

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)

June Meeting at Synod

Official Minutes

Distributed: 7/12/17

CLERK

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2017 JUNE MEETING AT SYNOD

Time: Wednesday June 28 from 1:15 - 2:15 p.m.

Place: Indiana Wesleyan University

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met to conduct business on the campus of Indiana Wesleyan University during the RPCNA Synod on Wednesday June 28 at 1:15 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Moderator, Mr. McKenzie, called the meeting to order at 1:20 p.m., after which the court sang Psalm 84C to the praise of God, and the moderator constituted the court in prayer.

2. ROLL CALL

The assistant clerk, Mr. Hemken, called the roll (p. 11) and indicated that a quorum was present. Mr. Pockras informed the court of Mr. Larry Bump's recent resignation from the eldership in the Belle Center congregation.

3. INTRODUCTION OF FIRST-TIME DELEGATES

Mr. Evans introduced the court to Mr. Ken Nelson, a first time delegate and ruling-elder from the Lafayette congregation.

4. CALL FOR MINUTE BOOKS

Mr. Hemken issued a call for session minute books not previously submitted for review at the Spring meeting.

5. MODERATOR APPOINTMENTS

Mr. McKenzie appointed Mr. Damerow and Mr. Pulliam to review the Sparta minute book and then to report their findings to the Ad Interim Commission.

6. CLERK'S REPORT

Mr. Kuehner presented the clerk's report (p. 4).

- Recommendation 1 was seconded and passed.¹
- Recommendation 2² was amended to include second service attendance³, after which the amended recommendation was seconded and passed.⁴
- Recommendation 3 was seconded and passed.⁵
- It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.

7. REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESIGNATION

Mr. Johnston submitted a written notice (p. 7) of his intention to retire from pastoral ministry and requested that presbytery dissolve his pastoral relationship with Second RPC of Indianapolis as of July 2, 2017; after which he shared of the Lord's gracious blessing in unifying our denomination and presbytery over the years.

- It was moved, seconded, and passed to dissolve Mr. Johnston's pastoral relationship with Second RPC of Indianapolis as of July 2, 2017, with abundant gratitude to him for his many years of faithful gospel ministry.
- Mr. David Hanson offered up a prayer of dissolution on behalf of the court.

8. ELKHART INSTALLATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Johnston presented an oral report on behalf of the Elkhart Installation Commission, confirming the installation of Pastor Wade Mann as teaching elder on October 14, 2016, and submitting the commission minutes to be spread on the minutes of presbytery (p. 8).

- It was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the report.

9. RESPONSIBILITY FOR TGB EXPENSES

Due to an excused absence for ill health, Mr. Magill was not present to address the court.

10. PAPER 17-03

¹ That presbytery instruct Mr. Evans to develop a list of basic guidelines for proper usage of the delegates email list and submit them for approval at our Spring 2018 meeting.

² Original Recommendation: That presbytery instruct its congregations to include the following statistics in their annual reports to presbytery: (1) Total Membership: Communicant and Baptized (2) Average Morning Worship Attendance (3) Baptized Members Professing (4) New Members by Profession (5) Net Change in Total Membership.

³ Note: The initial amendment made reference to "evening service", after which the phrase "second service" was substituted (by common consent) so as to include Sabbath afternoon worship. In seeking to integrate this phrase more smoothly into the language of the original recommendation, the clerk has taken the liberty to use the phrases "AM Worship" and "PM Worship" to signify "first" and "second" services respectively. (See footnote #4 below.)

⁴ Amended Recommendation: That presbytery instruct its congregations to include the following statistics in their annual reports to presbytery: (1) Total Membership: Communicant and Baptized (2) Average AM Worship Attendance (3) Average PM Worship Attendance (4) Baptized Members Professing (5) New Members by Profession (6) Net Change in Total Membership.

⁵ That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda (p. 6)

Mr. Work addressed the court regarding Paper 17-03 (p. 9) and fielded questions and comments from the floor, after which it was moved, seconded, and passed to return Paper 17-03 to Mr. Work.

11. READING OF MINUTES

Mr. Kuehner read the minutes from the current business session and it was moved, seconded, and passed adopt them as amended.

12. PRAYER OF ADJOURNMENT

It was moved, seconded, and passed to adjourn the meeting.

- Mr. Smith led the court in prayer for the health of Mr. Keddie and Dr. Butterfield.
- Mr. Pockras led the court in prayer for the health of Mr. Magill and Mr. Bump, adjourning the court in prayer at 2:21 p.m.

