

The Clerk's Report

2022 GLGP Spring Mtg ~ Indianapolis, IN
March 2-4, 2023 @ Southside RPC

Dear Fathers and 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 annual fall meeting, we are able to begin hearing oral congregational reports again. This year's proposed spring agenda will include oral reports from about half of our congregations (plus the Atlanta TGB) in reverse alphabetical order. (Prudence would dictate that we hear a report from the IRPC session, but unfortunately, no report has been submitted and the session has yet to acknowledge its ongoing affiliation with the RPCNA/GLGP.) 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. Similar to last year, assignments to lead the court in prayer for reporting congregations have been noted in the proposed agenda. Wherever possible, I tried to assign delegates to the congregation whose minutes they reviewed in recent weeks. 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 simply 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 (See 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 congregational disorganizations at Christ Church RP and First RPC of Grand Rapids, we have a few minor housekeeping matters to address. Bill Roberts recently contacted me to request counsel from the GLGP on behalf of synod's board of trustees (DCG 2.11, D-6) with respect to the remaining assets from CCRP.¹ Recommendation 6 (below) seeks to provide this counsel, in keeping with the wishes of the former members. I am not aware of any similar request made by the former members of First RPC-GR. However, I have included a written update from Steven Rhoda and Jake Schwartz concerning the steps that were taken following disorganization (See Appendix 2).

Minutes Review. The review of digital session/TGB minutes is nearly complete. As of 2/21/23, the only minutes not yet reviewed and found to be in lawful order are those which have yet to be submitted (Hetherton, IRPC, Selma) and those still under review (Southside, Sparta, WRPC). All 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. 23-7: Complaint v. IRPC Session from J. Smith re: a sermon illustration by Rev. Dan Perrin involving Christians & Muslims.
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.

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"

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That presbytery appoint the following parliamentarians for this meeting: J. Odom, F. Smith, P. Pockras (alt), J. Hughes (alt), Steve Rhoda (alt), Wade Mann (alt), Joel Hart (alt).
2. 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 for reappointment as GLGP Rep.,³ (C) Replace the two departing members of the Membership Comte (formerly the *Shepherding Committee*), (D) Replace the GLGP HMB Rep., and (E) Nominate a provisional moderator for the IRPC session.
3. That presbytery instruct the incoming AIC to determine and disseminate the time and place for the fall meeting by 7/31/23.
4. 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.
5. That presbytery approve the following committee reports as submitted, without hearing oral reports:

A. Geneva College Board of Corp.'s Report	C. Home Mission Board Rep. Report
B. Military Chaplaincy Report (R. Fearing)	
6. 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.
7. That presbytery transmit GLG 22-22 and GLG 22-23 to synod without endorsement.
8. That presbytery formally dismiss the CCRP Commission with thanks.
9. 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.
10. That presbytery refer GLG 23-5 to the three-man, moderator-appointed *Business Committee (OTD)* [BUSCOM]⁴ to examine the complaint (with pertinent records), to interact with the parties (as able), and to report back with its recommendation(s) later in the meeting.
11. That presbytery refer GLG 23-1, 23-2, 23-3, 23-7, and 23-9 to a three-man, moderator-appointed *IRPC Committee (OTD)* to examine each communication (with pertinent records) and report back later in the meeting with its recommendation(s).
12. That presbytery refer GLG 23-8 to the *Business Committee (OTD)* [BUSCOM] to advise the court regarding 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 in the meeting.
13. 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.⁵
14. 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)	
15. That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda for this meeting.
16. That presbytery grant all RPCNA elders present the privilege of the floor during the remainder of this meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Kuehner, Clerk

³ 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"

⁴ 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.

⁵ Rationale: (1) In keeping with the historic principles of biblical presbyterianism, the RPCNA *Directory for Church Government* (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 recognition is obtained to his satisfaction* — while remaining true to biblical presbyterianism as the permanent form of church government. (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.

Clerk's Report — Appendix 1
Financial Audit Instructions

The 1989 Minutes of Synod on pages 37 and 38 stated, "In 1963 (Minutes of Synod, p. 36), an action was taken wherein congregations were to have their financial records audited. It appears not all congregations are doing this, and we know of situations where an audit would have been helpful. Therefore, we are making a recommendation that congregational audit reports be reviewed by presbyteries and included in their annual report to Synod."

And those same 1989 minutes on page 39 stated the following recommendation that passed, "We recommend that Synod require each presbytery, in its annual report to Synod, in their review of congregational records, to include a review of the congregational treasurer's reports and congregational audit reports. The treasurer's reports should detail all income, expenses, assets and liabilities of the congregation. The audit report of each congregation, while it does not need to be prepared by a C.F.A., should reflect that a committee has reviewed the reconciled bank statements, verified all assets and substantiated all disbursements."

The 1963 Minutes of Synod (referred to in the 1989 minutes) on page 18 had stated, "That an audit be made annually in each congregation of all accounts by a Certified Public Accountant, but in a situation where the hiring of a C.P.A. is not, that an auditing committee be appointed annually."

Then in 2000, James McFarland, Synod's Treasurer sent a reminder to all Presbytery Treasurers and Clerks along with a suggested form. Each congregation is to submit annually to Presbytery its regular report along with a Treasurer's report and the audit form. James McFarland's letter and the audit form are attached.



TRUSTEES OF THE SYNOD OF THE
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JAMES K. MCFARLAND
Treasurer

June 26, 2000

To: Congregational and Presbytery Treasurers and Clerks
From: James K. McFarland

In 1989 Synod adopted a procedure requiring each presbytery, in its annual report to Synod, to include a review of the congregational treasurer's reports and congregational audit reports (See item 8, page 39, 1989 Minutes of Synod). In order to have a uniform procedure, the Trustees of Synod issued guidelines for review committees to follow in the examination of financial records and reports.

The Trustees have revised the suggested internal review guidelines to encourage full participation in this important procedure. A form is included with these guidelines that is to be completed by the review committee and forwarded to the Clerk of Presbytery. Presbyteries are also reminded that a review of the records and reports of the presbytery treasurers should be completed.

These guidelines are being sent out at this time as a reminder to complete all reviews that are not yet completed for the 1999 financial records. This may also assist you in preparing for the examination of fiscal year 2000 financial records to be done in January. We will be sending another copy of the guidelines at that time.

Please contact me if you have any questions concerning these procedures.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James K. McFarland".

James K. McFarland

**REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SUGGESTED INTERNAL REVIEW GUIDELINES
FOR CONGREGATIONS AND MISSION CHURCHES
AS REQUIRED BY SYNOD**

Purpose: The purpose of an internal review is to ascertain the reliability and accuracy of financial statements prepared and records maintained by the congregational treasurer. It is also intended to provide constructive suggestions toward improvement of procedures, record keeping and reporting.

Who should perform the review: The congregation should appoint a review committee, preferably comprised of 2 to 3 independent people. These people should preferably be unrelated to the treasurer.

Frequency: A review should be performed annually and a copy of the committee report should be sent to the presbytery clerk.

Procedures:

1. All financial records for the year should be gathered. This should include bank statements, cancelled checks, deposit slips, paid bills and treasurer's books.
2. Two months picked at random in the cash receipts and cash disbursements journals should be footed and cross-footed (added down and across). A few of these totals should then be traced into the general ledger (if one is maintained).
3. Trace the ending bank balance of two different months to the appropriate bank reconciliation. The bank reconciliation should be footed and agree to the books.
4. Select two checks from each month and trace to the source document (i.e. invoice, employment agreement, congregational minutes, deacon board minutes, etc.). Check the amount of the check to the source document and review for proper endorsement.
5. Trace the amounts on the year-end financial statements to the general ledger or other workpapers summarizing the monthly activity.
6. Determine that the cash balance at the beginning of the year plus receipts minus disbursements equals the ending reconciled cash balance.

- 7. Verify the existence of assets other than cash in checking (i.e. stock certificates, savings accounts, brokerage accounts, etc.). Review the earnings from investments to the amount of the assets for reasonableness.
- 8. Trace balances of notes payables and other liabilities to supporting documents.
- 9. Compare the income and expenses of the current year to those of the prior year for any significant fluctuations.
- 10. Review procedures for counting and handling of funds. This should be done by someone other than the treasurer.

We have examined the financial records of the _____ Congregation and have found the following:

- _____ 1. No problems or questions were noted.
- _____ 2. The following error(s) or problem(s) were found and were resolved as follows:

Finding

Resolution

Congregation _____ Date _____

Review Committee Members:

Please send two copies of this report to your Clerk of Session to be submitted to your presbytery clerk along with your congregational reports.

Clerk's Report — Appendix 2

First RP of Grand Rapids Post-Dissolution Update

Fathers and brothers,

This is a brief update to give an accounting of the management of matters with First RP since closure.

Membership

Some members are settled into new congregations while others are not. Please be in prayer for those who are not settled yet.

Minutes

The RP archives have received the minutes, and they have been scanned in. The books will be returned to the GLG as soon as possible.

Finances

We have provided the Synod Trustees with full year financials for the year ending December 31, 2022.

The balance of funds has been transferred to the Synod Trustees. A nominal amount (\$200) is left in the First RP account for any unexpected automatic transactions, though we anticipate there should be none. After a few months we intend to close out the account.

There will soon be provided to the Synod Trustees a list of final payouts from the funds.

Assets

A list of assets, their locations, and any other pertinent information has been provided to the Synod Trustees.

Year-End Matters

Contribution letters for membership have been completed, and the payroll for Pastor Craig is being taken care of.

Sincerely,
Jake Schwartz
Steve Rhoda

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)

Proposed Agenda — Upd. 2/22/23

CLERK

Adam Kuehner
ak@streetsermon.org

ASST. CLERK

Dale Koons
dlkoons49@gmail.com

2023 ANNUAL SPRING MEETING

Time: Thursday March 2 @ 2:00 p.m. to Saturday March 4 @ Noon

Place: Southside Reformed Presbyterian Church

Address: 6969 S. Meridian St. Indianapolis, IN 46217

Phone: (317) 787-1211

DAILY SCHEDULE

THURSDAY

Bus. Session #2 (2:00 - 5:30p)
- *Mid-Session Break* (4:00 - 4:15p)
- *Dinner Break* (5:30 - 6:30p)
Bus. Session #3 (6:45 - 9:00p)

FRIDAY

Bus. Session #4 (8:30a - 12:30p)
- *Mid-Session Br.* (10:35 - 10:50a)
- *Lunch Break* (12:30 - 1:30)
Bus. Session #5 (1:45 - 5:30p)
- *Mid-Session Break* (3:15 - 3:30p)
- *Dinner Break* (5:30 - 6:30p)
Bus. Session #6 (6:45 - 9:00p)

SATURDAY

Bus. Session #7 (8:30a - 12:00p)
- *Mid-Session Br.* (10:30 - 10:45a)
- *Adjournment (Noon)*¹

BUSINESS SESSION #1

Thu 2:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. (Break @ 4:00p)

1. **CALL TO ORDER / SERMON / PRAYER OF CONSTITUTION** (Moderator) 30 mins [2:30]
2. **ROLL CALL** (Asst. Clerk) 5 mins [2:35]
3. **FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS** (First-Time Delegates, Fraternal Delegates, Special Guests) 5 mins [2:40]
4. **MEMORIALS** (in honor of deceased RE/TEs) 5 mins [2:45]
5. **CLERK'S REPORT** (Kuehner) 20 mins [3:05]
6. **OFFICER ELECTIONS** (Nominations from Floor) Moderator, Clerk, Asst.-Clerk² 5 mins [3:10]
7. **AD INTERIM COMMISSION REPORT** (Hanson) 5 mins [3:15]
8. **INTERNET MAINTENANCE COMTE REPORT** (Kuehner) 5 mins [3:20]

¹ Lunch is typically served following adjournment, with sack lunches available upon request.

² At our most recent fall meeting, Nathan Eshelman was appointed to take over as assistant clerk.

9. MEMBERSHIP COMTE REPORT (F. Smith) 5 mins [3:25]
10. TREASURER'S REPORT (Bishop) 5 mins [3:30]
11. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT (Niess)
- A. Intro/Recommendations (Niess)
 - B. Bible Exam Results: J. Johnson (VV) 5 mins [3:35]
 - C. Church History Paper: J. Johnson (Comte + VV) 5 mins [3:40]
 - D. Exegesis Paper: J. Sturm (Comte + VV) 5 mins [3:45]
12. MID-SESSION BREAK (15 mins) — *Order of the Day @ 3:45p* [4:00]
- Following the break, the moderator should announce/excuse the appointed Judicial Comte (OTD) members.
13. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT (Niess) 80 mins [5:20]
- A. Pers. Godliness Exam: J. Johnson (20/10/5 + RCV) 40 mins [4:40]
 - B. Past. & Ev. Gifts Exam: J. Sturm (20/10/5 + RCV) 40 mins [5:20]
14. HOST CONGREGATION ANNOUNCEMENTS (Cerbus) 5 mins [5:25]
15. PRAYER FOR DINNER / RECESS (Moderator) 5 mins [5:30]

BUSINESS SESSION #2

Thu 6:45 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. (No Break)

16. CALL TO ORDER / PRAYER TO RECONVENE (Moderator) Appoint/Excuse Comtes 5 mins [6:50]
17. VISUAL ATTENDANCE (Asst. Clerk)
18. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT (Niess)
- A. Evid. of Progr. Sermon: J. Johnson (Psalm + 25/5 + RCV) 35 mins [7:35]
 - B. Past. & Ev. Gifts Exam: J. Sturm (20/10/5 + RCV) 40 mins [8:15]
19. CONGREGATIONAL REPORTS³ 25 mins [8:40]
- A. WESTMINSTER 5 mins [8:20] Prayer ~ P. McCollum (G. Fisher or R. Lodge)
 - B. TERRE HAUTE 5 mins [8:25] Prayer ~ S. Work (S. Hoover)
 - C. SYCAMORE 5 mins [8:30] Prayer ~ J. Hart (A. Doerr)
 - D. SPARTA 5 mins [8:35] Prayer ~ M. Goerner (J. Odom)
 - E. SOUTHFIELD 5 mins [8:40] Prayer ~ J. Hanson (R. Holdeman)
20. INTERCESSORY PRAYER & RECESS (See Appointees + Alternates Above)⁴ 20 mins [9:00]

BUSINESS SESSION #3

Fri 8:30 - 12:30 p.m. (Break @ 10:35a)⁵

21. CALL TO ORDER / PRAYER TO RECONVENE (Moderator) Appointments? — 5 mins [8:35]
22. VISUAL ATTENDANCE (Asst. Clerk)
23. READING OF PREVIOUS MINUTES (Clerk) 5 mins [8:40]

³ We plan to do congregational reports in reverse alphabetical order: ten (+Atlanta TGB) in the spring, eight in the fall.

⁴ Wherever possible, those asked to lead in prayer (along with their alternates) also served, by appointment of the moderator, as minute-reviewers for the particular congregation they are lifting up in prayer.

⁵ The deadline for papers occurs immediately following the mid-morning break.

24. CANDIDATES AND CREDENTIALS COMTE REPORT — Continued (Niess) 115 mins [10:35]

- A. Expository Sermon 2: J. Sturm (Psalm + 25/5 + RCV) 35 mins [9:15]
- B. Theology 1 Exam: J. Johnson (20/10/5 + RCV) 40 mins [9:55]
- C. Theology 2 Exam: J. Sturm (20/10/5 + RCV) 40 mins [10:35]

25. MID-SESSION BREAK (15 mins) — Order of the Day @ 10:35p [10:50]

26. IRPC RESOLUTION COMTE (Eshelman) 20 mins [11:10]

27. IRPC COMTE (OTD) REPORT (Chair) 70 mins [12:20]

28. HOST CONGREGATION ANNOUNCEMENTS (Cerbus) 5 mins [12:25]

29. PRAYER OF RECESS (Moderator) 5 mins [12:30]**BUSINESS SESSION #4***Fri 1:45 - 5:30 p.m. (Break @ 3:15p)***30. CALL TO ORDER / PRAYER TO RECONVENE** (Moderator) 5 mins [1:50]

31. VISUAL ATTENDANCE (Asst. Clerk)

32. DISABILITY COMTE REPORT (Johnston) 5 mins [1:55]

33. LAFAYETTE PASTORAL CALL REVIEW COMTE (Chair) 5 mins [2:00]

34. BUSCOM REPORT (Chair) 75 mins [3:15]

35. MID-SESSION BREAK (15 mins) — Order of the Day @ 3:15p [3:30]**36. CANDIDATES & CREDENTIALS COMTE REPORT — Continued** (Niess) 60 mins [4:30]

- A. Church History Exam: J. Sturm (20/10/5 + RCV) 40 mins [4:10]
- B. Licensure to Receive a Call: J. Sturm (RCV, Oral/Wr. Queries, Charge, Prayer) 15 mins [4:25]
- C. Report as a Whole (Niess) 5 mins [4:30]

37. CONGREGATIONAL/TGB REPORTS 30 mins [5:15]

- A. SWORP 5 mins [4:35] Prayer ~ D. Schisler (D. Hanson)
- B. SELMA 10 mins [4:45] Prayer ~ A. Niess (S. Shipp)
- C. SECOND 5 mins [4:50] Prayer ~ P. Pockras (J. Hughes)
- D. SOUTHSIDE 5 mins [4:55] Prayer ~ J. Odom (F. Smith)
- E. ATLANTA (TGB) 5 mins [5:00] Prayer ~ J. Foltz (J. Brotherton)

38. ATLANTA JUDICIAL COMMISSION REPORT 10 mins [5:10]

39. INTERCESSORY PRAYER & RECESS FOR DINNER (See Appointees + Alternates Above) 20 mins [5:30]**BUSINESS SESSION #5***Fri 6:45 - 9:00 p.m. (No Break)***40. CALL TO ORDER / PRAYER TO RECONVENE / WELCOME** (Moderator) 5 mins [6:50]

41. VISUAL ATTENDANCE (Asst. Clerk)

42. READING OF PREVIOUS MINUTES (Clerk) 5 mins [6:55]

43. REPORT ON SESSION MINUTE BOOKS (Clerk) 5 mins [7:00]

44. **CLERK'S MOTION:** *That members of the C.Y.P.U. leadership team be granted privileges of the floor during the Presbytery Youth Report.*
45. **PRESBYTERY YOUTH REPORT — C.Y.P.U.** (Rhoda) 30 mins [7:30]
46. **COMTE OF THE DAY REPORTS — *Continued*** (Chair) 80 mins [8:50]
A. **IRPC COMTE (OTD) REPORT** (Chair) 40 mins [8:10]
B. **BUSCOM REPORT** (Chair) 40 mins [8:50]
47. **HOST CONGREGATION ANNOUNCEMENTS** (Cerbus) 5 mins [8:55]
48. **PRAYER TO RECESS** (Moderator) 5 mins [9:00]

BUSINESS SESSION #7

Sat 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Break @ 10:30a)

49. **CALL TO ORDER / PRAYER TO RECONVENE** (Moderator) 5 mins [8:35]
50. **VISUAL ATTENDANCE** (Asst. Clerk)
51. **NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT — *Initial Draft*** (Chair) 5 mins [8:40]
52. **SYNOD YOUTH MINISTRIES REP REPORT** (Whitla) 5 mins [8:45]
53. **COVFAMIKOI CONFERENCE COMTE REPORT** (Nelson) 5 mins [8:50]
54. **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT** (Chairman) 10 mins [9:00]
55. **TIME & PLACE COMMITTEE REPORT** (Chairman) 5 mins [9:05]
56. **NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT — *Final Version*** (Chair) 10 mins [9:15]
57. **RESOLUTION OF THANKS COMMITTEE** (Chairman) 5 mins [9:20]
58. **READING OF PREVIOUS MINUTES** (Clerk) 5 mins [9:25]
59. **PRAYER OF ADJOURNMENT** (Moderator) 5 mins [9:30]

BUFFER: 2.5 HOURS

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 written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jared Olivetti". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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 "Kjell By". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial 'K' and a long, sweeping underline.

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.

GLG 23-4

IN THE COURT OF THE RPCNA SYNOD'S COMMISSION
for the repentance, reconciliation, and restoration of Jared Olivetti

THIS MATTER COMES ON FOR HEARING this 19th day of January, 2023, upon the occasion of Mr. Jared Olivetti actively partaking of the Lord's Supper while under the censure of Deposition from office accompanied by Suspension from the privileges of membership.

WE FIND and ADJUDGE that Mr. Olivetti, by knowingly and without justification violating the terms of his censure, has aggravated the underlying offenses that initially warranted his Deposition and Suspension.

Narrative

The facts are largely undisputed. Mr. Olivetti admits to being well informed of the judgment of Synod's Judicial Commission (announced March 10, 2022), which was sustained against all complaints by the Synod at large (June 23, 2022).¹ Being well informed of his Suspension from the Lord's Supper, Mr. Olivetti testified to the Commission that prior to December 2022, he had not partaken of Communion at Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church pursuant to the Suspension. This fact was affirmed by the Session of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church ("IRPC"), where Mr. Olivetti remains a member.

On November 18, 2022, the IRPC Session prayed the Commission by letter for restoration of Mr. Olivetti to the Communion table.² Despite the encouraging signs presented by IRPC Session, the Commission was not of one mind to lift the Suspension, and communicated its decision and rationale to IRPC Session on November 28, 2022³. IRPC Session renewed its appeal in a subsequent letter to the Commission dated November 30, 2022⁴, and by oral argument with the Commission in a specially called meeting December 2, 2022.

The Commission was not persuaded at the meeting of December 2, 2022, to lift Mr. Olivetti's suspension; and on the Lord's Day, December 4, 2022⁵, received notice by letter from IRPC Session of its intent to re-admit Mr. Olivetti to the Communion Table. Later in the day, Mr. Olivetti emailed the Commission stating that he had "celebrated communion today with our congregation, under the oversight and by the invitation of my elders."⁶

Mr. Olivetti's Argument

Mr. Olivetti does not deny having taken Communion. Rather, Mr. Olivetti asserts that he has not sinned by taking Communion because (i) IRPC Session (and not the Synod) holds jurisdiction over him with respect to the privileges of membership; and (ii) that this is so because (a) pursuant to the Synod's censure of Deposition on him, he is now simply a non-ordained member of the RPCNA; and/or (b) in removing jurisdiction of the sex abuse matter at IRPC from the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, the Synod did not specifically assert its jurisdiction over him.

We disagree.

¹ See 2022 RPCNA Synod Basic Minutes, p. 18, line 20-21

² November 18, 2022 IRPC Session Letter to Commission

³ November 28, 2022 Commission Memo to IRPC Session

⁴ November 30, 2022 IRPC Session Letter to Commission

⁵ December 4, 2022 IRPC Session Letter to Commission

⁶ December 4, 2022 Olivetti email to Commission

Does the Session have exclusive jurisdiction over the membership?

With regard to jurisdiction, Mr. Olivetti correctly states that while “[the] session is subordinate to the higher courts and shall be governed by their decisions,”⁷ but asserts that the term ‘subordination’ “presumes that the higher court will be making decisions that are within their bounds to make.”

Arguing that the Synod (and by extension, this Commission of the Synod) is not within its bounds to suspend a member of a congregation, Mr. Olivetti cites from Chapter 4 of the RPCNA Directory of Church Government (“DOCG”) that “[the] session is the court having original jurisdiction over the members of a congregation,”⁸ that “[the] session alone admits to and dismisses from the membership of the congregation,”⁹ and that “[all] judicial action affecting the standing of the members of the congregation shall be initiated in the session.”

While phrases like ‘the session *alone* admits...’ and ‘*all* judicial action...’ would appear to reserve to the lower court certain powers that cannot be invaded by the higher courts, these sections of the DOCG cannot be read in isolation. To do so is inconsistent with the Presbyterian system of government, with its hierarchy of courts, placing the local sessions under the authority of their respective presbyteries and the presbyteries under the authority of the Synod.

Construing the RPCNA Constitution as a whole, we cannot ignore that “Synod ... 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...”¹⁰ (*emphasis added*). So while jurisdiction and authority of the session over the local flock is *ordinarily* reserved to the local session, in all matters affecting the purity and welfare of the church the higher court may assume original jurisdiction.

Did the Synod assume original jurisdiction over Mr. Olivetti?

According to the RPCNA Constitution, it is the presbytery “...who holds original jurisdiction regarding the deposition of a teaching elder from his ordination¹¹ ... [with] power to ordain, install, try, remove, suspend or depose teaching elders.”¹² As Mr. Olivetti served as a teaching elder in the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery (“GLG”), the presbytery held original jurisdiction over Mr. Olivetti *until* the Synod voted (June 17, 2021) to assume original jurisdiction.¹³ This vote came on the recommendation of a Judicial Committee of the day whose task was to address Communications 21-16, 21-17, and 21-18 (all having to do with the integrity of GLG judicial processes against IRPC elders, including Mr. Olivetti).¹⁴

Having lawfully assumed jurisdiction, the Commission is unaware of any action of the Synod returning jurisdiction over Mr. Olivetti either to the presbytery or the local Session.

⁷ DOCG Ch. 4 ¶8

⁸ DOCG Ch. 4 ¶11

⁹ DOCG Ch. 4 ¶16

¹⁰ DOCG Ch. 8, ¶ 12

¹¹ DOCG Ch. 3 ¶ II.E.6.b; *See also* BOD § II Ch. 1 ¶ 5 “*The presbytery has original jurisdiction in relation to suspension, deposition, or excommunication of teaching elders.*”

¹² DOCG Ch. 6 ¶ 13; *See also* BOD § I Ch. 4 ¶ 3.b “*...Any censures of suspension, deposition, or excommunication shall remain with the presbytery or the court holding his credentials.*”

¹³ 2021 Synod Basic Minutes, p. 20, lines 14-18

¹⁴ *Id.* “*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 also* 2022 Report of the SJC, § 1 ¶ c, p. 1-3

Did the Synod lose jurisdiction over Mr. Olivetti by virtue of his Deposition?

Mr. Olivetti asserts that “Once the SJC took away my ordination, I was simply a member of a congregation whom they had no right to discipline.” We can think of nothing more absurd than a court, exercising jurisdiction over a man, would by the very exercise of jurisdiction lose its jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, we direct Mr. Olivetti to the Book of Discipline, that first, reserves jurisdiction over the Deposition and Suspension of teaching elders to the presbytery;¹⁵ second, directs persons under censure seeking restoration to come “before the censuring court” to ask for the lifting of censure¹⁶ and reserves to the presbytery jurisdiction over restoration of a teaching elder from the censures of suspension, deposition or excommunication¹⁷; and finally, expressly allows the censure of Deposition to be “accompanied” by suspension.¹⁸

Wherefore we answer that Synod, having assumed jurisdiction, continues in its exercise of jurisdiction over the combined Deposition and Suspension of Mr. Olivetti.

How can the Commission say “You cannot come to Christ”?

As elders in the RPCNA, we confess that “The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers”¹⁹ and that “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.”²⁰

Judgment having been rendered against Mr. Olivetti by the RPCNA Synod, we as Commissioners of the RPCNA Synod are not at liberty to re-try the case or alter the judgment. Instead, we are tasked with the continued work of church discipline, involving oversight of Mr. Olivetti’s “repentance, reconciliation, and restoration.”²¹

Notwithstanding IRPC Session’s error (i.e., exceeding their authority by admitting to the Lord’s Table a man under the Suspension of the Synod), we find Mr. Olivetti’s arguments specious and hold Mr. Olivetti responsible for his own actions as a former teaching elder. Our rationale for refusing to lift Synod’s Suspension was provided to IRPC Session²² as follows:

1. “The Commission is concerned about submission to the authority and discipline of the church, as this is a vow Mr. Olivetti took for Ordination and for communicant membership. We acknowledge that Mr. Olivetti has *followed* the court’s instructions (and we have been most appreciative of his willingness to meet with us) but we are still waiting to see a greater measure of *acceptance* of the Synod’s brotherly counsel.”

¹⁵ BOD § II Ch. 1 ¶ 5 “The presbytery has original jurisdiction in relation to suspension, deposition, or excommunication of teaching elders”

¹⁶ BOD § I Ch. 6 ¶ 1. *See also* BOD § 1 Ch. 6 ¶ 6 “Restoration of a person under censure should be made only by the court that imposed the sentence or with its advice and consent.”

¹⁷ BOD § I Ch. 6 ¶ 4

¹⁸ BOD § I Ch. 4 ¶ 1.d “[Deposition] It may also be accompanied by suspension from church privileges.”

¹⁹ WCF Ch. 30 ¶ 1

²⁰ WCF Ch. 30 ¶ 2. *See* Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18

²¹ 2022 Basic Minutes of Synod, p.19, ¶ 2

²² Commission Letter to IRPC Session (via email) November 28, 2022

2. “The Commission is also concerned about Matthew 5:23-24 (i.e., putting reconciliation ahead of worship) as there are still unresolved conflicts: with believers in the community, with former IRPC members, and with RPCNA brothers in the Presbytery or the Synod. We believe that part of our task is to help restore Mr. Olivetti’s ability to live at peace, as far as it depends on him. Romans 12:18”

The Lord’s Table is for believers (sinners that we all are); however, it is right and proper for the church to guard against believers coming to Christ in an unworthy manner.²³ For the reasons cited above, the Commission is not *yet* prepared to lift Mr. Olivetti’s suspension.

It is our sincere hope *and expectation* for Mr. Olivetti, that he would begin to see the events of the last several years, the discipline of the church, as an *assignment* from God instead of an *obstacle* to be overcome. In that expectation *we eagerly anticipate* how God will use Mr. Olivetti’s gifts and the spotlight that has been placed on him, for His glory and for the good of His church.

Conclusion

Mr. Olivetti’s arguments fail to justify his actions in defiance of the Synod. Wherefore, Mr. Olivetti, by knowingly and without justification taking Communion while under the Censure of the Synod, is judged to have sinned by aggravating the underlying offenses that initially warranted his Deposition and Suspension.

²³ See WSC Q 97 and Scripture proofs. See also Directory of Public Worship, Ch. 3 ¶ 11 “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.”

TO: Jared Olivetti
CC: IRPC Clerk of Session (Josh Karshen), GLG Clerk (Adam Kuehner), GLG AIC Clerk (Richard Blankenship) & Moderator (David Hanson)
FR: Olivetti Restoration Commission
RE: Communing while under Suspension of the Synod
DA: January 20, 2023

Jared:

The Commission has considered your response and the arguments, oral and written, given to justify your having taken Communion despite the Synod's Suspension. In our deliberations we did not receive any unsolicited input; and we have sought at all points to afford due respect your viewpoint, though we must disagree.

Having carefully considered the matter, we have adjudged that by knowingly and without justification violating the terms of your censure, you have aggravated the underlying offense that initially warranted your Deposition and Suspension. Please see attached our Ruling, addressing your arguments in detail. In brief, by taking Communion while under the Synod's Suspension, we see you continuing in the core underlying offense: the willful casting off of the church's authority.

Wherefore we continue in our endeavor to call you to repentance for the particular offenses that are clearly explained in the Synod's censures of Deposition and Suspension.

When you met with us, we talked about changing the conversation from 'what sin has been perpetrated against me that must be argued and defended' to 'how might our Sovereign God be glorified by my response to the events – and the censures – of the last several years?'

The mark of unrepentance is the 'refusal to listen' of Matthew 18. Will you continue to argue the matter of your sin that was settled by the Synod who granted you your ministerial credentials? Have you considered the implications of 'refusing to listen' even to the church? It is our continued prayer that we may still be able to work toward your restoration and reconciliation, but we must see that heart of repentance and submission to brotherly counsel.

When you have had a chance to read and digest our Ruling, we expect to hear from you with your acknowledgement of sin for having taken Communion December 4. We also expect a commitment that you will again refrain from the Table until the Suspension is lifted.

You have our assurance that lifting of the Suspension has not been, nor will it be, arbitrarily withheld. Please afford *us* the courtesy of letting us complete our work.

11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,

12 for the Lord reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 3:11-12

13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper,
but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Proverbs 28:13

Respectfully,

Jonathan D. Parnell, Clerk on behalf of
Olivetti Restoration Commission

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)

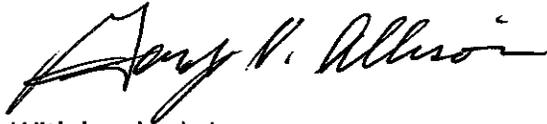
Gary V. Allison
4848 Fairway Ridge South
West Bloomfield, MI 48323

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.



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

To Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America,

And now, this 15th day of February, A.D. 2023, comes TE Joshua Smith and complains against the Immanuel RPC Session concerning their action of approving PCA Minister Daniel H. Perrin to preach in their pulpit on February 12th, 2023.

The Complainant alleges, by the action taken above, the Session erred to fulfill its duty in promoting the purity, peace, and protection of the Bride of Christ.

Complaint: The Immanuel RPC Session failed in their duty in promoting the purity, peace, and protection of the Bride of Christ:

1. The Constitution of the RPCNA is clear about who the universal church consists of, namely, professing believers together with their children, as well the duty of elders is maintain the purity of worship and that to protect the Bride of Christ from false teaching.
 - a) Directory of Church Government 4.7 (D-29) states, “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. It shall be responsible for the leadership of the singing, for the observances of the sacraments, and for the visitation of the people of the congregation. It should exercise general supervision of Christian education, missionary societies, young people’s societies, and all other organizations and activities in the congregation. It shall guard against any inappropriate or disorderly use of the church building. It shall particularly seek to provide wholesome recreation for its young people.”
 - b. WCF 25.1 (A-86) states, “The catholic or universal Church which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”
 - c. WCF 25.2 (A-86) states, “The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”
 - d. RP Testimony 25.2 (A-86) states, “It is the mission of the Church...to maintain the ordinances of divine worship in their purity; witness against all evil...”
 - e. RP Testimony 25.9 (A-87) states, “The responsibility of the elders is in teaching and ruling...”
 - f. RP Testimony 25.14 (A-89) states, “Divisions that separate believers into denominations mar the unity of the Church and are due to error and sin. It is the duty of all denominations which are true churches of Christ to seek reconciliation and union. Such organizational unity, however, should be sought only on the basis of truth and of scriptural order. It is the duty of every believer to unite with the branch of the visible church which adheres most closely to the Scriptures.”

2. The Session of Immanuel RPC by approving PCA Minister Daniel H. Perrin to minister before the congregation did not keep pure nor protect the Bride of Christ in her worship and teaching, thus disturbed the peace of the Church and possibly relations with our sister denomination the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).
 - a. PCA Minister Daniel H. Perrin on February 12th, 2023 preached a sermon¹ where he described Muslims as Christian and part of the Church of Jesus Christ.
 - i. The specific language he used in communicating an illustration from his personal experience where he was invited to attend in Egypt a service where there were Anglicans, Coptics, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Muslims². Of this gathering he calls it the, “Church of Jesus Christ,” and “Christian leadership,” “the Church of Jesus Christ in a fullness that I have never seen before,” and a “representation of the Church from around the world.” And of the Muslims describing them as “the Muslim Church.” He continues and says, “I haven’t compromised my theology but totally changed my ecclesiology.” Moreover, he says, “This is what Paul is calling us to do... joining together even when we don’t agree.”³

Thus, the Complainant alleges by the action of approving this PCA minister to preach those things contrary to the Constitution of the RPCNA, the Immanuel RPC Session failed to promote the purity, peace, and protection of Christ’s bride.

TE Joshua Smith, Complainant
Date: February 15, 2023

¹ Full audio of Immanuel RPC Worship Service on February 12, 2023 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/bczm33jcizbr2u/IRPC%202122023.mp3?dl=0>

² The word “Muslim” is defined as one who practices Islam.

³ <https://www.dropbox.com/s/urv2plaha44e1az/D%20Perrin%20Muslim%20Christians.mp3?dl=0>

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

**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 #)
Ad Interim 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, CYPUP Director Pro Tem, the following were approved as CYPUP leadership:

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

CYPUP 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/mailed (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

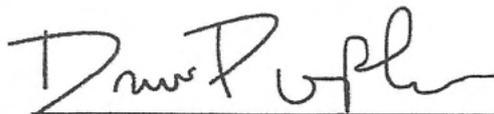
Adams, John (Inactive)	DeSoto, Ranleigh+
Albano, Nicholas*	Godwin, Hermonta*
Anderson, Hunter Grace	Hallfors, Denise*
Baybutt, Esther*	Hallfors, Eric*
Baybutt, Ida*	Hunter, Lawrence*
Baybutt, Rick*	Jackson, Bill+
Baybutt, Stephen*	Jackson, Donna+
Baybutt, Vickie*	Julien, Mikayla
Baybutt, Walter†	Kassler, 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 Jauch | 16. Richard Baylutt |
| 17. Lawrence Burke | 18. Amilia DeSoto |
| 19. Gummy Gadei | 20. Donna Jackson |
| 21. Bel D. M. | 22. Jani Mahony |
| 23. Mikayla Julien | 24. Ashley Oakley |
| 25. Autumn Manning | 26. Richard Baylutt |
| 27. Roger D Corneo | 28. Jeanne Corneo |
| 29. Richard Baylutt | 30. Det. 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
- 3. Carrie Bay
- 5. Christi Brinson
- 7. Haddon Fox
- 9. J. M. J.
- 11. Thomas Neal
- 13.
- 15.
- 17.
- 19.
- 21.
- 23.
- 25.

- 2. Anna Jise McJowan
- 4. Clifa Z. Brinson
- 6. Timothy Brinson
- 8. Jilly Klein (Fox)
- 10. Robin Mays
- 12. Erin Neal
- 14.
- 16.
- 18.
- 20.
- 22.
- 24.
- 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.



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

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.

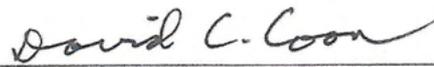
The session placed the name of Aaron Murray before the congregation as a nominee. There were no other nominations. Instructions as to voting were given and papers were handed out. Mike DeSocio, who had been a provisional elder appointed by Atlantic Presbytery for eight years, prayed God's direction as 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>Kevin Baird</u>	<u>Charles W. Leach</u>
<u>Sharon Bauder</u>	<u>David M. Balkman</u>
<u>Ernest Rumfield</u>	<u>Christopher Leach</u> <i>PHS</i>
<u>Ernest Rumfield</u>	<u>Stephen Leach</u>
	<u>Stephen Leach</u>

Communicant Mem bers (continued)

Zachary and Viktoria Butler

Adherents:

Ray A. Hill

Ryan Hill

Bryan Hill

Andrew J. Hill

Witnesses:

Luca De Sisto

Ray A. Hill

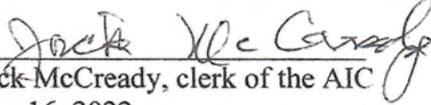
Attestation of the Call and Financial Agreement

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
Ronnie Marie
[Signature]
Lynda York
Kelley [Signature]
Pam Koch
Elizabeth [Signature]

[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]
[Signature]

Adherents:

Brett Mahlman
[Signature]
[Signature]

[Signature]
[Signature]
[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:

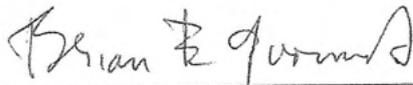
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1996-1999

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



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

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



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

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



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

Decision 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:

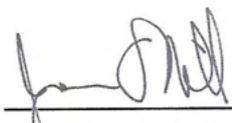
That Presbytery to appoint a judicial commission to take original jurisdiction of the issues of conflict between the CCRP Session and members, and to make formal binding recommendations regarding the situation.

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

~~Signature~~ John Long

Deacons:

~~Signature~~ ~~Signature~~

Communicant Members:

Thomas & Randy ~~Signature~~

Vernon Li Chris Bah

Mark Li Jess Bah

Patricia S. Fisher Jimmy Camery

Patricia McClintock ~~Signature~~

~~Signature~~ Beverly Camery

Audrey M. Hunt

Rebecca Fisher

Tot all

~~Signature~~

Others:
Baptized

Dot Luo Lyha

Christina Lundquist Sh. Benz

~~Signature~~

ARIA

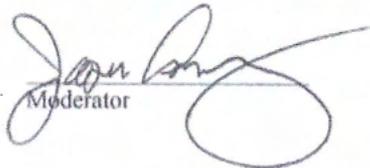
TEGAN

TESSA

Lily

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 | 22. Li, Mark |
| 2. Baker, Jessica | 23. Li, Veronica |
| 3. Bright, Josh | 24. McClintock, Kevin |
| 4. Bright, Candace | 25. McClintock, Patty |
| 1. Peter | 26. Morgan, Dave |
| 2. Andrew | 27. Morgan, Mary |
| 3. Margaret | 28. Morgan, David |
| 5. Camery, Christian | 29. Morgan, Melanie |
| 6. Camery, Jason | 13. Levi |
| 7. Camery, Jenny | 14. John |
| 8. Camery, Kay | 30. Planalp, Thomas |
| 9. Camery, Luke | 31. Schwarte, Russell |
| 10. Cole, Billy | 32. Schwarte, Michele |
| 11. Cole, Tatiana | 33. Schwarte, Gabrielle |
| 4. Lilly | 34. Schwarte, Nathaniel |
| 5. Tessa | 35. Schwarte, Abigail |
| 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 |

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)

GLG COMMUNICATION

GLG 22-23

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, in 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

GLG-22-23

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

GLG 22-23

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



Richard Blankenship <richardblankenship3@gmail.com>

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**
600K

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

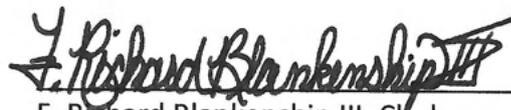
The *Ad Interim* Commission (“AIC”) of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, by Zoom video conference call.

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

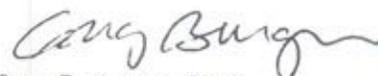
Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)

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

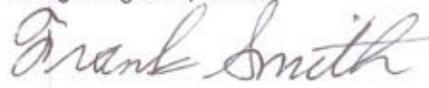
In attendance: Frank Smith (moderator), Greg Burgreen, Drew Poplin

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

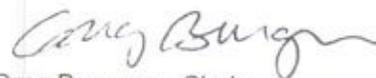
Minutes of the Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC)

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.

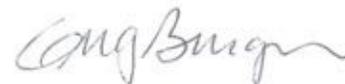
Perhaps you are wondering what the church expects of you. What we expect of you, as we expect of every church member, is to live in accordance with the will of God. Let us remind you of the public vows of membership that every member of the church, including yourself, made "in humble reliance upon His 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.

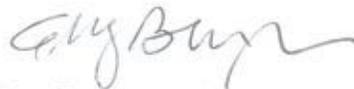
By common consent, the court decided to recess the meeting at 7:18 PM, to eat dinner, make minor amendments to the pastoral and verdict letters, complete the minutes, and to later reconvene for final approval of today's minutes.

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)

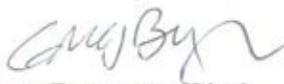
On the Lord's Day, May 15, 2022, at 12:51 PM, the Atlanta Judicial Commission was called to order by the Moderator, Dr. Frank J. Smith, at 5830 Millstone Drive, Cumming, Georgia with prayer by Dr. Smith. In attendance were the other two members of the commission, Dr. Greg W. Burgreen and Pastor Drew Poplin, thus constituting a quorum.

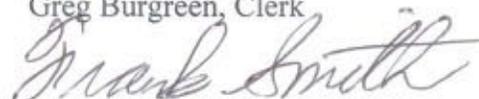
The purpose of this brief meeting was to receive amended testimony from Dr. Smith. The Moderator appointed Pastor Poplin to be Chair *pro tem* while Dr. Smith modified his original testimony. Dr. Smith read a prepared statement that addressed a potential line of defense by the defendant about her absence 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:

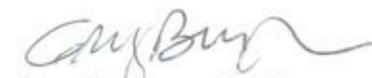
- (1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now
- (2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on 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.

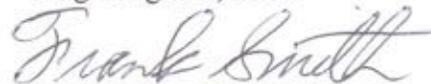
The Clerk read the minutes, which were approved by common consent.

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.



