

**Presbytery at Synod 2025  
Tuesday June 17, 2025**

The Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery met in room 118 of Noggle Hall at Indiana Wesleyan University. The court was constituted with prayer by Elder Jon Hughes at 1:00pm sharp.

The roll was taken by the clerk, Nathan Eshelman. Several visitors were present, especially from Second RP, including Mr. Long, Mr. Dinkledine, Mrs. Gilhooley, and Mrs. Foltz. Rev. Andy McCracken was present. Mr. Tom and Susan Dinkledine were present. Mr. Simeon Anderson and Mr. Stephen and Mrs. Mary Rhoda were also present.

The roll is as follows:

		<b>June 17</b>
<b>Belle Center</b>	Phil Pockras	X
	Jeffery Brotherton	X
<b>Bloomington</b>	Richard Holdeman	X
	Colby Davis	X
	Colin Elliot	N
<b>Columbus</b>	Scott Decker	X
	Jeffrey Jones	X
<b>Elkhart</b>	Robert Daniels	X
<b>Second Indianapolis</b>	Jerry Foltz	X
	David Mauser	X
<b>Southside Indianapolis</b>	David Hanson	X
	Ian Wise	E
<b>Kokomo</b>	Shawn Anderson	X
	Robert McKissick	X
<b>Lafayette</b>	Adam Neiss	X
	Jonathan Sturm	X
	Robert Bibby	X
	Aaron Hartzler	X
	Chris Stockwell (alternate)	X

		June 17
<b>Marion</b>	Aaron Murray	X
	Jason Camery	N
	Scott Hunt	N
<b>Mason (SWORP)</b>	Dick Knodel	X
	Timothy Vincze	X
<b>Orlando</b>	Nathan Eshelman	X
	Alejandro Ramirez	X
<b>Prairie View (West.)</b>	Josh Smith	X
	Matt Stiegert	X
<b>Selma Alabama</b>		—
<b>Southfield</b>	Adam Kuehner	X
	Jon Hughes	X
	John Kim	X
<b>Sparta</b>	Ross Fearing	X
<b>Terre Haute</b>	Russell Lodge	X
<b>Certified TEs</b>	Ray Lanning	X
	Frank Smith	X
	David Whitla	X
	Namsik Yang	X

**X: Present. N: Not Present. E: Excused.**

The clerk gave comments on two communications—which were late arrivals—both related to the Second RP Shepherding Committee and their work. The first was a request from Kokomo Session to form a review committee and the second was a petition from several members of Second RP, also requesting an investigation. Both of these will require a 2/3 vote to be heard by the court.

The agenda was approved and is as follows:

Elder Bob Bibby gave the Second RP Shepherding Committee update. He gave comments upon the report and noted the four prayer requests within. There were no recommendations. After the reading of the report, the floor was open for questions.

Rich Holdeman prayed for the continuing work of the shepherding committee. The report was received and is as follows:

### **Background & Charter**

The Great Lakes Gulf (GLG) Presbytery received Paper 25-3 from five couples at 2nd Indianapolis and 25-4 from the 2nd 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

The Kokomo petition related to Second RP was discussed. As this petition came late, it will take a 2/3 majority vote for the court to take up the petition. The floor was opened to speak for or against taking up the petition.

A motion was moved, seconded, and carried to grant all elders the privileges of the floor.

Mr. Tom Dinkledine, an elder in Kokomo, spoke in favor of the report.

The Kokomo petition discussion continued. The question as to taking up the petition was called. It was seconded. It appeared as though the moderator announced the petition request failed. There was some confusion and discussion related to the calling of the question. Mr. Kuehner called for a point of order. Mr. Hanson called for division. In division it was seen that the motion fell by over 2/3 majority.

The report will not be heard.

The Second RP members petition was discussed. The petition came to the clerk at 10:34pm on June 16th. It did not come through the session and it was not within the normal time frame to be included on the agenda.

