

Fathers and Brothers of the Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery,

I am submitting this in conjunction with my letter of resignation from Westminster RPC Prairie View, IL expressing my desire to engage in church planting efforts in Northwest Alabama. To give some demographic data, the Shoals Area, also known as the Quad Cities (Florence, Muscle Shoals, Sheffield, Tuscumbia), is an area of historical and cultural significance. While it is considered “small-town,” it is seeing continued growth. It has a total population of 78,682. It is also located only an hour west of Huntsville, Alabama’s fastest growing city and now largest city, and only two hours southwest of Nashville. The median household income is \$52,690, with most falling into the working-class category. While there is still very much a cultural identity when it comes to Christianity, the fidelity and commitment of most who profess to be believers is lacking. The two largest denominations in this area are the Southern Baptist Church, which has much variation congregation to congregation, and the Churches of Christ, which is a works-based religion that borders on being both Pelagian and Marcionite. There are only two Reformed congregations in the Shoals Area, Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Florence and First Presbyterian Church Tuscumbia. Knowing both of these congregations intimately, having been a member of both, I can confidently say that any attempt to see a new Reformed church plant in the area would be welcomed with open arms. Both of these PCA congregations understand that there is nothing like the RPCNA in the area. I also have an understanding that the NAPARC comity agreement would be followed.

What drives me to a desire to do church planting in this area is the same love for my kinsmen according to the flesh that the Apostle Paul had for his fellow Jewish brethren. Both my wife and I are from the Shoals Area (I am from Tuscumbia, and my wife is from Muscle Shoals). We both did our undergraduate degrees at the University of North Alabama in Florence. Two of our three girls were born in the Shoals Area. We both have all of our immediate family still in the area. In other words, there is a deep rootedness that we have with this area. It is my desire to see this area won for Christ’s crown and covenant. It is my desire to see a congregation established, many other congregations established in the southern region of our nation, and a southern presbytery established. I thank God for the work He is doing in both Gainesville and Celebration, as well as the work He has done in Atlanta. I pray that those two preaching stations in Florida will one day be established as congregations like what we witnessed at ARPC in October and be member churches of a future southern presbytery. I believe that the Lord can work just as mightily in the Shoals Area of Northwest Alabama as He has in Central Florida and Atlanta.

On June 29, 2025, while I was on vacation visiting family in the Shoals Area, I held an afternoon worship service. Despite being in the middle of a severe weather event, the worship service was still attended by 20 people. There were around 20 other individuals who had planned to attend but were unable to because of the weather. Following that service, there have been people expressing to me their desire to see an RP church planted in the area. On December 21, 2025, I held another

afternoon worship service. This one was attended by 20 people as well, with several others being unable to attend due to being out of town travelling. At this worship service there were eight new people who were not at the first one in June. The attendance of this worship service is much more indicative of the number of people who are desirous to see a church plant. I know of five committed households, and another eight households who have expressed interest. One of the committed households currently lives in Huntsville but has stated that he would be willing to move to the Shoals Area to see an RP church established. Two of the interested households live in Cullman, a town roughly an hour away. I believe there is a lack of solid conservative historical Reformed doctrine and worship in the area, and there are people who are desirous of it. By taking advantage of the interest that is already there, utilizing the university campus as a means of regular outreach, and putting into practice evangelistic methods that I have used in Prairie View, Gainesville, and Pittsburgh, I believe a church plant in this area would prove to be a great success.

I am formally requesting that, should Presbytery grant my resignation from Westminster RPC, Presbytery would then establish the Shoals Area of Alabama to be a preaching station. This would be done with the understanding that funds will not be requested of either the presbytery or the Home Mission Board for at least the duration of 2026, and if the preaching station has not reached the point of being raised to mission church status by Spring 2032 presbytery meeting, it will be officially dissolved.

Thank you for your consideration on this and may the Lord's will be done.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joshua M. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Joshua M. Smith