The Clerk's Report

Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery
June Meeting at Synod
Marion, Indiana
May 23, 2017

Dear Fathers & Brethren,

We are scheduled to meet during the upcoming RPCNA Synod for approximately one hour, immediately following lunch on Wednesday June 28 at 1:15 - 2:15 pm (Location: TBA). A proposed agenda for this brief meeting will be circulated alongside this report.

Our Email List

Not long after the close of our Spring Meeting in Columbus, a series of letters (three, to be exact) were circulated via our email list. All three letters related to Mr. Ketcham's theology exam, sharing various reflections, concerns, and complaints about what took place. In my estimation, the authors were simply voicing informal feedback to their fellow delegates. They were not intending to submit formal papers for inclusion in the court's agenda.

At the same time, it might be wise for us to develop a list of basic guidelines clarifying how to use our email list most effectively. I am not asserting that the above-mentioned letters were inappropriately distributed. I am merely suggesting that without a list of stated guidelines in place, we are leaving the door wide open for possible misuse in the future. This report includes a recommendation to this effect.

Internet Maintenance

I trust that we have all seen the seminary board's announcement regarding Mr. Evans. It should be noted that if he heads to Pittsburgh, it is at least *possible* that his days as our internet maintenance guy may be numbered. For this reason, I would suggest that some of our more gifted personnel/delegation experts (You know who you are!) begin brainstorming about a possible replacement for Mr. Evans. (Due to my existing workload, I will be unable to assume this role.)

Congregational Statistics

At our most recent meeting in Columbus, the court instructed its clerks "to develop a list of required statistics for congregational reports and to include them as a recommendation in a future clerk's report."

After some thought and consideration, we have decided to recommend the following statistics, as of 12/31 of the preceding year: **(1)** Total Membership: Communicant/Baptized **(2)** Average Morning Worship Attendance **(3)** Baptized Members Professing Faith **(4)** New Members by Profession of Faith **(5)** Net Change in Total

Membership. Such data, appearing somewhere within the body of each congregational report, might look something like this:

1. **TOTAL MEMBERSHIP:** 127 Comm., 44 Bapt.
2. **AVERAGE MORNING ATTENDANCE:** 185
3. **BAPTIZED MEMBERS PROFESSING:** 7
4. **NEW MEMBERS BY PROFESSION:** 5
5. **NET CHANGE IN TOTAL MEMBERSHIP:** +7

Communications

Since our last meeting, I have received only one formal communication: a paper from Mr. Work addressing RPCNA distinctives. I have classified it as **Paper 17-03**. It is the final item on our proposed agenda, so if we run out of time, it will have to wait until the Spring.

In addition, Mr. Magill would like to briefly address the court regarding a mission church's implied responsibility to cover expenses for its TGB. It is likely that he will make a motion to clarify this issue. By approving the proposed agenda, you will be granting Mr. Magill's request for the floor.

Session/TGB Minute Books

There are at least three outstanding¹ Session/TGB minute books. Mr. Hemken will be sending out an email reminding these three congregations to "bring the books". Mr. McKenzie should be ready to appoint delegates to review them. Rather than seeking to complete this entire process at Synod, it might be best for Mr. Hemken to report the review results to the *Ad Interim Commission* for approval sometime after Synod. (Just a thought.)

Recommendations

1. That presbytery instruct Mr. Evans to develop a list of basic guidelines for proper usage of the delegates email list and submit them for approval at our Spring 2018 meeting.
2. That presbytery instruct its congregations to include the following statistics in their annual reports to presbytery: (1) Total Membership: Communicant and Baptized (2) Average Morning Worship Attendance (3) Baptized Members Professing (4) New Members by Profession (5) Net Change in Total Membership.
3. That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda.

Every Blessing in Christ,

Rev. Adam Kuehner, Clerk
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¹ By "outstanding", I mean that they have yet to be submitted for review. In terms of content and quality, I trust that all of our minute books may be regarded, in some measure, as "outstanding".

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)

Proposed Agenda
Updated: June 21, 2017

CLERK

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2017 JUNE MEETING AT SYNOD

Time: Wednesday June 30 from 1:15 - 2:15 p.m.