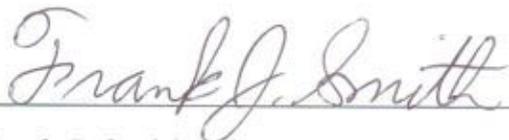
Dr. Frank J. Smith, Moderator



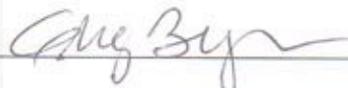
Dr. Greg W. Burgreen, Clerk

Pronouncement of Judgment
by the Atlanta Judicial Commission
of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
December 18, 2022

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Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D., Moderator



Greg W. Burgence, 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 "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.

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:

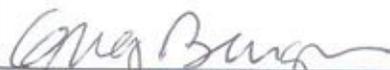
In a few moments, I will declare the meeting to be adjourned *sine die* accompanied by a rap of the gavel. The term *sine die* is Latin, meaning "without day," and it indicates that the court has concluded its business. However, though there is a finality to the actions of this court, there is always 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.

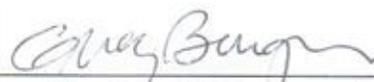
The Clerk read the minutes, which were approved by common consent.

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:

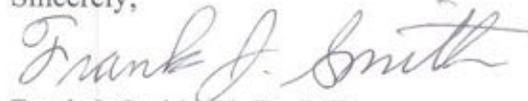
- (1) Willful neglect of attending worship (against the 2nd Commandment): a consistent pattern of not regularly attending church since at least January 2022 until now
- (2) Refusing to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (against the 4th Commandment): as seen by the failure to attend worship on 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.

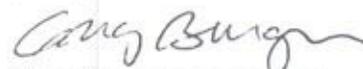
You are entitled to a copy of the minutes and all other records. If you desire to appeal this decision, you have 30 days from tomorrow to do so.

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

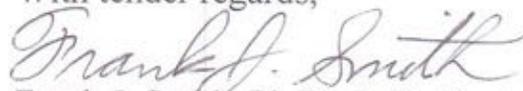
stretching in order to humble us, and also perhaps to address a tendency in us toward self-righteousness. The apostle Paul tells us: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” He goes 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.

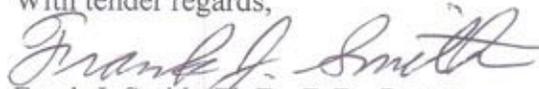
Secondly, however, your circumstances should not dictate how you respond to adversity. You are still responsible for acting in a proper, God-honoring way, no matter what the situation may be.

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.

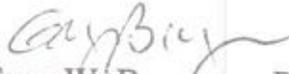
All three of us on the judicial commission have been praying for this entire situation, and we will continue to do so. We anticipate that we will gather again in three to four months in order to assess where Tawana is at, and how to proceed. Will things be about the same? Or, will they be worse? Or, 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.

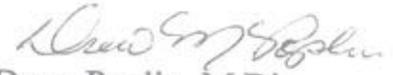
Sincerely,



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

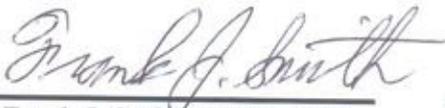
May 15, 2022

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.

574 Western Avenue NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30314
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.

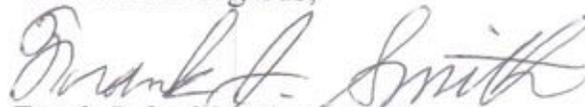
At our meeting on December 1, 2022, we, the members of the Atlanta Judicial Commission, voted unanimously to impose the church's highest censure, excommunication. We did so because of Tawana's obvious lack of repentance from the sins of which she had been found guilty on May 14, 2022. Of course, there 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

**Candidates and Credentials Committee
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Spring 2023 Report**

Recommendations

1. That student exams be conducted according to the schedule outlined below.
2. That Joel Hart and Rich Holdeman be nominated to continue serving on the Committee.
3. That a replacement for Craig Scott be nominated to serve on the Committee.
4. That our report be received.

Serving for Christ,

Joel Hart (2023)
Adam Niess (2024)
Ian Wise (2024)

Rich Holdeman (2023)
Jonathan Schaefer (2024)

Student	Exam	Time*	Examiner/Text
Joe Johnson	Evidence of Progress Sermon	25/-/5	Romans 1:1-7
	Personal Godliness	20/10/5	Aaron Murray
	Theology 1	20/10/5	Jerry Foltz
	English Bible		Proctor: Nathan Eshelman
	Church History Paper		Philip McCollum and Phil Pockras
Jonathan Sturm	Expository Sermon 2	25/-/5	Revelation 8:1-5 (on prayer)
	Exegesis Paper		Ross Fearing and Ian Wise
	Church History	20/10/5	Steve Rhoda
	Theology 2	20/10/5	Shawn Anderson
	Pastoral and Evangelistic Gifts	20/10/5	Rich Holdeman
	[Licensure to receive a call]		

*Duration - The first number is the allotted time for the examiner's question, the second is for questions from the presbytery and the third is for discussion by the presbytery about the exam prior to voting.

Student Aid

The following students are receiving aid from presbytery:

- T.J. Patillo (began September 2022)
- Jake Schwartz (began November 2022)
- Jonathan Sturm (began September 2020)

Seminary-Level Classes

In 2022, the Committee sponsored a seminary-level class on the Major Prophets, taught by Andrew Gilhooley at Second RP. Seven students completed the class, with six taking the class as auditors and one completing the class for credit. The reviews on Andrew's teaching were encouraging.

Motion from the Fall Meeting

The Committee has heard Presbytery's request for us to create a plan for student exams in a committee structure. We are discussing it and will come up with such a plan when it seems to be needed.

Updated Student Handbook

The Student Handbook is in the process of being updated with the newly approved additions by Presbytery. Please be sure to use this new version when it comes out in the near future.

Credential and Status Changes in 2022

Students taken under care or removed from under care

- Joe Johnson (taken under care, October 2022)
- Nathan Shaver (removed from being under care per his request, October 2022)
- Cody Work (taken under care, June 2022)

Licensures, ordinations, and installations

- Allen Blackwood (licensed to receive a call, June 2022)
- Aaron Murray (licensed to receive a call, June 2022; ordained and installed at Marion RPC, August 2022)
- Joe Smith (licensed to receive a call, March 2022)
- Josh Smith (ordained and installed at Westminster RPC, August 2022)

- Jonathan Sturm (licensed to preach, March 2022)

Resignations and transfers

- James Faris (resigned from Second RPC, October 2022)
- Mark Goerner (eligibility to receive a call transferred from St. Lawrence Presbytery, May 2022)
- Jake Schwartz (membership transferred to Providence RPC, soon to be a student under care of the POA)

Deaths

- Godfrey Franklin (December 2022)

Men Under Care

Joe Johnson - [From Joe] God is good. During our last Presbytery meeting I introduced my wife Jayna and announced that we are expecting. We learned that we are going to have a baby girl (coming ~ April 28th, 2023). We are elated. Jayna is working on finishing up a degree this spring and has started certification with DONA International to become a Birth Doula. Last year we read a number of books together as devotionals, such as Herman Bavinck's Wonderful Works of God. This year we are doing a year-through-the-bible plan and singing through our Psalter. A sizeable group from our church has joined in the reading plan. I am teaching middle-school Sunday School, going through the WSC. The kids are great. I occasionally fill-in for Tom Reid preaching morning and evening at the Gainesville plant, and I'm gearing up (coming mid-March) to preach every-other Sunday evening in Celebration, FL since our session recently approved of hosting evening services there. I continue to work full-time as a Full-Stack Web Develop at AdventHealth, a large health care conglomerate. We are working on rebooting our flagship App, and that has kept me busy. I long for the time when I can devote myself more fully to the work of ministry.

T.J. Patillo - [From T.J.] Lately, life has been busy with school and family. As we are approaching the end of the winter term at RPTS, the Greek exegesis paper is closer to being turned in to Dr. Stivason. Of course, if he gives it a good grade I will then pass on to you for review. There have been many blessings at the church in Atlanta lately. I have been teaching the Book of Acts in the adult Sabbath class I lead and it has encouraged a lot of discussion. We are currently taking a break from that and using the Ligonier questionnaire to see where the adult class is spiritually and theologically. The point of this is to give us ideas on what we should be preaching and teaching on to our particular congregation. My family and I have been enjoying family devotion using Dr. Keddie's book on the Prayers of the Bible. It is a great guide that has given us points of discussion and thoughts for our family prayer time. We are planning to go back to Pittsburgh this Summer to take another class on campus. Last summer, I took the summer class on chaplaincy on campus, but was discouraged in that direction when I learned the expectation of facilitation. That is where if you are ministering to someone and they say something like, "I am a Buddhist. Please get me a monk," then I would be expected to do so for them if that was part of the employment agreement. It is common expectation of chaplains. This lays very heavy on me, and I don't believe I could do it with a clear conscience before God. The Lord has also blessed me with a few preaching opportunities. This Sabbath, we are

headed to Birmingham RPC so that I may supply the pulpit there. I have also been asked to supply the pulpit in Atlanta on March 6. I am always scared and excited about these opportunities. I look forward to seeing you all in person again.

Cody Work - [From Cody] The year 2022 was a very blessed one for me and my family. In the spring, my wife Emily and I completed our graduate studies in the field of chemistry after 5 and 6 years, respectively. We also learned that we were expecting our first child, and our son James was born in November. I am grateful to the Lord for protecting Emily and James despite some complications in the pregnancy. We had planned to move to Pittsburgh in the summer of 2022 so that I could begin seminary studies, but the Lord made it clear that He wanted us to stay in northern Indiana for another year by unexpectedly and providentially granting opportunity for both of us to teach chemistry during the 2022-2023 academic year. Another blessing was being taken under care of the GLG Presbytery at the meeting following Synod in June. In addition to teaching, I've begun online classes in Greek, which to my pleasant surprise, I have enjoyed more than I thought I would, and I am also taking Ministry of Worship in the winter quarter. Additionally, Emily and I are grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve and be a part of the ministry at the Elkhart RP Church, where we both have served as Sunday School teachers and are active participants in the life of the body. We are currently in the process of planning to move to the greater Pittsburgh area in the summer of 2023 and are seeking and praying for the right employment situation. Please pray with us that the Lord would guide our next steps as we seek to commit our plans to Him.

Jonathan Sturm - [From Jonathan] This has been a busy and exciting year for me and my family. I spent the summer in East Providence, RI, interning with Daniel Howe at Christ RPC. The internship offered opportunities to preach from the epistle of James, to meet and fellowship with many members of the church, and extensive opportunities to interact with the Atlantic Presbytery. It was a joy to return to RPTS in September, and I am trying to savor my final year at RPTS as much as I can. The highlight of the year for Elsa and myself was welcoming our second daughter, Marianne Elisabeth, in October. As we look towards the future we are excited to see where the Lord calls us to serve in his vineyard, and are thankful that he will be with us wherever we go.

Ministers Without Pastorates

Active

David Whitla - [From David] I continue to serve the denomination and broader church of Christ as Professor of Church History at RPTS, where I teach several pastoral theology and practical ministry courses in addition to the required and elective Church History classes, and directing the summer Theological Foundations for Youth program. In the past year I have been privileged to regularly preach in several RPCNA, as well as RPCI and OPC congregations, and administer both sacraments upon occasion. I serve as chairman of the Youth Ministries Committee of Synod and Synodical Church History Committee. Further afield, I was speaker at the Front Ranges RP Men's Retreat in Denver, CO in the spring, and in the summer taught a virtual ThM intensive course on Scottish Reformation and Post-Reformation Pastoral Theology for Chinese pastors and seminary professors on behalf of China Reformed Theological Seminary (Taipei, Taiwan). I continue to pursue various popular and academic writing projects, including journal and magazine articles, paleography transcription projects, and a newly-edited gift edition of *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* with a companion Study Guide, published by Crown and Covenant in January.

Andrew B. - We have been in Central Asia on a temporary team for about a year and a half with a focus on learning team dynamics, language learning, and reaching out to locals from one of the largest unreached tribes in the world. Though challenging in many ways, it has been an exciting time of growth and confirmation of the massive needs and darkness here. In August 2022, our son, Malachi Samuel, was born in country. As we anticipate this temporary team arrangement finishing in summer 2023, we are planning for time in the States for rest, sharing with churches, and meeting with potential teammates. For re-entry, we anticipate transitioning to a work/business visa. Pray fervently with us for wisdom on what kind of work/business to bless the people of Central Asia and for laborers to join us for the long-term to see King Jesus known and worshiped in this land. Lastly, we have deeply appreciated the prayers and notes of encouragement from saints all over the denomination. Reach out to us at: servinghim@protonmail.com. (Please remember the sensitive nature of electronic communication.)

Inactive

Stan McKenzie - [We received no response to include in this report.]

Retired

Rich Johnston - Rich Johnston continues in faithful service at 2RP, in a retired capacity. He leads the weekly friendship Bible study, which serves those from the disabled community in and outside of the church. Rich also serves on the RPCNA disabilities committee.

Gordon Keddie - [We received no response to include in this report.]

Ray Lanning - [We received no response to include in this report.]

Keith Magill - [We received no response to include in this report.]

R. Paul Mathews - Paul and his wife Janet live in Gaylord, MI near family. They are non-resident, communicant members of the Elkhart, IN RPC. Paul weekly joins the Elkhart Sabbath morning worship via livestream. Janet assists their daughter in a coffee ministry at a large E-Free Church in Gaylord. They partake of the Lord's Supper with the Hetherton RPC (Johannesburg, MI) and occasionally worship there. In 2020 Paul was diagnosed with mild Parkinson's disease; later, sciatica has added to his limited mobility. Paul cherishes his personal time of Scripture reading and an expansive time of daily prayer for local, GLGP, RPCNA, global RP congregations, Wycliffe Bible translators, and other missionary friends. As a non-resident RP member, he is exceptionally blessed in joining the singing of Psalms in the Elkhart worship.

Bob McCracken - [From Bob] We are quite adjusted to life in California by now, and God is taking good care of us. Also Tim and Lori, and their family are very attentive to our needs. We have lots of contact with their children which we love, such as visits and birthday parties, and music recitals, etc. I can still drive, though Lynn has given it up, and that means we can come and go as we wish. That includes church, the stores, doctors' visits, etc. God has spared us from the "hard" diseases, though we know some difficult things are in our future, but we belong to a loving God so we live without fear, and with increasing hope of heaven. We marvel at the Lord's kindness to us.

As to church work, there is not much to report. I have preached 4 times here in Fresno so far this year, and have appreciated the opportunity to do that, but we have a Pastor now, so the need is not much. Also, an opportunity has opened up in a Senior Living home near us, to conduct a service once a month for some people there. That gives me some ministry for which I am glad.

Bob has transferred his credentials to the Pacific Coast Presbytery, so this will be the final report on him that we will include.

Glenn McFarland - At age 92, Glenn is doing remarkably well physically, still drives and does some yard work. His hearing impairment hinders interaction with others which he misses. He especially loves his time with the Lord in devotions, reading numerous passages of Scripture, books like the "Portraits of Christ" by G. Keddie and D. Whitla, etc. and spending long times in prayer. He goes through the ORPC Church Directory interceding for each member and friend listed as well as for there family of 43 and numerous other concerns. Most of his mornings are spent in reading and in prayer. He admits to "short term memory loss", is regretting his inability to continue ministerial duties, but is willing to give advice and counsel when able and requested. Glenn has an amazing knowledge retention of the past, of Doctrinal, Church History and Theological issues. ORPC is blessed to have Glenn and Jean worshipping and ministering among us.

Jim McMahon - Jim has had his share of health problems but remains an active member at Southside. He also leads a weekly Bible study at his residential home.

Bob Morrow - Bob has been in the Bria Skilled Nursing Facility in Columbia, IL, for a little over a year now and has been on Hospice care since about November 2022. Pastor Ross Fearing goes up to see him weekly and says that Bob continues to be a great encouragement to him. Ross also notes that Bob seems to be getting weaker month by month. Bob is obviously not engaged in active ministry in the congregation anymore, but he does continue his ministry of prayer. Let us lift up this godly man before the throne of grace as he finishes his race here on earth and he prepares to enter glory with his Savior.

Jim Pennington - Jim Pennington is alive and well and an active member of ORPC. He has recently stepped down from the Orlando Session and was granted Elder Emeritus status. He is appreciative of the love and support of the congregation. He has preached a few times for the congregation since the last Spring meeting of Presbytery and continues to preside in the worship services on a rotational basis. He also participates in the prayer times with the elders held via conference call before morning worship services. He supports the monthly Men's group meetings and leads the study on occasion. He celebrated 50 years of marriage to Ruth this past year. He was awarded the Faithful Servant Award by RPTS and will be honored at a Seminary dinner on March 10, 2023.

Dennis Prutow - Dr. Prutow continues as a member of 2nd RP. He did not preach or teach in 2022. He did publish 6 ebooks - a short commentary on Jonah and Five "Explanations of 1 Peter". He continues to maintain his SermonAudio and YouTube sites. Many excellent resources can be found in these places. His books are available for free at Smashwords.com; search for Dennis Prutow.

Steven Work - [From Steven] In 2022, the Lord has allowed me to supply the pulpit 14 times in 5 Reformed Presbyterian congregations. Presbytery has continued my assignment as moderator of the Atlanta Temporary Governing Body (Atlanta, GA). I serve on the session of the Southwest Ohio

Reformed Presbyterian Church (Mason, OH) as a ruling elder. Occasionally I serve our congregation as precentor.

Jim Wright - At age 83, Jim is currently housed at the Lake Bennett Center for Rehabilitation and Healing. He is enjoying his friendships there and occasional visits from family (his daughter, Stephanie, and Steve Garrow (Deacon), Mason and Emily (grandson and granddaughter). His health has stabilized after a recent infection and his is now back to normal. He is experiencing early signs of dementia with some confusion and memory loss but is functional. His membership has been transferred back to ORPC from Covenant Fellowship in Wilkinsburg, PA.

Bill Roberts - [From Bill] Rachel and I continue, in God's providence, to enjoy good health. During 2022, I was able to preach 29 times, including one joint service. In addition, I performed 3 infant baptisms as well as led communion 3 times. I continue to serve on the Trustees of Synod and on the Finance Committee of Synod, although it is likely I will not finish the terms on these. I still visit two prisoners on the Federal death row in Terre Haute. I also helped to represent the Reformation Translation Fellowship at the Ligonier Conference in Orlando. My physical address is 6523 E. Walton Drive, Camby, IN 46113. We are members at Southside RPC in Indianapolis.

Frank Schutz - [From Frank] As you may know, my wife died two years ago in April. After that I kept pretty busy spending time with my 3 children, two sons-in-law and two grandchildren. It was a pretty intentional time (on my part at least) for us all to get through the grieving process. It culminated last summer in a very long vacation that Leslie and I had often spoken of taking. For me it was something of a trip down memory lane and I sent out daily reports to my family with pictures. It was a wonderful and healing time for me and my family.

Near the end of August I spent about 10 days staying with Karl and Joan Stoicheff in Indianapolis. Some of you may know that Joan was writing her memoir called 'The Mercy Weaver.' Karl served as the Translator (she spoke the book into the computer and he translated that into text) as well as doing all the photographic work. My daughter Ellen was the Editor, their Grand Daughter Stephanie did the cover design and I was there as sort of a managing editor to get everything into shape for self-publishing. If you haven't gotten a copy, you should. (<https://www.lulu.com/shop/joan-schutz-stoicheff-and-karl-stoicheff-and-stephanie-gohmann-and-leslie-ellen-schutz-strickland/the-mercy-weaver/paperback/product-2p54r7.html?q=The+Mercy+Weaver&page=1&pageSize=4>) It is a wonderful story of how God works in and through trauma to weave our lives into a beautiful garment.

I have been attending Belle Center more often. However, this past month up to the present when I would have intended to go there, I have been laid up sick. When I can, I have also been working on writing a book of my own and I have also been doing a lengthy study on Worship. I am taking a more biblical theological approach. I have completed a rough draft through the Pentateuch.

Jack Baumgardner - [From Jack] My wife and I have been living in Avon, Indiana and attending Christ Church until it closed in October, I conduct communion for Christ Church once per month. After Christ Church closed we had our membership transferred to Second Reformed Presbyterian church. In January of 2022 I preached for Bell Center RPC when the pastor was sick. In April of 2022 Wade Mann asked me if I would Moderate the Westminster RPC while Wade was on sabbatical. I moderated that session in June, July and August when they Ordained and installed Josh Smith as their pastor. I preached twice for Westminster during that time. Before Christ Church closed a young

man began to attend church. I invited him into a men's book club/bible study. He began to attend. I shared the gospel with him and he claimed to be an unbeliever. After Christ Church closed I told him we were going to a different church so I picked him up and he began to attend Second RPC with my wife and I. He has since committed himself to Christ and I meet with him in study through the gospel of John each week. While attending Second RPC I met another young man. I ask him about his faith and then he asks me about my faith. I gave him my testimony and asked him if he would like to meet with me in a bible study in the gospel of John. I have been meeting with him weekly and he drove a stake on the Second RPC property to confirm his relationship with Jesus Christ. My wife have been seeking to build relationships with neighbors in the two years we have lived in our home in Avon. We just started and bible discussion in the gospel of John with three couples last month. My wife has had two reconstruction surgeries one on her left foot and now on her right. I have been caring for her. I am available to preach as churches need but am not looking for a full time position. I am also getting as much time as I can with my 13 grandchildren which is one of the main reasons I retired.

Tom Reid - [From Tom] Although classified as retired, I am working a lot as the pastor to a Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship in Gainesville, Florida, under the authority of the session of the Orlando RP Church. I preach twice each Lord's Day (currently in Genesis and Acts), and lead a study on Wednesday night on the Westminster Confession and the RPCNA Testimony (currently in chapter 17). We are trying to upgrade our website (gainesvillercpc.com), to make it a more useful ministry tool. Due to the effects of sleep apnea, despite faithful use of a c-pap machine each night, I am unable to attend Presbytery or Synod meetings, because I cannot stay alert or even awake in long meetings. I served as a member of the Ad Interim Commission over the past year and am open to serving in other ways which do not require travel or long meetings!

Appendix A: Student Recommendations



Student Evaluation

Presbytery/Church requesting review

Presbytery/Church requesting evaluation
Great Lakes- Gulf

Review Recipient Name
Adam Niess

Email of Recipient
adamniess@gmail.com

Student being reviewed

Student Being Reviewed	GPA	Credits Taken
Trevor Pattillo	3.79	24

Student Rating (scale: Strong, Acceptable, Concerning, Unknown, N/A)

How well does the student meet the academic standards of the seminary?

Strong

How consistent and disciplined is the student at fulfilling responsibilities in a timely manner (e.g., arriving to class, submitting assignments, paying tuition and other expenses, registering for classes, returning library books, completing work study responsibilities)?

Strong

Does the student fit in well with the campus environment, get along well with others, and show concern for them?

Unknown

Does the student show appropriate respect for professors and students, both inside and outside of class?

Strong

Does the student conduct himself with wisdom, grace, and love toward others?

Strong

What is your assessment of the student's personal character and walk with God?

Strong

What is your assessment of the student's emotional stability

Strong

What is your assessment of the student's relationships with his closest family members?

Unknown

What is your assessment of the student's gifts and calling to pastoral ministry?

Unknown

Given his current progress, how would you rate the student's overall preparedness toward being an effective pastor?

Unknown

Any Additional Comments?

We are thankful for TJ's participation in the online program at RPTS, and all our interactions with him have shown him to be a respectful student who is eager to learn. However, his distance student status limits us



Student Evaluation

Presbytery/Church requesting review

Presbytery/Church requesting evaluation
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

Review Recipient Name
Adam Niess

Email of Recipient
adamniess@gmail.com

Student being reviewed

Student Being Reviewed	GPA	Credits Taken
Cody Work	4.00	3

Student Rating (scale: Strong, Acceptable, Concerning, Unknown, N/A)

How well does the student meet the academic standards of the seminary?
Strong

How consistent and disciplined is the student at fulfilling responsibilities in a timely manner (e.g., arriving to class, submitting assignments, paying tuition and other expenses, registering for classes, returning library books, completing work study responsibilities)?
Strong

Does the student fit in well with the campus environment, get along well with others, and show concern for them?
Unknown

Does the student show appropriate respect for professors and students, both inside and outside of class?
Strong

Does the student conduct himself with wisdom, grace, and love toward others?
Unknown

What is your assessment of the student's personal character and walk with God?
Strong

What is your assessment of the student's emotional stability
Strong

What is your assessment of the student's relationships with his closest family members?
Unknown

What is your assessment of the student's gifts and calling to pastoral ministry?
Unknown

Given his current progress, how would you rate the student's overall preparedness toward being an effective pastor?
Unknown

Any Additional Comments?

As a student who is just beginning, Cody has only completed one class thus far at a distance in the Fall quarter, and is enrolled in two courses this Winter quarter. The few interactions with him we have had have



Student Evaluation

Presbytery/Church requesting review

Presbytery/Church requesting evaluation
Great Lakes-Gulf

Review Recipient Name
Adam Niess

Email of Recipient
adamniess@reformedlafayette.com

Student being reviewed

Student Being Reviewed	GPA	Credits Taken
Jonathan Sturm	3.97	109

Student Rating (scale: Strong, Acceptable, Concerning, Unknown, N/A)

How well does the student meet the academic standards of the seminary?
Strong

How consistent and disciplined is the student at fulfilling responsibilities in a timely manner (e.g., arriving to class, submitting assignments, paying tuition and other expenses, registering for classes, returning library books, completing work study responsibilities)?
Strong

Does the student fit in well with the campus environment, get along well with others, and show concern for them?
Strong

Does the student show appropriate respect for professors and students, both inside and outside of class?
Strong

Does the student conduct himself with wisdom, grace, and love toward others?
Strong

What is your assessment of the student's personal character and walk with God?
Strong

What is your assessment of the student's emotional stability
Strong

What is your assessment of the student's relationships with his closest family members?
Strong

What is your assessment of the student's gifts and calling to pastoral ministry?
Strong

Given his current progress, how would you rate the student's overall preparedness toward being an effective pastor?
Strong

Any Additional Comments?

Jon is an exceptional student, gifted preacher, and gentle soul. I am eager to see him shepherding the people of God.

Appendix B: Student Charts

GLG Presbytery Student Chart: **Joe Johnson**
C&CC representative: Jonathan Schaefer

	Date Completed	Examiner / Proctor	Comments
Taken under care	10/2022	-----	
Seminary: begun			
Evidence of progress sermon		-----	
Seminary: first year completed			
Personal Godliness exam			
English Bible exam (written)			
Theology & distinctives 1 exam			
Expository sermon 1 (assigned text)		-----	
Church history paper			
Licensure to preach		-----	
Seminary: second year completed			
Pastoral & evangelistic gifts exam			
Theology & distinctives 2 exam			
Church history exam			
Expository sermon 2 (assigned topic)		-----	
Exegesis paper			
Licensure to receive a call		-----	
Seminary: MDiv awarded	Graduated from WTS in 2016		

Internships			
Ordination Exams			
Expository sermon (assigned text)		-----	
Personal Godliness exam			
Soundness in the faith & Testimony			

GLG Presbytery Student Chart: **T.J. Patillo**

C&CC representative: Ian Wise

	Date Completed	Examiner / Proctor	Comments
Taken under care	11/2021		
Seminary: begun			
Evidence of progress sermon		-----	
Seminary: first year completed			
Personal Godliness exam			
English Bible exam (written)			
Theology & distinctives 1 exam			
Expository sermon 1 (assigned text)		-----	
Church history paper			
Licensure to preach		-----	
Seminary: second year completed			
Pastoral & evangelistic gifts exam			
Theology & distinctives 2 exam			
Church history exam			
Expository sermon 2 (assigned topic)		-----	
Exegesis paper			
Licensure to receive a call		-----	
Seminary: MDiv awarded			
Internships			

Ordination Exams			
Expository sermon (assigned text)		-----	
Personal Godliness exam			
Soundness in the faith & Testimony			

GLG Presbytery Student Chart: **Jonathan Sturm**
 C&CC representative: Jonathan Schaeffer

	Date Completed	Examiner / Proctor	Comments
Taken under care	9/27/19	-----	
Seminary: begun			
Evidence of progress sermon	3/2021	-----	Matthew 6:1-2
Seminary: first year completed			
Personal Godliness exam	3/2021	Philip McCollum	
English Bible exam (written)	3/2022	Barry York	
Theology & distinctives 1 exam	3/2022	Rich Holdeman	
Expository sermon 1 (assigned text)	11/2021	-----	1 John 4:1-6
Church history paper	3/2022	Nathan Eshelman and Phil Pockras	
Licensure to preach	3/2022	-----	
Seminary: second year completed			
Pastoral & evangelistic gifts exam			
Theology & distinctives 2 exam			
Church history exam			
Expository sermon 2 (assigned topic)		-----	
Exegesis paper			
Licensure to receive a call		-----	
Seminary: MDiv awarded			

Internships		RPC of Lafayette (Summer 2021) Christ RPC (Summer 2022)	
Ordination Exams			
Expository sermon (assigned text)		-----	
Personal Godliness exam			
Soundness in the faith & Testimony			

GLG Presbytery Student Chart: **Cody Work**
 C&CC representative: Rich Holdeman

	Date Completed	Examiner / Proctor	Comments
Taken under care	6/2022	-----	
Seminary: begun			
Evidence of progress sermon		-----	
Seminary: first year completed			
Personal Godliness exam			
English Bible exam (written)			
Theology & distinctives 1 exam			
Expository sermon 1 (assigned text)		-----	
Church history paper			
Licensure to preach		-----	
Seminary: second year completed			
Pastoral & evangelistic gifts exam			
Theology & distinctives 2 exam			
Church history exam			
Expository sermon 2 (assigned topic)		-----	
Exegesis paper			
Licensure to receive a call		-----	
Seminary: MDiv awarded			
Internships			

Ordination Exams			
Expository sermon (assigned text)		-----	
Personal Godliness exam			
Soundness in the faith & Testimony			

GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY

1/1/2022 Through 12/31/2022

<u>INCOME</u>		2022 Actual
100 - Assessments		
101	2022 Assessments	\$ 42,002.18
120 - From HMB		
124	H.M.B. Supplements - Durham Aid Grant	\$ 12,000.00
140 - Bank Interest		\$ 1.70
TOTAL INCOME		\$ 54,003.88
<u>EXPENSES</u>		
200 - Presbytery Meetings		
201	Annual Spring Meeting	\$ 4,626.35
202	Fall Meeting @ Columbus 10/7-8/22	\$ 4,762.23
245	Fall Meeting @ Southfield 11/5-6/2021	\$ 1,070.18
248	Drew Poplin Install 6/10/2022	\$ 2,009.98
249	Aaron Murray Ordination 8/17/2022	\$ 450.88
250	Joshua Smith Ordination 8/19/2022	\$ 1,048.15
260 - Officer Expenses		
261	Clerk Honorarium	\$ 3,000.00
262	Assistant Clerk Honorarium	\$ 500.00
265	Officer's Expense	\$ 223.52
270 - Standing Committees & Commissions		
272	Candidates & Credentials	\$ 159.06
276	Internet Maintenance	\$ 500.00
300 Congregational Visitions		
317	Grand Rapids Visitation	\$ 575.83
400 - New Works		
408	Atlanta Mission Church	\$ 974.36
500 - Seminary Student Aid		\$ 11,400.00
520 - Covfamiko Family Conference		\$ 2,000.00
550 - College Ministry		\$ 1,000.00
700 - HMB Aid Distribution		
701	HMB Durham Aid Grant	\$ 12,000.00
900 - Miscellaneous		
901	Other	\$ 100.00
915	Legal Fees	\$ 8,545.77
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$ 54,946.31
ANNUAL NET		\$ (942.43)
Balance Jan 1, 2022		\$ 7,516.34
Balance December 31, 2022		\$ 6,573.91

GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY**BANK ACCOUNT BALANCE**

1/1/2022 Through 12/31/2022

CHECKING ACCOUNT

Deposits	\$ 54,002.18
Withdrawals	\$ (54,946.31)
Interest	\$ 1.70
OVERALL TOTAL	<u>\$ (942.43)</u>
Balance Jan 1, 2022	\$ 7,516.34
<u>Balance December 31, 2022</u>	\$ 6,573.91

Internet Maintenance Committee Report

2023 GLGP Spring Meeting
Southside RPC ~ March 2-4

Dear Fathers & Brethren,

Over the past year, Andrew Imeson has faithfully served as our presbytery's Internet Maintenance Technician, helping to manage the presbytery's internet functions. With his help, we were able to navigate through some unfortunate technical difficulties involving site certification, some minor issues with our email list, and some lags with respect to the posting of minutes. These issues are now resolved, and your patience has been a real encouragement to us. While we are pleased with our progress this year, we have identified areas for improvement, meaning that the best is almost certainly yet to come.

Over the past year, we were able to break ground on several key items, including (1) Our new online delegate certification/notification form, and (2) Our new digital review process for Session/TGB minute books.

Presbytery-approved projects still in the pipeline include: (1) Removing the password-protection feature from the GLG website; (2) Distributing an updated and password-protected roster via email; and (3) Implementing an online travel expense form to assist the work of the treasurer.

At present, we are planning to remove password-protection from our website on April 1. As noted at the fall meeting, we are actively soliciting feedback from delegates *at this meeting* (either personally or on the floor) regarding any document currently on the website which is believed to be sensitive. This will be the last opportunity for the court to reclassify such documents prior to the removal of our website's password-protection on April 1.

This past fall, presbytery appointed Nathan Eshelman, upon the conclusion of his moderatorship, to begin serving as our new assistant clerk. This transition will take effect near the outset of our upcoming spring meeting. Moving forward, we believe it would be simpler and easier for everyone if presbytery dissolved this committee and delegated 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, Mr. Kuehner and Mr. Eshelman.¹

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That presbytery reappoint Andrew Imeson as Internet Maintenance Technician until the Spring 2024 meeting of presbytery, with an annual stipend of \$500.
2. 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.

Respectfully Submitted,
Adam Kuehner, Ch.
Nathan Eshelman
Andrew Imeson, Cons.

¹ Some will recall that, in the wake of Keith Evans' departure to POA, Mr. Kuehner originally proposed the formation of this committee as a temporary mechanism designed to merge into the clerkship once Mr. Eshelman became the new assistant clerk.

Membership Committee

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery

March 2023

The October 2022 meeting of Presbytery marked the dissolution of two congregations: Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian, Indianapolis, Indiana; and First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Several people who had been members of those congregations had already transferred their membership prior to the congregational disorganization. Those who had not already transferred their membership were placed on the general roll of Presbytery.

Over the past several months, the chairman of this committee has been involved in interaction with respect to a number of folks who had belonged to one of these now-dissolved congregations. However, your committee has been hampered in providing proper pastoral care by virtue of two factors:

1. Due to the transfer out of the Presbytery of two committee members, your committee has since October consisted only of its chairman. (At least obtaining a quorum has been easy!)
2. As of February 14, 2023, no list of the members from either congregation had been provided to your committee.

Your committee recommends the following:

1. That the Nominating Committee nominate three new members of the Membership Committee.
2. That this report be approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank J. Smith

Frank J. Smith, Chairman

HMB Representative Report
January 23, 2023

Overview

The Home Missions Board of the RPCNA met twice in 2022: April 14-15, and October 20-21. Your HMB Representative attended remotely and reported for the GLG at both meetings. The HMB discussed reports and funding requests from the various presbyteries. Additionally, the HMB discussed the possibility to fund outreaches that do not specifically involve church planting (i.e. prison ministry) and began a discussion on changes involved with the new Canadian denomination.

At the end of the year, the HMB was providing funding for:
8 churches and 1 prison ministry receiving HMB aid
3 Congregations with a Resident-in-Training (RIT) program
1 Regional Home missionary
4 Congregations with interns

Next Steps

- The next meeting of the HMB is March 9-10, 2023 in Elkins Park, PA.
- Your HMB Representative wishes to resign and be replaced at the 2023 Spring Presbytery Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bryan Dage

Appendix: 2022 HMB Report from GLG

Great Lakes-Gulf Update to HMB – October 17, 2022

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery currently no residents in training, one mission work and one prospective work. There are no requests for RIT or Mission funding at this time.

Atlanta Mission Work

No new reports since the last meeting.

Church Planting Opportunities – from GLGP’s Church Extension Committee Gainesville Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship, Gainesville, Florida

No new reports since the last meeting.

Men for the Ministry

T.J. Patillo – Taken Under Care, November 2021

Jake Schwartz – Taken Under Care, June 2021

Jon Sturm – Licensed to Preach, March 2022

Vacant Congregations

Selma RP, Selma, AL

Prayer Request:

Please pray for wisdom and unity in the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery through some difficult times that have put a damper on some church planting possibilities.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bryan Dage

Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church Resolution Committee Report February 2023

Fathers and brethren,

Below you will find the Immanuel RPC Resolution Committee Report.

Committee Make-Up

The committee was appointed by the moderator following the Fall meeting of the GLGP. The moderator purposefully chose a committee that reflected the breadth of the presbytery's makeup.

Your committee is as follows: Nathan Eshelman, Joel Hart, Richard Holdeman, Adam Kuehner, and James Odom.

Charge from Presbytery

The two-fold remit from the presbytery was:

1. Report back in the spring with its evaluation and recommendation concerning GLG 22-21.
2. Communicate the contents of the resolutions regarding the IRPC elders and congregation, listening to the elders and congregation, and discussing appropriate next steps.

We were also charged with presenting the following presuppositions and options to Immanuel Church:

IRPC Resolutions 1 & 2, which represent the matter to be conveyed to the IRPC elders and congregation, are as follows:

- That presbytery declare the action taken at the IRPC congregational meeting on 9/30/22 to leave the RPCNA to be out of order, such that IRPC remains an RPCNA congregation under the oversight of the GLGP.
- That we, the Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery — being grieved that IRPC desires to depart from the RPCNA and regretting that our efforts were not successful in preventing this desire — counsel the Immanuel RPC session and congregation, in the interests of maintaining the peace and order of the church during this time of transition,
- That, if they desire to come under the presbyterial oversight of another true branch of Christ's visible church, they should
- Identify a true branch of Christ's visible church with which the session and congregation would desire to affiliate, and which is inclined to accept that affiliation, and then
- Petition the presbytery for approval of this transition to the presbyterial oversight of another true branch of Christ's visible church, meanwhile the GLG 22-21 committee

will research the constitutional viability of such a transition and whether or not presbytery or synod has original jurisdiction to handle this matter.

- That, in order to be disorganized as a congregation of the RPCNA (DCG 1:14; 2.9, 11), they must
- Receive and accept the formal resignations of at least all but one resident elders from service on the session,
- Cooperate with Synod's Board of Trustees concerning the disposition of congregational assets and liabilities, per DCG 2.11.

Communications

The work began slowly and with difficulty in scheduling meeting times with the IRPC session. There were also several phone calls and conversations that were intended to work towards a resolution. Two formal meetings between the committee and the IRPC elders took place and were helpful in laying a plan for a peaceful exit from the RPCNA. As the committee presented the three options (remain, transfer, dissolve) to IRPC, the committee sought all available ways for "remain" and then for "transfer" to occur; but the third option, "dissolve," is where we currently are in our discussions.

The committee has not gotten to the point in the conversations where we are able to meet with the congregation, although we are aware of that component of the charge.

There were several discussions concerning the standing of the congregation as an RPCNA congregation; the assets of IRPC; as well as the status of former officers that remain under discipline. Our work as a committee was complicated by charges and complaints within the church courts as well as a civil lawsuit against the RPCNA, IRPC, and Jared and Lisa Olivetti, former pastor and his wife. As a committee we are not commenting on any of these matters as they are outside of the purview of our assigned labor.

Our first formal meeting was on December 23, 2022. Below are the approved notes from that meeting. Both the committee and the IRPC have approved these minutes:

December 13, 2022 – 8 PM

Present: Nathan Eshelman, Adam Kuehner, James Odom, Rich Holdeman, and Joel Hart joining with the Immanuel session (Samuel Carr, Josh Karshen, Matt Wilburn, and interim pastor Dan Perrin). The meeting was held via Zoom, with Samuel Carr, Matt Wilburn and Dan Perrin present together at the Immanuel church building.

After opening introductions, Nathan Eshelman prayed to open the meeting at 8:09 PM.

Nathan Eshelman began by reading from the presbytery resolution concerning the IRPC congregational meeting on September 30.

After this reading, discussion ensued about the nature of the presbytery resolution, life at IRPC, and perspectives of IRPC elders and committee members about next possible steps.

After good extended discussion, the IRPC elders requested more time to pray through the scenarios presented to them within the GLG presbytery resolution.

The committee and the elders agreed to continue discussing the scenarios, with the goal of making more clear how the scenarios might functionally work out in the life of the church and presbytery.

The group anticipates meeting again together in January.

Nathan Eshelman asked Dan Perrin and James Odom to close the time in prayer, after which the meeting closed at 9:21 PM.

After further discussion, the following proposal was crafted as one way to act as a neutral party, seeking, if possible, to resolve any pending judicial matters while facilitating IRPC's desired departure by way of lawful disorganization. Some committee members expressed mixed feelings regarding the proposal. However, it was agreed that the proposal might represent the least problematic way forward, under such challenging circumstances.

That all the IRPC elders sign a letter addressed to the presbytery, submitted no later than 2/16/23 [the two-week submission deadline], which includes the following:

1. An acknowledgement that the session's decision to admit Mr. Olivetti to communion, while made in good conscience with a desire to be faithful to Scripture, is contrary to the ruling of synod.
2. A formal resignation from service on the IRPC session (DCG 3.1.5a, D-11), including a request that their ordinations be terminated (DCG 3.1.7b, D-12).
3. An acknowledgement of the disorganization of the session and congregation, due to the resignation and termination from office of its session members, per the criteria outlined in DCG 2.9-11, D-5/6.
4. A list of all the IRPC members in good standing (not presently under discipline) whose memberships, by written request to the session, have been removed by the session, as of the disorganization of the session and congregation (BOD I.4.2b, E-6), along with a list of all the IRPC members (including all those presently under discipline) whose memberships will be automatically placed on the roll of presbytery, per DCG, 1.14, D-4. [The session would be responsible to compile this list.]
5. An acknowledgement that the session has received written confirmation from the Trustees of Synod indicating the terms upon which the Board has determined to forego any property or asset claims (DCG 2.9, D-6) resulting from the IRPC disorganization. [The committee would work with the session and the board to secure such terms, apart from which the agreement would be void.]
6. An acknowledgement that Mr. Borg and Mr. Anderson have agreed in writing to withdraw their complaints/charges, contingent upon the submission of this letter, in keeping with the specific terms of this mutual agreement.
7. An appendix containing relevant session minutes to confirm the actions taken above.

The notes of the meeting where we discussed this proposal are below. Again, both committee and IRPC session have approved these notes/minutes:

Meeting of IRPC Committee with IRPC Elders on January 26, 2023

Meeting held over Zoom

Time: 8PM

Present from Immanuel Session: Samuel Carr, Josh Karshen, Matt Wilburn, Daniel Perrin

Present from IRPC Committee: Nathan Eshelman, Adam Kuehner, Joel Hart, and James Odom. Committee member Richard Holdeman was unable to be present due to a prior commitment.

Nathan Eshelman began the meeting in prayer at 8:08 PM.

Nathan Eshelman overviewed the three options that were initially presented to IRPC coming out of the October presbytery meeting. These are summarized:

- (1) Stay in the denomination and work toward reconciliation
- (2) Transfer to a viable branch of Christ's church
- (3) Some form of resignation and dissolving as a church within the RPCNA

Nathan Eshelman then asked Adam Kuehner to walk through the steps of a proposal to how option 3 (resignation/dissolving) might unfold.

The proposal is pasted below. The proposal had been discussed among the committee in advance of the meeting, as well as forwarded to the IRPC elders in advance of the meeting.

