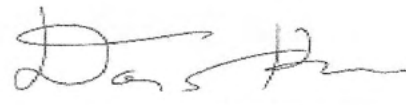
RPCNA Form 3 – Certificate of Teaching Elder to Synod
Revised and Updated

The **Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery** has certified the following teaching elders to the meeting of Synod, meeting **June 21-24 of 2022**, starting at **8:30 a.m.** on **June 21** at Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, Indiana).

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Andrew B. | <i>*Jack Baumgarder</i> |
| Bryan Dage | Rich Johnston |
| <i>*James Pennington</i> | Dennis Prutow |
| Thomas Reid | Bill Roberts |
| <i>*Frank Schutz</i> | <i>*Frank Smith</i> |
| Zachary Smith | <i>*David Whitla</i> |
| Steven Work | |

Given this **11th** day of **May** in the year **2022**, by order of the Presbytery.


 F. Richard Blankenship, III
 Clerk of the Ad Interim Commission


 David Hanson
 Moderator of the Ad Interim Commission

* *Note: The names of the Teaching Elders listed above in italics are new certifications. The other Teaching Elders listed were previously certified under a certificate dated April 22, 2022.*

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
Wednesday, May 18, 2022

The *Ad Interim* Commission ("AIC") of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on Wednesday, May 18, 2022, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Members present were David Hanson, Moderator, Robert McKissick, James Odom, and Thomas Reid. It was noted that our Clerk, Richard Blankenship, was unable to be involved in this meeting due to a sudden providence, so Robert McKissick agreed to serve as Clerk, *pro tem*.
2. The meeting of the Commission was called to order by Moderator David Hanson at 8:35 pm on Wednesday, May 18, 2022, with prayer to our Lord asking for wisdom and unity and constituting the Court in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.
3. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that (i) the Laramie RPC pastoral call to Allen Blackwood be approved and forwarded to Mr. Blackwood as a regular gospel call as soon as he is certified to receive a call, and (ii) the AIC recommend to the Laramie RPC that they shift \$1,000 from salary to auto allowance, to provide more adequately for their pastor's travel expenses. The congregational meeting minutes, roll of communicant members, and pastor's call and financial agreement are attached to and made a part of these minutes.
4. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the Coldenham-Newburgh RPC pastoral call to Aaron Murray be approved and forwarded to Mr. Murray as a regular gospel call as soon as he is certified to receive a call. The congregational meeting minutes, roll of communicant members, and pastor's call and financial agreement are attached to and made a part of these minutes.
5. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the Westminster RPC pastoral call to Joshua Smith be approved as a regular gospel call and forwarded to the Presbytery of the Alleghenies. The congregational meeting minutes, roll of communicant members, and pastor's call and financial agreement are attached to and made a part of these minutes.
6. The Commission, having received two communications regarding the Immanuel Synod Judicial Commission, one from Mr. Dan Dillon of the Immanuel RPC and one from members of the Lafayette RPC, observes that both papers are in order, were submitted in appropriate language, and were submitted in the appropriate timeframe. These communications are hereby transmitted to Synod. A copy of each of the communications is attached to and made a part of these minutes.
7. The Commission discussed Presbytery Communication GLG 22-13, from two members of Christ Church Brownsburg RPC. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the AIC ask the Moderator of Presbytery, Nathan Eshelman, to appoint a three-man committee to examine Communication 22-13 and bring recommendations to the Synod meeting of Presbytery concerning its disposition. A copy of Communication GLG 22-13 is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

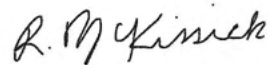
8. By common consent, the Commission agreed to forward the Certificate of Ministerial Credentials of Mark Goerner to the GL-G Candidates and Credentials Committee for action.
9. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the meeting be adjourned.
10. The prayer of adjournment was given by Tom Reid at 10:01 pm, with thanks for the men who were called into ministerial service and for continued wisdom and unity in our presbytery.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

Robert McKissick, Clerk *pro tem*
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

8. By common consent, the Commission agreed to forward the Certificate of Ministerial Credentials of Mark Goerner to the GL-G Candidates and Credentials Committee for action.
9. It was moved, seconded, and passed that the meeting be adjourned.
10. The prayer of adjournment was given by Tom Reid at 10:01 pm, with thanks for the men who were called into ministerial service and for continued wisdom and unity in our presbytery.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

Robert McKissick, Clerk *pro tem*
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

Laramie RP Church Congregational Meeting to Elect a Pastor

Sunday May 1, 2022

Robert Hemphill called the Congregational Meeting to order at 11:34 AM at the Lincoln Center on Grand Avenue in Laramie, WY.

Clyde Brown read the Edict that gave notice of the Congregational Meeting.

It was determined that a quorum was present. (13 members of the 17 resident members were present)

Robert Hemphill led the congregation in devotions pointing out the Overseer's Reputation, Responsibilities, Remuneration, and his Reward as developed in 1 Timothy and 1 Peter.

The Session Court was constituted in prayer by Robert Hemphill.

Psalm 23A was sung – The Lord is My Shepherd.

Robert Hemphill explained the procedure and opened the floor for questions and discussion. The congregation discussed Allen's qualifications and preaching.

The session nominated Edwin Allen Henry Blackwood II to be our pastor. No other nominations were received. It was moved, seconded and passed that the nominations be closed.

Clyde Brown asked our heavenly Father to bless our election. The ballots were distributed, completed and gathered by tellers Luiz Leal and Andy Ommen. The tellers counted the votes and determined that 16 total votes were received. 14 votes were for Allen. There was one blank vote and one NO vote.

Robert Hemphill declared that Edwin Allen Henry Blackwood II was elected.

The Call was distributed to the congregation to review. Deacon Jesse Mann explained the financial package that was part of the call.

It was moved, seconded and passed to approve the Financial Package attached to the call.

The congregation sang Psalm 133A and Robert Hemphill closed the court with a prayer of adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Hemphill, Provisional Moderator

Clyde Brown, Clerk Pro temp

Laramie, Wyoming Reformed Presbyterian Church Membership List

Active Communicant Members

Clyde Brown
Mary Brown
Hope Brown
Tim Brown
Chad Campsey
Christi Campsey
Joe Campsey
Shirley Campsey
Lucas Donato
Amandah Donato
Bob Hemphill
Cheryl Hemphill
Peggy Kennedy
Elise Mann
Jess Mann
Katie Mann
Breanna McCaragher
Larry McCracken
Jan Romsa
Lexie Tippin

Baptized Members

David Brown
Evyne Mann

CALL OF TEACHING ELDER

We, the Laramie Reformed Presbyterian Church congregation (“congregation”), under the care of the Midwest Presbytery (“Presbytery”), being without a pastor to take the spiritual oversight of us in the Lord; and being satisfied that your spiritual attainments, intellectual abilities, and soundness in the faith and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (“RPCNA”) are fitted to our capacities, do now, with the concurrence of Presbytery, earnestly call you, [Edwin Allen Henry Blackwood II], to undertake the office of teaching elder among us. Upon your accepting this call and performing the duties of your office as set forth by the RPCNA Constitution, we promise you all due respect and support in the Lord.

SUMMARY OF COMPENSATION PACKAGE

We hereby promise to pay you an annual salary of \$52000, as the Lord provides, payable in monthly installments of \$4,333.33 each. To the extent your performance of the duties of pastor among us does not begin on the first day of the year, the annual salary is to be pro-rated based on the number of days you serve as pastor during the year (beginning with the date of commencement of your service). Of this compensation, up to \$52,000 is allowable for appurtenances, furnishing, housing, maintenance, utilities, etc. under Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

In addition to an annual salary, we include the following additional items in your compensation package:

- Transition Expenses – We will provide you with a one-time payment of up to \$6000 to be used for transition expenses (e.g., moving expenses, down payment on house, rent deposit, furnishings, etc.).
- Retirement – We will contribute \$4400 annually to a 403(b) retirement plan for your benefit (or similar retirement-type account), payable in quarterly installments of \$1100 each.
- Health Insurance – We will reimburse you for the lesser of your total health insurance premiums (or membership payments as part of a health care sharing ministry – e.g., Samaritan Ministries) or \$4000 annually.
- Continuing Education Expense Reimbursement – We will reimburse you for the lesser of your out-of-pocket continuing education expenses (book purchases, seminar/conference fees, etc.) or \$500 annually.
- Auto Allowance – We will reimburse you for the lesser of the mileage (using business mileage rate as designated by the IRS) you use your personal vehicle in the ministry (does not include commuting) or \$250 annually.
- Family Conference Reimbursement – We will reimburse you for the lesser of your expenses to attend annual Presbytery/Denominational Family Conference or \$500 annually.
- Vacation Time – Four weeks (28 days including four Sundays) will be provided for vacation time each year. This is in addition to time off from preaching duties for annual Presbytery/Denominational meetings and Family Conference.
- Sabbatical Leave – Two weeks of accrued sabbatical leave per year of service. Every six years of continuous service establishes eligibility for sabbatical leave (up to twelve weeks).

We promise to review annually with you the adequacy of this compensation package, as the Lord provides, prior to the adoption of the congregation’s budget, to take into account the cost of living increase and other factors.

CONGREGATIONAL SIGNATURES

In witness thereof, we subscribe this call and financial agreement, this May 1, 2022, in the presence of these witnesses:

Ruling Elders:



Deacons:

Joseph M. [Signature]

Communicant Members & Adherents:

Shirley Campney Breanna McLurgler [Signature]

Lucas RV Donat Rose Brown Katie Mann

Amanda Bonato Timothy D Braum Elin Mann

Cheryl Hemphill David Brown _____

Bob Hemphill Helen Ounnen [Signature]

Cheryl A. Cappy _____

Christa Campney _____

Peggy A. Kedy _____

Janice M. Roman _____

ATTESTATION OF A CALL AND FINANCIAL AGREEMENT

I hereby certify that this call and financial agreement were made out on the date therein specified in accord with the law and order of the church.

Robert L. Hemphill
Session Moderator

Coldenham, NY
April 9, 2022

The session met in the auditorium of the church in Coldenham, NY. Elders David Coon, Phillip Shafer, and Ernie Johnson were present. Student intern Zach Dotson was in Canada. The purpose of the meeting was for the congregation to consider making out a call for teaching elder.

With eleven communicant members present, it was determined that a quorum had been met. A twelfth member joined later.

At 9:30 AM David Coon led those present in worship. John 13: 1 – 17 was read and appropriate remarks were made. Psalm 68 B and F were sung. Prayer for the meeting was offered up to our Lord.

The edict was read for the third and final time.

David Coon constituted the session as a court at 10:00 AM.

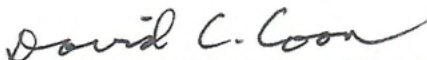
The session placed the name of Aaron Murray before the congregation as a nominee. There were no other nominations. Instructions as to voting were given and papers were handed out. Mike DeSocio, who had been a provisional elder appointed by Atlantic Presbytery for eight years, prayed God's direction as we voted.

Mike DeSocio and adherent Ben Hollo were appointed tellers. The vote was collected by roll call. In addition to those present, there were five absentee votes cast.

While the tellers counted the vote, Psalm 128 B was sung. The vote count was 17 in favor of Aaron Murray with no other votes cast. David Coon pronounced that Mr. Murray had been properly elected.

The financial arrangement had been prepared beforehand and was reviewed and approved by the congregation. It was MSC that the proposal be adopted.

Psalm 121 C was sung and David Coon adjourned the court in prayer at 10:40 AM



Moderator of the Session



Clerk of the Session

Coldenham-Newburgh Reformed Presbyterian Church

Roster as of April 9, 2022

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Necy Arnott | Rebecca Johnson |
| Allen Bailey > | Charles Leach |
| Debbie Bailey > | Susan Leach |
| Raymond Baisden | Steve Leach |
| Sharon Baisden | Christopher Leach @1 |
| Daniel Belknap | Barbara Nickerson |
| Dale Davidson * | Ernie Rumfield |
| Joyce DeFont | Irene Rumfield |
| Zachary Dotson # | Esther Salazar |
| Wilma Dotson # | Phillip Shafer (elder) |
| Shirley Hernandez | Lesesne Shafer |
| Ernest Johnson (elder) | Sarah Shafer @2 |

> Allen and Debbie Bailey are likely transitioning out of the congregation. Allen is convinced of believer baptism and is looking to a local Reformed Baptist church.

* Dale is handicapped and lives 30 minutes from the church. He receives the bulletin weekly and prays for the church but seldom attends.

Zach and Wilma are moving to Tasmania where he will take up the ministry of a congregation there.

@1 Chris is in the army, presently stationed in the Philippines. He prays regularly for the church.

@2 Sarah teaches in the United Arab Emirates and is only in the States for a month in the summer.

PASTORAL CALL

We, the Coldenham-Newburgh congregation, Walden, NY, under the care of the Atlantic Presbytery, being without a pastor to take the spiritual oversight of us in the Lord, and satisfied that your intellectual abilities, spiritual attainments, and soundness in the faith and the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* are fitted to our capabilities, do now, with concurrence of Presbytery, call you, Aaron Murray, to undertake the office of pastor among us. Upon your acceptance of this call and performing the duties of your office as set forth by the Constitution of the RPCNA, we promise you all due respect and support in the Lord.

We hereby promise to pay you \$53,400.00 in the event of your accepting this call and performing the duties of pastor among us – a direct compensation of \$36,400.00 annually, payable in twenty-six (26) installments of \$1,400.00 each. Of this compensation, and for tax purposes, \$10,000.00 is designated as an allowance for furnishings and appurtenances for your dwelling as set forth by Section 107 of the US Internal Revenue Code.

We include the following in the compensation package as shown below:

1. Housing: Free use of the manse and garage
2. Special inclusions:
 - a. \$5500.00 to be used for utilities
 - b. \$7000.00 for health insurance
 - c. \$4500.00 annually toward self-employment taxes
3. Accountable plan for business expenses from which:
 - a. upon presentation of receipt, you can withdraw up to \$2400.00, including car expense, books, seminars, hosting, office materials and supplies, etc.
 - b. a one-time amount of up to \$2000.00 will be available for moving expenses because it is necessary that you move to this area to assume the role of pastor.

4. Other annual benefits:

- a. Use of the church office, equipment, telephone, copy machine, etc.
- b. Attendance fees paid for Synod and one Presbytery camp
- c. \$4500.00 paid to the pension plan of your choice
- d. Four (4) weeks' vacation per calendar year
- e. Time off: Synod, Presbytery, two communions, and speaker at one family conference

We promise to annually review the adequacy of this compensation with you, prior to the adoption of the congregational budget to assess the cost-of-living expense.

In witness thereof, we subscribe this call and financial agreement, the 9th day of April in the year 2022, in the presence of these witnesses:

Elders: Phillip A. Shaffer Ernest Johnson

Deacon: Ernest Johnson

Communicant Members:

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <u>Lesue C. Shaffer</u> | <u>Shirley Hernandez</u> <i>PHS</i> |
| <u>Barbara E. Mickerson</u> | <u>Susan Leach</u> |
| <u>Esther Salazar</u> | <u>Joyce A. DeFont</u> |
| <u>Virginia Baird</u> | <u>Charles W. Leach</u> |
| <u>Sharon Baird</u> | <u>David M. Balkman</u> |
| <u>Ernest R. Baird</u> | <u>Christopher Leach</u> <i>PHS</i> |
| <u>Ernest R. Baird</u> | <u>Scott Leach</u> |
| <u>Ernest R. Baird</u> | <u>Stephen Leach</u> |

Communicant Mem bers (continued)

Joseph and Viktoria Butler

Adherents:

Raymond A. Hill

Ryan Hill

Becky Hill

Andrew J. Hill

Witnesses:

Luca De Sisto

Raymond A. Hill

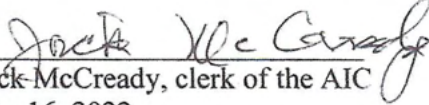
Attestation of the Call and Financial Agreement

I hereby certify that this call and financial agreement were made out on the date herein specified in accord with the law and order of the church.

David C. Coon

Moderator

The Ad Interim Commission of the Atlantic Presbytery of the RPCNA sustained the call of the Coldenham-Newburgh congregation to Aaron Murray as a regular gospel call and sent the call on to the clerk of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery.


Jack McCready, clerk of the AIC
May 16, 2022

Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church

Prairie View, Illinois

SESSION MEETING- CONGREGATIONAL MEETING FOR THE ELECTION OF A TEACHING ELDER

April 24, 2022, at 2:30 PM -Meeting at the Church 16670 Easton Avenue,
Prairie View, IL.

Elders present were Pastor Wade Mann (interim moderator) and Bob Koch- Clerk. Also attending were Jack Baumgardner (new interim moderator), and Brett Mahlen interim pastor.

The purpose of this meeting was to conduct an election of a Teaching Elder.

The meeting was called to order and the court was constituted in prayer by Pastor Mann.

1. Determination of a quorum.

The quorum was confirmed visually. There were 10 of 15 members present.

2. Inquiry as to whether the congregation wished to proceed with the election was answered in the affirmative.

3. The edict was read for the final time.

4. Worship

- We sang Psalm 111A.
- Wade opened the word from Acts 6:1-7.
- We explored the election process which we were undertaking from a Biblical point of view.
- Prayer
- Singing of Psalm 67A.

5. Election of a teaching elder

- a. Nominations were opened from the floor. Mr. Joshua Smith was nominated. There were no additional nominations.

Motion was made and seconded for the closing of nominations. The vote was unanimous to close nominations.

- b. Tellers appointed were Jack Baumgardner and Brett Mahlen.

- c. Vote was taken by role call with 10 members voting and one additional absentee ballot.

- d. The election was 9 in favor 1 against and one blank ballot. The Moderator declared Mr. Joshua Smith elected as Teaching Elder for Westminster RPC.

- e. Bob Koch then presented the congregation with the terms of the call and a revised budget. A motion was received and seconded to approve the

terms of the call and the revised 2022 budget which was passed unanimously.

- f. The call was then placed at the front of the church for everyone present to sign. It will be present at worship for the next two weeks for all to sign.

6. Psalm 48C was sung.

7. The meeting was adjourned in prayer at 3:25 PM by Elder Bob Koch.

WESTMINSTER REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Members, Adherents and Contacts

* = Baptized child (NR) = Non-resident (IA) = Inactive

Members – Communicant & Baptized

8/17/2021

1. JENNINGS, Charlie**2. JENNINGS, Luz**

*1. Lisa (College-UNI)

*2. Kimberley

3. KAIRELIS, Richard**4. KOCH, Robert****5. KOCH, Pamela****6. KOCH, Stephen****7. Mace Roman****8. RITCHHART, James****9. RITCHHART, Rebekah****10. STIEGERT, Matthew****11. ZELLER, Chris****12. ZELLER, Elizabeth****13. Zeller, Clarisa**

*3. Trystan

*4. Thadeus

14. ZELLER, Kirstie**15. ZELLER, Erin**

Friends Attending Regularly

Christian Osario

Pastor's Call to Joshua Smith

We, the Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church, Prairie View, IL 60069, under the care of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, being without a pastor to take the spiritual oversight of us in the Lord; and satisfied that your spiritual attainments, intellectual abilities and soundness in the faith and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church are fitted to our capacities, do now, with the concurrence of Presbytery, call you, Joshua Smith, to undertake the office of pastor among us. Upon your accepting this call and performing the duties of your office as set forth by the Constitution, we promise you all due respect and support in the Lord.

1. We hereby promise to pay you \$32,400.00/year, in the event of your accepting this call, and performing the duties of a pastor among us, payable in 12 installments of \$2,700.00/month.
2. We will provide the use of the manse, including the payment of utilities, water, gas, electricity, phone, and trash service.
3. \$5,000/year for Mileage Expense will be provided at the IRS government rate, reimbursed monthly.
4. \$1,200/year for Administrative Expenses will be supplied for office equipment and expense, telephone, etc., reimbursed monthly
5. \$ 1000.00 will be provided for pastoral development for books and instructional materials.
6. \$500/year for Pastoral Refreshment will be encouraged. This would include such things as attendance at an annual pastors' conference, mini courses, etc. This will need to be discussed and approved by the session.
7. Pension Plan: we will make annual payment to you as directed by the Synod pension plan. (\$4,500 for 2022, prorated from start date).
- 8.. 4 weeks will be provided for vacation time each year.
9. Attendance at church functions will be provided in addition to vacation time. This includes participation in Synod and Presbytery meetings. It also includes attendance 1 week attendance at annual presbytery and Synodical family conferences.
11. One Lord's Day per year for guest preaching will be provided, such as for communion seasons, pulpit supply, and/or conferences.
10. \$5,000 for Moving Expenses will be provided.

We promise to review annually with you the adequacy of this compensation prior to the adoption of the congregation's budget meeting to take into account cost-of-living increase, etc. (e.g. C.P.I.).

In witness thereof, we subscribe this call and financial agreement, the 24th day of April in the year 2022, in the presence of these witnesses:

Elders:

Robert L. Koch
Robert L. Koch, Clerk

Wade R. Mann
Wade R. Mann, Interim Moderator

Communicant Members:

Richard Lindley
Chris Jones
Mark L. Stegert
Monica Marie
[Signature]
Justin York
Kelley [Signature]
Pam Koch
Elizabeth [Signature]

[Signature]

Adherents:

Brett Mahlman
[Signature]

Attestation of a Call and Financial Agreement

I hereby certify that this call and financial agreement were made out on the date therein specified in accord with the law and order of the church.

Wade R. Mann
Wade R. Mann, Interim Moderator

1 The SJC provided a correction to the *Announcement* on March 28, 2022. It is included
2 here for the sake of completeness, but does not materially affect the Complaint:

3 “By deposition, we remove Mr. Olivetti from his ordination and office of elder. We declare
4 the relationship to the congregation in this capacity is dissolved. He is forbidden to
5 exercise any of the powers or duties of the office anywhere in the Church of Christ, and
6 until this Court restores his ordination by prayer and laying on of hands making him then
7 eligible for re-election to an office. He is additionally excluded from the privileges of
8 Church membership, including participation in the sacraments until penitence and new
9 obedience on his part has shown him worthy of the exercise of those privileges.”

10 **Complaint No. 1.** The suspension of Mr. Olivetti is unjust because it fails to meet the
11 standard required by our Constitution. The standard of the Constitution is ... “*This*
12 [i.e., suspension] *becomes necessary when members are guilty of gross sin or of*
13 *persistent neglect*” (BoD I:4.1c). Nowhere does the *Announcement* provide a statement
14 of the gross sin or persistent neglect committed by Mr. Olivetti. It states that Mr. Olivetti
15 is guilty of certain charges, but provides no basis—not even in summary form—that his
16 guilt involves gross sin or persistent neglect. Given this situation, an objective reader
17 must conclude that the suspension has no basis and is therefore unjust.

18 Someone may respond that the Trial Decision Announcement is not the Trial Decision
19 itself; i.e., the SJC has provided it basis for suspension to Mr. Olivetti alone and decided
20 not to provide the basis for suspension to rest of the RPCNA. However, under the
21 Constitution, note the following about when suspension accompanies deposition:

22 “Deposition ... This is the disciplinary removal of an ordained officer of the church
23 from his office. It may also be accompanied by suspension from church privileges.
24 This censure shall be imposed for serious offenses in doctrine or in conduct that
25 obviously disqualify the person for exercising office. The sentence shall be pronounced
26 by the moderator in constituted court, and in the name of Jesus Christ. The court shall
27 also make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for
28 the suspension.” (BoD I:4.1d; *emphasis added*)

29 It seems clear that the SJC believes that, in this matter, the Immanuel R. P. Church (IRPC)
30 members were under their oversight. Its members were allowed to attend the trial remotely,
31 but only under strict requirements, including signing in each day and affirming each time
32 that it would operate under its strictures. Latter parts of the *Announcement* directly
33 address IRPC. Yet, the court did not make IPRC aware of the reason for the suspension.
34 This, too, leads to a conclusion that the suspension has no basis and is therefore unjust.
35 Note that this complaint does not depend upon the guilt or the innocence of Mr. Olivetti;
36 it only complains about the censure. I do not believe myself to be in a position to judge
37 Mr. Olivetti’s guilt or innocence, beyond what he has already confessed.

1 **Complaint No. 2.** The SJC failed to properly execute discipline by failing to maintain
 2 the peace of the Church and effectively deter others from similar offenses.

3 According to our Constitution, there are several purposes for church discipline:

4 “... Five purposes of church discipline are: primarily, to reclaim a sinning member;
 5 *then to deter others from similar offenses; to maintain the honor of Christ and the*
 6 *purity and peace of His Church;* to maintain the truth of the gospel; and to avoid the
 7 wrath of God coming upon the church.” (BoD I:1.3; *emphasis added*)

8 Besides providing no basis for the suspension, the *Announcement* provides no
 9 explanation of the verdict, beyond the fact of the verdict. Here is the complete statement:

10 “Mr. Olivetti was charged as follows:

11 Mr. Jared Olivetti’s conduct in relation to the sexual abuse case at Immanuel
 12 Reformed Presbyterian Church since at least 2019 to the present, has not safeguarded
 13 or maintained the qualifications for the eldership contrary to the biblical requirements
 14 of 1 Timothy 3:2,4,7; Titus 1:6-7 in violation of [several of the Ten Commandments
 15 and RPCNA vows]. We found him guilty on each of the three counts: (1) ‘... Mr. Olivetti
 16 has not conducted himself in a way that is above reproach ... resulting in distrust and
 17 disunity within the church and failing to promote its peace, purity, and progress.’ (2)
 18 ‘... Mr. Olivetti has not managed his own household well,’ and (3) ‘Mr. Olivetti has not
 19 conducted himself in a way that has protected or maintained a good reputation ...
 20 threatening dishonor on the name of Jesus Christ, the Reformed Presbyterian Church
 21 of North America, Immanuel R. P. Church, and himself.’” [Note: The ellipses in this
 22 paragraph are in the original.]

23 These statements are so vague as to of no use in deterring others from similar offenses.
 24 The above statement provides categories of offenses, but not the offenses themselves.
 25 How can officers or members of His Church learn from this statement about what to do
 26 or not to do in future? In fact, it may only discourage others from pursuing the office of
 27 Teaching Elder. Who among us has not failed to behave in a way that is above reproach?
 28 Who of us has not failed to manage his household well? Who has not failed to conduct
 29 oneself in a way that maintains the honor of Christ? By providing such broad categories,
 30 without explanation, qualification, or proportion, the *Announcement* may provide a
 31 chilling effect on those pursuing office in the church.

32 Further, the failure to provide detail may lead some to believe that the SJC acted in an
 33 arbitrary or capricious manner. Note, I am not saying that the SJC *has* behaved this way.
 34 I am saying that the *Announcement*, considered by itself, leaves the SJC with little defense
 35 against accusations of arbitrariness or capriciousness, thereby failing to maintain the
 36 honor of Christ and disturbing the peace of the Church.

1 Our Constitution recognizes courts must act with discretion:

2 “In giving information to the people under its oversight regarding any censure, the court
3 should use discretion in determining how much to reveal to those under its oversight of
4 the details of the case. Only that which is necessary and proper should be stated, and then
5 normally only to the members. The court shall seek to protect the sinner from undue
6 exposure and those under its oversight must not engage in gossip or improper curiosity.”

7 ... and even without this explicit provision, I am *not* complaining that courts need to
8 provide excruciating detail. And in sensitive cases, no details should be provided. I have
9 *no* desire to know the details of the charges, evidence or conclusions related to the
10 accusation that Mr. Olivetti has not managed his household well. A summary explanation
11 is more than adequate. But all of that notwithstanding, to provide *no* details about the
12 censure (beyond its mere existence) seems to fall far, far short of what is required in this
13 high-profile case. Note that this complaint does not complain about the verdict, per se,
14 only the lack of detail in the *Announcement*. As noted above, I do not believe myself to be
15 in a position to judge Mr. Olivetti’s guilt or innocence.

16 **Brief remarks before proposing remedies**

17 Please note that two complaints are slightly different: That the suspension is unjust and
18 the explanation of the deposition lacks sufficient detail. I note that there have been
19 complaints that the charges against Mr. Olivetti were too vague. I am not in the position
20 to complain about this because I have not seen the charges. But I note that my complaint,
21 about the lack of justification and appropriate detail in the *Announcement*, is consistent
22 with a complaint that the charges lack sufficient detail.

23 Further, I am not complaining about any hurt against me. Instead, I am grieved at the
24 SJC’s *Announcement* because of the potential harm against the RPCNA that may have
25 occurred or may yet occur because of the issuance of the *Announcement*. I harbor no ill
26 will against the members of the SJC. They have had—and still have—a difficult task ahead of
27 them. I don’t complain about their motives, only their behavior in issuing the *Announcement*.

28 And so, with a great deal of love and respect for all involved, I file this statement about
29 how my heart grieves for my church. I humbly acknowledge that I may be wrong!

1 **Proposed remedies**

2 I request that Synod appoint a new Commission to review the records of the SJC to
3 determine if they have recorded their basis for the censure of deposition and suspension
4 in the trial records. If Synod agrees with this remedy, I further request that Mr. Olivetti's
5 suspension be immediately lifted until the work of the new Commission is completed.

6 1. If the SJC has recorded its basis for both deposition or suspension in the trial records,
7 I request that the SJC, under the supervision of the new Commission, reissue the
8 *Announcement* with sufficient detail to meet the standards of the Constitution. If the
9 *Announcement* is reissued, I request that the current *Announcement* be voided and
10 the reissued *Announcement* be considered a definitive action of the SJC, i.e., an action
11 subject to further Complaints.

12 2. If the SJC has not recorded its basis for deposition and/or suspension in the trial
13 records, I request that the group of men review the trial records and make its own
14 judgment as to the appropriate censure. The entire judgment of the SJC should be
15 voided and the judgment of the new Commission should be considered the definitive
16 action, and such action should be subject to further Complaint.

17 I appreciate consideration of the Complaint and look forward to the response of Synod.

18 In Christ, [SIGNATURE on mailed PDF] *Dan Dillon*

Beloved Fathers and Brothers,

We are aware that you have received a number of complaints regarding the decisions of the Synod Judicial Commission (SJC) tasked to address the problems at Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church (IRPC) in West Lafayette, IN. Specifically, we understand that the complaints argue against the suspension of membership and deposition of Pastor Jared Olivetti.

Much has been written and argued by those complaining about the decision. We, the undersigned, wish to provide a brief counter point-of-view. We are all former members of Immanuel who have witnessed various aspects of the case, the way it has been handled at Immanuel, and the fallout. We wish to state our support for the SJC's decision for many reasons. For the sake of brevity, only five points are listed below (although much more could be said).

1. We are deeply concerned that many of the complainants have not had an opportunity to hear both sides of the story and that many important aspects of the case appear to have been misrepresented to them. We are also concerned that communication to the IRPC congregation by the session set incorrect expectations about the SJC's task and starting point. For example, the congregation was told that several complaints to Synod (alleging bias on the part of the Presbytery Judicial Commission (PJC)) were "basically sustained" by Synod in 2021, but that unfortunately Synod "could not make it all go away." As a result, many at IRPC incorrectly expected that the PJC investigation was being discarded¹.
2. Due to the involvement of minors in the original issue at Immanuel, much of the information relevant to the situation has not been made public (even to IRPC members during the trial). By contrast, the members of the SJC had the opportunity to consider the public and private facts of the case before reaching their verdict.
3. Much prayer and thought went into selecting wise and godly men who did not have prior biases to serve on the SJC.
4. We believe that both the PJC that investigated in early 2021 and the SJC are comprised of men of wisdom, godliness, and integrity who desired to know and act on the truth. The fact that the character of many of these men has been called into question following their decisions being made public is distressing, perplexing, and grievous.
5. We are dismayed by the requests for yet another "professional"² investigation into this situation. The lack of resolution for over two years now (since the case broke in April 2020) has allowed untruths to fester and grow. Continuing delay will only make efforts at reconciliation even more difficult. We are concerned that another investigation would

¹ The Synod Judicial Committee of the Day assigned to deal with the IRPC complaints wrote "First, it is our opinion that the IJC [Presbytery's Immanuel Judicial Commission] did NOT enter this investigation with preconceived notions, or proceed in a way that warped their investigation. We think that they proceeded with the right motives and in a competent manner." While their report does acknowledge "events that led to the appearance of bias" it also affirms that the PJC "did excellent investigative work (in line with its remit)" and recommended that "the judicial process should proceed."

² Ironically, we have heard complaints that the SJC investigators were not "professionals" while also hearing complaints that the original PJC investigation included a DCS lawyer and a former police officer who might not be able to separate themselves from their professional occupations.

place an undue burden on victim families who have already met with multiple investigators multiple times to discuss these painful events. We are also convinced that an outside organization specializing in abuse will not find the actions of the 2020 IRPC session to be less grievous than the previous investigators found.

Finally, fathers and brothers, we ask you to please pray for us all. The burden of this situation on everyone it has touched is heavy. We are grateful to many of you who have prayed faithfully for Immanuel and those involved. Please continue. Much work remains to be done in bringing about the fruits of repentance, making truth known, working toward forgiveness and reconciliation, and rebuilding a congregation whose foundations were shaken. Many relationships are strained or even completely broken. Many are struggling to regain trust in church leadership. A number of parents need wisdom over how to shepherd their affected children and are struggling with deep hurts themselves. And we all need wisdom as to how to care for those who are hurting. Please pray that the peace of Christ would rest on His people once again and that Satan would be defeated among us to the glory of God.

