

Minutes of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (June 2016)

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA) met during the 2016 RPCNA Synod on the campus of Indiana Wesleyan University to conduct business on Tuesday June 28 at 1:00 p.m.

- The moderator, Mr. H.P. McCracken, called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. and constituted the court in prayer.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed that the clerk take the roll visually. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Congregation	Delegate	Attendance
Belle Center	Phil Pockras TE	P
Bloomington	Rich Holdeman TE	P
	Adam Niess TE	P
	Eric Cosens RE	P
	Wes Archer RE	P
Christ Church	Michael Lefebvre TE	P
Columbus	Andy McCracken TE	P
	George Gregory TE	P
First RP Durham	Kent Butterfield TE	E
First RP Grand Rapids	Craig Scott TE	E
Hetherton	Ray Morton TE	E
Immanuel	Jared Olivetti TE	P
	David Carr RE	P
Kokomo	Shawn Anderson TE	P
Lafayette	Keith Evans TE	P
	Jack Rhoda RE	P
Marion	Jason Camery TE	E
Orlando	H.P. McCracken TE	P
Second Indianapolis	Rich Johnston TE	P
	James Faris TE	P
	Terry Magnuson RE	P
	Dean Filson RE	P
Selma	N/A	
Southfield	Adam Kuehner TE	P
	John Kim RE	E
Southside Indianapolis	David Whitla TE	P
	Stan McKenzie TE	P
	Steve Sturm RE	P
Southwest Ohio RP	Dick Knodel TE	P

	Gregory Damerow RE	P
Sparta	Daniel Hemken TE	P
	James Odom RE	P
Westminster	Stephen Rhoda TE	P
Pageland Mission	Ian Wise TE	E
Terre Haute Mission	Bill Roberts TE	P
Active w/o Pastorate	Keith Magill TE	P
Active w/o Pastorate	Frank Smith TE	P
Retired Minister	Roy Blackwood TE	P
Retired Minister	Dennis Prutow TE	P
Retired Minister	Jim McMahan TE	P

P = Present. E = Excused. S = Sustained. NS = Not Sustained. Blank = Absent.

- Mr. Kuehner presented the clerk's report (p. 11).
 - Recommendations 1-4 were passed.
 - It was noted that Mr. McMahan was overlooked as a retired teaching elder delegate to Synod and that the moderator and clerk of presbytery will confirm Mr. McMahan's status as a delegate to the clerk's of Synod.
 - It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed that an honorarium of \$1500 be given to Ray Morton in gratitude for his long and faithful service as clerk of this presbytery, and that the moderator send this gift with a letter of thanks on behalf of presbytery.
- Mr. Kuehner presented the Southfield congregational report and it was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report (p. 12)
- Mr. Hemken presented the Sparta congregational report (p. 13). Recommendation 1 was passed. It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.
- Mr. Knodel presented the SWORP congregational report (p. 14). It was moved seconded, and passed to receive the report.
- Mr. Pockras presented the SWORP Organization Commission report, noting that he will forward the commission minutes to the clerk as soon as possible. It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.

- Mr. Anderson presented the Sycamore congregational report (p. 15). It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.
- Mr. Carr presented the Sycamore visitation report (p. 16) and answered questions. It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.
- Mr. Steve Rhoda presented the Westminster (Prairie View, IL) congregational report (p. 17) and answered questions from the floor. It was moved, seconded, and passed, to receive the report.
- New delegates were introduced to the court: Craig Scott, Doug Nadeau, Chris Stockwell, Timothy Vince, and pastoral intern Tony Mastris.
- Mr. Magill presented the Belle Center preliminary visitation report.
 - It was moved, seconded, and passed to authorize the visitation team to conduct an additional visit to Belle Center.
 - It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.
- The presbytery called upon God's name in prayer, led by moderator-appointed delegates, for the following congregations:
 - Southfield (Mr. Evans), Sparta (Mr. Butterfield), SWORP (Dr. Smith), Sycamore (Mr. McKenzie), Westminster (Mr. Kim).
- Mr. Kuehner read the minutes and it was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes as amended.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed to adjourn the court, after which the moderator, Mr. McCracken adjourned the court in prayer at 2:15 p.m.

H.P. McCracken, Moderator

Adam Kuehner, Clerk

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA) met following the 2016 RPCNA Synod at the Second Reformed Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis to conduct business on Wednesday June 29 at 3:00 p.m.