Proposal:

That all the IRPC elders sign a letter addressed to the presbytery, submitted no later than 2/16/23 [the two-week submission deadline], which includes the following:

1. *An acknowledgement that the session's decision to admit Mr. Olivetti to communion, while made in good conscience with a desire to be faithful to Scripture, is contrary to the ruling of synod.*
2. *A formal resignation from service on the IRPC session (DCG 3.1.5a, D-11), including the termination of their ordinations (DCG 3.1.7b, D-12).*
3. *An acknowledgement of the disorganization of the session and congregation, due to the resignation and termination from office of its session members, per the criteria outlined in DCG 2.9-11, D-5/6.*
4. *A list of all the IRPC members in good standing (not presently under discipline) whose memberships, by written request to the session, have been removed by the session, as of the disorganization of the session and congregation (BOD 1.4.2b, E-6), along with a list of all the IRPC members (including all those presently under discipline) whose memberships will be automatically placed on the roll of presbytery, per DCG, 1.14, D-4. [The session would be responsible to compile this list.]*
5. *An acknowledgement that the session has received written confirmation from the Trustees of Synod indicating the terms upon which the Board has determined to forego any property or asset claims (DCG 2.9, D-6) resulting from the IRPC disorganization. [The committee would work with the session and the board to secure such terms, apart from which the agreement would be void.]*

6. *An acknowledgement that Mr. Borg and Mr. Anderson have agreed in writing to withdraw their complaints/charges, contingent upon the submission of this letter, in keeping with the specific terms of this mutual agreement.*
7. *An appendix containing relevant session minutes to confirm the actions taken above.*

Adam discussed the proposal and drew out clarifying information concerning the points in the proposal.

Extensive discussion ensued between the committee and the session concerning matters of the proposal, including proposed timelines, challenges, and other scenarios.

No tweaks were made to the conceptual framework during the meeting. The committee agreed that extensions on the timeline (February 16) would be reasonable and almost certainly accepted by the presbytery.

At the end of the meeting, the IRPC elders indicated a thankfulness for the proposal and some leaning toward following the route indicated. They asked for time for prayer and consideration, to which the committee agreed.

Joel Hart closed the prayer at 9:11 PM.

The IRPC session had indicated that they were “favorable” towards the above but believe they needed more time to implement these actions. The committee sought to be flexible in the time line as we desire to do good work that glorifies God, rather than rushed work that merely seeks to meet deadlines. The intention was, sadly, to see Immanuel RPC dissolve before this meeting of presbytery and have this action recognized by this court.

Continued Work

As of February 13, 2023, according to Mr. Dan Perrin, the IRPC session is unable to complete the process of dissolution as laid out in the proposal. A future meeting (which is being scheduled as of the time of writing) between committee and IRPC elders will discuss why they are unable to accept the proposal. We must carry on.

The committee has the following two recommendations:

1. The committee be continued and to report back to the synod-time meeting of presbytery.
2. Mr. Dan Perrin be given five minutes to speak on the floor of presbytery.

Humbly Submitted,

Nathan Eshelman (chair)
 Joel Hart (secretary)
 Richard Holdeman
 Adam Kuehner
 James Odom

CYPY Spring 2023

Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery RPCNA Report

Board Members:

Stephen Rhoda – President/Interim Director – Class of 2024
 Bryan Planalp – Secretary/Clerk – Class of 2025
 Anna Roberts – Treasurer – Class of 2025
 Joy Whitt – Class of 2024
 Kevin Duffey – Class of 2023

Board Activity: The Board met six times beginning in June of 2022 with several key areas of focus.

- Transition from the good work of Jacob Long who requested to resign from his role as Director.
- Document key roles include the Director, Youth Leadership Team (YLT), and Treasurer
- Begin a search for a new director and support Stephen Rhoda in his role as Interim Director.
- Address Child Protection Policy requirements for events.

Key Successes during the last year.

- Stephen Rhoda successfully took on the responsibilities of Interim Director from Jacob Long. The transition was completed in early August of 2022.
- A job description of the Director's role was documented and approved by the CYPY board. This was key to support the Director's search and transition to the CYPY board oversight.
- YLT guidelines were documented.
- Treasurer documentation, PayPal and Banking information was transitioned to Anna Roberts – Treasurer for on-going administration.
- Events Held in 2022
 - Fall Fest 2022 - November meeting at McCormick's Creek State Park. Shipps were event coordinators, Day long event. (Two Meals) Phillip McCullum was the speaker (20-25 attended)
 - Winter Conference 2022 – 3 night event at Lakeview Camp in Seymour Indiana. Approximately 50 attended, John Punt was speaker. 5 male counselor and 3 female counselor Luke Hart was cook. 2/3 male/ 1/3 female. Ratio was a good cross-section of presbytery, Steve and Mary Rhoda were event coordinators.
 - Youth Leadership Team – Steve is meeting regularly with the YLT
 - Psalm Sing - January 29, 2023, February 26, 2023 – 2nd RP – Jacob and Cassie Long were event coordinators.
- Upcoming 2023 events in Spring and Fall

- Theological Foundations Weekend 2023 – March/April Event – arrangements coming up soon.
- Winter Conference 2023 - TBD
- Reach out to churches – Board will reach out to the Presbytery by making visits to churches with the goal of growing participation
 - Promotion of CYPUP and the YLT
 - Discipleship and volunteer opportunity
 - Search for Director

CYPUP Board Proposals for Presbytery consideration:

Proposal 1:

Stephen Rhoda would like to focus on the Director's role and would like to pass-on the responsibilities of President of the Board. Therefore

We Propose:

- 1) Bryan Planalp will become the President of the CYPUP Board
- 2) Stephen Rhoda will remain Director of the CYPUP
- 3) An additional CYPUP board member will be named.

Proposal 2:

We propose:

- 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 CYPUP 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 CYPUP budget. The benefits will be speed, ease, and uniformity.
- 3) CYPUP 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.

Proposal 3:

We propose:

- 1) CYPUP 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?

Proposed new Youth Ministry Application Form:

Youth Ministry Staff Application Form Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)

All information on this application will be kept confidential. If you have any questions about the application, please call or email the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event.

I. Basic Information

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

What age will be you be at the time of the first event at which you wish to serve? _____

How many years have you been a communicant member of the RPCNA? _____

Are you currently a communicant member of the RPCNA in good standing? _____

Current congregation: _____

II. History

Have you ever been:

- Arrested for any reason? *Yes / No*
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime involving minors? *Yes / No*
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a moving violation in the last 3 years? *Yes / No*

III. Affirmations

Place your initials on each line.

_____ I have carefully read the GLGP Child Protection Policy.

_____ I recognize that the GLGP is relying upon the accuracy of the information contained herein. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that all the information that I have provided is completely true and correct o the best of my knowledge.

_____ I authorize GLGP to contact any person or entity listed in this application and elder(s) of my session, and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide GLGP with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

_____ I further authorize GLP to conduct a criminal background investigation and/or child abuse investigation if further investigation is deemed necessary.

_____ I voluntarily release GLGP and any such organization or entity listed herein by me from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

IV. Attachments

Please remember to include the following with this application form:

1. *(If necessary)* Explanation of answers.

Applicant Signature _____ *Date:* _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if applicant is under 18)
 _____ *Date:* _____

V. Pastor/Elder Attestation

I am a pastor or elder from the applicant's current congregation. I attest that the applicant is a member in good standing of my congregation. I further attest that I have no reservations regarding the applicant's fitness for working with youth.

Additional comments (optional):

Pastor/Elder Signature and Date _____

For Administrative Use Only

Date submitted and received: _____

Date background check submitted: _____

Date background check results received: _____

Date and name of elder giving recommendation of applicant to be a youth ministry staff member: _____

Application Approved _____ Application Denied _____

Date of application approval or denial: _____

2023 Great Lakes/ Gulf Presbytery Meeting

Covfamikoi Report

2022 Conference Recap:

After a three-year break, we were excited that we were able to finally host a Covfamikoi conference last summer. The conference took place July 4 to July 9 at Johnson University near Knoxville, Tennessee. The attendance for the 2022 conference was 232.

The main speaker for the conference (adult and High school) was Dr. Barry York, President of RPTS. The theme for the conference and Dr. York's talks were "The Beauty of the Church". The Junior High Speaker was Drew Poplin. Due to having a long break between conferences, we had a completely new set of staff (counselors, teachers, and helpers). We are extremely thankful for all who assisted with making Covfamikoi 2022 a blessed time.

2023 Conference:

Lord willing, we are excited to hold Covfamikoi again this summer! We will be returning to Johnson University for our 2023 conference. The dates will be July 15 to July 20. This is returning to a Saturday -> Thursday schedule

Our main speaker (adult and High School) is George Gregory, Pastor of Hope Community RP Church. The theme for the conference is "Joy in the Lord." Aaron Murray will be the Middle School speaker. We are excited for the work of these two men.

Leadership/ Staffing:

The executive leadership team is made up of Ken & Christy Nelson as Conference Directors, Ross & Kaitlyn Cerbus as Conference Managers, and Stephen & Sarah Shipp as Youth Program Directors. We are currently in the process of finalizing the remaining open staffing positions. If you have suggestions for people in your congregation who may like to serve, please speak to someone on the leadership team. As always, in order to put on a successful conference, we need many people to be willing to fill roles of teaching, organizing activities, youth counselors, and several other roles.

Registration:

Registration for the conference will open Monday (March 6th.) We will keep registration open through June 23, or until the conference is full. Registration is completed through the website (www.covfamikoi.com).

Implementation of new Child Protection Policy:

For 2022, the staff worked extremely hard to implement as much of the policy as was feasible. We have since proposed a few changes to the policy based on “boots on the ground.” Thank you to Presbytery for adopting the changes that will help to ensure we can hold Covfamikoi and still maintain the requirements in the CPP.

For the background check requirements of the CPP, the Covfamikoi leadership has adopted the standard that a background check for an individual will remain in place for a 4-year cycle (or through the next international conference). Basically, if an individual had a background check for the 2022 conference, a subsequent background check for the same individual will not be needed until the 2025 conference. Steve Rhoda has also continued to help administer the background checks for Covfamikoi staff through the CYPU Ministry Safe account.

Future of Leadership:

Regarding executive leadership for the future, Ken & Christy Nelson, and Ross & Kaitlyn Cerbus are willing to remain on the executive leadership through the completion of the 2025 conference, but both couples are planning on stepping out of their roles as Conference Directors and Conference Managers following the 2025 conference. Stephen & Sarah Shipp will step down as Youth Program Directors following the 2023 conference. We need to start thinking and identifying the next people to fill these positions.

Financials:

Please see the attached Covfamikoi financials.

We are requesting the standard \$2000 support from Presbytery as has been allocated in the past.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Nelson, Conference Director

Covfamikoi Family Conference
Statement of Financial Position
As of December 31, 2022

Assets	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
Petty Cash	\$ -
PayPal	-
Regions Bank	10,452.01
Total Checking/Savings	<u>10,452.01</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>10,452.01</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>10,452.01</u></u>
Liabilities & Equity	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accrued Expenses	168.00
Total Current Liabilities	<u>168.00</u>
Total Liabilities	168.00
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	1,023.26
Retained Earnings	15,066.95
Net Income	(5,806.20)
Total Equity	<u>10,284.01</u>
Total Liabilities & Equity	<u><u>\$ 10,452.01</u></u>

Covfamikoi Family Conference
Statement of Activities
For the Twelve Months Ended December 31, 2022

Income	
Registration Fee	\$ 4,480.00
Conference Fees	54,810.50
Offering	2,238.00
Laundry	62.00
Presbytery Contribution	2,000.00
Total Income	<u>63,590.50</u>
Expenses	
Meals	19,311.00
Lodging	24,820.00
Facilities	11,000.00
Main Speaker	2,500.00
JH Teacher	500.00
Staff scholarships	7,567.50
Registration cancellations	290.00
Liability Insurance	842.00
Youth Program (JH & SH)	447.36
Juniors (ages 9-11)	160.11
Elementary (ages 6-8)	250.00
Pre-school (ages 3-5)	76.20
Nursery (ages 0-2)	8.41
Office Supplies	233.66
Social Activities	417.76
Recreation	150.41
Morning Breaks	105.82
Popsicle Socials	46.27
Miscellaneous expenses	79.24
PayPal Fee	317.03
IOS publishing fee	105.93
Web Hosting	168.00
Total Expenses	<u>69,396.70</u>
Net Income	<u><u>\$ (5,806.20)</u></u>

Chaplain Ross Fearing

Annual Report

February 16, 2023

Overview

In addition to serving as pastor at Sparta RPC, I serve as a Chaplain in the US Army Reserve assigned as Deputy Command Chaplain at the 85 Army Reserve Support Command, located in Arlington Heights, IL.

Duties

As a deputy command chaplain, I help the Command Chaplain run a religious support program for units across the nation. As a deputy my role is more administrative than my past assignments, ensuring that the chaplains within the command are receiving the training and resources they need to do their work effectively. Nevertheless, I still preach and counsel Soldiers on a regular basis.

Ministry Update

In my current assignment my focus is on learning to be a more effective administrator, learning how to function within in a very senior command, and completing required education for further promotion. None of this work is especially exciting, but the skills I am learning are critical to being effective as a chaplain and having an influence on how the Army protects the rights of Soldiers to free exercise of their religion and how the Army provides ministry to the many Soldiers desiring Christian ministry.

Challenges

The greatest challenge I face right now is having the time and energy to keep up with military, church, and family responsibilities. In particular, I have until May of this year to complete the second phase of Intermediate Level Education. This course is required for me to compete for promotion at the 2025 and 2026 boards. I need to work through the material faster in order to make the May deadline.

Prayer Requests

Please pray for my completion of my military school on time. Pray for my family as I am absent from them 70+ days a year. Pray that God would raise up more RPCNA chaplains.

In Christ,
Ross Fearing
Chaplain, USAR
Pastor, Sparta RPC
(936) 615-6336 (text/call)
orfearing@gmail.com

2023 Report of Presbytery's Nominee to the Board of Corporators of Geneva College

Dear brothers:

I am reporting to you again as your nominee to Synod to serve on the Board of Corporators of Geneva College. I stepped down from serving as the Board's Secretary and, consequently, upon the Executive Committee of the Board. Replacing me in these positions is the Rev. Matt Filbert of the First RPC of Beaver Falls. I continue to serve with two other Corporators from our Presbytery, elected by Synod: Dr. Kenneth de Jong of our Bloomington congregation and Session, and Mr. Scott Reynolds, also of our Bloomington congregation. Both men also serve as Trustees. The current Chair of the Corporators' Board of Trustees is Mr. Joel Silverman of our Southside congregation. Dr. de Jong is the Vice Chair.

As always, I'll repeat a paragraph that I place in every year's report, because some delegates to Presbytery may not be familiar with the governance of Geneva College. To refresh you, the Board of Corporators has twelve members, all elected by Synod. Each of the North American Presbyteries have nominees to Synod, with Synod's Nominating Committee nominating the others. All must be members in good standing in the RPCNA. We each serve four-year terms. The Corporators are the legal owners of the College. They are the members of the Corporation chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Corporators' main tasks, under the Bylaws it originates, are to govern the College through a Board of Trustees it has created and whose members it elects, to elect a President of the College, to steward the Bylaws, and maintain a strong connection to the Synod of the RPCNA. The Board does its governing through the Trustees, who operate the College on the Corporators' behalf. Half of the Corporators serve as Trustees, as well, thus maintaining useful liaison between the Boards and allowing Synod, in effect, to have direct placement of some Trustees. Dr. de Jong is an example of this.

Since the last stated meeting of Presbytery, the Board of Corporators has met twice. The first was at the Wyndham Conference Center near the Indianapolis airport on Saturday, 24 June, 2022 at 2:22 PM, the day after Synod. The second was on Saturday, 11 February, 2023 at the Presidents' Dining Room in Alexander Hall on the College Campus. I was unable to attend the June meeting, as had happened the previous year, due to Presbytery deciding to meet in Marion on that day at the same time.

There continues to be concern about enrollment. Since Geneva has a relatively small endowment, its finances are heavily tuition-dependent. The birthrate is going down all over the country, including the main area from which prospective Geneva College students come, and there is a seeming cultural change in seeing the desirability of higher education. Nonetheless, due to prayer and fine work from the Admissions department, we are thankful that the incoming classes have been growing in size slightly over the past two years. I should further note that the growth in freshman enrollment is better than the majority of both Christian and secular private schools are experiencing and

that it aligns with a strategic enrollment plan, part of the larger strategic plan that the Board of Trustees has approved.

One member of our Presbytery raised a concern with me about Geneva's "Justice Week" from 6 to 11 February of this year. Concerns included perceptions that there seemed to be "new age" influence, as well as social justice stands. President Troup noted that the College is much like an old house – one fixes a problem only to have new ones appear that were not even suspected. He assured us that he would be seeking better ways to address student concerns.

There are several other matters that the Board learned about, or learned further. Racial reconciliation initiatives with alumni seem to be changing attitudes. This is an appropriate set of actions to pursue, seeing Geneva's history in these matters, brought out strongly in Ray Wilcox' and Bob Copeland's fairly newly published work, *A Candle against the Dark*. In Bible Department matters, the funding for preparing Rut Etheridge for work as a professor has come through, and he is nearly done with his doctoral studies at Westminster. There will soon be several retirements in that department. We, as a Presbytery, need to be praying for God to raise up men for this vital mission of our church. Relevant to this is the ongoing chapel situation. It continues to go well. Sermons are now about 20 minutes and a testimony time is included. Both are appreciated by the students. Further, a Sabbath evening prayer and praise time has become popular. It is at 9 PM so as not to compete with local church evening services.

Many of you may have heard about the valuable property along the banks of the Beaver River, partly contiguous with College property, that has been donated to Geneva. There seems to be much optimism about the new property's usefulness to the College's mission.

Capital campaigns continue to do well, but the finances of the College continue to be a concern, mainly due to the aforementioned enrollment situation. However, there is no long-term debt. Giving is strong to the annual fund, and the campaign is progressing well.

Finally, in the June meeting, the Board elected Trustees. This recent meeting took time to discuss possible candidates for new members of both Trustees and Corporators, as well as incumbents whose terms are about to expire – like me.

The new Strategic Plan is guiding the College well. There are many professedly Christian colleges and universities that claim to integrate faith with their academic disciplines and campus life, but few truly do. Most, at best, have Christianity in conjunction with academia. Geneva seeks better and better actually to integrate.

To remind you, the website for the College is at www.geneva.edu. Much information is there on all sorts of matters pertaining to the College.

Synod reelected me to this Board four years ago, so that I am nearly done with this latest term. I have served our Presbytery, our Synod, and our College this way since 1998, and I thank Presbytery for its previous and current nominations. I again thank you for your confidence in me. I continue blessed in serving you in this way.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip H. Pockras

**The Atlanta Commission/TGB for
 Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church**
Report to Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
March 2023

The Atlanta Commission/TGB for Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church met nine times since the stated meeting of the Presbytery in March 2022.

Membership

In 2022, we received two new communicant members and at one point during the year had a total membership of 21 (thirteen communicants and eight non-communicants). However, towards the end of the year, in the space of a month, we lost a third of our membership, through death and discipline. At the end of 2022, our membership was 14 (twelve communicants and two non-communicants).

Contacts and Prospects

We come across a lot of people in our ministry, some of whom remain anonymous to us. However, we keep track of those whose names we are able to learn and for whom we are able to glean contact information for possible follow-up. In 2022, we made a total of 142 contacts. Some of these are not necessarily prospects for church membership (examples would include out-of-towners whom we might happen to meet); nevertheless, we try to place such people on the Penny's Pen email list. Others, though, can be considered potential recruits for Atlanta RPC.

Attendance and Visitors

In 2020, the average attendance (for the 45 weeks we met for public worship) was 24.56. (The figure for 2020 includes folks who joined the service by telephone. If those attending remotely are not included, then the average attendance would have been 23.11.) In 2021, the average attendance was 26.73. (If those attending via telephone were not included, the figure would have been 23.12.) In 2022, the average attendance was 19.84 (or 16.62 if those attending via telephone were not included). This past year, we met for worship a total of 50 times. No service was held on January 16th (due to inclement weather) nor on May 29th (due to widespread illness).

In 2022, there were no fewer than 43 first-time visitors in attendance at a worship service.

Worship

Customarily, in the worship service, we sing five psalm selections (including a doxology after the benediction). In 2022, we observed the sacrament of communion four times. Our ongoing goal is to have the Lord's Supper on a quarterly basis.

In 2022, the pastor offered messages from a variety of texts. Up through April, he preached on Revelation 4-7. He did a three-part series on church discipline (its purpose, procedure, and power) from Matthew 18:15-20. Other series were on the three lost things (sheep, coin, and son) in Luke 15; and the books of Joel and Obadiah. He has been preaching a series on Ezra, taking a break from it between chapters 4 and 5 in order to consider Haggai. Standalone messages have included “Reverence vs. Hardness” (Proverbs 28:14); “Fear of Man, Trust in God” (Proverbs 29:25); “New Creation in Christ” (II Corinthians 5:17); “Bible Meditation” (Psalm 119:15); and, on the last Lord’s Day of the year (December 25th), “Majestic Kingship” (Psalm 93). The four communion messages were as follows: “Over the Brook Kidron” (John 18:1-9); “Fencing of the Table” (Ezekiel 43); “The Egyptian Hallel: Exodus” (Psalm 114); and “The Egyptian Hallel: Humility” (Psalm 115).

Four others have also filled the pulpit this past year: Pastor Drew Poplin; Elder T.J. Pattillo; Elder Ben Stahl of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and a member of our church, Daiyaan Winston, who read a Spurgeon sermon on June 5th, a Sabbath when no one else was available.

Sunday School

Currently, we offer three classes: adult (taught by Elder T.J. Pattillo), older children (taught by Miss Amy Work), and younger children (taught by Mrs. Michele Haag).

Church Life

Every Lord’s Day, we experience warm and sincere fellowship. There is a genuine sense of *koinonia* amongst our people, and a real caring for one another. In numerous informal ways, folks maintain contact with each other during the week.

Discipline Matters

Due to the difficulty the Atlanta TGB would have had in obtaining a quorum that could meet in person for the conduct of a judicial matter, Presbytery’s Ad Interim Commission established a special Atlanta Judicial Commission (AJC). On May 15th, after a judicial hearing, the AJC suspended Tawana Franklin from the sacraments. There being a lack of repentance by Miss Franklin, the AJC imposed the censure of excommunication on December 18th. Her being erased from the roll resulted in the removal of her five covenant children as well.

Discipline of a different sort—not ecclesiastical but administrative—was meted out by the Atlanta TGB with respect to a fellow whose presence had become disruptive. By barring him from being on the property, not only he but his girlfriend and two of her sons no longer attended—another factor in lower attendance figures in 2022 in comparison to 2021.

A Death in the Family

For the fourth time in five years, our little flock experienced a death in 2022. Larry Wayne Kerr, who had been suffering from congestive heart failure, passed away on November 23rd at the age

of 66. A memorial service was held in conjunction with the regular worship service on December 11th. The message, “The Preciousness of God’s Law,” based on Psalm 119:71-72, reflected his great love for and eating up of Scripture the last month or so of his life.

Staff Workers

We are blessed with a wonderful cadre of staff workers. For a number of years, we have benefited from the hard work and insight of Miss Amy Work, Mrs. Michele Haag, Elder T.J. Pattillo, Mrs. Nancy Pattillo, and Mrs. Penny Smith. In early 2023, one of our new members, Jonathan Steele, was designated as a staffer. We remain grateful for the faithfulness of these servants.

This past year, the staff has met every few months in order to discuss the ministry and make plans. At a staff meeting in January 2023, a mission statement was approved and then adopted by the Commission.

Ministerial Intern

Since September 2019, Elder T.J. Pattillo has faithfully served as a ministerial intern. In addition to teaching adult Sunday School and helping to pick up people for church, he has shown a lot of initiative. He received his B.Th. from Metro Atlanta Seminary in May 2022 and is presently a full-time student at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Leadership Development

One of our goals for 2023 is the development of other leadership, not only for the meeting of present needs, but also in anticipation of eventual organization of the mission church as a congregation.

In the meantime, we could really, really use a deacon! (Any volunteers want to move to Georgia?)

Pastoral Activity

In 2022, the pastor engaged in at least 302 counseling occasions. Sometimes this counseling might last only a few minutes; other times, it took hours. He has counseled many people in the congregation, but also has counseled others who do not attend ARPC, and still others from across the RPCNA and in other branches of the church on a wide variety of topics, including ecclesiastical matters.

Among his academic pursuits was an article, “Robert Lewis Dabney’s War on Sensualism,” which is slated to be published in the upcoming edition of *The Confessional Presbyterian*. He is very close to finishing a biography of his father entitled, *God’s Man From Brooklyn: The Life and Times of a Twentieth-Century Minister*. Another pending project, which is more practical than academic, is a booklet, *’Til Death Us Do Part: Meditations on Courtship and Marriage*.

Outreach

The pastor's wife continues to write Penny's Pen, with a new article about three or four times per year. There are almost 800 names on the email list.

The weekly pulpit messages are placed on SermonAudio.

We are still trying to find ways to establish an effective "presence" in our neighborhood. Among the ideas broached is setting up a prayer table in the park two blocks away.

Meanwhile, most of our new attenders have come through the most effective means, viz., as a result of word-of-mouth.

Renovating a Building

We have been trying for some time to have renovations done to the building. Twice in 2022 (June and September), a volunteer crew from Covenant Presbyterian Church (OPC), Buford, Georgia, under the leadership of Sam Trupiano, has come in order to do demolition work. Taking down a ceiling and non-loadbearing walls has revealed the necessity for jack posts to be installed in order to shore up some beams. The most critical need is repair of the roof, which is leaking. A roof inspector has determined that a full replacement of the roof is not necessary. Other renovations will focus on the area we plan to use as the new sanctuary, including the replacement of cross beams, installing a new ceiling and lights, and putting in a mini-split HVAC unit.

Finances

Even though we have several thousand dollars less in our general fund at the end of 2022 in comparison to 2021, our finances remain strong.

In January 2023, we placed moneys from both the general account and the building fund into 11-month CDs earning about 4% interest. Our plan is to pay off the 20-year mortgage by 2025—that is, fifteen years early.

The financial statement for 2022 and the budget for 2023 are attached.

Reflecting on 2022

This past year has been extraordinarily challenging. Even the five-week sabbatical for the pastor and his wife turned into a bit of a disaster, with numerous difficulties that interrupted what was to be a time of rest and recuperation. Furthermore, we have been disappointed by the necessary exercise of discipline, and the resultant decrease in attendance. Nevertheless, we look forward to what the Lord is going to do in 2023.

Mission Statement

The following mission statement was adopted by the Atlanta Commission on January 19, 2023.

Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church aims to be a faithful church, in doctrine, worship, personal piety, church life, fellowship, outreach, and hospitality, with specific focus on downtown Atlanta, demonstrating the love of Jesus to all people, and seeking to impact the Atlanta metro area by modeling a covenantal Christ-like community and by the multiplying of other Reformed Presbyterian congregations.

Planning for the Future

Our goal is that Atlanta RPC be formally organized in the next year or two—that is, by 2025 at the latest. The year 2025 will mark the fifteenth anniversary of the beginning of this ministry, and the sixth anniversary of it being established as a mission church. Already, in 2022, we began paying the Synod assessment (in our case, \$1,604)—a sign that we are beginning to shoulder our share of denominational responsibility. We look forward to taking our place among the other organized congregations in the RPCNA constellation.

Prayer Requests

1. For a deacon, who could bring expertise in helping us to discern and to meet diaconal needs.
2. For the raising up of leadership, so we can be prepared for formal organization.
3. For strength and stamina for the leadership, that they might not be discouraged or lose heart.
4. For courage and boldness in the gospel, so the church would be a faithful witness for King Jesus.
5. For the building renovation, so that the building might be not only attractive but also useful in presenting a visible witness of the kingdom.

Recommendations

1. That Presbytery grant \$4,000.00 for the work of Atlanta RPC for 2023.
2. That Presbytery provide \$2,000.00 for the expenses of the Atlanta Commission.
3. That the membership of the Atlanta Commission consist of the current members.
4. That the report of the Atlanta Commission be approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank J. Smith

Frank J. Smith, Ph.D., D.D.
Pastor

2023 Belle Center Session Report to Presbytery

With Mary at the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth, joyfully we confess, "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy;" (Luke 1:54). The past year has seen blessings and challenges to our Session and in our congregation. In this fallen world, things are never uncomplicated by sin and its effects, yet, graciously our King rules over all to bless His bride (Ephesians 1:21-23) so that things are never as bad as we fear.

Blessings

1. Last year we rehearsed the blessing of God raising up a local Session. Many or most of you have gotten to meet and to know Jeff Brotherton and Bruce Bowers. They continue to be faithful shepherds and servants of this congregation. Our Deacon, Mr. Greg Probst, has been doing fine work, especially in tending to property issues and making sure that those in need, in our congregation, are helped and blessed materially. He asked that he might give over the Treasurer role for our congregation, so we asked Lorraine Brotherton, our Clerk's wife, to take on this task. Further, with a growing and spread-out congregation, Greg is quite stretched. We are hoping that Jesus will perhaps call a couple of people to serve as Deacons with Greg.
2. Between continued Zoom attendance and "warm bodies", our average attendance for 2022 was 50, a slight drop from our 2021 figure of 52. Much of this is due to the absence of all of the ten members of the Soma family for much of last year. We will refer further to that later in this report. We have lost one communicant member by death. Two men underwent final removal. We had increase of one by profession of faith, transfer by two, and a baptized member making profession. As well, we received four baptized members by transfer and one by infant baptism. Total membership now is 64; 46 communicant and 18 baptized. Three additional adults are in an inquirer's class, and a baby is on the way! As well, a couple of baptized members are preparing for personal profession of faith.
3. Finances continue to be far better than a few years ago. Last year, we noted that 2021 ended with financial surplus, and we anticipated only a small deficit for 2022. God blessed us with yet another small surplus; the first time in quite a while that this has happened two years consecutively.
4. It is now nearly two years since we were able to move into our building. We long prayed that Jesus would build our church, and then build us a building. All of His good promises have come to pass without fail. With growing membership and attendance, we are now beginning, a little, to wonder how long we will be able to use our building! We still need signage out front, but all the rest of the building is in fine shape. We have had to buy a new refrigerator. Further, we needed new chairs for the auditorium and classrooms. Christ Church RP in Marion County, IN, provided their chairs and their 2009 *Books of Psalms for Worship* to our congregation for the cost of transport!
5. There is a spirit of love, care, and delight in one another, shown by the fact that it is hard to get people out the door after worship services! People delight in sharing their

lives with one another in prayer and concern. There is a special ladies' prayer group that operates online, and several of our young men, on their own initiative, have met for a time on Sabbath mornings before worship for mutual strengthening in Jesus.

6. Our pastor attended a "Summer Intensive" course at RPTS entitled, "Introduction to the Chaplaincy." This led to his becoming endorsed by the Presbyterian and Reformed Chaplain Commission. What he learned enabled him to be more effective in his work at the Mary Rutan Hospital in Bellefontaine, OH.

Challenges

1. We are thankful that, for now, the Covid threat seems much diminished. Even our local hospital, where Mr. Pockras has been on the chaplain staff since 2017, is forgoing the use of masking. There are very few patients in isolation, most being due to flu. We continue to have people in our congregation with chronic illness including diabetes, pulmonary and respiratory difficulty, cancer, and arthritis.
2. The second has been the continued fallout from the arrest and trial process of Paul and Dana Soma. After trial, Paul was found guilty of gross sexual imposition and Dana pled guilty to child endangering. Their minor children were taken from them; they worshiped with Southfield congregation a few times, and then with the Southwest Ohio RPC in Mason, OH. Session, with its small size, felt overwhelmed at times. We proceeded to Church Discipline. Paul was suspended from membership privileges, with this announced to the congregation. Dana was rebuked, asking that the rebuke be presented publicly before the congregation. As well, she read a prepared confession of sin and asked the congregation to forgive her. Paul was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment in the Ohio Correctional System; within a short time he died. Dana was given probation for one year. The Family Court assigned the care of the five minor children to their oldest brother and his new bride, so that now the children usually worship with us in our first service. The second service is when their mother is able to attend. She, as yet, is allowed no regular contact with her minor children, although we hope that the limitation soon will be ending. Session asked Presbytery to appoint an investigative committee to help us, in our small size and physical separation, to determine facts for any church discipline proceedings. The committee was a help to Session. For this, we thank both the committee and Presbytery.
3. A further challenge is the physically spread-out nature of our congregation. We have families coming from the southwest travelling almost two hours each way. From the northwest, people must drive forty-five or so minutes. From the southeast, families travel thirty to forty-five minutes to get to Belle Center. This makes fellowship, except on Sabbath, difficult. It makes pastoral visitation difficult. But there may be a hidden blessing to come! Each of these four population centers – Greenville, Ohio; Lima/Bluffton, Ohio; Marysville/Dublin, Ohio, and the Belle Center/Bellefontaine, Ohio center, could, in God's adorable providence, conceivably be kernels for daughter congregations.

The session of the Belle Center, OH, Congregation met for 11 regular and 10 called meetings in 2022. The minutes of the session were submitted to Presbytery and approved without correction. Our

pastor attended Synod and 2 regular meetings of the Presbytery. Our new elders have been diligent to attend higher courts.

The congregation met once. As of the time of the writing of this report, the 2023 annual meeting has not occurred. We hope to have special meetings to elect deacons, then to ordain and install them.

We meet each Lord's Day at Noon for worship. We have second services and, on the last Sabbath of each month, fellowship meals. The Lord's Supper is celebrated on each fifth Sabbath in months that have them. Our pastor preached through Luke's Gospel during the first service and has now finished Paul's Epistle to the Romans in the second service. He has now begun an expository series on Ecclesiastes. Following morning worship, we meet for Sabbath School. We have three classes, now: our Covenant History class, taught by our minister; an enquirers class taught by Elder Bowers; and a class on church officer gifts and character traits taught by Elder Brotherton. Several young people attended many of the presbytery youth activities in the past year.

The congregation meets for prayer on Wednesday evenings at 7:30, with an average attendance of five (one more than last year). We are starting to see more interest in the congregation, and recently eight people were at our prayer meeting. This included our new communicant member who made profession out of the world.

We look forward to 2023 as a united congregation with a rather clear vision of where we want to go, as we continue to advance a testimony for salvation by grace through faith in the saving Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and the mediatorial kingship of Jesus in our area.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Pockras, Moderator

Jeffery Brotherton, Clerk

Belle Center Reformed Presbyterian Church

Treasurer Report Year End 12/31/2022

	12/31/2021 Actual	12/31/2022 Actual	2022 Budget	2023 Proposed Budget
Income				
Designated Giving	15,750.00	6,580.00	.00	.00
Interest Income	8.36	33.79	.00	33.00
Synods Dividend	2,254.10	2,277.33	2,254.00	2,277.00
Tithes & Offerings				
1 st Qtr.		18,537.06	20,660.00	18,954.00
2 nd Qtr		15,909.26	20,660.00	18,954.00
3 rd Qtr		15,282.26	20,660.00	18,954.00
4 th Qtr		22,233.00	20,660.00	18,954.00
Total Tithes & Offerings	84,922.24	71,961.58	82,640.00	75,816.00
Total Income	102,934.70	74,272.70	84,894.00	78,126.00
Expenses				
Insurance	1,922.00	2,069.00	1,992.00	2,100.00
Property Tax Church	.00	165.23	442.00	154.00
Property Tax Manse	1,003.46	1,203.74	562.00	1,408.00
Electric	632.55	757.12	650.00	760.00
Gas	689.80	616.45	690.00	617.00
Internet	1,025.42	1,242.39	1,025.00	1,243.00
Sewer	570.00	641.55	580.00	642.00
Water	193.19	163.47	200.00	164.00
Fees	.00	10.11	.00	.00
Belle Center Cap. Imp.	156.00	158.86	156.00	159.00
Garbage	.00	.00	.00	.00
Spiritual Leadership				
Pastor Salary	33,507.12	35,152.62	35,152.00	37,300.00
Housing Allowance	5,300.16	6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00
Health Insurance	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00	9,600.00
Med. Exp. Reimburse		.00	500.00	500.00
Pension	5,250.00	5,250.00	4,500.00	5,250.00
Total Pastor Compensation	53,657.28	56,002.62	55,752.00	58,650.00
Pastor Expenses				
Mileage		.00	500.00	500.00
Office Expense		.00	1,650.00	1,650.00
Book Expense		.00	200.00	200.00
Pulpit Supply	278.40	655.08	800.00	700.00
Synods Exp.	204.00	237.00	214.00	240.00
Conference Expenses		.00	200.00	500.00
Sabbath School		45.48	.00	.00
Session Expenses		.00	.00	.00

Belle Center Reformed Presbyterian Church

Treasurer Report Year End 12/31/2022

	<u>12/31/2021 Actual</u>	<u>12/31/2022 Actual</u>	<u>2022 Budget</u>	<u>2023 Proposed Budget</u>
Synod Expenses – Elder		237.00	.00	480.00
Presbytery Expenses		.00	.00	.00
Mileage		.00	.00	200.00
Books		.00	.00	200.00
Building Supplies		395.80	.00	.00
Church Exterior Improvements		.00	3,500.00	3,500.00
Chairs		.00	3,500.00	.00
Furniture and Fixtures	2,048.92	640.62	2,500.00	1,000.00
Supplies, Cleaning and Kitchen		411.94	500.00	450.00
Flowers		.00	50.00	50.00
Exterior Maintenance	70.00	135.00	200.00	300.00
Office Expense	55.00	80.71	150.00	200.00
Presbytery Assessment	902.71	994.00	994.00	1,326.00
Synod Assessment	.00	3,849.00	1,867.00	1,584.00
RP M&M	832.70	1,785.78	1,870.00	1,800.00
Repairs – Manse	21,501.78	3,634.83	10,000.00	7,000.00
Repairs – Church Building	.00	482.70	1,000.00	2,000.00
Total Expense	85,743.21	76,615.48	91,744.00	89,777.00
Total Available Income	\$ 87,184.70	\$ 74,272.70	\$ 84,894.00	\$ 78,126.00
Total Expense	\$ 85,743.21	\$ 76,615.48	\$ 91,744.00	\$ 89,777.00
	\$ 1,441.49	-\$ 2,342.78	-\$ 6,850.00	-\$ 11,651.00

Assets

Richwood Checking		\$38,853.07
FNC Checking	\$43,426.31	
Citizens Federal	\$6,160.38	\$6,163.65
Richwood Savings		\$1,000.21
Petty Cash Treasurer		\$2,000.00
Petty Cash Treasurer		\$156.78
Total Cash		\$48,173.71

Designated Funds Included in Assets

Designated Mercy Fund	\$2,600.00	\$4,182.46
Designated Chair Fund	\$3,440.00	\$1,088.21
Designated Soma Mercy Fund		\$1,343.48
Total Designated		\$6,614.15
Total Available		\$41,559.56

Report of the Bloomington Congregation To the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery 2023

Concerning Year 2022

“Witnessing for Christ in Bloomington for 201 Years”

*“The LORD declares to you that the LORD Himself
will establish a house for you” – 2 Samuel 7:11b*

Membership:

Communicant: 154 (+13)

Baptized: 51 (+5)

Total: 205 (+18)

Changes:

Transfers in: 17

Professions of faith: 1

Covenant baptisms: 6

Transfers out: 5

Transfers to glory: 0

Removal: 0

Excommunication: 0

Attendance:

AM: 172 (+19)

PM: 119 (+8)

We look on the past year as one of remarkable provision and grace in the face of some difficult times that we face as a nation and as God’s people. We have continued to see spiritual growth in so many people in the congregation, growth in the strength and capacity of leadership across the congregation, and the Lord continues to draw His people into our fellowship. We stand in humble awe of the Lord’s grace in bringing us all together to live, grow, and serve in His name.

The Bloomington session has met 11 times (monthly minus one meeting over the summer) as regular session meetings, and 3 additional meetings for particular purposes, such as communion interviews.

As the core of the session’s work centers around taking care of individuals and families in the congregation, we take the first half hour of each meeting in systematic prayer for individual families, and often the majority of the rest of our meetings involves thinking

through pastoral questions and situations. On a similar note, some of our regular meetings have focused almost entirely on interviewing brothers and sisters who are joining the congregation. This has been a real joy for us. Since we hope to establish open relationships with all of the members of the congregation, these interviews are very helpful steps along the way. We also continue to work on a method to allow us to be more systematic in our care for the people in the congregation, and we ask you to continue praying for us in this regard.

We continue to consider paths forward for expanding our facilities for the growing congregation, and we have been able to arrange for helpful input from outside counselors on the use of the current building. We continue to make persistent progress towards a longer-term solution. This is on the forefront of our logistical thinking for the new year.

Concerning the overall congregational membership, we see a pattern of growth in our community. The following figures pertain to the comings and goings of the calendar year 2022.

- The average in-person morning worship service attendance was 172, an increase of 19 over 2021.
- The average in-person evening worship service attendance was 119, an increase of 8 over the attendance after the break in 2021.
- The average SS class attendance was 102, a decrease of 8 from 2021.

- The total communicant (154) and baptized (51) membership on December 31, 2022, was 205, a net increase of 18 over 2021.
- Seventeen new communicant members were added. In addition, one baptized member made profession of faith.
- Along with these additional members, 3 children joined the congregation as baptized members with their parents, and three infants were baptized.
- Three members were transferred to other churches; one to an RP congregation, and 2 were transferred to other congregations where they are worshipping with their new families.
- Communicant membership at the end of 2021 was at 141 and rose to 154 at the end of 2022. The number of baptized non-communicant members at the end of 2021 was at 46 and rose to 51 by the end of 2022.

There were two major events that enabled us to develop our pastoral leadership this year. The first was the completion of Pastor Holdeman's sabbatical in Ireland. We believe that this time was fruitful for many different aspects of his ministry and for the Irish church. In addition, we also saw our own congregation flourishing over the summer with a record turnout in our VBS program as well as in continuous ministry in other directions. We are thankful for the obviously excellent leadership of Pastor McCollum over the summer. In addition, we were able to work out an internship with a young man in the congregation (John Punt) who is considering pursuing a call to pastoral ministry. Originally, this internship was considered over the summer months, but given Pastor Holdeman's sabbatical time, we decided that having John work with both pastors in the fall was more important than filling the gaps created by the sabbatical. John's work this fall went well, and the session is considering with the Punts what the next steps ought to be as we develop a longer-term plan toward the pastoral ministry.

We continue to have people taking distance-learning classes from our seminary for various purposes related to equipping them for service in the church. We wish to continue supporting this.

In terms of regular activity, the session has overseen communion on an alternating-month basis, and has spent some time considering the impact of having larger numbers of people on the logistics of the services, since our practice is to gather around the front in communion. In addition, the session continues to think through the logistics each week of offering regular services with the larger number of people in the building.

The session continues to meet jointly with representatives of the deacon board on a (roughly) quarterly basis to discuss issues of finances, facilities, and how to administer tangible mercy to our members and neighbors with their resource needs.

We have also seen the continual formation of Bible studies among various groups in the congregation. We are thankful for the active ministry of the Word throughout the congregation and throughout the week.

The session has also been joining with others in the congregation concerning the care and growth of the larger number of children in the congregation. We have interacted with the nursery committee in their effort to sharpen up their policies and practices. We are also

happy to see mutual support among mothers of younger children in the congregation through the formation of a well-attended MOPS group.

Members of our congregation have been involved with work with high schoolers in both the summer presbytery camp program as well as the winter conference. In addition, we were happy to have three members of the congregation participate in the TFY program. In addition to this, 6 high schoolers were involved in the Echo project in missions down in Florida. We are very thankful for the maturity and level of spiritual interest in the next generations in our congregation.

We have continued to interact with the Bloomington Chinese Christian Church, as they been working to rebuild after the severe degradation of their services during the various phases of the shut-down over the last two to three years. We are committed to supporting their work toward independence, though we also note that their members often visit our services. We recognize the positive work that the pastor and his wife are doing with us in the congregation. The congregation voted to extend our current facilities arrangement with them for the coming year again. In addition, we continue to think of directions for possible church plants, though we do not have any concrete planting activity or plans for such at this time.

Finally, we would be ungrateful not to note the remarkable growth in financial giving over this last year. We give the Lord thanks for his provision. One obvious direction for these resources is to address the issue of facilities expansion, but we have also been considering how to also support others outside the congregation. For instance, this last year we helped the Providence congregation in Rhode Island with their facilities problem through the purchase of a building. We thank the Lord for the growth in our congregation and pray the He would use it to overflow to others who give Him praise.