Praying that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with you in your labors at Synod,

Jeremiah Blocki

Heather Blocki

David Daniels

Michele Daniels

James Johnson

Sarah Johnson

James Hunter Johnson

Charlotte Johnson

Shawn Johnson

Jennifer Johnson

Haozheng Qu

Meng Zhang

Andrew Robison

Emily Robison

Ally Wiger

JJ Nance*

Maggy Nance*

Gail Overholser*

* former members of Immanuel RPC who have left the RPCNA but wanted to express their support for this petition

Cover Letter

28 April 2022

To the Ad Interim Commission of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery:

Attached you will find charges of sin against a member of your court, Rev. James Faris. Here is a short history of the sins and our attempts to confront them out of love for Rev. Faris, the church of Christ, and Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the church.

March 3, 2022:

The sins of Rev. Faris manifested at a meeting of Presbytery during his speech (Appendix A) in support of a paper submitted by the Session of Second Reformed Presbyterian Church, which opposed the revised report of the Christ Church Reconciliation Committee. We were in attendance and shocked at Rev. Faris' words—so much so that we asked to respond. Presbytery granted us the privilege of the floor and each of us described his dismay at Rev. Faris' comments. Though he knew we were offended by his speech, Rev. Faris did not talk with us about what he said. We returned home, thankful that Presbytery had appointed a Shepherding Committee to help our church, yet grieved by Rev. Faris' sin.

March 12 - 15, 2022:

We sought counsel and were advised that we should meet with Rev. Faris accompanied by witnesses, so we decided to ask our Session for help.

March 16, 2022:

Since Rev. Faris would be preaching at Christ Church RP on March 20, we asked our Session if they could meet with us and Rev. Faris on Sunday, prior to worship. We were told that Rev. Faris could meet on Saturday, the 19th. Unfortunately, the Enases were out of town, so our Session said they'd reschedule.

March 21, 2022:

Our Session told us that James had changed his mind and that the Second RP Session wanted to delay the meeting until they could counsel Rev. Faris.

March 29, 2022:

We asked for an update from our Session but there was no new information.

April 5, 2022:

Nathan arranged to meet with an elder at Second RP to inquire about the delay. After that meeting, the elder stated he would discuss with Rev. Faris our desire to confront his sins.

April 13, 2022:

The Second RP elder told us that Rev. Faris did not believe he had sinned, so there was no reason to meet with him. Our session also told us that Rev. Faris was unwilling to meet with our elders present, but they said we could still try approaching him directly.

April 18, 2022:

We asked Rev. Faris directly to meet with us privately, and he agreed on the condition that two additional members of the Second RP Session would attend.

April 21, 2022:

Five weeks after our first request, we met at Second RP Church with Rev. Faris, Donald Cassell, and Justin Olson from the Second RP Session and Dale Koons from our Session. We read our charges (Appendix B) to Rev. Faris, asking him to confess after each sin was identified, but his repeated answer was that he came to listen. He requested that we send the charges in writing, so we sent the written speech that day.

April 23, 2022:

Rev. Faris kindly responded (Appendix C) but refused to admit any sin in his speech at Presbytery; instead, he asked us to “look beyond this matter....”

To date, we have attempted to follow the law and order of the church but have not won our brother. As to the following steps, we have received various counsel, including taking our case to the court of Second RP. We don't believe this is wise for two reasons. First, Rev. Faris sinned publicly while speaking on behalf of the Second RP Session against the Committee that Presbytery sent to help Christ Church. Second, the Second RP Session has provided counsel to Rev. Faris and has acted as a witness in our latest meeting.

As the Book of Discipline I.2.5 states, “If the sin is known generally, and therefore cannot be solved privately, charges may be taken directly to the appropriate church court.” Since the sins were committed at Presbytery, we believe you are the appropriate court, so we are appealing to you directly. Thank you for taking the time to listen to the sheep.

In Christ our Lord,

Nathan Enas & Kevin Swan

Charge of Sin

To the Ad Interim Commission of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery:

Your informant respectfully states that Rev. James Faris, a member of your Presbytery, is believed guilty of serious sins, contrary to the Word of God and the profession of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in that Rev. Faris, on the evening of Thursday, March 3, 2022, during a constituted court of the Lord Jesus Christ, did

1. **bear false testimony against his neighbors** (i.e., the “two families,” namely, Nathan and Ginny Enas and Kevin and Rachelle Swan), as explained in Westminster Larger Catechism Q.143-Q.145, including “prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, ..., calling evil good, and good evil, ..., slandering, ..., misconstruing intentions, words, and actions, ..., not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name,” (e.g., see underlined text in the speech of Rev. Faris in Appendix A),
2. **publicize what he believed to be sin before seeking to win his brethren**, according to the command of Christ (Matthew 18:15) and the law and order of the church (e.g., Book of Discipline sections I.1.2, I.1.5, I.2.1)
3. **take the Name of the Lord our God in vain** (as explained in Westminster Larger Catechism Q.111-Q.113), including “misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it” (e.g., see **bold italic** text in the speech of Rev. Faris in Appendix A),

which sins were considerably aggravated (according to WLC Q.151) by the following facts:

1. Rev. Faris is “of riper age, greater experience or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others,”
2. Those offended include “the saints ... and the common good of all or many”,
3. The nature and quality of the offense: was “against the express letter of the law,” did “break forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation,” and was “done deliberately, willfully, [and] presumptuously,”

and that Rev. Faris ought to be proceeded against by your court to determine whether or not these charges are accurate.

Date: April 28, 2022

Names: Nathan Enas & Kevin Swan

List of witnesses: all presbyters/delegates on record attending Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery on the evening of March 3, 2022, including but not limited to Rev. Nathan Eshelman, Rev. Adam Kuehner, Rev. Jack Baumgardner, Rev. Jerry Foltz, Rev. Richard Holdeman, Rev. Craig Scott, Rev. Dick Knodel, Rev. Drew Poplin, Rev. James Faris, Dale Koons, Jason O’Neill, Sean Bird, and Jeff Platt.

List of material offered in evidence:

- All manner of public conversation spoken on the floor of Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery on said date, under the oversight of the moderator (Rev. Nathan Eshelman), related to the report of the Christ Church Reconciliation Committee, including the speech of Rev. Faris (Appendix A).
- The Holy Bible
- The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
- Sermon delivered by Rev. James Faris on February 13, 2022, at Second RP Church, entitled “When Joshua Failed” (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k--fnNdFhTc>; sermon begins at about 20:40 and lasts about 35 minutes)
- Email correspondence supporting the timeline provided in the cover letter.

Appendix A: 2022.03.03 Speech Given by Rev. Faris

The following is a quotation of a speech given by Rev. James Faris on the floor of Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery (March 3, 2022) during the period of discussion related to the report of the Christ Church Reconciliation Committee:

“I think one of the things that’s important to note is just the impact on the congregation. I would say that maybe for those of you who are sitting here in this meeting wondering, what exactly does this mean, are we just sort of parsing words? To be frank, what we’re talking about here really is, who is it that leads this congregation? Is it the Session, or is it a minority that is constantly picking at the Session’s decisions and doubting them? And I think this takes us really fundamentally to the larger question that is really important for us as Presbytery. And again this has to do with the nature of the relationship with the elders to the Session. And, as interim moderator, I can tell you that there are those, and this was reported to the Committee, this was one of the communications from one of the 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. And I think that that may very well be the case.

“There are many people who are very much on the brink in the congregation. Many, many tears were shed when this communication went out to the congregation because they recognized the significance of it. And not only the significance of it in terms of the content but also in terms of the timing, all the way in which this unfolded. And it’s just remarkably weighty for the congregation. This congregation has been through a great deal, this congregation where the vast majority trusts their leadership. And so it is a question fundamentally of who leads the congregation.

“Now, certainly the elders have not led perfectly. This is part of the question we are wrestling with in our culture: can leaders be forgiven? ***When we go to Leviticus chapter 4, there are provisions for atonement for leaders who have committed unintentional sins, and they haven’t done things perfectly. What is to be the solution? There is to be a sacrifice that’s offered and then it doesn’t say that the person is to resign or to be submitted to some other sort of committee that would oversee them and these kinds of things. It says he shall be forgiven.***

“We have to understand the reality of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it’s really significant that William Symington who is so famous for writing “Messiah The Prince” wrote on the atonement and intercession of Jesus Christ. That’s his first volume. ***Because it’s only as we understand the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly with regards to leadership, that we will see men raised up and led into positions of leadership with the knowledge that they may not do everything exactly perfectly as they begin. But where sins are committed, the atoning sacrifice is enough, because Jesus has provided that atoning sacrifice, and because He has raised from the dead, and He is leading from on high, and He raises up leaders.*** He does so, then, organically within the congregation. Jesus came to be a near kin to us. And He came as one of his own was raised up to be a leader. And we see that happening in this congregation. This congregation trusts its leadership. Yes, there are a couple of families that have dispute but the vast majority of the congregation trusts the leadership, and they are very disturbed by the things that they see happening here.

“And so the question is, will Presbytery acknowledge these men as the leaders of the congregation? Will it call out the sins of those who are on the other side of this dispute, these two families that are bringing a complaint as well, and call them to account, and set the leaders free in Jesus Christ to lead this congregation? So it’s really a question of leadership, and I’m just encouraging, brothers: ***there is no future in a model of “cancel culture”.*** There’s no future there. ***It’s not going to encourage people to be raised up to leadership. We have to understand the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His glory on the throne, the way in which He leads His people.***

“And so we don’t want to fall prey to the individualism of our day or the standpoint there is where one aggrieved party begins to sort of rule the whole. So this is very much why this is before us. And I do believe, as the interim moderator, as your Presbytery’s appointee to this, that this very well may be the death knell of the congregation. So what we have here before us is very, very weighty, and I just want the whole of the assembly to understand that.”

Appendix B: 2022.04.21 Speech by Mr. Enas to Rev. Faris

James, thank you for meeting with us today. You have been a dear brother in Christ to me for many years, and your family has been dear to my family for many years as well. We have had sweet fellowship together in God's house, and in our own homes. Our wives are dear friends, as are several of our children. We have homeschooled our children together. You have ministered to us in Word and in prayer, beginning with your involvement with the "west side" church plant. And when we were having concerns about the elders at Christ Church RP and their shepherding, you welcomed us to find shelter for a time back at Second RP, where we met new friends and reconnected with old ones. This also gave us more time in worship with our own children, who have enjoyed the fellowship at Second for many years.

So, today, we want to affirm and reaffirm our love for you, your wife and children, your extended family, and the congregation where you were ordained by God to shepherd. In addition to the various ways we have tried to show love for you and the church over these past 25 years, we also have a duty of love to confront serious sins in your life when we observe them, so that, by God's grace and mercy, you may be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and made to conform more and more to the image of Christ, who created us for good works that glorify God. That is the topic of today's meeting. But, before I confront specific sins, I would like to ask you a question. Are you willing on this occasion to confess, repent of, and make restitution for sins that you have committed against God and your brethren in Christ?

[James indicated he was prepared to listen.]

Thank you for that affirmation. I have one more introductory remark. In this meeting, we are here to confront you with sins, but we will not be debating them at this time. So, allow me to confront your particular sins, and to give you the opportunity to confess them particularly.

At the meeting of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, March 3, 2022, while in a constituted court of the Lord Jesus Christ, you made a speech in favor of your Session's complaint, and against the revised report of Christ Church Reconciliation Committee, particularly their recommendation to send a two-man shepherding committee to assist the Session at Christ Church to execute what that Session called their "fruits of repentance". During your speech, you sinned in three specific ways. First, you bore false testimony against your neighbors (that is, Nathan and Ginny Enas, and Kevin and Rachelle Swan), as explained in Westminster Larger Catechism Q.143-Q.145, including "prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, ..., calling evil good, and good evil, ..., slandering, ..., misconstruing intentions, words, and actions, ..., not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name." Second, you publicized what you called our "sins" before seeking to win us, according to the command of Christ (Matthew 18:15) and the law and order of the church (e.g., Book of Discipline section I.1.2, I.1.5, I.2.1). And, third, you took the Name of the Lord our God in vain (as explained in Westminster Larger Catechism Q.111-Q.113), including "misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it." All of these sins were considerably aggravated (according to WLC Q.151) by several facts. First, you are "of riper age, greater experience or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others". Second, those you offended include "the saints ... and the common good of all or many". And third, the nature and quality of your offenses were "against the express letter of the law," did "break forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation," and were "done deliberately, willfully, [and] presumptuously."

Allow me to explain each of your sins. First, you gave false testimony against your neighbors. Although you did not name us on the floor of Presbytery, there is no doubt about whom you were talking. You referred to "these two families that are bringing a complaint" at Christ Church RP. Only two families brought the complaint that led Presbytery to send a Reconciliation Committee, whose report you were discussing at the time. Hence, we infer that you were speaking of us. You broke the ninth commandment in a number of ways. To demonstrate this, I will quote your own speech on the floor of Presbytery:

- "To be frank, what we're talking about here really is, who is it that leads this congregation? Is it the Session, or is it a minority that is constantly picking at the Session's decisions and doubting them?"
- "This congregation has been through a great deal, this congregation where the vast majority trusts their leadership."
- "This congregation trusts its leadership. Yes, there are a couple of families that have dispute but the vast majority of the congregation trusts the leadership, and they are very disturbed by the things that they see happening here."

- “Will it call out the sins of those who are on the other side of this dispute, these two families that are bringing a complaint as well, and call them to account, and set the leaders free in Jesus Christ to lead this congregation?”
- “We don’t want to fall prey to the individualism of our day or the standpoint there is where one aggrieved party begins to sort of rule the whole.”
- “There is no future in a model of ‘cancel culture.’”

In these statements, as part of your whole speech, in the words of the Westminster Larger Catechism, you prejudiced the truth about us, and the good name of our neighbors; you called evil good and good evil; you slandered us; you misconstrued our intentions, words, and actions; not hindering what you can in others, such things as procure an ill name. You spoke falsehood about our intentions toward our Session (to lead this congregation). You spoke falsely about our demeanor towards our Session (ie, constantly picking at them and doubting them, don’t trust them). You spoke falsehood about our effect on our Session (ie, to enslave them so that they needed to be set free). You gave false testimony about our motivations for confronting our Session (ie, the individualism of our day). Instead of confirming our “fervent love for Christ and the purity of His Church” as the Reconciliation Committee did in their revised report, you condemned our complaint to Presbytery as sin that needed to be called into account. You also spoke falsehood about what our church believed with regard to our Session by repeatedly referring to the “vast majority of the congregation”. You never asked the congregation how they feel about their Session. If you concluded this based on Session’s input only, certainly you should have realized that they and their families constituted much of the congregation, so that such a statement before Presbytery, who were not acutely aware of the actual makeup of our congregation, would mislead them about the variety of opinions within our church. In any event, if there is sin within a Session, even if it is known to only one person, the fact that a vast majority doesn’t recognize the sin does not imply that God is not terribly concerned about the sin. That is, logic based on “vast majority” is erroneous, and intentionally using such faulty logic to achieve your goal is falsehood.

Let me pause and ask you, “Do you confess to committing these sins against us, and against God?”

[James repeated his commitment to listen.]

Second, you sinned when you publicized our so-called “sins” before seeking to win us, according to the command of Christ and the law and order of the church. Your speech at Presbytery was shocking to us. We have been available to you for confrontation for many months, both in your role as interim moderator of our Session, your role as our pastor while we attended Second RP, and just being your friend and brother in Christ. We have been available and near to you. Yet, you never approached us once about trying to usurp leadership from our Session, for constantly picking at them and doubting them, for trying to “cancel” them according to a worldly model, for not trusting them. You have not initiated conversation with us before Presbytery or since. Yet, you saw fit to use your pastoral privilege of the floor and a public court of Christ’s church to announce our “sins” to the church, prior to confronting us with them privately, and then with 2 or 3 witnesses, as Christ commands.

So, let me ask you, “Do you confess to committing this sin against us, and against Christ?”

[James repeated his commitment to listen.]

Finally, you took the Name of the Lord our God in vain, by “misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word” in your interpretation and application of Leviticus chapter 4. In your speech, you taught that, even though our Session sinned, because our Session has been atoned by the blood of Christ, there is no need or even warrant for Presbytery to enact any helpful measures, including the Reconciliation Committee’s recommendation to appoint a Shepherding Committee to meet with our Session over the next year. Simply put, your teaching confuses justification and sanctification. Your logic is, apparently, since the members of Session have been justified by the atoning work of Christ, there is no need for them to undergo the rigors of sanctification, which certainly could include a loving Shepherding Committee sent by a loving Presbytery to lovingly shepherd our shepherds to help them learn how to shepherd well. You knew that members of our Session admitted that no one has ever taught them how to be shepherds, and yet you perverted God’s Word in an attempt to sway Presbytery’s mind against the thought that “the person is to resign or to be submitted to some other sort of committee that would oversee them and these kinds of things”. So, let me ask you, “Do you confess to committing this sin against God and all those who witnessed your speech at Presbytery?”

[James repeated his commitment to listen.]

Appendix C: 2022.04.23 Email from Rev. Faris

JF

James Faris <james@2rp.church>

... Apr 23

to Nathan Enas <enasnate@gmail.com>, CC: Kevin Swan <me@kevinswan.com>, Donald Cassell <dona1d@sagamoreinstitute.org>, Jus Ro <jusolson@gmail.com>, and Dale Koons <d1koons49@gmail.com>

Dear Nathan and Kevin,

I am thankful for you and for your concern for me. The comments I made on the floor of presbytery in March were made in the context of debate around the original and revised versions of the CCRP Reconciliation Committee along with the Second RP Session's paper and the many months of history behind those documents.

Obviously, we disagreed over those matters as I argued for the essence of the original Reconciliation Committee report. In the course of debate, I was not seeking to hurt you personally or sin against you, but rather to bring help to all parties. The nature of debates in church courts will always include our infirmities as finite beings in the scope of our knowledge as speakers and listeners, our words, how we hear what is said, and more. I am deeply sorry that you were hurt and offended by my comments and perceive them as sinful. Please know that I did not seek to hurt nor sin against you men. These were not my intent nor my desire. I pray you will be able to look beyond this matter and that we can press on to know the Lord together.

I pray this response will help bring the matter to a close. If you want to discuss this further, I'm sure our Session will be desirous to help being the next court of appeal in this situation. The Lord bless you both.

In Christ,
James

CERTIFICATE OF MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS

- For Ministers in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America -

(as filed in the St. Lawrence Presbytery)

NAME: Mark Goerner
CURRENT ADDRESS: 1127 Rush St., Celebration, FL, 34747

BIRTHPLACE: New Hartford, NY

Date:

Citizenship: U.S.A.

DATE OF BAPTISM:
DATE OF PROFESSION:

EDUCATION:

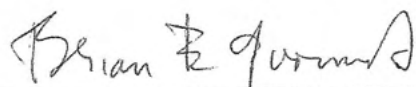
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1996-1999

RECORD OF SERVICE:

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Taken under Care | <i>March 12, 1996</i> |
| Eligibility to Preach | <i>June 17, 1998</i> |
| Personal Godliness | <i>July 14, 1997</i> |
| English Bible | <i>July 14, 1997</i> |
| Systematic Theology/Distinctive Principles | <i>June 17, 1998</i> |
| Expository Sermon | <i>March 25, 1997</i> |
| Church History Paper | <i>June 17, 1998</i> |
| Eligibility for Call | <i>March 30, 1999</i> |
| [Eligibility renewed: April 22, 2003; April 17, 2008; April 16, 2013, April 17, 2018] | |
| Pastoral & Evangelistic Gifts | <i>March 30, 1999</i> |
| Systematic Theology/Distinctive Principles | <i>March 30, 1999</i> |
| Church History | <i>October 20, 1998</i> |
| Expository Sermon | <i>March 30, 1999</i> |
| Exegesis Paper | <i>October 20, 1998</i> |
| Not yet Ordained to Service. | |

TRANSFER to Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery, April 19, 2022 by action of S.L. Presbytery

On behalf of the St. Lawrence Presbytery of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, I attest that this information is accurate.



Rev. Brian E. Coombs, *clerk*



Action on Laramie RPC Call to Allen Blackwood and Coldenham-Newburgh RPC Call to Aaron Murray

1 message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Sat, May 21, 2022 at 3:13 PM

To: A K <ak@streetsermon.org>

Cc: mcreadyjb@hotmail.com, pashafer@gmail.com, MWP Clerk <mwpcclerk@gmail.com>, David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Robert McKissick <rammd51@gmail.com>, "James M. Odom" <james.odom@covenanthome.com>, Thomas Reid <tgreidjr@gmail.com>

Adam,

The Ad Interim Commission met this past Wednesday evening, May 18th, and two items of business addressed were the Laramie RPC pastoral call to Allen Blackwood and the Coldenham-Newburgh RPC pastoral call to Aaron Murray.

Both calls were reviewed and approved with a special recommendation provided for the Laramie RPC regarding their call to Mr. Blackwood (see the excerpt from the minutes presented below).

Though both calls were reviewed and approved, neither Mr. Blackwood nor Mr. Murray have been licensed to receive a call. Therefore, ***the AIC is not forwarding the calls to these gentlemen, but is instead forwarding both calls to you as Clerk of the Presbytery to be held for forwarding to them once they have been licensed to receive a call***, which is anticipated to take place at the Presbytery meetings at the upcoming Synod. I have underlined the notation of the calls being held until the recipients of the calls have been licensed to receive a call.

Below is an excerpt from the AIC minutes regarding the action taken.

Laramie RPC/Blackwood Call

"It was moved, seconded, and passed, that (i) the Laramie RPC pastoral call to Allen Blackwood be approved and forwarded to Mr. Blackwood as a regular gospel call as soon as he is certified to receive a call, and (ii) the AIC recommend to the Laramie RPC that they shift \$1,000 from salary to auto allowance, to provide more adequately for their pastor's travel expenses. The congregational meeting minutes, roll of communicant members, and pastor's call and financial agreement are attached to and made a part of these minutes."

Coldenham-Newburgh RPC/Murray Call

"It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the Coldenham-Newburgh RPC pastoral call to Aaron Murray be approved and forwarded to Mr. Murray as a regular gospel call as soon as he is certified to receive a call. The congregational meeting minutes, roll of communicant members, and pastor's call and financial agreement are attached to and made a part of these minutes."

The calls are attached.

The Clerks of the Laramie RPC Session, Midwest Presbytery, the Coldenham-Newburgh RPC Session and the Atlantic Presbytery AIC are copied on this communication to let them know of the status of these calls and the recommendation from the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery regarding the Laramie call to Allen Blackwood.

richardblankenship3@gmail.com

4 attachments

 **2022 AIC 5.18 Min Laramie Blackwood Call.pdf**
1281K

 **2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Laramie Blackwood Roll.xlsx**
11K

 **2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Laramie Blackwood Mtg Min.docx**
14K

 **2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Coldenham Murray Call.pdf**
4388K

Transfer of Credential to the Candidates and Credentials Committee

1 message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Sat, May 21, 2022 at 2:09 PM

To: Adam Niess <adamniess@reformedlafayette.com>

Cc: A K <ak@streetsermon.org>, David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Robert McKissick <rammd51@gmail.com>, 'James M. Odom' <james.odom@covenanthome.com>, Thomas Reid <tgreidjr@gmail.com>, Brian Coombs <briancoombs@me.com>

Adam Niess and Adam Kuehner,

The Ad Interim Commission met this past Wednesday evening, on May 18th and one item of business addressed was the request for the transfer of the Mark Goerner's Ministerial Credentials from the St. Lawrence Presbytery to the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

From the minutes of the May 18th meeting the following action was taken:

"By common consent, the Commission agreed to forward the Certificate of Ministerial Credentials of Mark Goerner to the GL-G Candidates and Credentials Committee for action."

The transfer of Mark's Credential was approved and I am hereby informing the Candidates and Credential Committee and the Clerk of our Presbytery of that action.

richardblankenship3@gmail.com

 2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Mark Goerner credentials.pdf
771K



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Forwarding of Pastoral Call to Joshua Smith

1 message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Sat, May 21, 2022 at 4:27 PM

To: mblocki1@consolidated.net

Cc: A K <ak@streetsermon.org>, David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Robert McKissick <rammd51@gmail.com>, "James M. Odom" <james.odom@covenanthome.com>, Thomas Reid <tg Reidjr@gmail.com>, WadeMann@elkhartpc.org, rkochsales@gmail.com

Martin,

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery Ad Interim Commission met this past Wednesday evening, May 18th, 2022 and reviewed the call from the Westminster RPC (IL) to Joshua Smith. The Commission approved the call and I am forwarding the call to the Presbytery of the Alleghenies for its review and presentation to Mr. Smith.

An excerpt from the minutes of our meeting is provided below.

"It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the Westminster RPC pastoral call to Joshua Smith be approved as a regular gospel call and forwarded to the Presbytery of the Alleghenies. The congregational meeting minutes, roll of communicant members, and pastor's call and financial agreement are attached to and made a part of these minutes."

Attached to this email are the Transfer of a Call, the Call, the Congregational Meeting Minutes, and the roll of communicant members.

I do not have a printer available at this time to print the Transfer and sign it, so I have noted signatures on the Transfer of the Call that I have prepared.

If you have any questions or comments please let me, Adam Kuehner, Clerk of our Presbytery, and Robert Koch, Clerk of the Westminster Session know.

richardblankenship3@gmail.com

4 attachments

 **2022 AIC5.18.2022 Min Westminster Smith Call.pdf**
956K

 **2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Westminster Smith Mtg Min.docx**
19K

 **2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Westminster Smith Roll.docx**
20K

 **Transfer of a Call Westminster to Joshua Smith.docx**
13K

Transfer of a Call
From the
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
To the
Presbytery of the Alleghenies

This call made by the **Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church of Prairie View, Illinois** upon **Joshua Smith** on the **24th** day of **April** in the year **2022**, was made in accordance with the law and order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and has by the **Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery** been sustained as a regular gospel call.

It is hereby transferred to the **Presbytery of the Alleghenies**, of which **Joshua Smith** is a member, for presentation.

By order of the Presbytery this **21st** day of **May** in the year **2022**.

/s/ F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of the Ad Interim Commission
of the
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

/s/ David Hanson
Moderator of the Ad Interim Commission
of the
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery



G AIC Forward of Communications to Synod

1 message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Sat, May 21, 2022 at 1:54 PM

To: jmmlawrence@aol.com

Cc: A K <ak@streetsermon.org>, David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Robert McKissick <rammd51@gmail.com>, 'James M. Odom' <james.odom@covenanthome.com>, Thomas Reid <tgreidjr@gmail.com>

John,

This past week on Wednesday, May 18th, the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery's Ad Interim Commission met and approved the forwarding to Synod two communications that it had recently received. One of those communications was the Dillion complaint which you have already received and the other is from former members of the Lafayette RPC.

The AIC is forwarding the attached communications to you for Synod. An excerpt from the minutes of our May 18th AIC meeting is below.

"The Commission, having received two communications regarding the Immanuel Synod Judicial Commission, one from Mr. Dan Dillon of the Immanuel RPC and one from members of the Lafayette RPC, observes that both papers are in order, were submitted in appropriate language, and were submitted in the appropriate timeframe. These communications are hereby transmitted to Synod. A copy of each of the communications is attached to and made a part of these minutes."

You need anything else or if I have not followed proper protocol, please let me know and I will work on getting things correct.

Thank you for your service to us.

richardblankenship3@gmail.com

2 attachments

 **2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Dillion Complaint to Synod .pdf**
497K

 **2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Synod Petition from Former IRPC Members.pdf**
334K

Resolution of the AIC May 18, 2022 Regarding Charges Against James Faris

1 message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Sat, May 21, 2022 at 12:06 PM

To: Nathan Eshelman <n.p.eshelman@gmail.com>

Cc: A K <ak@streetsermon.org>, David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Thomas Reid <tgreidjr@gmail.com>, "James M. Odom" <james.odom@covenanthome.com>, Robert McKissick <rammd51@gmail.com>

Nathan,

The Ad Interim Commission met this past Wednesday evening, May 18th, and one of the items addressed was the charges brought against James Faris by Nathan Enas and Kevin Swan, members of Christ Church RPC, Brownsburg. Those charges were received by and passed on to the AIC by Adam Kuehner who had asked that the communication containing those charges be considered Communication GLG 22-13.

After the discussion the AIC passed a motion asking you, as Moderator of the Presbytery, to appoint a three-man committee to examine the charges and bring recommendations to the upcoming Synod meeting of the Presbytery concerning the disposition of those charges.

The minutes of the meeting related to this issue are below.

"The Commission discussed Presbytery Communication GLG 22-13, from two members of Christ Church Brownsburg RPC. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the AIC ask the Moderator of Presbytery, Nathan Eshelman, to appoint a three-man committee to examine Communication 22-13 and bring recommendations to the Synod meeting of Presbytery concerning its disposition. A copy of Communication GLG 22-13 is attached to and made a part of these minutes."

A copy of the charges is attached.

I was not able to attend the meeting. If you have any questions about the AIC's request you can contact me and I will reach out to one of the other AIC members who were present to seek to address any issue you have or you may contact our Moderator, David Hanson.

richardblankenship3@gmail.com

 2022 AIC 5.18.2022 Min Charges of Sin GLG 22-13.pdf
341K

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
June 10, 2022

The *Ad Interim* Commission ("AIC") of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on June 10, 2022, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were David Hanson, Moderator, (Southside RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Richard Blankenship, Clerk, (Second RPC, Indianapolis, IN), James Odom (Sparta RPC), and Tom Reid (Orlando RPC). Robert McKissick (Sycamore, RPC) was not able to be present.
2. David Hanson 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 8:10 pm.
3. By common consent, the AIC meeting minutes of April 22, 2022, were approved, as amended.
4. By common consent, the AIC meeting minutes of May 18, 2022, were approved, as amended.
5. 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.
6. 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

with the following appointed as alternates to the Commission, in the order listed:

Bob Bibby
Phil Pockras
Eric Cosens
John Cavanaugh
C. J. Davis
Tom Reid

- 7. By common consent, adjournment was approved.
- 8. James Odom prayed for the CCRPC Commission 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 9:20 pm.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

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:

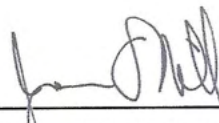
That Presbytery to appoint a judicial commission to take original jurisdiction of the issues of conflict between the CCRP Session and members, and to make formal binding recommendations regarding the situation.

In Christ,

The CCRP Session



 Joel Hart, Interim Moderator



 Jason O'Neill, Clerk



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.

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
August 3, 2022

The *Ad Interim* Commission ("AIC") of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on August 3, 2022, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were David Hanson, Moderator, (Southside RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Richard Blankenship, Clerk, (Second RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Robert McKissick (Sycamore, RPC), James Odom (Sparta RPC), and Tom Reid (Orlando RPC).
2. Tom Reid 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 8:34 pm.
3. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to sustain the Marion RPC call of Aaron Murray as a regular gospel call made in accordance with the law and order of the church and to forward the call to Aaron Murray for his acceptance. A copy of the Call, Minutes of the meeting for the election of a Teaching Elder, and Membership Roll are attached to and made a part of these minutes. Aaron Murray has indicated his intent to accept the call.
4. By common consent, it was approved that the Moderator and Clerk of the AIC appoint an Aaron Murray Ordination Exam Commission, consisting of nine men, to conduct the ordination exams for Aaron Murray.

The appointment of the members of the Commission were as follows:

Phil Pockras
Bruce Bowers or Jeffrey Brotherton
Shawn Anderson (Moderator)
Tom Dinkledine
Ken Nelson
Chris Stockwell
Ian Wise
Dick Knodel
Scott Damerow

with the following appointed as alternates to the Commission, in the order listed, in the event any of the above men are unable to serve:

Mark Hart
Adam Doerr
Rich Johnston

5. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to convene the Fall meeting of the Presbytery at Columbus RPC in Columbus, Indiana, on Friday, October 7, 2022, beginning at 10:00 am, and adjourning at Noon, Saturday, October 8, 2022.
6. By common consent, in response to a request from First RPC of Grand Rapids and a recommendation from the Presbytery's First RPC of Grand Rapids Visitation Committee, Bryan Dage and Jon Hughes were appointed as the Provisional Elders of First RPC of Grand Rapids.
7. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to accept Steve Rhoda's resignation as a Provisional Elder of First RPC of Grand Rapids, effective when Bryan Dage and Jon Hughes begin serving as Provisional Elders of First RPC of Grand Rapids (see item number 6 above).
8. By common consent, it was approved to appoint Jerry Foltz as Second RPC, Indianapolis, interim Moderator of Session during James Faris' sabbatical leaves at various times during 2022 and 2023, the length and dates of which are pending agreement and approval by the Second RPC Session.
9. The AIC declined to act on the request for the dismissal of the Christ Church RP Shepherding Committee ("CCRP Shepherding Committee"), but moved, seconded, and passed a motion to encourage the CCRP Shepherding Committee to report on its work at the Fall meeting of Presbytery and to request dismissal at that time, if the Committee deems dismissal appropriate.
10. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the AIC ask the Presbytery appointed Provisional Elders of Immanuel RPC to report on and give advice to the AIC, by August 17, 2022, regarding developments and actions taken at any congregational meeting(s) by Immanuel RPC in July 2022.
11. The minutes of the actions taken were reviewed.
12. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the meeting be adjourned.
13. Bob McKissick 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 10:41 pm.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church

1100 West Jeffras Ave

Marion, IN 46952

Pastor's call and Financial Agreement

We, the Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church of Marion, Indiana 1100 West Jeffras Ave, under the care of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, desiring to call a pastor to take the spiritual oversight of us in the Lord; and having satisfied that your spiritual attainments, intellectual abilities and soundness in the faith and the testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church are fitted to our capacities, do now, with the concurrence of the Presbytery, call you, Aaron Murray, to undertake the office of pastor among us. Upon your accepting this call and performing the duties of your office and set forth by the Constitution of the RPCNA, we promise you all the respect in the Lord.