Place: Indiana Wesleyan University (Bldg: TBA)

1. **CALL TO ORDER** - *Prayer of Constitution* (Mr. McKenzie)
2. **ROLL CALL** (Mr. Hemken)
3. **INTRODUCTION OF FIRST-TIME DELEGATES** (If Applicable)
4. **CALL FOR MINUTE BOOKS** (Mr. Hemken)
5. **MODERATOR APPOINTMENTS** - *Minute Books* (Mr. McKenzie)
6. **CLERK'S REPORT** - *Recommendations 1-3* (Mr. Kuehner)
7. **REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESIGNATION** (Mr. Johnston)
8. **ELKHART INSTALLATION COMMISSION REPORT** (Mr. Johnston)
9. **RESPONSIBILITY FOR TGB EXPENSES** (Mr. Magill)
10. **PAPER 17-03** (Mr. Work)
11. **READING OF MINUTES** (Mr. Kuehner)
12. **PRAYER OF ADJOURNMENT** (Moderator Appointment)

Rich Johnston

To: Adam Kuehner (adamkuehner@gmail.com); Stanley (skmckenzie@msn.com)
Subject: RE: GLG Presbytery Meeting at Synod, June 29, 2017

Mr. Moderator and Mr. Clerk,

As you may know I plan to retire on July 2, the last day of my service to Second RPC in Indianapolis, Indiana. I am writing to ask that my resignation be approved by presbytery. According to the Directory of Church Government of the RPCNA, Chapter 3, section 2, item 5. Cessation of Service (D-22) "A teaching elder may request the presbytery to release him from his relationship with the congregation. Any teaching elder desiring to resign shall give notice of his resignation to the congregation at least two weeks before offering his resignation to the presbytery." I have offered my resignation to the Session of 2nd RPC on June 14, 2017. I am writing to make my intention to retire known to the Presbytery. May this item be added to the June meeting of Presbytery, meeting at the time of the meetings of Synod, June 29, 2017?

Thank you for your consideration.

Pastor Rich

Pastor Richard Johnston
317-460-0405
johnston@secondrpc.org
Second Reformed Presbyterian Church
4800 N. Michigan Rd.
Indianapolis, IN 46228
317-255-7557

To the Ad Interim Commission of the Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery:

The meeting of the commission of GL/G Presbytery to install Rev. Wade R. Mann as pastor of Elkhart RPC took place Friday night, October 14, 2016. It was a glorious and well attended service. Among the many visitors were teaching and ruling elders from both the RPCNA and other NAPaRC denominations, and members of Rev. Mann's family, including Prof. Wayne Spear and his wife.

All four commissioners (Greg Fisher, Rich Johnston, Ray Lanning, and Keith Magill) met at 5:30 p.m. for a duly-constituted meeting and to enjoy a meal at Culver's Restaurant in South Bend, IN. The commission then traveled on to Elkhart to conduct the installation service at 7:00 p.m. in the church building at 2323 17th Street. We appointed RE Greg Fisher as our clerk and TE Rich Johnston served as moderator. TE Ray Lanning constituted the court in prayer. After the narration of steps taken *ad hoc* by RE Jon Ummel, and the final reading of the edict by RE Fik Menbere, the congregation was asked to indicate its adherence to the call and stood to do so.. Rev. Mann also affirmed his adherence to the call. TE Keith Magill propounded the constitutional queries for installation to Rev. Mann and he answered them in the affirmative. He then signed the minute book of GL/G Presbytery. TE Bill Roberts called Wade Mann forward, and asked all other elders present to stand with them while Mr. Roberts offered the installation prayer. Prof. Barry York preached on "The Gift of a Pastor" from Ephesians 4:11-16. TE Keith Magill gave the charge to the newly installed pastor, and TE Rich Johnston gave a charge to the Elkhart congregation. After the reading and amendment of the minutes, Moderator Rich Johnston adjourned the court in prayer, and Rev. Mann dismissed the congregation with a benediction. The members of Elkhart RPC furnished a splendid table of refreshments for all to enjoy in the fellowship hall after the service. RE Greg Fisher, as clerk of the commission, produced minutes for both meetings and the commission reviewed and approved both sets of minutes. These minutes will be submitted to the presbytery at its spring meeting.

To my knowledge these actions complete our assignment and we ask that we be dismissed as a commission of presbytery.

1 To: Great Lakes / Gulf Presbytery, RPCNA
2 From: Rev. Steven E. Work, Englewood, OH
3 Date: May 12, 2017
4

5 The March 2-4, 2017, meeting of Great Lakes / Gulf Presbytery was a challenge to the peace and
6 unity of the presbytery. The important discussion centered on our denominational distinctives. This
7 paper seeks to explore the nature and use of distinctives.

