

Report of the Atlanta Commission and TGB of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery March 5th-7th, 2020

Fathers and Brethren:

At last year's meeting of the Presbytery, Atlanta Presbyterian Fellowship was elevated from being a preaching station to being a mission church. With gratitude for the work of the previous Atlanta Commission, a new commission was appointed, which serves as the Temporary Governing Body for this mission effort, which has now been renamed Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Since our appointment a year ago, your Commission has met in constituted court, on the following days: 4/6/2019, 5/4/2019, 5/10/2019, 5/15/2019, 5/26/2019, 6/19/2019, 7/25/2019, 8/22/2019, 10/10/2019, 11/21/2019, 1/9/2020, 2/6/2020, 2/7/2020, 2/8/2020, and 2/20/2020.

Rejoicing in the Installation of the Pastor

In March 2019, the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery approved a call to Dr. Frank J. Smith to be the pastor for the Atlanta ministry. The Commission installed him on May 10th, 2019, with over 50 people being present. Included among that number was Ruling Elder Dale Koons, representing the Presbytery at large. We rejoice with the people at ARPC as they now officially have as pastor a man they have loved and respected for many years.

Work and Expansion of the Ministry

In 2019, the average attendance was 28. Last year, the church welcomed at least 73 first-time visitors. Through the third Sabbath of February 2020, the average attendance has been 29.

The total membership currently stands at 21 (including 13 communicant members and 8 baptized non-communicant members). Three of the members (2 communicants and 1 baptized) moved away several months ago to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and will presumably soon be transferring to the RPCNA congregation where they have been faithfully attending. In addition to the 18 resident members, there are about a dozen adherents.

ARPC's first baptism was that of Mrs. Nancy Pattillo, on December 1st, 2019, who had never been validly baptized (her purported baptism in a Baptist church about twenty years ago having not been performed by a minister).

February 9th, 2020 was a very exciting day, in that we witnessed seven baptisms. One of the adults baptized, Mrs. Michele Haag, a long-time children's worker with the church, having been raised Roman Catholic, she was received upon transfer from an Orthodox Presbyterian Church congregation. The other adult baptized, Miss Tawana Franklin, presented for baptism her five covenant children: Diamonique, known as Diamond (14); Jonathan (10); Caeden (7); Dyneshia (6); and Wynter (almost 3). Received at the same time were Miss Miyoshi Robinson (who has been with the ministry for ten years); Mr. Stacy Moton, III; and Mr. Jimmie Snider, Jr. Mr. Andrew Jubera, who was raised as a Roman Catholic, was to have been baptized on that occasion; however, he had been in a serious accident (being run over by a pickup truck while he was riding his bike) nine days previously. But the next Lord's Day, February 16th,

2020, was, like the week before, also glorious, as Andrew was able to attend and profess his faith and be baptized. The same day, the congregation's first communion was observed. A total of 16 people came to the Lord's Table, with the fencing of the table being done not only by means of verbal warning but also via the use of communion tokens. The Lord's presence was evident as the flock came forward and was seated at table.

The pastor completed a sermon series last year on the various chapters of the Confession of Faith. He also preached a series of sermons on Psalm 51; a two-part message on Nehemiah 4 ("Sword and Trowel"); a two-part message on tithing; and a two-part message on Bible meditating. In January, he began a series on I Thessalonians. Others who have filled the pulpit have included Dr. Ken Smith; Pastor Steven Work; and Deacon Sean McPherson.

There are now three Sabbath School classes. The adult class was taught by Deacon Sean McPherson until his move to Pennsylvania in August. That class has now been taken over by Elder T.J. Pattillo. Miss Amy Work continues to work with the older children. The class for the younger children is taught by Mrs. Michele Haag.

One of the key ministries has been that of providing diaconal assistance for several members and for others as well. There have also been numerous instances of pastoral counseling.

God's Provision of a Ministerial Intern

In September 2019, Trevor ("T.J.") Pattillo became ARPC's ministerial intern. He is well equipped for this post. He had served some years ago as an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church in America. He and his family had joined the RPCNA in 2011. In August 2019, they became members of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, but shortly thereafter he was called to serve in downtown Atlanta. He aspires to the ministry, and is presently enrolled at Metro Atlanta Seminary, which operates under the auspices of Metro Atlanta Presbytery (PCA), in a B.Th. program. After completing that course of study, he expects to enroll in an M.Div. program. He and his wife and their adorable children (Hannah, who is 8, and Sawyer, who is 4) have been of incalculable benefit to the Atlanta ministry. In addition to his regular teaching of the adult Sunday School class, we have already used T.J. to assist in several baptisms. We see him as a local man being raised up for leadership in Atlanta.

God's Provision in the Budget and the Financial Report

The 2020 budget is attached, as is a financial report.

There has been a tremendous and significant response to the fundraising efforts for the building fund. At the beginning of December, there was a bit more than \$15,000 in that fund. As of February 15th, 2020, there was \$48,776 in that fund, with another at least \$8,375 being pledged, for a total of \$57,151. We are amazed! And we praise God for His evident blessing upon this work.