- The moderator, Mr. H.P. McCracken, called the meeting to order and constituted the court in prayer at 3:15 p.m. Psalm 3B was sung to the praise of God.
- Assistant clerk, Mr. Hemken, took attendance visually, by common consent and it was determined that a quorum was present.

Congregation	Delegate	Attend.	S. Ketcham Expository Sermon	S. Ketcham License to Preach	J. Hart License to Preach
Belle Center	Phil Pockras TE	P	S	S	S
Bloomington	Rich Holdeman TE	P	S	S	S
	Adam Niess TE	P	S	S	S
	Eric Cosens RE	P	S	S	S
	Wes Archer RE	P	S	S	S
Christ Church	Michael Lefebvre TE	P	S	S	S
Columbus	Andy McCracken TE	P	S	S	S
	George Gregory TE	P	S	S	S
First RP Durham	Kent Butterfield TE	E			
First RP Grand Rapids	Craig Scott TE	E			
Hetherton	Ray Morton TE	E			
Immanuel	Jared Olivetti TE	P	S	S	S
	David Carr RE	P	S	S	S
Kokomo	Shawn Anderson TE	P	S	S	S
Lafayette	Keith Evans TE	P	S	S	S
	Jack Rhoda RE	P	S	S	S
Marion	Jason Camery TE	E	S	S	S
Orlando	H.P. McCracken TE	P	S	S	S
Second Indianapolis	Rich Johnston TE	P	S	S	S
	James Faris TE	P	S	S	S
	Terry Magnuson RE	P	S	S	S
	Dean Filson RE	P	S	S	S
Selma	N/A				
Southfield	Adam Kuehner TE	P	S	S	S
	John Kim RE	E			
Southside Indianapolis	David Whitla TE	P	S	S	S

	Stan McKenzie TE	P	S	S	S
	Steve Sturm RE	P	S	S	S
Southwest Ohio RP	Dick Knodel TE	P	S	S	S
	Gregory Damerow RE	P	S	S	S
Sparta	Daniel Hemken TE	P	S	S	S
	James Odom RE	P	S	S	S
Westminster	Stephen Rhoda TE	P	S	S	S
Pageland Mission	Ian Wise TE	E	S	S	S
Terre Haute Mission	Bill Roberts TE	P	S	S	S
Active w/o Pastorate	Keith Magill TE	P	S	S	S
Active w/o Pastorate	Frank Smith TE	P	S	S	S
Retired Minister	Roy Blackwood TE	P	S	S	S
Retired Minister	Dennis Prutow TE	P	S	S	S
Retired Minister	Jim McMahan TE	P	S	S	S

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- The proposed agenda was adopted by common consent.
- Mr. Niess presented an update from the Selma committee (p. 18).
 - Recommendations 1-2 passed and it was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed to grant floor privileges to all RPCNA elders present.
- Mr. Steve Rhoda presented the Judicial Committee Report on Paper 2016-1 (p. 20).
 - The recommendation (That Paper 2016-1 be returned to the Bloomington session) failed.
 - It was moved, seconded, and passed that presbytery send Paper 2016-1 to Synod with the court's endorsement.
 - It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the report. The motion passed.
- Mr. Olivetti presented the Candidates and Credentials Report (p. 19), after which Recommendation 1 was passed.

- Mr. Sam Ketcham was invited forward for his Expository Sermon I preaching exam.
 - Mr. Ketcham read Mark 1:9-13, called upon God's name in prayer, and preached from the text on our Lord's baptism and temptation, after which Psalm 2A was sung to the praise of God and feedback was offered from the floor.
 - Mr. Hemken called the roll and the exam was unanimously sustained.
- Mr. Knodel presented the review committee recommendation to sustain Mr. Ketcham's church history paper on Thomas Aquinas and the Regulative Principle of Worship.
 - The exam was sustained without dissent by a voice vote.
- The English Bible Exams for Mr. Sam Ketcham, Mr. Andrew Battiato, and Mr. Joel Hart (with distinction) were sustained without dissent by a single voice vote.
- Mr. Olivetti invited Mr. Ketcham forward for his licensure to preach the gospel.
 - Mr. Holdeman read the queries to Mr. Ketcham, who publicly affirmed.
 - Mr. Hemken called the roll and Mr. Ketcham's licensure to preach was unanimously sustained, after which he signed the query book.
 - Mr. Niess then led the court in prayer for Mr. Ketcham, thereby licensing him to preach the gospel, after which Mr. Holdeman delivered a charge outlining the attending duties and privileges.
- Mr. Pockras presented the review committee recommendation to sustain Mr. Joel Hart's church history paper on the Doctrine and Practice of Social Reform in the RPCNA (1930-1945).
 - The paper was sustained without dissent by a voice vote.