Respectfully submitted by the Session of the Bloomington Congregation

Wes Archer, Eric Cosens, CJ Davis, Ken de Jong (clerk), Rich Holdeman (moderator), Philip McCollum, & Stephen Shipp

Bloomington Reformed Presbyterian Church Budget Summary - January 28, 2023

Revised

Income					2022 Budget	2022 Actuals	2023 Budget
	External Income						
		Book Table Income				2,421.90	
		Contributions - Offerings		400,000.00		527,555.68	488,000.00
		Designated Income				4,589.25	500.00
		Diaconal Ministry - Vol. Fund				-	
		Facilities Capital Income				5,000.00	
		Facilities: 619 S. Lincoln Income		18,000.00		14,226.79	10,000.00
		Interest - Capital Investments & Savings		200.00		345.24	400.00
		Miscellaneous Income		75.00		150.00	75.00
		Offerings & Donations		-		7,361.66	-
		Total External Income		418,275.00		561,650.52	498,975.00
		Designated Income from Savings Revolving Funds		6,734.31		2,183.11	5,105.88
		Total Income		425,009.31		563,833.63	504,080.88
	Expense						
	External Expenses						
		Book Table Expense		649.05		2,482.33	588.62
		Facilities Capital Expense		25,000.00		5,040.00	45,000.00
		Facilities: 619 S. Lincoln St.		9,600.00		5,971.70	7,600.00
		Facilities - Operating		43,230.00		31,131.30	52,000.00
		Finance Committee		13,134.40		12,169.11	14,330.00
		Ministry: Diaconal		2,500.00		3,364.54	3,000.00
		Educational		17,085.26		13,899.81	15,517.26
		Fellowship		3,860.00		3,463.60	3,860.00
		Library		1,000.00		513.10	1,000.00
		Nursery		350.00		188.86	1,000.00
		Outreach		5,480.00		3,981.45	8,480.00
		Session		4,275.00		373.42	1,500.00
		Student		1,400.00		278.86	1,400.00
		Technology		4,320.00		2,998.54	6,275.00
		Youth		1,200.00		718.53	1,200.00
		Missions		23,825.00		29,492.94	30,000.00
		Offerings - Disbursements				1,540.00	
		Office Expense		16,870.00		17,370.73	22,800.00
		Pastoral Compensation - Holdeman		103,751.00		104,001.00	113,826.00
		Pastoral Compensation - McCollum		83,433.00		83,683.00	93,508.00
		Pastoral Internship		4,375.40		3,944.31	-
		Pastoral Expenses		7,300.00		2,038.97	7,000.00
		Presbytery		4,636.95		4,636.95	6,319.61
		RPCNA Works		15,765.00		25,487.00	17,413.82
		Special Funds		9,000.00		9,236.08	-
		Total External Expenses		402,040.06		368,006.13	453,618.31
		Designated Disbursements - to Savings Revolving Funds					
		Benevolence				-	
		Book Table					
		Camp Fundraiser				-	
		Facilities Capital		50,000.00		55,000.00	50,000.00
		Ministry Hedge		-			4,000.00
		Total Disbursements to Savings Revolving Funds		50,000.00		55,000.00	54,000.00
		Total Expense		452,040.06		423,006.13	507,618.31
		Net Income		(27,030.75)		140,827.50	(3,537.43)

Bloomington RP Church
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2022

	Dec 31, 22	Dec 31, 21
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
Old National		
Checking	13,584.38	3,585.23
Savings		
6 Year Plan - Ministry Hedge	31,878.12	32,432.80
Benevolence	8,416.05	9,416.05
Book Table	588.62	649.05
Facilities Capital	70,000.00	15,000.00
Facilities Renovation Reserve	7,218.00	7,218.00
Fundraiser-Camp Assistance	4,517.26	5,085.26
General Savings	368,239.94	237,411.59
Security Deposit	500.00	500.00
Total Savings	491,357.99	307,712.75
Total Old National	504,942.37	311,297.98
Total Checking/Savings	504,942.37	311,297.98
Total Current Assets	504,942.37	311,297.98
TOTAL ASSETS	504,942.37	311,297.98
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	0.00	0.00

Balance Sheet – Other Assets
May 31, 2022

Deposits to Accounts: From December 1997 to December 2021

Capital Investments – RPCN	121,835.35
McClintock Endowment Fund	<u>10,000.00</u>
Total Deposits	131,835.35

Capital Investments Fund

Balance – 12/31/2020	157,661.17
2021 Dividend Reinvested	5,869.78
2021 Gain/(Loss)	<u>26,480.12</u>
Balance 12/31/2021	190,011.07

McClintock Endowment Fund

Balance 12/31/20	12,341.85
2021 Dividend Reinvested	459.49
2021 Gain/(Loss)	<u>2,072.89</u>
Balance 12/31/2021	14,874.23

Note:

The Capital Investments fund is invested with the denomination's pooled investments. The pooled investments have generally increased in value over the years, while also paying out a dividend on the funds. The dividend this year has been reinvested in the fund. It is noted that the dividend payout is calculated as 4.2% of the previous 12 quarters' average market value. In order to avoid a decline in the principal of the funds, the Trustees will reduce this amount by 0.1% for the next few years. We will be notified of the Gains/Losses for 2022 in March of 2023.

The Thomas and Grace McClintock Memorial Fund was established by Ralph McClintock when he bequeathed \$10,000 to the church. At his request, the \$10,000 remains in the fund while the interest income may be used by the Bloomington Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Pastor's Report

“And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” (Mark 15:39)

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31)

Church life, or at least our preaching life, in the past year has been these two themes: (1) in Mark, the discovery of Jesus Christ, the Son of God in His cross and resurrection and (2) in Genesis, the glory of the goodness of God in creation and His purpose for our life in this good world.

These two themes, drawn together through the preaching in Mark and Genesis, do shape our goals and prayers in the life of the church. We continue as those “preaching Jesus Christ and Him Crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). We do so with a view to God’s goodness – now shown toward us as sinners – filling our lives, our families, our church, our world.

These themes define, briefly, *where we’ve been* and *where we’re going*, Lord-willing.

Where we’ve been in 2022

The center of church life in 2022 continued to be the worship of God. Worship is our mountaintop experience, our move upward to Eden. As elders, we labor to make this central in church life. I’m particularly thankful for the labor of presiding of our ruling elders – a labor of love for the sake of the church.

Active church life unfolded in our first full “new pastor, post-COVID (largely)” year. As pastor, life largely consisted of morning preaching, evening teaching, midweek Bible study prep, intermixed with discipleship and counseling with people across the church. Denominational life continued to present many challenges, but the Lord has sustained.

It seemed that church life from the summer on became defined by large hospitality events in the church.

- VBS in June saw our church building taken to outer space; so many worked to serve and encourage the youth of our church and community.
- Late August saw the election of Scott Hoover and Mike Mellinger and their ordination in late September. We are so thankful for their readiness for active service in the church!
- In late September we enjoyed the fall retreat. In early October, the church was asked to host an *ad hoc* presbytery meeting. The church was enabled to provide a warm and joyful welcome to a presbytery facing some real challenges.
- In November, we hosted the annual Thanksgiving Psalm Sing.

All this full time of hosting gave great opportunity for the church to work together, build relationships, and serve the broader church. A huge thank you to those who worked so hard to make it happen.

Each of these activities draw strength from and live in purpose toward that glory of Jesus Christ in the cross and resurrection (Mark 15:39) and the goodness of God even toward sinners (Gen. 1:31).

Space fails to thank all involved in church life, but a particular note of thanks is due to Lisa Shoop and Jenny Erney for their continued faithful service in the office. They keep the pastor, and the church, moving in so many details.

Our communicant membership grew by five over the year; our baptized membership dropped by one; total membership now stands at 137. We're glad for the many new families (Goldeys, Girard, Taylor, Gaskins, Carr, Monica and Carlos, Ford) that have joined and the life they bring to the church. The baptisms of the newly adopted Schulz girls were a particular highlight of the year.

Just a brief note from the Hart family: we continue to rejoice in the Lord bringing us to Columbus. The kids love life here; Orlena enjoys serving in the church. We are glad in the Lord!

Where we are going, Lord-willing.

As a church, we long to be headed in the direction of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified for all of life. We long to experience His goodness in this created world.

This remains our true north – now the question is, “How do we see this come about?”

For the year to come, this, we pray, means a few things:

- A continued centrality of encountering God in the Word and in worship. Our church's strength is only in Christ; we will find our hope there.
- A continued desire to develop relationships within the church. We've increased our focus on visitation and hope that continues.
- A continued exploration of new officers. We see possibilities for growth in our deacon and elder numbers and will seek to train and disciple to that end.
- A consideration of future opportunities presented to us with the resources God has provided. With our mortgage paid off and God's remarkable provision for us as a church, we have resources we need to think wisely about how to steward in our labor as shepherds in the church. Pray for us, and talk to us, with your thoughts, concerns, and questions. May all our decisions be in the direction of the glory of Jesus Christ in this world.

Joel Hart, along with the session

Columbus Reformed Presbyterian Church								
	1Q22	2Q22	3Q22	4Q22	Total	2022	Spend	2023
						Budget	vs Bud	
Giving Income								
General Giving - Columbus	91,632.06	65,339.59	68,905.03	110,867.37	336,744.05			
Designated Giving - Columbus	5,398.00	1,622.32	2,483.42	2,912.42	12,416.16			
Other (Grants, Fees)	6,364.00	8,189.97	200.00	622.00	15,375.97			
Interest Income	22.98	28.17	28.22	30.20	109.57			
Total Giving Income	103,417.04	75,180.05	71,616.67	114,431.99	364,645.75			
Net Income								
	32,248.95	-8,573.61	19,351.80	38,657.62	81,684.76			
Net Cash Balance (Unreserved Funds)								
Operating Fund (<i>Checking</i>)	57,127.00	20,298.00	42,058.06	45,587.41				
Seminary/Bible Training Scholarship Fund - <i>Reserved</i>	12,881.34	14,381.34	14,759.34	14,763.34				14,763.34
Higher Education Scholarship Fund - <i>Reserved</i>	6,000.00	4,500.00						
Roof Repair Fund - <i>Reserved</i>	75,000.00	75,000.00	75,000.00	75,000.00				85,000.00
Building Fund <i>Reserved</i>	100,000.00	100,000.00	100,000.00	100,000.00				175,000.00
Non-Restricted Savings	46,419.00	103,030.64	107,152.60	145,310.41				
Total Overall Cash Fund Balances	297,427.34	317,209.98	338,970.00	380,661.16				
Total Non-Restricted Cash Funds	103,546.00	123,328.64	149,210.66	190,897.82				
Expense								
Ministries								
Christian Education (incl. WBS)			185.78	125.40	311.18	1,000.00	31.1%	1,000.00
Church Listings	520.00				520.00	550.00	94.5%	550.00
Youth For Christ					0.00			1,000.00
Digital Ministry	815.46	179.85	837.48	254.83	2,087.62	3,000.00	69.6%	3,000.00
Evangelism/Outreach	138.12	10,000.00		875.92	11,014.04	5,000.00	220.3%	5,000.00
Benevolence/Gifts	369.69	125.56	3.99	76.23	575.47	500.00	115.1%	500.00
Fall Seminar	2,300.00	14.88		740.00	3,054.88	4,000.00	76.4%	4,000.00
Fellowship	64.83	721.69	628.85	924.00	2,339.37	3,000.00	78.0%	3,000.00
Pulpit	450.00	211.00	465.00	225.00	1,351.00	1,500.00	90.1%	2,000.00
Higher Education Fund Scholarship Expense		1,500.00	4,500.00		6,000.00	6,000.00	100.0%	6,000.00
Mercy	9,095.52	79.34	528.79	12,829.24	22,532.89	10,000.00	225.3%	15,000.00
Clarity	1,200.00			1,000.00	2,200.00	2,200.00	100.0%	6,000.00
New Song					0.00			4,000.00
RP Missions & Ministries	6,500.00	6,500.00	6,500.00	6,500.00	26,000.00	26,000.00	100.0%	26,000.00
RP Witness Subscription				1,280.00	1,280.00	1,000.00	128.0%	1,300.00
Biblical Training Scholarship Expense	249.00		1,122.00	1,496.00	2,867.00	2,000.00	143.4%	3,000.00
Session Ministries			1,258.92	905.52	2,164.44	2,500.00	86.6%	2,500.00
Vacation Bible School	88.00	1,098.99	77.18	273.37	1,537.54	2,500.00	61.5%	2,500.00
Youth Memory Work Scholarship		893.93			893.93	750.00	119.2%	1,200.00
Youth Ministry/College & Career	33.04				33.04	2,000.00	1.7%	2,000.00
Youth TFY/Echo/Short Term Missions		348.36	1,795.81	105.97	2,250.14	2,750.00	81.8%	2,750.00
Total Ministries	21,823.66	21,673.60	17,903.80	27,611.48	89,012.54	76,250.00	116.7%	92,300.00
Synod & Presbytery								
Presbytery Assessment	3,210.00				3,210.00	3,210.00	100.0%	4,600.00
Synod Housing		744.24			744.24	1,000.00	74.4%	1,000.00
Synod's Assessment		7,076.00			7,076.00	6,000.00	117.9%	7,100.00
Presbytery Meetings				1,236.56	1,236.56			
Total Synod & Presbytery	3,210.00	7,820.24	0.00	1,236.56	12,266.80	10,210.00	120.1%	12,700.00
Columbus Reformed Presbyterian Church								
Senior Pastor	1Q21	2Q21	3Q21	4Q21	Total	Spend	vs. Bud	

Elkhart, IN RPC Session Report For Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery Meeting, March 2-4, 2023

*“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.
Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.” Isaiah 26:3-4 (ESV)*

1) Total Membership: Communicant and Baptized (12/31/22), 53. (2) Average AM Worship Attendance, 45. (3) Average PM Worship Attendance, 23. (4) Baptized Members Professing, 0. (5) New Members by Profession, 0. (6) Net Change in Total Membership, -6.

Praise God for His abundant love and faithfulness in guiding, guarding, and upholding His church at ERPC in 2022. It has been an unusual and eventful year in which we have seen Jesus’ gracious care and provision for His body here. Session met 21 times in constituted court to oversee the life and work of the ministry of ERPC. Three of the meetings were joint meetings with the Board of Deacons. For each meeting devotions were led by one of the elders from the book *Learning to Love the Psalms* by Robert Godfrey.

The provision of a four-month sabbatical for rest, reflection, and refreshment was a wonderful blessing for which I am sincerely grateful to the congregation. It came at a good time for me, and I praise God for how He blessed the congregation through those months with faithful preaching and ministry, protection and provision.

In 2022 my preaching ministry at ERPC was abbreviated by the sabbatical but focused on a new series through the Gospel of Luke in the morning worship services covering Chapters 1-6. We continued with sermon discussions during the evening services on the first and third Lord’s Day evenings and initiated a monthly congregational prayer meeting on the second Lord’s Day evenings. We had three congregational Psalm Sings at the church on the fifth Lord’s Day evenings. Also, we celebrated the Lord’s Supper six times on the first Lord’s Day evenings of alternating months.

S.S. classes for children have been provided along with adult classes in which we covered Colossians and Philemon, and video series on *Learning to Love the Psalms* by Robert Godfrey, *The Doctrines of Grace in the Gospel of John* by Steven Lawson, *Developing Christian Character* by R.C. Sproul, and *The Lord’s Day* by Robert Godfrey.

In late April our combined mid-week Bible study concluded a review of *A Proverbs Driven Life*, by Anthony Selvaggio. After our summer break, in early October the Wednesday dinner, Kid’s Group, and Bible study began again, focusing on *The Sermon on the Mount*, by Sinclair Ferguson. This year the monthly women’s group continued a study of *With the Master on Our Knees*, by Susan Heck. The men’s group began studying *A Field Guide on False Teaching* from Ligonier Ministries. In early July our second VBS program was held and blessed by the Lord.

Throughout 2022, the elders have helped some families as they sought to transfer their membership to other congregations for various reasons or relocate in order to serve an aging parent. In March, the Ummels and DeRosas departed from ERPC. We accepted Jon’s request for resignation as an elder at our April meeting with gratitude for his service. We have greatly appreciated Andy’s continued service virtually until another elder was in place. In November 2022 we also granted a temporary leave of absence to deacon Isaac Moore at his request. The elders are thankful for all who have stepped up to serve as the ministry adjusted to these changes. On November 22, 2022, the congregation unanimously voted to elect Bob Daniels to serve as elder. After examining Bob, members of Session unanimously voted to sustain elder-elect Bob, who was ordained and installed on January 15, 2023. We accepted Andy DeRosa’s resignation as elder on February 8, 2023 with gratitude for his service.

We give praise to God that in recent months, He has brought several new individuals and families to worship and fellowship in our midst. In May 2022, Cody and Emily Work both earned their Ph.D. degrees in chemistry at Notre Dame University. They have become an integral part of the ministry at ERPC, and we rejoice that Cody has indicated his sense of God’s call to the ministry. After interviewing him in May, Session recommended Cody to be taken under care of the Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery, which took place at its June

meeting. Beginning in September, he has been taking classes remotely at RPTS while he and Emily work as visiting professors at Notre Dame. They plan to move to Pittsburgh in the fall of 2023 for seminary study.

We rejoice in the births of several children in 2022 and give thanks for the baptisms of covenant children: Joshua Dean, son of Eric and Jessica Dean on May 1, 2022. James Work, son of Cody and Emily Work on December 4, 2022.

We pray for God to bless those who have requested and received dismissals and transfers of membership: Joe Moore to the Nappanee Missionary Church on January 9, 2022; the Jon and Jennifer Ummel family to Michiana Covenant Presbyterian Church, Granger, IN on December 13, 2022.

Early in the year, Session began preparing for Pastor Mann's sabbatical which was scheduled to take place between May and August. We are very thankful for Pastor Ian Wise who served as provisional moderator of our Session. He preached and served the Lord's Supper on June 5. Pastor Rich Holdeman preached on three Lord's Days and served the Lord's Supper on August 7. Rev. Ed Blackwood preached on four Lord's Days and assisted with VBS. Mr. Brandon Fisher and Rev. Namsik Yang each preached on two Lord's Days. Pastors Harry Metzger, Garrett Mann, Brett Mahlen, and David Landow each preached once at a Lord's Day worship service. We are thankful to the Lord for each of His servants and their ministry to all of us at ERPC.

We praise our gracious Lord for each member of the body of Christ at ERPC and pray that the Lord Jesus will be pleased to pour out His blessing in this coming year. Pray that He will strengthen the commitment of each member to sound Reformed Biblical truth and to faithful committed service in His church here, and that He will enable us to love one another more and more, joyfully enfolding those He brings into our fellowship as we faithfully minister His glorious Gospel in word and deed!

"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21 (NASB)

Respectfully submitted,

Wade Mann—TE, Robert Daniels—RE, Fikre Menbere—RE

ERPC 2022 Financial Report and 2023 Budget

	2022 Budget	2022 Actual	2022 Difference	2023 Budget
INCOME				
101 Contributions	143,803.00	164,045.50	20,242.50	154,396.19
102 Interest	0.00	8.73	8.73	0.00
105 Designated Gifts	0.00	5,500.00	5,500.00	0.00
107 Other	0.00	16.00	16.00	0.00
TOTAL INCOME =	143,803.00	169,570.23	25,767.23	154,396.19
EXPENSES				
CONGREGATION				
201 Christian Education	1,000.00	911.55	88.45	1,000.00
202 Fellowship Activities	1,750.00	2,107.58	(357.58)	1,000.00
203 Youth Ministry	500.00	398.94	101.06	500.00
204 Guest Ministry	2,200.00	936.65	1,263.35	2,200.00
205 Administration	1,500.00	652.58	847.42	1,500.00
206 Pastor's Ministry Expenses	3,000.00	2,013.91	986.09	3,000.00
207 Workman's Comp Insurance	350.00	332.69	17.31	350.00
208 Group Study Resources	250.00	0.00	250.00	250.00
209 Session Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
210 Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Congregation Sub-total =	10,550.00	7,353.90	3,196.10	9,800.00
PASTORAL SUPPORT				
301 Salary	31,960.00	31,960.00	0.00	32,960.00
302 Parsonage Allowance	33,740.00	33,740.00	0.00	33,740.00
303 Salary Supplement	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
304 Pension	9,620.00	9,620.00	0.00	9,620.00
305 Medical Insurance	6,400.00	6,400.00	0.00	6,400.00
Pastor Sub-total =	81,720.00	81,720.00	0.00	82,720.00
306 Associate Pastor (Sabbatical)	3,000.00	5,665.07	(2,665.07)	0.00
307 New Pastor Relocation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
308 Professional Development	1,500.00	1,127.69	372.31	1,500.00
Pastoral Support Sub-total =	86,220.00	88,512.76	(2,292.76)	84,220.00
MISSIONS				
401 Local Outreach (Wednesday Dinner)	2,000.00	775.18	1,224.82	2,000.00
402 Vacation Bible School	500.00	674.00	(174.00)	500.00
403 Short Term Missions	250.00	0.00	250.00	250.00
404 Other Missions (Family Conference)	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00	500.00
405 Mercy Ministry	1,500.00	0.00	1,500.00	1,000.00
406 Protection and Preservation of Life	500.00	170.00	330.00	500.00

407 Seminary Student Support				2,000.00
Missions Sub-total =	5,750.00	1,619.18	4,130.82	6,750.00
DENOMINATION				
501 Presbytery Assessments	1,532.00	1,532.23	(0.23)	1,929.19
502 Synod Assessments	2,970.00	3,316.00	(346.00)	2,970.00
503 Synod & Presby Delegate	300.00	0.00	300.00	300.00
505 RP Home Missions	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
506 RP Global Missions	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
510 RP Missions/Ministry	7,181.00	9,556.32	(2,375.32)	7,181.00
Denomination Sub-total =	13,983.00	16,404.55	(2,421.55)	14,380.19
PROPERTY				
601 Mortgage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
602 Utilities	9,500.00	8,690.07	809.93	9,500.00
603 Maintenance & Supplies	9,000.00	6,521.42	2,478.58	5,000.00
604 Property Insurance	5,000.00	4,382.25	617.75	5,000.00
605 Property Improvements	3,000.00	297.16	2,702.84	18,946.00
606 Office Equipment	500.00	0.00	500.00	500.00
607 Other Equipment	300.00	0.00	300.00	300.00
Property Sub-total =	27,300.00	19,890.90	7,409.10	39,246.00
TOTAL EXPENSES =	143,803.00	133,781.29	10,021.71	154,396.19
YTD NET =	0.00	35,788.94	35,788.94	0.00

Total Cash Balance

Beginning Balance January 1:	87,803.44
Net from This Year:	35,788.94
Balance =	123,592.38

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Lafayette

“...yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation”-*Habakkuk 3:18*

In 2022 we were richly reminded that God is in control. He is working all things out for His good, and He is in charge of His church. With these reminders in our minds, the session thanks God for continuing to use our congregation to build His church in the community God has planted us.

In 2022 we continued to see significant changes in our membership role. All told we had over 60 changes to our current membership. We are thankful to the Lord for the new people he has brought into our midst, as well as we are thankful, we can send former members to other areas of ministry. We currently have many visitors and longer-term adherents worshiping with us as well. The session wants to remind all of us to stay vigilant in welcoming new people and be sure to continue to get to know those newer people in our midst.

We are continued to be blessed by the work of our Pastor. He serves our congregation well and for that the session is grateful. This past year we also realized we needed to give Adam a little longer time away for refreshment and encouragement. We were thankful we could give Adam an extended three weeks off in October. With the continued increase in workload, in our congregation, we realized 2022 was the time where we needed to take steps to call a 2nd man to help with the ministry. This had been a matter of prayer for several years now. We are thankful that God worked in our congregation in December to call Jon Sturm as our associate pastor. We are still waiting for God to confirm where he would have Jon minister, but if God confirms to Jon that he should serve in Lafayette, we are excited for his arrival sometime in 2023.

As a congregation we were blessed with studying the “Farewell Discourse” found in John 13-17, as well as the book of Habakkuk in our morning worship, and we have continued the topical series “Identity of God” in our evening services. The book of Habakkuk reminded us that God is in control even when things seem out of control. We were reminded that we need to take joy in the God of our salvation even in the midst of very difficult circumstances.

One of the great highlights for our congregation in 2022 was the provision of a new elder, and two new deacons. God continues to greatly bless our congregation through the provision of new officers to lead His church.

In 2022, the session met as a constituted court a total of 23 times. The session planning retreat was held August 19-20 at the Bibby home. The sacrament of Lord’s Supper was conducted 11 times.

As of 12/31/22, our current membership is 154 (109 communicant members, 45 baptized members.) Net change in total membership is +4 from 12/31/21. Our average attendance for our worship services was 122 in the morning and 92 in the evening.

Our congregation continues to be active and involved in bringing God’s Word to the Tippecanoe County Jail and work release facility. Bob Bibby continues to lead us in this ministry.

Purdue Corps (CORPS at Purdue) continues to be a key ministry of our congregation. Adam and Anne Niess faithfully lead this ministry.

The Youth Group continues to serve our youth well. Our leaders are, Justin and Chloe Hicks, Corbin and Bristol Grohol, and James and Susanna Barnard. We are thankful for these leaders who are willing to invest in the lives of our Jr. High and High School students.

During the week, we continue to have several mid-week Bible Studies to encourage fellowship and spiritual growth.

As a session, we continue to be involved in the larger courts of our denomination. At the synod level, Adam is on the International Conference Advisory Committee; Bob is serving on the E&P board, on the Inmate Membership Committee, and is serving on the board of RPTS. At the presbytery level Adam is serving as a provisional elder at Selma, chairman of the Candidates and Credentials Committee; Bob has served as the chairman on the realignment committee; Jeff is on the Covfamikoi Advisory Committee; Ken (and Christy) are serving as Covfamikoi conference directors; and one of our deacons, Bob Sabolich, is serving as a trustee of Synod.

We thank God for how He is guiding our congregation. We continue to seek God in all we do and are comforted in knowing He is guiding the plans for our congregation.

Membership:

Communicant	109 (+2)
Baptized	45 (+2)
Total	154 (+4)

Changes:

New Converts (+)	0
Transfers-In (+)	28
Baptisms (+)	4
Transferred-Out (-)	22
Removed (-)	5
Deaths (-)	1

On behalf of the session,
Ken Nelson, Clerk

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Lafayette
2022 Treasurer Report
2023 Proposed Budget

	2022 Actual	2022 Budget	2022 Over/Under	2023 Budget
Income				
Interest	862	350	512	3,000
Rent	21,600	21,600	-	21,600
Tithe	309,510	330,000	-20,490	321,000
Total Budgeted Income	331,972	351,950	-19,978	345,600
Special Gift Income	27,752		27,752	
Total Income	359,724	351,950	7,774	345,600
Expenses				
<u>Church Building</u>				
Capital Improvements	69,774	65,000	4,774	30,000
Furniture & Equipment	8,109	10,000	-1,891	5,000
Insurance	4,367	4,500	-133	5,000
Maintenance	14,100	16,000	-1,900	15,000
Rental Expense	4,370	5,500	-1,130	4,000
Supplies	5,050	5,000	50	5,200
Utilities	10,867	11,000	-133	11,500
Interest Expense	156	487	-331	-
Total Church Building	116,793	117,487	-694	75,700
<u>Congregational Giving</u>				
Gifts/Scholarships	2524	4800	-2,276	4,800
Bravely	200	200	0	200
Miscellaneous Missionary	400	700	-300	700
Presbytery Assessment	2,646	2,646	0	4,433
RP M & M	7,000	7,000	0	7,200
RP Seminary	3,000	3,000	0	3,200
RTF	1,500	1,500	0	1,600
RP Global Mission	5,500	5,500	0	5,800
Synod Assessment	6,330	6,807	-477	7,303
Trinity Mission	500	500	0	700
International Students Inc	3,000	3,000	0	3,000
Total Congregational Giving	32,600	35,653	-3,053	38,937
<u>Ministry Expense</u>				
Administrative	4,259	5,891	-1,632	4,500
Christian Ed	2,740	2,200	540	2,900
College Ministry	2,462	2,500	-38	2,500
Hospitality Committee	2,952	2,700	252	3,000
Social Committee	1,308	1,500	-192	2,000
Ironmen	-	200	-200	
Jail Ministry	1,341	2,500	-1,159	2,500

Mercy Ministry	2,277	3,500	-1,223	3,500
Nursery		200	-200	200
Outreach		500	-500	500
Session	1,273	1,500	-227	2,000
Session Conferences	897	1,300	-403	1,600
Theological Education	1,000	1,000	0	
Youth Group	67	1,000	-933	1,000
Church Safety	755	1,500	-745	4,000
Book Table	275	300	-25	1,000
Total Ministry Expense	21,606	28,291	-6,685	31,200
<u>Allowances and Salaries</u>				
Guest Speakers	7,544	5,500	2,044	4,500
Summer Intern		8,000	-8,000	
Ministry Expense - Adam	3,918	4,100	-182	4,100
Ministry Expense - Associate				2,050
Associate Pastor Fund	35,000	35,000	0	32,500
Ministry Expense - Intern		500	-500	
Custodian Salary	6,240	6,240	0	6,240
FICA	1,422	1,879	-457	1,506
Housing - Adam	25,200	25,200	0	26,500
Pastor Salary - Adam	66,400	66,400	0	69,640
Pension - Adam	5,200	5,200	0	5,500
Pension - Assoc				2,200
Housing - Associate Pastor				
Pastor Salary - Associate				30,300
Office Manager Salary	10,656	11,000	-344	11,640
Office Support	1,703	1,500	203	1,800
Total Allowances and Salaries	163,283	170,519	-7,236	198,476
Total Budgeted Expense	334,282	351,950	-17,668	344,312
Fund Transfer Expense	1,041		1,041	
Special Gift Expense	11,617		11,617	
Total Expense	346,940	351,950	-5,010	344,312
Net Income	12,784		12,784	1,288

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Lafayette

Statement of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2022

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
100 Pefcu Checking	41,097
110 Pefcu Money Market	107,539
120 Pefcu Savings	5
122 Pefcu CD	80,032
Total Bank Accounts	\$228,673
Other Current Assets	
155 Prepaid Mercy Gift Cards	450
Total Other Current Assets	\$450
Total Current Assets	\$229,123
TOTAL ASSETS	\$229,123
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
210 FICA Payable	-0
215 Deferred Revenue	1,800
216 FSA payable	1,568
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$3,367
Total Current Liabilities	\$3,367
Total Liabilities	\$3,367
Equity	
300 General Fund	141,943
310 Retained Earnings	0
320 College Ministry Fund	1,360
355 Book Table Fund	854
358 Associate Pastor Fund	63,000
390 Youth Group Fund	1,815
392 Adoption Fund	4,000
Net Revenue	12,784
Total Equity	\$225,755
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$229,123

The Provisional Session of Marion RP Church Report
GLG Spring Presbytery
March 2-4, 2023

February 16, 2023

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

On February 17, 2022, the AIC took the following action,

“The request and recommendations received from the Marion RPC Session for help in handling a discipline case in their congregation were moved, seconded, and approved, those being specifically (i) appointing Shawn Anderson (Sycamore RPC – Kokomo) and Bob McKissick (Sycamore RPC – Kokomo) as provisional elders to handle the oversight and discipline of Christian Camery and (ii) appointing Shawn Anderson as moderator pro-tem over the case involving Christian Camery.”

As a provisional session, we met formally three times.

- February 25, 2022: To hear from Christian Camery regarding the events surrounding his arrest.
- March 1, 2022: To censure Christian Camery and explain this censure and the steps of repentance and restoration.
- February 16, 2023: To finalize our work and approve our Minutes.

Our minutes reflect the details of Mr. Camery’s progress in his repentance and our handing his pastoral care over to the standing session with Pastor Aaron Murray working directly with Christian. Though they are attached for your perusal as acts of the Marion Provisional Session, we believe they remain on the record of the Marion RPC’s session minutes.

Recommendation:

1. *That Shawn Anderson and Bob McKissick be dismissed as provisional elders of the Marion session in the case involving Mr. Christian Camery.*

In service to Christ and His Church,

-Shawn Anderson, Jason Camery, Greg Fisher, and Bob McKissick

Attached: (1) Minutes of 2022.02.25; (2) 2022.03.01; (3) 2023.02.16; (4) Letter of Censure to Christian Camery; (5) Letter to the Congregation Concerning Christian Camery’s Censure.

**Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church
Marion Provisional Session Meeting
1100 W. Jeffras Ave., Marion, IN
February 25, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Shawn Anderson (Moderator pro-tem), Jason Camery, Greg Fisher (Clerk pro-tem), and Bob McKissick. Christian Camery was also present.

CONSTITUTION OF THE COURT

Jason led a time of devotions from Proverbs 14:22-27. After a time of prayer lead by Greg Fisher, the court was constituted in prayer at 7:10 pm.

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

Christian Camery was invited to come and explain what happened and why he was arrested by the Marion Police Department.

Shawn Anderson opened up this discussion asking Christian Camery to tell us what happened on the morning of February 12, 2022.

Christian Camery answered various questions from the session and gave answers. Christian admitted/confessed to a variety of sins in his interview.

Christian Camery was dismissed with prayer so that the session could consider all that was revealed to them.

Motion was made to have Shawn Anderson draft a letter explaining the provisional session's recommendation that Christian Camery's membership be suspended, and guiding Mr. Camery in what repentance looks like as he is restored to Christ and His Church. It was seconded and passed unanimously.

Next meeting with Christian Camery is scheduled for March 1, 2022

ADJOURNMENT

Motion carried to adjourn. Greg Fisher prayed and adjourned the court in prayer at 8:30 pm.



Moderator of Session (Pro-Tem)

Clerk of Session (Pro-Tem)

**Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church
Marion Provisional Session Meeting
1100 W. Jeffras Ave., Marion, IN
March 1, 2022**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jason Camery and Greg Fisher (Clerk pro-tem) were present. Shawn Anderson (Moderator pro-tem) and Bob McKissick joined via Zoom call. Christian Camery was also present.

CONSTITUTION OF THE COURT

The court was constituted in prayer at 8:03 pm.

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

Christian Camery was presented with a draft letter of his suspension (attached). After discussion, Christian said that he understood everything in the letter. He explained that he is seeking the Lord's forgiveness and grace to repent. We also discussed our understanding that Christian did receive head trauma which contributed to his erratic behavior. At the same time, he was urged to consider the culpability highlighted in the provisional session's letter.

The provisional session also communicated what would be shared in a letter to the congregation. Christian understood the content and why it would be sent to the Church.

Bob led in prayer for Christian, who was then dismissed from the meeting.

DISCIPLINE

Motion sustained to suspend Christian Camery from the privileges of church membership for violating the sixth commandment. The following statement was made in the name of the Lord.

Whereas Christian Camery has been found guilty of violating the sixth commandment in being publicly drunk, and in placing lives in immediate danger with the careless use of a firearm, and in causing the magistrate to arrest him to protect the public, this court, on March 1, 2022, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ sadly and solemnly suspends Christian from the privileges of church membership, including participation in the sacraments, until he has given satisfactory evidence of true repentance, and have been restored to good standing by this court.

Greg Fisher led in prayer for Christian's repentance and restoration in this discipline.

ADJOURNMENT

The provisional session adjourned in prayer at 8:47 pm.



Moderator of Session (Pro-Tem)

Clerk of Session (Pro-Tem)

March 1, 2022

**1315 N. Beckford Place, Apt. 1
Marion, IN 46952**

Dear Christian,

The session met with you on February 24, 2022, to consider your recent behavior and explanation of the events of February 12, 2022, in much prayer to our Triune God for grace, wisdom, and love. We have reflected on the following:

- As you admitted, it was wrong to go to Jaybo's bar. While at the bar, you became publicly drunk, harming your Christian witness (Psalm 1:1; Prov. 4:14-15).¹
- While at the bar, your carousing led people to believe that you intended to seduce a woman with whom you were talking, harming your Christian witness (Rom. 13:13-14).²
- After being attacked, you left the bar in anger and drove to your house while drunk, putting others in harm's way (James 1:20-21).³
- In a rage, you brought two guns back to the bar—either intending to intimidate or harm your attacker, shot your way in—putting those inside in harm's way, pointed a loaded firearm at multiple people—placing them in fear of their life, demanded information about your attacker—intimidating them, and all the while intoxicated—compounding the gravity of an already dangerous situation (Ex. 20:13; Numb. 35:16-18).⁴
- This brought police into a hazardous circumstance wherein their lives were believed to be threatened by your actions.
- As this story is being covered by the local media, it has brought suspicion and criticism to the congregation with which you are associated, giving opportunity for the unbeliever to blaspheme the name of Christ (2Sam. 12:14; Neh. 5:9).⁵

¹ Psalm 1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked and do not proceed in the way of evil men. 15 Avoid it, do not pass by it; Turn away from it and pass on.

² Romans 13:13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

³ James 1:20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

⁴ Exodus 20:13 You shall not murder.

Numbers 35:16 'But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17 If he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which he will die, and as a result he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18 Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he might die, and as a result he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

⁵ 2 Samuel 12:14 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. Nehemiah 5:9 Again I said, "The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?"

From our perspective, the Lord has exposed several areas in your life wherein you are not consistently walking in the Spirit. This disclosure is a token of God's love for you and is a call to repent from these sins that separate you from the Lord and His grace. Such areas include:

- seeking friendship with the world, while not putting the same energy into developing relationships within the Church;
- a pattern of abuse of alcohol that is both hidden at times and minimized when confronted about it (though we admit not completely denied);
- an underlying spiritual struggle with anger, evidenced by the extreme nature of your violent actions when least constrained and self-governed;
- a tendency to simultaneously acknowledge your wrong-doing, and then undermine your confession by placing the responsibility of your actions on others or highlighting the wrong-doings of others as an explanation for yours.

While these sins have furthered your own misery and placed civil consequences over you, they serve as warning signs from the Lord, indicating and exposing your fundamental need to draw near to Him in faith and repentance.

Whereas you, Christian Camery, have been found guilty of violating the sixth commandment in being publicly drunk, and in placing lives in immediate danger with the careless use of a firearm, and in causing the magistrate to arrest you to protect the public, this court, on March 1, 2022, 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.

To clarify, this is not an excommunication where you put one out of the Church and hand them over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh that their soul might be saved. Rather, this is a suspension, or temporary exclusion from the privileges of church membership and can be lifted on evidence of a life of repentance. *What does "a life of repentance" look like?*

1. Cooperate with all civil investigation and procedure in this matter in a way that takes responsibility for your actions and does not further harm the cause of Christ.
2. Secure further counseling to address the pattern of alcohol abuse.
3. Secure further counseling to address the underlying spiritual struggle with anger.
4. Address the Church in writing, asking for forgiveness in the way you have broken your Covenant of Communicant Membership and harmed both ours and Christ's reputation in the community.
5. In cooperation with the civil authorities, make financial and social restitution with Jaybo's bar and any other injured parties that are discovered in this process.

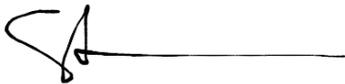
We do not pretend to know what is in your heart or mind, we are simply judging your recent actions and words. We do not desire to discourage you or push you away from God and His Church. Consider this, if Christ were to forsake you, it would not be now, but when He was called to take our sins upon Himself and to stand in God's fierce anger against our guilt. Since He did not forsake you then, why would He now? Therefore, John Owen says, "*Our hearts are capable of being full of unkind and unthankful thoughts towards Christ, as though upon every dark and black temptation and trial he would forsake us, but His love was such that he would not forsake us when He, Himself was to be forsaken and made a curse.*"

Finally, we encourage you with the words of Psalm 130:1-4,

*Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!
Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.
If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.*

If you deny or desire to contest these charges, then you have a right to request that Presbytery review and correct our discipline of you. We are willing to assist you in making this appeal or direct you to the RPCNA Book of Discipline (pages E-7, 15-19).

In Service of Jesus Christ,



Shawn Anderson

Jason Camery

Greg Fisher



Robert McKissick

March 6, 2022

Dear Congregation,

Christian Camery has been found guilty of violating the *sixth* commandment in being publicly drunk, and in placing lives in immediate danger with the careless use of a firearm, causing the magistrate to arrest him to protect the public.

On March 1, 2022, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ this Court sadly and solemnly suspended Christian from the privileges of church membership, including participation in the sacraments, until he has given satisfactory evidence of true repentance, and has been restored to good standing by this court.

To clarify, this is not an excommunication where you put one out of the Church and hand them over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh that their soul might be saved. Rather, this is a suspension, or temporary exclusion from the privileges of church membership and can be lifted on evidence of a life of repentance.

As a congregation, we want to avoid the sin of gossip. At the same time you may have questions or comments about this event wherein you are looking for more information. It is not wrong to talk about the actions of the Church, but if you desire more information, please speak with the elders or Christian directly and let Ephesians 4:29-30 guard your speech, *“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* (Ephesians 4.29-30)

Further, please be in prayer for Christian for his repentance, restoration, and renewal in Christ. *“The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much...My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”* (James 5.15-20)

In Service to Christ and His Church,

The Session of Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church

(Shawn Anderson; Jason Camery; Greg Fisher; Bob McKissick)

**Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church
Marion Provisional Session Meeting
1100 W. Jeffras Ave., Marion, IN
February 16, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Shawn Anderson (Moderator pro-tem), Jason Camery, and Bob McKissick met via Zoom call. Greg Fisher was unavailable.

CONSTITUTION OF THE COURT

The court was constituted in prayer at 2:00 pm.

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

Since Christian Camery's suspension, he has had multiple meetings and phone calls with members of this provisional session to encourage him in his faith and repentance. The provisional session has waited for the civil judicial process to be handled before completing the church disciplinary process to ensure full restitution, reformation, and spiritual restoration. This civil process has not yet taken place. Since Christian is under the pastoral care of Pastor Aaron Murray, it would be beneficial to hand him back to his local session for his restoration from censure.

On January 23, at 5 pm, Shawn and Bob met with Christian and Aaron over zoom to discuss what steps of repentance had been completed or outstanding. The following was discussed:

- 1. Cooperate with the civil investigation and procedure in this matter in a way that takes responsibility for your actions and does not further harm the cause of Christ.**

Christian has sufficiently cooperated in every instance he has had the opportunity without causing any additional harm or shame to the cause of Christ.

- 2. Secure further counseling to address the pattern of alcohol abuse.**

Christian has not imbibed any alcohol since the incident a year ago.

- 3. Secure further counseling to address the underlying spiritual struggle with anger.**

Shawn gave Christian a resource from Paul Tripp. Christian objected to Tripp as a teacher, so Shawn gave Christian a book on anger by David Powlison. They have not had an opportunity to work through the book. The Marion session will consider if further action is needed.

- 4. Address the Church in writing, asking for forgiveness for how you have broken your Covenant of Communicant Membership and harmed our and Christ's reputation in the community.**

Christian drafted a letter, but the provisional session was awaiting civil action, initially scheduled for June of 2022, before having Christian address the Church. While this is overdue, Christian has also been able to walk out his repentance in tangible ways for the Church to see. It was agreed upon in this

discussion that it is not too late for Christian to address the Church. He can even update them on how the Lord has worked in his life over the last year.

5. In cooperation with the civil authorities, make financial and social restitution with Jaybo's bar and any other injured parties discovered in this process.

This restitution is dependent upon the decision and completion of the civil process.

Given these details, the Marion session is happy to take over primary pastoral care for Christian. The provisional session agrees that this is what is in Christian's best interest. Therefore, we see our work as a provisional session concluded, passing on what remains of Christian's restoration in censure to the original session.

Motion sustained to approve the Minutes of February 25, 2022

Motion sustained to approve the Minutes of March 1, 2022

Motion sustained to approve the Minutes of February 16, 2023

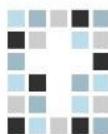
Motion sustained to send a report to Presbytery asking for Shawn Anderson and Bob McKissick to be dismissed as provisional elders of the Marion session.

ADJOURNMENT

The provisional session adjourned in prayer at 2:05 pm.

Moderator of Session (Pro-Tem)

Clerk of Session (Pro-Tem)



REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH *of* ORLANDO

CONGREGATIONAL REPORTS

January 2023

Reports:

Pastor's Report

Session Report

Membership and Attendance Report

Deacon Report

Treasurer's Report

2023 Annual Budget

Christian Education Committee Report

Social Committee Report

R. P. Witness Correspondent's Report

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church Pastor's Report 2022

This year has been a good year for us as a congregation. We continue to get to know one another as pastor and congregation; some growing pains have been felt; and we—hopefully—have grown in love and care for one another as shepherd and congregation.