Interestingly, much if not most of this special designated income has been given or pledged not only from outside this Presbytery, but also outside of the RPCNA. In addition to donations from NAPARC and other Reformed churches and individuals, there have been gifts (for both the general fund and the building fund) from an Episcopalian clergywoman, a couple of people from a PC(USA) background, and a man who self-identifies as an atheist and a socialist. (We regard donations from unexpected sources as a manifestation of the mediatorial kingship of Christ.) Meanwhile, two of the congregations of our

Presbytery have donated in direct response to our appeal for moneys for the building fund. We would encourage all of the congregations of our Presbytery to give generously to this cause.

God's Provision of a New Worship Location and its Planned Purchase

In 2018, Atlanta Presbyterian Fellowship was informed that its lease would not be renewed past the summer of 2019. Accordingly, a diligent search was undertaken to secure a new meeting location. Those efforts were initially frustrated, and a month's extension on the existing lease was granted. Thankfully, as of October 2019, Atlanta RPC has been leasing a building which we expect to be able to purchase in the near future.

Our Proposal for Purchase of the Building

In January, the Ad Interim Commission gave its blessing to our entering into an agreement to purchase a building in downtown Atlanta. AIC's action has helped us as we have been dealing with a challenging situation. After being forced out of our previous rental, finding an acceptable property in our area has proven exceedingly difficult. We finally obtained a new rental agreement for our new location, but the owner entered into it only if we were willing to make plans to purchase it.

Our six-month lease, which expires at the end of March 2020, is an informal lease-with-option-to-buy. It has been formally appraised at \$250,000, but the understanding we had reached with the owner was that he would sell it to us at \$200,000.

After comparing our past rental fees we found that our mortgage payments for the new building would be cheaper or equal to our past and current monthly rent.

The Advantages of the Property

The property occupies a wonderful location. It's two blocks off of Northside Drive, a major north-south artery; two blocks from a multi-million-dollar park that is being built; four blocks from the Georgia World Congress Center; about two-thirds of a mile from the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium; and about a mile from tourist attractions such as the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, CNN Center, and College Football Hall of Fame. It is virtually in the shadow of Midtown's skyscrapers. Moreover, being in a nicer area than where we started, we are right at the intersection of the 'haves' and 'have-nots' — enabling us to continue to reach out to 'the least of these,' while at the same time attracting middle-class folks living in nicer apartments and houses.

But what is particularly advantageous about this location is the unique zoning of this property. When the building was turned into a church twenty years ago, its industrial zoning classification allowed it to be also used as a "Place of worship." Even though the zoning was later changed to "Residential," this church usage is grandfathered in. Furthermore, there are very few church buildings in our area that would have this benefit of being able, according to zoning, to be used as a church. And because of mandated parking space requirements, to try to construct a new church building would be cost prohibitive—even assuming that a sufficient number of contiguous lots could be acquired.

Therefore, given:

- 1) Our need to secure property,
- 2) The fact that this property is being offered to us at a fair price,
- 3) The fact that we have already raised close to \$40,000 for the building fund (with a goal of at least \$50,000 as a down payment), and,
- 4) The fact that we that we are hopeful that more RPCNA congregations will contribute to this cause (in the short time since our funding letter went out, two congregations have already responded)

– We therefore believe that now is the time to take the appropriate steps toward acquiring this building. To use common real estate jargon, ‘time is of the essence.’

As we will soon enter into a formal agreement to purchase this property (in the form of an option to buy), we will need to consummate the purchase by September 1st, 2020, according to the terms of that agreement.

Therefore, in order to purchase this property, we have applied to the Trustees of Synod for a loan and now seek the approval of the Presbytery for this loan to be granted. We strongly urge said approval, as a necessary measure for the continuation and prospering of Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Recommendations

- (1) That the pastor of Atlanta RPC be given up to ten minutes to address Presbytery.
- (2) That the Atlanta Commission be authorized to proceed with the purchase of the church building at 574 Western Avenue NW, Atlanta, Georgia.
- (3) That the Presbytery approve the loan application to the Trustees of Synod.
- (4) That the Presbytery ask its congregations and members to give generously for the support of Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church, particularly for its building fund.
- (5) That the Presbytery give \$2,000.00 in 2020 for the ministry of Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church.
- (6) That the Presbytery allot \$2,000.00 for the work of the Atlanta Commission.
- (7) That the minutes of the Atlanta Commission be spread upon the minutes.
- (8) That the present members of the Atlanta Commission be re-elected for another year.
- (9) That this report be approved.

Atlanta Reformed Presbyterian Church 2020 Budget

<u>Facility & Operating</u>		\$16,900.00
Rent	\$12,000.00	
Utilities	1,800.00	
Liability Insurance	1,100.00	
Van: Insurance	850.00	
Van: Fuel	250.00	
Building Supplies	100.00	
Office Supplies (paper, ink, etc.)	500.00	
Other Supplies	100.00	
Hospitality (coffee, snacks, etc.)	100.00	
Administrative	100.00	
<u>Ministerial Compensation</u>		8,508.00
Housing Allowance	4,008.00	
Pension	4,500.00	
<u>Expenses for Diaconal and Other Workers</u>		400.00
<u>Pulpit Supply</u>		500.00
<u>Edification</u>		100.00
Teaching Supplies	100.00	
<u>Mercy</u>		16,600.00
Assist: Congregation	16,600.00	
<u>Intern</u>		6,000.00
<u>Miscellaneous and Contingency</u>		<u>1,000.00</u>
<u>Budget Total</u>		\$50,008.00