- Mr. Olivetti invited Mr. Hart forward for his licensure to preach the gospel.
 - Mr. Faris read the queries to Mr. Hart, who publicly affirmed them.
 - Mr. Hemken called the roll and Mr. Hart's licensure to preach was unanimously sustained, after which he signed the query book.
 - Mr. Whitla then led the court in prayer for Mr. Hart, thereby licensing him to preach the gospel, then delivered a charge outlining the attending duties and privileges.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the Candidates and Credentials Report.
- Mr. Kuehner read the minutes and it was moved, second, and passed to adopt the minutes as amended.
- The moderator, Mr. McCracken, recessed the court in prayer at 5:13 p.m., giving thanks for the faithful ministry of Mr. Whitla within this presbytery and asking God's blessing on his future studies and service to the denomination.

H.P. McCracken, Moderator

Adam Kuehner, Clerk

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA) reconvened at the Second Reformed Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis on Wednesday June 29 at 7:00 p.m. to ordain Mr. Venkatesh Gopalakrishnan as a missionary to India.

- The moderator, Pastor H.P. McCracken, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and constituted the court in prayer.
- Mr. Kuehner called the roll and determined that a quorum was present.

Congregation	Delegate	Attendance
Belle Center	Phil Pockras TE	P
Bloomington	Rich Holdeman TE	P
	Adam Niess TE	P
	Eric Cosens RE	P
	Wes Archer RE	P
Christ Church	Michael Lefebvre TE	P
Columbus	Andy McCracken TE	P
	George Gregory	P
First RP Durham	Kent Butterfield TE	E
First RP Grand Rapids	Craig Scott TE	P
Hetherton	Ray Morton TE	E
Immanuel	Jared Olivetti TE	P
	David Carr RE	P
Kokomo	Shawn Anderson TE	P
Lafayette	Keith Evans TE	P
	Jack Rhoda	P
Marion	Jason Camery TE	E
Orlando	H.P. McCracken TE	P
Second Indianapolis	Rich Johnston TE	P
	James Faris TE	P
	Terry Magnuson RE	P
	Dean Filson RE	P
Selma	N/A	
Southfield	Adam Kuehner TE	P
	John Kim RE	P
Southside Indianapolis	David Whitla TE	P
	Stan McKenzie TE	P
	Steve Sturm RE	P
	Bob Burchfield RE (Alt.)	P
Southwest Ohio RP	Dick Knodel TE	P
	Gregory Damerow RE	P
Sparta	Daniel Hemken TE	P

	James Odom RE	P
Wesminster	Stephen Rhoda TE	P
Pageland Mission	Ian Wise TE	E
Terre Haute Mission	Bill Roberts TE	P
Active w/o Pastorate	Keith Magill TE	P
Active w/o Pastorate	Frank Smith TE	P
Retired Minister	Roy Blackwood TE	P
Retired Minister	Gordon Keddie TE	P
Retired Minister	Jim McMahan TE	P
Retired Minister	Dennis Prutow TE	P

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- Pastor Rich Johnston narrated the previous steps leading to the ordination, followed by the final reading of the edict by the moderator.
- Members of the RPCNA Global Mission Board stood in confirmation of their call to Mr. Gopalakrishnan, who, upon inquiry, publicly affirmed his adherence to the call.
- The moderator, Pastor H.P. McCracken, called the assembly to worship, after which, Psalm 122A (stanzas 1-4) were sung to the praise of God.
- Pastor David Hanson then read from 2 Timothy 2:1-13 and preached a sermon from the text on Gracious Truths for Faithful Men, after which he called upon God's name in prayer, and the court sang Psalm 87A to the praise of God.
- Dr. Ram Rao administered the queries of ordination to Mr. Gopalakrishnan, who publicly affirmed them and signed the query book.
- Dr. Roy Blackwood and Pastor Rich Johnston led in a prayer of ordination, as members of the court (and other affiliated elders) laid hands on Mr. Gopalakrishnan, thereby ordaining him to the gospel ministry in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Zion's only Head and King.
- Pastor James Faris presented a charge to Rev. Gopalakrishnan and called upon God's name in prayer, after which Psalm 27D (stanzas 12-15) was sung to the praise of God.