Here is a summary of my work as your pastor in 2022:

Preaching/Teaching

In July of 2022, I finished a 54 part series on the Book of Ephesians that I was preaching during the morning worship services. After Ephesians, I began to preach through First Corinthians and that is the current series we are in. For evening worship I have continued my series through the Gospel of Mark; I have preached 78 messages through that Gospel and will finish soon. During the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper I have been preaching through Isaiah 53 focusing on the suffering servant. I have preached seven messages in that series so far.

During the summer months I was able to have a church information and new members class. That was well attended. Other teaching includes monthly Psalm meditations before our prayer meeting times.

Youth Work

A vibrant youth ministry is important to me. My home is open for our youth and I make myself available as their pastor as well. Lydia and I host "fifth Sundays" which are well attended. We also seek to have several events organized for our young people. In 2022 there were gathered times for ice-skating, attendance at the Ligonier youth conference, a pickle ball tournament, a service project at the Turmenne's home, as well as other events. Pray for our young people—they are the future leaders in our church. Our investment into them now will determine how they lead the church in future days.

The Church Courts

For some reason unbeknown to me I was elected moderator of the Great Lakes Gulf (GLG) Presbytery in 2022. My moderating philosophy has been simple: do not call extra meetings and, with God's grace, manage the struggles and difficulties of the past few years as a presbytery. We need to land that plane and move on to important things like planting churches and raising up men for the ministry. My desire has been to see the peace of Zion in the GLG. I have worked for peace and am hopeful for good things ahead.

I am also serving on a presbytery committee working with the elders of Immanuel Church in West Lafayette, IN to help them navigate their ecclesiastical relationship with the RPCNA and help determine a future home for them. This is tough work—tearful and anxious work.

Currently I am serving on the Board of Education and Publication as well. I have served two terms with them previously and was, by synod appointment, brought back on in 2022.

Special Projects

I finally have been able to say that my book *I Have a Confession* has been published. I began work on the book in 2019 and hoped to see it released in 2020. The world fell apart due to COVID responses and the publishing business took a hit with supply chain issues and then major backlog. The book was released in December and has done well.

I also continue to write for *Gentle Reformation* and *Meet the Puritans* (through the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals). I co-host a podcast with some friends called *The Jerusalem Chamber* and that has thousands of listeners growing in their understanding of the doctrine, worship, government, and piety of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Surely some only listen for the banter between friends. Each of these will continue in 2023, with *The Jerusalem Chamber* finishing the Confession and moving on to other parts of the Westminster Standards.

I am also under contract with Crown and Covenant to write another book. I have been working on that and it is due to the publisher mid-2023. The title is *Worthy: On the Worship of God*. I will give you the inside scoop and share my chapter titles: Chapter 1: "Worship: A word's strange journey." Chapter 2: "Why: God is worthy of your praise." Chapter 3: "Wrong: We mess up and need direction." Chapter 4: "Watch: Our worship is regulated according to God's Word." Chapter 5: "Wonder: The public gathering of the church." Chapter 6: "Without End: The forever future of public worship." Pray for this project. I am trying to write one evening per week to complete it in time.

Hospitality

Hospitality is an important part of my ministry. I believe that Lydia is to be recognized here as well; without her we would not be able to host as many and as often as we do. Hospitality, in my humble pastoral opinion, is an essential part to organic, non-programmatic Christian discipleship. "House to house" is an important New Testament principle. Remember, as I have told some of you: serving water and popcorn have done a lot to advance the kingdom of God. Kingdom dreams are made around dinner tables. I hope to see some of our kingdom dreams made and brought to fruition because of fellowship around our table!

What's Ahead

I will continue to serve you as the Lord has called me here. I am grateful for your warmth, kindness, and love to me as your pastor. I appreciate those who seem to be growing and being challenged by the preaching of the Word. We are still in the new phase—and God has done so much to knit us together in love and to help us all to flourish under the ministry of the Word. I will continue with my simple philosophy of ministry: provide warm, confessional preaching and teaching; prayer for you and your lives; along with opening my home and life to you.

May Jesus be glorified in Orlando, Central Florida, the Sunshine State and to the ends of the earth.

Warmly,

Pastor Nathan
January 2023

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church 2022 Session Report

"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God [is] faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." – 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Your session is thankful to the LORD for the grace He has extended to us in Christ Jesus and greatly encouraged at His work among us. 2022 proved to be another year of significant changes for the Orlando congregation with the Lord entrusting new members to our congregation, new elders and a new deacon being ordained, an elder transitioning to emeritus status, ongoing work to develop another congregation in Gainesville and the restarting of a men's fellowship group.

In 2022, Session met 19 times in constituted court and weekly for prayer on Lord's Day morning. Session led 6 communion services. Session finished reading through Rejoice and Tremble by Michael Reeves and began reading Concerning the True Care of Souls by Martin Bucer.

In January, we began a men's fellowship breakfast and study. At our first meeting, over 30 men were present this level of attendance fluctuated slightly through the year but has continued to be well attended and served to strengthen of our bonds as brothers in Christ. Following our first meeting, it was decided that we would read through Thomas Watson's, A Godly Man's Picture, which we continued to read and study through the balance of the year with rotating leadership.

In February, Nicholas Goerner, Naphta Jean, Mike and Dominique Quilles joined the congregation.

In March, Pastor Eshelman and Elder Schaefer attended the Spring Presbytery meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana. Pastor Eshelman was elected Moderator and Elder Schaefer was appointed to a committee to help counsel the CCRP congregation in Brownsburg, IN. We also welcomed Rosanna Le into our congregation as a baptized member. Pastor Eshelman officiated.

In response to an announcement of an election for elders and deacons, the congregation was asked to provide Session with candidates for consideration. Session spent considerable time prayerfully considering elder and deacon candidates submitted by the congregation. Three candidates for elder and one deacon candidate were put before the congregation and an election was conducted. Following the election, Mark Goerner, Kevin Duffey and Alejandro Ramirez were presented to the congregation as elders-elect and Paul Knutson was presented to the congregation as deacon-elect.

In April, the session finalized plans for examination, training and ordination of our elders- and deacon-elect. We received an update from Rev. Tom Reid on the Gainesville church plant and agreed to move forward with morning and evening worship services on a three-month trial basis.

Elder Joe Worsham, Elder-elect Alejandro Ramirez, and Pastor Nathan, as a delegation of the session, traveled to Gainesville to interview potential members. Tom and Marlo Wagoner. Mr. Wagoner affirmed the vows of communicant membership. Their three children Jason, Luke, and Hope (ages 15, 14, and 12) were encouraged to continue in their progress in the faith and to seek to be active among the Orlando and presbytery youth as they are able.

Dr. Ife and Kearsten Eleyinafe and their two lovely daughters, Noah and Lindy-Anna, ages two and six-months were brought into communicant membership and their daughters were to be baptized by Pastor Reid at their earliest convenience.

These four communicant members and five baptized members will be kept on a separate list of members associated with the Gainesville work at this time.

In May, the session met with each of the elders-elect and the deacon-elect. The session was very encouraged at the testimonies of these men. The session decided that Mark Goerner (elder-elect) and Paul Knutson (deacon-elect) would be examined by the session right away.

In June, Mark Goerner and Paul Knutson who were previously examined by session and sustained in their examinations, were ordained to their respective offices. Joe Johnson and Jayna Bailey were married, Pastor Eshelman officiating. Maximillian Petra, Zyra Rose and Edva Jean were baptized by Pastor Eshelman. Elders-elect Duffey and Ramirez began seminary-level coursework to help sharpen their tools for ministry among us. Elder Duffey accepted a position on the presbytery's youth advisory committee.

In July, over 30 from our congregation traveled to Johnson Bible University to attend the Presbytery's Family Camp. Those attending enjoyed a wet, but wonderful time in worship, fellowship and recreation.

Vanessa Le was appointed by the session as chair of the Christian Education Committee. The session made plans to interview Joe Johnson in hopes of recommending him to the Presbytery to be taken under care as a student of theology, the first step towards gospel ministry in the RPCNA.

The women's Bible/book studies for the fall were approved. Tuesday and Thursday will continue to study the material they were previously studying (*I Samuel for You* by Tim Chester and *Colossians/Philemon* by K. Nielson). The Friday group will begin "Love Thy Body" by Nancy Pierce.

In August, Jason and Jennifer Mercado, along with Alanis and Jacinto (JD or Jaci) were received into the congregation on profession of faith. The session then spent time with Joe Johnson talking about his upcoming presbytery visit. As he will be interviewed by the presbytery before being taken under care, we asked him to share with us his sense of call to gospel ministry, his history with church work (including preaching); and some of the expectations that presbytery will have as a theological student. We then prayed for Joe, asking God to bless his sense of calling and make his will known.

In September, Pablo and Andrea Valenzuela, along with their son Abiel, were received into the congregation on profession of faith. Sabbath School classes resumed with Elder Goerner beginning a class on the Westminster Confession of Faith. At the end of September, Hurricane Ian blew through Orlando, introducing the Eshelmans to life in Florida. The congregation fared well, though the church basement was flooded and required some heavy work in order to recover. Joel Schaefer and Tava Goerner were married, despite the hurricane. Pastor Eshelman officiated.

In October, the session resumed meetings with those seeking membership. Session received Joseph Hernandez into the congregation on profession of faith. The Cardozo family (Justin, Sara and baby, Lydia) were received by transfer from the Elkins Park RP congregation in New Jersey. The session met with and examined elders-elect Kevin Duffey and Alejandro Ramirez. Both elders-elect were unanimously sustained in their examinations and the men were scheduled for ordination in November. Elder Pennington, who has served the RPCNA for most of his adult life, requested that the session "accept his resignation from office effective immediately." After some discussion and with sadness, the session accepted his resignation with gratitude for his years of service. The title of *elder emeritus* was conferred, which gives him all the rights and privileges of a ruling elder in his retirement. Elder Emeritus Pennington will continue to serve by helping to shepherd the oldest members as well as in a ministry of prayer for the congregation. We also thanked his wife, Ruth, for her years of sacrifice as well. The session also met with Emily Schultz, Peter McCauley's betrothed, and received her into the congregation on profession of faith.

In December, Peter and Emily were married. Their wedding was officiated by Pastor Eshelman. It was a special joy to have Emily's father, whom we had prayed for regarding recovery from cancer, be present at the wedding and walk Emily down the aisle to be married. Lucinda Goerner and Watson Eshelman both appeared, separately, before the session, gave their testimonies and were received into the congregation on profession of faith. The session also met with Jaemin and Grace Song who were received into the congregation on profession of faith. Their sons, Ezra and Kian were baptized by Pastor Nathan shortly thereafter.

We as a session, continue to give praise to the Lord for granting wisdom and strength to deal with the matters before us. He has continued to build His Body here at Orlando RPC. Please join us in prayer for the coming year, that we as a body of believers would grow in our understanding of who He is and what He requires and be encouraged by the Spirit to walk faithfully and uprightly for His glory and honor in 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

The Session

Pastor Eshelman, Moderator
Elder Worsham
Elder Goerner
Elder Duffey
Elder Ramirez
Elder Schaefer, Clerk
Elder Emeritus Pennington

ORLANDO REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2022 Membership and Attendance Report

January 2023

In 2022, our overall membership grew from 124 to 138 members. Communicant Members added to our membership by profession of faith include Nicholas and Lucinda Goerner, Michael and Dominique Quiles, Naphta Jean, Joseph Hernandez, Jason and Jennifer Mercado, Pablo and Andrea Valenzuela, Emily McCauley, Jaemin and Grace Song. Justin and Sarah Cardozo transferred in their communicant memberships from Elkins Park RPC in Pennsylvania. Additions to our roll from baptisms include Rosannah Le, Zirah Rose and Edva Jean, Maximillian Petra, Alanis and Jacinto Mercado, Abiel Valenzuela, Ezra and Kian Song. Baptized members added by transfer include Justin and Sarah Cardozo's daughter Lydia from Elkins Park RPC.

Communicants Ted and Sarah Mehalic and their baptized daughter Sophia transferred to the Celebration Community Church. Also, the following communicant members were removed from our membership roll due to lack of attendance: Gretchen Baldwin, Andrea and Sam Small, Kathryn Boadner, Cathy Errion and Lorene Wilcox.

The total membership roll of 138 comprises 95 communicant and 43 baptized members. Of our communicant members, 10 are inactive and 3 are out-of-bounds communicant members.

The average attendance at morning worship in 2022 was 113.4 with a high of 149 on May 22nd and a low of 90 on August 7th. The average evening attendance was 53.8 with a high of 75 on both September 4th and November 7th and a low of 29 July 10th.

Prepared by: Jonathan Schaefer, Clerk of Session

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church
Congregational Meeting
January 27, 2022

Report of the Deacon Board

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:20-21

The Deacon Board continues to covet your prayers for strength and focus as we serve the congregation and seek to support its ministries. We look forward to continued service in the coming year, and are thankful that God has brought Paul Knutson to labor as a member of the deaconate. Below are some highlights of service that we have been blessed to participate in over the last year.

Mercy Ministry

The Mercy Ministry of the ORPC provides service, comfort, aid and encouragement to those in need. In 2022, the ministry included meeting some direct financial needs of our members, as well as some physical needs related to housing and giving some logistical assistance. The financial needs of the ministry were supported by direct contributions made during Communion services without the need to draw on the amount budgeted. Because of this, we are looking at ways that we can bless the larger denomination with our budgeted Mercy Fund amount.

Once again this year, we saw a great outpouring of mercy, love and affection within our congregation as members met the needs of other members, and we are encouraged that this spirit of love and mercy seems to be strengthening and growing among us. We encourage each member to remember “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10.

Looking ahead into 2023, the Deacons will continue to seek out and meet the needs of our members and Adherents. We encourage each member to prayerfully consider giving directly to the Mercy fund during our celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Additionally, we implore the congregation to continue to pray for each other, look for ways in which to meet each other’s needs and encourage each other in ministries of mercy. As always, please let the Deacons know how we can come along side you and support those efforts or if you see an unmet need that we can address together.

Facilities Maintenance and Renovations

The Deacon Board continued to work to keep the building in working order and take on improvement projects in 2022. Outside, the parking lot was repaved and restriped, and pickleball and four-square courts were laid down. We also coordinated with Jason Mercado, who volunteered to begin updating the landscaping.

Inside, the sanctuary was repainted, a sound feed of the services was added to the cry room, a video feed of the services was added to the nursery, and the projector was mounted to the ceiling. We also purchased some additional tables for the social hall.

Indoor air quality in the building has been a consistent complaint, so we set up air filters that can run when the building is not in use as well as an air quality monitor. Additionally, we began installing sound dampening tiles in the social hall.

Flooding from Hurricane Ian loomed large on our efforts in the latter part of the year. Even though the new pump kept the flooding in the basement from being catastrophic, the cleanup was significant and it was several weeks before the space was dry enough that it could be put back together and used again. A number of measures are under consideration to further mitigate the water issues.

Meals for Special Needs

The Deacon Board worked with Kelly Bailey to coordinate meals for members with special needs, and would like to thank Kelly for her service in this area. These meals are provided as an outpouring of love by the congregation when members have a significant life event, such as injury, illness, or death of a loved one that might disrupt their ability to prepare meals for themselves. Over the course of the year meals were provided to two members and their families through this ministry. The deacons ask that you participate in this ministry by contacting us and letting us know if you or someone else the congregation has a situation that might warrant getting meals delivered.

Flowers and Cards Ministry

Flowers are provided to members who are hospitalized for multiple days or on the occasion of a member's funeral, unless requested otherwise by the recipient or directed by the Deacons.

Cards were sent to members and adherents for special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, weddings etc. as well as for extended illness and bereavement. Jen Mercado took over this ministry in 2022 and has been doing great job.

The Card ministry will be moving to a more digital format in 2023 with the majority of recipients receiving their cards via email. Physical cards will be mailed to the children of the church, those who do not have access to technology, or if a physical card is requested instead of digital.

Media Ministry

The congregation maintains a web presence at www.OrlandoRPC.org and at www.SermonAudio.com/OrlandoRPC.

The congregation website, **www.OrlandoRPC.org**, is maintained by Kevin Duffy and gives information about our location, service times, and ministries. We thank Kevin for his skilled service in keeping the website up to date. The website was visited by 2,571 unique visitors during 2022.

We upload sermons weekly to Sermon Audio at **www.SermonAudio.com/OrlandoRPC** (also accessible at www.ReformedVoice.com/OrlandoRPC). There is an archive of over 750* sermons there, which includes sermons preached from our pulpit since 2008. Those sermons continue to be accessed and downloaded by people from all over the world. In 2022 Orlando RPC sermons were played 3,499 times from Sermon Audio, being accessed from almost every U.S. State and 38 different countries. The top five non-U.S. countries were United Kingdom, Singapore, China, Philippines, and Belgium.

The worship services are streamed each week on YouTube with an average of seven online viewers both in the morning and in the evening. They are available for later viewing on our YouTube Channel at **www.youtube.com/channel/UCgc_bawWEtdv9D_4aUQsP9w**. Our YouTube channel has 168 subscribers

with 4,580 views of our services during the year. The most watched service for the year has been March 20, with over 200 views.

**Note: Last year we reported over 1,500 sermons, which included sermons previously preached by Nathan that were linked to the ORPC account. Sermon Audio has changed this and Nathan's other sermons are not being automatically linked any longer. They can still be found by searching for him as speaker or for the LA congregation.*

Sanctuary Flowers

Peggy Terry faithfully attended to the sanctuary flowers in 2022 and the Deacons would like to thank her for her ministry to our congregation in this area. Peggy has opted to not continue this work, so there is an opportunity for service in 2023. If you are interested, please contact one of the deacons for details.

Attendance

The average morning worship attendance in 2022 was 113, with a high of 149 on May 22 and a low of 90 on August 7. The average evening attendance was 54, with a high of 75 on September 7 and a low of 29 on July 10.

Respectfully submitted,

The Deacon Board

Treasurer's Annual Report

Jan - Dec 2022

Account Reconciliation - Truist (All Funds)

	TOTAL	ORPC	GAINESVILLE
Balance Jan 1, 2022	\$ 83,837.46	\$ 80,790.28	\$ 3,047.18
add 2021 deposits			
subtract 2021 expenses	\$ 2,390.13	\$ 2,390.13	
Net 2022 opening balance	\$ 81,447.33	\$ 78,400.15	\$ 3,047.18
Add 2022 Income	\$ 241,628.65	\$ 203,369.65	\$ 38,259.00
Subtract 2022 Expenses	\$ 210,611.25	\$ 200,270.39	\$ 10,340.86
subtract 2022 deposits			
add uncleared 2022 expenses	\$ 564.58	\$ 564.58	
Balance December 31, 2022	\$ 113,029.31	\$ 82,063.99	\$ 30,965.32

Truist Account -- Quarterly and Annual Changes 2022 (All Funds)

Quarterly Balance	Balance	Quarter +/-	From Jan 1
Net opening balance Jan 1	\$ 81,447.33	-	-
Balance March 31	\$ 77,023.16	\$ (4,424.17)	\$ (4,424.17)
Balance June 30	\$ 70,508.00	\$ (6,515.16)	\$ (10,939.33)
Balance September 30	\$ 80,143.05	\$ 9,635.05	\$ (1,304.28)
Balance December 31	\$ 113,029.31	\$ 32,886.26	\$ 31,581.98

Annual Comparisons (ORPC funds only)

Year	Acct Balance Jan 1	Income	Expenses
2010	\$ 60,333.60	\$ 83,287.90	\$ 81,991.21
2011	\$ 62,541.00	\$ 86,274.67	\$ 85,730.73
2012	\$ 62,784.94	\$ 88,913.16	\$ 115,443.65
2013	\$ 36,300.02	\$ 99,250.31	\$ 97,051.10
2014	\$ 39,398.66	\$ 96,649.42	\$ 103,984.34
2015	\$ 39,173.95	\$ 115,957.19	\$ 107,760.93
2016	\$ 41,157.67	\$ 113,898.04	\$ 108,673.35
2017	\$ 42,962.69	\$ 124,540.88	\$ 112,645.25
2018	\$ 55,840.54	\$ 137,967.29	\$ 118,072.66
2019	\$ 79,649.32	\$ 141,060.95	\$ 129,580.44
2020	\$ 88,888.92	\$ 153,351.56	\$ 123,447.14
2021	\$ 119,602.88	\$ 179,003.60	\$ 215,966.15
2022	\$ 80,790.28	\$ 203,369.65	\$ 200,270.39
2023	\$ 82,063.99		

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01/17/23
Cash Basis

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church
Profit Loss Budget Performance
January through December 2022

Ordinary Income/Expense	<u>Jan - Dec 22</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>
Income			
35000 · Carryover- \$83,837.46			
35501 · GF21 Carryover \$80,413.03			
35503 · Desig - Abhi Med Fund \$377.25			
35507 · Desig - Gainesville \$3,047.18			
42200 · Maintenance and Upgrade Escrow		Used	Balance
42201 · Sanctuary Roof - \$20,000			
42202 · Exterior Painting - \$5,000			
42203 · Building Reserve - \$22,000		19,138.37	2,861.63
42204 · Capital Equipment - \$1,250		444.23	805.77
42205 · Sound Equipment - \$400			
42206 · SH Noise Damp - \$5,000		1,178.27	3,821.73
42207 · Refresh Restrooms - \$15,000			
42208 · Centennial Celebration - \$1,000			
49500 · Tithes/Offerings/Desig Giving			
49510 · General Fund	198,259.28		
49515 · T/O Desig Bible Studies Materia	250.00		
49518 · Desig - Abhi Medical Fund	246.25		
49519 · Desig - Cush4Christ	100.00		
49521 · T/O Desig - Gainesville Fellows	38,259.00		
49522 · T/O Desig Kid2Kid	381.00		
49527 · T/O Desig T-Shirts	747.00		
49528 · T/O - Desig RPM&M	100.00		
49530 · T/O - Desig Youth Events/confer	30.00		
Total 49500 · Tithes/Offerings/Desig Giving	238,372.53		
49600 · Interest Income	5.04		
Total 49800 · Mercy Fund Offerings	3,246.00		
Total Income	241,628.65		
Expense			
60000 · Leadership Expenses			
60010 · Pastor Salary	36,900.00	36,900.00	100.0%
60011 · Pastor Housing	45,100.00	45,100.00	100.0%
60013 · Pastor Medical Insurance	10,100.00	10,100.00	100.0%
60014 · Pastor Pension	8,000.00	8,000.00	100.0%
60016 · Pastor Life Insurance	764.40	900.00	84.93%
60017 · Pastor Mileage Expense	1,498.00	1,800.00	83.22%
60018 · Pastor Hospitality Expense	2,187.60	2,000.00	109.38%
60020 · Pastor Conference Expense	2,127.55	2,000.00	106.38%
60021 · Pastor Expenses and Supplies	2,436.35	2,000.00	121.82%
60050 · Guest Speakers	1,400.00	3,000.00	46.67%
60200 · Presbytery's Budget Assessment	2,123.25	2,100.00	101.11%
60250 · Synod Operation Assessment	3,702.00	3,500.00	105.77%

Note: As monies are used from escrow accounts
current balance will be updated.

1:44 PM
01/17/23
Cash Basis

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church
Profit Loss Budget Performance
January through December 2022

	<u>Jan - Dec 22</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>
60260 · Synod RPM&M	7,500.00	7,500.00	100.0%
60270 · Synod Delegate Travel Expenses	1,214.47	750.00	161.93%
60300 · Miscellaneous	1,617.71	100.00	1,617.71%
Total 60000 · Leadership Expenses	126,671.33	125,750.00	100.73%
70000 · Plant & Equipment Expenses			
70010 · Custodial Service	6,625.00	6,500.00	101.92%
70020 · Lawn Service	2,060.00	2,800.00	73.57%
70030 · Repairs and Maintenance	6,465.15	6,000.00	107.75%
70040 · Office Supplies	2,728.08	1,800.00	151.56%
70050 · Capital Equipment Escrow	444.23		
70061 · Kitchen Supplies/food	934.84	1,000.00	93.48%
70062 · Janitorial Supplies	982.64	500.00	196.53%
70070 · Telephone/Internet	2,219.74	1,900.00	116.83%
70080 · Utilities	6,607.49	5,000.00	132.15%
70094 · Building Reserve Escrow	19,138.37		
70095 · SH Noise Damp Escrow	1,178.27		
70100 · Insurance - Property	6,402.80	7,500.00	85.37%
70110 · Tax & Corp Fee	566.10	600.00	94.35%
70200 · Bank Fees	142.32		
70300 · Miscellaneous	0.00	100.00	0.0%
Total 70000 · Plant & Equipment Expenses	56,495.03	33,700.00	167.64%
80000 · Ministry Activities Expenses			
80010 · Sabbath School	1,774.57	1,500.00	118.31%
80020 · Bible Studies Expenses	166.49	750.00	22.2%
80021 · Witness Subscriptions	1,267.20	1,000.00	126.72%
80030 · RP Missions Scholarships	0.00	3,000.00	0.0%
80040 · Social Committee	1,406.33	1,500.00	93.76%
80050 · Shower Committee	75.65	400.00	18.91%
80060 · Library/Literature Rack	388.23	500.00	77.65%
80070 · Flowers/Cards	0.00	500.00	0.0%
80075 · Sanctuary Flowers	311.36	500.00	62.27%
80080 · Media	869.19	750.00	115.89%
80090 · Mercy Fund	0.00	3,600.00	0.0%
80100 · Young Adult Group	619.45	500.00	123.89%
80110 · Youth Events/Conferences	1,262.20	1,500.00	84.15%
80120 · Childrens Summer Program	0.00	500.00	0.0%
80130 · Camp Fund - Gen Fund	2,752.50	4,000.00	68.81%
80133 · Outreach	1,005.36	1,000.00	100.54%
80134 · Desig - Abhi Medical Fund	246.25		
80136 · Desig - Abhi Med Fund carryover	377.25		
80211 · Desig - Tom Reid Salary	7,293.68		
80220 · Desig - Gainesville Fellowship	0.00	1,000.00	0.0%
80221 · Desig - Gainesville Carryover	3,047.18		

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01/17/23
Cash Basis

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church
Profit Loss Budget Performance
January through December 2022

	<u>Jan - Dec 22</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>
80230 · Desig - Bible Studies Expenses	133.57		
80260 · Desig - Cush4Christ	100.00		
80280 · Desig Kid2Kid	381.00		
80290 · Desig - Mercy fund	2,922.09		
80300 · Miscellaneous	168.34	50.00	336.68%
80340 · Desig - T-Shirts	747.00		
80350 · Desig - RPM&M	100.00		
80380 · Desig- Youth Events/Conferences	30.00		
Total 80000 · Ministry Activities Expenses	<u>27,444.89</u>	<u>22,550.00</u>	<u>121.71%</u>
Total Expense	<u>210,611.25</u>	<u>182,000.00</u>	<u>115.72%</u>
Net Ordinary Income	31,017.40		

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church 2023 Ministries and Operational Budget

Line Item Description	2022 Budget	2023 Budget
Pastor Compensation & Benefits		
SALARY	36,900.00	39,114.00
HOUSING	45,100.00	47,806.00
MEDICAL INSURANCE	10,100.00	10,100.00
LIFE INSURANCE	900.00	900.00
SOCIAL SECURITY / MEDICARE	-	-
PENSION	8,000.00	8,480.00
Total Pastor Compensation & Benefits	101,000.00	106,400.00
Ministry Budget		
Discipleship Ministries		
CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS	4,000.00	4,000.00
CHILDREN'S SUMMER PROGRAM	500.00	-
YOUTH CONFERENCES	1,500.00	1,500.00
YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT EVENTS	500.00	500.00
LIBRARY/LITERATURE RACK	500.00	200.00
BIBLE STUDY EXPENSES	750.00	250.00
SHOWER COMMITTEE	400.00	400.00
SOCIAL COMMITTEE	1,500.00	1,500.00
SABBATH SCHOOL	1,500.00	2,500.00
RP MISSIONS SCHOLARSHIPS	3,000.00	3,000.00
WITNESS SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,000.00	1,500.00
Total Discipleship Ministries	15,150.00	15,350.00
Mercy Ministries		
MERCY MINISTRY*	3,600.00	3,600.00
FLOWERS/CARDS	500.00	500.00
Total Mercy Ministries	4,100.00	4,100.00
Outreach Ministries		
CONGREGATION OUTREACH	1,000.00	2,000.00
GAINESVILLE OUTREACH	1,000.00	
ORLANDO RPC MISSION SUPPORT		750.00
SYNOD: RPM&M	7,500.00	7,500.00
WEBSITE/CD RECORDINGS	750.00	950.00
Total Outreach Ministries	10,250.00	11,200.00

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church 2023 Ministries and Operational Budget

Line Item Description	2022 Budget	2023 Budget
Total Ministry Budget	29,500.00	30,650.00
Operations Budget		
<u>Administrative Expenses</u>		
GUEST SPEAKERS	3,000.00	3,000.00
JOB RELATED INJURY ALLOCATION	-	-
PASTOR CONFERENCES/FAMILY CONFERENCES	2,000.00	2,500.00
PASTOR AUTO	1,800.00	1,200.00
PASTOR HOSPITALITY	2,000.00	2,000.00
PASTOR EXPENSES, BOOKS, & OFFICE SUPPLIES	2,000.00	2,600.00
BANK FEES		100.00
Total Administrative Expenses	10,800.00	11,400.00
<u>Taxes, Assessments, and Insurance</u>		
PRESBYTERY'S BUDGET ASSESSMENT	2,100.00	3,100.00
SYNOD: OPERATION ASSESSMENT	3,500.00	4,000.00
SYNOD: DELEGATE TRAVEL EXPENSE	750.00	750.00
INSURANCE-PROPERTY	7,500.00	5,000.00
INSURANCE-LIABILITY		1,700.00
TAX & CORP FEE	600.00	600.00
Total Taxes, Assessments, and Insurance	14,450.00	15,150.00
<u>Facilities Expenses</u>		
CUSTODIAL SERVICE	6,500.00	6,500.00
LAWN/GROUNDS SERVICE	2,800.00	2,800.00
OFFICE SUPPLIES	1,800.00	2,500.00
KITCHEN SUPPLIES / FOOD	1,000.00	1,200.00
CLEANING SUPPLIES	500.00	1,000.00
MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSE*		
* Budget lines 60300, 70300, and 80300	250.00	250.00
SANCTUARY FLOWERS	500.00	500.00
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE	6,000.00	8,000.00
TELEPHONE/INTERNET	1,900.00	1,900.00
UTILITIES	5,000.00	6,000.00
Total Facilities Expenses	26,250.00	30,650.00
Total Operations Budget	51,500.00	57,200.00

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church 2023 Ministries and Operational Budget

Line Item Description	2022 Budget	2023 Budget
Total Pastor Compensation & Benefits	\$101,000.00	\$106,400.00
Total Ministry Budget	\$29,500.00	\$30,650.00
Total Operations Budget	\$51,500.00	\$57,200.00
GRAND TOTAL BUDGET	\$182,000.00	\$194,250.00
CAPITAL BUDGET AND RESERVES		
<u>Capital Items</u>		
CAPITALIZED EQUIPMENT	1,250.00	12,000.00
ANNEX EXTERIOR REPAIRS	5,000.00	7,500.00
SOCIAL HALL NOISE DAMPENING	5,000.00	5,000.00
REFRESH DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOMS	15,000.00	15,000.00
REPLACE PSALTERS		2,500.00
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION	1,000.00	1,000.00
PASTORAL SABBATICAL	-	-
RESERVES	22,000.00	10,000.00

ORLANDO REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 2022 SOCIAL COMMITTEE REPORT

January 2023

Committee Members: Anthony Farrant, Dianne Schaefer, Stephanie Garrow, Kelly Bailey, Lydia Eshelman

Debra Goerner : Fellowship meals

Lisa Schmidt : Showers

The planned events for the year were as follows:

Bingo Night – Chair Jessica Schaefer – budget \$200.00

Church Campout – Co Chairs – Stephanie Garrow / Kelly Bailey – budget \$400.00

Night on The Town for Graduates – Organizer Anthony Farrant – budget \$100.00

Church Picnic – Chair Becky Farrant – budget \$400.00

Christmas Program and Dinner – Chair Anthony Farrant – budget \$400.00

Other events:

Community Outreach Event – Chair Dianne Schaefer – separate budget

50th Anniversary Event for Ray and Louise Turmenne – Debra Goerner / Lydia Eshelman / Kelly

Bailey / Dianne Schaefer - \$300.00 added to budget for this event as it was special event added by the Deacons

Total Budget – beginning of year \$1500.00 + \$300.00 total of \$1800.00

Total Spent - \$1406.00

All of the Social Committee events were pretty well received and attended throughout the year. Those who attended the events had an enjoyable time. We focused on getting more church members involved throughout the year by asking people who had not already participated in an event committee to assist as the year went on.

The Fellowship meal team was outstanding as well as we had even more fellowship meals this year than we had in the past and all of them were enjoyable and well attended. The different themes are always fun and introduce some different types of foods to the pallets of the church family.

Speaking of the church family the showers team had a super busy year this year with multiple weddings and births adding to the church family. From what I heard great times were had by all at these events.

- Katie Petra baby shower April 23
- Jayna Bailey bridal shower May 14
- Tava Goerner bridal shower September 3
- Emily Schultz bridal shower October 22
- Bashia Schaefer baby shower November 5

Respectfully submitted,

The Social Committee

Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church 2022 Christian Education Committee Report

January 2023

The Christian Education Committee met several times in 2022. Committee members are: Vanessa Le (chair), Joe Worsham, Scott Bailey, Stephanie Garrow, and Dianne Schaefer; Donna Worsham served on the committee until her retirement in August of 2022.

We planned the Sabbath School curriculum, classes, and teachers for the 2022/2023 school year. Our church has been blessed this year with many covenant children – we have 45 children from preschool to high school!

The biggest change this year was with the preschool curriculum. We moved to The Gospel Story Curriculum, which was a large purchase, but we now have the curriculum as a download and may use it for the life of our church. The preschool students have been blessed to work through the Old Testament with a focus on how the stories point us to Jesus.

As our church grows, there have been changes with the class sizes and teachers; the following page shows a list from the fall of the classes and teachers, but we have already made some changes for the spring.

Some things we are looking at adding for the future are a way to commit to praying for our covenant children as well as some options for summer Sabbath School.

We will be moving to a “class” system for committee members, where we will serve for a term of 4 years, so we will need someone new on the committee starting in June of 2023. If you are interested in committing to about 4 meetings a year and have a heart for young people, please ask a member of the session about joining the CE committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Education Committee

WITNESS CORRESPONDENT REPORT

for 2022
- - - - -

For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable

-- Romans 11:29

In a recent study of God's Word, this text gave me pause. I read it over and over, pondering its meaning and significance -- a deeper spiritual truth opened before me:

All that we possess, God has given to us: our talents, our abilities, even our intellect was "measured" out to us, by His Divine will, to be used in service to Him and others.

He not only created us in all our uniqueness, He chose us before the foundation of the world to be His vessels, giving us possession of His most precious TREASURE within us: His Holy Spirit, who skillfully woos His way into our hearts and lives by means of Salvation.

This power-packed verse shares a wondrous and awe-inspiring truth we can each grasp and hold tightly to our hearts. It's a truth that echoes loudly of His great and ever-lasting love for us, as He holds us tightly to His heart.

.....

2022 - - - - -

Just so you'll know, our Pastor Nathan Eshelman served on the Witness Publication Board and has written many articles for the publication.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022 WITNESS ISSUE

Items were submitted mid-November 2021.

AROUND THE CHURCH News items were not included in this issue.

PRAYER CALENDAR items:

- + New church members recently added.
- + Members who are ill and in need of healing, comfort and encouragement.
- + Rev. Tom Reid & his wife, Genevieve and their new burgeoning ministry in Gainesville.
- + The elders as they wisely minister and competently lead the congregation.
- + The members of the congregation in their efforts to spiritually minister God's love to others.
- + Pastor Nathan as he studies and ministers to the congregation.
- + Thankfulness for God's wondrous love and presence.
- + The deacons as they diligently serve the Lord inside and outside the church building.

(JANUARY/FEBRUARY continued next page)

MARCH/APRIL 2022 WITNESS ISSUE

Items were submitted early January 2022.

AROUND THE CHURCH news included:

- * A mention of last fall's Movie-in-the-Lot feature films and attendance.
- * Special mention and send-off for Tava (Goerner) who was leaving for missionary work in South Sudan.
- * Nicholas & Adriana Francoeur moving to Colorado.
- * The December 28th ZOOM call to our denomination's assigned family in India.

PRAYER CALENDAR items:

- + The Holy Spirit's guidance in daily study of God's Word.
- + Members and friends who have health concerns.
- + Thankfulness for God's comforting presence.
- + Thankfulness for all the blessings of the past year.
- + That the Lord would challenge our commitment to Him.
- + That we would be eager to share the Gospel of Christ with others.
- + For God's sovereign grace in all facets of life.

Apart from this correspondent report, but worthy of mention nonetheless, since it is Witness related, an article by Pastor Nathan Eshelman appeared in this issue under the Jerusalem Chamber, titled "Duckness and the Equality of Persons," referencing the Trinity and Question 11 of the Westminster Larger Catechism.

MAY/JUNE 2022 WITNESS ISSUE

Items were submitted early March 2022.

Though submitted, AROUND THE CHURCH news items did not appear due to the plethora of wonderful articles and the Creative Arts Contest winners that were included in this issue and given priority.

PRAYER CALENDAR items:

- + The men of the congregation to be strengthened and encouraged in their walk with the Lord.
- + Moms Vanessa Le and Katie Petra and their newborns.

JULY/AUGUST 2022 WITNESS ISSUE

Items were submitted early March & May 2022.

AROUND THE CHURCH News included:

- * God blessing us with the Eshelman family.
- * New church members.
- * Fifth Sunday at the "manse."
- * Men's prayer breakfast maintaining attendance.
- * The pending birth of two babies - one to John & Vanessa Le and one to Matt & Katie Petra.
- * The election of new church officers, named - three elders and one deacon.
- * Thanking and naming current church officers - elders and deacons -publicly (within the Church News).

(PRAYER CALENDAR appears on next page.)

JULY/AUGUST 2022 WITNESS ISSUE continuedPRAYER CALENDAR items:

- + Continued growth for Orlando RPC.
- + New church officers elected.
- + Tava Goerner and Joel Schaefer to be married.
- + Thankful for opportunities to serve in the church.
- + Thankful for God's transforming written Word.

BRIEF NOTES items:

BIRTHS: (At the time) Rosanna Linh to John & Vanessa Le.

BAPTISMS: Edva and Zyra Rose, daughters of Kendy & Naphta Jean;
and also Rosanna Linh, daughter of John & Vanessa Le.

MARRIAGES: Joe Johnson and Jayna Bailey.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022 WITNESS ISSUE

Items were submitted early July 2022.

AROUND THE CHURCH News included:

- * Annual Night-on-the-Town Dinner for graduates:
Jayna Kathryn (Bailey) Johnson, Mason Garrow and James Joyner.
- * The wedding ceremony of Joe Johnson & Jayna Bailey on June 3rd in the church sanctuary.
- * The improvements made to the church building and property surrounding.
- * The ordaining and installation of Mark Goerner as elder and Paul Knutson as deacon. (The misspelling of Paul's last name in print was an unfortunate and inadvertent editorial error.)

PRAYER CALENDAR items:

- + Homebound and physically challenged members.
- + Members experiencing health and physical difficulties.
- + That we would be thoughtfully aware of others around us.
- + Thankfulness for new members.
- + That we would strive to serve God wholeheartedly in all we do.
- + That God would shelter us from evil forces.
- + That we carefully guard our steps as ambassadors of Christ.

BRIEF NOTES items:

BIRTHS: Maximillian Otto Petra, born May 14th to Matthew & Katie Petra.

BAPTISMS: Maximillian Otto Petra, baptized on June 19th by Pastor Nathan Eshelman.

GRADUATIONS: Mason Garrow (Ocoee High School), Jayna Kathryn (Bailey) Johnson (Homeschooled), James Joyner (Homeschooled and Lake Sumter State College).

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022 WITNESS ISSUE

Unfortunately, due to publication delays, this issue was not received in a timely fashion, therefore it was not possible to verify if any content regarding our congregation was printed therein. Therefore, it will be printed in next year's annual report. My apologies...

Respectfully Submitted, Louise M. Turmenne, Witness Correspondent



Congregational Report

January 2023

Session Report 2022

Here are some blessings we can note for 2022, in response to Psalm 103:2, claiming another promise, “I will build my church.”

- 1) The proclamation of the good news that Christ lived among us and died on the cross for our sins, with this good news going forth in preaching, teaching and service in our city and state.
- 2) The calling of Jerry Foltz as an associate pastor, with his Christ-centered story along with Monica’s. That call has included a vision for training more pastors in a third position. We also have mourned the departure of James Faris as our senior pastor and seek the Lord in our search for another pastor to join with Jerry. We are thankful for 11 good years of fruitful ministry with James, with prayers for him as he seeks the Lord’s direction for this next stage of his life.
- 3) Christ’s building of a new generation of young families, along with the birth and baptism of babies in our midst.
- 4) The training and building of us as men, through the IronMen fellowship, as well as the personal man-to-man times among us week by week and month by month.
- 5) An ongoing daily study of the Bible in the morning or evenings by so many in the congregation among us.
- 6) The daily 7 a.m. prayer meeting, started due to Covid, continued through leadership of Dean and Pam Filson, with a faithful few and others who join from time to time. Church history and biography show how Christ will build His church through prayer.
- 7) Christ’s gift of commitment to Scriptures in a time of drift. The book club read *Christianity and Liberalism* by Gresham Machen and saw the sad spiritual decline as many churches started drifting from the Bible a century ago.
- 8) Christ’s work of orthodoxy of community among us as well as doctrine, in a time when our culture is splintering in terms of community and relationships. We are also thankful for home Bible studies; Friendship ministry; ESL; game nights for high schoolers; Iron Men; book club by Zoom.
- 9) Older elders to offer a balanced wisdom on how we respond to difficult cultural shifts in the United States.
- 10) A senior saints fellowship, including senior theology teacher Dennis Prutow and his Westminster Evangelistic Ministries.
- 11) Rich Blum’s team leadership of massive tech progress in the sound system and audiovisual area, along with the rest of his team.
- 12) Christ’s building of His church through the world coming to Indianapolis, through ESL; the Treeses at IUPUI; and Adam Doerr with Exodus refugee ministry and welcoming of strangers.

13) Christ's building of his church in Indiana and worldwide in sending missions, Matthew 28:18-20: India; South Sudan; Asia; Liberia; Aaron and Mary Murray, to Marion, Indiana; Joel and Orlena Hart, to Columbus, Indiana.

14) Christ's building our Jeremiah 29:7 focus on the city: Heart Change; Purposeful Design; Public Servants Prayer; Jesus House; Wheeler Mission; Life Centers; Shepherd Community Center; Indianapolis Theological Seminary. This outreach illustrates Christ's kingship, or His Lordship over all. Years ago, the session read Jack Miller's *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*, which captures this theme.

