Report of the Hetherton RPC Visitation Committee

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, Spring 2024 Meeting

January 10, 2024

This committee, made up of Bob Bibby, Joshua Smith, and David Hanson, was appointed in May to visit the Hetherton Congregation to provide counsel and encouragement.

At the Fall 2023 meeting, the presbytery passed the following motions:

1. That with gratitude and appreciation for the lengthy and faithful service of Pastor Raymond Morton, the Great-Lakes Gulf Presbytery receives his notice of retirement and sets the conclusion of December 31, 2023 as the time at which the pastoral relationship between him and the Hetherton Reformed Presbyterian Church will be dissolved.
2. That Phil Pockras and Wade Mann be appointed provisional elders to Hetherton as requested by the session.

Since that time, our committee has made sure to have regular contact with both Rev. Morton and Elder Bryan Dage to ensure that the transition proceeded smoothly. That culminated with Pastor Hanson traveling to Hetherton for Sunday, January 7 to preach, baptize Samuel Dage, and participate in the fellowship meal following the service honoring Rev. & Mrs. Morton’s years of service to the Hetherton Congregation. Humanly speaking, the Hetherton Congregation would not have continued to this point without their sacrificial labors, and we honor Rev. Morton not only for his years of faithfulness at Hetherton, but for over 50 years of dedicated ministry on three continents (Africa, Europe, and North America).

At the time of our appointment as a committee and even at the writing of our Fall Report, we were planning to conduct an onsite visit. However, with the appointment of Pastors Mann and Pockras as provisional elders, a visit by our committee seems redundant and unhelpful. The reality is that Pastors Mann and Pockras will be providing the outside perspective and ministry encouragement that a visitation would hope to accomplish. In fact, their work will be superior to anything that our visitation committee could provide, because it will include regular, sustained contact and participation alongside the Hetherton leadership.

So, our intent, with the concurrence of the local Hetherton leadership, is not to conduct an onsite visit, unless presbytery instructs us otherwise.

With gratitude to God for His help,

Bob Bibby, Joshua Smith, and David Hanson

Motion:

1. That the Hetherton RPC Visitation Committee be dismissed.