- Rev. Gopalakrishnan then pronounced God's blessing upon the people of God, after which Psalm 67C (stanzas 1-2) was sung to the praise of God.
- Mr. Kuehner read the minutes and it was moved, seconded, and passed to adopt the minutes as read.
- The moderator adjourned the court in prayer at 8:34 p.m.

H.P. McCracken, Moderator

Adam Kuehner, Clerk

**Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)
Regular Meeting during Synod
On Tuesday June 28, 2016
At Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana
Report of the Clerk of Presbytery**

Dear Fathers & Brothers,

As clerk of this presbytery, since our last meeting, I have completed the following tasks:

- Returned Paper 2015-01 to its author along with a note of gratitude for his many diligent labors to promote the accuracy of our doctrinal standards.
- Forwarded the list of thirteen typographical errors (Cf. Study Committee Report on Paper 2015-01) to the E&P Board in time for its next meeting, encouraging it to take whatever steps it deems necessary in order to correct our printed version of the Westminster Standards.
- Composed and circulated the minutes from the ordination/installation of Craig Scott in Grand Rapids on May 20, 2016.
- Submitted our presbytery minutes to the three reviewers assigned by the Assistant Clerk of Synod and interacted with those reviewers concerning their questions and feedback.

Presently I am still working through the slow process of learning how to function effectively in my new role as clerk. This will take time and patience. Between now and our next Spring meeting, I hope to compile an accurate list of those on the roll of presbytery. I have also begun mulling over the feedback we received from the Synod minute-reviewers and how to best apply their suggestions. Some of this feedback is reflected in the recommendations below.

It has, at times, been suggested that I read through all the past minutes of our presbytery searching for a list of adopted guidelines for presbyterial order and procedure. While I do see the value in this enterprise, I do not believe that my already-existing responsibilities as a busy pastor, husband, father, and presbytery clerk (etc) give me the luxury of pursuing such a noble work of supererogation at this time. Perhaps in the future. Or perhaps a committee of enthusiastic delegates with greater flexibility in their schedules could compile the list instead. In any event, it has been a pleasure thus far to serve you all in this capacity. Your patience has not gone unnoticed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That, whenever possible, all presbytery reports and/or documents to be included in the minutes be submitted to the clerk in Microsoft Word/Excel format (or Pages for Apple Users), using black and white Times New Roman font, with no unnecessarily extravagant formatting frills or scanned attachments.
2. That presbytery reimburse the clerk for the purchase of Adobe Acrobat Standard DC (Estimated Cost: \$300).
3. That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda for this meeting.
4. That all RPCNA elders present, including all non-certified delegates from this presbytery, be granted the privilege of the floor during the remainder of this meeting.*

Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church

"They shall turn their
swords into plowshares
and their spears into
pruning hooks." Isaiah 2:4

Congregational Report
Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery
Spring Meeting (2016)
Bloomington, Indiana
March 3-5, 2016

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

As a congregation, we recognize that the ultimate triumph of unity over disunity is expressed through cooperation. Interpersonal strife must be replaced with a "striving together for the faith of the gospel". Provoking one another to wrath must be replaced with "provoking one another to love and good works". Biblical unity is never stagnant or inactive. Contentious energy will never cease to dominate until it is redirected and converted into cooperative energy. If genuine church unity is to be achieved and maintained, then the swords and spears of conflict must ever be turned into the plowshares and pruning hooks of earnest gospel labor.

Thankfully, we have been privileged to experience these truths firsthand over the past few years. During that time, the Lord has not only granted us a period of sustained peace and unity, but has enabled us to cultivate an active, energetic "partnership in the gospel" as we labor together for Him in Southeast Michigan.

Our average morning worship attendance this year increased to 40, including a cumulative total of 289 visitors. Afternoon worship featured fewer visitors, but enjoyed nearly perfect attendance by our members (except for those sick, out of town, etc.). Communicant membership presently stands at 27, with eight baptized members, and a new membership class of about seven people. As in years past, we renewed our Covenant of Communicant Membership during the first communion service of the year, which was preceded by a day of prayer and fasting. Guest speakers for communion this year included Rev. Shawn Anderson (Spring) and Rev. Gordon Keddie (Fall). Pastor Kuehner administered the sacrament on four additional occasions.

