

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

**Synod Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery, March 2026**

### **Background & Charter**

The Great Lakes–Gulf (GLG) Presbytery received Paper 25-3 from five couples of 2nd Indianapolis and Paper 25-4 from the Session of 2nd Indianapolis at its March meeting. Both papers petitioned the presbytery to assist in bringing resolution to a variety of disagreements that had arisen within the congregation, primarily related to a petition requesting an elder election and the events that followed.

All parties agreed that a committee was needed to address issues of conflict, distrust, and hurt. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the Session's use of authority and perceived procedural irregularities. Accordingly, the presbytery approved a motion to establish a three-member Shepherding Committee to address the issues raised in Papers 25-3 and 25-4, along with related concerns. The committee was given latitude to determine whether the involvement of outside parties would be necessary to accomplish the work of mediation.

### **Summary of Activity**

Since its establishment, the committee has met numerous times to develop strategies, organize the facts learned, and determine appropriate next steps. The committee has also held multiple meetings with various concerned parties, including the petitioners, members of the Shaver family, the Session, individual members of the congregation, and a retired Session member. Committee members have conducted many phone conversations with individuals and Session members within the congregation. In addition, Bill Roberts has preached fifteen times at 2nd RP since the committee was formed.

A mediation meeting was also conducted between the petitioners and the Session. While this meeting did not achieve all that was initially hoped, some measure of reconciliation occurred between certain Session members and the petitioners. Notably, communication took place between Pastor Foltz and Nathan Shaver in which forgiveness was sought in writing, followed by a face-to-face meeting in which forgiveness was granted.

Although our committee's charter was pastoral in nature, a significant amount of investigative work proved necessary in order to understand the situation fully, determine an appropriate path forward, and develop recommendations that would be helpful for the future ministry of 2nd Reformed Presbyterian Church in the greater Indianapolis area.

### **Current Status**

It is regrettable that all of the original petitioners have chosen to worship at other congregations in the area and have formally transferred their membership. In the committee's final meeting with the petitioners and the 2nd RP Session, it was clear that the petitioners were weary and felt the need to move on. While some indicated a willingness to consider returning at some point in the future, they

currently believe this decision is in the best interest of their families. As a committee, we agree that a period of separation may be beneficial for all parties involved.

With the departure of the original petitioner families, the committee shifted its focus to working directly with the Session. This work resulted in the development of an eight-point improvement plan for the Session. It is our belief that focused attention on these areas will significantly reduce the likelihood of future conflict and improve the Session's overall relationship with the congregation.

A redacted version of this plan, prepared to protect individual confidentiality, was shared with the congregation as well as with the petitioners who have left 2nd RP. To assist the presbytery understanding the scope of this work, the relevant communication has been included in this report as **Appendix A**.

We are thankful that the 2nd RP Session developed a plan to address these concerns and communicated it openly with the congregation. To ensure transparency and provide an opportunity for interaction, a joint question-and-answer session involving the 2nd RP Session and the Shepherding Committee was held with the congregation on November 16. Overall, the plan was well received.

As a committee, we believe these areas of improvement are necessary to strengthen the working relationships within the Session and between the Session and the congregation. While we believe the 2nd RP Session exhibited some clear shortcomings and made decisions that were unwise, based on our investigation we do not believe the Session acted in a manner contrary to the law and order of the church.

On February 5, 2026, the Session provided a brief update on their work in response to our eight-point improvement plan. While steps have been taken to improve communication and clarity regarding the direction of the Session, additional work is still needed in this area. A pastoral review with Pastor Foltz has been completed, and a workload review is scheduled for the fall.

In addition, the Session is continuing its study of Jay Adams's *Handbook of Church Discipline*. This study is critical for ensuring consistency in both the practice of church discipline within the congregation and the communication surrounding it. Following the completion of this study, the Session has committed to undertaking a focused study on the RP position regarding subscription to the Westminster Standards.

Shepherding groups have been updated, and Session updates have been restructured to connect more directly with the congregation. Pastor Foltz has also begun regular mentorship meetings with another RP minister; Jerry was greatly encouraged following their first meeting.

We respectfully ask the presbytery to continue praying for the 2nd RP Session and congregation as they work through this process. Please pray that there would be a growing love for one another, unity of the Spirit, and a bond of peace, so that this congregation may not be distracted from the work of building up the saints and bringing forth the gospel to the lost in the greater Indianapolis area (Ephesians 4:1–6).

## **Recommendations**

1. That a Visitation Committee, composed of presbyters not currently serving on the Shepherding Committee, be appointed to conduct a visitation of 2nd RP and to follow up on the Shepherding Committee's action plan toward the end of 2026.
2. That the 2<sup>nd</sup> RP Shepherding Committee be dismissed.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Hart

Bill Roberts

Bob Bibby, Chair

## **APPENDIX A**

### ***2<sup>nd</sup> RP Session Improvement Document from the Presbytery Shepherding Committee 5 September 2025, with some personal examples redacted***

Dear 2<sup>nd</sup> RP Congregation:

Over the past months, we as a committee have had the opportunity to meet with the petitioners, meet with some of the members of your congregation (including the Shavers), meet with you as an entire session, meet with a number of these folks individually (in person and on the phone), and facilitate meetings with those who have expressed concerns over the work of the session. During these meetings and reviewing documentation submitted to us, there is no doubt that the petitioners and the session have a love for this congregation and that everyone involved would like a peaceful solution to manifest itself. We also understand the number of hours, many have worked to try to bring some sort of resolution here.