We hereby promise to pay you \$45,000 annually, in the event of your accepting this call, and performing the duties of a pastor among us payable 12 installments of \$3,750.00 each. Of this compensation 60% is designated as an allowance for furnishings and appurtenances for your dwelling as set forth by section 107 of the IRS code.

We include the following in the compensation package:

1. Salary/Housing allowance-\$45,000 paid in monthly installments
2. Medical- up to \$6,000 per year paid in monthly installments
3. Retirement Contribution \$4,700 per year paid quarterly into an established IRS approved fund for pastors. This will follow the Synod's direction and will adjust over time according to the Synod's minimum requirements.
4. Reimbursement for ministry expenses according to current church policy.
5. The congregation will provide from our saving account \$1500 dollars in moving expenses and 5% of a house purchase cost, up to \$9,500, in help for a down payment for a house in the Marion city limits. This will be a maximum total of \$11,000 in loans given to the Murrays and will be forgiven in year 5 of his pastoral service to the church. If Mr. Murray leaves the Marion RP church before year 5 then he would be responsible for paying this loan back at a pro-rated rate given his years of service to the church.
6. Two weeks of vacation time each year with a new week added every third year maxing out at 6 weeks of vacation.
7. Time will be given for attendance at Synod meetings, Presbytery meetings, Covfamikoi family conference, and International Conference each year they are held. A Sabbatical

will be considered at year 10 with the length of the sabbatical to be determined by the congregation.

We promise to review annually with you the adequacy of this compensation prior to the adoption of the congregation's budget meeting to take in account the cost-of-living increase.

In the witness thereof, we subscribe this call and financial agreement, the 17th day of July in the year 2022 in the presences of these witnesses:

Attestation of the Call and Financial Agreement

I hereby certify that this call and financial agreement were made out on the date therein specified and in accord with the law and order of the church

Signatures of Communicant Members approving the call:

Elders:

1. Jason Camery
2. Greg Fisher
3. Scott Hunt

Deacons:

1. Billy Cole
2. Jacob Fisher

Communicant Members:

Elders:

Gregory A. Asher

~~John Long~~

Deacons:

~~John Long~~

~~John Long~~

Communicant Members:

Thomas & Randy ~~Olson~~

Vernon Li Chris Bah

Mark Li Jess Bah

Patricia S Lisher Jimmy Camery

Patricia McClintock ~~Chuck~~

~~Colin~~ Beverly Camery

Audrey M. Hunt

Rebecca Fisher

~~Not all~~

~~John~~

Others:
Baptized

Donna Lynn

Christina Lundquist Sh. Benz

~~John~~

ARIA

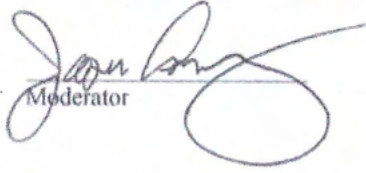
TERGAN

TESSA

Lilly

Attestation of a Call and Financial Agreement

I hereby certify that this call and financial agreement were made out on the date therein specified in accord with the law and order of the church.


Moderator

Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church

Marion, Indiana

Session Meeting- Congregational meeting for the election of a Teaching Elder

July 17, 2022, at 12:30 PM -Meeting at the Church 1100 West Jeffras Ave, Marion, Indiana
46952

Elders present were Pastor Jason Camery, Greg Fisher, and Scott Hunt- Clerk.

The purpose of this meeting was to conduct an election of a Teaching Elder.

The meeting was called to order and the court was constituted in prayer by Pastor Camery.

1. Determination of a quorum.
 - a. The quorum was confirmed by the reading of the congregational role.
2. Inquiry as to whether the congregation wished to proceed with the election. Congregation unanimously answered in the affirmative by voice vote.
3. The edict was read for the final time.
4. Worship
 - We sang Psalm 91B.
 - Pastor Camery opened the word from Titus 1:1-16.
 - Pastor Camery explained the election process and we asked the Lord to bless our deliberations.
 - o Extensive discussions regarding the financial package presented. Removing Pastor Camery's compensation and adding in the proposed annual package as outlined in the call roughly matches the annual budget we approved in January. The loan for the moving expenses and house down payment would come from our savings.
 - o Motion by Chris Baker (seconded by Jenny Camery) to amend the call as follows:
 - Adjustment in Point #1 of the salary package from "\$49,000" to "\$45,000" salary/year.
 - Discussion about possible amendments to the motion. No amendments were made.
 - Motion passed unanimously by voice vote. The secretary will make the appropriate adjustments to the call.
 - o Motion by Greg Fisher (seconded by Jacob Fisher) to amend the call as follows:
 - Adjustment in Point #2 of the salary package from "Medical - \$6,000" to "Medical - up to \$6,000"
 - Motion passed unanimously by voice vote. The secretary will make the appropriate adjustments to the call.
 - o Motion by Jacob Fisher (seconded by Thomas Planalp) to amend the call as follows:
 - Adjustment in Point #5 of the salary package from "\$9,500 in help for a

down payment for a house” to “up to \$9,500 in help for a down payment for a house”

- Discussion about possible amendments to the motion. Motion amended from “up to \$9,500 in help for a down payment for a house” to “5% of a house purchase, up to \$9,500, in help for a down payment for a house.”
 - Final motion was to amend the call as follows:
 - Adjustment in Point #5 of the salary package from “\$9,500 in help for a down payment for a house” to “5% of a house purchase, up to \$9,500, in help for a down payment for a house”
 - Moderator ruled that the voice vote did not pass the amended motion. Division was noted. Therefore, the vote was re-taken by raised hand. The motion passed by 10-6 raised hand vote. The secretary will make the appropriate adjustments to the call.
 - Motion by Scott Hunt (seconded by Chris Baker) to amend the call as follows:
 - Adjustment in Point #6 of the salary package from “6 weeks vacation time in your 9th year as pastor.” To “6 weeks vacation time.”
 - Motion passed unanimously by voice vote. The secretary will make the appropriate adjustments to the call.
 - Motion by Jenny Camery (seconded by Kevin McClintock) to amend the call as follows:
 - Adjustment in Point #7 of the salary package from “Synod and Presbytery meetings each year” to “Synod meetings, Presbytery meetings, Covfamikoi family conference, and International Conference each year they are held.”
 - Motion passed unanimously by voice vote. The secretary will make the appropriate adjustments to the call.
 - With the above amendments, the call was presented for vote.
 - The call passed unanimously by voice vote.
 - We prayed for the Lord to guide His church.
 - Singing of Psalm 133A.
4. Election of a teaching elder
- a. Nominations were opened from the floor. On behalf of the Session, Greg Fisher nominated Aaron Murray. No other nominations were made.
 - b. Motion by Kevin McClintock (seconded by Chris Baker) to close the nominations.
 - c. Tellers appointed were deacons Billy Cole and Jacob Fisher.
 - d. Vote was taken by roll call (anonymous paper ballot).
 - i. While the votes were being tallied, the congregation sang Psalm 84B.
 - e. The voted tallied by the tellers were twenty affirmative and one no.
 - f. Jason Camery then presented the congregation with the terms of the call and a revised budget. A motion was made by Scott Hunt (seconded by Tatiana Cole) to approve the terms of the call and to revise the 2022 budget according to the new terms of the call.

Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church

Membership Roll

As of August 3, 2022

Membership

1. Baker, Chris
2. Baker, Jessica

3. Bright, Josh
4. Bright, Candace
 1. Peter
 2. Andrew
 3. Margaret

5. Camery, Christian

6. Camery, Jason
7. Camery, Jenny

8. Camery, Kay

9. Camery, Luke

10. Cole, Billy
11. Cole, Tatiana
 4. Lilly
 5. Tessa
 6. Emma

12. Dunning, Lindell

13. Fisher, Greg
14. Fisher, Pam

15. Fisher, Jacob
16. Fisher, Bekah
 7. Luna
 8. Teagan
 9. Aria
 10. Jackson
 11. Wade

17. Hunt, Scott

18. Hunt, Allison
19. Hunt, Ian
20. Hunt, Audrey
21. Hunt, Collin
12. Ashtyn

22. Li, Mark
23. Li, Veronica

24. McClintock, Kevin
25. McClintock, Patty

26. Morgan, Dave
27. Morgan, Mary

28. Morgan, David
29. Morgan, Melanie
 13. Levi
 14. John

30. Planalp, Thomas

31. Schwarte, Russell
32. Schwarte, Michele
33. Schwarte, Gabrielle
34. Schwarte, Nathaniel
35. Schwarte, Abigail

Roll of Adherents

1. Bergen, Shawn
2. Jones, Robert

3. Minton, Monty
4. Minton, Brianne
5. Minton, Mason

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
September 10, 2022

The *Ad Interim* Commission (“AIC”) of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on Saturday, September 10, 2022, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were David Hanson, Moderator, (Southside RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Richard Blankenship, Clerk, (Second RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Robert McKissick (Sycamore, RPC), James Odom (Sparta RPC), and Tom Reid (Orlando RPC).
2. Tom Reid 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 4:01 p.m.
3. By common consent, the minutes of the August 3, 2022, meeting of the AIC were approved.
4. It was moved, seconded, and passed, (i) to appoint an Ordination and Installation Commission for the ordination and installation of Aaron Murray as Pastor and Teaching Elder of Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church, said Commission to consist of David Whitla, Joel Hart, Shawn Anderson, Don Prichard and Bob Bibby, with Russ Pulliam, Adam Niess and George Gregory appointed as alternates, in that order, in the event any of the appointed men are unable to serve, (ii) to authorize AIC’s Moderator and Clerk to appoint any other alternates, if needed, and (iii) for the Clerk to issue the Ordination and Installation Edict for the ordination and installation service of Aaron Murray as Pastor and Teaching Elder of Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church at Marion RPC on Thursday, October 6, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

A copy of the Ordination and Installation Edict is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

5. By common consent, David Whitla was appointed Moderator of the Aaron Murray Ordination and Installation Commission. Shawn Anderson appointed as alternate.
6. In response to the request of the AIC (see AIC Minutes of August 3, 2022, Item No. 10), Kenneth de Jong provided a report to the AIC from the Presbytery appointed Provisional Elders of Immanuel RPC regarding developments and actions taken at a July 2022 congregational meeting of Immanuel RPC. The AIC reviewed the report and determined no further action was needed at the present time.
7. By common consent, it was agreed the Richard Blankenship will circulate a draft AIC Report to Presbytery for approval by the members of the AIC prior to submission to the Presbytery for the upcoming October 7, 2022, meeting of Presbytery.

- 8. By common consent, it was agreed the meeting be adjourned.
- 9. Bob McKissick 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 4:35 p.m.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

**Edict for the Ordination and Installation
of Aaron Murray
in the
Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church**

The Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery has received a call made by the Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church upon Aaron Murray to be their pastor and has sustained it as a regular gospel call. He has accepted the call. Notice is hereby given that the 6th day of October in the year 2022, has been fixed as the time for his ordination and installation, with certification that the Presbytery will proceed in the same unless some valid objections be offered to the Presbytery which is to meet by Commission at Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church on the 6th day of October in the year 2022 for the ordination and installation.

The meeting for the ordination and installation will be held at 7:00 p.m. at Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church, 1100 West Jeffras Ave., Marion, Indiana.



F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of the *Ad Interim* Commission



David Hanson
Moderator of the *Ad Interim* Commission

By order of the Presbytery this 10th day of September in the year 2022.

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
November 16, 2022


The *Ad Interim* Commission ("AIC") of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were David Hanson, Moderator, (Southside RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Richard Blankenship, Clerk, (Second RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Robert McKissick (Sycamore, RPC), James Odom (Sparta RPC), and Tom Reid (Orlando RPC).
2. James Odom 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 8:34 p.m.
3. By common consent, the minutes of the September 10, 2022, meeting of the AIC were approved.
4. By common consent, the October 1, 2022, resignations of the Presbytery appointed Immanuel RPC Provisional Elders, Ken DeJong, John Hanson, and Terry Magnuson, were accepted. This action was taken up by the AIC at the request of the Clerk of the Presbytery, because of the Presbytery overlooking this matter at the Fall Presbytery meeting in October 2022.
5. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the October 6, 2022, Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and Install Aaron Murray as pastor of Marion RPC in Marion, Indiana, be returned to the Commission to clarify (i) whether they elected Shawn Anderson as Clerk and, (ii) whether they met to assign the responsibilities for the different parts of the Ordination and Installation service. This action was taken up by the AIC at the request of the Clerk of the Presbytery, because of the Presbytery overlooking this matter at the Fall Presbytery meeting in October 2022.
6. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to accept the November 1, 2022, resignation of James Faris, as pastor of Second RPC, Indianapolis. A copy of the resignation is attached to these minutes.
7. It was moved, seconded, and passed, at the request of Second RPC, Indianapolis, to dissolve the pastoral relationship between Second RPC, and James Faris effective November 1, 2022. Appreciation was expressed for James Faris' service and ministry at Second RPC. Tom Reid effected the dissolution with a prayer of thanksgiving for James' ministry and the good done for God's glory, along with an appeal for the Lord's blessing on James' future, the congregation of Second RPC, and its pursuit of another pastor.
8. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to approve the request of the Session of Second RPC, Indianapolis, to call a Teaching Elder/Pastor to replace James Faris.

9. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to confirm the Second RPC Session's appointment of Teaching Elder, Jerry Foltz, as Moderator of the Second RPC Session.
10. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the complaint contained in Communication GLG 22-22 be processed by the whole Presbytery at the 2023 Spring meeting of Presbytery. Communication GLG 22-22 is the complaint of Mr. Nathan Enas and Mr. Kevin Swan against the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, regarding a policy adopted October 7, 2022, by the GLG Presbytery governing the recording of Presbytery meetings. For information purposes, a copy of Communication GLG 22-22 is attached.
11. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the complaint contained in Communication GLG 22-23 be processed by the whole Presbytery at the 2023 Spring meeting of Presbytery. Communication GLG 22-23 is the complaint of Mr. Nathan Enas against the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery regarding the Presbytery's action on October 7, 2022, returning to the author his complaint (Communication GLG 22-18) against the Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian Commission for its not sustaining a complaint (Communication GLG 22-15) against an action of the Christ Church RP Session. For information purposes, a copy of Communication GLG 22-23 is attached.
12. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the request forwarded to the AIC from the Membership Committee for the transfer of Joe and Meleah Tubergen's membership to Providence Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, be returned to the Shepherding Committee for counsel as to whether Providence Reformed Church is a true branch of the visible church. The Tubergens are former members of the now disorganized First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, and their memberships are currently on the roll of Presbytery.
13. It was noted that, as reported by Bill Roberts, virtually all the physical property of Christ Church RP, Indianapolis, has been distributed to various congregations in the Presbytery.
14. By common consent, it was agreed the meeting be adjourned.
15. Bob McKissick 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 10:19 p.m.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Resignation as pastor of 2RP

1 message

James Faris <jas.faris@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 25, 2022 at 8:53 PM

To: David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Dear David and Richard,

As you both know, I have given my resignation as pastor to the session of Second Reformed Presbyterian Church. Two weeks notice was given on October 17 for my resignation effective November 1, 2022.

I'm writing to you in your roles on the AIC in accordance with the Directory of Church Government (DCG 3.ii.5.b, D-21). I am giving notice to the presbytery of my resignation from Second Reformed Presbyterian Church effective November 1, 2022.

Please let me know if there is anything else needed from me.

In Christ,
James

05 November 2022

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

We, the undersigned, wish to register a complaint regarding an action of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery on October 7, 2022, in which Presbytery elected the following: *"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."* We also ask Synod 1) to declare that audio recordings of open meetings of all church courts are good, and 2) to commission a policy to be developed for the orderly recording of the church courts and the curation of recordings for the preserving of truth and justice for the good of the church, now and in perpetuity, until King Jesus returns to judge every idle word.

SOME BIBLICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL DATA

- WLC Question 144. What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?
Answer. The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man...
- "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away." (Luke 8:16-18)
- "For thus says the Lord of hosts: "As I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the Lord of hosts, so again have I purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not. These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the Lord." (Zechariah 8:14-17)
- "So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people. Joab the son of Zeruah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder, and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and David's sons were priests." (2 Samuel 8:15-18)

BASIC REASONING

1. The essence of courts is contained in words, written and spoken. Words matters to God, so words matters. Words can be good (truth in love), and words can be evil (falsehood, lack of love).
2. Recording open meetings of the church courts is a good practice for many reasons (see "Detailed Rationale" below). To prohibit a good practice is sinful. Therefore, to prohibit the recording of all open meetings of a church court is sinful.

DETAILED RATIONALE

1. Few people can remember the volume of speech and reasoning on a variety of topics over several days that is commonly experienced at meetings of the courts. Audio/video recordings can mitigate such human frailty. Instead of everyone taking notes (which cannot be completely accurate), they can spend their energy and thought to engage in the debates and discussion, knowing that they can come back to an accurate recording for more consideration later on.
2. Recording open sessions of the court has the obvious advantage of making the entire proceedings available for those who would like to have been, but were not able to be, present.
3. Imagine if you could hear the actual debates in past courts on a particular topic. This orderly reasoning can be more valuable than the decisions that a court makes because it teaches the church how a court came to a decision. This reasoning can be evaluated for its current relevance, and it can be used to instruct future generations of the courts and the broader church.
4. Recordings are an efficient way to preserve the truth about important conversations. If there is any accusation of impropriety in the courts, this truth may be used to acquit the righteous and to sanctify the unrighteous. This truth may be used to settle disputes over what actually happened in the courts. This will save much time and litigation by preventing needless disputes and wrangling over words and history.
5. Recording can help court participants grow in sanctification. 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.
6. Recordings provide necessary accountability for how people converse in the courts. Those who speak in the courts presumably have the right to speak. But no one has the right to sin. Of course, all men do sin, and sometimes men will speak sinfully in the courts. In these cases, the sinner should confess, and make repairs toward reconciliation. Recordings are some of the Godly means for documenting speech, encouraging Godly speech, and helping to correct ungodly speech, if it occurs.
7. Even secular courts are public events, and complete audio or written transcripts are created by paid recorders. How much more carefully should the courts of King Jesus be preserved and curated!
8. Recording courts promotes needed transparency and communication. How much more will the trust between the shepherds and the sheep of God's house be strengthened by complete openness about what was said in the courts of King Jesus!
9. 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).

SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

1. **Recordings can be used against people on the recording.**
Answer: Truth and righteousness cannot harm anyone; on the contrary, they can only acquit and defend people. However, falsehood and wicked speech should be exposed for the sake of sanctification.
2. **Recording meetings is uncharted territory for the church.**
Answer: Recording is actually a standard process in worldly courts. Also, the courts of the Biblical kings used recorders, who were important officials in the court.

3. **The church doesn't know what will be done with the recordings.**

Answer: This objection seems motivated by fear. If the recording is truth, Jesus says it will set us free, not enslave us.

4. **Privacy will be compromised by recordings.**

Answer: First, church courts are open meetings. Second, a court may elect to enter an executive session if the value of privacy outweighs the value of openness.

5. **Recordings can be edited and posted on social media platforms, but without the appropriate context of the entire discussion.**

Answer: First, this is true of any speech, recorded by written notes, or just recollected from memory. Yet, the Presbytery did not vote to prohibit all note-taking, just audio and video recording. Second, this argument actually argues for due diligence to preserve an accurate, full recording of the courts, so that an authoritative answer can be given, if anyone posts a misleading version of the deliberations of the courts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Synod declare that recording open meetings of church courts is good and permissible throughout the RPCNA.
2. That Synod admonish Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery for prohibiting recording, a good deed, in the courts.
3. That Synod commission a policy to govern the recording of church courts, and proper curation of the recordings, for the glory of God and the good of His church.

SIGNED,

Nathan Enas

Kevin Swan

Former members, Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian, Indianapolis, Indiana
Current members, Roll of Presbytery (Great Lakes Gulf)

5 November 2022

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

I wish to register a complaint regarding the following action of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery (GLGP), on October 7, 2022: *“Recommendation 1 [i.e., “that Presbytery receive this (CCRP Commission) report”] was adopted without vocal dissent, after which the clerk read Clerk’s Recommendation 6 (Footnote #6 Above), reminding the court that the receiving of the CCRP Commission minutes without rescindment automatically returns GLG 22-18 to its author along with the instructions included in the Recommendation.”*

My reasons for this complaint are as follows:

1. The CCRP Commission violated the 9th Commandment in their report, in which they repeatedly damaged “the good name of our neighbor [Mr. Nathan Enas]” (see WLC Q144-145) without charging Mr. Enas with sin and without providing Mr. Enas opportunity to defend his good name.
2. The CCRP Commission failed in its charge to “seek reconciliation”, as evidenced by 5 families separating from CCRP upon reading the CCRP Commission Report, followed by the resignation of the CCRP Interim Pastoral Assistant, and the resignation of the entire CCRP Session from ordained office, thus disorganizing the congregation due to lack of elders.
3. By receiving the CCRP Commission report without dissent, GLGP has joined the CCRP Commission and the former CCRP Session in their errors.

I have already outlined the Commission’s errors in my complaint to Presbytery (GLG 22-18, attached). In this kind of situation, there are only two possibilities: either you agree with the Commission’s report, or you don’t. Case 1: If you agree with the Commission as did Presbytery, then you are agreeing with their claim that Mr. Enas does not respect church authority. If this is true, this appears to be an example of “contempt for the courts of the church” which includes “refusal...to respect the authority and discipline of the church”. Clearly, no church court has attempted to discipline Mr. Enas for this, even though this is an “offense [which] requires discipline” (BOD I.1.6). If Mr. Enas does not respect church authority, the church must discipline him, which it hasn’t. This is an error. Case 2: If you do not agree with the Commission, then the Commission (and hence Presbytery) has maligned Mr. Enas falsely. This also is an error.

Thus, in either of the two possible cases, the Commission and hence Presbytery has made an error, and I am asking you to help Presbytery correct their errors for the good of Christ’s body and the glory of His name.

For errors such as these, I believe God is judging this Presbytery. Evidences of God’s judgment are manifest and manifold:

- once thriving congregations are now disorganized or wanting to separate from the RPCNA;
- long-time pastors are resigning their pastorates and leaving the RPCNA;
- many long-time members are leaving the RPCNA to other denominations or none at all;
- entire Sessions are resigning;
- church members who were once dear friends to each other now don’t speak to each other;
- credible charges of sin against elders are ignored;

- when these troubles came before Presbytery, the focus of the discussion was on technicalities, such as “did he follow the proper legal procedures to submit his complaint?”, “who will get the money in the church’s bank account?”, “is the proper term ‘dissolution’ or ‘disorganization’”, and even a joke like “I’ve been ‘disorganized’ for a long time” during the discussion regarding the disorganization of CCRP.

God has spoken:

“Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” (1 Peter 4:15-19)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod recuse GLGP from voting on any action related to this complaint.
2. That Synod instruct the judicial committee of the day to investigate said action of Presbytery, including all the actions that led up to said action (including actions of the former CCRP Session and the CCRP Commission), adjudicate these actions appropriately by the Word of God and the law and order of the church, discipline the guilty and acquit the innocent.
3. That Synod admonish GLGP for their errors.
4. That Synod form a judicial commission to investigate the manifest evidences of God’s judgment on this Presbytery, to adjudicate the sins that have led to God’s judgment, to discipline the guilty and acquit the innocent.

Sincerely,

Nathan Enas

Former member, Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian, Indianapolis, Indiana
Current member, Roll of Presbytery (Great Lakes Gulf)

Attachment: GLG 22-18

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.

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
December 10, 2022

The *Ad Interim* Commission (“AIC”) of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on Saturday, December 10, 2022, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were David Hanson, Moderator, (Southside RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Richard Blankenship, Clerk, (Second RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Robert McKissick (Sycamore, RPC), James Odom (Sparta RPC), and Tom Reid (Orlando RPC).
2. Tom Reid 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 12:03 p.m.
3. By common consent, the minutes of the November 16, 2022, meeting of the AIC were approved.
4. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the request forwarded to the AIC from the Membership Committee for the transfer of Joe and Meleah Tubergen’s membership to Providence Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, be approved. The Tubergens are former members of the now disorganized First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, and their memberships are currently on the roll of Presbytery.
5. By common consent, the AIC Clerk is to communicate the AIC’s concern about the Tubergens becoming part of the Reformed Church in America denomination.
6. It was moved, seconded, and passed, that the October 6, 2022, Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and Install Aaron Murray as pastor of Marion RPC in Marion, Indiana, be received, and spread on the minutes of Presbytery. A copy of the minutes is attached to an made a part of these minutes.
7. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to send to the full Presbytery meeting in March 2023, the request of James Faris (former Teaching Elder at Second RPC, Indianapolis) for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church in Zionsville, Indiana. David Hanson expressed his dissent with the decision, and his dissent is attached to these minutes. A copy of Mr. Faris’ request is attached to these minutes for information purposes.

- 8. By common consent, it was agreed the meeting be adjourned.

- 9. Bob McKissick 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 12:56 p.m.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

Dissent of David Hanson to the Action Taken Regarding the Request of James Faris for the Transfer of his Credentials

The reasons for my disagreement with this decision are as follows:

1. Pastor Faris has made an ordinary, legal request and it should be simply granted as the routine item of business that it is.
2. For more than 18 months, Pastor Faris has clearly articulated his concern and disagreement with the decisions and direction of the presbytery and synod. Therefore, Pastor Faris's desire to remove himself from our denomination should not surprise anyone.
3. Pastor Faris is not currently charged with any sin and is within his God-given rights to state that he can no longer in good conscience submit to the RPCNA. For us to hold onto his credentials is to unlawfully bind his conscience, keeping him within a denomination that he believes is in serious error.
4. Pastor Faris has asked for the transfer of his credentials to a true branch of the visible church, and the RPCNA's recognition of this is clear from the standpoint that members of Zionsville Fellowship would be served communion at any RPCNA congregation.
5. Other transfers of credentials, have been treated as routine, so to deny Pastor Faris's request demonstrates bias and favoritism.
6. We do not know and Pastor Faris is not required to share all of his reasons for asking for his credentials at this time. However, refusing to transfer his credentials is uncharitable as it places our interests and desires above his.

David W. Hanson
December 10, 2022

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and Install Aaron Murray

The commission to ordain and install Aaron Murray as pastor of the Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church in Marion, Indiana, met on October 6, 2022.

1. Dr. David Whitla opened the meeting and constituted the Court in prayer, in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 7:01 PM.
2. Shawn Anderson, serving as clerk, called the roll of the commission. Elders present from the five-man commission: Shawn Anderson (clerk), Bob Bibby, Joel Hart, Don Prichard, and David Whitla (moderator).
3. The moderator asked that all elders and ministers rise and introduce themselves to the congregation.
4. Motion carried, that elder delegates without certificates be seated, that all Reformed Presbyterian ruling and teaching elders present who are not delegates be made consultative members of the court and that all elders in good standing in denominations with which we have fraternal relations be invited to participate in the laying on of hands.
5. Narration of the Steps and final reading of the Edict were read by Elder Scott Hunt.
6. Members of Marion RPC rose to confirm their call of Aaron Murray.
7. Aaron Murray rose to signify his acceptance of the call.
8. Dr. Whitla read the Call to Worship (Psalm 95:1-7a).
9. The congregation sang Psalm 95A to the praise of God.
10. Dr. Whitla prayed the invocation.
11. Pastor Joel Hart preached from 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (“Called to Battle”).
12. Congregation responded to the preaching of God’s Word by singing Psalm 31D.
13. Pastor Jason Camery put the queries to Aaron Murray who confirmed them.
14. Aaron Murray signed the Queries for Ordination and Installation.
15. Elder Don Prichard led the court in prayer of ordination and installation as elders laid hands upon Aaron Murray.

16. The right hand of fellowship was offered to Pastor Aaron Murray.
17. Congregation responded in praise by singing Psalm 122A.
18. Dr. Whitla gave the charge from John 1:6-8 to Pastor Aaron Murray.
19. Pastor George Gregory gave the charge from Acts 9 to the congregation.
20. Congregation responded in praise by singing Psalm 104A.
21. Pastor Aaron Murray pronounced the Benediction.
22. Congregation sang in praise to the Lord from Psalm 72C.
23. The Minutes were read and approved by common consent.
24. Dr. Whitla gave thanks and adjourned the Court in prayer, in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, at 8:49 PM.

E-signature:

David Whitla, Moderator

Shawn Anderson, Clerk

Transfer of Tubergen Membership to Providence Reformed Church

message

Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Sat, Dec 10, 2022 at 7:55 PM

To: walter@adavalley.com

Cc: Meleah Bazen <meleahjoy713@gmail.com>, David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Frank Smith <franksmith76@gmail.com>

Mr. Rozeboom,

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America received from Joe and Meleah Tubergen a request for the transfer of their membership to Providence Reformed Church.

Attached is the Certificate of Transfer of Membership they requested.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

May Providence be used in the Tubergen's continued growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and may they be a blessing to the congregation at Providence.

Sincerely,

 richardblankenship3@gmail.com

 **AIC Tubergen Transf.pdf**
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Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

December 10, 2022

Mr. Walter Rozeboom
 Providence Reformed Church
 1700 Coit Avenue North East
 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505

Re: Certificate of Transfer for Joe and Meleah Tubergen

Dear Mr. Rozeboom:

The *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has received from Joe and Meleah Tubergen, former members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and who are now on the membership roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, a request for a transfer of their memberships to Providence Reformed Church. The *Ad Interim* Commission has considered their request and approved the request.

Below is a Certificate of Transfer of Membership for your records. If you have any questions or need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



F. Richard Blankenship, III

Clerk of Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery *Ad Interim* Commission

Certificate of Transfer of Membership

This is to certify that Joe and Meleah Tubergen are members on the roll of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ("RPCNA") having been members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and are at their own request, hereby dismissed to unite with Providence Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Given this 10th day of December in the year 2022, by order of the *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA



F. Richard Blankenship, III
 Clerk of the *Ad Interim* Commission



David W. Hanson
 Moderator of the *Ad Interim* Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
February 7, 2023

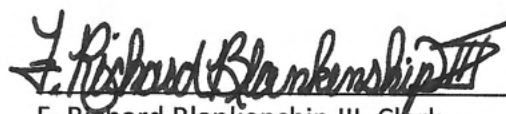
The *Ad Interim* Commission (“AIC”) of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were David Hanson, Moderator, (Southside RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Richard Blankenship, Clerk, (Second RPC, Indianapolis, IN), Robert McKissick (Sycamore, RPC), James Odom (Sparta RPC), and Tom Reid (Orlando RPC).
2. Richard Blankenship 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 8:20 p.m.
3. By common consent, the minutes of the December 10, 2022, meeting of the AIC were approved, as amended.
4. The AIC had been informed of Aaron Murray’s appointment as Moderator of the Marion RPC Session. After discussion, it was determined by the Commission that it is not clear what the position of Jason Camery is to the elders of the Marion church. By common consent, the Commission agreed to encourage the Marion Session to report to the March 2023 meeting of Presbytery, concerning Jason Camery’s membership on the Marion Session.
5. By common consent, the request for the transfer of Dick and Rieta Bonner’s membership to Reformation OPC of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was approved. The Clerk of the AIC will issue the Certificate of Transfer to Reformation OPC. The Bonners are former members of the now disorganized First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, and their memberships are currently on the roll of Presbytery.
6. By common consent, the request for the transfer of Rebekah, Alastair, and Margaret Scott’s membership to the U. S. Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing was approved. The Certificate of Transfer will be issued by the Clerk of the AIC to the U. S. Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing. The Certificate will note that Alastair and Margaret are baptized children, and not communicant members. The Scotts named are the wife, son, and daughter of Craig Scott, former Pastor of the now dissolved First Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, and their memberships are currently on the roll of Presbytery. The transfer is made to the U. S. Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing because the church where Craig is presently serving as Pastor is a mission church. Memberships in mission churches in the U. S. Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing are held by the Presbytery.

7. By common consent, the request for the transfer of Jake, Lydia, Abigail, Verity, Aiden, and Idelette Schwartz's membership to Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church of the Presbytery of the Alleghenies, was approved. The Clerk of the AIC will issue the Certificate of Transfer to Providence RPC. The Certificate will note that Abigail, Verity, Aiden, and Idelette Schwartz are baptized children, and not communicant members. Jake and Lydia Schwartz's membership is currently on the roll of Presbytery. Jake Schwartz was a ruling elder of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and is currently enrolled as a student at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary and resides in the Pittsburgh area.
8. By common consent, the request for the transfer of Roy Clark's membership to Reformation OPC of Grand Rapids was approved. The Clerk of the AIC will issue the Certificate of Transfer to Reformation OPC. Mr. Clark is a former member of the now disorganized First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, and his membership is currently on the roll of Presbytery.
9. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to approve the AIC Report to Presbytery containing the minutes of the AIC. The Report will be submitted to Presbytery at the March 2023 meeting of Presbytery for the minutes of the AIC to be spread on the minutes of Presbytery.
10. The minutes of the February 7, 2023, meeting of the AIC were read. By common consent, the minutes of the meeting were approved.
11. James Odom 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 9:04 p.m.



David Hanson, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission



F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

**GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA
AD INTERIM COMMISSION**

February 9, 2023

Pastor David C. Noe
Reformation OPC
2565 Forest Hill Avenue SE, Suite 101
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Via Email and First-Class Mail

Re: Certificate of Transfer for Dick and Rieta Bonner

Dear Pastor Noe:

The *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has received from Dick and Rieta Bonner, former members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and who are now on the membership roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, a request for a transfer of their memberships to Reformation OPC. The *Ad Interim* Commission has considered their request and approved the request.