During the mid-week, we are now blessed with regional prayer and Bible study meetings in Southfield, Novi, Ann Arbor, and Pontiac. We also have a ladies group that meets every other month to discuss *Holiness* by J.C. Ryle. Our young men's summer discipleship group is again scheduled to run from May to August. This past year featured a book study on *The Theology of the Family*. This proved fitting, since we now expect to have at least two sets of newlyweds among us by the end of May.

**Sparta Reformed Presbyterian Church
Annual Report for 2015**

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who calls us to His own glory and excellence (II Peter 1:3).

We give thanks to Almighty God for what He has done among us at Sparta Reformed Presbyterian Church in 2015. Here are some highlights of the year:

Ministry of the Word: On Sabbath mornings, Pastor Daniel Hemken finished preaching a sermon series through Ephesians (begun last year). He then preached a topical series on Covenant Theology and Christ's Reign, after which he began preaching through the Gospel according to Mark. In the evenings, he preached a series on Spiritual Practices before preaching through First and Second Thessalonians and beginning his present survey of the Book of Genesis. At our Wednesday evening Bible Study and Prayer Meeting, Pastor Hemken has been leading us in a study of the Gospel according to Luke before our time of prayer. On Thursday evenings from May through August, we opened the doors of our building to the public as Pastor Hemken lectured on Pseudo-Christian Cults. Families of our congregation have benefited from the family worship aid *Let's Worship God* published by the Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland (to which Pastor Hemken has contributed by writing a study of the Book of Judges). When our pastor was away, our pulpit was supplied by Bob Morrow, Sam Sterrett and PCA ruling elders Norris Lessley and John Hancock. We were also delighted to have Venkatesh Gopalakrishnan and his wife Sarmishta (Venky and Shammi) with us as Venky brought us God's Word on December 13, 2015.

Sacraments: We were blessed to celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper four times in 2015 – March 1 (12 communicants), May 3 (11 communicants), September 13 (14 communicants) and December 13 (22 communicants). Two of these services (May 3 and December 13) were preceded by a preparatory service the night before.

Sabbath School: Margaret Odom and Kim Hemken have taught the children's Sabbath School classes, studying Fathers and Sons in the Bible, the Children's Catechism and Missionaries, while Pastor Hemken has been leading the adult class in a study through *Understanding Biblical Doctrine*.

Finances: When we issued the call to Pastor Hemken near the end of 2013 we believed our finances to be strong enough to offer him a salary for two years. The LORD blessed us so much in 2014 that we were able to start the clock over at the beginning of this year. 2015 proved to be another blessed year with our expenditures somewhat exceeding our income, even as we increased our pastor's salary. Truly the LORD has been good to us.

Session Matters: Session held ten regular and three special meetings. We were privileged to receive three new communicant members into our congregation this year – one being a long-time adherent and the other two being baptized members of the church – bringing our roll to 21 communicant members. In order to fulfill the directive of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, the Session adopted the following Pastoral Renewal Policy to be presented to the congregation as part of the 2016 Pastor's Compensation Package:

2015 SWORP* Presbytery Report (Submitted to our 3/3/16 Spring Meeting) (*Southwest Ohio RP Church / Rev. Dr. R. E. Knodel, Jr.)

2015 Overview

A.D. 2015 has been very exciting because we've gone from Mission-Church status to being a fully Organized Church with both a Session and Deacon. Our November 13, 2015 formation meeting, blessed by Presbytery, was certainly the highpoint of our year! As pastor, I have been blessed to be joined by **Steven Work, Tim Vincze, and Gregory Scott Damerow** on our Session, with **Chris Knodel** as our Deacon. We've begun to meet, to great mutual encouragement. *The Lord has allowed us to maintain continuous worship services here for five years, host a Student Mission Team for two weeks this past summer, be very involved in community affairs and go into 2016 with a lot of optimism.*

Preaching Ministry & Sacraments

In our morning service, we began the year with a series on **Worship**, using various Bible texts. I purposed in this, to both challenge our mission church to worship more enthusiastically – as well as to better appreciate our denominational distinctives. After "Worship," with an eye to further organization, I preached a series on the **church officers**. Steven Work had had a short series on worship earlier – in my absences – and we both focused on relevant aspects of leadership in the Pastoral Epistles. In July, **Rev. Work** also did a short series on the RPCNA, its inheritance and history that was well-received. In August I began a series on the **Acts of the Apostles**, thinking that our young church would well-benefit from studying the early Apostolic Church. This continues on into 2016. Abundant thanks are due to the **Rev. Steven Work** for supplying our pulpit on most of those occasions when I have been called away on vacation or presbytery assignment.

