

Business Committee Report (BUSCOM)
GLG Presbytery March 2-4, 2023

GLG 23-5: Complaint v. Southfield RPC session from Gary Allison regarding the session's decision to schedule a trial.

Mr. Allison's complaint alleges reasons why the Southfield RPC session erred in issuing an accusation of sin (dated Oct 27, 2022, sent registered mail). Mr. Allison contested these charges. Mr. Allison further complained about the action of the session on Dec 8, 2022, in scheduling a trial for Jan 21, 2023.

"I humbly ask the Presbytery to annul or reverse the action of the Session of Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church on Dec 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."

Fathers and brothers,

We examined the complaint with pertinent records. We believe the Southfield RPC session has correctly followed the requirements of the Bible and our confessional standards, including the Book of Discipline, in charging Mr. Allison with alleged sin. Further, when Mr. Allison contested the charge, which is his constitutional right, the session correctly followed the same Biblical and constitutional requirements to schedule a trial.

Rationale

The BoD Sect. I, Ch. 3, lays out the steps of Matthew 18 when a court deals with sin in the church. We believe that the Southfield session followed these steps. (BoD I.3.1-5, E-4).

1. The elders directly addressed the alleged sin with Mr. Allison.¹
2. According to the record, Mr. and Mrs. Allison were shepherded with love and care. The record notes that from July 2021 to December 2022, all three elders met with Mr. and Mrs. Allison on ten occasions (*dates can be provided*) to investigate and discuss these matters.²

¹ *BoD I.3.1. If session or a higher court learns of a sinning member, it must not ignore the situation. The court may deal with the situation directly or by a judicial commission. (See section II, chap. 4, par. 1, as well as the Directory for Church Government, chap. 6, par. 16 on page D-35.)*

² *Bod I.3.2 If there is reasonable evidence that a member is teaching heresy, disregarding or violating the moral law, or showing contempt for the courts of the church, the court shall contact that member in love and with care, and shall investigate the allegations.*

3. The Minutes record that Mr. Allison was rebuked (Feb 6, 2022) for six incidents of patterned sin, also cited in the later Accusation of Sin (Oct 27, 2022). According to the record, Mr. Allison did not contest the rebuke but sought forgiveness.³
4. The session alleges that Mr. Allison continued these sins after the rebuke.
5. On Oct 27, 2022, the session approved a letter of Accusation of Sin. On Nov 10, 2022, Mr. Allison contested the charge. Therefore, the Southfield session scheduled a trial according to the steps in the Book of Discipline.⁴

Further Observations

Interacting with Mr. Allison's ways in which the session has erred:

1. Matthew 18 is being carried out not by the witnesses, as offended parties, but by the session itself. Therefore, the accusations or statements of Mrs. Allison or any other witness are not a necessary basis for the session's charge of sin.
2. The record indicates that the session does have sufficient evidence to warrant a trial.
3. The record shows that the session has taken appropriate shepherding measures to love, care for, and strengthen the whole family, including this action.

Recommendations:

1. The GLG Presbytery permits Mr. Allison to address the court for up to 10 minutes concerning this complaint.
2. That the GLG Presbytery not sustain this complaint.

Shawn Anderson, Jerry Foltz, James Odom

3 BoD I.3.3 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. Bod I.3.4. If the accused does not contest the charges, regardless of whether or not he acknowledges the truthfulness of the accusation, and does not give evidence of repentance from the alleged sin, the court may proceed, without formal trial, to the imposition of any formal censure in hope of repentance. (See chap. 4 for appropriate censures.)

4 BoD I.3.5. However, if the accused takes steps to contest the charges, the court may not proceed to issue a censure beyond admonition or rebuke without conducting a formal trial. (See section II for the formal trial process.)