

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.