We began the year's evening services, continuing our study of the **Book of the Exodus**. In this, we traveled beyond the history of early Exodus, into the giving of the Law to Moses, and then the construction of the Tabernacle. As 2016 began we saw the Tabernacle finished and the Glory of God's Spirit descending on it – so that Israel might be led into the future as a spiritual people. The Tabernacle always reminds us of the Emmanuel phenomenon of the New Testament era – the idea that God dwells among us. This was prefigured in the Tabernacle and radically fulfilled in Christ Jesus!

Such serial preaching always teaches me new things. The Bible shocked me when I realized that Moses *broke the tablets of the Law* at the Golden Calf incident, when God signaled his wrath. Popular thinking rarely sees grace associated with the Ten Commandments; but this was precisely the logic of God's actions. In his wrath he took back the Law in Exodus 32, even as in his grace he gave it again in Exodus 34. This is completely counter-intuitive to contemporary evangelicalism, and its notions of grace and law. So we should see the law as our friend, after Salvation – showing us how to become more holy in Christ.

Our Ministry of the Word multiplies through SermonAudio.com. We're delivering 500-1,100 downloads a month all over the country and world.

We have celebrated the **Lord's Supper** on our four-times-per-year schedule. In these services, we make a special aim to focus on the fact that we should expect God to work in-and-through his chosen holy ordinances as real "means of grace." Rev. Steven Work has regularly brought meaningful table exhortations.

Outreach

We did not do as much public witnessing (preaching/signage at intersections and abortion industry sites) this past year, largely due to illness. I managed to get over a prolonged virus in the Spring, but that was the time that Susan got diagnosed with a serious thyroid problem. Her illness has complicated our lives in many unforeseen ways, for which we would solicit Presbytery's prayers. *She has spent many whole weeks bedridden this year, and her needs have compelled my own.*

Susan and I joined the **West Chester Tea Party** to witness together, but Susan has not been able to attend hardly any meetings this past year. She had commenced a wonderful outreach with the women, but has been taken from it. Still, we have felt the Lord's blessing in this. I give out my church business-cards with its map on the back all the time. We have made a constant effort to detail the relation between biblical theology, fraternal love and good government, and many in the Tea Party have thanked me for it.

Sycamore Reformed Presbyterian Church Report

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery March 3-5

"There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven..."

– Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

We give thanks to our great Triune God for his manifold blessings and gracious benefits in Christ Jesus. Reflecting on 2015, it would appear that in the wise providence of God we have experienced a year of pruning. Not that God has been pruning only bad or sinful aspects of our life and service. No! In fact, the pruning of this Sycamore tree has been for our health and growth, so that we would be able to continue producing fruit in Christ's Kingdom.

Statistics of the Year

The Session constituted as a court of the church 10 times and met informally several other occasions for counsel and prayer. Our church celebrated the sacrament of communion 6 times throughout the year.

We participated in Marion Reformed Presbyterian Church's organization on Friday, September 11, 2015. It is amazing to think of all that the Lord did from a Bible study with IWU students to planting another Kingdom outpost in Marion, IN. Truly the Lord builds His Church!

Membership at SRPC must be considered in light of Marion RP Church's organization. We transferred 25 communicants and 17 baptized members to Marion. We also transferred 6 communicants and 9 baptized to three other congregations (two RPCNA, one FCSC). The Lord also added to our congregation with 4 births this year! This leaves our numbers in the end of 2015 at 37 communicant members and 23 baptized members. Our average attendance was, 54 (14 households) in the morning service and 26 (8 households) in the evening teaching service.

Regarding our preaching & teaching ministry the Lord has held forth His Gospel of Grace to us in the Gospel according to Mark, Judges, Ruth, and Galatians as well as the theme of Shepherding God's Flock. We also invited the community to our Sanctity of Life service.

The Session spent most of 2015 studying and processing Timothy Witmer's, *"The Shepherd Leader"* to gain more insight into our role of shepherding Christ's flock. We had a very profitable retreat in July which resulted in our present shepherding groups. We were also blessed by the time spent with the Presbytery Visitation Committee.

