

Southfield RPC Visitation Committee Report to the Great Lakes—Gulf Presbytery, November 14, 2023

Introduction and Schedule

The Southfield Visitation Committee was privileged with the opportunity to meet with the Southfield Reformed Presbyterian Church over the weekend of October 28 and 29, 2023. The committee consisted of Wade Mann (TE - Elkhart, chairman), Russell Lodge (RE – Terre Haute), and Brentt VanSickle (RE – Kokomo). Prior to the meeting we received the session's responses to the presbytery visitation form/questionnaire, as well as their recent annual congregational reports and financial statements.

The visitation committee was able to meet formally with the Session of Southfield on Saturday, October 28th. This meeting was attended by Adam Kuehner (TE), John Kim (RE), and Jon Hughes (RE). The evening began with a meal shared at the Kuehners' house. The committee was able to introduce itself to the session as well as most of pastor Kuehner's family.

Following the meal, the committee met with the session in pastor Kuehner's office from approximately 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. During this time the elders shared with the committee both their personal spiritual life as well as the health of the church and asked for input regarding some shepherding questions. The time was concluded with prayer. The committee was then hosted overnight by Jon and Wendy Hughes.

The morning of the Lord's Day the committee joined the SRPC congregation for morning worship. Following worship there was a fellowship brunch. The committee was introduced, and Pastor Wade Mann greeted the congregation and prayed for the meal. For the duration of the meal, the committee was able to interact with various members and adherents of the congregation.

Meeting the Session

During the evening of Oct 28th, the committee met personally with the session. During this time, the committee initiated the conversation with a discussion of the spiritual health of each elder. The session has been engaged in a wide array of ministry at many levels, but the committee notes that each member of session has been faithful in their own walk and family responsibilities. Pastor Kuehner discussed with the committee the positive changes he has made in his routine which have helped him to maintain a high level of productivity as teaching elder as well as clerk of the presbytery. Elder Kim shared with the committee how God has graciously sustained him and his wife in caring for his elderly parents, which has limited his ability to participate in the life and ministry of the church to some extent. Elder Hughes indicated a generally healthy spiritual life at this time, noting his wife Wendy's additional care of family members over the past several months.

Church Life

As part of the interview, the session provided information on multiple areas of the church. The session is pleased with how the Lord Jesus continues to build His church. Morning worship attendance continues to grow. The congregants are full of life and hungry for teaching and guidance. They report that in events outside of worship, there is good attendance. With this influx of young people, many under the age of 30, there has also been an increased need for counseling and working through interpersonal matters. Otherwise, the session gives thanks for the overall peace of the church while remaining vigilant for threats to the flock.

Worship

Morning worship continues every Lord's Day. Pastor Kuehner is currently preaching from Romans. Sabbath school is held every Lord's Day except if there is a 5th Lord's Day of the month. Evening Sabbath services occur 2-4 Sabbaths per month. There are midweek Bible studies with multiple elders. Communion has been transitioned from 6 times per year to every quarter. This happens with

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preparatory services the Saturday before. Pastor Kuehner has been preaching through Romans in the morning service and his evening services have been on Christian love. Pastor Kuehner has been grateful for the availability of pulpit supply from Rev. Namsik Yang and Rev. Colin Samul.

Diaconate

There are currently no ordained deacons. However, there are currently five men who are undergoing a year-long diaconal internship. They have been currently undertaking diaconal work within the church. They are also attending session meetings (not including private shepherding matters). They discuss diaconal care during the meetings. The session reports they have been working with the men to promote and develop their spiritual qualifications. They hope to have an election next year.

Youth Work

Currently, there is one child catechism class. Other than this there are no youth groups. The session attributes this to only having a few teenagers currently within the congregation. However, the session believes that those teenagers are being well shepherded due to the large number of mature adults. Generally, the session believes that they are well included in other activities of the church.

Discipline

There has been one case of discipline in the church. The disciplined member is currently seeking an appeal. Other issues in the congregation have been dealt with informally and without significant consequence.

Outreach

The congregation is active in community outreach. Several members share the gospel outside a local abortion clinic. There is also engagement in local public locations such as bus stops and sporting events. There are several other outreach efforts within the church. Pastor Kuehner has been involved with much but hopes to hand some of this off to others within the church.

Finances

The budget is being met and exceeded, as God is generously supplying their needs. Pastor Kuehner reports that he is being well provided for financially. They are also able to support the work of Synod and Presbytery.

Physical Plant

For the age of the building, it is in overall good condition. Multiple projects have been completed recently.

Summary

We rejoice in the good work God is doing in the Southfield RPC and for the growth and vitality that is evident. We commend the session for their diligent labor in shepherding the congregation. We further commend each elder for their faithful service to Christ in additional key areas, such as their leadership in Presbytery or their long-term care for elderly family members. We encourage them to guard against overextending themselves and to persevere in the strength of the Lord as they seek to present each member complete in Christ (Colossians 1:28-29) and further the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 24:14).

Recommendation: that the committee be dismissed, having concluded its work.

Sincerely in Christ,

Russell Lodge, Brentt VanSickle, Wade Mann (chair)