

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Reformed Presbyterian Church Shepherding Committee Report**

### **Synod Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, June 2025**

#### **Background & Charter**

The Great Lakes Gulf (GLG) Presbytery received Paper 25-3 from five couples at 2<sup>nd</sup> Indianapolis and 25-4 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Indianapolis session at the March meeting of the GLG Presbytery. Both papers petition the presbytery to assist in bringing resolution to a variety of disagreements that have arisen within the congregation primarily related to a petition requesting an elder election and subsequent events.

All parties agreed that a committee was required to deal with issues of conflict, distrust, and hurt. In addition, there were concerns raised regarding the session's use of authority and perceived irregularities. The motion was raised and passed to establish a three-member shepherding committee to address the issues raised in Papers 25-3 and 25-4 along with related issues. We were given latitude in the course of our work to determine if outside parties were required to accomplish the work of mediation.

#### **Summary of Activity**

Since our establishment, we have met multiple times as a committee to establish strategies, to formulate the facts learned, and determine the next steps. Our work has been delayed a bit waiting to have a fully staffed committee, a fire in one of committee members' home, the birth of a baby, vacations, and conferences. It has been abundantly clear from our work that the petitioners have put a great deal of thought into this and had a great deal of documentation to support their position.

We have met with each group concerned (Petitioners, Shavers, session, and a retired session member), and have had multiple one on one meets as well. In addition, we conducted a formal meeting on 4 June between the Shavers and the session (with the petitioners and the retired elder present).

Our goal had been to also establish mediation meetings between the petitioners individually & the session and the Shavers & the session to begin reconciliation by identifying individual grievances. Unfortunately, while the session was willing, the other parties were not due to a certain level of distrust. We tried to accomplish the same meeting without the session present and unfortunately the petitioners declined once again. That being said, the Shavers have agreed to meet with us.

#### **Current Status & Recommendations**

From the onset of our work, it became clear that the petitioners did not want a shepherding committee, they wanted an investigative commission... believing the irregularities on how the session conducts itself has led to this situation. Because the petitioner's expectations have not been met, this has clearly hindered our role. Since our charter was not investigative, we remain focused on shepherding, although to do this role a certain level of investigation has taken place.

We currently have a list of thoughts and questions identified for each group to help begin the reconciliation process. To date, the document created for the session has been the only one shared.

In our 4 June meeting, where all parties were present, there was a great deal of tension... but there were tasks identified that we believe will be helpful to move toward reconciliation. From this meeting the session was given a homework assignment to reflect on how they conduct themselves and do their work and Pastor Foltz was given the assignment to reflect on the offenses that were identified in the meeting with Nathan Shaver and to determine how best to proceed with the reconciliation process with him.

The next steps for our committee will be a meeting, with the Shavers & the committee, a meeting with the Petitioners & the committee, a meeting with the session & the committee, and finally a meeting with Jerry Foltz & the committee. This work will lead to a meeting with all parties involved. It is our hope this process would be effective... but we realize an outside mediator may be required if these steps are not successful.

### **Reflections and Encouragements**

Each group and individuals we interviewed have a heart for the Lord and His Church and it is clear they want what is best for Second Indianapolis RPC. Everyone involved wants the church to heal. In addition, we believe, any of the issues/difficulties have been thrust upon the congregation and elders escalated with the resignation of James Faris as Senior Pastor.

### **Prayer Requests**

1. Wisdom on how to best proceed to promote healing and strength for this congregation.
2. Pray that all involved would practice the "judgment of charity", i.e., taking the other person's words or actions in the best possible light and remember that "love covers a multitude of sins."
3. That the homework assignments for the session and the pastor Foltz would be completed and bear much fruit.
4. Pray that our next meetings will begin a true process of reconciliation.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Hart

Bill Roberts

Bob Bibby, Chair