Pastor Anderson continues to be involved in monthly preaching at the Rescue Mission, frequent counseling in the community, weekly prayer meeting with local pastors, and is in the ThM program at Puritan Seminary.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO VISIT SYCAMORE

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Your committee respectfully reports that it visited the Sycamore congregation on October 24 and 25, 2015. After meeting together for lunch and doing some planning, the committee met with Pastor Shawn Anderson from 2:00 – 4:00 pm, with several minutes taken in the middle of that time to go next door and visit his wife Tammy and children. From 4:00 – 6:00 pm we met with the entire session. This was followed by dinner with the four session members and their wives at a local restaurant, followed by dessert in the home of elder Greg Fisher. We observed the morning SS program, the morning worship service, and enjoyed a delicious lunch with the congregation. During the lunch and at other times we had opportunity to interact with various members of the congregation. We were able in the afternoon to do some preliminary discussion of our observations concerning Sycamore. Due to concerns for his ailing wife, Dr. Knodel had to leave at this point while the two remaining members of the committee stayed for the evening service.

The committee notes that in the last couple of years several very significant transitions have taken place in the life of the congregation. First, the founding pastor left after nearly two decades in order to serve at RPTS. Secondly, a considerable portion of the congregation left to form the Marion congregation. In addition to this in recent months three families have left or are in the process of leaving the congregation, two of whom are related to work or family situation; two of these were deacons and the other was a strong and very active family. On top of this, it was necessary to depose one of the deacons because of sin; this was announced the Sabbath morning of our visit. It has been a difficult time in many ways but the pastor, session, and congregation have continued to trust God and persevere with remarkably good attitudes. Finances are tight, but the bills are being paid and necessary improvements to the church building are being made.

The congregation will soon be without an active diaconate because the one remaining deacon is taking a sabbatical to care for special challenges relating to adopting 2 foster children. Therefore, the session will be overseeing the diaconal ministries. The committee urges the session to keep the commitment to programmed activities small enough so that they and the congregation will have the time and energy necessary to meet the ministry needs as they arise.

We found the pastor laboring hard in his role as a preacher and teacher in the congregation, as well as in prayer. Prayers for disciplined members have been wonderfully answered. The session works together well and ruling elders hold the teaching elder in high regard. There seems to be much effective teaching and counseling occurring. Significant effort has been invested in planning the SS curriculum. There is informal outreach taking place. An outreach committee has been appointed but has not met. We would encourage the session to examine the overall

Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church
Report to Presbytery
Spring Meeting 2016

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

The ministry of Christ in the Spirit continues at Westminster with both challenge and blessing over the past year. As a blessing to us, our interim pastor of almost six years, Steve Rhoda, became our pastor by regular call in May, having been examined and sustained by Presbytery at the spring 2015 meeting. The installation service was a special time for our congregation, and we continue to remember with thankful hearts the commission from Presbytery that came to make this possible, especially as Dave Long was the moderator and is now home in glory.

Another blessing has been the exceptional giving of the congregation. We had a very good financial year in 2015, our reserve funds thus remaining steady and extending the viability of ministry with a full-time pastor further into the future. We are thankful to God for the resources He is providing us, even as we lost two families and a single member over the past year.

The rich fellowship within the congregation at Westminster is another blessing to be counted. Despite our size, and seemingly regardless of attendance on a given Lord's Day, the communion of saints is deeply felt as members linger long into the afternoon and enjoy being together in the name of Christ.

Finally for blessings to highlight, we continue to have a very active and eager youth membership at Westminster. Presbytery youth events, including those of CYPY as well as combined activities with other congregations, have given our youth the opportunity for much activity and growth in their faith.

Among challenges, most are those that we have faced in the past and don't anticipate going away anytime soon in the future. A majority of our congregation lives at a significant distance, and in varying directions, from the church building, making weekday ministry unsustainable. This also limits church attendance in the event of bad weather and illness. On occasion we have all members present for a worship service, but usually only a fraction of them. In addition, the busyness of the congregation in work, school, and extended family/social engagements again limits what we can plan and accomplish in terms of ministry.

Therefore, perhaps our greatest need is to grow as a congregation, and to grow by gaining members from the local community. To this end, we continue to preach the Word and to seek ways of making connections in the community. We have completed two mailings in the recent past, seeking to let people know that we are here and that they are welcome to come and worship with us. We also have a new sign that sits in front of the building, announcing our ministry times and inviting visitors. Over the past 5-6 years, the pedestrian traffic has greatly increased on our street, and this sign is a strategic attempt to prompt people to come check us out as a church.