Below is a Certificate of Transfer of Membership for your records. If you have any questions or need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact information is as follows:

Richard Blankenship, Clerk of GL-G Presbytery AIC
c/o Second Reformed Presbyterian Church
4800 North Michigan Road
Indianapolis, IN 46228

Email: richardblankenship3@gmail.com / Telephone: (317) 650-3673

Sincerely,



F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery *Ad Interim* Commission

Cc: Dick and Rieta Bonner
5417 60th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49512
Email: rietabonner@gmail.com

Pastor David Noe, via email: davidcnoe@gmail.com

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

This is to certify that Dick and Rieta Bonner are members on the roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ("RPCNA") having been members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and are at their own request, hereby dismissed to unite with Reformation OPC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Given this 7th day of February, in the year 2023, by order of the *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA



F. Richard Blankenship, MI
Clerk of the *Ad Interim* Commission



David W. Hanson
Moderator of the *Ad Interim* Commission

GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA
AD INTERIM COMMISSION

February 9, 2023

Pastor David C. Noe
Reformation OPC
2565 Forest Hill Avenue SE, Suite 101
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Via Email and First-Class Mail

Re: Certificate of Transfer for Mr. Roy Clark

Dear Pastor Noe:

The *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has received from Mr. Roy Clark, a former member of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and who is now on the membership roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, a request for a transfer of his membership to Reformation OPC. The *Ad Interim* Commission has considered his request and approved the request.

Below is a Certificate of Transfer of Membership for your records. If you have any questions or need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact information is as follows:

Richard Blankenship, Clerk of GL-G Presbytery AIC
c/o Second Reformed Presbyterian Church
4800 North Michigan Road
Indianapolis, IN 46228

Email: richardblankenship3@gmail.com / Telephone: (317) 650-3673

Sincerely,



F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery *Ad Interim* Commission

Cc: Mr. Roy Clark
c/o Rest Haven Homes
1424 Union Avenue NE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Pastor David Noe via email: davidcnoe@gmail.com

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

This is to certify that Mr. Roy Clark is a member on the roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ("RPCNA") having been a member of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and at his own request, is hereby dismissed to unite with Reformation OPC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Given this 7th day of February, in the year 2023, by order of the *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA



F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of the *Ad Interim* Commission



David W. Hanson
Moderator of the *Ad Interim* Commission

GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA
AD INTERIM COMMISSION

February 9, 2023

Via First Class Mail and Email

Mr. John Uselding
Clerk of Hunt County Preaching Station Commission
US Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing
325 Shadowbrook Dr.
Burlington, NC 27215
Via email: uselding@yandex.com

Re: Certificate of Transfer for Rebekah, Alastair, and Margaret Scott

Dear Mr. Uselding:

The *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has received from Mr. Craig Scott a request for Rebekah Scott, his wife, and Alastair and Margaret Scott, his children, to have their church membership transferred to the U.S Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing. Rebekah, Alastair and Margaret are former members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan and are now on the membership roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. I understand that the transfer request is for a transfer to the Presbytery because the church where Craig is ministering is still a mission church and members of the mission church have their memberships held by the Presbytery.

The *Ad Interim* Commission has considered and approved.

Below is a Certificate of Transfer of Membership for your records. If you have any questions or need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact information is as follows:

Richard Blankenship, Clerk of GL-G Presbytery AIC
c/o Second Reformed Presbyterian Church
4800 North Michigan Road
Indianapolis, IN 46228

Email: richardblankenship3@gmail.com / Telephone: (317) 650-3673

Sincerely,



F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery *Ad Interim* Commission

Cc: Craig Scott, email: craig.scott1560@hotmail.co.uk


CERTIFICATE OF TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

This is to certify that Rebekah, Alastair, and Margaret Scott are members on the roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ("RPCNA") having been members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and are, at their own request, hereby dismissed to unite with the U.S. Presbytery of the Free Church Continuing.

It is noted in this transfer certificate that Alastair and Margaret Scott are baptized children and not communicant members.

Given this 7th day of February, in the year 2023, by order of the *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA


F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of the *Ad Interim* Commission



David W. Hanson
Moderator of the *Ad Interim* Commission

GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA
AD INTERIM COMMISSION

February 9, 2023

Pastor Steven Bradley
Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church Via Email and First-Class Mail
2001 Pioneer Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15226

Re: Certificate of Transfer for Jake and Lydia Schwartz and Family

Dear Pastor Bradley:

The *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has received from Jake and Lydia Schwartz, former members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and who are now on the membership roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, a request for a transfer of their memberships to Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church. The *Ad Interim* Commission has considered and approved their request.

Below is a Certificate of Transfer of Membership for your records. If you have any questions or need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact information is as follows:

Richard Blankenship, Clerk of GL-G Presbytery AIC
c/o Second Reformed Presbyterian Church
4800 North Michigan Road
Indianapolis, IN 46228

Email: richardblankenship3@gmail.com / Telephone: (317) 650-3673

Sincerely,



F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery *Ad Interim* Commission

Cc: Pastor Steven Bradley, via email: bygracealone@verizon.net
Elder Dan Berkenpas, via email: berkenpasdb1@gmail.com
Jake Schwartz, via email: rpephesian@gmail.com


CERTIFICATE OF TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

This is to certify that Jake, Lydia, Abigail, Verity, Aiden, and Idelette Schwartz are members on the roll of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America ("RPCNA") having been members of the now dissolved First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids and are at their own request, hereby dismissed to unite with Providence Reformed Presbyterian Church in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

It is noted in this transfer certificate that Abigail, Verity, Aiden and Idelette Schwartz are baptized children and not communicant members.

Given this 7th day of February, in the year 2023, by order of the *Ad Interim* Commission of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA


F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of the *Ad Interim* Commission



David W. Hanson
Moderator of the *Ad Interim* Commission

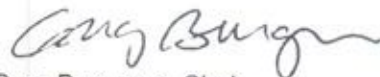
Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)

Meeting date and location: April 23, 2022 by conference call.

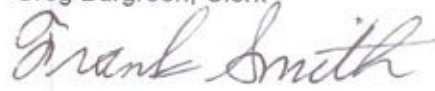
In attendance: Frank Smith (moderator), Greg Burgreen, Drew Poplin

1. Meeting called to order and constituted in prayer by Dr. Smith at 8:37 pm EST.
2. Dr. Smith asked Dr. Burgreen if he would serve as clerk. He agreed to do so.
3. Dr. Smith asked if he could address any questions. The following questions were raised:
 - a. Did the Atlanta TGB formally consider exercising Book of Discipline (BOD) Section 1, Chapter 4, Paragraph 2.a (Certificate of Dismissal) for the Accused?
 - b. Were there any expectations regarding pleas by the Accused?
 - c. Did the Accused fully understand the seriousness of the charges? Did the rest of the Atlanta congregation understand the seriousness of the charges?
 - d. What is the frequency of celebrating the Lord's Supper at Atlanta RP?
 - e. Did the Accused understand their rights and opportunity for defense?
 - f. What are the contingencies in case a second summons is required?
 - g. Should Atlanta RP offer child care for the Accused during the upcoming judicial process?
 - h. Do the Accused's children show evidence of interest in the church and spiritual matters?
 - i. When did the Accused join the church as a communing member?
 - k. Did any Selma RP elder agree to serve on the Commission?
4. Dr. Smith emailed the Commission a draft of the summons document. The Commission unanimously agreed that it was a reasonable draft.
5. A discussion about timing of the upcoming judicial process was discussed along with travel plans. A time of May 14, 2022, 11:00 am EST was agreed upon.
6. The next AJC meeting was set for April 28, 2022, 8:30 pm EST.
7. Meeting was adjourned in prayer by Dr. Burgreen at 9:54 pm EST.

Submitted by:



Greg Burgreen, Clerk



Frank Smith, Moderator

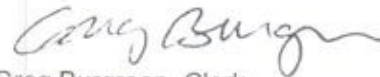
Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)

Meeting date and location: April 28, 2022 by conference call.

In attendance: Frank Smith (moderator), Greg Burgreen (clerk), Drew Poplin

1. Meeting called to order and constituted in prayer by Dr. Smith at 8:33 pm EST.
2. Discussed meeting minutes of April 23, 2022 and made minor corrections to the document.
3. Commission unanimously approved the minutes of April 23, 2022.
4. Discussed updated travel plans for the May 14, 2022 judicial process.
5. Discussed and made modifications to the Summons document dated April 28, 2022. We changed "church" to "Reformed Presbyterian Church" in the sentence that begins "In these proceedings." Under 2., we changed "meeting minutes" to "draft minutes." Under 7., we changed "and thereby taking this action, the Commission is" to "and, by taking this action, the Commission is hereby". Finally, a paragraph of instruction and reminders was added to elucidate to the Accused how church membership vows and baptismal vows were broken and thus related to Charges 1, 2, and 3.
6. After reviewing the revised Summons document, Commission unanimously agreed to the revised text.
7. A roll call vote for adoption of the Summons document was held, and the document was approved with a 3-0 vote. Thus, the Accused will be summoned, and thereby taking this action, the Commission is setting the date and time for the judicial proceedings. The proceedings will be held in public.
8. The Commission authorized the AJC Moderator and Clerk to sign this and any future Summons.
9. It was preliminarily judged and agreed that no further meetings of the AJC would be needed before the May 14, 2022 judicial proceeding, barring any unexpected circumstances.
10. Meeting was adjourned in prayer by Pastor Poplin at 10:04 pm EST.

Submitted by:



Greg Burgreen, Clerk



Frank Smith, Moderator

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

Atlanta Judicial Commission

April 28, 2022

Miss Tawana Franklin

Dear Miss Franklin:

The Atlanta Temporary Governing Body, which governs Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church, has referred a set of charges against you to Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. A three-man judicial commission has been appointed to process and adjudicate these charges. The commission consists of Dr. Frank J. Smith, Pastor, Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church; Dr. Greg W. Burgreen, Ruling Elder, Birmingham (Ala.) Reformed Presbyterian Church; and Pastor Drew Poplin, First Reformed Presbyterian Church, Durham, North Carolina.

The charges are as follows:

(1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now

EVIDENCE AND WITNESSES: Frank J. Smith; T.J. Pattillo; record of worship attendance

(2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on a regular basis

EVIDENCE AND WITNESSES: Frank J. Smith; T.J. Pattillo; record of worship attendance

(3) Willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment): as seen by the fact that your children have many times not attended worship

EVIDENCE AND WITNESSES: Frank J. Smith; T.J. Pattillo; record of worship attendance

(4) Sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment): expressed particularly in phone conversations on February 6, 2022

EVIDENCE AND WITNESSES: Frank J. Smith; T.J. Pattillo; Nancy Pattillo

(5) Lying (against the 9th Commandment): as seen by your having lied recently about why your children were not attending church

EVIDENCE AND WITNESSES: Frank J. Smith; Penelope Smith

Other evidence includes various relevant documents, including the pastoral letter and charges dated November 4, 2020; the letter of admonition dated November 5, 2020; the letter of rebuke dated September 11, 2021; the letters from the Atlanta TGB dated March 17, 2022 and April 14, 2022; and the pastoral letter dated April 14, 2022.

GL-G Atlanta Judicial Commission, April 28, 2022, p. 2

You are hereby summoned to appear before this court, meeting at Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church, 574 Western Avenue NW, Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, May 14, 2022, at 11:00 AM, so that this matter can be handled. You are urged to attend this hearing, at which we will carefully listen to you.

If you do not desire to contest these charges, the court will proceed to render a verdict on each of these charges based upon the facts of the case; and, upon a finding of guilt, also institute any appropriate censure.


If you desire to contest these charges, we will immediately proceed to conduct a formal trial in accordance with the Book of Discipline of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. You will be asked how you plead—"guilty" or "not guilty"—to each of the five charges. If you plead "guilty" to any particular charge, the court would later decide on the censure. If you plead "not guilty" to any particular charge, there would be the taking of testimony from the witnesses on that matter, as well as opportunity for cross-examination. Furthermore, there is the possibility of rebuttal testimony. You may also offer a closing statement, after which the prosecutor may offer a closing statement. Those closing statements must be confined to the evidence and testimony. These proceedings customarily are public. After receiving all of the evidence and testimony, the commission will deliberate in private.

In these proceedings, you may represent yourself or be represented by any member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in good standing. If you desire witnesses to be summoned to testify on your behalf, please let us know, so that we can summon them. If you would like assistance in preparing your defense, we will be happy to direct you to someone who could provide that assistance.

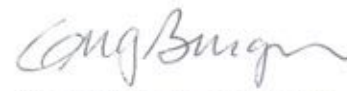
Perhaps you are wondering what the church expects of you. What we expect of you, as we expect of every church member, is to live in accordance with the will of God. Let us remind you of the public vows of membership that every member of the church, including yourself, made "in humble reliance upon His grace, as you desire to give your account with joy at the Last Great Day." Specifically, you promised, among other things, that you would "keep the Lord's Day" and "regularly attend the worship services" and "to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in all the relationships of life." As your children were baptized, you publicly promised to train them "to keep the Lord's Day and to understand the nature of the Church" and "the value of its worship and fellowship." The fourth commandment emphasizes the duty of a parent to encourage children that the Sabbath be observed by them, and that all things necessary for soul and body be provided (Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/A 118, Q/A 129).

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. In the meantime, please be aware that each of us on this commission will be remembering you and this matter in prayer.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.
Moderator of the Commission
(770)241-3946



Greg W. Burgreen, Ph.D.
Clerk of the Commission
(662)418-0591

Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)

The Atlanta Judicial Commission was called to order by the Moderator, Dr. Frank J. Smith, at Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church, 574 Western Avenue NW, Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, May 14, 2022, at 11:09 AM. Also in attendance were the other two members of the commission, Dr. Greg W. Burgreen and Pastor Drew Poplin, thus constituting a quorum. Others present were the following: Elder T.J. Pattillo, Mrs. Penelope Smith, and Mrs. Nancy Pattillo, witnesses; and the following observers in person: Johnathan Steele, Amy Work, and Larry Kerr. Listeners by telephone were: Miyoshi Robinson, Stacy Moton, and Kim Brown. Defendant Miss Tawana Franklin was not present in person or by counsel.

The Moderator constituted the court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King. Then, Pastor Poplin read Proverbs 8:1-17.

The Moderator began by reading the following statement, which had met with the approval of all members of the court:

I want to welcome everyone here today. We are glad that you are present—and that for several reasons.

First, it is important for you to know how the church operates. Second, it is essential for you to have confidence in your elders as they exercise rule in the church—and that confidence can occur only if the church leadership is transparent in its dealings. Third, in order for there to be justice, there must be, in the words of an old American Presbyterian book of church order, “the approbation [approval] of an impartial public.” That term “impartial public” certainly includes the members and adherents of a particular congregation, but it includes far more—it means that people from the community should know (or at least have the opportunity to know) what the church is doing and why the church is doing it. We are not a cult—we believe in being open. The church is not a secret society, hiding behind closed doors and refusing to reveal its procedures and actions. Instead, reflecting the fact that the church is the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and that she prophetically proclaims the very public message of the gospel and calls upon all men everywhere to submit to King Jesus, the church is a public institution. Christianity is not a mystery religion. It is not a cult. It is the divinely established instrument to disciple men and nations as the world is converted to the One who died on the cross and rose again and ascended into heaven. And therefore, the church should have nothing of which to be ashamed as she evangelizes and worships and also as she exercises discipline. Let me add that this practice of conducting judicial process in public is nothing new, nor is it confined to the Presbyterian Church. A book entitled *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900*, is a case study of Baptist church documents, with a focus on Georgia, and including congregations that largely or exclusively consisted of black membership. The book

demonstrates that the prevailing custom was to conduct church trials in public, at least in part as a way of instructing the congregation as a whole to live in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Another reason is for the protection of the defendant, in case the elders were to proceed in an arrogant or otherwise inappropriate manner.

Five charges were filed against Tawana Franklin by the Atlanta Commission, which serves as the Temporary Governing Body for Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church. Because of the difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of men to travel from Ohio in order to conduct the hearing or trial, the Atlanta Commission referred this matter to our Presbytery. As a result of this request, a special judicial commission was appointed to process and adjudicate the matter. In addition to myself, there are two other members of the Atlanta Judicial Commission. Dr. Greg Burgreen is a ruling elder who is a member of the Birmingham (Ala.) Reformed Presbyterian Church; he is an associate research professor in the field of engineering at Mississippi State University. Pastor Drew Poplin ministers at First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Durham, North Carolina, where he is slated to be installed next month as the associate pastor. Let me express to these men my thanks, and the thanks of all of us here at Atlanta RPC, for their willingness to travel a long distance to be with us this weekend and to handle this matter.

Let me describe today's procedure. The first thing we did was to constitute the court in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King. We were asking that Jesus would be with us in a special way, in accord with His promise in Matthew 18 that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He will be in their midst.

In a few moments, I will ensure that the accusation has been served, and the witnesses summoned. I will remind all of us who are judges in this case that we must put aside all prejudices. We will ask the defendant if she desires to contest the charges against her. If she says that she wants to contest the charges, she will have opportunity to offer objections to the proceeding, and may also "challenge the right of any member of the court to sit in judgment of the case."

The defendant will be asked whether she pleads "guilty" or "not guilty" to each of the five charges. If she pleads "guilty" to any charge, the court will later discuss and decide what censure to impose. On any charge to which she pleads "not guilty," the trial will proceed. The prosecutor will present the case by calling various witnesses and introducing evidence. The defendant will have opportunity to cross-examine any witness. After the prosecution's case has been presented, then the defendant may introduce any witnesses, and the prosecutor may cross-examine those witnesses. Rebuttal evidence may also be offered. After all testimony has been heard and all evidence entered on the record, the accused will present a closing statement, followed by a closing statement by the prosecutor.

At that point, the commission will recess. The plan is for the commission to reconvene this afternoon and deliberate in private. After reaching a verdict on each of the charges, and preparing a report, we will recess for the night, and then reconvene immediately after the worship service tomorrow in order to announce the decision publicly. In the meantime, we will communicate to the defendant the outcome of the proceedings.

This is a meeting of a church court. Courts, among other things, adjudicate matters, and it is in that judicial role that we are meeting today. But we use the term “court” to describe these meetings of presbyters (elders) since, no matter what the issue is, they do not act like a legislature that makes laws, but rather they declare various decisions based on God’s law. In other words, we don’t make up the rules as we go along—we follow the rule, viz., the Word of God which He has written. Let me also note that the term “court” is appropriate, because of the dignity that is involved in our proceedings. As a matter of fact, if you are wondering why we are going through all this process, including, in this case, establishing a special judicial commission and having men travel hours and across state lines to be here today, one important reason for doing so is because of the respect we desire to show to the accused. We trust that our proceedings will be characterized by respect and dignity. In accord with the principle of respect and dignity, we ask that you refrain from getting refreshments while the court is in session; however, bottles of water are available on a table at the back.

I earlier expressed my appreciation for each of you in being here today. In Acts 15, when a doctrinal dispute was referred to the church court in Jerusalem, it was the apostles and elders who actually decided the issue. Nevertheless, the text is clear that “the multitude” was present and that the decision met with the approval of “the whole church.” During today’s meeting, you should remain quiet—remember, it’s a court. But even though only the members of the court and the parties and witnesses will be allowed to speak during today’s proceedings, your presence is very important, in that, hopefully, you will be able in your heart to say “Amen” to what is decided. If you have any questions, of course, do not hesitate to ask any member of the court afterward.

The Moderator affirmed that he had delivered the charges and the summons to the residence of the defendant on May 1, 2022, and also had summoned the witnesses, all of whom were present.

The Moderator reminded the members of the court of the solemn duty in which they are about to engage, and of their responsibilities in the Lord’s house, and enjoined them to dismiss from their minds all prejudice or personal considerations, and to concern themselves for the spiritual welfare of the accused and of the church. He specifically reminded them that the Lord hates an unjust balance, and that those who rule in the Lord’s house must do so in the fear of God and

without respect of persons. He explained that each of the charges is a sin, being a violation of the law of God, and every sin is serious in that it is an offense against the Judge in heaven and that every sin deserves His eternal wrath in hell, and furthermore that only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from any and every sin. He reminded the court that unrepentant sin is a sign that the sinner is in a dangerous position, and that continuation in that sin may give evidence of a hard heart and a lack of being truly converted to Christ. The Moderator further set forth the purposes of church discipline, viz., the restoration of the offender and his reconciliation to anyone he has offended; the purity and existence of the church; and the honor of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the church.

To all present and on teleconference, the Moderator stated that the accused has the right to a fair and impartial trial, and that the burden of proof in convicting her rests with the prosecution. She has the right to written charges that are delivered in a timely fashion (at least ten days before a trial/proceedings); to be able to defend herself; to be represented by counsel who is a member in good standing of the Reformed Presbyterian Church; to be able to consult with others who are not formal counsel but who could offer her advice; to name witnesses that could be summoned by the court to appear; to offer objections to the proceedings; to cross-examine the prosecution's witnesses; to examine her own witnesses; to offer rebuttal evidence and testimony; to be provided with the full record of the case; and, in case of being found guilty, to appeal the decision. It was stated that she also has various duties, including, participation in this judicial process, conducting herself with proper decorum, and submitting to the decision of the courts of the church.

The Moderator planned to ask if the accused has any objections to the proceedings today. No objections were expressed because the accused was not present in person or by counsel.

The Moderator planned to call upon the accused to answer to each of the charges. No answers were given because the accused was not present in person or by counsel.

(1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now

The defendant was not present to answer.

(2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on a regular basis

The defendant was not present to answer.

(3) Willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment): as seen by the fact that your children have many times not attended worship

The defendant was not present to answer.

(4) Sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment): expressed particularly in phone conversations on February 6, 2022

The defendant was not present to answer.

(5) Lying (against the 9th Commandment): as seen by your having lied recently about why your children were not attending church

The defendant was not present to answer.

Because the accused was not present, the court proceeded under Section 1 of the Book of Discipline, thus, there was no need of trial or a prosecutor. The court considered evidence and witness testimony only, and later determined a censure based on the charges and evidence.

Because of the absence of the accused, observer Larry Kerr asked the court if she was informed and knowledgeable of the judicial proceedings against her. The Moderator provided an affirmative answer with no additional details and asked that any further questions from observers and listeners would be handled after recess of the court.

The Moderator read and entered into evidence the various documents mentioned in the indictment, which are as follows (and which are appended to these minutes): the pastoral letter and charges dated November 4, 2020; the letter of admonition dated November 5, 2020; the letter of rebuke dated September 11, 2021; the letters from the Atlanta TGB dated March 17, 2022 and April 14, 2022; and the pastoral letter dated April 14, 2022. Elder T.J. Pattillo presented a printout of the congregational attendance record, which was then entered into the record as evidence.

The Moderator then called the witnesses. Each of these witnesses, before giving testimony, was sworn in with right hand upraised and left upon a Bible, using the substance of the oath found in Form 22, Oath of a Witness (Do you swear by the Living God that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as far as you know it, in the case now under trial, as you shall answer to God in the judgment?). Each one responded, "I do." All who were present stood for the swearing in of the witnesses. The following testimony was heard.

Dr. Frank J. Smith

He read and presented a written statement that was entered into the record (see appendix).

Questions from the court, summarized

Pastor Poplin asked if the 4th Commandment had been taught to the Atlanta RPC. Dr. Smith answered in the affirmative.

Dr. Burgreen asked if the accused had any meaningful response to the letters written to her. Dr. Smith answered that she had a limited response accompanied by limited actions.

Dr. Burgreen asked if he thought the content of the letters were fully comprehended by the accused. Dr. Smith answered that they were.

Note the transcribed testimony of Dr. Smith given in response to questions of members of the court is found in the appendix.

During the time that Dr. Smith was in the witness chair, Pastor Poplin assumed the role of Moderator *pro tem*, after which Dr. Smith reassumed the moderatorship.

Due to some telephone connection issues, a recess was called at 12:05 PM. The court was reconvened at 12:08 PM.

Elder T.J. Pattillo

He read and presented a written statement that was entered into the record (see appendix).

Questions from the court, summarized

Dr. Burgreen asked if the defendant was aware of whether her behaviors impacted her family and the congregation, and if she had an understanding of her disobedience. Elder Pattillo answered that he believed that she was aware and had understanding.

Note the transcribed testimony of Elder Pattillo given in response to questions of members of the court is found in the appendix.

Mrs. Nancy Pattillo

She read and presented a written statement that was entered into the record (see appendix).

Questions from the court

None.

Mrs. Penelope Smith

She read and presented a written statement that was entered into the record (see appendix).

Questions from the court

None.

Elder T.J. Pattillo offered a photograph of a text message sent by the accused. The exact content was not revealed nor discussed. The court declined accepting this into the record because it was considered as new evidence.

It was moved, seconded, and carried “that the parties be removed.” The court immediately recessed, to be reconvened at the call of the Moderator at 5830 Millstone Drive, Cumming, Georgia, this afternoon. Pastor Poplin offered prayer and the court stood in recess at 12:25 PM.

At the call of the Moderator, the court reconvened at 5:14 PM with prayer by Dr. Smith.

The members of the court briefly discussed each charge of the case. The court voted, by roll call, on each of the charges, as follows:

(1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now

Dr. Burgreen, Guilty; Pastor Poplin, Guilty; Dr. Smith, Guilty

(2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on a regular basis

Dr. Burgreen, Guilty; Pastor Poplin, Guilty; Dr. Smith, Guilty

(3) Willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment): as seen by the fact that your children have many times not attended worship

Dr. Burgreen, Guilty; Pastor Poplin, Guilty; Dr. Smith, Guilty

(4) Sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment): expressed particularly in phone conversations on February 6, 2022

Dr. Burgreen, Guilty; Pastor Poplin, Guilty; Dr. Smith, Guilty

(5) Lying (against the 9th Commandment): as seen by your having lied recently about why your children were not attending church

Dr. Burgreen, Guilty; Pastor Poplin, Guilty; Dr. Smith, Guilty

The court then voted by roll call to impose the censure of suspension on Miss Franklin.

Dr. Burgreen, Aye; Pastor Poplin, Aye; Dr. Smith, Aye

The court approved by roll call 3-0 a statement which explains the judgment and also how we will proceed going forward, to be read publicly to the congregation tomorrow after the worship service at Atlanta RPC. The statement is found in the appendix.

The court approved 3-0 placing on the record two pastoral letters, one to the defendant and one to the congregation. Both letters are found in the appendix.

The court approved 3-0 a letter conveying to the defendant the verdict in this case. This letter was emailed to the defendant on the evening of May 14, 2022 and is found in the appendix.

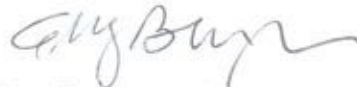
By common consent, the court decided to recess the meeting at 7:18 PM, to eat dinner, make minor amendments to the pastoral and verdict letters, complete the minutes, and to later reconvene for final approval of today's minutes.

At the call of the Moderator, the court reconvened at 11:56 PM with prayer by Dr. Smith. It was agreed by common consent that after the presentation and approval of today's minutes, the court will reconvene immediately after the worship service at Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church tomorrow afternoon, May 15, 2022. It was moved, seconded, and carried that in tomorrow's session, the Moderator will read publicly the statement that explains the judgment in the case and how we will proceed going forward, as well as the two pastoral letters; and then will read the censure of suspension and that, after the reading and approval of the minutes, the court will be adjourned.

The Clerk presented the minutes of today's proceedings. The minutes were approved as presented.

Pastor Poplin then recessed the meeting for the night in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King. The meeting was recessed at 12:00 AM, May 15, 2022.

Submitted by:



Greg Burgreen, Clerk



Frank Smith, Moderator

Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)

On the Lord's Day, May 15, 2022, at 12:51 PM, the Atlanta Judicial Commission was called to order by the Moderator, Dr. Frank J. Smith, at 5830 Millstone Drive, Cumming, Georgia with prayer by Dr. Smith. In attendance were the other two members of the commission, Dr. Greg W. Burgreen and Pastor Drew Poplin, thus constituting a quorum.

The purpose of this brief meeting was to receive amended testimony from Dr. Smith. The Moderator appointed Pastor Poplin to be Chair *pro tem* while Dr. Smith modified his original testimony. Dr. Smith read a prepared statement that addressed a potential line of defense by the defendant about her absence of attendance. The amended testimony of Dr. Smith is found in the appendix. By common consent, the amended testimony was entered into the record, and it was unanimously agreed that the amended testimony did not materially alter or impact any previous deliberations or the verdict of suspension.

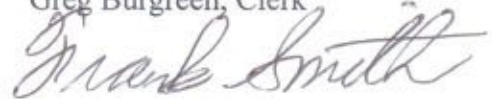
Dr. Smith resumed the Chair. The minutes were read by the Clerk. A motion to adopt the minutes was made, seconded, and adopted by a 3-0 vote.

Dr. Burgreen adjourned the meeting in prayer at 12:58 PM.

Submitted by:



Greg Burgreen, Clerk



Frank Smith, Moderator

Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)

On the Lord's Day, May 15, 2022, at 5:33 PM, the Moderator, in front of the congregation and with the defendant not being present, reconvened the meeting in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King.

The Moderator read the statement explaining the judgment in the case and the two pastoral letters. He then imposed the censure of suspension by reading the following:

Whereas you, Tawana Lashaun Franklin, have been found guilty by this court of Christ's House, the decision of the court is that you are deserving of the censure of suspension. Now, therefore, for your own spiritual good and for the peace and purity of the Church, receive the pronouncement of this censure.

You, Tawana Lashaun Franklin, have been found guilty of the following sins:

- (1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now
- (2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on a regular basis
- (3) Willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment): as seen by the fact that your children have many times not attended worship
- (4) Sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment): expressed particularly in phone conversations on February 6, 2022
- (5) Lying (against the 9th Commandment): as seen by your having lied recently about why your children were not attending church

This court, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, sadly and solemnly suspends you from the privileges of church membership, including participation in the sacraments, until you have given satisfactory evidence of true repentance, and have been restored to good standing by this court.

The Clerk read the minutes, which were approved by common consent.

The court stood for prayer and was led in prayer by Pastor Poplin, who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King, for His blessing upon all these proceedings. The meeting was adjourned by His authority at 5:57 PM.

Submitted by:



Greg Burgreen, Clerk



Frank Smith, Moderator

**Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)
December 1, 2022**

The Atlanta Judicial Commission was called to order by the Moderator, Dr. Frank J. Smith, via Zoom teleconference meeting on Thursday, December 1, 2022, at 1:04 PM. Also in attendance were the other two members of the commission, Dr. Greg W. Burgreen and Pastor Drew Poplin, thus constituting a quorum. Miss Tawana Franklin was invited to join the meeting to express herself in this first follow-up meeting after the May 15, 2022 imposition of censure of suspension upon her. However, she did not attend the meeting.

The Moderator constituted the court in prayer, in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King.

1. The meeting began with housekeeping activities to approve the AJC final minutes of the meetings on April 23, 2022 and April 28, 2022. Both sets of minutes were unanimously approved.
2. The purpose of this meeting was to consider whether or not to impose the next level of discipline, excommunication, to Tawana Franklin. Dr. Smith began by reading from The Constitution of the RPCNA, Book of Discipline, Chapter 4, Section 1.e, *Excommunication*.
3. This was followed by recounts of valid past attempts since May 14, 2022 made by each member of the AJC to contact and encourage Miss Franklin toward repentance and faithful living. There has been very little response from Miss Franklin to these efforts.
4. We then considered the duty before us to decide the next step of discipline, which began by a solicitation of questions by the Moderator about this weighty matter.

Pastor Poplin asked if the Atlanta congregation has reached out in any way to Tawana. Dr. Smith responded that Stacy has asked about Tawana, but was unsure if any direct contact had been made by him. Dennis did visit Tawana at some point.

Pastor Poplin noted that after the trial and announcement of censure, there was a sense of fear and trembling in the congregation. He asked if that sense had been maintained. Dr. Smith responded that Larry (who recently passed away from this life) was initially affected by it, but later slipped into his old ways. [Clerk's note: However, the last month of his life, Larry showed real signs of genuine repentance.]

Dr. Burgreen searched for any promising aspects of Tawana's life since the hearing and asked if she had attended church anywhere since the hearing. Dr. Smith responded that she attended (as far as he knew, once) a liberal Baptist church through which Tawana's financial benefactor funnels funds. Tawana's children briefly attended a local church, according to Tawana, not for religious training, but for practical life skills training. Tawana at one point stated

that she was “done with church,” alluding to her apparent realization of the shallowness of other churches compared to the teaching and experiences at Atlanta RP.

Dr. Burgreen asked if Tawana’s daughter, Diamond, had visited Atlanta RP since the hearing. Dr. Smith responded that there were conflicting communications from both Tawana and Diamond about Diamond’s desire and Tawana’s permission to allow her to visit the church. Diamond did call one Lord’s Day (November 13th) to attend and did visit. Miss Amy took Diamond home after church and later contacted her to attend the God’s Girls program, but nothing further worked out.

Pastor Poplin asked for clarification if Tawana had attended Atlanta RP even once since the hearing. Dr. Smith responded no, she had not. Tawana did express an intention to attend. Dr. Smith sent her a letter of guidance meant to protect both Tawana and the congregation. Miss Franklin, however, did not ever follow through on her stated intention to attend Atlanta RPC.