The Second RP members petition was ruled out of order because it did not get forwarded through the session according to *Directory of Church Government*, 8.11:

A member has the right to petition any court of the church to whose jurisdiction he is subject in relation to any matter of reasonable importance. All communication from subordinate courts, or from individuals not members of the court, to be brought to the attention of Synod, such as papers, petitions, proposed overtures, appeals and complaints, must bear endorsement showing that they have been regularly transferred by the lower courts. A petition addressed to a presbytery or Synod shall first be submitted to a session...

For information, Mr. Adam Dinkledine was given privileges of the floor to answer the question as to whether he knew petitions were to come through the session. It was answered in the affirmative, but he also noted the allowance that "the higher court may in exceptional cases admit a petition directly from a person who is not a member of the court." He argued this as an exceptional case.

The Hetherton Property & Assets report gave an update. Rev. Adam Kuehner presented that report. There was also an oral report about another family that offered less money for the building and this will be forwarded to the Trustees. Mr. Kuehner reported that both options would be good, although one was at a higher price. He also noted that there was a supply of new Psalters in the building which Southside provided for Hetherton (in case they'd like them).

The five recommendations were taken up:

Recommendation 1: That Presbytery petition the RP Trustees to accept Mr. Scott Haughton's cash offer of \$75,000 to purchase the HRPC church building, the manse, and various property items as designated above.

Carried.

Recommendation 2: That Presbytery notify the RP Trustees of its formal request on March 7, 2025 that the board "provide from the sale of the Hetherton manse up to \$5000 for Morton's moving expenses and a gift of thanks of \$10,000 to Mr. Dage for his labors."

Carried.

Recommendation 3: That Presbytery petition the RP Trustees to dispose of the remaining church property items according to the three designations proposed above.

Carried.

Recommendation 4: That Presbytery cover any remaining insurance and/or utility costs for the HRPC properties until the properties are sold, and petition the RP Trustees for reimbursement for these costs from the proceeds of the sale.

Carried.

Recommendation 5: That Presbytery reimburse Mr. Kuehner \$206.62 for the May property insurance premium.

Carried.

The report as a whole was approved. The clerk will inform the Trustees to continue the insurance payments and forward this report to Mr. McFarland. The report is as follows:

### **Hetherton Property Committee Report**

Dear Fathers and Brethren,

On March 7, 2025, the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery granted the request of the Hetherton RPC members to disorganize the congregation. In addition, a motion was adopted to “request the Trustees of Synod to provide from the sale of the Hetherton manse up to \$5000 for Morton’s moving expenses and a gift of thanks of \$10,000 to Mr. Dage for his labors. The motion was seconded and carried.”

On April 21, 2025, the GLGP AIC acted to “Appoint a Hetherton property committee” to “(1) determine the assets and liabilities of the congregation, (2) provide a list of the assets and liabilities to the Synod’s Board of Trustees, (3) submit recommendations regarding the disposal of the property, and (4) provide local assistance as needed to the Synod’s Board of Trustees.”

### **Contacts and Communications**

Throughout this process, we have communicated directly with Elder Jim McFarland, chairman of Synod’s Board of Trustees. In addition, we have been in touch with RPCNA Controller and Hetherton ex-pat, Vida Brown, who has supplied us with a wide variety of documents, details, and insights along the way. In addition to Mr. Dage’s presence in the local vicinity, Mr. Kuehner was able to tour the church building and parsonage in late April, meeting with former treasurer and unofficial groundskeeper, Dave Hagadorn, and relaying both photos and observations to the committee.

### **Assets and Liabilities**

As a committee, we were able to identify the following church assets: (1) the historic HRPC house of worship (1200 Meridian Line Rd, Johannesburg, MI 49751), which sits on a tiny plot of land with a small parking lot; (2) the manse (11825 Meridian Line Rd. Johannesburg, MI 49751), located just down the road from the church, with an adjacent garage; and (3) A variety of additional items listed below.

The church building and manse are on two separate deeds and are located in two different counties, as reflected in the attached documentation. The church building has been without power, as since April, when an ice storm knocked down a nearby telephone pole, ripping out the church’s electrical box. The rest of the building is in average to below-average condition, as reflected in the attached photos, is located in a relatively obscure rural area with virtually no acreage. At the moment, the manse is in no condition to place on the market, but could potentially be sold “as is” to someone interested in renovating and renting/reselling it for a profit.