Please pray for us, that our blessings would incite encouragement and perseverance within us and that our challenges would not lessen our joy in the Lord. Pray also that we would have wisdom to know the will of God for us for the future. We desire to proclaim Christ and the Gospel and to see people coming to faith and growing weekly in their relationship to Jesus Christ. May God give us strength to labor on.

Sincerely, in Christ,
Stephen Rhoda

**SELMA COMMITTEE
GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY OF THE RPCNA**

Report to the Meeting of Presbytery – June 29, 2016

Fathers and brothers,

Since our last report to you at the spring meeting of presbytery, our committee has continued working toward our goal of helping the Selma RPC find a pastor, as well as improving relations between the congregation and the presbytery. As we have done so, there are some updates we would like to share with you regarding: 1) Selma's interim moderator; 2) Mark Brown, a potential candidate for the pastorate of Selma RPC; and 3) Our committee's decision and plan regarding the strained relationship between Selma RPC and the presbytery.

In our last report, we shared with you that our committee was in discussion regarding who should replace Jerry O'Neill as the interim moderator of the Selma Session. This is because Dr. O'Neill has faithfully served in this capacity for many years and now desires to be relieved of his duties. In addition, while grateful for Dr. O'Neill's service, we believe it is the will of presbytery that the interim moderator be a man from our own presbytery. It was recently decided by our committee that Chairman Adam Niess should take on the position. However, upon sharing this desire of ours with the Selma Session (not wanting to push anyone onto them against their will), the elders requested a change not be made. Having grown comfortable with Dr. O'Neill's leadership, they would prefer it remain the same for the time being. Out of love for them, and wanting to keep improving our relationship with them, our committee believes we should honor their request for one more year, at the end of which we will resume discussion on the matter.

CANDIDATES & CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT

Great Lakes /
Gulf Presbytery

Summer, 2016

Fathers and brothers,

We are glad to bring the following items of business to this meeting of presbytery:

1. **Recommendation 1** - That examinations be conducted according to the following chart.

Student	Exam	Time*	Examiner
Andrew Battiato	English Bible Exam	n/a	n/a
Joel Hart	History paper	n/a	Jeff Kessler & Phil Pockras
	English Bible Exam	n/a	
	Licensure to preach		
Sam Ketcham	History paper	n/a	Scott Hunt & Dick Knodel
	English Bible Exam	n/a	n/a
	Expository Sermon 1 Mark 1:9-13	25/-/5	n/a
	Licensure to preach		
Zach Smith	English Bible Exam	n/a	n/a

2. **Recommendation 2** - That Joel Hart & Sam Ketcham be licensed to preach if they are sustained in their exams.
3. **Seminary classes** - Currently we are planning a covenant theology class to be taught by Dr. Prutow this fall.

Attached: student charts

Respectfully submitted,

Roy Blackwood (emeritus)	Rich Holdeman (2018)
James Faris (2017)	Michael Lefebvre (2019)
Dean Filson (2018)	George Gregory (2018)
Jon Hughes (2019)	Jared Olivetti (2017)

Judicial Committee Report

Fathers and brethren,

The Bloomington Session has requested that Presbytery "petition Synod for a change to the 'Queries for Ordination, Installation, and Licensure,' namely that vow #6 from 'The Covenant of Baptism' be added to the 'Queries for Ordination, Installation, and Licensure,' as Query 10," which reads, "Do you make these promises in the presence of God, in humble reliance upon His grace, as you desire to give your account with joy at the Last Great Day?"

The Judicial Committee recommends that Presbytery not accede to the request. While we appreciate the warm, pastoral intent of the Bloomington Session in their recommendation, we believe the wisest course is not to proceed at this time, for the following reasons:

1. It is our opinion that while a cogent argument can be made for the proposed tenth vow, the current nine are sufficient, and those taking these vows are not underserved by them as they carry out their ministry as officers in the church.
2. We contend that the substance of the proposed tenth vow is already included in the current nine: in Query 8, the officer already confesses reliance upon the Holy Spirit, and in Query 9, acknowledges accountability before God.
3. Given that there are already nine vows within the Queries for Ordination, Installation, and Licensure, we are concerned that pushing the number of ordination vows into double-digits may inadvertently and unnecessarily rekindle a recent debate at Synod on the current number and extent of our vows.

In conclusion, while the Bloomington request is not without merit, we are not persuaded that the queries should be altered at this time.

Respectfully submitted,
Shawn Anderson
Stephen Rhoda, Chair
David Whitla