Dr. Burgreen asked if any of the four admonitions written in the charges letter dated April 28, 2022 had been substantively acted upon by Miss Franklin since the hearing. Dr. Smith responded that there has been no such outward evidence. The court concluded that the Lord knows whether or not Miss Franklin has kept in her heart and/or private actions any of the four admonitions, but that we as the AJC were duty bound to make rational judgments based on outward evidences, of which there has been little.

5. Dr. Smith asked if we would like to make any motion with respect to this matter. Pastor Poplin made the following motion: Based upon the obvious lack of repentance from the sins of which she had been found guilty on May 14, 2022, the AJC hereby votes to impose the censure of excommunication upon Tawana Franklin. Dr. Burgreen seconded the motion.

The court voted, by roll call alphabetically, on the motion to impose the censure of excommunication, as follows:

Dr. Burgreen, Aye; Pastor Poplin, Aye; Dr. Smith, Aye. The vote was unanimous (3-0-0).

6. Dr. Smith instructed the court to open a letter that he had drafted about the matter and sent to the court via email, in which we had been instructed not to open it until he made such request.

7. Dr. Smith read the letter to the court. We voted by roll call to include this letter in the minutes, as follows:

Dr. Burgreen, Aye; Pastor Poplin, Aye; Dr. Smith, Aye. The vote was unanimous (3-0-0).

[Clerk’s note: On December 17, 2022, the Commission took action to approve modifications of said letter. The letter as finally adopted is found in that set of minutes.]

8. The court recessed at 2:08 PM until 2:15 PM.

9. The court reconvened at 2:16 PM.

10. The AJC determined to meet in constituted court on December 18, 2022 at Atlanta RPC after the worship service in order for Dr. Smith to publicly read the pastoral letter and impose the ensure of excommunication on Tawana Franklin. Pastor Poplin cannot make the December 18 meeting. Dr. Burgreen can and will arrange further travel details with Dr. Smith.

11. A personal letter was drafted to Miss Franklin dated December 1, 2022 to clarify what these proceedings practically mean for her, to explain the option to appeal this decision, and to encourage her to attend church and repent. The full content of that letter is below.

December 1, 2022

Dear Tawana:

It is my sad duty to inform you that the Atlanta Judicial Commission today, after extensive and careful discussion, voted to impose the censure of excommunication upon you. This censure will be pronounced after the worship service on December 18, 2022.

You will have 30 days from that date in order to appeal this censure. I would be happy to help you with any appeal that you would make, including, directing you to someone who could counsel you in that regard.

Meanwhile, let me again say that you and your children are still welcome to attend the church. As a matter of fact, we would encourage you to do so. This censure means that you are no longer a member of the visible church and implies that your soul is in jeopardy. But our hope and prayer would be that even this censure will be used by God to bring you to genuine faith and repentance.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Smith

Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.

Pastor, Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

12. The proposed wording for the censure is as follows:

Pronouncement of Judgment
by the Atlanta Judicial Commission
of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

December 18, 2022

You, Tawana Lashun Franklin, have been found guilty of the sins of (1) willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment), (2) refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment), (3) willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment), (4) sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment), and (5) lying (against the 9th Commandment), sins deserving of the extreme penalty of excommunication, yet you continue obstinate and give no evidence of repentance, although efforts have been made to restore you. Now, therefore, this Court, constituted in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and acting under His authority, hereby excommunicates you, removing you from the membership of the Church, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. May God have mercy upon you by awakening you to repentance and bringing you to righteousness, so that you may be among the redeemed in the Day of the Lord Jesus.

Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D., Moderator

Greg W. Burgreen, Ph.D., Clerk

The court voted, by roll call, to accept the censure as written, as follows:

Dr. Burgreen, Aye; Pastor Poplin, Aye; Dr. Smith, Aye. The vote was unanimous (3-0-0).

13. The court voted to accept the personal letter to Tawana as written, as follows:

Dr. Burgreen, Aye; Pastor Poplin, Aye; Dr. Smith, Aye. The vote was unanimous (3-0-0).

14. The court authorized the Clerk and the Moderator to make any needed grammatical updates to these minutes, prior to their final approval on December 18, 2022. (NB: A change was made in the wording of the censure of excommunication to correct the spelling of Miss Franklin's middle name.)

15. The Clerk was authorized to pre-write the general anticipated minutes for the upcoming AJC meeting to be held on December 18, 2022, subject to amendments on that date.

16. Pastor Poplin then adjourned the meeting in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King. The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 PM.



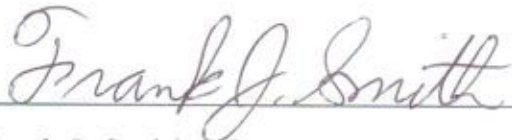
Dr. Frank J. Smith, Moderator



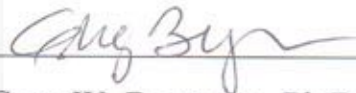
Dr. Greg W. Burgreen, Clerk

**Pronouncement of Judgment
by the Atlanta Judicial Commission
of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
December 18, 2022**

You, Tawana Lashun Franklin, have been found guilty of the sins of (1) willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment), (2) refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment), (3) willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment), (4) sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment), and (5) lying (against the 9th Commandment), sins deserving of the extreme penalty of excommunication, yet you continue obstinate and give no evidence of repentance, although efforts have been made to restore you. Now, therefore, this Court, constituted in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and acting under His authority, hereby excommunicates you, removing you from the membership of the Church, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. May God have mercy upon you by awakening you to repentance and bringing you to righteousness, so that you may be among the redeemed in the Day of the Lord Jesus.



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D., Moderator



Greg W. Burgreen, Ph.D., Clerk

Atlanta Judicial Commission
December 17, 2022

The Atlanta Judicial Commission met at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Frank J. Smith, 5830 Millstone Drive, Cumming, Georgia, on Saturday, December 17, 2022. The Moderator, Dr. Smith, called the meeting to order at 6:24 PM and constituted the court in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only King and Head. Also present was Dr. Greg W. Burgreen, thus constituting a quorum. Pastor Drew Poplin could not be present either today or tomorrow and was excused from both meetings.

The minutes for December 1, 2022, were read and were, by common consent, approved.

The Moderator sought to perfect the pastoral letter that had been approved at the previous meeting. Without objection, three sentences in the original were excised ("She said that her mom was not allowing her to come to church today. She also asked on behalf of her mom for financial help. I reminded her that church policy was to help only those in regular church attendance and that her mom certainly had not been attending.") and the following sentence inserted in their place: "We chatted for a few minutes but she did not attend the church service that day (though she did attend the following week)." The final version, which is dated December 18, 2022, is as follows.

Dear Members and Friends of Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church:

One of the most difficult and distressing things I have had to do as a minister is to pronounce the sentence of excommunication. Thankfully, in my 42 years of ordained ministry, I have, up until today, had to make that pronouncement only twice. But today will mark the third time that I will have performed that duty.

Tawana Franklin first started attending the worship services of this congregation in the summer of 2016. In February 2020, she professed her faith and then, along with her children, was baptized in a service of public worship. However, there was an obvious spiritual struggle in her soul. A couple of months after she joined the church, she said to me, with reference to Covid-19, that I was "scarier than the virus." In other words, she realized that unlike other churches which she had attended, we meant business and were very serious about these religious matters. I took her statement as an encouraging one, in that she recognized the Spiritual nature of what she had done in committing herself to the church. At the same time, it soon was evident that this inner battle was one in which the wrong side was beginning to prevail.

As many of you know, from the time of her public profession, she became very erratic in her attendance. In November 2020, the elders admonished her. For a few weeks after that censure, she was faithful in coming to church. But then, in early 2021, she became unfaithful again—a pattern that continued throughout the spring and summer. In September 2021, the elders imposed a stronger discipline, that of rebuke. She showed the same pattern as before—a brief period of church attendance, followed by long periods of non-attendance. Finally, in March 2022, the elders preferred charges against her and referred

the matter to the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, which appointed a special judicial commission.

This special commission, the Atlanta Judicial Commission, scheduled a hearing to which she was summoned. We consulted with her as to when we would schedule that hearing, so as to accommodate her, and she agreed to appear at the set date and time (May 14, 2022 at 11:00 AM) so that she could present her side of the story. We were under the impression that she would show, but she was a no-show.

The Commission proceeded to take testimony and receive evidence on the five charges. She was found guilty of all five charges. The Commission, after careful consideration, decided to impose a censure of suspension upon her—that is, barring her from the Lord’s Table until she expressed sorrow and repented. Over a period of weeks, all three members of the Commission reached out to her in order to encourage her and to call her to repentance. There was no repentance.

In late October, I made arrangements to swing by her apartment on October 26th. I brought a pizza with me as a token of friendship. I explained that the Commission was planning to meet on Monday, October 31, 2022, in order to consider her case and what action, if any, to take. I thought that she and I had a good conversation. She volunteered that she wanted to come back to church and indeed that she would come back that next Lord’s Day, October 30, 2022. Three days later, I sent her an email. In it, I reminded her of the hurt and pain she had caused at Atlanta RPC, and then stated that, in order for her to come back, she was going to have make things right with those whom she had offended. Not only must she apologize but she must seek the forgiveness of those whom she had hurt. I stated that she needed to acknowledge the guilt of the sins of which she had been found guilty; and that she needed to participate, cheerfully and responsibly, in the services of the church. And I also said that she must not ask for money. In emphasizing that she should not ask for money, I reminded her that she herself had told me that she was glad to have the financial angle divorced from her participating in the church. I concluded with these words:

If you’re serious about your spiritual walk, you will do these things. No one is expecting you to be perfect, Tawana. But we are expecting you to be sincere. Whether you are or not, only time will tell.

You’ve heard the old saying from baseball, “Three strikes and you’re out.” Well, you’ve already had three strikes. You were admonished. Then you were rebuked. And back in May, you were suspended from communion. You’ve got one more chance. I want you to know that the church is not playing games with you. If you don’t show yourself to be genuinely sorry for your sins and sincerely seeking to walk with Christ, then it will be “Four strikes and you’re out.”

You mentioned during our meeting on Wednesday how lenient I had been with you in the past. Sometimes I have been too lenient and have not shown you what

is called “tough love.” I promise you, Tawana, there’s no more fooling around. This is your last chance.

Tawana, we love you and want only the best for you and your family. We are willing to welcome you back with open arms. But you’ve got to play your part by being faithful with regard to [what I wrote] above.

.....

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to ask. Tawana, I am the eternal optimist, always looking at things through rose-colored glasses. Please do not disappoint me. More importantly, please make sure for the sake of your own soul and the good of your children that you do what is right.

Upon reflection, the members of the Atlanta Judicial Commission agreed to postpone its meeting for several weeks, in order to give Tawana more time to express her repentance and to show that she was serious about wanting to come back to church.

Two days after I met with Tawana, she texted me, asking for money. We exchanged text messages on Saturday: she said that she was still coming to church even if I didn’t give her money, and I informed her that, as indicated in my email letter, no, we would not be giving her money. The next morning, Sunday, October 30th, she texted me, saying: “Good morning. I won’t be attending church... I look forward to coming next Sunday tho...” I responded, “Okay.” The following Sunday, November 6th, I texted her at 11:54 AM, saying, “Tawana, I plan to arrive at 2:15. Remember, we gained the hour last night, as we’re now on Eastern Standard Time. Will your children be coming as well?” I received no reply. I arrived around 2:18 PM and knocked on the door of the apartment. There was no answer. I knocked again and waited a few minutes, and just before driving off, Diamond came out. We chatted for a few minutes but she did not attend the church service that day (though she did the following week).

Instead of meeting on October 31st, the Commission had delayed its meeting for about a month in order to give Tawana more time to get right with God. On November 29th and November 30th, I informed her that we would be meeting on December 1st, and that she was welcome to attend via Zoom in order to express repentance or anything else she desired. She did not attend.

At our meeting on December 1, 2022, we, the members of the Atlanta Judicial Commission, voted unanimously to impose the church’s highest censure, excommunication. We did so because of Tawana’s obvious lack of repentance from the sins of which she had been found guilty on May 14, 2022. Of course, there is always a provisional nature to the censures of the church—repentance is always an option, and, in point of fact, one of the reasons for church discipline is to lead people to repentance.

Furthermore, we want to be very clear that the church has no authority to send anyone to hell. It is God alone who sends people to hell. And it is God alone who bestows His grace in order to bring people to salvation. But it is our duty as elders in the church to pronounce

judgments which reflect what God Himself has sovereignly decided and as to how He has judged. When the elders turn the keys of the kingdom, they are reflecting Jesus' words in Matthew 18, by seeking to discern that which has already been determined in heaven and to judge accordingly.

Our action does not determine anyone's eternal destiny. That right belongs only to God. But at the same time, no one should regard the matter of excommunication lightly. Twenty-five years ago, I pronounced excommunication upon a relative of mine who had abandoned the faith. When I read the censure, the congregation was obviously affected—you could have heard a pin drop on the carpet. A few years later, that young man was killed in an automobile accident. God is not mocked. You don't play games with Him or with His gospel. Indeed, dealing with Him is scarier than the virus.

And so, as we come to this moment in the life of our congregation, may each of us examine himself or herself to check for hypocrisy. And let us continue to pray that God would grant Tawana the grace of repentance before it is eternally too late.

With tender regards,

Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.

Pastor, Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

Without objection, the court approved the Moderator making the following statement just prior to adjournment of tomorrow's meeting:

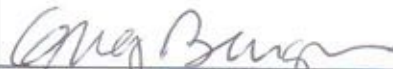
In a few moments, I will declare the meeting to be adjourned *sine die* accompanied by a rap of the gavel. The term *sine die* is Latin, meaning "without day," and it indicates that the court has concluded its business. However, though there is a finality to the actions of this court, there is always the possibility of change. A higher church court can modify or overturn what we have done. Most importantly, the Holy Spirit could move in Tawana Franklin's heart to bring about repentance so that she can be reconciled to the Lord and to His church. So, although our actions are final, thankfully, they may not be the last word. Let us earnestly pray that they are not.

The court approved the Moderator conveying to Miss Franklin the pastoral letter to the congregation and the censure, along with a cover letter (see attachment).

The minutes for this meeting were read and approved. Dr. Burgreen adjourned the meeting with prayer in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only King and Head. The meeting was adjourned at 7:23 PM.



Dr. Frank J. Smith, Moderator



Dr. Greg W. Burgreen, Clerk

**Atlanta Judicial Commission
December 18, 2022**

The Atlanta Judicial Commission met at Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church, 574 Western Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia, on the Lord's Day, December 18, 2022. The Moderator, Dr. Smith, rapped the gavel three times and convened the meeting at 4:54 PM in front of the congregation and with the defendant not being present, and constituted the court in the name of and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only King and Head. Also present was Dr. Greg W. Burgreen, thus constituting a quorum.

The Moderator read the pastoral letter explaining the progression and judgment of the case against Tawana Franklin. He then imposed the censure of excommunication by reading the following:

You, Tawana Lashun Franklin, have been found guilty of the sins of (1) willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment), (2) refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment), (3) willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment), (4) sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment), and (5) lying (against the 9th Commandment), sins deserving of the extreme penalty of excommunication, yet you continue obstinate and give no evidence of repentance, although efforts have been made to restore you. Now, therefore, this Court, constituted in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and acting under His authority, hereby excommunicates you, removing you from the membership of the Church, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. May God have mercy upon you by awakening you to repentance and bringing you to righteousness, so that you may be among the redeemed in the Day of the Lord Jesus.

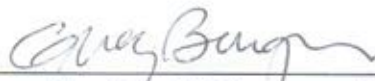
The Clerk read the minutes, which were approved by common consent.

The Moderator read the statement approved yesterday with regard to the finality of our actions.

The court stood for prayer and was led in prayer by Dr. Burgreen, who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for His blessing upon all these proceedings. The meeting was adjourned by His authority *sine die* at 5:13 PM as the Moderator rapped the gavel once.



Dr. Frank J. Smith, Moderator



Dr. Greg W. Burgreen, Clerk

Appendix to the Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission

Testimony, May 14-15, 2022

Letter to Miss Tawana Franklin, May 14, 2022

Pastoral letter to the Congregation, May 14, 2022

Pastoral letter to Miss Tawana, May 15, 2022

Explanation of Verdict, May 15, 2022

Censure of Suspension, May 15, 2022

Email letter to Miss Tawana Franklin, December 1, 2022

Pastoral letter to the Congregation, December 18, 2022

Email letter to Miss Tawana Franklin, December 18, 2022

Censure of Excommunication, December 18, 2022

Testimony

Testimony of Dr. Frank J. Smith, May 14th, 2022

The record clearly shows that Miss Franklin has not been regular in her attendance over a long period of time. I can personally attest to her lack of attendance since before she was initially disciplined via admonition in November 2020.

She has broken the Sabbath by means of a willful lack of attendance. Indeed, on numerous occasions, she has engaged in inappropriate activities, such as going shopping instead of being in the Lord's house. One example is that she had been shopping with her sister Rakita on February 6th, 2022. On at least one occasion, she was absent from her children overnight without being in touch with them, having been at a party.

I can also attest to the fact that on numerous occasions over the past couple of years, her children have not been in church when she has not been present. Sometimes this has been because she has been absent from the house and therefore they are not prepared to attend the service. Sometimes this has been because of her allowing them to participate in other activities, such as parties or trips.

Her lack of attendance, Sabbath breaking, and not ensuring that her children have regularly been in church is well known throughout the congregation. On numerous occasions, people have asked me where the Franklins were that particular Lord's Day. In other words, her sins in these regards have been a public scandal.

On February 6th, 2022, about 6:30 PM, she called me while I was visiting with Larry Kerr, one of our church members. She was furious and said some very nasty things about Nancy Pattillo and her husband T.J. with respect to how her sons were being disciplined at church that day when she was not there. As had been the case on other occasions, she talked about how she and her kids were never going to come back to church. This conversation was in front of Larry, and, when I was finally able to get a word in edgewise, I told her that I would call her back later (so as to spare her the embarrassment of Larry hearing the tirade). I did call back later that evening, but the call went to voicemail, and she did not return it. The fact of her sinful anger, as evidenced on this occasion as well as others, is generally known in the church.

On February 17th, 2022, on a 39-minute phone call with Miss Franklin, she admitted that she had lied as to why the children weren't able to come to church recently: instead of their being ill, which was the excuse, she said that it was actually because they didn't want to come. My wife Penny overheard this conversation.

On March 19th, 2022, I delivered to her the letter dated March 17th, 2022 from the Atlanta TGB. She got very upset and angry, and yelled at me for a number of minutes. She talked about how she's been suffering from so many physical ailments, as exemplified by her having fallen in the

bathroom and having to go to the hospital to get checked out, and also by her having a neuropathy exam scheduled for July 13th. She pleaded for time to get her life together, especially in terms of her health. She stared at me and vehemently asked, “Do you want to kick me out of the church?” I assured her that our goal was for her repentance. She admitted that she has had a racial animus toward folks like Miss Nancy, not being willing to forgive her and others because they’re white. She did acknowledge that she has appreciated Miss Nancy and others being able to try to get Wynter (four year old daughter) under control at church, but resented how they tried to rein in her sons Jonathan and Caeden. She eventually calmed down a bit. At one point, I embraced her and told her that we loved her, and had prayer with her. She said, “I love y’all, too.” She had noted that, with Diamond’s encouragement, she had sent her children to church the previous week, and also said that not only would they attend church the next day, but that she would also. However, she had been embarrassed about the fact that she didn’t have clothes that fit her, as she had lost about 20 pounds recently. But, she was hopeful that her sister Rakita [spelling?] would be coming by soon and would be able to take her to get something to wear that evening. At 12:22 PM on the Sunday, March 20th, she texted, “Kids will be ready at the agreed time but Wynter started back throwing up so I’m feeding the other 4 and I will have them ready...I got the clothes for myself as promised but like I said, Wynter hasn’t completely got over the stomach bug...”.

And that is my statement, gentlemen.

Question from Pastor Poplin: Dr. Smith, has the teaching on the Lord’s Day been a part of kind of instructing Miss Franklin in the faith? That’s been a part of instructing her in the faith is what the Lord’s Day is, and how to keep it?

Answer: Yes. Yes, I would say so. And even before that, I mean in terms of church membership classes.

Question from Dr. Burgreen: I think, Dr. Smith, you have read several letters that [were] given to Miss Franklin.

Answer: Yes. Correct.

Question from Dr. Burgreen: Did she respond to each letter? Did each letter seem to . . . did she [understand] the content of the letters? What was her responses to each letter?

Answer: Yes. Never formally did she respond. She responded—as I suggested in one of the letters, we were initially hopeful after the admonition. You know, she seemed to be ok with that. She agreed that we could admonish her and rebuke her without process—a summary, like a summary judgment. I made sure that she was ok with that. And so, for a time, I would say, that she tried to do better. But very quickly, it went—you know, within probably a month or two, something like that—she went back to her old ways.

Question from Dr. Burgreen: So, you would say that her understanding of the contents of the letters was sufficient? That she had a full understanding and that none of the words or sentences or concepts were beyond her comprehension?

Answer: That is correct. No, she—I think she understood exactly.

Testimony of Elder T. J. Pattillo, May 14th, 2022

I am a witness to counts (1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd commandment), (2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy (against the 4th commandment), (3) Willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th commandment), and (4) Sinful anger (against the 6th commandment) on February 6th of 2022 against the defendant, Miss Tawana Franklin.

In reference to counts 1, 2, and 3 there have only been two instances where Miss Franklin attended ARPC in the 1st quarter of 2022. Those dates are January 9th and 23rd. January 16th was a “snow day” and we had devotions and prayer in two groups as the roads were unsafe to travel and attendance was not taken. I have been shown many texts between Miss Franklin and Pastor Smith about her “reasons” for not attending church. Some seemed viable as having back trouble or illness in the family, others are unknown as she would not return texts from the staff or answer phone calls and give an explanation, some were results of prioritizing or lack of preparation for the Sabbath as not having clean clothes for the kids. Others were priorities of importance to her; like letting the kids miss church so they could go to Six Flags, or Miss Franklin herself choosing to go to the nail salon on May 1st of 2022 instead of attending worship.

It is frequent in text messages from the Pastor and First Lady, as we’re planning on picking people up for church, that we would get a “No Franklins” text message to let us know they were not attending worship that day. Even though it was common for Pastor Smith to make attending easier for the Franklin family, like making two trips before the service to the Franklin apartment before worship. The first to get the kids, the second to go back and get her to accommodate her demands. Such efforts still yielded little fruit in encouraging Miss Franklin in regular attendance.

As to count 4, I was a witness to the phone call to Nancy Pattillo on February 6th of 2022. Miss Franklin called from a phone number that was not listed under her name (she was not present at church that day) and when Nancy answered the phone, I could immediately hear Miss Franklin screaming at Nancy. I was sitting in the driver’s seat with my and Nancy’s two children buckled in behind me in their seats as we were getting ready to head home with the car running. Nancy was standing up outside the opened passenger door when she answered Miss Franklin’s phone call and I could hear Miss Franklin screaming over the phone from outside the car, over my kids talking, and a car engine running and the inside heat blowing. I could not make out the words that Miss Franklin was saying, but Nancy said they were so foul she didn’t want to repeat

them. Nancy was upset to be spoken to in such a way, but as Miss Franklin continued to scream at her, Nancy was saying “Tawana. Tawana. Stop yelling and talk to me”. The phone call ended with a hang-up. Afterward, Nancy walked back to the church to let Pastor Smith know of the phone call, only saying “That woman” as she walked back towards the church. (I found out yesterday that Pastor Smith was not present when she walked back. He was apparently taking people home and visiting Larry; but I thought that was the purpose for her going back.) As Nancy returned, she did mention that Tawana said she no longer wanted to attend ARPC.

The argument was over one of the Franklin children being disrespectful and arguing with Michelle Haag about preparing for worship. It is common for a couple of the Franklin children to be disruptive and disrespectful, so Nancy went over to tell the child that he should be respectful, and she was tired of them being disruptive. The Pastor had given a couple of announcements about everyone needing to be reverent and it seems to not have taken effect with a few of the children. However, though Miss Franklin was not present, and the children’s behavior is not different when she is there, there seemed to be a need to handle the child’s attitude as a team. Miss Franklin didn’t appreciate the fact that Nancy verbally confronted the child about their needing to be respectful to adults and reverent in worship.

Honestly, I was not surprised by Miss Franklin’s behavior that day. However, I did wonder how she could be so hateful towards Nancy. There have been several times Tawana would call us before we would leave for worship, asking Nancy to bring personal items and clothes for the kids. Nancy was always sure to be helpful. Only the Lord knows where Miss Franklin’s heart and head were that day, that she would turn against someone who had regularly been showing compassion to her in the past.

For the record, I am saddened that we are here at this point. It needs to be said that though there are serious and concerning trends with Miss Franklin, there are also good things that have happened at ARPC with the Franklin family. There have been so many times when my family has prayed for the Franklins during devotions and bedtime to see them return to church and grow His kingdom to include this. Those prayers have been accompanied by the fact that my daughter enjoys a friendship with the oldest and very sweet daughter Diamond. I have seen my son happily playing with Denisha, Caden, and Wynter, as well as being carried by Diamond as he hugs her. Moments like those can only make someone smile and hope that God will use them for building His kingdom with the Franklins. It needs to be said that there have been those moments of joy at ARPC with the Franklin children. A note on this matter: the Pattillo family has no ill will towards Miss Franklin over February 6th, or anyone else in the Franklin household, and we will continue to pray for them. And that’s all.

Question from Dr. Burgreen: So, in your testimony, you gave many examples of foul language in some of her interactions. Do you believe Miss Franklin was aware, was she aware, of her outbursts and demands? And what I’m driving at is a sense of understanding. Did she understand her obedience? Does she understand how her family has negatively impacted the church?

Answer: Well, she's been spoken to on several occasions—gently confronted. I've been given excuses such as, You don't understand—this is my time to worship and I don't need to worry about them, I need somebody else to do it. So, she does understand. And it's been to no effect.

Testimony of Mrs. Nancy Pattillo, May 14th, 2022

As a witness to count 4, sinful anger, I, Nancy Pattillo, submit to you details to the best of my recollection regarding an encounter on Sunday, February 6th, 2022, with Tawana Franklin. [Excuse me.] To explain a bit of the background that day, one of the children began responding disrespectfully to Miss Michele Haag, one of the Sunday School teachers, before the worship service was to begin. I then supported Miss Michele in the conversation and attempted to sort the situation in preparation to have a reverent worship service. This was a concern as all but one of the children are often unruly during Sunday School and worship. Tawana called me shortly after the children returned home from church. When I answered the call, she instantly began yelling at me. I asked her to stop yelling and talk to me. She never asked what led to the necessity of the conversation with the child. She only had heard from the child that a conversation occurred and called me out of anger to yell about its occurrence. I [garbled—"said to"?] her during that call that if she had a problem with how the children's problem was being addressed, she should be present to police them herself. I will note that Tawana did not call Miss Michele regarding this situation for which she was livid. At this time, I do not recall additional details regarding this conversation. We have been praying for Tawana and for her children, for open hearts, reverence, attendance, and the Lord's mercy. These prayers . . . [garbled].

Testimony of Mrs. Penelope Smith, May 14th, 2022

I was witness to a phone call between Pastor Smith and Tawana Franklin in which she admitted that she had lied about the reason her children had not attended church recently.

Amended testimony of Dr. Frank J. Smith, May 15th, 2022

During the night, I realized that perhaps I should have mentioned a potential line of defense that Tawana may have pursued had she been present. From time to time, she has mentioned her fear of a couple of the men in the congregation, one in particular, with respect to the safety of her sons. She has no rational basis for this fear, neither in terms of the men themselves nor with regard to the setting, as our building is an open plan with no hidden cubby holes. Nevertheless, she has claimed, as she did during a telephone conversation in mid-April, that her motherly instinct tells her that these men are pedophiles. (I will add that during that phone conversation a

few weeks ago, she drew a distinction between whites and blacks, in that whites trust their kids around anyone and anybody.)

The degree to which to believe her perspective on this matter is difficult to discern. On the one hand, she would often keep eyes on one of the gentlemen, or, if she was not in attendance, delegate that responsibility to her teenage daughter Diamond. On the other hand, her concern for her sons' safety did not stop her from sending her children without her being present, and, on occasion, from sending her children without either she or Diamond being at church. So, it may very well be a real fear of hers, while, at the same time, it is more along the line of an excuse for not coming to church—similar to numerous other excuses that she has offered.

In that same telephone conversation referenced above, she eventually agreed to “come to court,” and expressed that perhaps the men before whom the hearing would be conducted would be able to come up with an answer as to why she hasn't been coming to church—that is, to do something to her so she could get over these feelings about these two men who she finds are creepy.

As you can imagine, I was very concerned if she were to offer this kind of testimony, especially in open court. One of these two men is well aware of her belief that he's a pedophile, and is very offended by that claim. I consulted with Professor Tom Reid, Pastor Phil Pockras, and Elder Scott Hunt as to how to handle her testimony, particularly with regard to what could be inflammatory remarks. Based on my consultation with them, I had determined that we as a court would go into executive session if Tawana were to begin to give this type of testimony. Of course, Tawana was not in attendance to tell her side of the story. And I was therefore facing a dilemma. The allegations that she may have made in making her defense, had not been entered into the record. If they had been via her sworn testimony, they could have been subjected to cross-examination and rebuttal. I was hesitant to mention to the court this perspective of hers, since, as far I can see, it has no rational basis. (Tawana got upset with the one gentleman several years ago when he gave one of her young sons a cookie. As far as I know, there is no other incident that has occurred.) The written testimony I presented had been prepared with the understanding that Tawana would be there in order to present her view, and therefore that material would have been before the court, if at all, through that means.

Please forgive me for amending my testimony in this fashion at this time. However, for the sake of my own conscience and also giving witness to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I thought that I should do so.

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

Atlanta Judicial Commission

May 14, 2022

Miss Tawana Franklin

Dear Miss Franklin:

It is our sad duty to inform you that you have been found guilty of the five charges that were preferred against you, as follows:

- (1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now
- (2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on a regular basis
- (3) Willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment): as seen by the fact that your children have many times not attended worship
- (4) Sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment): expressed particularly in phone conversations on February 6, 2022
- (5) Lying (against the 9th Commandment): as seen by your having lied recently about why your children were not attending church

The court voted unanimously (3-0-0) to impose the censure of suspension, which will be pronounced publicly immediately after the worship service of Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church tomorrow afternoon. We will also be presenting an explanation of the judgment and how we will proceed going forward, as well as providing a couple of pastoral letters—one to you and one to the congregation.

You are entitled to a copy of the minutes and all other records. If you desire to appeal this decision, you have 30 days from tomorrow to do so.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.
Moderator of the Commission
(770)241-3946



Greg W. Burgreen, Ph.D.
Clerk of the Commission
(662)418-0591

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

Atlanta Judicial Commission

Pastoral Letter to the Congregation

May 14, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church:

As you know, over the past several weeks, we have been dealing with a judicial matter. Thankfully, we don't have to handle such matters very often. But when we do, it is good to reflect on what has happened and the impact it has had on the congregation.

I know that at least some of you may be concerned about the proceeding and the resulting discipline. First, please be aware that we have been dealing with Tawana for a long time—our action was not hasty in any way. Further, I want to assure you that absence from the Lord's house is not always necessarily a ground for discipline. What Tawana was found guilty of was that she willfully and without valid reason absented herself from worship over an extensive period of time. Not only that but she also refused to attend the judicial proceeding even though she had been summoned, and had agreed to the date and time, and had indicated just a few days ago that she would attend, knowing that she would be able to present her perspective. So please do not worry that you will be charged as Tawana was as long as you have a valid reason for non-attendance, and as long as you do not display a similar pattern of sin including sinful anger and lying. And even if you do sin in these ways, you can avoid judicial process by means of swift and humble repentance. I John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."

Therefore, in learning from the Lord's providence through the discipline of Christ's Church, there are three themes I would like to develop: pain; war; and love. Pain, war, and love.

First, pain. There is a book that is entitled *PAIN: The Gift Nobody Wants*. The book focuses on the experiences of people in a leprosy colony. As you may be aware, leprosy is a very serious disease, and one of its conditions is that the patient is no longer able to feel pain in his extremities (fingers, hands, feet). Now, we might think that being free from pain is a good thing. However, a leper who can no longer feel pain will often do dangerous things, such as touching a hot stove, without realizing how bad that is. And so, pain can be a valuable thing, as much as we usually don't want it. With regard to this present judicial matter, I know that for many of us, this entire situation has been very painful. And yet, none of the pain which we have experienced has taken our Lord by surprise. Indeed, He has from all eternity ordained it. And He has done so for our good. I have often said that this ministry in inner-city Atlanta will stretch you beyond what you can imagine. But Jesus uses such

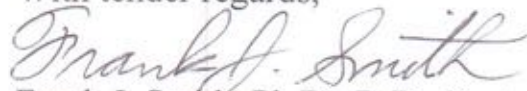
stretching in order to humble us, and also perhaps to address a tendency in us toward self-righteousness. The apostle Paul tells us: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” He goes on to say: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” (Galatians 6:1-4). Yes, we’ve experienced a lot of pain and turmoil in dealing with this matter. But God has been working in and through this situation, via His word, which is the sword of the Spirit, which has been cutting in all directions in our midst. He has been pruning us as individuals and as a community of believers, preparing us for further service.