When we attempted to secure a professional appraisal, we were informed that this would cost over \$700 for the manse alone, a cost which we did not feel authorized to approve. Instead, we had a local real estate agent create a comparative home sale analysis of the manse for free, although he said he would be unable to produce a similar analysis for the church building, due to its unique character. Our understanding is that his analysis reflects what the manse would sell for after a series of pre-sale renovations, rather than “as is.” Also, the “comparable” properties tend to include more land. In any case, given our specific remit and limited schedules, it is unclear to us precisely who

would do the legwork of overseeing the ongoing process of prepping, listing, and selling these properties on the open market.

While we did not discover any liabilities against the church, both Vida Brown and Dave Hagadorn informed us, early on, that the property insurance for both the church building and the manse was coming due for its annual renewal on May 9. To avoid a lapse in coverage, Mr. Kuehner called the local insurance agent on May 6, switched from annual to monthly billing, and paid \$206.62 (see attached receipt) to renew the policy. Assuming the properties are not sold, if another payment is not made by June 9, the insurance policy will lapse. According to Jim McFarland, such costs ordinarily fall to the presbytery, prior to the disposal of assets.

### **The Mortons**

Following Mr. Morton's recent retirement from the ministry, the congregation agreed to let him continue living in the manse rent-free with his wife Susan, on the condition that they pay for utilities. Since the disorganization, this arrangement continued until Ray and Susan recently relocated to Colorado to live with family. Based on the condition of the manse at this time, we believe the property would need quite a bit of TLC before attracting its true market value on the open market.

### **An Interested Buyer**

Scott Haughton, a communicant member of Southfield RPC and owner of dozens of Michigan rental properties, has expressed interest in buying the church building and parsonage. His intention for the church building is to preserve the historic HRPC sanctuary while transforming the sabbath school and fellowship hall areas into lodging and kitchen accommodations, thereby creating a small church retreat center, less than one hour from the Mackinaw Bridge, which would be available to RPCNA churches, sessions and ministries free of charge. Since these renovations could end up costing him upwards of \$50k, Mr. Haughton intends to offset this cost by renovating and selling the parsonage, subsequent to his work on the church building. To this end, Mr. Haughton has offered to pay \$75,000 in cash for both properties. We believe it would be wise to accept this offer for the following reasons:

1. It would relieve both the presbytery and the denomination, moving forward, of any further responsibility to manage these properties, pay insurance premiums, fix the electrical damage, and oversee the sale of the properties.
2. It would enable the historic HRPC house of worship to remain largely preserved as a monument of God's grace to His people there in times past, and as a means of providing ongoing edification to His saints moving forward.
3. It would enable Mr. Haughton to transform the manse into an attractive, marketable residential property, thereby funding his costly renovation to the HRPC church building.
4. It would supply the RPCNA with funds to help fulfill its ongoing mission and ministries.

### **Bank Accounts & Property Items**

The HRPC checking account balance currently sits at \$549. We had originally planned to report a balance of \$1049, but the former HRPC treasurer recently informed us that he gave a gift of \$500 to Rev. Morton out of the church account. Mr. Dage informed the Synod Trustees of this unauthorized distribution, and they said they will take it into account when addressing our request to compensate Rev. Morton for his moving

expenses. The fact that the former treasurer has access to these accounts (and that all billing and paperwork for insurance and utilities is sent to his address) puts us in a challenging position. We are unclear as to how the insurance and utility costs incurred between now and the potential sale of the properties will be covered by the remaining \$549 in the church account.

Given this uncertainty, we are asking that Mr. Kuehner's insurance renewal payment of \$206.62 be reimbursed by the Presbytery, and that the Presbytery cover any additional insurance and/or utility bills prior to the sale of the property—all with the expectation that the Synod Trustees will subsequently reimburse us from the proceeds of the sale. In addition to the church account, we believe there may be a Sabbath School bank account with a very small balance. Attempts to contact Sonja Hoy for details are ongoing.