While this situation has been discouraging to both sides, we as a committee continue to believe there is hope. In light of this, we are thankful that there have been examples of where affected parties have met, resulting in forgiveness being granted.

We believe a part of achieving a lasting solution here is the willingness of your session to be willing to adapt and learn from this situation. Along those lines we provided a document, to your session, identifying weaknesses and errors with suggested solutions. We asked your session to review the document in order to help determine their steps going forward, which brings us to where we are today.

We are thankful for the willingness of all involved to work with us as a committee and for your reference we have include a redacted version of the document given to your session. This document eliminates some of the examples we shared with your session to protect personal confidentiality. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us at any time.

Yours in Christ,

2<sup>nd</sup> RP Shepherding Committee

Joel Hart

Bill Roberts

Bob Bibby, Chair

- 1. As a session, you have struggled with your management of information within the session, this has resulted in a number of problems coming to light over the course of the current conflict with some of the members of the congregation.**

**Proposed Solution:** Effective immediately, this session needs to share all information, all session members must be engaged, make decisions as an entire session, assure you have the right level of detail to develop a decision / plan, and plan implementation of said decisions as a session.

- 2. In evaluating the first petition that came to you as elders, you erred as a session per the following:**
  - a. You chose a more procedure-oriented route to declare the petition “out of order” as opposed to meeting with and understanding the concerns of the petitioning families. Later you did confess an error in declaring the petition out of order, but great damage had already been done. A similar error appeared to have been made in February when, as a session, you communicated a desire to meet with the petitioners, unfortunately you did not follow through in making this meeting happen and you did not communicate to the affected parties on why plans changed.
  - b. As a session, you chose to declare that Nathan was ‘unqualified’ from being an elder, which gave the impression that he was formally examined, when he was not.
  - c. In some cases, offering an apology (and not a confession) and then seemingly taking it back.

**Potential Solution:** Before making decisions that could be controversial to the congregation, step back and ensure you have looked at all the angles. Pause and ask yourselves... Have you properly considered everything and are you all aligned prior to making this decision?

- 3. As a session, you struggled to manage the disconnect between Nathan Shaver’s endorsed public ministry with the congregation and private concerns some of you had about Nathan Shaver’s readiness for ministry. This struggle created an understandable disconnect to your congregation between Nathan being publicly endorsed while privately being questioned about his suitability.**

**Potential Solution:** While unpaid or minimally paid interns are common in the church, before proceeding with this first step, the candidate must be, at a minimum, examined formally by the session. In the case of a paid intern doing regular preaching, he must be examined by your session and taken under care by the presbytery.

- 4. As a session, you have struggled to speak with a clear and coherent voice on the doctrinal standards required to take ordination vows at 2RP. The appearance, at least, was given that Pastor Foltz sought to hold (and lead the elders to hold) Nathan Shaver to a higher standard than that which is possibly held by active elders within the session.**

**Potential Solution:** You as a session should work and discuss together the standards of subscription to the RP standards required for elders in the RPCNA and how they relate to ongoing life at 2RP. This is critical for you as a session and for how you are viewed by your congregation.

5. **At times, you as a session, or individual elders, have operated or communicated in ways that gave unnecessary offense to the petitioners and other congregants individually or as a whole.**

**Potential Solution:** You as a session should consider your communications with the congregation. Think of how it could be interpreted... you set the tone for the faithfulness of the congregation; your actions and speech communicate a message to the entire congregation.

**6. Other personal, pastoral matters that have appeared in the conflict include:**

- a. A need to improve in shepherding well those who are suffering, even the dying, in the congregation. In this, the session as a whole could grow in sympathy and connectivity with the congregation. Where there has been failure on this point, confession of sin should occur.
- b. A need to improve consistent public communication with the congregation, such as post-session meeting emails.
- c. In these public communications, the session should grow in willingness to discuss bad news, personal struggles, or corporate failures. There can be a tendency to always want to put a good face forward, which in the long run, erodes trust.

**Potential Solution:** Even though you are working to improve things, you should seek to meet with those whom you may have offended in these areas and seek forgiveness.

7. Your pastor Jerry Foltz was thrust into an unplanned senior leadership role without the right level of experience. Because of this, mistakes were made that helped create and complicate the current situation.

**Potential Solution:** We believe that assigning a mentor to work alongside Jerry to help him gain an additional level of experience would help him grow in capability. Possibly consider having a temporary moderator for a period of time.

8. You as a session have struggled to have a clear and consistent voice in the area of church discipline. This has created understandable questions about transparency and faithfulness. In light of this, we offer these areas of guidance:
  - a. In cases of suspension or excommunication from membership, you as a session should make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the suspension (or excommunication) (DCG 4).
  - b. In cases of members (regardless of age) rejecting the faith, you as a session should be readily willing (with sadness) to use the disciplinary measures of suspension/excommunication or formal removal from your rolls in the event there is no interaction with these individuals.
  - c. In areas where you have failed on these points, you should consider the need for confession and repentance.

**Potential Solution:** You as a session are studying church discipline in your current session meetings. We advise you to study faithfully and work diligently through these issues and apply the guidelines we have given to you.