In Service to the Church

1. This past year the session held 18 meetings: 12 regular meetings and 6 special meetings. Total membership as of Dec. 31, 2022, was 232, with 177 communicant members and 55 covenant children.
2. The congregation observed the sacrament of Communion on 12 occasions.
3. We rejoiced in these births:
 - March 18, 2022 John Hendrik Vanderveen, son of Tyler and Katie Vanderveen
 - April 15, 2022 Evangeline Hope Smith, daughter of Zach and Beth Smith
 - July 19, 2022 Juniper Lucille Blue, daughter of Shane and Erika Blue
 - August 8, 2022 Malachi Samuel Battiato, son of Andrew and Laura Battiato
 - September 6, 2022 Georgia Kay Chheng, daughter of Joe and Janae Chheng
 - October 20, 2022 Myra Jacqueline Dinkledine, daughter of Adam and Heidi Dinkledine
 - November 19, 2022 Seth William Terpstra, son of Jake and Laurie Terpstra
 - November 28, 2022 Matthew Noah Long, son of Jacob and Cassi Long
4. The sacrament of baptism was administered to:
 - February 6, 2022 Juliette Rose Olson, daughter of Justin and Leah Olson
 - March 13, 2022 Nora Saunders, daughter of Andrew and Lauren Saunders
 - April 3, 2022 Lillian Blaire Cutter, daughter of Philip and Ashley Cutter
 - May 8, 2022 Evangeline Hope Smith, daughter of Zach and Beth Smith
 - August 25, 2022 Juniper Blue, son of Shane and Erika Blue
 - November 6, 2022 Georgia Kay Chheng, daughter of Joe and Janae Chheng
 - November 13, 2022 Jordan Musick
5. Daniel Carr and Alice Yu were married September 3, 2022.
Aaron Dinkledine and Nirmala Rao were married October 1, 2022.
6. Elder delegates to the Presbytery in Lafayette, March 3-4. were: Jeff Platt and Terry Magnuson. James Faris and Jerry Foltz went as teaching elders. The same ruling elder delegates were assigned to the Indy meeting at 4800, March 5, for the ordination and installation of Jerry Foltz as a teaching elder. Elder delegates to the Presbytery, Columbus, Indiana, October 7-8: Richard Blankenship and Donald Cassell, ruling elders. Jerry Foltz went as teaching elder.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Session,

Russ Pulliam

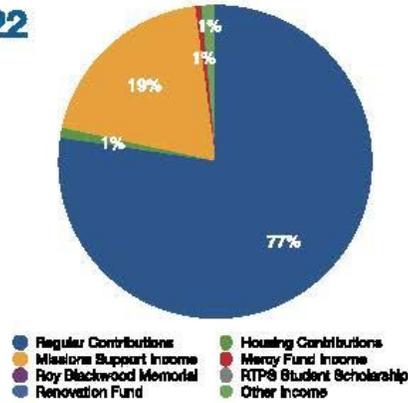
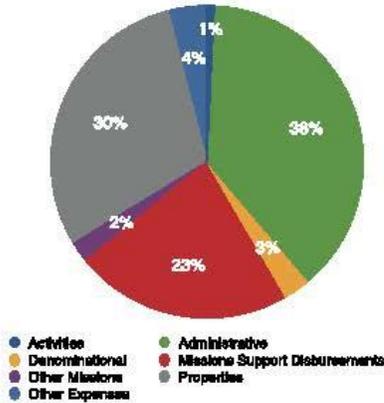
Clerk of Session



This report has been prepared by your StartCHURCH Bookkeeper

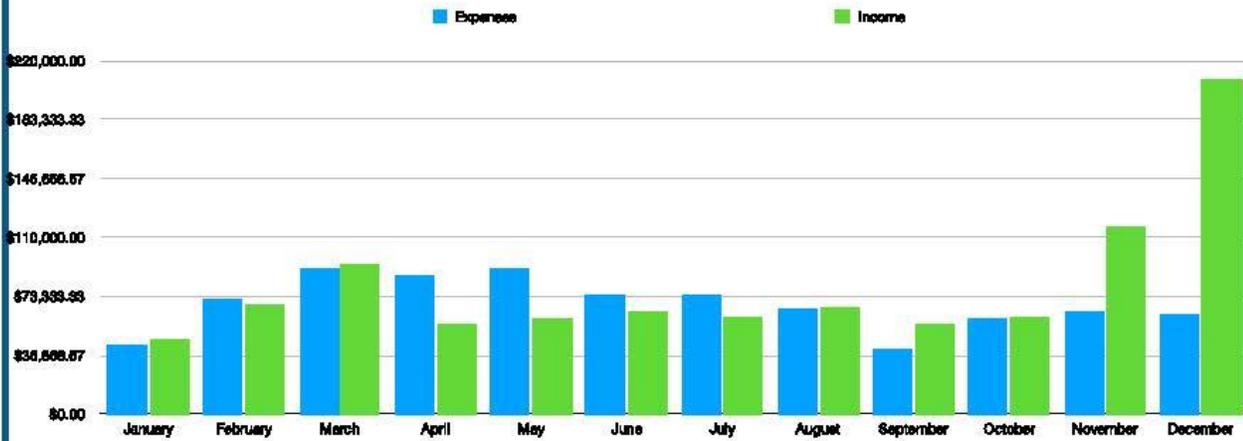
Second Reformed Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis

January - December 2022



Category	Amount	Percent of Expense
Activities	\$0,128.17	0.8%
Administrative	\$310,412.80	38.0%
Denominational	\$22,892.89	2.8%
Missions Support Disbursements	\$184,010.00	22.6%
Other Missions	\$17,231.25	2.1%
Properties	\$242,282.82	29.7%
Other Expenses	\$32,069.73	4.0%
Total Expense	\$816,922.80	

Category	Amount	Percent of Income
Regular Contributions	\$740,088.08	77.4%
Housing Contributions	\$9,800.00	1.0%
Missions Support Income	\$186,608.00	19.5%
Mercy Fund Income	\$5,685.00	0.8%
Roy Blackwood Memorial	\$0.00	0.0%
RTPS Student Scholarship	\$800.00	0.1%
Renovation Fund	\$150.00	0.0%
Other Income	\$13,895.00	1.4%
Total Income	\$967,536.08	



	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Expense	\$43,326.85	\$70,538.85	\$68,724.33	\$83,464.41	\$80,173.85	\$73,503.24	\$74,318.69	\$64,730.51	\$39,167.89	\$38,820.19	\$63,065.85	\$61,361.83
Income	\$46,923.82	\$68,172.27	\$69,097.59	\$56,890.35	\$68,713.65	\$68,069.04	\$81,118.44	\$68,932.11	\$68,566.84	\$60,818.98	\$117,297.01	\$208,961.19

**It is our honor and pleasure to serve you and your organization.
Lacey McDonald, StartCHURCH Bookkeeping**

Second Reformed Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis

Statement of Financial Position | Cash Basis

As of December 31, 2022

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
12 Month CD (7638)	79,408.69
24 Month CD (2631)	45,684.23
Chase Checking (6736)	537,228.01
Money Market (5913)	1,781.22
Savings (2711)	111,930.90
Total Bank Accounts	\$776,033.05
Other Current Assets	
2022 Donations	6,918.17
Total Other Current Assets	\$6,918.17
Total Current Assets	\$782,951.22
Fixed Assets	
4840 Property	275,000.00
Accumulated Depreciation	-50,197.63
AV Equipment	7,338.00
Building Improvements	98,548.78
Equipment Purchase	53,389.58
Office Equipment	3,793.26
Total Fixed Assets	\$387,871.99
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,170,823.21
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Credit Cards	
Chase Credit Card	9,861.28
Lowe's Credit card (9929)	14.03
Total Credit Cards	\$9,875.31
Total Current Liabilities	\$9,875.31
Total Liabilities	\$9,875.31
Equity	
Net Assets	1,038,708.24
Net Revenue	122,239.66
Total Equity	\$1,160,947.90
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,170,823.21

Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church

"Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness."
Psalm 37:3 (NKJV)

Dear Fathers and Brethren,

We are grateful to the Lord for His abundant mercies to our congregation over the past year. Here are some of the highlights.

1. In 2022, we continued to enjoy an influx of newly Reformed young, outreach-minded believers into the life of our church.
2. In addition to weekly sermons (AM: Romans, PM: Christian Love) and psalm meditations, we continued our sabbath school series on the WLC (Sin, Covenant, Christ), then took a break for an extended series unpacking and refuting the Federal Vision.
3. During the "late night" time slot following evening worship (7:30 to 9:00), we finished our video lecture series on Biblical Theology in June, hosted a backyard book study (Sermons of G. Smeaton) around the parsonage fire pit through August, then finished the year with an informal time of fellowship and snacks at the church.
4. Due to an increase of men contemplating a future call to vocational teaching ministry, Pastor Kuehner commenced a series of pre-seminary courses, starting with *Theology Proper I: God's Existence and Attributes*¹, followed by *Theology Proper II: The Trinity*², both of which were well received by all seven students.
5. Two of our members continue to participate in RPGM's Next Steps training program: (1) A gifted university student who plans to spend her entire summer in S. Sudan, and (2) A young man who helped lead Japanese (JCFN) youth events in Chicago and SoCal, and plans to lead an RP Missions team to Japan in 2023.

Annual Congregational Report to Presbytery Spring Meeting, 2023

MEMBERSHIP*

Communicant: 53 (+1)

Baptized: 18 (+2)

Grand Total: 71 (+3)

ATTENDANCE**

AM Worship: 70 (+7)

PM Worship: 60 (+10)

PROFESSIONS

New Converts: 1

Covenant Children: 0

In Lieu of Transfer: 6

Grand Total: 7

BAPTISMS

Adults: 1

Children: 5

Grand Total: 6

OTHER ACTIONS

Transfers (in): 0

Transfers (out): 4

Dismissals: 6

Excommunications: 0

Deaths: 0

* Net Totals (Net Chg.)

** In-person, not incl. livestream

¹ Fall Syllabus (2022): <https://drive.proton.me/urls/QWQ4XHH4B4#T58jwTXJSYJT>

² Spring Syllabus (2023): <https://drive.proton.me/urls/DX3DX5V4Y8#HYkoYMMvH16u>

6. In November, the session appointed five diaconal interns to serve in 2023 on a Diaconal Task Force involving attendance at session meetings, diaconal work to test their gifts, and a first-hand sense of what a nomination/election to the diaconate would entail.
7. The session maintained a more consistent pattern of weekly visitation, and led midweek groups in Novi, Southfield, and Troy.
8. Despite Pastor Kuehner's need to scale back his outreach efforts even more in 2022, the young adults were able to take on a more active role at the rehab center and abortion clinic, leading to the double-baptism of a new convert (former SDA) and his young son.
9. Our total membership grew to 71³, with an average morning worship attendance of 70, and an average evening worship attendance of 60, *excluding* those who live-stream these services.
10. We also praise God that our budget continues to grow, with \$182,592 in total giving for 2022: a 20% (\$31k) increase from last year's previous all-time high of \$151k, thereby enabling us to more than double our Improvement Fund from \$19k to \$41k.
11. We are humbled and thankful to God for His goodness, and remain hopeful, as we continue to seek and serve him in 2023.



**Respectfully Submitted,
The Session of the Southfield RP Church**

³ The ensuing chart was made prior to an inactive member's voluntary dismissal in December.

Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church
Treasurer's Report

BALANCE SHEET - AS OF 12/31/22

	<u>12/31/2022</u>	<u>YTD as of 12/31/2022</u>	<u>2022 Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>	<u>2023 Budget</u>
1 BALANCE FORWARD	43,113.84	25,029.37	25,029.37		25,566.33
2 TOTAL INCOME:	17,860.97	182,592.02	130,120.00	140%	156,600.00
3 TOTAL EXPENSES:	35,408.48	182,055.06	128,976.00	141%	156,558.00
4 ENDING BALANCE	25,566.33	25,566.33	26,173.37		25,608.33

INCOME STATEMENT - December, 2022

5 INCOME:					
6 Tithes	17,768.40	178,953.07	130,000.00	138%	156,000.00
7 5th Sabbath Offerings	0.00	3,156.00			
8 Interest - Certificates of Deposit and Savings	92.57	482.95	120.00	402%	600.00
9 Other	0.00	0.00			
10 TOTAL INCOME:	17,860.97	182,592.02	130,120.00	140%	156,600.00

11 EXPENSES

12 BUSINESS EXPENSES:					
13 RPCNA SYNOD & PRESBYTERY:					
14 Delegates to Synod	0.00	682.00	450.00	152%	700.00
15 Synod's Assm't (2.2% of receipts)	0.00	3,306.60	2,875.00	115%	3,900.00
16 Presbytery Assessment	0.00	1,434.57	1,435.00	100%	2,170.00
17 SOUTHFIELD:					
18 Worker's Comp. Insurance	0.00	379.00	400.00	95%	400.00
19 Church Business Expenses	157.25	439.20	200.00	220%	200.00
20 Pastor's Expense Account	475.54	3,391.04	3,000.00	113%	3,750.00
21 TOTAL BUSINESS EXPENSES:	632.79	9,632.41	8,360.00	115%	11,120.00

22 BUILDING EXPENSES:

23 UTILITIES:					
24 Electric	314.77	1,960.22	1,650.00	119%	2,000.00
25 Natural Gas	292.03	1,515.60	1,000.00	152%	1,500.00
26 Internet	78.95	955.39	960.00	100%	985.00
27 City Water & Sewer	33.09	455.22	520.00	88%	500.00
28 PROPERTY INSURANCE:	0.00	5,135.00	4,700.00	109%	5,250.00
29 CONTRACTED SERVICES:					
30 Gutter Cleaning - Parsonage & Church	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
31 Janitorial Services & Supplies	350.00	3,977.40	4,200.00	95%	4,200.00
32 Lawnmowing Service	490.00	2,470.00	2,500.00	99%	3,675.00
33 Parking Lot & Drive Seal Coating	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
34 Snow Plowing	185.00	560.00	1,020.00	55%	1,620.00
35 MAINTENANCE & REPAIR:					
36 Building	49.00	11,991.10	800.00	1499%	2,000.00
37 Equipment/Appliances/Furniture	999.11	4,443.13	2,000.00	222%	2,000.00
38 Materials/Supplies	69.09	222.55	150.00	148%	175.00
39 Groundskeeping/Landscaping	37.44	216.65	250.00	87%	500.00
40 BUILDING FUND:	20,000.00	20,000.00	0.00		5,000.00
41 TOTAL BUILDING EXPENSES:	22,898.48	53,902.26	19,750.00	273%	29,405.00

	<u>12/31/2022</u>	<u>YTD as of</u> <u>12/31/2022</u>	<u>2022</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2022</u> <u>Budget</u>	
42	MINISTRY EXPENSES:					
43	SOUTHFIELD:					
44	Social Committee	254.25	1,943.54	1,000.00	194%	1,500.00
45	Education	0.00	0.00	100.00	0%	100.00
46	Library Expenses	0.00	25.00	28.00	89%	28.00
47	Guest Preaching	0.00	2,355.12	2,500.00	94%	4,000.00
48	Church Web-Site Expenses	82.19	966.62	810.00	119%	920.00
49	Outreach/Evangelism (add to Fund)	0.00	600.00	0.00		200.00
50	RP Conference Travel Expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
51	Publication Fund (add to Fund)	0.00	0.00	0.00		300.00
52	REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN GIVING:					
53	RP Missions & Ministries	1,940.00	7,140.00	5,200.00	137%	6,250.00
54	RP Home	730.00	2,930.00	2,200.00	133%	2,600.00
55	RP Seminary	730.00	2,930.00	2,200.00	133%	2,600.00
56	RP Global Missions	730.00	2,930.00	2,200.00	133%	2,600.00
57	Home Missions	730.00	1,930.00	1,200.00	161%	1,450.00
58	Reformation Translation Fellowship	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
59	Other (Includes desig. gifts)	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
60	FIFTH SABBATH OFFERINGS:	0.00	3,156.00	0.00		0.00
61	NON-REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN GIVING:					
62	Choices Prenancy Center	0.00	100.00	100.00	100%	500.00
63	Other	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
64	MINISTRY OF MERCY(add to Mercy Fnd)	0.00	300.00	0.00		200.00
65	TOTAL MINISTRY EXPENSES:	5,196.44	27,306.28	17,538.00	156%	23,248.00
66	PASTORAL COMPENSATION EXPENSES:					
67	Pastor:					
68	Salary	3,852.12	46,225.00	46,225.00	100%	51,850.00
69	Housing Allowance	833.26	10,000.00	10,000.00	100%	10,000.00
70	Utilities	778.69	6,656.11	6,000.00	111%	6,750.00
71	Health Savings Account	1,216.70	7,300.00	7,300.00	100%	7,920.00
72	Pension Fund-Employer Cont.(10%)	0.00	4,700.00	4,700.00	100%	4,800.00
73	Conference Costs	0.00	1,780.00	500.00	356%	2,000.00
74	Bonus	0.00	5,950.00	0.00		0.00
75	In Lieu of Social Security	0.00	8,603.00	8,603.00	100%	9,465.00
76	TOTAL PASTORAL COMPENSATION EXP:	6,680.77	91,214.11	83,328.00	109%	92,785.00
77	TOTAL EXPENSES:	35,408.48	182,055.06	128,976.00	141%	156,558.00
78	NET INCOME(LOSS)	(17,547.51)	536.96	1,144.00		42.00

OTHER FUNDS

	<u>Cemetery</u>	<u>Mercy</u>	<u>Improvement Fund</u>	<u>Outreach/ Evang. Fund</u>	<u>Publication Fund</u>
1 Balance 01/01/2022	11,473.47	263.66	22,908.17	78.72	200.00
2 + Contrib. or Interest	140.45	0.00	20,500.00	0.00	0.00
3 + From General Fund	0.00	300.00	0.00	600.00	0.00
4 - Expenditures	0.00	430.69	2,290.00	399.56	189.99
5 Balance 12/31/22	11,613.92	132.97	41,118.17	279.16	10.01

SUMMARY OF ASSETS

Balance 12/31/22

<u>Bank</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Issue Date</u>	<u>Maturity</u>	<u>Interest Rate</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Designation</u>
6 Bk Of America	SV acct.	12/12/19	none	0.02	15,452.15	
7 Live Oak Bank	12 mth.	05/05/22	05/12/23	1.73	10,325.10	CD# 5946
8 Live Oak Bank	12 mth.	09/19/22	09/19/23	2.71	10,440.01	CD# 7115
9 Live Oak Bank	6 mth	08/18/22	02/18/23	2.47	11,613.92	CD# 7764 *
10 Live Oak Bank	SV acct.	04/14/22	none	3.44	20,219.77	#0541
11 Southfield checking account balance as of 12/31/22					10,669.61	
12 TOTAL CASH BALANCES					78,720.56	
13 General Fund					25,566.33	
14 Cemetery Fund					11,613.92	CD# 7764
15 Mercy Fund					132.97	
16 Improvement Fund:					41,118.17	
17 <i>Set aside for parsonage kitchen</i>				\$1,410.00		
18 Outreach/Evangelism Fund					279.16	
19 Publication Fund					10.01	
20 Payroll Tax Liability Account					0.00	
21 TOTAL FUNDS					78,720.56	

* Note: CD# 7764 is designated for Cemetery Funds

SUMMARY OF NOTES RECEIVABLE

<u>Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date of Loan</u>	<u>Total Loan</u>	<u>Amt. Repaid</u>	<u>Bal. Due</u>
22			None at this time			

SUMMARY OF NOTES PAYABLE

23	None at this time
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Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southside Indianapolis

Report to Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery – Spring 2023

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9

Fathers and Brethren,

It is good to pause and reflect on the “spiritual house” the Lord has continued to build here at Southside Indianapolis this past year. Session met in constituted court twenty-one times during the year. In addition to eleven monthly stated meetings, ten special meetings were held for communicant membership interviews or matters needing timely attention. In three meetings, session set aside time to meet jointly with the deacon board to review and discuss progress on ministry initiatives.

Public Services

Our congregation continues to be well-fed from God’s word each week. Pastor Hanson completed preaching through the Gospel of John and finished his Colossians series. He preached occasionally from Psalms. He begins preaching from 2 Timothy in the new year. Pastor Wise continued preaching through 1 Kings followed by 2 Kings and then preached through Lamentations. In the summer he preached a month-long series from Romans 8. In the new year he has begun preaching through Micah. In addition to the preaching ministry of our own teaching elders, the congregation also heard from these guest preachers: Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, Venkatesh Gopalakrishnan, Joel Hart, and Jonathan Sturm.

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was observed twelve times on the second Lord’s Day of the month throughout the year, in the morning service once per quarter and in the evening service the other months. The sacrament of baptism was administered to Caleb Alan Brewster at the time of his profession of faith and these eight covenant children: Zoey Lynn Erney, Sofia Mykhaylovna Fatyanov, Amelia Jane Kleyn, Andrew Jeffrey Koons, Joanna Irene Manring, Annika Miriam Ritenour, Avalon Roxann Sturm, and Marianne Elisabeth Sturm. In addition to corporate prayer in the worship services, a mid-week prayer meeting led by the pastors was held throughout the year. The meeting that had been occurring on Wednesday evenings was moved to Tuesdays, excluding weeks when the session and deacons have their meetings.

Pastoral Care

At the end of 2022, the total membership of the congregation stood at 300. The communicant membership was 219, an increase of nineteen, and the baptized membership was 81, an increase of four, from 2021.

The following thirty-one individuals united with Southside RPC as communicant members: Aaron and Maggie Becker by transfer from Terre Haute RPC, Terre Haute IN; Sean and Monica, Miriam, Elizabeth, Joseph, Rebekah, and John Bird by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; Caleb Brewster; Jeff and Heather Derouin; Alexandria Erney; Michael and Rachel Fatyanov by transfer from Second RPC, Indianapolis IN; Catie Hilliard; Duane and Anne Judd by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; Dale and Laura Koons by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; James Lefebvre by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; Stephen Manring; Will Martin by transfer from Friendswood Baptist Church, Camby IN; Jennifer Neel by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; Jason and Michelle O’Neill by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; Verayna Newland; Cody Perrault; Anna Roberts by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; Craig Stone by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN; and Daniel Wilson by transfer from Bloomington RPC, Bloomington IN.

In addition to the seven baptized children mentioned above, Isaac and Samuel Fatyanov by transfer from Second RPC, Indianapolis IN and Abigail, Jack, and Kaitlyn O'Neill by transfer from Christ Church RP, Indianapolis IN were added to the roll as baptized members.

Each at their own request, Michael and Angela Eddy were transferred to First Southern Baptist Church, Floyds Knobs IN; Sarah Erney was transferred to The SOMA Gathering, Beaver Falls PA; Miriam Hanson was transferred to Trinity Presbyterian Church, Rochester MN; David and Megan Manring along with their daughters Abigail and Joanna were transferred to Providence Presbyterian Church, Opelika, AL; Joe and Ally Smith along with their children Alexis, Gavin, Ophelia, and Phineas were transferred to Westminster RPC, Westminster CO where Joe was called to serve as their pastor. After they united with new congregations in Indianapolis, Wesley Dewar and Kay Roesner were each removed from the communicant members roll. For our dear Marjorie Main, her faith became sight on August 31 as she entered the presence of her Savior.

There were nine births during the year: Avalon Sturm (1/17), Joanna Manring (1/30), Zoey Erney (6/17), Amelia Kleyn (8/5), Sofia Fatyanov (8/27), Andrew Koons (9/3), Marianne Sturm (10/12), Benjamin Lanza (10/31), and Annika Ritenour (12/6)

Participation in the Higher Courts and Wider Church Ministry

Presbytery - Our ruling elder delegates to the Spring meeting of Presbytery held at Lafayette RPC were John Cavanaugh, Ross Cerbus, David Kleyn, and Jerry Porter. The Fall meeting delegates were John Hanson, David Kleyn, and Don Prichard. Dale Koons served as Assistant Clerk. Pastor Hanson served as moderator of the Presbytery Ad Interim Commission and as a member of the Nominating Committee. Pastor Wise serves on the Candidates and Credentials Committee. Jim Bishop serves as Presbytery Treasurer. Mark Hart serves as the Presbytery Assistant Treasurer. Ross Cerbus serves as the COVFAMIKOI Conference manager. Pastor Wise served as interim moderator for Elkhart RPC from May through August. John Hanson concluded his service as a provisional elder for Immanuel RPC. Steve Sturm served on the Christ Church RP Commission. In June, John Hanson once again organized and led a team of Presbytery youth to serve at the ECHO (Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization) farm in Ft. Myers, Florida. He also organized a "Seniors ECHO" trip in November. Jonathan Sturm continues as a student under care of Presbytery and was licensed to preach at the Spring meeting. He anticipates further Presbytery exams this Spring pursuing licensure to receive a call along with graduation from Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (RPTS) in May.

Synod – Our ruling elder delegate to the RPCNA Synod meeting held at Indiana Wesleyan was Steve Sturm. Bill Roberts serves as chairman of the Trustees of Synod, John Cavanaugh serves on the Central America and South America Committee, Jason O'Neill chairs and Mark Hart serves on the Finance Committee, and Steve Sturm serves on the Olivetti Restoration Commission.

Initiatives

Session is thankful for progress this year on several initiatives. In the Spring, Session completed elder visitations begun in early 2020 that had been interrupted due to the coronavirus pandemic. One take-away from visitation feedback resulted in the "Men's Ministry Night" meetings on Thursday evenings. The Child Protection Policy Review Committee in consultation with the GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment) organization has made steady progress developing an updated Safe Church Policy that should be adopted soon. The Master Plan Committee has worked with our design team to reach several milestones for the Site Improvements Project introduced at last year's meeting. We have signed a construction contract for the work and are awaiting City permit approval. We are in the planning stages for an elder election in 2023.

May we be faithful to "proclaim the praises of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light" in 2023.

Respectfully submitted,
Southside Indianapolis RPC Session

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southside Indianapolis
Proposed Budget for 2023 - General Fund

	Actual 2021	Budget 2022	Actual 2022	Budget 2023	% Chg-23 Budget vs. 22 Budget
RECEIPTS					
Total contributions	\$610,118	\$600,000	\$652,306	\$645,000	7.5%
Other income	111	2,000	56	2,000	0.0%
Total receipts	610,229	602,000	652,362	647,000	
EXPENDITURES					
CONGREGATION					
101.0 Pastor's Salary	128,459	133,296	133,296	143,160	7.4%
102.0 Parsonage Allowance	62,541	65,204	65,204	69,768	7.0%
104.0 Pastor's Pension	18,800	20,000	20,000	20,400	2.0%
105.0 Secretarial Services	10,352	16,380	10,880	17,000	3.8%
106.0 Worker's Compensation	1,523	1,569	1,672	1,723	9.8%
107.0 Ministry Expenses	5,888	7,950	4,244	8,450	6.3%
108.0 Church Office	7,021	7,240	8,856	9,130	26.1%
109.0 Benevolence	1,204	1,000	1,011	1,000	0.0%
110.0 Pastoral Intern	10,000	10,000	-	10,000	0.0%
111.0 Audit/Compilation fees	1,900	2,000	1,000	1,100	-45.0%
112.0 Traffic/Security Officer	7,927	11,340	5,537	10,125	-10.7%
113.0 Safe Church Policy	2,382	1,400	6,596	1,625	16.1%
Sub-total	257,997	277,379	258,296	293,481	5.8%
EDUCATION					
201.0 Sabbath School	2,884	3,750	2,222	3,750	0.0%
203.0 Youth Group	387	1,000	1,416	1,500	50.0%
204.0 Conferences & Guest Ministry	3,546	4,000	1,718	4,000	0.0%
205.0 Fellowship Activities	3,241	5,800	5,532	7,300	25.9%
206.0 Library	168	450	209	450	0.0%
207.0 Seminary Student Assistance	4,500	4,500	5,845	3,425	-23.9%
208.0 Ruling Elder Training	-	3,000	-	3,000	0.0%
209.0 Family Camp Scholarship	-	5,000	2,735	5,000	0.0%
Sub-total	14,726	27,500	19,677	28,425	3.4%
MISSIONS					
301.0 Local Evangelism	2,366	3,000	1,092	3,000	0.0%
302.0 Missionary Support	65,400	64,000	78,000	70,000	9.4%
304.0 Ministry of Mercy	6,000	6,000	3,093	6,000	0.0%
305.0 Special Missions Projects	-	1,500	850	1,500	0.0%
307.0 Local Ministries	5,800	6,150	6,150	6,550	6.5%
Sub-total	79,566	80,650	89,185	87,050	7.9%
DENOMINATION					
401.0 Presbytery Assessment	5,774	6,657	6,657	8,837	32.7%
403.0 Synod Assessment	13,310	13,425	13,441	14,351	6.9%
405.0 Synod/Presby. Expenses	1,425	1,500	578	1,500	0.0%
407.0 R.P. Missions/Ministry	34,700	30,000	40,000	35,000	16.7%
Sub-total	55,209	51,582	60,676	59,688	15.7%
PROPERTY					
503.0 Maintenance & Supplies	37,313	39,765	41,529	42,175	6.1%
504.0 Capital Purchases	1,941	25,000	1,614	25,000	0.0%
505.0 Utilities	18,462	19,820	21,235	22,740	14.7%
506.0 Insurance	10,193	10,710	10,491	11,020	2.9%
510.0 Debt Service	-	-	-	-	0.0%
Sub-total	67,909	95,295	74,869	100,935	5.9%
Total expenditures	475,407	532,406	502,703	569,579	7.0%
Net increase/(dec.) in General Fund Assets	134,822	69,594	149,659	77,421	11.2%
Other receipts	19,200	-	3,750	-	
Other expenses	(41,306)	-	(112,663)	-	
Total increase/(dec.) in Net Assets	\$112,716	\$69,594	\$40,746	\$77,421	11.2%

Sparta Reformed Presbyterian Church
Session Report to Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery
February 17, 2023

Pastor

Ross Fearing completed his second year as pastor this year and continues to serve in the United States Army Reserve as a Chaplain. He transferred to the 85th Army Reserve Support Command which is located in Arlington Heights, IL, which has greatly reduced his commute to monthly drills.

Public Ministry

The congregation continued to worship morning and evening each Lord's Day, with Ross providing most of the preaching. Because Ross serves in the Army approximately fourteen Lord's Days each year, we thank Pastor Terry Dowds for providing regular pulpit supply. This year we completed the book of Micah and are currently studying in Mark and Deuteronomy.

Regular Sabbath School continued this year with Jeanne Finley teaching the elementary and kindergarten class. This year Jim Jones began teaching the youth class. Ross Fearing and Bill Wilson led the adult class. In the last few months, we have been working through Ken Ham's video series, "Foundations". We celebrated communion April 24, July 31, October 30, and January 29 (2023).

During the months of September and October we spent Sunday evenings working through the Christianity Explored program as a congregation.

Session

The session consists of Moderator Ross Fearing and Clerk James Odom. Ruling Elder Bob Morrow retired from the session and was granted emeritus status on February 17, 2023.

There are currently 14 communicant members, 7 baptized members. For morning worship average attendance was 21 and for evening worship 17 which represents an approximately 10% decline from the last report.

The session is requesting Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery to provide a provisional elder.

Properties

The church building continues to be in good condition, without need of major repairs in the last year.

Finances

While the final financial report has not been completed, the preliminary report shows expenses significantly exceeded income and the church relied on cash reserves for the difference.

Conclusion

This year the focus of the church has been on equipping the congregation for life together and evangelism and improving the teaching ministry of the congregation. In the last few months we have seen encouragement from several visitors, including one family which has been attending

regularly for over a month. We are facing challenges related to the areas of finances and filling essential leadership positions in the congregation.

Recommendation: Presbytery assign a provisional elder to the Sparta RPC session.

In Christ Jesus,

Sparta Reformed Presbyterian Church Session

Ross Fearing, Moderator

James Odom, Clerk

SYCAMORE RP CHURCH 2023 REPORT

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery Mar 2-4, 2023

He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. (Eccl 3:11)

This has been a year of growth for Sycamore RPC, and where there is growth, there is often that divine discipleship through challenges which yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11). We certainly feel the fleeting, fading, and frustrating nature of this brief life under the sun. Yet the Lord has given us much to rejoice in as we look forward to an eternal communion in the glorious presence of our Triune God. How dependent we are mutually upon the Spirit of God, the Holy One of Israel, and the Father of Lights!

Congregational Stats	2021	2022
Total Members	35 C 28 B (63)	44 C 46 B (90)
AM Attn	57	67
PM Attn	37	45
Professions of Baptized	1	0
Professions of New Converts	0	0
Change in Members	-3/+1	-0/+27

The session continues through Darby Strickland's "*Is It Abuse?*" as we prepare to discern and shepherd sufferers and sinners in abusive situations under the gentle & lowly heart of Christ. We also spent time in other devotional materials.

Statistically, the Session constituted as a court **16** times in 2022. We met with the deacons twice and many other times informally for reciprocal counsel and discussion. Sycamore RPC currently has **44** communicant members and **46** baptized members, for a total of **86** resident members. We witnessed the Lord add Ian Blue and Nicodemus to the congregation, as well as the Prevosts, Daniels, and Murrays. Our average weekly attendance is **67** in the AM (approx. 9 on Zoom) and **45** in the PM (approx. 11 on Zoom). Compare this with 57 in AM and 37 in PM.

As a congregation we had a Day of Remembrance and Review of our life and ministry. We enjoyed a Memorial Day picnic at Highland Park. In our community, some attended the mayor's prayer breakfast in January, the Recovery Celebration in May, and the annual PRC Life Banquet in September. On the Presbytery level, some went to Covfamikoi family conference. We sent youth to CYPUs events. We hosted the CORPS Winter Conference in January. We attended the annual northern Indiana Thanksgiving Psalm Sing in November, hosted by Elkhart RPC. The session maintained our family visitation schedule, meeting with most households. We plan to make it into each of our homes in 2023. Most significant to our work, we added a ruling elder in Brentt VanSickle.

Regarding our preaching & teaching ministry, we've heard from the Spirit speaking in His Word as we completed our Romans series, then a series on Spheres of Worship. In April 2022 our pastor began preaching through Ecclesiastes. We also had several one-off sermons often related to communion. We celebrated the Lord's Supper 5 times in 2022, including our Communion Weekends. In these weekends, we conferenced on the Beatitudes in April, and in October, Christ's call to His disciple to "*deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him.*" Guest preachers included Jason Camery, Aaron Murray, and Steven Work. In Sabbath evening, we answered Shorter Catechism questions 1-38, and read Dane Ortland's *Gentle and Lowly*. We sang consecutively through Psalms 1139A to 150C. We began at 1A again in August 2022. We also enjoyed an evening Psalm sing four times this year on the fifth Lord's Day of the month.

A weekly schedule of classes was maintained, including Judges and Keller's *Making Sense of God* on Mondays; Genesis and Tripp's *War on Words* in our women's study; and a men's study on Trueman's *Strange New World*, then selections from John Owen on *Communion with God*, as well as a Wednesday evening Elder's Training class for the church. Apart from several weekly Biblical counseling, our pastor continues to tutor several students from church in the Classical Conversations Challenge program each Wednesday.

We continue to see the Lord's work in our midst through our diaconal ministry (growing in mercy ministry and improving/maintaining a 100 yr old building) as well as our Christian education ministry. We enrolled 39 students in our Sabbath School program this year.

June 2023 marks a decade of Shawn's ministry at Sycamore RPC. Concerning this, he wrote in his annual report. "*At times it seems like I have been here much longer. Other times it is as if I just started, having so much more to learn in the will and ways of the Lord. It is my greatest privilege to serve Christ's Word and His people... I can say with Paul, "concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another... I have found refreshing rest in your company"* (Rom 15:14, 32)." We give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness to us all.

Regarding our budget, our average monthly income this year was around \$10,000 (above the \$8,333/mo. budgeted). We brought in \$22,000 over budget and spent \$11,000 over the budgeted amount of \$100,000 giving us a total surplus of around \$11,000 for the year. We have been greatly cared for and blessed by the Lord.

We trust and pray that as we experience our God's benediction of His love, grace, fellowship, & trial, we would increase in our knowledge and experience of His all-surpassing love.

SYCAMORE RP CHURCH 2023 BUDGET

	2022 Budget	2022 Actual	2023 Proposal
100 Income			
101 Interest	\$0.00		
102 Tithes and Offerings	\$100,000.00	\$120,721.84	\$126,500.00
103 Flow-In (Anonymous & RP Witness)		\$626.00	
104 Building Emergency Fund			
105 Compassion International			
107 Other Income			
108 Building Improvements		\$799.88	
110 Building Cleaning			
111 Special Gifts (Seminary Fund)		\$1,000.00	
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$100,000.00	\$123,147.72	\$126,500.00
200 Administration			
201 Administration	\$3,000.00	\$5,126.23	\$3,000.00
202 Christian Education	\$1,200.00	\$2,105.68	\$2,190.00
203 Library Education	\$150.00	\$148.48	\$150.00
205 Anderson Ministry Expense	\$2,000.00	\$3,687.88	\$300.00
206 Miscellaneous	\$50.00	\$118.00	\$50.00
207 Gift/Donation	\$500.00	\$555.69	\$500.00
208 Speakers	\$1,500.00	\$1,025.00	\$1,500.00
209 Media	\$500.00	\$20.12	\$500.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$8,400.00	\$12,787.08	\$8,190.00
300 Congregation			
301 Fellowship & Hospitality	\$1,000.00	\$708.11	\$1,000.00
303 Mercy	\$1,000.00	\$1,177.82	\$1,000.00
304 Memorials	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
305 Outreach & Evangelism	\$100.00	\$58.04	\$100.00
306 Compassion International	\$456.00	\$456.00	\$456.00
310 Sermon Audio	\$480.00	\$479.40	\$480.00
311 Pastoral Continuing Education	\$500.00	\$516.00	500
313 Seminary Attendance Fund		\$1,500.00	1000
323 Conference and Missions	\$800.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$4,436.00	\$4,895.37	\$9,636.00

400 Denomination & Missions			
403 Presbytery Assessments	\$1,200.00	\$1,214.44	\$1,102.00
405 RPM&M	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00
407 Synod Assessments	\$1,765.00	\$2,563.00	\$2,500.00
410 Synod	\$400.00	\$0.00	\$400.00
Subtotal	\$4,565.00	\$4,977.44	\$5,202.00
500 Pastor			
501 Health	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.03	\$9,000.00
502 Housing	\$19,000.00	\$18,999.96	\$20,000.00
503 Salary	\$28,132.00	\$28,132.09	\$28,332.00
504 Pension	\$5,200.00	\$5,200.00	\$6,000.00
Subtotal	\$60,332.00	\$60,332.08	\$63,332.00
600 Building			
602 Domestic Supplies	\$1,200.00	\$1,054.89	\$1,200.00
603 Maintenance	\$3,500.00	\$2,277.73	\$3,500.00
604 Building Emergency Fund	\$2,127.00	\$299.88	\$0.00
605 Insurance	\$3,840.00	\$3,801.51	\$3,840.00
607 Utilities	\$9,000.00	\$9,169.02	\$9,000.00
608 Building Improvements	\$0.00	\$8,700.00	\$20,000.00
610 Building Cleaning	\$2,600.00	\$2,692.50	\$2,600.00
703 Flow Out (Anonymous & RP Witness)	\$0.00	\$626.00	\$0.00
Subtotal	\$22,267.00	\$28,621.53	\$40,140.00
Total	\$100,000.00	\$111,613.50	\$126,500.00
Over/Under Budget:	\$0.00	-\$11,613.50	\$0.00
2021 Balance	\$25,262.83		
2022 Balance	\$36,797.05		
EM Fund balance 2021 \$299.88			
EM Fund balance 2022 \$0			

Terre Haute Reformed Presbyterian Church

Terre Haute, Indiana

Report to Presbytery

Spring Meeting 2023

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our risen Savior! We continue the gospel ministry here in Terre Haute, in His name, by His power, and for His honor and glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. The following are some highlights:

Worship

We have enjoyed an entire year of regular worship services with the whole congregation at the point where they feel comfortable attending in-person due to the diminished threat from the Covid virus. Session has maintained a Zoom option for worship services, but this is largely used by members who are suffering from illness or are otherwise unable to attend. We continue to have Sabbath School at 9:30am with the morning worship service starting at 10:45am. We finished our multi-year sermon series through Genesis having taken breaks every couple of months for short sermon series and have moved on to the book of Romans. In the evening, we had several shorter series on e.g. the book of Ruth, the letters to the churches in Revelation, and a series on Psalms to encourage God's people to sing with understanding.

Fellowship

Our congregation enjoys a fellowship meal on the first Sunday of each month, following our celebration of the Lord's supper. Moreover, the congregation is faithful in showing hospitality throughout the week, which reflects the overall unity and love in our congregation. There is a regular Women's Fellowship Bible Study and the Men's Fellowship was able to hold a wide range of events in an effort to build fellowship among the men of the congregation, some of whom have difficult schedules and live at a distance.

Bible Study

The Women's Fellowship continue their study of Hebrews. We also continue our Thursday Evening Bible Study, which finished a short course on covenantal baptism and then launched into the gospel of John. On occasion, in lieu of the study, a Reformation Roundtable was held as an outreach event to connect with those in the community who are already acquainted with reformed theology. The adult Sabbath school class has enjoyed some lively discussion as it has moved through a series on relationships in the Christian life, *Christianity in America* by Stephen Nichols, Calvin's *Golden Booklet of the Christian Life*, and now a study on Law and Gospel. Session held a retreat in the fall to discuss vision for the church, and was unified in seeking a way to

ensure that our junior high and high school students are firmly grounded and conversant in systematic theology, perhaps through the rigorous study of a catechism.

Building and Grounds

The diaconate was established in our congregation with the ordination and installation of two deacons in December 2022. The deacons have already been hard at work, particularly on the facilities and finances, and we as a Session are actively seeking ways to further equip and guide them in their important ministry to the congregation. Our "Property Search Committee" visited a second property at a central location in Terre Haute but determined that though beautiful and full of character, the building's state of disrepair was unmanageable. In the meantime, we are very thankful to God for our current facilities.

Membership

The congregation has enjoyed modest numerical growth. One family transferred to another RPCNA congregation. Two communicant members and two baptized members have been added. The net result is that the membership numbers remain the same from 2022. However, there are presently four individuals who are moving toward church membership. We hope to grow, both in faith and number, and pray that Acts 2:47 might be realized for us too, if even to a lesser degree: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Here are current membership numbers:

- Current Professing Members: 26
- Current Baptized Members: 13
- Regularly Attending: 6

Blessings to you in Christ,
The Session of Terre Haute RPC

THRPC Budget Report -- February 13, 2023

	2022 Budget	2022 Actual	2023 Budget
100-INCOME	\$ 115,500.00	\$ 112,642.35	\$ 112,000.00
101 - Tithes and Offerings	\$ 113,000.00	\$107,496.30	\$ 112,000.00
102 - Designated Gifts to TH (local)			
104 - Outside Gifts	\$ 2,500.00	\$2,500.00	
105 - Designated Gifts (outgoing)		\$2,646.05	
200-PASTORAL SUPPORT	\$ 77,200.00	\$ 78,033.00	\$ 74,950.00
201 - Pastor's Salary	\$ 38,500.00	\$38,508.00	\$ 40,000.00
202 - Pastor's Housing Allowance	\$ 30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
204 - Pension	\$ 8,250.00	\$8,625.00	\$ 4,500.00
205 - Professional enrichment	\$ 450.00	\$900.00	\$ 450.00
206 - Other Expenses			
300-CHURCH MINISTRY	\$ 7,100.00	\$ 7,667.85	\$ 7,600.00
301 - Children's SS Curriculum	\$ 800.00	\$565.95	\$ 800.00
302 - Christian Education Materials	\$ 250.00	\$89.90	\$ 250.00
303 - Pastor's Ministry Expenses	\$ 3,000.00	\$2,772.42	\$ 3,000.00
304 - Guest Ministry	\$ 1,800.00	\$1,217.00	\$ 1,500.00
305 - Mercy Ministry	\$ 300.00	\$2,745.08	\$ 1,000.00
306 - Website Hosting	\$ 100.00	\$30.00	\$ 100.00
307 - Other		\$10.97	
309 - Youth Ministry			
310 - Missions	\$ 400.00	\$22.44	\$ 500.00
311 - Fellowship Activities/Gifts/Nursery	\$ 450.00	\$214.09	\$ 450.00
400-CHURCH ADMINISTRATION	\$ 700.00	\$ 696.10	\$ 700.00
401 - Church Office Expenses	\$ 700.00	\$696.10	\$ 700.00
403 - Other			
500-DENOMINATION	\$ 3,336.01	\$ 3,265.01	\$ 4,150.00
501 - Presbytery Assessments	\$ 736.01	\$736.01	\$ 800.00
502 - Synod Assessments	\$ 2,000.00	\$2,529.00	\$ 2,600.00
503 - Presby & Synod Delegate	\$ -		\$ 550.00
504 - RPM&M	\$ 500.00		\$ 100.00
505 - CYPUP	\$ 100.00		\$ 100.00
600-CHURCH BUILDING	\$ 19,600.00	\$ 21,622.52	\$ 22,510.00
601 - Mortgage	\$ 9,000.00	\$9,000.00	\$ 9,000.00
602 - Insurance	\$ 2,000.00	\$3,258.75	\$ 3,300.00
603 - Cleaning	\$ 1,650.00	\$1,960.00	\$ 1,960.00
604 - Maintenance (subtotal)	\$ 2,000.00	\$1,745.00	\$ 2,000.00

THRPC Budget Report -- February 13, 2023

– Maintenance: Bug Man		\$840.00	
– Maintenance: Mowing		\$805.00	
– Maintenance: Snow Removal		\$100.00	
607 - Utilities (subtotal)	\$ 4,200.00	\$5,281.16	\$ 5,500.00
– Utilities: Electric – Duke		\$1,550.67	
– Utilities: Gas – Vectren		\$888.21	
– Utilities: Sewer		\$338.52	
– Utilities: Water		\$328.82	
– Utilities: Internet & Phone		\$1,545.64	
– Utilities: Sermon Audio		479.4	
– Utilities: Zoom		\$149.90	
609 - Other			
610 - Church Supplies (reimbursements)	\$ 750.00	\$377.61	\$ 750.00
700-FACILITIES TEAM	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 208.24	\$ 1,000.00
701 - Discretionary Project Fund	\$ 1,000.00	\$208.24	\$ 1,000.00
705 - Approved Project (2022): Chairs	\$ 1,500.00	\$0.00	
706 - Proposed (2021): Bldng upgrade research	\$ -		\$ -
800-OUTREACH	\$ 750.00	\$ 210.82	\$ 750.00
801 - Printing			
802 - Mailing		\$47.82	
803 - Facebook		\$163.00	
804 - Other	\$ 750.00		\$ 750.00
900-MISCELLANEOUS	\$ -	\$25.00	\$ -
		\$25.00	
TOTAL INCOME:	\$ 115,500.00	\$ 112,642.35	\$ 112,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$ 111,186.01	\$ 111,703.54	\$ 111,660.00
NET INCOME:	\$ 4,313.99	\$ 938.81	\$ 340.00
Balance Transfer to Savings Account	\$ 2,000.00		\$ 2,000.00

ACCOUNT SUMMARY	12/31/2021	12/31/2022	2/13/2023
Checking Account balance:	\$ 67,987.62	\$ 70,256.59	\$ 73,273.70
Savings Acct balance:	\$ 7,511.15	\$ 7,511.91	\$ 9,511.91
Building Fund balance:			



WESTMINSTER REFORMED

★ PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ★

Congregational Report 2023

1) Membership - Communicant: 16; Baptized: 7; Total: 23 (+3). 2) Average Worship Attendance - 21. 3) Professions - New Converts: 0; Covenant Children: 0; Total: 0. 4) Baptisms - Adult: 0; Children: 1; Total: 1. 5) Other Actions - Transfers (in): 4; Transfers (out): 0; Dismissals: 1.