Below is an inventory list of additional property items, arranged in accordance with their respective locations within the HRPC church building. We believe that it would be best to divide these into four separate categories: (1) Items to be retained by the GLGP and kept, for now, at the HRPC building, to be distributed at the court's discretion, within the RPCNA, upon request; (2) Items to be retained by the GLGP and offered to RP Archives;<sup>1</sup> and (3) Items to be included in the sale of the properties to Mr. Haughton. The list, which follows, includes notations as to which of these four classifications we are proposing for each item.

**Entrance**

Decoration<sup>3</sup>  
 Driveway Salt<sup>3</sup>  
 Snow Shovel<sup>3</sup>

**S.S. Room**

Long Tables (2)<sup>3</sup>  
 Chairs (~8)<sup>3</sup>  
 Small table<sup>3</sup>  
 Bibles<sup>1</sup>  
 Old Psalters<sup>1</sup>  
 New Psalters<sup>1</sup>  
 Ogemaw Pulpit Bible<sup>2</sup>  
 Bible Maps<sup>3</sup>  
 Folding Chairs, Stool<sup>3</sup>  
 Rug cleaning device<sup>3</sup>  
 Glass Cabinet<sup>3</sup>  
 Decorations, etc.<sup>3</sup>  
 Old communion cups<sup>2</sup>

Photo: Cov. Hts. Conf.  
 Estes, CO (1982)<sup>2</sup>  
 3 shelves of misc. books<sup>3</sup>  
 RP Const'ns, Synod Mins.<sup>1</sup>  
 S.S. Fin. Records<sup>2</sup>

**Nursery**

Sofa, Chair<sup>3</sup>  
 Box of books<sup>3</sup>  
 Dresser (empty)<sup>3</sup>  
 Baby equipment (toys, rockers, high chair)<sup>3</sup>

**Childrens' Room**

Tables (2)<sup>3</sup>  
 Folding Chairs<sup>3</sup>  
 Toys/books<sup>3</sup>

**Pastor's Office**

5 vacuum cleaners<sup>3</sup>

Desk<sup>3</sup>  
 Chairs (2)<sup>3</sup>  
 Office Supplies<sup>3</sup>  
 Financial docs (not antiquarian)<sup>3</sup>  
 Office supplies, etc.<sup>3</sup>

**Foyer**

Chairs (4)<sup>3</sup>  
 Small Chairs (3)<sup>3</sup>  
 Small Table<sup>3</sup>  
 Artificial Flowers<sup>3</sup>  
 Flags<sup>3</sup>  
 Pew bench, long tables<sup>3</sup>  
 Communion supplies (cloths, trays, cups)<sup>1</sup>  
 Small table<sup>3</sup>  
 Box for tracts/papers<sup>3</sup>  
 Guestbook<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Items classified under #2 which are not desired by RP Archives would automatically fall under #3.

(1) That Presbytery petition the RP Trustees to accept Mr. Scott Haughton's cash offer of \$75,000 to purchase the HRPC church building, the manse, and various property items as designated above.

(2) That Presbytery notify the RP Trustees of its formal request on March 7, 2025 that the board "provide from the sale of the Hetherton manse up to \$5000 for Morton's moving expenses and a gift of thanks of \$10,000 to Mr. Dage for his labors."

(3) That Presbytery petition the RP Trustees to dispose of the remaining church property items according to the three designations proposed above.

(4) That Presbytery cover any remaining insurance and/or utility costs for the HRPC properties until the properties are sold, and petition the RP Trustees for reimbursement for these costs from the proceeds of the sale.

(5) That Presbytery reimburse Mr. Kuehner \$206.62 for the May property insurance premium.

Respectfully Submitted, Bryan Dage  
John Kim  
Adam Kuehner, Ch.

TJ Pattillo's English Bible Exam report was presented by Rev. Adam Niess. The results were sent out through email and the results are before the court:

**Overall result:** PASS (71%).

**Results by section:**

***Bible Books***

Law	<u>WEAK (57%).</u>
Prophets	<u>STRONG (90%).</u>
Psalms	<u>WEAK (50%).</u>
Wisdom Literature	<u>WEAK (40%).</u>
Gospels	<u>GOOD (64%).</u>
Epistles	<u>WEAK (57%).</u>
Book of Revelation	<u>STRONG (90%).</u>

***General Bible***

A motion to sustain the examination was moved, seconded, and carried. The examination was sustained.