Second, war. We are in quite the fight. And when I say that, I don’t mean simply on a local level in dealing with this one particular matter. What we have experienced is one little skirmish in a global war in which the church as a whole is engaged. Nobody likes to fight, but sometimes it is necessary. The church in this world is called the church militant, as it is called upon to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And fighting this spiritual war is a bloody business—not literally, of course, but emotionally and in our souls and spirits, it is a tough, desperate battle. So, as we fight, we should remember that this series of events is just one tiny little piece of the whole war, and yet also an important piece, as we are dealing with souls and with eternal consequences. We fight not in order to destroy sinners; we fight in order that they may be saved.

Third, love. In this spiritual warfare in which we have been engaged, love is the key. Love is the motivation. Love is the method. James, the brother of our Lord, reminds us: “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20). And so, we must love our erring sister. We must love her better than we love ourselves. We must express to her our love and concern. And we must show love as we humbly and regularly pray for her full restoration.

Friends, let me urge you to embrace the pain; fight the good fight of faith; and show forth your love.

With tender regards,



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D., Pastor

Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

Atlanta Judicial Commission

May 15, 2022

Dear Tawana:

Firstly, I want you to know how much our hearts go out to you. You have had a hard life, and the struggles you have faced have had a lot to do with how you react sometimes.

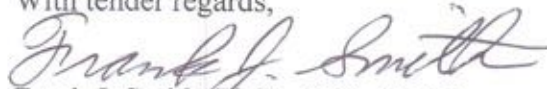
Secondly, however, your circumstances should not dictate how you respond to adversity. You are still responsible for acting in a proper, God-honoring way, no matter what the situation may be.

Thirdly, let me counsel you with regard to something you said to me a few weeks ago. In speaking of your relationship to the church, at one point, you cried, "I *tried!* I *tried!*" Tawana, I am sure that you did. I am sure that there were times when you did try to live up to what you regarded as the church's expectations. But at this point, what I want to say to you is, "Stop trying!" Stop trying—that is to say, stop trying in your own strength. If you try to live a life of obedience by means of your goodness or strength, you will fall flat on your face every time. You will forever face failure and frustration—you will never, ever, be happy. No, you must learn to look to Jesus and lean on Him and trust Him with your life. In this regard, please note that love and obedience go together.

Your doing what is right is not simply a matter of checking a particular box and figuring that you've done your duty. No, Jesus is clear: He said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). In the epistle of First John, we read, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk just as He walked" (I John 2:3-6). "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3).

Trying to work enough on our own strength to please God and man is a temptation with which we all wrestle. And my prayer is that you would learn to lean upon Christ and look to Him, even in your struggles with sin.

With tender regards,



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D., Pastor

Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

Atlanta Judicial Commission

Explanation of Verdict

May 15, 2022

The three members of the judicial commission emailed Tawana Franklin last night to communicate to her our judgment in the matter. By a vote of 3-0, we unanimously found her guilty of the five charges, and also voted to impose a censure of suspension from the Lord's Table.

In reaching these conclusions, we took into account a number of factors. First, we were aware that it is always best, if possible, to use the least amount of censure in any given situation. Second, we were also aware, on the other hand, that this latest judicial action was not the first attempt, but the third attempt, over a period of a year and a half, to call Miss Franklin back to a faithful walk with Christ. We therefore felt compelled not only to take stronger measures than the admonition and the rebuke that had been employed in the past, but also to ensure that this matter remains under judicial review so as to ensure that Tawana is able to demonstrate her repentance over a period of time.

Tawana's actions and attitudes have not only caused hurt to herself, but also have caused hurt to many in the congregation. We know that Tawana is hurting, and as elders who care for sheep, our hearts go out to her. She has been under a lot of stress. In many ways, she has lived a hard life and experienced pain and brokenness. At the same time, her actions and attitudes have not been pleasing to the Lord. And though the church has been extraordinarily patient with her, there comes a point at which the church must exercise discipline—which is why we conducted the proceeding yesterday. Indeed, Tawana herself has acknowledged that she has had problems with sinful anger, at least in part because of racial bias. Part of the healing process that we trust will take place through this discipline is to counsel her as she works through these matters. There is no magic pill that she can take; we offer no hocus pocus. However, there is an answer to these hurts and pains, which is found in Jesus. The question is, Will Tawana receive the answer? This time of probation will tell.

For the moment, then, Tawana is **not** excommunicated. Rather, her privilege of coming to the sacrament of communion has been suspended until such time as she is able to be fully reconciled with the congregation and also able to be a joyful participant in the life of the church.

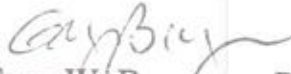
All three of us on the judicial commission have been praying for this entire situation, and we will continue to do so. We anticipate that we will gather again in three to four months in order to assess where Tawana is at, and how to proceed. Will things be about the same? Or, will they be worse? Or, will she have totally and thoroughly repented and given such evidence that everyone is able to see it? That last outcome, of course, is the one which we

will they be worse? Or, will she have totally and thoroughly repented and given such evidence that everyone is able to see it? That last outcome, of course, is the one which we very much desire, as does everyone in the congregation. In the meantime, we, the members of this judicial panel, will be communicating with Tawana on a regular basis, perhaps every week or two, to see how she is doing and how we can help her in her spiritual life. We are not her enemies. We desire nothing but the best for her and her family. We know that discipline is not a pleasant thing. But discipline is not designed to destroy someone but to restore him or her. And it is our intention to help her to heal.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.
Moderator of the Commission



Greg W. Burgreen, Ph.D.
Clerk of the Commission



Drew Poplin, M.Div.
Member of the Commission

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

Atlanta Judicial Commission

May 15, 2022

Whereas you, Tawana Lashaun Franklin, have been found guilty by this court of Christ's House, the decision of the court is that you are deserving of the censure of suspension. Now, therefore, for your own spiritual good and for the peace and purity of the Church, receive the pronouncement of this censure.

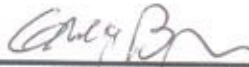
You, Tawana Lashaun Franklin, have been found guilty of the following sins:

- (1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now
- (2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on a regular basis
- (3) Willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment): as seen by the fact that your children have many times not attended worship
- (4) Sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment): expressed particularly in phone conversations on February 6, 2022
- (5) Lying (against the 9th Commandment): as seen by your having lied recently about why your children were not attending church

This court, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, sadly and solemnly suspends you from the privileges of church membership, including participation in the sacraments, until you have given satisfactory evidence of true repentance, and have been restored to good standing by this court.



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.
Moderator of the Commission



Greg W. Burgreen, Ph.D.
Clerk of the Commission



Drew Poplin, M.Div.
Member of the Commission

December 1, 2022

Dear Tawana:

It is my sad duty to inform you that the Atlanta Judicial Commission today, after extensive and careful discussion, voted to impose the censure of excommunication upon you. This censure will be pronounced after the worship service on December 18, 2022.

You will have 30 days from that date in order to appeal this censure. I would be happy to help you with any appeal that you would make, including, directing you to someone who could counsel you in that regard.

Meanwhile, let me again say that you and your children are still welcome to attend the church. As a matter of fact, we would encourage you to do so. This censure would mean that you would no longer be a member of the visible church and would imply that your soul is in jeopardy. But our hope and prayer would be that even this censure will be used by God to bring you to genuine faith and repentance.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Smith

Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.

Pastor, Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

December 18, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church:

One of the most difficult and distressing things I have had to do as a minister is to pronounce the sentence of excommunication. Thankfully, in my 42 years of ordained ministry, I have, up until today, had to make that pronouncement only twice. But today will mark the third time that I will have performed that duty.

Tawana Franklin first started attending the worship services of this congregation in the summer of 2016. In February 2020, she professed her faith and then, along with her children, was baptized in a service of public worship. However, there was an obvious spiritual struggle in her soul. A couple of months after she joined the church, she said to me, with reference to Covid-19, that I was “scariest than the virus.” In other words, she realized that unlike other churches which she had attended, we meant business and were very serious about these religious matters. I took her statement as an encouraging one, in that she recognized the Spiritual nature of what she had done in committing herself to the church. At the same time, it soon was evident that this inner battle was one in which the wrong side was beginning to prevail.

As many of you know, from the time of her public profession, she became very erratic in her attendance. In November 2020, the elders admonished her. For a few weeks after that censure, she was faithful in coming to church. But then, in early 2021, she became unfaithful again—a pattern that continued throughout the spring and summer. In September 2021, the elders imposed a stronger discipline, that of rebuke. She showed the same pattern as before—a brief period of church attendance, followed by long periods of non-attendance. Finally, in March 2022, the elders preferred charges against her and referred the matter to the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, which appointed a special judicial commission.

This special commission, the Atlanta Judicial Commission, scheduled a hearing to which she was summoned. We consulted with her as to when we would schedule that hearing, so as to accommodate her, and she agreed to appear at the set date and time (May 14, 2022 at 11:00 AM) so that she could present her side of the story. We were under the impression that she would show, but she was a no-show.

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 Telephone: 770-241-3946 Email: franksmith76@gmail.com

The Commission proceeded to take testimony and receive evidence on the five charges. She was found guilty of all five charges. The Commission, after careful consideration, decided to impose a censure of suspension upon her—that is, barring her from the Lord’s Table until she expressed sorrow and repented. Over a period of weeks, all three members of the Commission reached out to her in order to encourage her and to call her to repentance. There was no repentance.

In late October, I made arrangements to swing by her apartment on October 26th. I brought a pizza with me as a token of friendship. I explained that the Commission was planning to meet on Monday, October 31, 2022, in order to consider her case and what action, if any, to take. I thought that she and I had a good conversation. She volunteered that she wanted to come back to church and indeed that she would come back that next Lord’s Day, October 30, 2022. Three days later, I sent her an email. In it, I reminded her of the hurt and pain she had caused at Atlanta RPC, and then stated that, in order for her to come back, she was going to have make things right with those whom she had offended. Not only must she apologize but she must seek the forgiveness of those whom she had hurt. I stated that she needed to acknowledge the guilt of the sins of which she had been found guilty; and that she needed to participate, cheerfully and responsibly, in the services of the church. And I also said that she must not ask for money. In emphasizing that she should not ask for money, I reminded her that she herself had told me that she was glad to have the financial angle divorced from her participating in the church. I concluded with these words:

If you’re serious about your spiritual walk, you will do these things. No one is expecting you to be perfect, Tawana. But we are expecting you to be sincere. Whether you are or not, only time will tell.

You’ve heard the old saying from baseball, “Three strikes and you’re out.” Well, you’ve already had three strikes. You were admonished. Then you were rebuked. And back in May, you were suspended from communion. You’ve got one more chance. I want you to know that the church is not playing games with you. If you don’t show yourself to be genuinely sorry for your sins and sincerely seeking to walk with Christ, then it will be “Four strikes and you’re out.”

You mentioned during our meeting on Wednesday how lenient I had been with you in the past. Sometimes I have been too lenient and have not shown you what is called “tough love.” I promise you, Tawana, there’s no more fooling around. This is your last chance.

Tawana, we love you and want only the best for you and your family. We are willing to welcome you back with open arms. But you’ve got to play your part by being faithful with regard to [what I wrote] above.

.....

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to ask. Tawana, I am the eternal optimist, always looking at things through rose-colored glasses. Please do not disappoint me. More importantly, please make sure for the sake of your own soul and the good of your children that you do what is right.

Upon reflection, the members of the Atlanta Judicial Commission agreed to postpone its meeting for several weeks, in order to give Tawana more time to express her repentance and to show that she was serious about wanting to come back to church.

Two days after I met with Tawana, she texted me, asking for money. We exchanged text messages on Saturday: she said that she was still coming to church even if I didn’t give her money, and I informed her that, as indicated in my email letter, no, we would not be giving her money. The next morning, Sunday, October 30th, she texted me, saying: “Good morning. I won’t be attending church... I look forward to coming next Sunday tho....” I responded, “Okay.” The following Sunday, November 6th, I texted her at 11:54 AM, saying, “Tawana, I plan to arrive at 2:15. Remember, we gained the hour last night, as we’re now on Eastern Standard Time. Will your children be coming as well?” I received no reply. I arrived around 2:18 PM and knocked on the door of the apartment. There was no answer. I knocked again and waited a few minutes, and just before driving off, Diamond came out. We chatted for a few minutes but she did not attend the church service that day (though she did attend the following week).

Instead of meeting on October 31st, the Commission had delayed its meeting for about a month in order to give Tawana more time to get right with God. On November 29th and November 30th, I informed her that we would be meeting on December 1st, and that she was welcome to attend via Zoom in order to express repentance or anything else she desired. She did not attend.

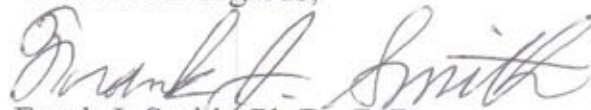
At our meeting on December 1, 2022, we, the members of the Atlanta Judicial Commission, voted unanimously to impose the church's highest censure, excommunication. We did so because of Tawana's obvious lack of repentance from the sins of which she had been found guilty on May 14, 2022. Of course, there is always a provisional nature to the censures of the church—repentance is always an option, and, in point of fact, one of the reasons for church discipline is to lead people to repentance.

Furthermore, we want to be very clear that the church has no authority to send anyone to hell. It is God alone who sends people to hell. And it is God alone who bestows His grace in order to bring people to salvation. But it is our duty as elders in the church to pronounce judgments which reflect what God Himself has sovereignly decided and as to how He has judged. When the elders turn the keys of the kingdom, they are reflecting Jesus' words in Matthew 18, by seeking to discern that which has already been determined in heaven and to judge accordingly.

Our action does not determine anyone's eternal destiny. That right belongs only to God. But at the same time, no one should regard the matter of excommunication lightly. Twenty-five years ago, I pronounced excommunication upon a relative of mine who had abandoned the faith. When I read the censure, the congregation was obviously affected—you could have heard a pin drop on the carpet. A few years later, that young man was killed in an automobile accident. God is not mocked. You don't play games with Him or with His gospel. Indeed, dealing with Him is scarier than the virus.

And so, as we come to this moment in the life of our congregation, may each of us examine himself or herself to check for hypocrisy. And let us continue to pray that God would grant Tawana the grace of repentance before it is eternally too late.

With tender regards,



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.

Pastor, Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

December 18, 2022

Dear Tawana:

It is my sad duty to inform you that the Atlanta Judicial Commission today imposed upon you the censure of excommunication.

You have 30 days from when you are informed of this action in order to file a notice of appeal with regard to this censure, including at least a brief statement of the reasons for the appeal. You would have at least 60 days in order to file a full statement of your reasons for why you believe this judgment to be unjust or inappropriate. As I mentioned previously, I am very willing to help you by directing you to someone who could advise you and assist you with your appeal.

Tawana, nobody in the congregation is happy with your having been excommunicated. Everyone continues to pray that you would repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to His church.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Smith

Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.

Pastor, Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church

Pronouncement of Judgment
by the Atlanta Judicial Commission
of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
December 18, 2022

You, Tawana Lashun Franklin, have been found guilty of the sins of (1) willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment), (2) refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment), (3) willful failure to ensure that your children are attending worship (against the 5th Commandment), (4) sinful anger (against the 6th Commandment), and (5) lying (against the 9th Commandment), sins deserving of the extreme penalty of excommunication, yet you continue obstinate and give no evidence of repentance, although efforts have been made to restore you. Now, therefore, this Court, constituted in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and acting under His authority, hereby excommunicates you, removing you from the membership of the Church, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. May God have mercy upon you by awakening you to repentance and bringing you to righteousness, so that you may be among the redeemed in the Day of the Lord Jesus.



Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D., Moderator



Greg W. Burgreen, Ph.D., Clerk

The Clerk's Report

2022 GLGP Spring Mtg ~ Indianapolis, IN
March 2-4, 2023 @ Southside RPC

Dear Fathers & Brethren,

As you can see, we have our work cut out for us yet again this spring. Thankfully, our labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

Oral Congregational Reports. Now that we have a stated fall meeting, we are able to begin hearing oral congregational reports again. This spring's proposed agenda will include oral reports from about half of our congregations (plus the Atlanta TGB) in reverse alphabetical order. According to the proposed format, the remainder of the reports will be heard in June and/or at our stated fall meeting.

Corporate Intercessory Prayer. Congregational prayer assignments are noted in the proposed agenda. Wherever possible, I tried to assign delegates to the congregation whose minutes they recently reviewed. Please look for your name in the proposed agenda so that you are prepared to lead in prayer at the appointed time. If you are unable to do so, please inform your alternate that they will need to fill in for you.

Annual Congregational Financial Audits. It has come to my attention that many of our congregations may not be in full compliance with synod's annual congregational financial auditing process (Appendix 1). Therefore, I am recommending that presbytery instruct its clerks to look into this matter and report back to the presbytery in the future.

Assets of Disorganized Congregations. In light of the recent disorganizations at Christ Church RP and First RPC of Grand Rapids, we have a few housekeeping matters to address. Bill Roberts is requesting our counsel on behalf of synod's board of trustees (DCG 2.11, D-6) with respect to the remaining assets from CCRP¹ Rec. 6 (below) seeks to provide this counsel, in keeping with the wishes of the former members. I've also included an update from Steven Rhoda and Jake Schwartz concerning the steps taken since disorganization (Appendix 2).

Minutes Review. The review of digital session/TGB minutes is nearly complete. As of 2/28/23, all minutes have been reviewed and found to be in lawful order except for Hetherton and IRPC. *Session clerks must bring their minute books to the spring meeting to be stamped.*

Communications. Please note the following communications and subsequent recommendations.

1. 22-22: Complaint v. GLGP from N. Enas & K. Swan re: GLGP's recent adoption of a "permission to record" policy.
2. 22-23: Complaint v. GLGP from N. Enas re: GLGP's decision to return his prior complaint v. CCRP Comm. (22-18) stemming from the commission's decision not to sustain his original complaint v. CCRP Session (22-15).
3. 23-1: Complaint v. IRPC Session from K. Borg re: admission of J. Olivetti to the L.S. while under suspension.
4. 23-2: Complaint v. IRPC Session from S. Anderson re: admission of J. Olivetti to the L.S., etc.
5. 23-3AB: Charge of Sin v. IRPC Session from K. Borg re: admission of J. Olivetti to the L.S., etc.
6. 23-4: Update from Synod's Olivetti Commission regarding its ruling on 1/19/23 re: admission of J. Olivetti to the L.S., etc.
7. 23-5: Complaint v. Southfield Session from G. Allison re: session's decision to schedule a trial.
8. 23-6: Request from J. Faris to transfer his ministerial credentials to Zionsville Fellowship Church.²
9. 23-7AB: Complaint v. IRPC Session from J. Smith re: a sermon illustration by Rev. Dan Perrin involving Christians & Muslims (Withdrawn)
10. 23-8: Communication from K. Evans re: Mr. Faris' (apparent) email inviting folks to commune with Mr. Olivetti at IRPC.
11. 23-9: Petition from J. Odom regarding the situation at IRPC.
12. 23-10AB: Two letters from Rev. Dan Perrin (PCA), the latter explaining and qualifying the former.
13. 23-11: Communication from K. Borg confessing a private offense against the GLGP clerk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That presbytery appoint the following parliamentarians for this meeting: J. Odom, F. Smith, P. Pockras (alt), J. Hughes (alt), S. Rhoda (alt), W. Mann (alt), J. Hart (alt).
2. That presbytery enter executive session in order to hear the rest of the clerk's oral report and to consider Recommendations 3, 4, and 5.
3. That presbytery confirm its understanding that the clerk is authorized to "handle correspondence" and to "have charge of all the papers and records belonging to the [court]" (DCG 4.4, D-28), meaning that, at the clerk's discretion, due to the sensitive nature of certain

¹ Email to Clerk (2/10/23): Adam, The Trustees of Synod have a policy that money from the closing down of congregation is placed in the building and loan fund of the denomination. There is an exception that the presbytery can request the funds be held for up to 5 years to support a new work of the presbytery in the vicinity of the closed congregation. The session at Christ Church wanted the funds from there to be set aside for a new work in Marion County or one of the eight counties in central Indiana that touch it. For it to be acted upon by the Trustees, it will need a formal request from the presbytery to be sent to the Trustees (i.e., Jim McFarland). I have heard nothing about Grand Rapids if they might want to reserve the funds for a new work in SW Michigan. You may know the answer to this question. If so, a formal request by the presbytery would also be needed to be sent to the Trustees. I am not planning on attending this meeting of the presbytery. ~ Bill Roberts

² 23-6: "Dear Brothers of the CCC and AIC, The Lord has graciously granted me nearly twenty years of service as a pastor in the RPCNA. All of those have been served in this presbytery. I am thankful to have been born, baptized, raised, married, ordained in this denomination. My children have been born and baptized here. Elizabeth and I are thankful for all that the Lord has done here and the people the Lord has used in our lives, including you. Most of all, we are thankful for the Lord himself. He's made us and redeemed us in Christ. He's worked his grace in our hearts and given us newness of life. He's given us his word to be believed and obeyed. We have never been more thankful for his word and Spirit than now. Seeking to be faithful to his word, the time has come for me to depart from the RPCNA and to move my credentials to Zionsville Fellowship Church in Zionsville, Indiana. This independent church is willing to receive me and my credentials as a presbyterian pastor. I remain presbyterian in my convictions, but at this time, I am not sure what presbyterian assembly I will join next. I do know that I will no longer be part of the RPCNA. You know well the disagreements I have with many actions of the RP church in recent years and how truly grieved I am over these. I can no longer be under the jurisdiction, and so need to move elsewhere now, even if not to another presbyterian body immediately. I still love the RP church & pray for her sanctification through the risen Savior. Please send a letter with my credentials to Drew Hunter, pastor of Zionsville Fellowship (9090 Oak St., Zionsville, IN 46077). In Christ, James"

- documents, he may restrict access and transmission of such documents to the presbytery delegates only, and that these restrictions constitute binding counsel tendered in the Lord (QFO 9), unless or until reversed or modified by the Presbytery or its Ad Interim Commission, such that anyone who willfully violates these restrictions, has sinned against the court and may be subject to censure.
4. That presbytery, in keeping with the 2006 decision of GLGP and Synod (MoS, 142) to permit RPCI's policy of discretionary access to session minutes, confirm that a session clerk's duty to "furnish extracts from the minutes when ordered by the court" (DCG 4.4, D-28), to present session minutes "for review by the presbytery once a year" (DCG 4.5, D-29), to "transmit to the higher [court] all records and papers pertaining to [a complaint]" (BOD II.4.4, E-16), and to ensure that "ordinarily... minutes of the session are open to members of the congregation" (DCG 4.5, D-28) does not imply an unqualified or inalienable license for every individual to access or disseminate every such record for every conceivable reason,³ much less for non-members of the congregation and/or presbytery to procure previously unpublished or uncirculated minutes in an unauthorized manner for widespread publication without the court's consent or knowledge.
 5. That presbytery form a three-man committee, appointed by the moderator, to contact Rev. Kyle Borg, the Winchester RPC session, and the Midwest Presbytery, respectively, on behalf of the GLGP to articulate our very serious concerns and ask that steps be taken in love to effectively persuade Rev. Borg to publicly repent and receive the freely and eagerly offered forgiveness of the GLGP and the IRPC session for his sin against these ecclesiastical bodies (not merely against the GLGP clerk) in admittedly publishing sensitive, password-protected GLGP judicial records — submitted by the IRPC session to the GLGP in connection with Rev. Borg's own complaint against them — on the website, *Peace, Purity, Progress*, against the express instructions of the GLGP clerk.
 6. That presbytery instruct the nominating committee to (A) Determine the congregations to be visited this year, (B) Consider the Geneva College B.O.C. nomination of P. Pockras as GLGP Rep.,⁴ (C) Replace the two departing members of the Membership Comte, (D) Replace the GLGP HMB Rep., (E) Nominate an IRPC provisional moderator, (F) Replace J. O'Neill as GLGP Rep. on Synod's Finance Comte.
 7. That presbytery instruct the incoming AIC to determine and disseminate the time and place for the fall meeting by 7/31/23.
 8. That presbytery form a two-man committee, appointed by the moderator, to review the RPC of Lafayette's pastoral call to Jonathan Sturm and report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting.
 9. That presbytery approve the following committee reports as submitted, without hearing oral reports: (A) Geneva College Board of Corp.'s Report, (B) Fearing Chaplaincy Report, (C) Home Mission Board Rep. Report
 10. That presbytery counsel the Synod Board of Trustees (DCG 2.11, D-6), in keeping with the wishes of the former CCRP congregation in Brownsburg, Indiana, to hold the remaining funds from the disorganized CCRP congregation for up to five years for a new work in Marion County or one of its eight bordering counties.
 11. That presbytery transmit GLG 22-22 and GLG 22-23 to synod without endorsement.
 12. That presbytery formally dismiss the CCRP Commission with thanks.
 13. That presbytery instruct its clerks to look into the synod's requirements for annual congregational financial audits and report back to the presbytery no later than the spring of 2024.
 14. That presbytery refer GLG 23-5 to the three-man, moderator-appointed Business Committee (OTD) [BUSCOM]⁵ to examine the complaint (with pertinent records), to interact with the parties (as able), and to report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting.
 15. That presbytery refer GLG 23-1, 23-2, 23-3, and 23-9 to a three-man, moderator-appointed IRPC Committee (OTD) to examine each communication (with pertinent records) and report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting.
 16. That presbytery refer GLG 23-8 to BUSCOM to advise whether or not its contents warrant any further action(s) by the presbytery (e.g. BOD I.3.1/2, E-4; BOD II.1.3/4, E-9), and to report back with its recommendation(s) later at this meeting.
 17. That presbytery, in response to Mr. Faris' request "for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church" (GLG 23-6), instruct the clerk to send ZFC a letter of ministerial standing, but not to *transfer* Mr. Faris' credentials to ZFC.⁶
 18. That presbytery instruct the moderator to announce the following appointments by the start of Bus. Session 2 at the latest:

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| A. Business Comte of the Day [BUSCOM] (3) | E. Resolution of Thanks Committee (2) |
| B. IRPC Comte of the Day (3) | F. Time and Place Committee (2) |
| C. Nominating Committee (3) | G. Lafayette Call Review Comte (2) |
| D. Finance Committee (3) | |
 19. That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda for this meeting.
 20. That presbytery grant all RPCNA elders present the privilege of the floor during the remainder of this meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Kuehner, Clerk

³ Even with regard to the parties in a judicial trial, excerpts from the trial minutes are limited to instances of practical *necessity* as discerned by the court: "Parties are entitled to such extracts from the minutes as may be necessary in preparing an appeal" (BOD II.4.11, E-17).

⁴ Email to Clerk (2/14/23): "Dear Rev. Kuehner, On behalf of the Geneva College Board of Corporators' Nominating Committee, we would like to recommend Phil Pockras for re-election to the Board of Corporators as Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery Representative. We continue to thank God for Phil's faithful and wise service to the Corporators... Sincerely, Shana Milroy, Nominating Committee Chair"

⁵ The Business Committee of the Day [BUSCOM] is designed to handle *all types of business* referred to it by the court: *judicial and non-judicial*. This allows us to refer an item to BUSCOM without passing judgment in advance as to whether it involves a *judicial* or *non-judicial* matter. This same principle would apply to the 'IRPC Committee of the Day'. The point is to avoid spinning our wheels over nomenclature during the clerk's report, so that we have more time later in the meeting to discuss the well-digested thoughts and recommendations of our committees.

⁶ Rationale: (1) In keeping with the historic principles of biblical presbyterianism, the RPCNA (DCG 3.II.E.5.i, D-21; DCG 6:2, D-31; DCG 6:13, D-33) places the oversight of ministerial credentials in the hands of regional presbyteries rather than the minister himself, or a local church, such as ZFC; (2) A letter of standing would grant the substance of Mr. Faris' request — *i.e. facilitating whatever recognition he is seeking from ZBC, and enabling him to request removal from the GLGP TE roll as soon as this is obtained* — while remaining true to biblical presbyterianism. (3) In light of the possibility of unresolved questions stemming from GLG 23-8, some may regard it as imprudent to transfer Mr. Faris' credentials out of the RPCNA at this time.

GLG 23-1

To the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA,

The *Book of Discipline* states:

The Presbyterian form of government provides for a gradation of courts whereby the lower is answerable to the higher. A decision of the lower court is subject to review and correction by a higher court. Any member of the church may carry his or her case through the lower courts even to the highest court for adjudication (II.4.1, E-15).

The Complaint

Pursuant to this privilege, I am filing a complaint with the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery against the session of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church. *This complaint is relative to the action taken by the lower court on December 3, 2022 to admit Mr. Jared Olivetti to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper contrary to his lawful and continuing suspension by Synod from the privileges of church membership since March 10, 2022.*

In a communication on December 4, 2022 the session of Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church informed the Olivetti Commission of the following:

The session has carefully weighed the options and discussed the consequences. As we stated in our meeting, we feel trapped between either violating our consciences or acting against the ruling of the church. The session is of the mind that it is God-honoring for the elders and for the congregation to follow the examples set before in scripture, even if it is not in compliance with the rulings of the church leadership.

We understand this is not what is acceptable in the book of discipline. We understand what is at stake. What is at stake goes far beyond a pastor's credentials or a group of elders who may or may not be in good standing with a denomination. Our standing before the Lord is of the utmost importance.

Therefore, the session of IRPC has voted to allow Jared back to the Lord's table. As seen clearly in scripture, this decision falls on the local elders who have direct oversight and knowledge enough to speak confidently into this matter.

Provisions for Complaint

The right of complaint is reserved for “any interested persons” (II.4.3, E-15). My interest in this action pertains to my previous role in investigating Mr. Olivetti’s response to the sexual abuse situation at Immanuel RPC, and my participation in the orderly and lawful prosecution in the *Synod of the RPCNA vs Mr. Jared Olivetti* (March 8-10, 2022). The ecclesiastical trial that was done in accord with the Scriptures and the *Book of Discipline*, resulted in Mr. Olivetti’s proven guilt and lawful censure – the same censure the action of the Immanuel session knowingly and willingly circumvented on December 3, 2022. In addition to this, the Scriptures warn of the corporate danger that may befall the church when the ordinances are not kept in a worthy manner, see 1 Corinthians 11:30.

The *Book of Discipline* also requires that “the complainant shall give notice to the lower court within 30 days” (II.4.3, E-15). On December 15, 2022 I gave notice of my intent to complain to Messrs. Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn, together with the clerk of GLG, Mr. Adam Kuehner. Mr. Kuehner confirmed the receipt of that notice and copied the GLG Moderator Mr. Nathan Eshelman.

Reasons for Complaint

The *Book of Discipline* directs that with the complaint, the complainant shall give “the reasons therefor” (II.4.3, E-15). The reason for this complaint is *because the aforementioned action of the Immanuel RPC session did not comport with the fundamental law or the law and order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, as Mr. Olivetti is under the lawful censure of the Synod of the RPCNA having been suspended from the privileges of membership*. This is evidenced in the following ways:

1. The action of the Immanuel RPC session pertained to a member who was suspended by the Synod of the RPCNA and whose suspension is not under the jurisdiction of the local session (see e.g. RPT 30.3, DCG 2.1, 2.6, 2.9, 4.8, 8.1, 8.12, BOD I.1.6, *Minutes of Synod 2021*, *Cumulative Minutes of the SJC*, and *Minutes of Synod 2022*).
2. The action of the Immanuel RPC session was not done under or in accord or with the consent of the court that imposed the censure contrary to the fundamental law and the law and order of the church (see e.g. WCF 31.3, WLC 109, RPT 30.3, DCG 2.1, 2.6, 4.7, 4.8, 8.1, 8.12, BOD I.4.3, I.6.2, I.6.6, II.3.13, and *Minutes of Synod 2022*).
3. The action of the Immanuel RPC session permitted one who is disqualified from participating in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to observe it contrary to the fundamental law and the law and order of the church (see e.g. WCF 29.8, 30.3, WLC 109, 173, DCG 4.7, 4.8, BOD I.4.3, I.6.2, DPW 3.11, *Cumulative Minutes of the SJC*, and *Minutes of Synod 2022*).

4. The action of the Immanuel RPC session threatened the spiritual welfare of Mr. Olivetti and the church contrary to the fundamental law and the law and order of the church (see e.g. WCF 29.8, 30.3, WLC 173, RPT 30.1, DCG 4.7, BOD I.1.4, and DPW 3.11).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states (*emphases added*):

Wherefore, all ignorant and *ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto* (WCF 29.8).

Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, *and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders* (WCF 30.3).

It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: *which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word* (WCF 31.3).

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* states (*emphases added*):

Q. 109: What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

A: ...all *neglect*, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.

Q.173: May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, be kept from it?

A: Such as are found to be ignorant or *scandalous*, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, *may and ought to be kept from that Sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his Church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.*

The *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* states (*emphases added*):

Our Lord commanded church discipline, so no church which fails to exercise it where needed can hope for His blessing (RPT 30.1).

Official discipline is to be administered by the courts of the Church, not by elders individually. Such counsel and discipline should be received in a spirit of Christian submission (RPT 30.3)

The *Directory for Church Government* states (*emphases added*):

A congregation is organized *on the basis of the standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church and in conformity with its law and order* (2.1, D-4).

A congregation has certain other responsibilities among which are [...] to be obedient in the Lord to the law and order of the Church (2.6, D-5).

A particular responsibility of the session is to care for the spiritual interest of the congregation and of each member. *Therefore, it shall maintain the ordinances of public worship in accordance with the principles of the church* (4.7, D-29).

The session is subordinate to the higher courts and shall be governed by their decisions (4.8, D-29).

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America is the highest court of the church [...] It is responsible for the continuing reformation of the church in maintaining the subordinate standards of the church in harmony with the Scriptural truth and order. *Its decisions are final, but its authority is limited by its subordinate standards* (8.1, D-38).