8 John Wesley warned, "Parochialism is always the enemy of the gospel, and unchecked we will
9 naturally be parochial." Parochialism is that which cares only about our group and has a very limited
10 or narrow outlook. Parochialism may be the result of the misuse of distinctives. We have two kinds
11 of distinctives, written and unwritten.
12

13 **Written Distinctives** -- Our view and use of RPCNA distinctives may be **broad** and inclusive. These
14 distinctives are what is common, excellent, and essential. They are identified by the *Westminster*
15 *Standards (Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechism)*. Our view and use of RPCNA
16 distinctives may be **narrow** and restrictive. These distinctives are what is uncommon and makes us
17 different. They are identified not only by the *RPCNA Testimony*, but also in our *Directory for Church*
18 *Government, The Book of Discipline, The Directory of Public Worship, and the Official Vows*.

19 **Broad** distinctives have an objective and a subjective element. Objectively, we are Reformed in
20 doctrine and Presbyterian in government as defined by the *Westminster Standards*. Subjectively, we
21 delight in the greatest commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and the second
22 commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor." Our love, defined by the law of God, must be the
23 evident and passionate distinctive.

24 **Narrow** distinctives have an objective and a subjective element. Objectively, we reject in the
25 *RPCNA Testimony* selected portions of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and expand other
26 portions as an adaptation and expression to our North American witness. Subjectively, we put
27 pressure on the conscience to conform to our perspective.
28

29 **Unwritten Distinctives** -- Some of our distinctives are unwritten and are not in our Constitution.
30 There are two categories of unwritten distinctives: **social** and **theological**.

31 Unwritten **social** distinctives arise from three features which are common to all churches. First is
32 *lineage*, which includes those who share a common ethnic heritage. An example is the quip, "If
33 you're not Dutch, you're not much." Second is *limits*, which define the practices of holiness. An
34 example is the rule of fundamentalists which require no alcohol, no tobacco, no playing cards, no
35 movies, no dancing. Third is *liturgy*, which describes the required procedure for worship. Examples
36 include the expectation of head covering for women, or a flamboyant song leader, or the frequency of
37 the Lord's Supper, or the praying of the Lord's Prayer in unison.

38 Unwritten **theological** distinctives develop from intense desires to see the church grow.
39 Examples are a communion season that spans a week, or a pre-defined model of how and where to
40 plant a church, or a synodical Vital Churches Committee.
41

42 **Developed Distinctives** -- What shapes our view and use of distinctives is molded by our
43 engagement in the **spiritual** and **social** battlefields of life.

44 Just as there are no identical reports of conversion, so there are no identical **spiritual**
45 pilgrimages. There will be similarities if we have similar covenantal heritages, moral values, and
46 worship practices. If you grow up under the influence of the European, or British Isles, or North
47 American expressions of the Reformed faith, there will be noticeable differences in lineage, limits,
48 and liturgy.

49 The RPCNA has developed distinctives which have been influenced by the **social** battlefields of
50 *temperance* (expressed in Vow 8 until 1993), *feminism* (expressed in opening the deaconate to

51 women), *egalitarianism* (expressed in restructuring the Constitution from a three-office to a two-office
52 view, and maintaining a congregational view of voting by communicant members), and *pragmatism*
53 (expressed in the hierarchical use of commissions inside of presbytery).

54 Our view and use of our distinctives is meant to unite us in a consistent witness. However, an
55 unintended consequence is that some of our distinctives do not promote unity between other
56 Reformed Presbyterian bodies, but division. When those distinctives are demanded without regard to
57 other Reformed Presbyterian bodies, we are in real danger of schism. When these traditions are
58 required, we are in peril of violating *sola Scriptura*.

59

60 **Absolute Distinctives** -- When a presbytery insists on *all* its distinctives, without room for individual
61 conscience, it can be self-defeating. Instead of producing an orthodox consensus, an outward
62 conformity encourages both personal hypocrisy and theological equivocation.

63 Since our *Confession* states that “All synods or councils, ... may err; and many have erred” (WCF
64 31:4), we admit that doctrinal traditions will supersede and nullify Scripture itself when insisted
65 absolutely. Just as the “good works” of Roman Catholicism have a way of turning into “bad works,”
66 a demand of complete doctrinal compliance, without any provision for exceptions, actually proves
67 counterproductive.

68 Formal confidence in all of our distinctives leads to lovelessness and pride when we presume we
69 have absolutely perfect doctrine. This presumption is questionable when our *Testimony* challenges
70 the original Westminster doctrines. Our current practice of careful subscription, with an opportunity
71 for possible exceptions (and discussion of them) is better.