Dear Fathers and Brethren,

Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church continues to carry out an active, hopeful and joyful ministry in the north suburbs of Chicago. The RPCNA has maintained a witness to the Chicago area for over a century, and we trust that God will continue to use us to proclaim Christ and uphold the Reformed faith in this region. We are about the business of proclaiming the Gospel to a needy and wanting world. We first equip the saints and send them into the world. Our intention is to prepare our members of Westminster that they are ready to proclaim the love of Christ.

Worship

We have been able to meet each Lord's Day for corporate worship, proclaiming the Word of God and sitting together (monthly) at the Table of our Lord. Dr. Rev. Brett Mahlen has served as stated supply for the first part of the year and Joshua Smith accepted our call to serve as our pastor. He started on August 1 and was ordained on August 19th. Joshua started by preaching through the book of Philippians.

Ordained Leadership

For the first half of June, Dr. Brett Mahlen served as our stated supply. He is ordained in the OPC. He is now working with prisons ministry in Indiana.

In August 2022 Joshua Smith and his wife Brooke came to Westminster. Joshua now serves as our pastor.

We met in constituted court 14 times during 2022. These meetings usually were conducted on Zoom. We also had two congregational meetings during 2022. One was the traditional spring meeting, and the other was a special meeting to make a pastoral call. Wade Mann was our interim moderator along with Jack Baumgardner who served when Wade took sabbatical. Their work and assistance in helping us through the challenges of a call and ordination were appreciated. Wade has continued to serve with us as an advisory member of the session after Joshua's ordination. He will be stepping down from the role as interim elder in March. His wisdom and patience has been appreciated.

Jack Baumgardner also served as our interim moderator starting in May sharing his years of wisdom through the ordination of Joshua in August. We truly appreciate his willingness to take the time to work with us.

Fellowship

Recognizing the church as the “communion of the saints,” we gave a significant emphasis to fellowship. Beyond our Lord’s Day worship, we sat down each Lord’s Day after worship for meals. On the first Sunday of each month we had our monthly carry-in dinners, which are a bit more organized. The other weeks we call them a brown bag lunch, for people to bring food for themselves. However, people continue bringing casseroles, large salads and desserts to share. Many people drive long distances to attend Westminster and would like to eat a meal before they head home. This helps to accommodate them with an enjoyable time of fellowship. Thus, on average we are together each Lord’s Day from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm.

Currently the Facebook page is being updated by Joshua. This is helping to keep it fresh and relevant.

Education

Our educational ministries continue to thrive. We currently have one class that meets each Lord’s Day morning: an adult class. We started the year by discussing apologetics and going through lectures by Greg Bahnsen. In August, we began to work through “Understanding Biblical Doctrine”.

Twice a month, Bob Koch leads a study on the book of Joshua. It has been a long journey through this important book.

We also continue with our Zoom prayer meeting on Wednesday evenings. This has worked well. Because of the distance people have to travel, a weekly meeting has never been something we could do. However, we now have a Wednesday gathering on Zoom that is usually attended by two to six people.

Outreach

With the challenges of COVID behind us, communities are slowly starting to come out and the festivals have begun again. Now to figure out the best way to utilize those events for outreach. We did attempt to one event this summer at the local train station, but it was rained out. So we had some practice on getting ready, but were not able to follow through with this project. We will try again. We also have started to see some visitors from time to time which is encouraging. This fall we had a community gathering at the church and had a nice turnout. One woman had not been in a church building for decades. We need to continue to pray for wisdom on what we can do, with our limited numbers that would be effective and productive.

Property and Facilities

We are extremely thankful to God for the property we enjoy in Prairie View, Illinois. It provides us with a significant presence within the community. Both structures are sound and attractive, though not without maintenance challenges. The major challenge we have had in the last year was the water well collapsing and ceasing to function. It took several months to repair due to the winter weather. In March it was finally in place and the water has worked well. During the time that the well was broken, we were able to meet at a Messianic Jewish facility in Buffalo Grove. This was great blessing. They allowed us to use the facility as if it were our own, and we continued having lunch and second hour there.

Finances

2022 ended reasonably well. Our income fell short of our expenses by around \$12,000. This is of course a challenge, but we do have a reserve we were able to utilize to meet our expenses.

Challenges

Our small numbers and not meeting budget are concerns. Outreach is a challenge, and we will be trying some activities when the weather breaks and people are outside again.

Like all local congregations, we are not without our challenges, by which God keeps us humble, prayerful, and conscious of our utter dependence upon Him.

Conclusion

These are our major challenges, but this report began with a reference to Westminster as an active, hopeful and joyful ministry, and that certainly bears repeating. Our witness to Christ is clear, our fellowship is deep, and our expectation for the blessing of God is high. We face uncertainties but know that Christ is King and Head of His church and that He bears all power and authority. We pray that He will stir us by His Spirit, prosper us in His grace, and use us in a mighty way for His kingdom and glory. Please support and pray for us to this end. Thank you!

As we begin a new phase in the life of Westminster, with a new pastor, we are encouraged. We appreciate all the help we have received from Dr. Brett Mahlen, Wade Mann and Jack Baumgardner. Their care and concern for Westminster has helped this small church to thrive and continue to develop. Thank You.

2022 End of Year Financials

Category	Budget	Actual	2023 Budget
Income			\$87,000
Tithes & Offerings	\$78,000	\$51,458	\$87,000
		(\$26,542)	
Pastoral Support			\$53,000
Pastor's Salary	\$16,250	\$13,500	\$41,000
Pension	\$2,250	-	\$4,500
Other Expenses	\$5,000	\$5,237	\$500
Health Reimbursement Account	-	-	\$2,400
Interim Pastor's Salary	\$17,500	\$16,200	-
Interim Pastor's Expenses	\$4,200	\$1,895.78	-
Pastor's Expenses	\$3,100	-	\$3,100
Pastoral Development	\$500	-	\$500
Pastor's Book Allowance	-	\$170.22	\$1,000
		(\$11,797)	
Church Ministry			\$7,650
Christian Education	\$200	\$337.08	\$600
Fellowship Activities	\$500	-	\$1,000
Pastor's Ministry Expenses	-	\$127.46	\$3,000
Guest Ministry	\$2,500	\$3,191.97	\$500
Mercy Ministry	-	-	\$250
Advertising	-	-	\$500
Conference	\$1,000	1,325.56	\$1,000
Youth Ministry	\$500	-	\$500

Category	Budget	Actual	2023 Budget
Missions	-	-	\$300
Other	-	\$512.87	-
		(\$1,705.06)	
Administration			\$900
Church Office Expenses	\$300	\$56.89	\$500
Other	\$100	-	-
Worker's Comp Insurance	-	\$457.58	\$400
		(\$114.47)	
Denomination			\$3,010
Presbytery Assessments	\$1,000	\$404.21	\$810
Synod Assessments	\$1,140	\$1,689	\$1,200
Presby & Synod Delegates	-	-	\$500
RPM&M	\$500	-	\$500
		(\$547.79)	
Church Building			\$21,900
Mortgage	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Insurance	\$3,800	\$4,065	\$3,000
Cleaning	\$250	-	\$1,000
Maintenance	\$1,500	\$2,180.04	\$2,500
Security	\$1,200	-	\$1,000
Internet	\$2,250	\$2,311.03	\$1,000
Utilities	\$5,350	\$4,679.31	\$5,000
Church Equipment	\$500	-	\$500
		(\$1,614.62)	
Parsonage			\$5,000

Category	Budget	Actual	2023 Budget
Maintenance	\$1,200	\$2,113.42	\$700
Utilities	\$3,200	\$3,104.69	\$3,700
Improvements	\$2,500	-	\$600
		(\$1,681.89)	
Net Difference		(\$12,111.11)	

The Revelation of Joseph Smith in its American Cradle:

The Eschatological, Political, and Soteriological Trajectories of a New Religion

Joseph Johnson

CH 321 Church in the Modern Age

With notable bombast Joseph Smith entered the fray of 19th century second great awakening preachers and prophets, not through revival sermons in an established denominational effort, but through the publication of the *Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, which told the story of ancient Israelites, from around the time of Zechariah (600 B.C.), who traveled to and populated the Americas, taking with them and continuing their own line of God's written revelation to His Jewish people, an anthology which only came to be unearth and translated by, and in the time of, the American man Joseph Smith. Since its publication, much ink has been spilt by Joseph's enemies in attempts to refute the *Book of Mormon*. Just two years after its 1830 publication, one of its earliest critics said it contained

every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. [Joseph] decided all the great controversies: - infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government and the rights of man.¹

For the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* this is not at all shocking. Since God led Joseph to unearth the BOM at that time and place, it is only appropriate that it apply for the issues of his day, in his context – it needs to evince evidence of that context.² But in order to discover and make sense of Joseph's revelations, they must be placed within their 19th century American backdrop with all its *inherited historical trajectories*. Most specifically, Joseph

¹ Campbell, Alexander. *Delusions an Analysis of the Book of Mormon with an 1832*. Facsimile Publisher, 2013. 85.

² Givens, Terryl L. *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*. 1 edition. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. 166-167.

Smith's revelations fit into the protestant American context as a result of the existing puritan-theological eschatological, soteriological, and political historical-trajectories.

The eschatology of Smith's work has an uncanny resemblance to the post-reformation protestant views provided by trajectories from the theologian Joseph Mede (1586-1638), which aid in placing Smith's revelations pertaining to the American Indian, the Jews, the millennium, and the place of his followers. St. Augustine (354-430), the preeminent early-church theologian, taught that Revelation 20's millennium meant a non-literal thousand year reign of Christ, from his resurrection to the end of the world, but seventeenth-century puritans were united in recasting Augustine's theology with a historicist hermeneutic, following Martin Luther, so that they saw an optimistic progression in history toward the triumph of the protestant gospel.³ Protestant eschatological expectations began to shape protestant biblical interpretation, and vice versa. Along with this recasting of Augustine came a departure from Augustine, a belief that the past history of the church was not the millennium at all, but a period of great apostasy. Such was the belief, following Mede, of Westminster Divine Thomas Goodwin:

The state of the church, from Christ's time until the kingdom of Christ, may be divided into two: 1. The state of the church during the first four hundred years after Christ, usually called primitive times. 2. The state of the church during the times of Antichrist, whom Jesus Christ is to destroy with the brightness of his coming.⁴

³ Beeke, Joel R., and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. 1st Edition edition. Grand Rapids, Mich: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. 774.

⁴ Per Jue, Jeffrey K. *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede*. 2006 edition. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006. 178; Found in: Goodwin, Thomas. *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, 12 Volume Set*. Sovereign Grace Publishers, Inc., 2001. Vol. III: 65.

Goodwin projected Mede's interpretation of Revelation into dates bracketing the beginning of apostasy and the age of millennium, getting 395 A.D. and 1656, though he would revise them to 360-365 A.D. and 1700.⁵ This historicist great apostasy period is implicit in the revelation period of Joseph Smith, whose BOM teaches that "In or about the year A.D. 421, Moroni, the last of the Nephite prophet-historians, sealed the sacred record and hid it up unto the Lord, to be brought forth in the latter days... In A.D. 1823, this same Moroni... visited the Prophet Joseph Smith."⁶ "The important point to realize is [not date-setting *per se*, but] that the Puritans did not view eschatology as mere theological speculation. Rather, they saw themselves as participants in events that would lead to full eschatological realization."⁷ The socio-cultural movements of America were generally thought to be the movement of a new age. And this new age followed Joseph Mede's eschatological trajectories.

Mede largely influenced the historicist's optimism concerning the end times, especially as it came to be understood as a wholly future millennial reign of Christ; some have even called him the possible father of premillennialism.⁸ Two effects of this theology were puritan expectations for 1) a future conversion of the Jewish people, and 2) a revelation of "the latter-day glory of the church and the New Jerusalem."⁹ Concerning the order of events, "[T]he millenarians (e.g.

⁵ Jue, Jeffrey K. *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede*. 2006 edition. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006. 178-179

⁶ Saints, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day. *LDS Triple Combination - Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012. Introduction.

⁷ Beeke, Joel R., and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. 1st Edition edition. Grand Rapids, Mich: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. 779.

⁸ *Ibid.* 777.

⁹ *Ibid.* 778

Mede, Twisse, Goodwin, and Holmes) expected that the return of the Jews to the true Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and to the land promised to Abraham by God, would usher in the millennium, or, at least be one of the first things accomplished in the millennium.”¹⁰ Joseph Smith’s revelations fit into this schema exactly, with creative modifications. For him, the American-Indians are Jews, and the land of promise is America. The BOM unearths an ancient prophesy which declares to a Jewish people-group, through their own prophets, to go to America, which will be a “land of promise” through covenant with God;¹¹ thusly the peoples Joseph Smith and others knew as American-Indians were actually descendants of Israel. In this way Joseph believed that the millennium was directly tied to the conversion of the American-Indians, and he wasn’t the only one; there were many before him. For example, John Eliot (1604-1690) was a fervent evangelist to the Indians, even producing the first Bible printed in America, which was in the Algonquian language he learned in a mere three years – “Like most Puritans, Eliot believed strongly that the last times were near. Since the gospel shall be heard by all the earth before Christ’s second coming, the Indians must be evangelized immediately”, specifically because he believed “they were Hebrews, retrograde descendants of the biblical patriarchs and the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel”,¹² and the inclusion of Israel spoken of in Romans 11, “thus all Israel shall be saved”, needed to be fulfilled.¹³ Whether or not one saw the Indians as the Jewish people, there was a belief that their inclusion indicated the millennial kingdom. Cotton Mather, for instance,

¹⁰ Toon, *Purians, The Millenium and the Future of Israel*, 127.

¹¹ Book of Mormon, henceforth BOM, references from Skousen, Prof Royal, ed. *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*. Translated by Joseph Smith. First Edition edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 2 Nephi 1.

¹² Beeke, Joel R., and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. 1St Edition edition. Grand Rapids, Mich: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. 784-785.

¹³ For more on how Smith’s revelation interacts with Rom. 11, see BOM’s book of Jacob.

argues that the last of the apocalypse's silver trumpets will be the coming of Christ, the millennial kingdom, and that the direct application of this coming kingdom is the inclusion of the American-Indians.¹⁴ So strong is the connection between preaching to American-Indians and the expectation of the millennial kingdom, which could only come with the inclusion of the Jews,¹⁵ that Joseph Smith biographer Fawn Brodie says "America's most distinguished preachers — William Penn, Roger Williams, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards — had all espoused the theory

¹⁴ Mather, Cotton 1663-1728. *India Christiana. A Discourse, Delivered unto the Commissioners, for the Propagation of the Gospel among the American Indians Which Is Accompanied with Several Instruments Relating to the Glorious Design of Propagating Our Holy Religion, in the Eastern as Well as the Western, Indies. An Entertainment Which They That Are Waiting for the Kingdom of God Will Receive as Good News from a Far Country.* By Cotton Mather, D.D. and F.R.S. 2246. Green, Bartholomew, 1667-1732, printer., 1721. 16-24. http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAIX&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F301862F2117588&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=8A00336EDFB54E79A7AF828A0975AC0D.

¹⁵ Notice the confounding of Israel and the Jews - Mather, Increase 1639-1723. *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation, Explained and Applied: Or, A Discourse Concerning the General Conversion of the Israelitish Nation. Wherein Is Shewed, 1. That the Twelve Tribes Shall Be Saved. 2. When This Is to Be Expected. 3. Why This Must Be. 4. What Kind of Salvation the Tribes of Israel Shall Partake of (viz.) a Glorious, Wonderful, Spiritual, Temporal Salvation. Being the Substance of Several Sermons Preached by Increase Mather, M.A. Teacher of a Church in Boston in New England. [Ten Lines of Scripture Texts].* 143, 1669. 62. http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAIX&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F301570F110BAE0&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=8A00336EDFB54E79A7AF828A0975AC0D.

[that the red men were a remnant of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel].”¹⁶ The millennial kingdom was coming, and the Indians would be primary players.

With the expectation of the future conversion of the Jews, Mede and others had specific expectations about how God would reveal himself before the millennium; these expectations are reflected in Smith’s revelations, but creatively applied to the American-Indians. Historian Jeffrey Jue explains how Mede taught Christ would audibly speak from heaven; “For Mede, the Apostle Paul’s conversion served as a pattern for the Jews, because he formerly opposed Christianity even to the point of persecution, and thus needed Christ to appear to him personally in order to be convinced of the validity of the Christian gospel.”¹⁷ The BOM contains this same basic narrative: “And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth upon all the face of this [American] land, crying... I am Jesus Christ the Son of God.”¹⁸ Smith

¹⁶ Brodie, Fawn M. *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*. 2nd Revised & enlarged edition. New York: Vintage, 1995. 45. – She is slightly mistaken, for Mather says in Mather, Cotton 1663-1728. *India Christiana. A Discourse, Delivered unto the Commissioners, for the Propagation of the Gospel among the American Indians Which Is Accompanied with Several Instruments Relating to the Glorious Design of Propagating Our Holy Religion, in the Eastern as Well as the Western, Indies. An Entertainment Which They That Are Waiting for the Kingdom of God Will Receive as Good News from a Far Country. By Cotton Mather, D.D. and F.R.S.* 2246. Green, Bartholomew, 1667-1732, printer., 1721. 24. http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAIX&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F301862F2117588&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=8A00336EDFB54E79A7AF828A0975AC0D. that both the time and way of American colonization in unknown, and while Edwards did write a pamphlet showing the correlations between Hebrew and the Indian language he knew, he wrote in Edwards, Jonathan 1745-1801. *Observations on the Language of the Muhhekaneew Indians; in Which the Extent of That Language in North-America Is Shewn; Its Genius Is Grammatically Traced: Some of Its Peculiarities, and Some Instances of Analogy between That and the Hebrew Are Pointed Out. Communicated to the Connecticut Society of Arts and Sciences, and Published at the Request of the Society. By Jonathan Edwards, D.D. Pastor of a Church in New-Haven, and Member of the Connecticut Society of Arts and Sciences.* 21068. Meigs, Josiah, 1757-1822, printer., 1788. 16. http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAIX&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F3018D38AB58420&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=8A00336EDFB54E79A7AF828A0975AC0D. – “How far the use of prefixes and suffixes, together with these instances of Analogy, and perhaps other instances, which may be traced out by those who have more leisure, go towards proving, that the North-American Indians are of Hebrew, or at least Asiatic extraction, is submitted to the judgment of the learned...” Nevertheless, both theologians indicate a desire for this connection.

¹⁷ Jue, Jeffrey K. *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede*. 2006 edition. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006. 192.

¹⁸ 3 Nephi 9:1, 15.

creatively applies this narrative because this event does not happen at the time of European expansion into the Americas, but before the great apostasy, just after the ascension of Christ into heaven; that is, at about the same time Paul received a revelation from heaven. However, it is through this event, told in the now-discovered BOM, that the American Indians – the Jews – of Joseph’s time are told they *already have* received a voice from heaven. And so Martin Harris, to whom Joseph Smith primarily dictated his revelations, said about the BOM that “‘an important epoch had arrived — that a great flood of light was about to burst upon the world, and that the scene of divine manifestation was to be immediately around us.’ The Golden Bible, he said, would ‘contain such disclosures as would settle all religious controversies and speedily bring on the glorious millennium.’”¹⁹ Smith’s revelations showed a way forward in the conversion of the Jews/Indians and all the disputations concerning them, providing a way forward into the millennium while also resolving existing soteriological tensions. For example, Cotton Mather argued that the gospel was preached in the Americas at the time of the apostles in order to refute those who taught the Americas couldn’t be populated until after the apostolic gospel-proclamation.²⁰ The BOM is cognizant of this tension: “Is not a soul at this time precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming? Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be known unto this people as well as unto their children?”²¹ The waiting Mede-like

¹⁹ Brodie, Fawn M. *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*. 2nd Revised & enlarged edition. New York: Vintage, 1995. 38.

²⁰ Mather, Cotton 1663-1728. *India Christiana. A Discourse, Delivered unto the Commissioners, for the Propagation of the Gospel among the American Indians Which Is Accompanied with Several Instruments Relating to the Glorious Design of Propagating Our Holy Religion, in the Eastern as Well as the Western, Indies. An Entertainment Which They That Are Waiting for the Kingdom of God Will Receive as Good News from a Far Country. By Cotton Mather, D.D. and F.R.S.* 2246. Green, Bartholomew, 1667-1732, printer., 1721. 25. http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAI&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=0F301862F2117588&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=8A00336EDFB54E79A7AF828A0975AC0D.

²¹ Alma 39:17-18; Also cf. the BOM Title Page

theologians were riddled with unresolved tensions, into which Joseph's American eschatological revelations creatively intruded, providing for a new people group an identity as the millennial people of God – *the Latter Day Saints*.

The people set apart through the revelations of Joseph Smith were also, being the initiators and inheritors of the eschatological New Jerusalem, a political body standing in a typical relationship with Moses's Israel, deeply defined by American theological and republican-political history. Historian Jeffrey Jue again helpfully explains that “[t]he history of the nation of Israel, from the exodus to the promise land and finally into exile, was applied to the present circumstances of the New England churches... [L]iterary studies concluded that New Englanders regarded themselves as the antitype of Israel, replacing ethnic Israel as the recipients of God's blessings...”, but the problem inherent in this depiction of New England theology is that they believed ethnic Israel was not cast off as God's chosen people, so that there was a clear distinction between Israel and the church.²² However, this once again created a place in which Joseph Smith was able to circumvent the theological tensions of his time, since he taught the Indians were Jews, thusly allowing for a typical relationship between America and Israel, a semi-valid later-fulfillment of historian Perry Miller's thesis, which taught that New Englanders saw themselves as “establishing a godly community that would serve as a religious example to the world... like ancient Israel's exodus from Egypt, on an ‘Errand into the Wilderness,’ mandated by God and bound by a special covenant.”²³ “Semi-valid” because the errand into the wilderness

²² Jue, Jeffrey K. *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede*. 2006 edition. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006. 195.

²³ *Ibid.* 175

was seen by New Englanders as the migration from Europe, but Joseph taught, again, that the fulfillment of this came in the ancient world, through Jewish travelers before the time of Christ – which through Joseph’s new revelation the New Englanders were experiencing for the first time, fitting the Jew to Gentile pattern of gospel proclamation.²⁴ And so the BOM says, “And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.”²⁵ Here Joseph’s revelation indicates a clear type/anti-type relationship between Israel and America, America being the ultimate promised land.²⁶ And instead of keeping a distinction between the church and Israel, the BOM maintains two peoples of God in two places: “Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another...”²⁷ This utterance provides a division and unity in the people of God, united by written revelation on both continents, so that Smith himself has bridged the type/anti-type relation through his revelation,²⁸ culminating in a new temple on the new continent.²⁹

²⁴ Cf. 2 Nephi 10:10-14

²⁵ Alma 37:45. Cf. Omni 1:15

²⁶ The BOM is full of double-fulfillment language. Cf. 2 Nephi 6:11

²⁷ 2 Nephi 29:8

²⁸ Contra, per Jue, Jeffrey K. *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede*. 2006 edition. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006. 195-208., the New England puritan interpretation of type/anti-type fulfilled in the church. Rejection of this puritan tradition also illuminates the difference between LDS temple ritual and the Christian’s de-centralized worship in the church.

²⁹ Suggested in other puritans like Cotton, who “urged his congregation to discern whether God was calling them to ‘build a house’ in America.” Beeke, Joel R., and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*. 1st Edition edition. Grand Rapids, Mich: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012. 780. Explicit throughout Smith’s D&C.

As a distinctly religious-political body in America, Smith's New Israel also inherited American-republican values. Historian Mark Noll writes brilliantly about the historical development of a synthesis between American religion and American republicanism. He writes,

Traditional Christian complaints were recited for several centuries as a common litany: Republican instincts prized human self-sufficiency more highly than dependence upon God. They demeaned the life to come by focusing without reservation on this-worldly existence. They defined the human good in terms of public usefulness instead of divine approval. Both Protestants and Catholics, in addition, regularly noted the persistent correlation of republican political convictions and heterodox theological opinions.³⁰

If in eschatology Joseph Smith followed the early puritans, this was a sure departure; the theology of Smith's revelations were thoroughly republican, which Noll argues is directly connected to the atheists and heterodox.³¹ In the late 18th century "[t]raditional religious believers who might still have worried about the corrupting effects of republican principles could only have been reassured when leading patriots went out of their way to employ traditional religious language in supporting their wig policies", which is exactly what happened.³² Noll references, as an example of dissenting political language synthesizing with the religious, Gilbert Tennet who in 1737 said "that nothing mattered more than coming to experience 'everlasting Liberty' from 'Bondage and Servitude.' ... 'Are ye in Bondage and Servitude? Here is a spiritual, noble, and everlasting Liberty offered to you, in the Riches of Christ! Oh! If the Son of the Father's Love do but make you free, ye will be free indeed.'"³³ Of course, Jesus was originally

³⁰ Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 57-58.

³¹ Ibid. 61

³² Ibid. 83

³³ Ibid. 75

speaking about a liberty from sin, but this language is appropriated for entirely different means.

Joseph Smith, riding on this same political-religious movement, takes up in his direct revelations from God this exact synthesis of republicanism, capped with the words of Jesus in John 8:

And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me. Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land; And as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil. I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed; and the law also maketh you free.³⁴

“In their shared efforts, both political and religious figures were tailoring the project of republican independence to fit the language of traditional Protestant religion. After only a few years, America’s religious population, with Protestant evangelicals in the forefront, began in similar fashion to tailor their religious projects to fit the language of republicanism.”³⁵ Joseph Smith’s revelations are a clear representative of this tailoring. Language in the BOM also reflects this American republican identity, such as references to the “land of liberty”, a “true friend of liberty”, “liberty of worshipping the Lord their God”, “support the cause of freedom... maintain a free government”, “defense of your liberty and your property and your country”, or again using the soteriological language of the New Testament for political ends – “My soul standeth fast in that liberty in the which God hath made us free.”³⁶ Whatever human author Smith’s revelations are ascribed to, they generally share the same early American-republican idiom. Smith himself,

³⁴ Saints, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day. *LDS Triple Combination - Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012. D&C 98:5-8.

³⁵ Noll, Mark A. *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 85.

³⁶ BOM In order: 2 Nephi 10:11; Mosiah 29:32; Alma 46:17/Alma 62:37/Alma 21:22/Alma 46:35/3 Nephi 3:2/Alma 61:9 contra Gal. 5:1

with his early American compatriots, crafted a motto for their newfound church that was likewise distinctly American-republican; written in Joseph's journal:

Motto of the Church of Christ of Latterday Saints./The Constitution of our country formed by the Fathers of Liberty./Peace and good order in society Love to God and good will to man./All good and wholesome Law's; And virtue and truth above all things/And Aristarchy live forever!!!/But Wo to tyrants, Mobs, Aristocracy, Anarchy and Toryism: And all those who invent or seek out unrighteous and vexatious lawsuits under the pretext or color of law or office, either religious or political./Exalt the standard of Democracy! Down with that of Priestcraft, and let all the people say Amen! that the blood of our Fathers may not cry from the ground against us. Sacred is the Memory of that Blood which baught for us our liberty...³⁷

Thusly not only Joseph Smith's revelations, but his established church was *fully* involved, even by divine fiat, in the Republican-protestant synthesis that was part of the historical American experiment.

Joseph's political revelations were not only a republican-protestant American synthesis, but his soteriological revelations also show a similar trajectory, taking on the philosophy of the common sense realism in which Pelagian/Arminian theology thrived. Joseph's revelations came at an interesting time in Methodist history, during or directly after a shift away from Wesley himself into a more American context,³⁸ so that while Joseph's BOM followed Wesleyan

³⁷ 16. Journals, March–September 1838ID #6664 Smith, Joseph. Collection, 1827–1846. CHL., <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-march-september-1838#!/paperSummary/journal-march-september-1838&p=2>

³⁸ Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 330-364.

teachings like universal atonement,³⁹ Christian perfectionism,⁴⁰ free will,⁴¹ the innocence of infants,⁴² the denial of predestination,⁴³ synergistic regeneration,⁴⁴ and even total depravity,⁴⁵ his larger corpus moved in the general trend of republican-Americanization that Methodism experienced through the 1820's-30's.

Noll, in straightforward manner, writes that “[i]t was only when Christian orthodoxy[, with its doctrines of total depravity, the sovereignty of divine grace, and the need for revelation from God,] gave way that republicanism could flourish.”⁴⁶ The same decade the BOM was revealed was also the decade in which Methodism adopted republicanism.⁴⁷ Wesley himself was resistant to republicanism,⁴⁸ as was early Methodism in America,⁴⁹ but his theology was taken in a new direction; for example, Methodist Asa Shinn wrote *An Essay on the Plan of Salvation* in 1813, which whole-sale adopted common sense moral reasoning, gaining such popularity that it

³⁹ 2 Neph 9:7; Mosiah 3:11, 4:7; Alma 34:8

⁴⁰ 2 Nephi 31:20; 3 Nephi 8:1

⁴¹ Mosiah 2:21

⁴² Mosiah 3:16; Mormoni 8

⁴³ Alma 31:12-18 contains a denial of double predestination; 3 Nephi 19:20-36 compare with John 17

⁴⁴ Mosiah 3:19

⁴⁵ Mosiah 3:19

⁴⁶ Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 60.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 347 – “By the next decade[, from 1820's to the 1830's,] Methodists... were wholehearted promoters of the commonplace Christian republican vision.”

⁴⁸ Ibid. 331 – “Wesley opposed American independence, reprobated republican politics as inherently sinful, and criticized the era's new moral philosophy as dangerously self-centered...”

⁴⁹ Ibid. 336 – “in no case were these Methodist convictions occasioned by adapting to republican thought, to beliefs about the providential destiny of the United States, or to the principles of commonsense moral philosophy.”

became required reading for ministerial candidates by 1834.⁵⁰ Joseph's BOM revealed a "plan of salvation"⁵¹ with similar components, including modern language of faculty psychology.⁵²

Smith, who sounds just like the earlier Methodist O'Kelley,⁵³ lauded man's moral-intellectual faculties so ardently it no doubt made others nervous or outraged:

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.⁵⁴

In this way religious moral freedom became coterminous with the political freedom and American self-sovereignty that Joseph's American-Zionism required. While Wesley recommended Mede's eschatological views,⁵⁵ he would never have entertained the American-protestant synthesis that Joseph's revelations brought.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 348-349

⁵¹ Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14, 42:5

⁵² Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 289-290. Lamb, Martin Thomas. *The Golden Bible: Or, The Book of Mormon. Is It from God? 1887*. Facsimile Publisher, 2015. 219. BOM 1 Nephi 15:25; Jacob 3:11; Words of Mormon 1:18; Mosiah 29:14; Alma 32:27

⁵³ Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 339. – "Reason – O what a gift to fallen man? This is the light that dear Jesus gives to all born into the world; if they live to be capable of using of it they find it arising with the light of nature as ideas of good and evil appear."

⁵⁴ Saints, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day. *LDS Triple Combination - Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012. D&C 93:29-31.

⁵⁵ Jue, Jeffrey K. *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede*. 2006 edition. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006. 248.

Smith's revelations embodied the revivalistic nature of his time, especially as it pertained to man's moral freedom to choose. New England's 1830s donned a new era: "Steady-state religion began to share space with the revivalistic 'one eternal now.'"⁵⁶ "Revivalist conversion was the religious analogue to Lockean individualism",⁵⁷ and Smith's revealed narratives were chalk-full of it, regardless of the time period – conversion was falling on the ground, preaching rolled from verse to verse,⁵⁸ and men sang the "song of redeeming love."⁵⁹ It is no coincidence that the pre-eminent revivalist Charles Finney, sharing the 1830's and New York with Smith, also both stressed individual action by free agency, hostility to Calvinism, and a synthesis of politics and religion.⁶⁰ And yet Finney did not go nearly as far as Joseph in his departure from orthodoxy. The Wesleyan tension between total depravity and the free agency of man given through the atonement was solved by an infusion of common-sense moral reasoning, such that the fall of man became a moral good – that Adam and Eve's eyes were opened in the garden was not evil,

⁵⁶ Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 138.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 214; Yet Noll also relates that revivalists had "a mixture of individualism and communitarianism", which would also, and especially, be true for Smith's Zionist people.

⁵⁸ Lamb, Martin Thomas. *The Golden Bible: Or, The Book of Mormon. Is It from God? 1887*. Facsimile Publisher, 2015. 222-227. Also, Joseph's revelation weaves together Biblical references not at all like the NT use of the OT, or the OT use of the OT, but like an impromptu revivalist sermon; for example, D&C 95:4-7.

⁵⁹ The "song of redeeming love" was colloquial revival language for experiencing conversion. E.g., note its use in Latta, John E. (John Ewing) 1773-1824. *A Sermon Delivered on the 24th Day of August, 1809, a Day Recommended by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to Be Set Apart for Solemn Thanksgiving and Prayer. By the Rev. John E. Latta. Published by Request*. 17898. Brynberg, Peter, 1755?-1816, printer., 1809. 23. http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:EAIX&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=104404BB1F75ECB0&svc_dat=Evans:eaidoc&req_dat=8A00336EDFB54E79A7AF828A0975AC0D.

⁶⁰ Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 306-308; Smith is especially hostile to Calvinism in his denial of double predestination and his continual hatred for cessationism

for now they could decide between good and evil, which is the highest moral good:⁶¹ “it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves...”⁶² Thusly Smith championed a *method-ist* way unto eternal exaltation by which men could, by good works through free moral agency, become gods.⁶³ One Scottish Presbyterian, eager to see the American experiment at work, returned in 1800 with this report on how Americans construed the Bible: “In the Beginning the Sovereign People created Heaven & Earth”.⁶⁴ Joseph Smith was one of those Americans.

Finally then, it is clear that distinctly American historical conditions, in eschatology, politics, and soteriology, create the context for Joseph Smith’s revelations. No other context could foster the BOM’s revelation that in Zion men should be judged according to their crimes, not their religious beliefs, since all men are equal.⁶⁵ No other content could foster the revelation of Smith: “In this way [the churches] may establish Zion... [a]ccording to the [American] law and constitution of the people... [t]hat every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment...”⁶⁶ No other context could allow for a

⁶¹ Moses 5:10-11

⁶² Moses 6:54-57; Therefore god is not able to save men per Alma 11:37

⁶³ Saints, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day. *LDS Triple Combination - Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012. D&C 131:2; 132:20.

⁶⁴ Noll, Mark A. *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 66.

⁶⁵ Alma 30:7-11.

⁶⁶ Saints, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day. *LDS Triple Combination - Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012. D&C 101:74-78.

temple dedication in Ohio to signify the coming millennial kingdom of Christ through the American Constitution and its baptisms of age of accountability eight-year-olds.⁶⁷ But Joseph's 19th century protestant-American context was the cradle of his revelation, and none other. True latter-day saints take note.

⁶⁷ Ibid. D&C 109 (Perhaps JS's most eloquent revelation); D&C 68:27

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Psalm 80:
A Prayer for Reorientation

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Introduction

In the psalms of David, the people of God have the words of “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:1);¹ perhaps it could be said that, in the psalms of Asaph, the people of God have the words of the bittersweet psalmist of Israel. Asaph’s collection strikes a melancholy tone. Largely found in the third book of the psalter (73-89), these psalms reflect points of crisis in the life of the psalmist, and in the corporate life of Israel. Tanner comments, “Book Three [of the psalter] represents every time when the world and its violence make no sense, times when we do not understand why God does not simply fix it. Book Three is a poetic rendering of theodicy.”² In the first psalm of Asaph, God says through the psalmist, “And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me” (50:15). The thematic or theological center to the psalms of Asaph may be the invitation to cry out to God in distress, as the psalms give a vocabulary for an individual, church, or nation who are experiencing a day of trouble.

1: Historical Analysis

1.1 Authorship

Psalm 80 is one of twelve psalms in the psalter bearing the designation “of Asaph” (אֲשָׁף): Psalm 50, and psalms 73-83, the first eleven psalms of book 3 in the psalter. The biography of Asaph is found primarily in 1 and 2 Chronicles. 1 Chronicles lists Asaph among those “whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the LORD after the ark rested there” (1 Chron. 6:31, 39; cf. 15:16, 17). Chapter 16 lists Asaph as chief among those whom David appointed to “minister before the ark of the LORD, to invoke, to thank, and to praise

¹ All Scripture citations, besides those from psalm 80, are taken from the ESV. All Scripture citations from psalm 80 are the author’s translation, unless otherwise noted.

² Nancy Declaissé-Walford, Rolf. A Jacobson, and Beth Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. E.J. Young, R.K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 583.

the LORD, the God of Israel” (1 Chron. 16:4, 5). In the tabernacle worship, Asaph played the cymbals and was appointed, along with his brothers, to sing thanksgiving to the LORD (1 Chron. 16:5, 7). In chapter 25, as David is organizing the Levites for ministry in the temple Solomon would build, Asaph is listed as one of three chiefs, with four sons under him, and 48 musicians under his sons (1 Chron. 25:1, 2, 9, 12, 14). Asaph was present at the dedication of Solomon’s temple, along with other chiefs, leading in instrumental playing and congregational singing, just antecedent to the glory of the LORD filling the temple (2 Chron. 5:12-14). Throughout the remainder of 2 Chronicles, descendants of Asaph appear in the account, especially connected with the worship of Israel. Descendants of Asaph are associated with the worship in the reforms of both Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Chron. 29:12; 35:15).

Asaph’s descendants continued to play an important part in Israel’s worship after the exile. Descendants of Asaph are among the returned exiles listed in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2:41, Neh. 7:44), and they aided in musical praise when the foundation of the second temple was laid (Ezra 3:10). Thus, Asaph the man was active around the time of the Davidic monarchy (c. 1000 B.C.), but the guild of musicians bearing his name continued after his death, at least until the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian exile (516 B.C.). Not all are convinced of the connection of the Asaph of Chronicles and Ezra with the Asaph of the psalter. Tanner is not optimistic about the connection: “It is impossible to connect the verses in 1 Chronicles and Ezra with this psalm collection.”³ However, given the significant biblical data connecting Asaph and his guild with the worship, especially the music of Israel, it is curious why the testimony of the chronicler regarding the origin of the Asaph guild is not more accepted as being connected with book 3 of the psalter.

³ Tanner, *Psalms*, 582.

The post-exilic references to the descendants of Asaph are important, because many of the psalms bearing the designation אֲשָפֹזִי, psalm 80 included, do not appear as if they can be associated with a man who lived during the reigns of David and Solomon. Some of these psalms describe times when God's temple was destroyed, when the citizens of Jerusalem lay dead in the streets, when the nation was mocked and scorned by their neighbors, and when her walls were broken down (Ps. 74:3, 7; 79:1, 4; 80:7,⁴ 13). These images do not appear to be consistent with a description of either David or Solomon's reign. Thus, it seems best to attribute psalm 80 to descendant of Asaph, still active in his musical guild, and therefore making the designation אֲשָפֹזִי appropriate.

1.2 Date and Setting

It is difficult to precisely date psalm 80, and no suggested date is without problems. All see the psalm as post-dating the Asaph of Chronicles, however that is where the agreement stops. The reference to Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin (80:2) have led many to give psalm 80 an origin in the northern kingdom of Israel, at or near its destruction at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. This view has early attestation, as the superscription in the LXX reads, "concerning the Assyrians."⁵ Calvin, Keil and Delitzsch, Dahood, and Kidner take this view.⁶ This dating has problems, especially the reference to Benjamin in 80:2. Benjamin, at least initially, sided with Judah after Jeroboam's rebellion (1 Kings:12:21, cf. 2 Chron. 11:1). The reference to the

⁴ Throughout this paper, references to psalm 80 will follow the versification in the Masoretic Text (MT).

⁵ For a discussion of noteworthy textual variants, see 2.1 below.

⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 295-296; C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5, *Psalms* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 382-383; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William F. Albright and David N. Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 255; Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150: A Commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975), 288.

cherubim between which God dwelt (80:2), language associated with Jerusalem, may also hint at a Judean, not a northern origin for the psalm.⁷

The references to the northern tribes along with the three-fold petition that God “cause us to return” (80:4, 8, 20) has led some to associate psalm 80 with the reigns of Hezekiah or Josiah. During Hezekiah’s reforms some northerners responded to his invitation to keep the Passover of the LORD in Jerusalem, including men from Manasseh and Ephraim (2 Chron. 30:10, 18). Similarly, during Josiah’s reforms men from Judah and Israel were present to keep the Passover (2 Chron. 35:18). In this dating scheme, God-fearing northerners who have come to live in Jerusalem are petitioning in psalm 80 for a return of the northern tribes from the Assyrian captivity.⁸ However, psalm 80 does not seem to present a psalmist petitioning for his lost brothers to be brought back, but one who is himself in exile: “cause us to return” (80:4, 8, 20).

A better date for psalm 80 seems to be the period of Judah’s exile in Babylon, probably after the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. This would explain the psalmist’s use of the first-person plural in his three-fold petition to return. The reference to the God dwelling between the cherubim (80:2) could reflect a period of the exile before the glory of the LORD had departed from the temple (Ezek. 10), and before the temple was destroyed. However, connections with psalm 79, discussed below, make this unlikely. Alternately, if the psalm were written during the Babylonian exile but after the temple had been destroyed, the reference to God dwelling between the cherubim could still make sense. The tabernacle and temple were understood as being patterned after heavenly realities (Ex. 25:40). A faithful psalmist could have

⁷ Tremper Longman III, “The reference to God as enthroned above the cherubim indicates a connection with the theology of the Jerusalem temple, and thus a southern perspective” in *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 298.

