

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