Synod, however, *may assume original jurisdiction over all matters affecting the purity and welfare of the church, and may, without complaint or appeal, investigate and adjudicate any matter requiring its attention* (8.12, D-41).

The *Book of Discipline* states (*emphases added*):

A church that does not follow our Lord's commands regarding church discipline will certainly lose His blessing, deteriorating more and more in doctrine and in life (I.1.4, E-3).

Deposition – This is the disciplinary removal of an ordained officer of the church from his office. *It may also be accompanied by suspension from church privileges* (I.4.1(d), E-5).

The session may discipline a teaching elder as a member of the congregation, but its authority is limited to the censures of admonition and rebuke. *Any censures of suspension, deposition, or excommunication shall remain with the presbytery or the court holding his credentials* (I.4.3(c), E-7).

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 (I.6.2, E-8).

Restoration of a person under censure *should be made only by the court that imposed the sentence or with its advice and consent* (I.6.6, E-8).

If adjudged guilty on any or all counts, the court shall fix the degree of censure to be administered (II.3.13, E-15).

The *Directory for Public Worship* states (*emphases added*):

Only those who have been baptized and are *communicant members in good standing* in a true branch of Christ's visible church are to partake of the Lord's Supper. *Persons whose manner of life is notably inconsistent with their Christian profession, or who are unknown to the Session in charge of the Table, are not to be invited to commune* (3.11, F-13).

The Actions of Synod

"We recommend that Synod assume original jurisdiction in the matter of GLG and Immanuel, and the moderator appoint a seven-man judicial commission to address this matter" (see *Minutes of Synod 2021*).

"The SJC voted unanimously by a roll call vote to depose Mr. Olivetti. The SJC then voted unanimously by a roll call vote to suspend Mr. Olivetti from church privileges, accompanying the censure of deposition" (*Cumulative Minutes of the SJC*).

Communication #22-13 a complaint alleging that "the suspension of Mr. Olivetti is unjust because it fails to meet the standard required by our Constitution" was not sustained (see *Minutes of Synod 2022*).

"That Synod assign oversight of the repentance, reconciliation, and restoration of Mr. Olivetti to a 5-man commission consisting of 2 of the current SJC commissioners (we recommend Mr. Andrew Silva & Mr. Tom Pinson) and 3 other men, all to be appointed by the 2022 Synod Moderator with one of the IRPC ruling elders as a consultative member" (*Minutes of Synod 2022*).

Therefore, I am submitting this complaint to the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery against the session of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church due to the action taken by the lower court to admit Mr. Jared Olivetti to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper contrary to his lawful and continuing suspension by Synod from the

privileges of church membership. This action is contrary to the fundamental law and and the law and order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Borg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "B".

Pastor Kyle Borg

Addendum of Clarification: This complaint is not submitted to preclude other alternative constitutional methods of review and correction of the lower court by the higher court.

February 14, 2023

A Complaint (II.4.3-6, E-15,16) to Mr. Adam Kuehner, Clerk of the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA, to be distributed to the GLG Presbytery for their consideration and response to the actions of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church Session, namely Mr. Samuel Carr, Mr. Joshua Karshen, and Mr. Matthew Wilburn.

Submitted by Mr. Shawn Anderson, a presbyter in the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA. Notice of Complaint was emailed to the IRPC session and clerk of the GLG Presbytery on January 3, 2023 (within the 30-day deadline).

The actions taken by the session of Immanuel RPC affect the peace, purity, progress, and unity of the church, wherein the court admitted to and served Mr. Jared Olivetti the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on December 4, 2022, and January 1, 2023, per Rev. Dan Perrin's public admission.

This action demonstrably

1. Violated the Synod's upholding of Mr. Olivetti's censure of suspension of church membership privileges, including participation in the Lord's Supper.

Mr. Olivetti was censured by a Judicial Commission of the Synod of the RPCNA on March 10, 2022. While five complaints were issued to Synod in response to this censure, the Synod overwhelmingly did not sustain any of these complaints June 21-24, 2022. This local court has disregarded the lawful decision of its broadest court.

2. Violated the RPCNA's Constitution's scriptural form of Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government.

There are several places in both the "fundamental law" (*the Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and RP Testimony*) and the "law and order of the church" (*the Directories for Church Government and Worship, the Book of Discipline and the actions of the Synod*) that have been violated. I won't labor the point by repeating what has already been sufficiently detailed in Mr. Borg's complaint.

3. Harmed Mr. Olivetti's spiritual well-being, which is already compromised given his censure status, presently unlifted by the Synod or its Commission overseeing Mr. Olivetti's care.

These elders have denied Mr. Olivetti the dynamic, God-ordained means of individual sanctifying grace through this process of church discipline. Contrary to the ruling of Synod, it appears the

session does not believe that Mr. Olivetti does not need to be further reclaimed. Their actions undermine their pretense of love, wisdom, and obedience to God.

4. Harmed the Immanuel RP Church's spiritual well-being, which was already compromised in the undue delay of celebrating the Lord's Supper for approximately six months.

This delay "appeared" to be imposed so Mr. Olivetti could participate in the Supper. The details of this delay were brought before the court when I asked Mr. Samuel Carr (while he spoke on the floor at October's Presbytery meeting) if IRPC had celebrated the Lord's Supper as a congregation since the 2022 Synod. When he answered, "yes," I was left with the impression that I was misinformed, so the question was dropped, to my shame.

Further, in disobeying the church's censures, they deprived Christ's Church of the benefits of the scriptural process of discipline, which is given in part to "deter others from similar offenses" and "maintain the purity and peace of His Church."

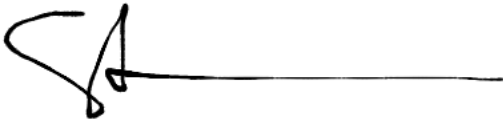
5. Neglected to adequately maintain Christ's authority and honor by not upholding the lawfully binding censure of the courts of this church.

6. Neglected to adequately maintain the truth of the Gospel by not upholding the lawfully binding censure of the courts of this church.

Church discipline was instituted by our Lord, Christ Jesus in part to protect scriptural faith and life of His Church in accord with the truth of His Word and Spirit.

Please receive this Complaint in a spirit of Christian concern and desire to see this remedied in a way pleasing and glorifying to our God and for the well-being of His Bride.

Respectfully Submitted,



Pastor Shawn Anderson

January 9, 2023

To: Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery

Cc'ed: Mr. Nathan Eshelman, Mr. Adam Kuehner, Mr. David Hanson, and Mr. Richard Blankenship

From: Kyle Borg

Re: Charge of Sin Against IRPC Session

Brothers of the GLG,

With lamentation my conscience feels bound to submit to this court of Christ's church a charge of sin against Messrs. Samuel Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn. That charge is included below.

Since Synod of 2022 I have continued, by Synod's direction and under the oversight of a commission, to participate in the process of reconciliation according to a mediated agreement signed by Messrs. David Carr, Ben Larson, and Keith Magill – the former ruling elders at IRPC.

Immanuel's decision to sever its relationship with the RPCNA on September 30, 2022 impacted this continuing work because, as the mediated agreement stipulates, the process of reconciliation was to be conducted under the authority and accountability of the RPCNA. At that time I quickly reached out to the IRPC session to inquire about the membership standing of the congregation and, in particular, the men I continue to work with. Mr. Ken DeJong gave some response leading me to believe that Messrs. Carr, Larson, and Magill were no longer members of the RPCNA – corroborated in that these men requested their membership be held by Second RPC.

When GLG ruled that the congregation's decision was out of order, our effort continued in good faith that GLG's determination was received and accepted by IRPC. Concerns returned in November when Mr. Daniel Perrin, IRPC's interim pastor, began preaching from the pulpit the congregation's decision to reject the authority of the RPCNA. On November 29th I communicated with Messrs. Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn and asked if they were committed to shepherding and holding Messrs. Carr, Larson, and Magill accountable and responsible to the courts, doctrine, order, authority, and discipline of the RPCNA. Receiving no response, I followed-up on December 3rd and again received no response.

Concerns were heightened significantly when on December 4, 2022 I learned that the IRPC session had approved Mr. Jared Olivetti's participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on December 3rd, and his partaking on December 4th even though he has biblically and lawfully been suspended from the privileges of membership. I initially heard this from an individual and sought confirmation from Mr. Gary McNamee who is the chairman of the Olivetti Judicial Commission. He confirmed on December 5th that Mr. Olivetti did participate.

On December 6th I communicated with Messrs. Carr, Larson, and Magill about this action and Mr. Larson informed myself (together with Synod's commission overseeing reconciliation) that if we had questions about this decision it should be directed to the IRPC session.

Heeding Mr. Larson's advice I communicated with the IRPC session later on December 6th (including Mr. Larson and Mr. Joseph Friedly on the communication), specifically asking: "Is Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church and its members under the jurisdiction and accountable to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and are you committed in your shepherding to holding the membership accountable to the doctrine, courts, order, authority, and discipline of the RPCNA?" That same day, Mr. Wilburn confirmed receipt of that and my previous communications but said it was not useful or wise to continue communication with me.

Unable to receive straightforward answers to the questions, and concerned about IRPC's action to admit Mr. Olivetti to the sacrament of the Lord's Table I gave notice to the IRPC session and the GLG clerk Mr. Adam Kuehner of my intent to file a complaint – an intention that must be stated within 30-days of the action. Mr. Kuehner noted my intention. On December 16th I submitted my complaint to the IRPC Session and again included Mr. Kuehner, and the AIC's clerk Mr. Richard Blankenship. To this date I have heard nothing upon the submission of the complaint.

On December 23rd I submitted a communication to the GLG AIC through Mr. David Hanson and Mr. Blankenship, noting from the *Book of Discipline*, that a court who learns of a sinning member cannot ignore the situation. My request to the commission stated: "I am writing because it would be a tremendous assurance to know that the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery is or soon will be addressing this public scandal with the Immanuel RPC session which has so dishonored the ordinances of our King and Head." To this date I have heard nothing in response to this communication.

On January 7th I sent a personal appeal to the IRPC session (including Mr. Perrin). In that personal appeal I noted the gravity of sin in their permitting Mr. Olivetti to participate in the sacrament as a violation of the moral law of God and the commitments of their covenants, oaths, and/or vows. I acknowledged that I had filed a complaint but said: "I am now writing to engage you on an alternative provision – namely, to see closure by seeking your public repentance." I concluded by saying: "Please examine yourselves, acknowledge your sin to turn from it, publicly repent and seek the peace of Zion."

In response I received an email and letter from Mr. Perrin (with the IRPC session included) on January 9th. In the email, Mr. Perrin stated: "I have no intention of entering into an exchange of thoughts or responses. This is my one and only response to you." While Mr. Perrin acknowledged in the attached letter: "You may have had correct information about us serving Jared. We did not hide it and informed his commission of our intention before it was done," he did not demonstrate a spirit of acknowledging sin and repentance but one of self-justification.

In seeking to respect his intent to not dialogue on these issues I did not provide a response to the many assertions he made in his letter. Rather, I appealed a second time again asking these men to examine

themselves, acknowledge their sin, publicly repent, and seek the peace of Zion. In my second appeal I included Mr. Nathan Eshelman as he is currently serving as the GLG moderator and because he is, to my knowledge, the chairman of the committee that GLG appointed to work with the session. Given Mr. Wilburn's December 6th communication that the session would not engage with me (which was reaffirmed again on January 9th), and Mr. Perrin's definitive statement of not responding, it's certainly no violation of charity to assume I'll likely not get a response to my second appeal. I would happily receive notification from them of their intent to publicly acknowledge and repent of their sin.

On the basis of all of this, I am sadly compelled to institute a formal judicial process (see *Book of Discipline*, II.2.1, E-10) against Messrs. Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn by signing and submitting a charge of sin against them. In so doing I cite the following provision:

"If the sin is known generally, and therefore cannot be solved privately, charges may be taken directly to the appropriate church court" (*Book of Discipline*, I.2.5, E-4).

If there is a pending judicial response and/or action by the GLG Presbytery regarding the action to allow Mr. Olivetti to participate in the Lord's Supper that is unknown, I would likely be content to defer to that.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kyle Borg', written in a cursive style.

Kyle Borg

PS: Below is the formal charge of sin, and included are a number of the communications noted in the evidence list.

To the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America,

In accordance with Form 21 "Charge of Sin," **Your informant respectfully states that Messrs. Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn, ruling elders under your jurisdiction, are believed to be guilty of serious sin, contrary to the Word of God and to the profession of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in that Messrs. Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn on December 3-4, 2022 at Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church, did knowingly and willingly permit one lawfully suspended from the privileges of membership to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and Messrs. Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn ought to be proceeded against by your court to determine whether or not the charge is true.**



Pastor Kyle Borg

January 9, 2023

Date

List of Witness: 1) Gary McNamee, 2) Jonathan Parnell, 3) Andrew Silva, 4) Steve Sturm, 5) Tom Pinson, 6) Jared Olivetti, 7) Daniel Perrin, 8) Sam Carr, 9) Josh Karshen, 10) Matt Wilburn, 11) Ben Larson, and 12) Nathan Eshelman.

List of Evidence: 1) Minutes and correspondences of the Olivetti Judicial Commission (chmn. Gary McNamee), 2) Minutes of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church, 3) First Letter of Appeal (January 7, 2023), 4) Email and "Response" letter from Mr. Daniel Perrin (January 9, 2023), 5) Second Letter of Appeal (January 9, 2023), and 6) Complaint to GLG from Pastor Kyle Borg (December 16, 2022).

Notice of Additional Evidence

Pursuant to the provision of the *Book of Discipline*: "If additional witnesses or new evidence are discovered, the accused shall be informed and further time given him or her to prepare a defense" (II.2.3, E-11), I am giving notice of new evidence to be listed with the aforementioned on this day, January 20, 2023.

1. Recording of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church morning worship service on December 11, 2022.
2. Recording of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church morning worship service on January 1, 2023.

January 7, 2023

To the IRPC Session (and Mr. Daniel Perrin),

Having already given notice and filed a complaint with the GLG Presbytery regarding the lawfulness of your December 3rd and 4th decision to allow Mr. Olivetti to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I am now writing to engage you on an alternative provision — namely, to seek closure by seeking your public repentance.

IRPC's action on September 30, 2022 was determined by the GLG Presbytery to be out of order and, therefore, you remain members and officers under the jurisdiction of the RPCNA. As such, you (and every elder in the RPCNA) are responsible to exercise oversight for the worship and fellowship of the church in a manner that adheres to what has been solemnly adopted by this denomination.

If your consciences forbade you from complying with the authoritative determinations of the courts of the church, you had every opportunity and provision of help by your Presbytery to seek an honorable exit from the obligations you are bound to by covenant and oath. By that means, a way of escape was afforded to you by the shepherding ministry of those who will give an account, in part, on your behalf. Unfortunately, without the appearance of wisdom or discernment, you have rejected righteousness and sought sin.

Your reckless and rebellious behavior is a serious violation of the law of God as revealed in the Scriptures and explained by the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, which has been received by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America as a part of our fundamental law. The seriousness of your offense is demonstrated in that on December 3-4, 2022 by admitting a member to the Lord's Table who is lawfully suspended from the privileges of membership, you have:

- Violated the second commandment by failing to keep pure the religious worship and ordinances that God has instituted by treating said ordinances with contempt (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 108-109, *Covenant of Communication Membership* #4, and

Queries for Ordination/Installation #9).

- Violated the third commandment by failing to keep your lawful covenants, oaths, and/or vows found in the Covenant of Communicant Membership and Queries for Ordination and Installation, together with a failure to use the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in a holy and reverent way (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 112-113, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #s 4, 5, and 6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #s 8, and 9).
- Violated the fourth commandment in that your unlawful and sinful actions took place on the Lord's Day during the worship of the church, as superiors you countenanced the sin of inferiors on the Lord's Day and during the worship of the church, and by engaging in careless and negligent performance of your duties (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 117-119 and 151, and *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #s 5 and 6).
- Violated the fifth commandment as inferiors toward the superior courts of the church as you did not show honor and due reverence nor give willing obedience to lawful commands and counsels of superiors, and as superiors toward inferiors you did not act in a way to bring blessing to your inferiors, you did not provide for things necessary to soul and body but left others to physical and spiritual danger, and did not preserve the authority which God has put upon you through your unjust and remiss behavior (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 124, 127-130, and 151, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #s 4 and 6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #s 8 and 9).
- Violated the sixth commandment because in rebellion to the authority of Jesus Christ and the lawful exercise of the keys of the kingdom you did not endeavor to preserve your lives or the lives of others but participated in that which may tend toward the destruction of the life of another (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 134-136, 173, and 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #8).
- Violated the eighth commandment by not being diligent in your calling, and dealing unjustly and unfaithfully in a matter of trust (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 140-141,

Covenant of Communicant Membership #6, and Queries for Ordination/Installation #8).

- Violated the ninth commandment by not showing concern or regard for the name of Jesus Christ, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church, Mr. Jared Olivetti, or yourselves, by not keeping your lawful promises made by covenant, oath, and/or vow, and by passing an unjust sentence (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 143-145, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #s 4 and 6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #s 8 and 9).

The character of this offense is public in its very nature and, on that account, cannot be solved privately. While it would be appropriate to take a charge of sin directly to the courts of the church (see *Book of Discipline*, I.2.5, E-4), if procedure can be set aside for a personal appeal then I am content to that end.

Brothers, as we wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life we are to show mercy to some by snatching them out of the fire. Your sin was avoidable, and so too is the just judgment of sin through the blood of the eternal covenant of the one who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Please examine yourselves, acknowledge your sin to turn from it, publicly repent and seek the peace of Zion.

A Servant of Christ,



January 9, 2023

Dear Mr. Borg,

I appreciate your appeal to us and need to respond to set things straight. I am writing representing only myself, however the rest of the session is in a similar place.

I and we can't confess to your annotated list of sins because they do not apply to this situation, and really become a ridiculous accusation. It would be much easier to deal with your concerns if you were to focus on the real issue and not come up with a distracting list of supposed sins. This seems to be what you did with Jared Olivetti and then accuse him with not being repentant when he cannot confess to sins he did not commit.

The list of charges is more about you than about me/us.

*There is foolishness in piling on charge after charge that is stretching the reality of the situation. If you want to challenge me with my sinfulness that is one thing. I fail to fully love the Lord with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength. Your list inadequately showed that sin, and it is a sin that I regularly confess to the Lord. I am growing in my love and faithful submission to Him, but I do fall short. If that is your concern, then I fully and humbly accept your challenge and will go again before the Savior to confess my imperfect love for Him. Thankfully I am growing in the love, but I have a long way to go, and I ache over my failures.

*This list is more about your arrogant attempt to exert your authority than it is about exposing my sin. This is not what church discipline should be about.

*Kyle, this list of enumerating sins is exactly what Jesus condemned in the Pharisees when He condemned them for adding more laws, and expanding God's law, thus adding to their burdens, making it impossible for them to keep the law. I pray that your heart doesn't also reflect the pharisees' hearts that Jesus also condemned. The glory of Christ and the peace of His church is not reflected at all by what you have written. It is time for your self-examination.

*This list is not about things our session needs to confess, but rather about your attempt to demonstrate your authority and to impose it upon us and others who might anger you. Your process has caused great damage within our congregation, and in the lives of many who were already struggling over the sad and sinful circumstance surrounding Immanuel Church.

Kyle, you have violated our session by never attempting to understand or adequately address the circumstances that you have so soundly denounced.

*As far as I know you have not reached out to any of us to find out what has actually happened and why. In Matthew 18 Jesus sets out a pattern of dealing with offenses and sin that begins with going to the offender to find his side of the story. You have rejected the pattern because you say it is public sin and therefore there is no need to privately confront. I have witnessed this repeatedly over the years by people who want to short cut the process and move immediately to judgment and condemnation. It just doesn't reflect the love of Jesus or the way He dealt with sinners. Kyle you need to do better than this the next time you pursue a sinner. Kyle, you totally missed the real issue, and have buried it in your long list of sinful offenses.

*You have missed the what and why in your attempt to assert your importance and your authority. The real issue is not one of sinful disregard for the authority over us, but rather a difference in understanding how to apply your Blue Book's authority. Your Book of Confessions has some contradictions, and one of those happens to be in who has authority over the sacraments as they are protected and celebrated under session authority. The issue is not one of sinful disregard for authority, but rather how to interpret the contradictions in the Blue Book. In your failure to understand the underlying issue you have accused innocent men without giving them due process of arguing their actions.

*You have totally ignored our repeated appeals to the commission overseeing Jared for help in caring for him and the congregation. We repeatedly begged (literally) them for relief for a congregation and a congregant who are suffering greatly. We also begged them for relief from the position that they had placed us in of having no way out of our situation without sinning. Either by disobeying their authority or violating a deserving brother who greatly needed the blessing of the sacrament. Their response at least twice was to ignore our concerns and to fail to help us to resolve the predicament of sinful responses that they had placed us in. Your charges just don't fit because they don't apply to the real issue at hand. Your attempt at redirecting this issue to one of your authority is wrong and damaging.

Kyle, there is another issue that I need to address. I have been told, although I have not seen it myself that you posted on a social media site a quote from Jude 8 that was to apply to us and your opinion of our session. I do have a facebook account that seldom gets used and on which I never post, but beyond that I am not on social media. Did you publish Jude 8 or something similar and was it intended toward our session, even if you didn't specifically mention us by name? That was slanderous and a grievous offense against our session if that is correct. One problem is that you failed to look at the next verse (9-11) where the angel Gabriel in facing off with Satan but would not slander him. If you did post this our session deserves a public apology and correction of the offense.

*Further, you have violated the direct teaching of St. Paul in 1 Timothy 5:19-20 where he instructs Timothy to not entertain charges against elders who rule well without others to collaborate the charges. You may have had correct information about us serving Jared. We did not hide it and informed his commission of our intention before it was done. However, without clear collaborative evidence of the what and why you violated godly elders and the clear warning from the Apostle Paul.

*Further you condemned us without knowing anything about our session. You didn't care to find out. I have been a pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America for 46 years, of high reputation having pastored faithfully and obediently. The three ruling elders are godly men who are young and inexperienced but willing to step into the disaster of a congregation left without leadership as a result of the RPCNA's careless discipline of the church. Those three elders are faithful and were willing to step into a disastrous situation although they were in over their heads. They have been faithful and wise. I was called out of retirement to step into the church situation after they had declared themselves to be no longer part of the RPCNA. We have been working to knit the congregation back together after it was on the brink of unraveling and closing. It has been difficult, and we have regularly looked to the commissions for help but

mostly they have left us with a lack of clarity and an impossible situation to work through. We have worked diligently to do what God has called us to do in shepherding this congregation through the disaster that has become part of the cost of the sin done within the congregation.

*You have violated Immanuel Church, along with some others in the denomination. You have been guilty of abusing church discipline. Over almost a half century of working in Presbyterian polity I have watched how church discipline is more often misused and even the cause of spiritual abuse. It is either ignored as is often seen in the mainline churches, or it is applied legalistically, without love, and without any meaningful means of recovering repentant sinners. What I have observed is that both groups congratulate themselves for their faithful protection of those under their authority. It really has been seldom that I have seen church discipline that is balanced with love, a concern for recovery, and a protection of the glory of God. What seems to come out is an emphasis on the punitive. That balance is lacking in your process, and I challenge you to do some serious soul searching.

Kyle, I beg of you to consider our situation and what it requires of us to care for this congregation and to sit under what feels like oppressive discipline. This letter comes to you through my tears, literally. Tears for our situation, and tears for having to write such a difficult letter. It isn't my style, but I am doing it out of concern for you and the purity of the church. I am also having tears (literally I had to stop in my writing of this letter) for you, for the coldness of your heart, for your willingness to spiritually abuse in the name of discipline, and for the way you blur the love of Jesus in your desire to impose your authority, under the guise of appropriate punishment, even though it is being done inappropriately.

Kyle, in conclusion I am asking that you do several things:

1. That as you read and consider this letter that you ask God to show you places where you need to confess your sin and the sin of unfair and unbiblical discipline. Please pray as you read.
2. That you make a public apology for slandering our session
3. That you pray for us the session and the congregation. I don't mean a quick prayer, but to really pray for us. On Saturday, January 21st we are having a day of prayer and fasting where we will again confess the corporate and private sin of the congregation, Where we will beg God's forgiveness of the sins done to individual families and their children, and for the sin done to other individuals. We are inviting back those who have been injured, as much as we can, to join us in this day. We are also going to each of the ones we know of who we have offended as well as those who have offended us that we might honor the Lord in our response to them. This is still a work in progress but please pray for us as we go through this arduous process of trying to honor the Lord. It will still take months, but we are already in that process.
4. That on the 21st you join us in our day of prayer and fasting. Perhaps you could gather some of your congregation to pray as we are praying.
5. That you commit to pray for Jared. He has been a faithful pastor who has found himself in a horrible place. Please pray for him as he struggles to understand his responsibility, what God expects of him, and how to find a path through all of this.

6. Finally that you might find a way where we can meet together as brothers in the Lord Jesus to set things right between you and our congregation. I would even invite you to preach in our pulpit for the purpose of healing and reconciliation, and to proclaim to the community at large the glory of God as we work to put back together a badly broken congregation, and a sadly smeared reputation of the church. Although I am offering this without the knowledge of the session, or their permission i would work to make this invitation happen.

In tears, your brother in Christ, Rev. Dan Perrin

January 9, 2023

To the IRPC Session (and Mr. Daniel Perrin and Mr. Nathan Eshelman),

Mr. Perrin, thank you for your response. It gives tremendous clarity, and for that I am appreciative. I don't know if the others agree with the substance of what you communicated, but in absence of any other communication, now or later, I will assume their silence is agreement.

The email accompanying your letter indicates that you have no intention of "entering into an exchange of thoughts or responses." Respectfully, upon your stated intention I will not engage you in a back-and-forth on your response, except to say it's unfortunate how grossly misled you seem to be. While I will respect your wish to not engage in an exchange, nevertheless, my conscience is bound to appeal to you all for a second time. On this account, I have added Mr. Nathan Eshelman to this communication as he is the current moderator of GLG, and chairman of the GLG committee tasked with working with you.

This is now the second time I am appealing to you. I will again say that while I have already given notice and filed a complaint with the GLG Presbytery regarding the lawfulness of your December 3rd and 4th decision to allow Mr. Olivetti to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I am now writing to engage you on an alternative provision — namely, to seek closure by seeking your public repentance.

IRPC's action on September 30, 2022 was determined by the GLG Presbytery to be out of order and, therefore, you remain members and officers under the jurisdiction of the RPCNA. As such, you (and every elder in the RPCNA) are responsible to exercise oversight for the worship and fellowship of the church in a manner that adheres to what has been solemnly adopted by this denomination.

If your consciences forbade you from complying with the authoritative determinations of the courts of the church, you had every opportunity and provision of help by your Presbytery to seek an honorable exit from the obligations you are bound to by covenant and

oath. By that means, a way of escape was afforded to you by the shepherding ministry of those who will give an account, in part, on your behalf. Unfortunately, without the appearance of wisdom or discernment you have rejected righteousness and sought sin.

Your reckless and rebellious behavior is a serious violation of the law of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and explained by the *Westminster Larger Catechism* which has been received by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America as a part of our fundamental law. The seriousness of your offense is demonstrated in that on December 3-4, 2022 by admitting a member to the Lord's Table who is lawfully suspended from the privileges of membership, you have:

- Violated the second commandment by failing to keep pure the religious worship and ordinances that God has instituted by treating said ordinances with contempt (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 108-109, *Covenant of Communication Membership #4*, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation #9*).
- Violated the third commandment by failing to keep your lawful covenants, oaths, and/or vows found in the *Covenant of Communicant Membership and Queries for Ordination and Installation*, together with a failure to use the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in a holy and reverent way (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 112-113, *Covenant of Communicant Membership #s 4, 5, and 6*, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation #s 8, and 9*).
- Violated the fourth commandment in that your unlawful and sinful actions took place on the Lord's Day during the worship of the church. As superiors you countenanced the sin of inferiors on the Lord's Day and during the worship of the church, and you were careless and negligent in the performance of your duties (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 117-119 and 151, and *Covenant of Communicant Membership #s 5 and 6*).
- Violated the fifth commandment as inferiors toward the superior courts of the church as you did not show honor and due reverence nor give willing obedience to lawful commands and counsels of superiors. As superiors toward inferiors you did not act in a way to bring

blessing to your inferiors, you did not provide for things necessary to soul and body but left others to physical and spiritual danger, and you did not preserve the authority which God has put upon you through your unjust and remiss behavior (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 124, 127-130, and 151, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #s 4 and 6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #s 8 and 9).

- Violated the sixth commandment because in rebellion to the authority of Jesus Christ and the lawful exercise of the keys of the kingdom you did not endeavor to preserve your lives or the lives of others but participated in that which may tend toward the destruction of the life of another (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 134-136, 173, and 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #8).
- Violated the eighth commandment by not being diligent in your calling, and dealing unjustly and unfaithfully in a matter of trust (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 140-141, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #s 4 and 6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #8).
- Violated the ninth commandment by not showing concern or regard for the name of Jesus Christ, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church, Mr. Jared Olivetti, or yourselves, and by not keeping your lawful promises made by covenant, oath, and/or vow, and by passing an unjust sentence (see *Westminster Larger Catechism* Qs. 143-145, *Covenant of Communicant Membership* #s 4 and 6, and *Queries for Ordination/Installation* #s 8 and 9).

The character of this offense is public in its very nature and, on that account, cannot be solved privately. While it would be appropriate to take a charge of sin directly to the courts of the church (see *Book of Discipline*, I.2.5, E-4), if procedure can be set aside for a personal appeal then I am content to that end if you walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received.

Brothers, as we wait for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life we are to show mercy to some by snatching them out of the fire. Your sin was avoidable. Avoidable

too is the just judgment of sin through the blood of the eternal covenant of the one who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Please examine yourselves, acknowledge your sin to turn from it, publicly repent and seek the peace of Zion.

A Servant of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kugel" followed by a stylized flourish.

December 16, 2022

To the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA,

The *Book of Discipline* states:

The Presbyterian form of government provides for a gradation of courts whereby the lower is answerable to the higher. A decision of the lower court is subject to review and correction by a higher court. Any member of the church may carry his or her case through the lower courts even to the highest court for adjudication (II.4.1, E-15).

The Complaint

Pursuant to this privilege, I am filing a complaint with the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery against the session of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church. *This complaint is relative to the action taken by the lower court on December 3, 2022 to admit Mr. Jared Olivetti to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper contrary to his lawful and continuing suspension by Synod from the privileges of church membership since March 10, 2022.*

In a communication on December 4, 2022 the session of Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church informed the Olivetti Commission of the following:

The session has carefully weighed the options and discussed the consequences. As we stated in our meeting, we feel trapped between either violating our consciences or acting against the ruling of the church. The session is of the mind that it is God-honoring for the elders and for the congregation to follow the examples set before in scripture, even if it is not in compliance with the rulings of the church leadership.

We understand this is not what is acceptable in the book of discipline. We understand what is at stake. What is at stake goes far beyond a pastor's credentials or a group of elders who may or may not be in good standing with a denomination. Our standing before the Lord is of the utmost importance.

Therefore, the session of IRPC has voted to allow Jared back to the Lord's table. As seen clearly in scripture, this decision falls on the local elders who have direct oversight and knowledge enough to speak confidently into this matter.

Provisions for Complaint

The right of complaint is reserved for “any interested persons” (II.4.3, E-15). My interest in this action pertains to my previous role in investigating Mr. Olivetti’s response to the sexual abuse situation at Immanuel RPC, and my participation in the orderly and lawful prosecution in the *Synod of the RPCNA vs Mr. Jared Olivetti* (March 8-10, 2022). The ecclesiastical trial that was done in accord with the Scriptures and the *Book of Discipline*, resulted in Mr. Olivetti’s proven guilt and lawful censure – the same censure the action of the Immanuel session knowingly and willingly circumvented on December 3, 2022. In addition to this, the Scriptures warn of the corporate danger that may befall the church when the ordinances are not kept in a worthy manner, see 1 Corinthians 11:30.

The *Book of Discipline* also requires that “the complainant shall give notice to the lower court within 30 days” (II.4.3, E-15). On December 15, 2022 I gave notice of my intent to complain to Messrs. Sam Carr, Josh Karshen, and Matt Wilburn, together with the clerk of GLG, Mr. Adam Kuehner. Mr. Kuehner confirmed the receipt of that notice and copied the GLG Moderator Mr. Nathan Eshelman.

Reasons for Complaint

The *Book of Discipline* directs that with the complaint, the complainant shall give “the reasons therefor” (II.4.3, E-15). The reason for this complaint is *because the aforementioned action of the Immanuel RPC session did not comport with the fundamental law or the law and order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, as Mr. Olivetti is under the lawful censure of the Synod of the RPCNA having been suspended from the privileges of membership.* This is evidenced in the following ways:

1. The action of the Immanuel RPC session pertained to a member who was suspended by the Synod of the RPCNA and whose suspension is not under the jurisdiction of the local session (see e.g. RPT 30.3, DCG 2.1, 2.6, 2.9, 4.8, 8.1, 8.12, BOD I.1.6, *Minutes of Synod 2021*, *Cumulative Minutes of the SJC*, and *Minutes of Synod 2022*).
2. The action of the Immanuel RPC session was not done under or in accord or with the consent of the court that imposed the censure contrary to the fundamental law and the law and order of the church (see e.g. WCF 31.3, WLC 109, RPT 30.3, DCG 2.1, 2.6, 4.7, 4.8, 8.1, 8.12, BOD I.4.3, I.6.2, I.6.6, II.3.13, and *Minutes of Synod 2022*).
3. The action of the Immanuel RPC session permitted one who is disqualified from participating in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to observe it contrary to the fundamental law and the law and order of the

church (see e.g. WCF 29.8, 30.3, WLC 109, 173, DCG 4.7, 4.8, BOD I.4.3, I.6.2, DPW 3.11, *Cumulative Minutes of the SJC*, and *Minutes of Synod 2022*).