⁸ This is Tate’s preferred dating, although he is not dogmatic (Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 20, *Psalms 51-100*, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John. D. W. Watts [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991], 311).

understood the glory to have departed the physical temple (Ezek. 10), and yet seen the reality of God dwelling between the cherubim as still valid (Ex. 25:17-22, Ps. 80:2).

Another piece of evidence for an exilic dating comes from thematic and linguistic connections between psalm 80 and 79. There can be little doubt that psalm 79 describes the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. In psalm 79, the Asaphite psalmist describes nations defiling the temple, laying Jerusalem in ruins, and causing the streets of Jerusalem to run with blood from the slain (4:1, 3). The psalmist summarizes the situation in 79:4, “We have become a taunt *to our neighbors* (לְשִׂכְנֵינוּ), *mocked* (לְעַג) and derided by those around us.” In 80:7 the psalmist laments, “You have made us a strife *to our neighbors* (לְשִׂכְנֵינוּ), and our enemies *mock* (לְעַג).” Additionally, psalm 79 ends with a description of the people of God as the “*sheep* (צֹאן) of your *pasture* (מִרְעֵי־תֶדֶד)” (79:13), and psalm 80 begins by addressing the “*Shepherd* (רֹעֶה) of Israel, the one guiding Joseph *like a flock* (כַּצֹּאֵן) (80:2). Thus, the thematic connections (the nation derided by neighbors and a strife to neighbors), the linguistic connections (neighbors, mocking, shepherd/pasture, and flock/sheep), the canonical proximity (psalm 79 followed by 80) may well indicate a chronological proximity between psalms 79 and 80. James Hamilton offers support for this dating: “The points of contact between Pss 79 and 80...create the impression that Ps 80 asks for restoration from the devastation wrought on the temple in Ps 79. In conjunction with Ps 78, we see that Israel’s history of disobedience led to the attack on the temple in Ps 79, resulting in the request for restoration and favor in Ps 80.”⁹ Thus, while no dating for psalm 80 is required by Scripture, a date during the Babylonian exile seems to best account for the particular details of the text.¹⁰

⁹ James Hamilton, *Psalms*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021), 2:72.

¹⁰ A date of composition during the Babylonian exile does not resolve all the dating difficulties for psalm 80, perhaps especially the references to Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh, as opposed to Judah and Jerusalem.

2: Textual Analysis

The BHS¹¹ offers 30 text-critical notes for psalm 80. Below, twelve noteworthy entries in the critical apparatus are discussed. Brotzman and Tully say that “the MT is our most important text tradition of the OT.”¹² While there are cases where there are obvious errors in the MT which can be solved through textual criticism, these cases are few.¹³ Additionally, Brotzman and Tully give cautions about the editorial philosophy behind the critical apparatus of the BHS.¹⁴ Therefore, the textual analysis below is not an attempt to “recreate the text,” but an examination of variants, and suggestions regarding their origin. Throughout the analysis, the MT is followed. The translation for each note follows in parentheses.

Note 2, 80:1b (Compare with [psalm] 45:1a.): Note 80:1b points out that the superscription for psalm 80 also appears in psalm 45, albeit with a different preposition על-שִׁעֲנַיִם. An interesting cross-reference, especially since the preposition used in 45:1 is the same preposition some variant readings have in 80:1.

Note 3, 80:1c (the LXX adds “regarding the Assyrians.”): Note 80:1c shows that the LXX gives a historical setting to the Psalm, probably the Assyrian conquest and exile of the northern tribes of Israel recorded in 2 Kings 17. Given such a setting, the psalmist may be praying for a restoration of the northern tribes from the Assyrian exile. It is possible that the psalm is set during the Assyrian exile, and many commentators have noted the distinct use of northern tribes in the psalm.¹⁵ However, a Babylonian context seems somewhat more likely.¹⁶

¹¹ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. K Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977).

¹² Ellis R. Brotzman and Eric J. Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 59.

¹³ Brotzman and Tully, *OT Text Criticism*, 56.

¹⁴ “Overall, the textual apparatus in the BHS is highly problematic” (Brotzman and Tully, *OT Text Criticism*, 105).

¹⁵ See footnote 6, above.

¹⁶ For the proposed date during Babylonian exile, see section 1.2: Date and Historical Setting.

Note 4, 80:3a (Some medieval manuscripts have “toward the sons.”): This variant would have verse 3 read: “Toward the sons (לְבָנָי) of Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, be stirred up with your strength and come to save us!” instead of “Before (לְפָנָי) Ephraim...” This variant could arise from a spelling error, as the difference is a single letter, בּ vs. פּ. Certainly the Psalmist does not have in view the actual patriarchs of Israel, but the sons and descendants of those patriarchs. This this variant is not impossible. However, the face or countenance of God (פְּנֵיָהוּ) plays a major theme in this psalm, thus it seems the lexical connection between the noun “face” (פָּנָה) and the preposition “before” (לְפָנָי) should not be lost.

Note 7, 80:4a (Syriac and old Latin versions as well as vv. 8 and 20 have “God of armies.”): The Syriac and the Latin seem to want to give more consistency to the use of the divine name within the psalm. In every other instance of either אֱלֹהִים or יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים, the divine name is connected with צְבָאוֹת (80:5, 8, 15, 20). However, by prematurely adding צְבָאוֹת, the progression of the Psalm is short-circuited. The movement from “*God*, cause us to turn,” (80:4) to “*God of armies*, cause us to turn,” (80:8) to “*LORD God of armies*, cause us to turn” (80:19) is lost through the addition made in the Syriac and Latin. Thus, it seems best to the flow of the psalm to read with the MT.

Note 8, 80:5a (Two medieval manuscripts are lacking “God,” probably delete.): For the first time in the critical apparatus for psalm 80, the editors suggest a change, instead of drawing attention to a variant. Specifically, they suggest deleting “God.” According to Ross, this may be because “LORD of armies” is a more common construct than “LORD God of armies.”¹⁷

Note 12, 80:6b (The Syriac is lacking “in full measure.”): The Syriac simply has “you have given them tears to drink.” Certainly, the Syriac paints a picture of judgement and lament,

¹⁷ Ross, *Psalms*, 684n6.

but not as full a picture as what the MT presents: “you have given them tears to drink *in full measure*.”

Note 14, 80:8a (LXX before *lord*, read, perhaps, “LORD.”): The LXX has “LORD God,” instead of simply, “God.” This is probably an attempt to harmonize with 80:5, which the editors of BHS are open to. However, this would hamper the progression of the refrain in the psalm (see comment for Note 7, above).

Note 15, 80:b (the LXX adds “selah.”): Perhaps because of the refrain in v. 8, the translators of the LXX inserted a selah break. This does not have any textual supports from any Hebrew manuscripts, and should not be followed.

Note 19, 80:12a (Perhaps a verse has dropped out.): The editors suggest that perhaps a verse has dropped out of the text, citing the refrain repeated in 80:4 and 80:8. However, there is nothing which requires strophes of equal length.¹⁸

Note 20, 80:14a (ϑ suspended.): In the MT the ϑ in the text is superscripted. Many suggest it is to represent the middle letter of the psalter.¹⁹

Note 23, 16b-b (from [verse] 18, delete): The editors of BHS assume that the latter half of 16 has been incorrectly transplanted from verse 18 below. However, this misses the allusion to the LORD planting David when he established his covenant with him (2 Sam. 7). The editors’ suggestion should be disregarded.

Note 24, 16c (the LXX and Syriac add “of man,” confer with 80:18): The LXX and the Syriac attempt to be consistent in psalm 80’s references to the son, adding “of man” in 80:16 to harmonize with 80:18.

¹⁸ Tate, 308.

¹⁹ Ross, *Psalms*, 685n16.

3: Translation and Analysis

3.1 Translation and Psalm Structure

The structure of psalm 80 consists of an introduction (80:1), followed by two stanzas. The first stanza consists of two strophes, each of nine cola. The first strophe (80:2-4) contains a petition for salvation, and the second strophe (80:5-8) describes the predicament from which the nation needs to be saved. The second stanza contains three strophes, but unequal cola.²⁰ The third strophe (80:9-12) is a reminder of God's former dealings, the fourth strophe (80:13-17) centers on a petition for God to turn towards his people, and the fifth strophe (80:18-20) is a petition for God to strengthen the son of man who is at his right hand.²¹ The first, second, and fifth strophes end with a repeated refrain: "[LORD], God [of armies], cause us to return! And cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved!" (80:4, 8, 20). Closely connected, the fourth strophe centers on a petition that the God of armies himself would turn (80:15). Below is a personal translation, highlighting the refrain of the psalm in bold text:²²

Stanza 1: Introduction

- 1 To the chief musician: to lilies.
A witness for Asaph, a psalm.

Strophe 1 – Petition for Salvation.

- 2 Shepherd of Israel, listen!
[The one] guiding Joseph like a flock,

²⁰ There is broad agreement that the refrain of verses 4, 8, and 20 end three strophes in the Psalm. However, there is not broad agreement about how, or if, to divide vv. 9-20. Tanner suggests four strophes (*Psalms*, 630-632) and Keil and Delitzsch propose five (*Psalms*, 383). Others emend the psalm to make it fit a more consistent pattern – see a discussion in Tate, *Psalms*, 308. Tate is helpfully critical of such an approach: “The imposition of a preconceived notion of poetic structure (strophes of equal length interrupted by a standardized refrain) has not been followed by everyone and has little to comment it” (308).

²¹ Westermann uses Psalm 80 as a prototypical example of a lament of the people, containing an address and cry for help, a reference to God's earlier saving deeds, a lament, a confession of trust, a petition, motifs (the vine), and repeated petition, and a vow of praise (Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 53-54.

²² For a personal translation in parallel with the MT, see Appendix A.

- [the one] dwelling between the cherubim, shine forth!
 3 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh,
 let yourself be stirred up with your strength,
 and come to save us.
 4 **God, cause us to return!**
And cause your face to shine,
and we shall be saved!

Strophe 2 – Israel’s Predicament.

- 5 LORD God of armies,
 how long will you be angry in the prayer of your people?
 6 You have caused them to be fed with the bread of tears,
 and given them tears to drink again and again and again.
 7 You have made us a strife to our neighbors,
 and our enemies mock,
 8 **God of armies, cause us to return!**
And cause your face to shine,
and we shall be saved!

Stanza 2:

Strophe 3 – God’s Former Dealings.

- 9 You brought a vine from Egypt,
 you drove out nations and planted it.
 10 You cleared its face,
 and caused the root to be rooted, and it filled the land.
 11 The mountains were covered with its shadow,
 its boughs [covered] the mighty cedars.
 12 It sent out its branch to the sea,
 and to the river its branches.

Strophe 4 – Petition for God to See and Act.

- 13 Why have you broken through its hedges,
 so that all passing by the way pluck it?
 14 The boar from the woods tears it up,
 and the beast of the field grazes there.
 15 **God of armies, please turn!**
Look from heaven and see,
and attend to this vine!
 16 and the shoot which your right hand has planted,
 and on the son you strengthened for yourself.
 17 It is burned in fire, it is cut.
 From the rebuke of your face they are carried off.

Strophe 5 – Petition for the Son of Man to be Strengthened.

- 18 Let your hand be on the man of your right hand,
on the son of man you strengthened for yourself.
- 19 And we will not deviate from you.
Make us live and we will call to your name.
- 20 **LORD God of armies, cause us to return!**
And cause your face to shine,
and we shall be saved!

3.2 Exegetical Analysis

3.2.1 - Introduction: 80:1

80:1 designates this psalm as coming from the Asaphite guild of musicians.²³ The chief-musician is instructed that the Psalm is “to lilies” what some suggest may be a musical tune.²⁴ Psalms 45, 60, and 69 also contain various forms of *שִׁשְׁבִּימִים* (lily/lilies) in their titles. Similarly, the psalm is called *עֵדוּת* (a witness), as is psalm 60. Interestingly, psalm 60 begins with a request for restoration, *הִשְׁבִּיבֵנוּ לָנוּ* (60:1), similar to the three-time repeated petition in psalm 80: *הִשְׁבִּיבֵנוּ*. However, connections based on aspects of the titles, beyond authorship, do not seem important.²⁵

3.2.2 - Strophe 1: 80:2-4

80:2 contains three references to God: *רֹעֶה*, *נֹהֵג*, and *יֹשֵׁב*. Each of these is a qal active participle, and thus could be used substantively as direct addresses to God:²⁶ *Shepherd* of Israel, *Leader* of Joseph...*Dweller* between the cherubim.²⁷ The psalmist makes a close grammatical connection between what God does in his works, and who God is in his person. The psalmist seems to be reasoning with God: that since he is a shepherd, a leader, and one who dwells

²³ See 1.1: Authorship, above.

²⁴ The NIV has: “For the director of music. *To the tune of* “The Lilies of the Covenant.”

²⁵ “Those who are most learned in antiquities adduce nothing but probable conjectures [from the title of Psalm 80]” (Calvin, *Psalms*, 296).

²⁶ Tanner, *Psalms*, 630-631n.6.

²⁷ For the substantive use of the qal participle, see Gary D. Pratico and Mile V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 241.

between the cherubim, he will of necessity be inclined to “come and save” (80:3) the nation of Israel, which stands in need of his salvation. Especially noteworthy may be the reference to God “dwelling between the cherubim.”²⁸ The cherubim, between which God dwelt, overshadowed the mercy seat on top of the ark of the covenant (Ex. 17-22). Thus, the psalmist may be reasoning that since Israel stands in need of mercy, and since God dwells on his mercy seat between the cherubim, Israel may expect to receive mercy from their shepherd.

The petition in 80:2 that God “shine forth!” anticipates a request that will give structure to the remainder of the psalm – “cause your face to shine!” In 80:2 the request that God “shine forth” is followed by a request for salvation actively given by God: “come to save us” (וּלְקַח לִישַׁעַתָּה לָנוּ). The remaining petitions that God shine forth are followed by assurance that the people of God will be the passive recipients of his salvation, “we will be saved” (וְנִשְׁעָה). Thus, the psalmist does not doubt God’s ability to save – if God comes to save Israel, Israel will be saved.

The reference to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, is widely debated. The tribes have a close familial connection as the offspring of Rachel (Gen. 30:22; 35:16-18; 41:50-52), and the three tribes were stationed on the west of the tabernacle in the wilderness (Num. 2:19-21). If the dating of the Babylonian exile is correct, the reference of these tribes demonstrates a concern by the psalmist for more than simply Judah and Jerusalem, but for all of Israel. It shows a desire not only that Judah return, but that all Israel be gathered back to the land.

80:4 contains the first instance of the threefold refrain which gives structure to the psalm, here in its earliest form: “God, cause us to return! And cause your face to shine, and we shall be

²⁸ The MT does not have a preposition between “the one dwelling” [יָשַׁב] and “the cherubim” [הַכְּרֻבִּימִים]. Many English translations provide the preposition “(up)on,” or “above” (ESV, RSV, NASB, NLT), while others provide the preposition “between” (NKJV, NIV).

saved!” (אֱלֹהִים הַשִּׁיבֵנו וְהָאֵר פְּנֵיהֶם וְנִשְׁעָה:). הַשִּׁיבֵנו is a hiphil, imperative, 2ms, with a 1cp suffix of שׁוּב. In 80:4, הַשִּׁיבֵנו is translated as “restore us” in nearly all English translations.²⁹ However, the sense of שׁוּב is, according to one lexicon, “turn back” or “return.”³⁰ Holladay gives “return,” “go back,” and “come back” as definitions.³¹ Since the hiphil is used to express causation, and given the potential of an exilic setting, translating הַשִּׁיבֵנו as “cause us to return” makes sense. It is not simply a restoration of a relationship with God that psalm 80 has in view, but a restoration of a relationship with God through a return to the land of promise.

The request that God “cause his face to shine” (וְהָאֵר), is a hiphil, imperative, 2mp of אִוֵר, “to shine.”³² This request draws to the Aaronic priestly blessing: “May the LORD make his face shine” [יֵאָר יְהוָה], where אִוֵר is a hiphil, imperative, 2mp, with the jussive sense.³³ In 80:4 the psalmist asks that God would do what God had already promised to do in the Aaronic blessing. In 80:4 וְהָאֵר may function as a synecdoche for the whole of the Aaronic blessing: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Num. 6:24-26). Thus, the psalmist requests covenant blessings for a people desperately in need of help.

3.2.3 - Strophe 2: 80:5-8

In the first strophe the psalmist brought a petition for salvation, and in the second strophe the psalmist presents the predicament from which Israel needs salvation. The second strophe begins and ends with a reference to God as “God of armies” (אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת) (80:5, 8). In 80:3 the

²⁹ The ESV, NIV, NASB, RSV, and NKJV all translate שׁוּב as “restore.”

³⁰ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 996. Hereafter, *BDB*.

³¹ William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 362.

³² *BDB*, 21

³³ Jussive, or the volitional imperfect, because it (1) is imperfect (2) at the start of the sentence (3) with no vav-consecutive. See Pratico and Van Pelt, *Hebrew Grammar*, 257.

psalmist asked that God “be stirred up with your strength,”³⁴ and now he addresses God as “LORD God of armies” – evidently the first petition of 80:3 has been answered. The psalmist is still awaiting an answer to the second petition of 80:3, “come to save us.”

The first aspect of Israel’s predicament was God’s disposition toward their prayers: “how long will you be angry in the prayer of your people?” (80:5). “How long?” is a question asked in several psalms, including Asaphite psalms: “How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?” (79:5). In 74:9 the psalmist laments: “We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long.” The false prophets of Judah had been exposed, since their prophecies of “peace, peace” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11) had come to nothing. Since there were no true prophets, the psalmist puts the question to God: “How long, O God?” (74:10). Thus, the question “how long?” is not a question of distrust or despair, but a question full of faith since God knows how long, and since he does not afflict his people forever (Lam. 3:31).³⁵

The situation of God being angry (תִּשְׁמַח), or “wrapped in smoke”³⁶ in the prayer of his people is not without parallel. Jeremiah laments, “you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through” (Lam. 3:44). Ross suggests that the prayers God is rejecting are hypocritical and insincere prayers.³⁷ However, this is not necessarily the case. It is possible that the prayers God rejected were insincere, like the prayers of wayward Israel in Isaiah: “Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen” (Isa. 1:15). There is certainly sin involved in Israel’s predicament, but their prayer for reorientation (80:4, 8, 20) does not seem to be hypocritical.

³⁴ Keil and Delitzsch offer “Stir up thy warrior-strength” as a translation of 80:3 (*Psalms*, 381).

³⁵ Tate: “The “How long?” is not a rejection of punishment itself. Rather, it implies that the punishment is deserved: “Why?” is not asked. The thing at issue is the claim that the punishment has gone on long enough!” (*Psalms*, 314).

³⁶ Ex. 19:18, “Now Mt. Sinai was wrapped in smoke [תִּשְׁמַח] because the LORD had descended on it.”

³⁷ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms: 42-89* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013), 693.

The psalmist adds to his lament that not only is God angry with Israel's prayer, but the Shepherd of Israel is feeding his flock with "the bread of tears," and causing them to drink tears "again and again and again" (שִׁלֵּשׁ, 8:6).³⁸ שִׁלֵּשׁ is connected with the cardinal number "three" (שְׁלֹשָׁה). *BDB* demonstrates a range of meanings, from "third" or "measure," to "officer – the third man (in a chariot)."³⁹ This is figurative language, describing the afflictions of God's people.⁴⁰ The bread and tears could also be a reference to Israel's experience in the wilderness after the exodus, when they ate bread from heaven and drank water from the rock (Ex. 16, 17). Tanner comments, "Verse [6] may also be a reference to the wilderness, for instead of sweet water and manna, their food and drink are now *tears*."⁴¹ The events surrounding the exodus were in the psalmist's mind as he composed psalm 80 (cf. the third strophe, 80:9-12), so Tanner's suggestion is probable.

The psalmist closes the description of Israel's predicament in this strophe with a reference to Israel's neighbors: "You have made us a strife to our neighbors, and our enemies mock" (80:7). If this mocking and strife in 80:4 is connected to psalm 79:1-4 and the destruction of Jerusalem, this may be another attempt by the psalmist to rouse God to action. God had said of Jerusalem, "I have chosen Jerusalem that my name may dwell there" (2 Chron. 6:6). If the nations are making a mockery of the people called by God's name (2 Chron. 7:14) in the city where God's name dwells (2 Chron. 6:6), then this would certainly tend to incentivize God to defend the glory of his own name.

³⁸ Tate points out that this language parallels language in Isa. 30:20 and Hos. 9:4 (*Psalms*, 314). This may be evidence favoring the Assyrian exile, not the Babylonian, as the setting for this psalm.

³⁹ *BDB*, 1026.

⁴⁰ Ross, *Psalms*, 693.

⁴¹ Tanner, *Psalms*, 633.

The strophe ends with the second of three refrains: “God of armies, cause us to return! And cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved!” (80:8). Tanner comments, “It is interesting that even if the problem is stated as God’s anger, the people ask for God to cause them to *return*, acknowledging they are involved and culpable in the relationship.”⁴² While the discipline may have been brought on by sin, the solution is not that the discipline would cease, but that Israel return to the LORD (cf. Jer. 3:22).

3.2.4 - Strophe 3: 80:9-12

The third strophe begins a consideration of God’s former dealings with Israel, presented through the illustration of the transplanted vine [יִצְאָל].⁴³ Of all the characteristics of the Asaphite collection of the psalter, its attention to and use of history stands out as perhaps the most prominent.⁴⁴ So, it is not surprising that as the psalmist petitions for God to “cause [Israel] to return,” he reminds God of his saving acts in the past. The language of the strophe draws on images of the exodus, conquest, and early monarchical periods of Israel’s history, when God brought them out of Egypt, drove out nations before them, and filled the land (80:9-10).⁴⁵ Kidner sees a potential negative connotation with the imagery of a spreading vine in the parable of the tree and the vine in Judges 9.⁴⁶ Such a concern is unwarranted – the entirety of the third strophe is a celebration of God’s faithfulness to his vine, not the success the vine enjoyed when it “filled the land” (80:10).

⁴² Tanner, *Psalms*, 633.

⁴³ Many commentators make a connection between Israel being called a vine, and Joseph (already mentioned in 80:2) being called “a fruitful vine” (Gen 49:22, NIV). So, Keil and Delitzsch (*Psalms*, 385), Tate (*Psalms*, 314), Longman (*Psalms*, 299), and Kidner (*Psalms*, 291). This is possible, and the imagery is similar. However, psalm 80 uses יִצְאָל, while Gen. 49:22 uses תֵּבֵן.

⁴⁴ Psalm 74:12-17; 75:1; 76:2-3; 77:11-20; 78:1-72; 80:9-12; 81:4-12; 83:9-12. In the Asaphite collection, only Psalms 50, 73, 79, and 82 lack distinct references to God’s deeds in the past.

⁴⁵ For more on the vine imagery as it is used in psalm 80, see a biblical-theological discussion in 5.1, below.

⁴⁶ Kidner, *Psalms*, 291.

The second half of the strophe, 80:11-12, advances the imagery of the vine filling of the land (80:10). The vine covered mountains, and cedars, and spread from the (Mediterranean) Sea [ים] to the (Euphrates) River [נהר].⁴⁷ In view may be Sinai to the south, the cedars of Lebanon to the north, the Euphrates to the east, and the Mediterranean to the west: in total, a picture of a vine which has covered the whole earth. This was the promise which God had made to his people: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea” (Deut. 11:24). The description in 80:10-11 appears to refer to the reign of Solomon – a golden era for the nation of Israel: “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates, to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:21).

The rehearsal of God’s saving acts seems to be calling to God’s attention to the glory of the works he had done in the past. The strophe is full of verbs with God as the actor: “you brought” (בָּרַעַתְּ hiphil, imperfect, 2ms), “you drove” (שָׁרַפְתָּ piel, imperfect, 2ms), “you cleared” (פָּצַעְתָּ piel, perfect, 2ms), “and you caused [it] to be rooted” (וַתִּשְׁרַעַתְּ hiphil, imperfect, 2ms, vav-consecutive). The resultant activity of the vine, “and it filled the land” (וַתִּמְלֵא-אֶרֶץ piel, imperfect 3fs, vav-consecutive) is not a result of Israel’s success, but the necessary outcome for a vine which had been so well cared for. The psalmist does not take any glory for Israel. Instead, rehearsing the special care that God had given in past days, he prepares for the coming petition that God would revive his glorious work.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ ים especially applies to the Mediterranean Sea, while נהר especially applies to the Euphrates River (*BDB*, 410, 625).

⁴⁸ Ross, *Psalms*, 695.

3.2.5 - Strophe 4: 80:13-17

The fourth strophe is chiasmatic in structure:

- [13a] (a) Why have you broken through its hedges?
 [13b] (b) All passing along the way pluck it.
 [14a] (c) The boar from the woods tears it up.
 [14b] (d) The beast of the field grazes there.
God of armies, please turn!
 [15] (e): **Look from heaven and see,
 and attend to this vine!**
 [16a] (d^ˆ) The shoot which you planted
 [16b] (c^ˆ) The son you strengthened for yourself.
 [17a] (b^ˆ) It is burned in fire, it is cut.
 [17b] (a^ˆ) From the rebuke of your face they are carried off.

In this scheme, (a) and (a^ˆ) show the connection of the walls of Israel being torn down, and the people of Israel being carried off into exile; (b) and (b^ˆ) show the destruction done to the vine; (c) shows the destruction of the vine by strong enemies, and (c^ˆ) shows the strong son who could defeat the enemies; (d) pictures a beast grazing and (d^ˆ) shows what the beast is feeding on: the vine; (e) is an example of the central petition of the psalm, that God would turn away from his anger, look at the distress of his people, and attend to his vine.

The fourth strophe begins with a pitiful picture of what the vine has become. The psalmist asks, “why have you broken through its *hedges* (from רָדָּן)?”⁴⁹ This is not the word used to describe the destruction of the *walls* of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, cf. 2 Chron. 36:19)⁵⁰, but the imagery is similar, and it could describe the same event. Certainly, the destruction of the walls of Jerusalem made it possible for “those passing along the way” (80:13) to pillage the city: “And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these [the king of

⁴⁹ According to Holladay, a “stone wall made of loose field stones and piled up with mortar” (*Lexicon*, 57).

⁵⁰ According to Holladay, a “wall around building or portion of city” (*Lexicon*, 98).

Babylon] brought to Babylon” (2 Chron. 36:18). The boar (חַזִּיר, often translated “swine”)⁵¹, which was active in the destruction of God’s vine, was an unclean animal, adding insult to Israel’s defeat (cf. Deut. 14:8, “And the *pig* (חַזִּיר)...is unclean for you). The psalmist’s question in 80:13, according to Ross, “is not so much asking for a reason from God as lamenting that God has enabled the enemies to do this.”⁵² The psalmist is not protesting innocence, but is asking a lamenting rhetorical question. The answer to the psalmist’s question, implicit in psalm 80, is explicit elsewhere in the Asaphite collection: “yet they sinned,” (78:17), “still they sinned” (78:32), “they tested and rebelled” (78:56).

The psalmist moves from this description of the nation’s trouble to the central petition in the psalm in 80:15: “God of armies, please turn! Look from heaven and see, and attend to this vine!” The request that God would “please turn!” (שׁוּבוּ־נָא, qal, imperative, ms with the particle of entreaty) is related to the refrain petition of the psalmist for the nation: “cause us to return!” (הֲשׁוּבֵנוּ, hiphil, imperative, 2ms, 1cp suffix). שׁוּבוּ־נָא is the only word in the psalm with an *Oleheyored*, the strongest disjunctive in the poetic books.⁵³ This makes the petition that God would turn the hinge on which the psalm swings. Combined with this central petition is a three-fold request: *look* (טַהַר־נָא hiphil, imperative, ms), *and see* (וַיִּרְאֶה qal, imperative, ms with a vav-consecutive), *and attend* (וַיִּשְׁמַע qal, imperative, ms with a vav-consecutive). Looking and seeing are similar, and the three imperatives taken together allude to God’s dealings with Israel during the exodus: “And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had *visited* (פָּקַד) his people of Israel and that he had *seen* (רָאָה) their affliction, they bowed their heads and

⁵¹ Holladay, *Lexicon*, 99.

⁵² Ross, *Psalms*, 695.

⁵³ William D. Barrick, “The Masoretic Hebrew Accents in Translation and Interpretation” (Sun Valley, CA: the Master’s Seminary, n.d.), 6. <https://drbarrick.org/files/papers/other/HebrewAccentsrev.pdf> (Accessed 16 Feb 2023).

worshipped” (Ex. 4:31). The psalmist knows that if God will only look and see, he will act in mercy.

80:16 introduces a distinctly messianic hope in the psalm.⁵⁴ With God attending the vine still in mind, the psalmist asks that God would also attend to “the son whom you strengthened for yourself.” Longman comments, “The reference to the king as God’s son connects to the Davidic covenant in which God promised that David would have a descendant on the throne forever, and that the king ‘would be his son’ (2 Sam. 7:14, Ps. 2:7).”⁵⁵ With the language of the Davidic covenant already established, the psalmist appeals to that language. In the psalmist’s mind, if the LORD were to turn towards his people in grace, it would be evidenced in the exaltation of the Davidic king.

Reality sets in once again, however — returning to the vine, the psalmist laments that “it is burned in fire, it is cut” (80:17). The petition that God would turn and attend to the vine and the son are still unfulfilled. Indeed, the people of God are not being “rooted in the land” (80:10), but, at God’s rebuke, are being “*carried off*” (אָדָּנָה, qal, imperfect, 3mp) to exile. Verse 17b is difficult to translate. Nearly all English translations take אָדָּנָה as “to perish,” either giving it a jussive sense, “may [the enemy] perish at your rebuke” or applying it to the people of God, “at your rebuke [your people] perish.”⁵⁶ However, אָדָּנָה can also mean “to be carried off,”⁵⁷ or “be lost or strayed.”⁵⁸ Otzen observes, “Occasionally, the meaning “wander off, run away” also

⁵⁴ This is not to suggest that “the son” of 80:16 is the only messianic expectation in psalm 80, but it is perhaps the strongest.

⁵⁵ Longman, *Psalms*, 300.

⁵⁶ Tanner, *Psalms*, 634.

⁵⁷ Holladay, *Lexicon*, 1.

⁵⁸ *BDB*, 1.

appears, especially with reference to animals.”⁵⁹ Israel has already been referred to as a flock (80:2), and their recurring petition has been, “cause us to return.” Therefore, if the problem is exile, it seems appropriate to consider the rebuke of God which the psalmist laments as Israel being “carried off.”

3.2.6 Strophe 5:18-20

The central petition of the psalm is found in 80:15 – אֲנִי־בֶן־יְמִינֶךָ, and the basis for the hope of this petition being answered is bound up in 80:18: God strengthening the son of his right hand whom he makes strong for himself. In psalm 110:1 David identifies the man at God’s right hand as his own Lord. Thus, the psalmist is alluding to one greater than David, in whom are bound up the fortunes of the ruined vine, so desperately in need of help. This is the messianic hope and center of the psalm: as God strengthens the man of his right hand, the fortunes of the people will be strengthened as well.⁶⁰

Attached with this prayer for restoration is a promise of worship. If God turns his face, and if the son of man is strengthened, then the nation promises faithfulness to him: “we will not deviate from you.” Tate comments, “The vow in [80:19] is noteworthy because of its use of the verb סָגַב, ‘move away/backslide;’ freely translated: ‘We will never be backsliders again!’”⁶¹ The promise of worship, “we will call (נִקְרָא) on your name” (80:19) alludes to God’s word through Asaph in 50:15, “and call upon me (וְקִרְאַנִי) in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” The psalmist then closes with the final refrain, now at its fullest: “LORD God of armies, cause us to return! And cause your face to shine, and we will be saved.” Since the

⁵⁹ Benedikt Otzen, “אָבִי,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols., ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. John T. Willis et. al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:20. (Hereafter, *TDOT*).

⁶⁰ Longman, *Psalms*, 300-301. For more on the son of man, see 5.2, below.

⁶¹ Tate, *Psalms*, 316.

Davidic covenant was invoked in 80:16 and 80:18, it is appropriate to end the psalm with a petition to the covenant name of God: the LORD.

4.1 Lexical Considerations: שׁוּב Word Study.

Throughout psalm 80, שׁוּב plays an important part in the progression. It is a word with several nuances, and the twelfth most common verb in the OT, occurring over 1050 times.⁶² At its most basic, שׁוּב carries the sense of turning back, returning, or going back.⁶³ In the hiphil stem (as in 80:4, 8, 20), “the notion of physical movement is frequently attested ...[and] can have significant theological implications especially when referring to the return from exile.”⁶⁴ This seems to be the best way to understand its use in psalm 80, as a petition for a return from exile into the promised land.

However, since a return from exile and repentance from sin are so closely connected, it is not surprising that שׁוּב plays a major role in the prophets. Hosea uses it to describe Israel’s need to repent, “Come, let us *return* to the LORD” (Hos. 6:1). Jeremiah uses שׁוּב extensively, calling Judah to repent: “*Return*, O faithless sons; I will heal your faithlessness” (Jer. 3:22). When the LORD had answered the prayers of his people, including the prayer found in psalm 80, they rejoiced in his work, “When the LORD *restored* the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream” (Ps. 126:1).

5. Theological Considerations

Psalm 80 is not directly cited anywhere in the New Testament. However, the imagery of the vine and the son of man seem to be implicitly behind much of Christ’s preaching.⁶⁵

⁶² Heinz-Josef Fabry, “שׁוּב,” in *TDOT*, 14:463.

⁶³ *BDB*, 996; Holladay, *Lexicon*, 362.

⁶⁴ Fabry, “שׁוּב,” in *TDOT*, 14:480

⁶⁵ Andrew Streebt, *The Vine and the Son of Man: Eschatological Interpretation of Psalm 80 in Early Judaism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014).

5.1 – Biblical Theology and the Vine

Psalm 80 centers on an extended illustration of Israel being a vine which God transplanted from Egypt into the promised land (80:9-17). This is not an isolated illustration, but one which runs through the OT: “Often...in the Old Testament, God is presented as a gardening horticulturalist with Israel depicted as his pleasant planting.”⁶⁶ In his covenant with David, the LORD uses gardening imagery, “I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them” (2 Sam. 7:10). In the prophets, the vine motif continues. Isaiah presents a picture of God’s tender care: God cleared the ground (Isa. 5:1, cf. Ps. 80:10), and planted it (Isa. 5:2, cf. Ps. 80:9); but when the vineyard did not produce good fruit, he broke down its wall (Isa. 5:5, cf. Ps. 80:13), and let it be trampled down (Isa. 5:5, cf. Ps. 80:14). Ezekiel also uses vine imagery to picture God’s transplanting of Israel from Egypt to the promised land (Ezek. 17:1-10). Jeremiah pictures Judah as “a choice vine” which inexplicably has become “a wild vine” (Jer. 2:21).

In the New Testament, Christ draws on this OT imagery, making connections with the NT church, and with his own person and work. In Mark 12:1-11 Jesus gives the parable of the tenants and the vineyard. When the owner of the vineyard is unable to get a harvest from his tenants, he eventually sends his son, whom the tenants kill, after which the owner gives the vineyard to others. Christ explicitly cites psalm 118, but Streett argues that he is also alluding to the vine in psalm 80: “the lexical and rare concept agreement in the combination of the son and the vineyard [in Mark 12:1-11], is a strong pointer to Psalm 80.”⁶⁷ Jesus also draws on vine imagery in John 15:1-8. In this passage, Jesus identifies himself as the vine, his Father as the vinedresser, and the disciples as the branches (John 15:1, 5). This is unexpected, since so far, the vine has always represented Israel. In a similar way to Jesus representing the true Israel and the

⁶⁶ Hamilton, *Psalms*, 74.

⁶⁷ Streett, *The Vine and the Son*, 202.

faithful son (Hos. 11:1, Matt. 2:15), in John 15 Jesus is the true and fruitful vine.⁶⁸ Jesus is demonstrating the messianic identity between himself and his people – their union with him, and their fruitfulness as a fruit of that union.

5.2 – Biblical Theology and the Son of Man

Psalm 80 presents a messianic figure as central to the fortunes of the people of God: the son of man (80:16, 18). “Son of Man” was Jesus’ most common self-designation in the gospels.⁶⁹ Many scholars suggest that Jesus took this messianic designation from the Daniel’s vision, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom” (Dan. 7:13-14). Notably, Streett argues that Daniel is drawing from the language of Psalm 80 in his vision.⁷⁰ The vine which covers the earth, closely connected with the son of man (Ps. 80:9-12, 16) does fit well with the vision in Daniel of the son of man being given a kingdom and an everlasting dominion. Thus, when Jesus presents himself as the messianic son of man, he draws not only from Daniel 7, but also from psalm 80: he is the son of man whom the God of armies must strengthen if the vine is to flourish again.

5.3 Systematic Theology – The Grammar of Salvation

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks, “What is justification?” and answers: “Justification is a work of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.”⁷¹ In justification, God is active – he pardons, he accepts, he imputes. Those justified are

⁶⁸ Streett argues that in John 15, Psalm 80 is interpreted messianically and eschatologically (*The Vine and the Son*, 218-219).

⁶⁹ Marius, Ne, “‘Son of Man’ in the Gospel of Mark,” *Skriflig*, 51, no. 1 (2017): <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i3.2096>.

⁷⁰ Streett, *The Vine and the Son*, 107.

⁷¹ WSC Q&A 33.

passive. It is noteworthy that the grammar of psalm 80 demonstrates this truth: God is the active party in our salvation. In the threefold refrain of psalm 80, the petition for a return has God as the active party: הָשִׁיבֵנוּ – a hiphil, imperative, ms with a 1cp pronominal suffix. The hiphil expresses causation, the returning is something that God will cause to take place.⁷² However, for the people of God, the result of this returning is passive: וְנִשְׁעָרָה – a niphil, imperfect, 1cp, with a cohortative suffix. The niphil expresses passivity, “we will be saved.”⁷³ This is not to say that God’s people are inactive, but their activity is a result of God’s activity. They promise, “we will call on your name,” but this calling follows God’s salvation. First, God must “make us live” (80:19).

6: Homiletical Outline:⁷⁴

Introduction:

1. Review the situation of Israel’s exile: do not demand that it be Assyrian or Babylonian, but simply that it is a psalm for people in a time of distress – the Fallen Condition Focus of the Psalm.
 2. Establish a connection between Israel and the church – this is a psalm which we can take on our lips and sing to God, asking for his help.
 3. Homiletical Point: *When you are far from God, cry out and appeal for help.*
- I. Cry out for help, appealing to God’s character (vv. 1-6).
 - A. God is a shepherd – picture of care and protection (v.1).
 - B. God is merciful – he dwells between the cherubim on the mercy seat (v.1).
 - C. God is full of pity – pour out your heart to him (vv.4-7).
 - II. Cry out for help, appealing to God’s former dealings (vv. 8-11).
 - A. Use history to preach to yourself (cf. 77:11-12).
 - B. Remind God of the glory he receives in redeeming and reviving his people: *you brought, you drove, you cleared.*

⁷² For the hiphil, see Pratico and Van Pelt, *Hebrew Grammar*, 287ff.

⁷³ For the niphil, see Pratico and Van Pelt, 264ff.

⁷⁴ The versification and references in the homiletical outline follow the ESV.

III. Cry out for help, appealing to your status in Christ (vv. 12-20).

- A. God has given us the messianic Son of Man in Jesus Christ, and God has made him strong: at the resurrection he was given all authority.
- B. In Christ, as those who share in his resurrection, we can promise devotion and offer worship (v. 18).
- C. In Christ, we can be confident that our prayers have been heard: *LORD, God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

Appendix A: MT and Personal Translation in Parallel

Verse:	Masoretic Text	Personal Translation
1	לְמַנְצֵחַ אֶל־שֹׁשְׁבִימִים עֲדוֹת לְאַסָּף מִזְמוֹר:	To the chief musician: to lilies. A witness for Asaph, a psalm.
2	רְעֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל! הַאֲזִינָה נִהְגַּי כַּצֹּאן יוֹסֵף יֵשֵׁב הַכְּרוּבִים הוֹפִיעָה:	Shepherd of Israel, listen! [The one] guiding Joseph like a flock, [the one] dwelling between the cherubim, shine forth!
3	לִפְנֵי אֶפְרַיִם וּבִנְיָמִן וּמְנַשֶּׁה עוֹרְרָה אֶת־גְּבוּרָתְךָ וְלִכְבֹּה לִישׁוּעָתָה לָנוּ:	Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, let yourself be stirred up with your strength, and come to save us.
4	אֱלֹהִים הַשִּׁיבֵנו וְהַאֲרֵךְ פְּנֵיךָ וּנְשׁוּעָה:	God, cause us to return! And cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved!
5	יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת עַד־מַתִּי עֲשׂוֹת בְּתַפְלַת עַמֶּךָ:	LORD God of armies, how long will you be angry in the prayer of your people?
6	הָאֵכַלְתֶּם לֶחֶם דְּמַעְיָה וְתִשְׁלֹמוֹ בְּדַמְעוֹת שְׁלִישׁ:	You have caused them to be fed with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink again and again and again.
7	תְּשִׁימֵנו מְדוּחַ לְשִׁכְנֵינוּ וְאֵי־בֵינוּ לְעַגְרֵלָמוֹ:	You have made us a strife to our neighbors, and our enemies mock,
8	אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁיבֵנו וְהַאֲרֵךְ פְּנֵיךָ וּנְשׁוּעָה:	God of armies, cause us to return! And cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved!
9	גָּפְנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם תְּסִיעַ תְּגַרְשׁ גֹּוִלִים וְתִטְעֶה:	You brought a vine from Egypt, you drove out nations and planted it.
10	פָּנִיתָ לְפָנֶיהָ וְתִשְׁרַשׁ שְׁרָשֶׁיהָ וְתִמְלֵא אֶרֶץ:	You cleared its face and caused the root to be rooted, and it filled the land.
11	כְּסוּ הַרִיִם צֶלֶה לְעִנְפֶיהָ אֲרֻז־אֵל:	The mountains were covered with its shadow, its boughs [covered] the mighty cedars.
12	תִּשְׁלַח קַצִּירָהּ עַד־יָם וְאֶל־יָהָר יִזְקוּתֶיהָ:	It sent out its branch to the sea, and to the river its branches.
13	לָמָּה פָּרַצְתָּ גְדָרֶיהָ וְאָרְוֶה כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרְךָ:	Why have you broken through its hedges so that all passing by the way pluck it?
14	יִכְרַסְמֶנָה חַזִּיר מִיַּעַר וְזִי שְׂדֵי יִרְעֶנָה:	The boar from the woods tears it up, and the beast of the field grazes there.
15	אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת שׁוּבוּ־נָא הִבַּט מִשָּׁמַיִם וּרְאֵה וּפְקֹד גִּפְנוֹ זֹאת:	God of armies, please turn! Look from heaven and see, and attend to this vine.
16	וּכְנֵה אֲשֶׁר־נִטְעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעַל־בֶּן אֲמַצְתָּה לָּךְ:	and the shoot which your right hand has planted, and on the son you strengthened for yourself.
17	שָׂרְפָהּ בְּאֵשׁ כְּסוּתָהּ מִצַּעֲרַת פְּנֵיךָ יֵאבְדוּ:	It is burned in fire, it is cut. From the rebuke of your face they are carried off.

Verse:	Masoretic Text	Personal Translation
18	<p>תְּהִי יְדֶךָ עַל־אִישׁ יְמִינְךָ עַל־בֶּן־ אָדָם אֲמַצְתָּ לָּךְ:</p>	<p>Let your hand be on the man of your right hand, on the son of man you strengthened for yourself.</p>
19	<p>וְלֹא־נִסְוֶה מִמֶּנּוּ תְחַיֵּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָחֶה נִקְרָא:</p>	<p>And we will not deviate from you. Make us live and we will call to your name.</p>
20	<p>יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צְבָאוֹת הַשִּׁבְנוּ הָאָרֶץ כְּנֹרְךָ וְנִשְׁעָה:</p>	<p>LORD God of armies, cause us to return, and cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved!</p>

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