72

73 **Illustrative Distinctives** -- Since our *Testimony* is a subordinate standard to the Scriptures,
74 exceptions may be allowed on distinctives if they are defended from the Scripture and within the
75 provisions of the *Westminster Standards*.

76 Because of the recent actions of Great Lakes / Gulf Presbytery regarding candidate Sam Ketcham
77 and our refusal to grant his dissent on issues which have regularly been granted in the past, we are in
78 danger of parochialism.

79 Regarding the Atlanta Presbyterian Fellowship and our refusal to consider their 24 page petition
80 for mission status, we are in danger of limiting to one paradigm the work of the Spirit in gathering
81 His people and thus are distorting the gospel.

82 What is common in these two instances is that of elevating distinctives in such a way as to isolate
83 our presbytery from the greater body of Reformed Presbyterians, and to cause unnecessary tension
84 within the presbytery.

85

86 **Recommendations** -- Regarding the problematic nature of distinctives across Reformed Presbyterian
87 churches holding to slightly different versions of distinctives (including those of North America,
88 Ireland, Scotland, Australia, etc.); and in order to promote the peace and unity of our churches, we
89 recommend:

90 1. Guidelines:

91 a. Where common distinctives exist in Reformed Presbyterian bodies, they are primary and
92 binding on the conscience.

93 b. Where uncommon distinctives exist in Reformed Presbyterian bodies, they are secondary and
94 non-binding on the conscience.

95 2. Action: That these guidelines be studied by our Presbytery and Synod.

96

97 Respectfully submitted,

98

99

100 Rev. Steven E. Work, Teaching Elder (Retired)

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
June 28 , 2017
Attendance

Belle Center	Phil Pockras TE	P						
	Larry Bump RE	E						
Bloomington	Rich Holdeman TE	P						
	Adam Niess TE	P						
	Wes Archer RE	P						
	Ken de Jong RE	P						
	Eric Cosens RE (Alt.)	-						
Christ Church	Michael LeFebvre TE	P						
	Sean Bird RE	E						
	Dale Koons RE (Alt.)	-						
	Duane Judd (Alt.)	-						
	Jason O'Neill (Alt.)	-						
Columbus	Andy McCracken TE	P						
	Ed Schisler RE	P						
	Gary McNamee RE	P						
Elkhart	Wade Mann RE	P						
	Fikre Menbere	E						
First RP Durham	Kent Butterfield TE	E						
	Bob Bibby RE	P						
First RP Grand Rapids	Craig Scott TE	P						
Hetherton	Ray Morton TE	P						
	Barton Briley	P						
Immanuel	Jared Olivetti TE	P						
	David Carr RE	P						
Lafayette	Keith Evans TE	P						
	Ken Nelson RE	P						
	Jack Rhoda RE	P						
Marion	Jason Camery TE	E						
Orlando	H.P. McCracken TE	P						
Second Indianapolis	James Faris TE	P						
	Rich Johnston TE	P						
	Denny Prutow RE	P						
	Russ Pulliam RE	P						
	David Mauser RE (Alt.)	-						
Selma	Averette Woodson RE	-						
Southfield	Adam Kuehner	P						
	Jon Hughes RE	P						
Southside Indianapolis	David Hanson TE	P						
	Stanley McKenzie TE	P						
	RE	-						
	Don Pritchard RE	P						

	Steve Sturm RE (Alt.)	P						
Congregation	Delegate							
Southwest Ohio	Dick Knodel TE	P						
	Scott Damerow RE	P						
	Timothy Vincze RE (Alt.)	-						
Sparta	Daniel Hemken TE	P						
	Jim McMahan	P						
Sycamore	Shawn Anderson TE	P						
	Bob McKissick	P						
Westminster	Stephen Rhoda TE	P						
Dayton Mission								
Pageland Mission	Ian Wise TE	E						
Terre Haute Mission	Bill Roberts TE	P						
Active w/o Pastorate	George Gregory	P						
Active w/o Pastorate	Keith Magill	E						
Active w/o Pastorate	Frank Smith	P						
Retired Minister	Gordon Keddie	E						
Retired Minister	Bob McCracken	-						
Retired Minister	Jim McMahan (See Sparta)	-						
Retired Minister	Bob Morrow	P						
Retired Minister	Denny Prutow (See 2 nd Ind.)	-						
Retired Minister	Steven Work	P						