4. The action of the Immanuel RPC session threatened the spiritual welfare of Mr. Olivetti and the church contrary to the fundamental law and the law and order of the church (see e.g. WCF 29.8, 30.3, WLC 173, RPT 30.1, DCG 4.7, BOD I.1.4, and DPW 3.11).

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* states (*emphases added*):

Wherefore, all ignorant and *ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto* (WCF 29.8).

Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, *and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders* (WCF 30.3).

It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: *which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word* (WCF 31.3).

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* states (*emphases added*):

Q. 109: What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?

A: ...all *neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.*

Q. 173: May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, be kept from it?

A: Such as are found to be ignorant or *scandalous*, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, *may and ought to be kept from that Sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his Church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.*

The *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* states (*emphases added*):

Our Lord commanded church discipline, so no church which fails to exercise it where needed can hope for His blessing (RPT 30.1).

Official discipline is to be administered by the courts of the Church, not by elders individually. Such counsel and discipline should be received in a spirit of Christian submission (RPT 30.3)

The *Directory for Church Government* states (*emphases added*):

A congregation is organized *on the basis of the standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church and in conformity with its law and order* (2.1, D-4).

A congregation has certain other responsibilities among which are [...] to be obedient in the Lord to the law and order of the Church (2.6, D-5).

A particular responsibility of the session is to care for the spiritual interest of the congregation and of each member. *Therefore, it shall maintain the ordinances of public worship in accordance with the principles of the church* (4.7, D-29).

The session is subordinate to the higher courts and shall be governed by their decisions (4.8, D-29).

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America is the highest court of the church [...] It is responsible for the continuing reformation of the church in maintaining the subordinate standards of the church in harmony with the Scriptural truth and order. *Its decisions are final, but its authority is limited by its subordinate standards* (8.1, D-38).

Synod, however, *may assume original jurisdiction over all matters affecting the purity and welfare of the church, and may, without complaint or appeal, investigate and adjudicate any matter requiring its attention* (8.12, D-41).

The *Book of Discipline* states (*emphases added*):

A church that does not follow our Lord's commands regarding church discipline will certainly lose His blessing, deteriorating more and more in doctrine and in life (I.1.4, E-3).

Deposition – This is the disciplinary removal of an ordained officer of the church from his office. *It may also be accompanied by suspension from church privileges* (I.4.1(d), E-5).

The session may discipline a teaching elder as a member of the congregation, but its authority is limited to the censures of admonition and rebuke. *Any censures of suspension, deposition, or excommunication shall remain with the presbytery or the court holding his credentials* (I.4.3(c), E-7).

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 (I.6.2, E-8).

Restoration of a person under censure *should be made only by the court that imposed the sentence or with its advice and consent* (I.6.6, E-8).

If adjudged guilty on any or all counts, the court shall fix the degree of censure to be administered (II.3.13, E-15).

The *Directory for Public Worship* states (*emphases added*):

Only those who have been baptized and are *communicant members in good standing* in a true branch of Christ's visible church are to partake of the Lord's Supper. *Persons whose manner of life is notably inconsistent with their Christian profession, or who are unknown to the Session in charge of the Table, are not to be invited to commune* (3.11, F-13).

The Actions of Synod

"We recommend that Synod assume original jurisdiction in the matter of GLG and Immanuel, and the moderator appoint a seven-man judicial commission to address this matter" (see *Minutes of Synod 2021*).

"The SJC voted unanimously by a roll call vote to depose Mr. Olivetti. The SJC then voted unanimously by a roll call vote to suspend Mr. Olivetti from church privileges, accompanying the censure of deposition" (*Cumulative Minutes of the SJC*).

Communication #22-13 a complaint alleging that "the suspension of Mr. Olivetti is unjust because it fails to meet the standard required by our Constitution" was not sustained (see *Minutes of Synod 2022*).

"That Synod assign oversight of the repentance, reconciliation, and restoration of Mr. Olivetti to a 5-man commission consisting of 2 of the current SJC commissioners (we recommend Mr. Andrew Silva & Mr. Tom Pinson) and 3 other men, all to be appointed by the 2022 Synod Moderator with one of the IRPC ruling elders as a consultative member" (*Minutes of Synod 2022*).

Therefore, I am submitting this complaint to the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery against the session of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church due to the action taken by the lower court to admit Mr. Jared Olivetti to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper contrary to his lawful and continuing suspension by Synod from the privileges of church membership. This action is contrary to the fundamental law and and the law and order of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Borg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "B".

Pastor Kyle Borg

Addendum of Clarification: This complaint is not submitted to preclude other alternative constitutional methods of review and correction of the lower court by the higher court.

SOUTHFIELD REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Where Christ is the center of it all

January 12, 2023

Dear Fathers and Brethren:

The Southfield RPC Session hereby transmits the attached complaint to presbytery. We welcome presbytery's involvement in this case, and have postponed the trial until after the spring meeting. If further comment is needed regarding the substance of the complaint, we are happy to share additional details at the meeting. However, in order to protect the complainant's public reputation, we would prefer to share these details either in executive session or to a committee/commission appointed by the court to adjudicate this matter.

The SRPC Session

Elder Jon Hughes (clerk)

Elder John Kim

Pastor Adam Kuehner (moderator)

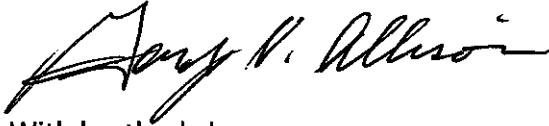
Gary V. Allison
4848 Fairway Ridge South
West Bloomfield, MI 48323

January 3, 2022

Dear Session of Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church,

I hereby complain to the Presbytery within 30 days against Session's December 8, 2022 decision. I humbly submit the enclosed complaint with grounds to the Moderator and Clerk of Session (The Book of Discipline II.4.3).

In accord with the Directory for Church Government Chapter 8, Section 11, I humbly submit to the Session this complaint addressed to the Presbytery against the Session, and I request the Session transfer this complaint to the Presbytery.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary V. Allison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "G".

With brotherly love,
Gary V. Allison

To Adam M. Kuehner, Clerk of Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America:

And now, this thirtieth day of December A.D. 2022, comes Gary V. Allison and complains against the action of the Session of Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church on December 8, 2022, to issue an accusation of sin and schedule a trial for Saturday, January 21, 2023.

In bringing this complaint I affirm that I believe that the Session has erred and that this error is serious; that I have tried to understand the Session's point of view; that I have seriously examined, in prayer before the Lord, my willingness to be in subjection to my brothers in Christ; and that I have made a serious effort to correct the error short of entering a complaint.

In support of this complaint I set forth the following grounds:

1. The charge alleges five ways that I have sinned against God but does not state one specific instance and the “time, place and circumstances of its commission” as required in The Book of Discipline II.2.1. In addition, both Form 21 and Form 22 (H-20 and 21) require that a charge or accusation of sin give specific instance and the date on which a person has sinned against God.
2. The evidence for the alleged charge is a list of family members and one ruling elder who are not witnesses of the things alleged. One family member requested to testify is not a Christian and has lived elsewhere for many years with little contact. None of the witnesses listed has followed Matthew 18:15–17 and personally brought these allegations to me as our Lord requires and which is the “orderly manner for dealing with sin in His church” (The Book of Discipline, I.1.2 and I.2.1–4).
3. These allegations are based on false things my wife says in her sinful opposition to my patient and loving guidance and direction for daily living, including family worship, eating as a family, financial stewardship, education of our children, and entertainment, but the Session has not investigated the allegations as required in The Book of Discipline I.3.2. If the Session properly investigated these allegations, it would find that she has been disregarding and violating the moral law as it is taught in Scripture and by the church and as I have lovingly brought to her attention (The Book of Discipline I.1.6). Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:16–17, 16:18–20; Psalm 45:6–7; Proverbs 24:23–26; John 7:24; I Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 1:8–9. Larger Catechism #144–145.
4. The Session has brought a charge based on false statements from my wife, “who manifests malice” toward me consistently, both privately and openly in the presence of our children, which The Book of Discipline II.1.2 forbids.
5. The Session has instituted formal process without evidence being presented that the means of reconciliation referred to in The Book of Discipline section 1, chapter 2 have been tried as required in The Book of Discipline II.1.1.
6. The Session has instituted formal judicial process without “evidence sufficient to warrant a trial” and without determining that “Christ’s rule (Matt. 18:15–16) has been followed,” both of which are required in The Book of Discipline II.2.2.

7. Requiring family members to testify against the head of the family concerning matters of which they have no knowledge, is not right and will harm the family instead of strengthening it, which can only be done by addressing the actual sins, which the Session has ignored.

I humbly ask the Presbytery to annul or reverse the action of the Session of Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church on December 8, 2022, to issue an accusation of sin and schedule a trial without following the requirements of the Bible, our confessional standards, and The Book of Discipline.

 _____, Complainant
Gary V. Allison

Date: December 30, 2022

Credential Transfer Request

1 message

James Faris <jas.faris@gmail.com>

Sat, Dec 3, 2022 at 5:06 PM

To: David Hanson <davidrpts@hotmail.com>, Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>, Adam Niess <adamniess@gmail.com>

Dear Brothers of the CCC and AIC,

The Lord has graciously granted me nearly twenty years of service as a pastor in the RPCNA. All of those have been served in this presbytery. I am thankful to have been born, baptized, raised, married, ordained in this denomination. My children have been born and baptized here. Elizabeth and I are thankful for all that the Lord has done here and the people the Lord has used in our lives, including you. Most of all, we are thankful for the Lord himself. He's made us and redeemed us in Christ. He's worked his grace in our hearts and given us newness of life. He's given us his word to be believed and obeyed. We have never been more thankful for his word and Spirit than now.

Seeking to be faithful to his word, the time has come for me to depart from the RPCNA and to move my credentials to Zionsville Fellowship Church in Zionsville, Indiana. This independent church is willing to receive me and my credentials as a presbyterian pastor. I remain presbyterian in my convictions, but at this time, I am not sure what presbyterian assembly I will join next. I do know that I will no longer be part of the RPCNA. You know well the disagreements I have with many actions of the RP church in recent years and how truly grieved I am over these. I can no longer be under her jurisdiction, and so need to move elsewhere now, even if not to another presbyterian body immediately. I still love the RP church and pray for her sanctification through the risen Savior.

Please send a letter with my credentials to [Drew Hunter](#), pastor of [Zionsville Fellowship](#) (9090 Oak St., Zionsville, IN 46077).

In Christ,
James

GLG 23-8

February 16, 2023

To the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery,

On December 10, 2022 the Ad Interim Commission of the GLG Presbytery determined to "send to the full Presbytery meeting in March 2023, the request of James Faris (former Teaching Elder at Second RPC, Indianapolis) for his credentials to be sent to Zionsville Fellowship Church in Zionsville, Indiana."

As the GLG Presbytery will deliberate and decide upon this request at its upcoming full meeting of Presbytery, it may be useful to have the following information:

Appended below is an email from Mr. Faris which was distributed to a list of people, including communicant members in the RPCNA, sent on January, 11, 2023, as Immanuel RPC was preparing to celebrate the Lord's Supper on February 5, 2023, and administer the Supper to Mr. Olivetti in defiance of the ruling of Synod of the RPCNA. I here provide Mr. Faris's original email in its entirety for your information.

Sincerely before our Lord,



Keith Evans
Servant of the Church, RPTS
Presbytery of the Alleghenies, TE

Fwd: Invitation to encourage Immanuel

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Jan 11, 2023 at 9:44 AM -0500

Dear brothers and sisters,

You are those who signed the complaint to synod last summer regarding matters pertaining to Immanuel. I write today especially those of you who live in Indiana.

I'm writing to invite you to encourage the Immanuel congregation in West Lafayette by joining them for worship with communion on February 5.

This beleaguered congregation has endured many hardships over the last couple of years, and they have held fast to Jesus Christ. My family and I have worshiped with them on a number of occasions and have seen the joy they have expressed in the midst of trial. Their faith, hope, and love abound and they continue to reach others in the community. Yet, it is a lonely season for these saints. So, I promised them that I would recruit friends to come and encourage them in their service to the Lord if they would help coordinate a fellowship meal after the worship service.

Worship is at 10:00 a.m. on February 5, 2023 at 2212 Yeager Road, West Lafayette, IN 47906. Interim Pastor Dan Perrin will be preaching.

Those who come are invited to participate in a pitch-in lunch after the morning service. It is not the week of the month for the congregation's regular fellowship meal, but many from the congregation will also be joining those who are guests for lunch. Please bring enough for yourself plus a little to share if you wish to stay.

Some of you may have questions about the current state of affairs. The congregation has voted to leave the RPCNA over disagreements of how ecclesiastical problems should be addressed (1 Pet. 4:8) and what it looks like to pursue a culture of gospel grace (Eph. 4:1-3; Jude 21). Yet, they have sought to work with the remaining commissions and committees of the RPCNA as much as they are able in order to live at peace with all men as far as it depends on them (Rom. 12:18). You may be aware that their pastor, Jared Olivetti, was barred from the Lord's Supper by the RPCNA in addition to being defrocked last year. Jared and his defense refused to attend the ecclesiastical trial because of what was obviously a kangaroo court.

Recognizing the gross injustice of the proceedings of the synod last year, many of Immanuel's officers and members objected to communing under the requirements of the RPCNA. So, for the peace and unity of the body,

the congregation had ceased to celebrate the Lord's Supper altogether for more than six months. Though the local elders believed Jared could be admitted to the Lord's Supper, they did not exercise their jurisdictional rights to admit him to the table out of deference to the RPCNA courts, even after the congregation voted to leave the denomination. It was a noble attempt to live peaceably with all men while seeking to resolve matters of dispute.

In the spring of 2022, the Synod Judicial Commission had declared Jared guilty of specific offenses in a ecclesiastical court setting without any defense present and without any cross-examination of witnesses.

At synod last summer, the RPCNA assigned a commission to follow-up with Jared Olivetti. It has now heard all of the statements of confession Jared made before he was barred from the table (which the earlier commission refused to consider before the trial). The commission has compared those statements with the charges against him and found that they were glad for his responses.

Yet, even now, after more than six months of work has been done since synod, the follow-up commission still does not believe Jesus has a place for Jared at his table, but the commission cannot articulate any substantive reason why. They are incapable of telling or unwilling to tell Jared what he has done wrong and for which he has not repented. Nor are they able to say what he should do to repent to in order to be welcomed back to the Lord's Supper. They simply say that other as-yet-unknown persons are offended for as-yet-unknown offenses...and that the commission will get back to him later. This, in spite of Jared's clear willingness to meet with or hear from any who believe he has sinned against them.

What might be the problem? Well, it seems that for the current commission to allow Jared back to the table without some new statement of repentance would be to imply that the original judgment of the SJC and synod to ban him from the Lord's Supper was wrong. And if it were admitted that this judgment was wrong because of the flawed judicial process that was pursued, what about the other judgments against Jared? Is it possible that the whole case against him could crumble as it was constructed if this were to be acknowledged?

Or is the problem that the church has a fundamentally flawed understanding and practice of justice, redemption, forgiveness, and reconciliation? Or is the law of God being twisted in ways never intended by the Lawgiver? Or are there some involved in the process who would rather see vengeance than redemption? Or has a fear of man's opinion overtaken the desire to please God? Or some combination of some of these and/or other factors? Perhaps the Lord alone knows, but something is seriously amiss.

Whatever the case, the RPCNA continues to ban Jared from Jesus' table without valid reason. This injustice harms not only one man, but a whole congregation. While the RPCNA has constantly dangled a carrot of hope that restoration is just ahead, it has regularly moved the goalposts. Job stated in Job 6:14 that: "He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty." Is the RPCNA forsaking the fear of the Almighty by withholding the basic kindness God shows to his people? Is the church unable to feature the grace with which it has been entrusted?

The Immanuel elders who have walked closely with Jared and who have examined the claims against him have seen that the commission's ruling is unjust and is contrary to the word of God. Knowing that, like the apostles of old, they must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29), they exercised their rightful jurisdiction over the

congregation and admitted Jared to the Lord's Supper starting in December 2022. The congregation again began celebrating God's grace in this way, proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

Abraham Kuyper once wrote: "Only in churches which take their stand in Calvinism [biblical Christianity], do we find that spiritual independence which enables the believer to oppose, if need be, and for God's sake, even the most powerful office-bearer in his church. Only he who personally stands before God on his own account, and enjoys an uninterrupted communion with God, can properly display the glorious wings of liberty." The Lord has stood beside and strengthened the leaders of this congregation to follow Jesus, even in the face of opposition.

As many of you know, I myself (and others) have left the RPCNA, in part, because of the gross injustices of this situation. It fits a pattern of other legalistic actions and attitudes in the denomination that focus on rules and structure instead of cultivating the spiritual life of the church. Jesus gives strong warnings against those who shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces (Matt. 23:1-15). Elders are charged to prioritize bringing people to Jesus, not keeping people from Jesus. At the Lord's Supper, we get to celebrate this great privilege of bringing God's needy people to him and of seeing his kingdom strengthened and built.

Over the holidays, many of you enjoyed family meals together. Grandmothers and mothers were glad to have their family at the table. We also know that our matriarchs noticed with sadness who was absent from the holiday table in addition to rejoicing over those who were present. You can imagine Grandma's indignation if she were to learn that one member of the family had intentionally kept another member of the family away without justifiable reason. How much more indignant is Jesus Christ in such a situation? He died and rose again for his children. Jesus delights to have his repentant children at his table. He loves to see his people welcome one another as Christ has welcomed them (Rom. 15:7).

Obviously, the Immanuel congregation is moving forward in a new direction denominationally as they follow the Lord.

You may not know what to think of all of the decisions made by the various church courts. But, you can still take this opportunity to love and encourage your brothers and sisters in the Lord in a tangible way by joining them for worship to celebrate God's grace in Christ. They are your flesh and blood in the Lord who follow Jesus but have been isolated in many ways. Now is a wonderful time to come alongside and magnify the Lord with them (Psa. 34:3).

To help the congregation prepare, please let me know if you plan to come on February 5, and I will let the Immanuel elders and deacons know to expect you. An RSVP is not required of course, but it may help with planning. Finally, if you cannot call on the Lord with Immanuel in person, please call on him in prayer for the church there and for all involved.

In Christ,

James Faris

jas.faris@gmail.com

Communication with Recommendations

GLG 23-9

Fathers, Brethren, and now Sons,

In late 2019, numerous hidden acts of sexual sin by a single minor member of Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church began to be progressively discovered and considered by that member's authorities.

Of these acts, 4 were against individual minors whose families remained in the Immanuel Congregation, 4 were against individual minors whose families left the Immanuel Congregation as a result of the acts, and 7 were against individuals whose families were outside the Immanuel Congregation. One of the latter families has recently filed a lawsuit against the sinning member, his family, the IRPC Congregation, and the RPCNA.

By the middle of 2020 (some action regarding this was taken at a special meeting regarding the writings of then Christ Church Pastor Michael LeFebvre), the member's body of ecclesiastical authorities, that is, the IRPC Session (Jared Olivetti, moderator, David Carr, Keith Magill, Ben Larson, Nate Pfeiffer, and Zachary Blackwood) were aware of much detail of the sin, and realized that the extent of the problem was great enough to require the support of Presbytery to rightly resolve the matter.

During this entire process, the IRPC Session made several bad (i.e., enough to be accused and convicted of sin) decisions, primarily stemming from the moderator's remaining, and promoting direction, despite a severe personal conflict of interest, as well as his delay while attempting to personally and privately resolve the sin issues (no assertion is made here that there was delay in reporting sexual abuse to civil authorities quickly after discovered in April 2020) as more instances continued to progressively be revealed, rather than the timely involvement of the rest of the IRPC Session, and other help as needed.

As a result of these decisions, IRPC Session came into conflict with the original Presbytery committee sent to assist them.

As a result of this conflict, Presbytery appointed another group of Presbyters, confusingly calling it the Immanuel Judicial Commission, but with a committee's remit, that is, to investigate and recommend (rather than the usual practice of giving a "judicial commission" a remit of adjudicating a matter). I believe (apparently along with the Immanuel Congregation, a minority of other Presbyters, and several men who have left eldership as a result of this matter) that the evidence supports my conclusion that despite the delay, conflict of interest, and resulting undue influence of the moderator, the intent of these men was to rightly perform their duty without partiality or favor to any of their congregation.

The individuals most severely harmed by the actions of the sinning member are:

- the 15 (7 outside of RPCNA jurisdiction, but who nonetheless should of course be treated with great love and attempted restoration going forward) individuals against whom the sins were committed,
- their families (including two elders on the IRPC Session),
- the family of the sinning member (including the Pastor, perhaps the greatest of that family),
- and corporately, the whole Immanuel Congregation.

All of these individuals and families were severely harmed, and but for some of their failures in addressing the sin in a proper manner, innocent victims of the sin.

While the original Immanuel Judicial Commission openly claimed to be operating under partiality toward "victims," ("victim-centered approach, IJC Report, Page 2) they excluded from their definition most of the victims above, some of the most harmed, including the parents, grandparents and families of physical victims within the Session, the family of the sinning member, and the Immanuel Congregation itself, labeling as "victims" only the few (4, and included their immediate family members) who sought the

imposition of harsh penalties against the Session for sinfully mishandling the matter. Select persons of the extended group of victims were included, while others were severely restricted in their observation and participation (notably, elders raising their own significant, legitimate motives and actions – mitigating circumstances, or even to fellow Presbyters who would advocate on their behalf, were severely chided on the floor for doing so)

In addition to this unjust (centering consideration on the harm of only a very few of the most harmed victims), partiality toward a subjectively applied definition of victims, the “Judicial Commission,” exceeded its remit to investigate and report (while claiming not to exceed it – “these are only recommendations”), by making the procedure and wording of the recommendations in such a way as to (without attributing any bad intent to the IJC, which I don't believe they had) unduly influence Presbytery to the IJC's desired verdict for the IRPC Session.

That is, defining “repentance” outside of its recommendation in a parliamentary proceeding practically forced the unheard of penalty of self-suspension of all elders, prior to a trial (though they were each given, with inadequate time to prepare, 7 minutes to “address the report” of IJC, which time they all used to confess their sins, and in a case or two to also introduce – with fierce objection from the floor – some of the mitigating factors that led to their sins).

While confessions often should not include mitigating factors, which can be viewed as excuses, the procedural status of being ordered to resign without a trial in the upcoming recommendations, required a defense, since the usual expectation following confession of sin would be sentencing, at which point such considerations are appropriate.

This unusual and extraordinary procedure may have been due in part to the diverse remit, investigating the previous child abuse while at the same time judging the elders going forward, which likely caused confusion and conflation in the minds of Presbyters as to the difference between separate disciplinary matters of the minor child abuse and the mismanagement of the administration of discipline afterward.

I suggest that after these men's confessions, justice under the law and order of the RPCNA required public acceptance of the confession of sin, having presented the offenses and won our brothers, followed by either a) immediate sanctions by that Court (up to reprimand), or b) a trial for the purpose of sentencing for a higher sanction (e.g., suspension, deposition), where presumably aggravating and mitigating factors would have been heard and considered. The unusual procedural direction of the IJC prevented this from occurring.

After much wrangling (I will happily take much of the blame for that) on the floor of Presbytery, objecting to this procedure, some good shepherding by the Moderator of Presbytery, local elders under accusation, provisional elders, AIC, and the shepherding committee, things were moving in a direction to hear the Immanuel Congregation's pleas for help. However, the beginnings of a full trial as if the sin had not been confessed, and several complaints to Synod from both sides of the issue caused Synod to take original jurisdiction over the matter.

Synod took “original jurisdiction” (a civil legal term) after the defendants had already confessed to their offenses. After these men's confessions, justice under the law and order of the RPCNA still required public acceptance of the confession of sin, having presented the offenses and won our brothers, followed by only assessment of sanctions.

Rather than only sanctioning the admitted sinners of IRPC Session, a lengthy, extensive, and expensive to Christ's Kingdom, re-discovery and consideration of facts, from the underlying original matter of a sinning IRPC member ensued. We had won our brother(s), and the only just action remaining on the part of the Court was sentencing.

Beginning at the Presbytery meeting in which the IJC report was presented, the members of the Immanuel Congregation who had been excluded from the list of victims considered in the IJC's definition, begged for mercy (rather than demanded, as one source has accused them) through the minority Presbyters, wrote their own communications, and tried to express their need and desire for healing as victims to forgive, fully restore, and keep their own Session (along with much needed experience, knowledge, and love of and for the congregation).

Rather than hearing the cries for mercy of the innocent victims of Immanuel Congregation in the original matter, the higher courts prioritized stiff sanctions higher than those harmed by the Session's sins in the first place.

After nearly 3 years of pleading, losing all hope (wrong) that they could ever be allowed to restore their leaders and fully heal, the Immanuel Congregation and its new Session took matters into its own hands and attempted to leave the RPCNA outside the provisions of the Constitution.

Others in the dissenting minority who opposed our injustice through the Presbyterian system left the pastorate, their charge as elders, and the denomination itself.

They should have remained even in suffering, but like some of the families who were unable to reconcile with the initial sin, the mishandling Session, and the congregation, the congregation itself also gave-up on the Biblical and Presbyterian system.

One member of IRPC was caught in sin and has been treated (ironically, by the accused Session, and harmed Congregation, and not a few peers) with mercy and restoration. The remaining Immanuel Congregation, like a child to a parent, has taught us a valuable example of mercy and forgiveness. Some of the victims of the sin were caught in the sin of mishandling the manner. We cast the stones they deserved at them.

The corporate body of primary victims begged for (not demanded) mercy, repeatedly, and through a few voices in the minority of Presbytery and Synod, and this once strong congregation has given up on us in despair. Perhaps they, like Paul, remain alive beneath the stones. Let us repent of our lack of mercy, show mercy, and save the friends, mentors, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters of the Immanuel Congregation from death.

The Magill and Larson Family in particular, victims in every conceivable way, have behaved with great honor to Christ in this matter, and nonetheless had their own reputations incorrectly tarnished as a result of our actions. We should ask their forgiveness.

We should now take these men at their word of confession, as is our usual practice, and allow the Holy Spirit to convict them and restore as He directs. Some of them probably won't come back due to grief over the sin. Some over time may continue reconciliation efforts with those lost with results to the great glory and honor of God. The continued harm to the Pastor and his family as a result of the sin will most certainly continually drive him to his knees in private and public humiliation before the LORD and the culture.

Finally, with respect to the new IRPC Session, not under any discipline itself at the time, only one reference in Constitution suggests the possibility of denying membership privileges as a sanction, and even the SJC felt they had to provide explanation for using it. They unequivocally imply that Jared Olivetti is a believer by repeatedly so referring to him (i.e., "brother"). SJC has been at all times aware that:

- Jared Olivetti is a member of Immanuel RPC.
- Jared Olivetti is obligated by his vow of church membership to observe appointed sacraments.
- DCG 1.2 (D-2) indicates that in a regularly organized congregation it belongs to the session alone

- to admit to membership, of which communicant membership is a part.
- It is the duty from God and the Constitution of Sessions to admit members to the table. The Session (alone) is to fence the table under specific objective criteria, then leave the examination to the observers of the sacrament.
- The Constitution and God clearly give only the observer of communion the authority of self-examination of his or her own heart as to partaking in the sacrament.
- By ordering a Session not to do so, particularly upon their more intimate knowledge of whether a member is capable of their own duty of self-examination, Synod creates a conflict between the Session's known duty to permit believing members to observe the appointed sacraments, and a higher court's direction not to do so. Unless under excommunication, barring a member from the table is not according to the law and order of the Church, nor of God's law. This should be removed from the list of sanctions in the Constitution, to eliminate such confusion and conflict in the future.

This is the conflict. Surely all of you men, whom I know and love, with tears, can see that we have some sin in this matter. While the Immanuel Congregation has no voice with which to take its offense before its brother in person, I am certain that it has an offense against us for the above.

I beg you, let us make peace with our fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and friends at Immanuel. Let us not lose this congregation because they were innocent victims of sin. Everyone on both sides says it is impossible, but it is not. Will they not return if we accept their confessions and confess and repent ourselves? Will they not take us at our word and forgive and return, knowing they've won their brother? Will more stiff penalties for confessed sin advance the Crown and Covenant of Christ, while the body is rent?

Men, let us stand down. Let us give these injured and hurting believers shelter and mercy, not what they deserve. Let us not lose a brace of kinsmen. I want my kids to grow up in fellowship alongside them.

Recommendation 1: Complaints against Immanuel Session for serving communion to Jared Olivetti be referred to Synod 2023, with a recommendation of special mercy toward the Immanuel Congregation for their harm from the original sin and handling of the matter, that the sanctions against their former Session now be lifted, all related Synod committees and commissions be dismissed, and the matter be returned to Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

Recommendation 2: A 5 man-study committee be formed to propose amendment to the Constitution to remove denial of membership privileges as a possible sanction, absent excommunication, and to suggest other changes to better distinguish between procedures for trial of actual charges, and sentencing for confessed charges.

Recommendation 3: Receive this communication and forward to Synod 2023, asking their mercy as well.

For Christ's Crown & Covenant,

James M. Odom, Clerk of Session
Sparta Reformed Presbyterian Church

GLG 23-11A

To the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery,

On February 27th, Pastor Adam Kuehner spoke to me about involvement in the website Peace, Purity, and Progress — a website that provides public documentation surrounding the situation at Immanuel RPC. In his brotherly confrontation, Mr. Kuehner directly asked if I was responsible for contributing the document “Pertinent Records (GLG 23-1, 23-2)” to the website — records related to the complaint I have filed with GLGP. I acknowledged that I did.

Despite Mr. Kuehner’s request that the document not be given beyond the eldership of GLGP, I still contributed it to the website. The document was the public minutes of a public court pertaining to a public decision that the Immanuel leadership has publicly defended and ordained members of GLGP have publicly celebrated. As public minutes they should be, to the best of my knowledge, available both ecclesiastically and civilly.

However, Mr. Kuehner has not participated in the publicizing of these things and his request was reasonable. By this action I confess that I have sinned against Mr. Kuehner by not giving deference to his request, or communicating with him prior to contributing it to the website. This was unwise and it was unseasonable and did not reflect a spirit of charity, and it resulted in his character and integrity — which are above reproach — to be questioned. As a result of his brotherly confrontation I acknowledged this to him and sought his forgiveness which was extended to me.

I write this communication to inform the GLGP of these things.

Humbly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Borg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Kyle Borg

GLG 23-11B

To the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery & the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church Session,

I write to express with sincerity my apology for having contributed the document “Pert Records for GLG 23-1 and 23-2” to a public website on February 24, 2023.

I did so within the framework of two assumptions. First, it was my understanding that the clerk’s instruction was an advisory caution and not a binding dictate. This was on the basis of my reading of the *Directory for Church Government*, and accepted parliamentary procedures. I believed that the clerk may encourage reasonable discretion, but did not think his will represented the determination of the court.

My second assumption was that the minutes of courts are public in nature and cannot be declared confidential. This was on the basis of my understanding of the *Directory for Church Government*, *Robert’s Rules of Order*, the determinations of Synod, and circumstances of the government of the Church common to human actions and societies.

Because of these assumptions I believed the offended party was only Mr. Kuehner, and sought his forgiveness for my action. I understand that neither the Immanuel session or the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery agrees with either of those assumptions, and have taken offense at my action.

Therefore, brothers, in an effort to walk with a clear conscience before the Lord Jesus Christ, and in integrity before men, I would humbly ask the Immanuel session and the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery to forgive me. In contributing the document to a public website I sinned against you. What I did was unwise, it did not give honor or deference to your ecclesiastical bodies, it did not speak the truth in a seasonable way, it did not promote the trust that is needed in your courts and among brothers, it was contrary to the lawful instruction given, and it is not reflective of the relationship I desire to have among those who are co-laborers in the Lord.

With special emphasis I want to apologize to the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian session. I know there are things that divide us and may still divide us, but my impropriety in this action was an unnecessary and avoidable contribution to further strain in this relationship.

Brothers, for these things I sincerely and with a broken spirit apologize and ask that both the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian church session and the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery would extend to me forgiveness, and that love that covers a multitude of sins.

I also want to affirm to these ecclesiastical bodies that my session has been informed of these things, and I am looking to their shepherding care for accountability in my continued growth in grace.

I look to that day when Jesus Christ the only Head and King of the Church will do what no man can — namely, make us truly and forever one in all things.

I am striving to boast in Christ with you all, and remain your brother and servant,



Kyle Borg

GLG 23-12

Mr. Smith,

I know that Mr. Eshelman stated this on the floor of GLGP, but I wanted to write (to keep a paper trail) and inform your committee that I am withdrawing my complaint and charge of sin. Upon the submission of my charge I noted that I would happily defer to another judicial course, and I believe it's time for me to do that. The action of IRPC in administering the Lord's Supper to Mr. Olivetti is very public and universally known. The BOD states: "If session or a higher court learns of a sinning member, it must not ignore the situation" (I.3.1, E-4), and I am confident that GLGP will not ignore this situation and can have a better path forward without my participation.

May the Lord prosper the work of your hands.

In Jesus,
Kyle [Borg]

CC'ed Mr. Adam Kuehner clerk of GLGP