Privileges of the floor were granted to Mr. and Mrs. Rhoda. Rev. Foltz presented the committee report and the floor was opened for questions. The floor was then given to Mr. Rhoda and he spoke of the letter he wrote to the presbytery, his sorrow for sin, of working towards the restoration of his marriage, and updates on his repentance. Mr. Rhoda stated he is five months sober and gives glory to God for where he is in his recovery.

The report was received and is as follows:

At the direction of Presbytery, the Rhoda–Terre Haute Shepherding Committee has continued its work of providing encouragement, counsel, and accountability to Reverend Stephen Rhoda. We have remained in contact with both Steve and his wife, Mary, and are thankful to report that we have seen continued signs of progress. We are

grateful for the opportunity to continue this shepherding work and will plan to provide a further update at the next stated meeting of Presbytery.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jerry Foltz (Chair)  
David Hanson  
Kenneth De Jong  
Josh Reshey

The letter from Mr. Rhoda is as follows:

I write to give report of how I am doing in my recovery from addiction and under the suspension of my credentials by Presbytery. My intent in this paper is also to confess my sins and ask for your forgiveness.

Physical, emotionally, and spiritually, I am doing well by God's grace and blessing to me in Christ. Since undergoing treatment for addiction at Union Hospital in Terre Haute, I have maintained sobriety, without any use of alcohol, and with very little temptation to drink, for over four months now. This is a blessing from God, for which I give Him thanks as He has provided me with an excellent Biblical counselor, Dr. Jim Evans, at Community Christian Counseling in Terre Haute. My weekly treatment and work presently continue with Dr. Evans, who has been willing both to confront me with God's Law, helping me to see and repent of my sin further, and to encourage me to receive God's grace and forgiveness for the sake of Christ's finished work for my salvation, that I might be confident in the present and hopeful for the future.

God has also blessed me with sobriety and kept me from strong temptation by way of my participation in Celebrate Recovery, which is much like Alcoholics Anonymous but with a specific and deliberate focus on Christ and the Gospel. I attend Celebrate Recovery three times each week, on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday evenings. I have gotten to know the brothers there and have found them to be ardent, joyful believers who love Jesus as God (i.e. they are Trinitarian) for His cross (i.e. they hold to penal substitutionary atonement), seeking to follow Jesus and serve Him in their recovery from addiction (i.e. they believe in Christ's bodily resurrection). Each meeting is Bible-based and Christ-centered, so that Celebrate Recovery has served to turn my heart more fully to my Savior Jesus.

I have also been held accountable and strengthened by my local ruling elders, Russell Lodge, Josh Reshey, and Jack Baumgardner (provisional moderator). Josh and Russell visit me every 2-3 weeks, checking in and praying with me. I was blessed to complete two repentance exercises that they designed and assigned to me. They also require that I call one of them each week to keep them updated on how I am doing.

While presently my wife Mary and I remain separated (not a legal separation), we text and talk on the phone regularly, most often daily, and we see each other occasionally for dinners out together and at extended family gatherings. Both of us are committed to maintaining and bettering our marriage in the present and for the future. We have benefited from the personal ministry of elders Ken de Jong, Jerry Foltz, and David Hanson. Brother Hanson especially has been a blessing, meeting in person with me several times and even with both Mary and me together on one occasion; he also calls me regularly on the phone. Finally regarding our marriage, Mary and I are planning to attend a marriage retreat weekend (Thursday through Saturday), for troubled marriages, at a place and ministry called The Ravines. By the time this letter is read, we will likely

have already attended, if the Lord has brought it to pass. Going in, we are hopeful and expect to benefit from this Christian ministry.

Though I am still learning what I should have done in my weariness, frustration, and eventual bitterness, I do know what I should not have done. Using alcohol openly or secretly to treat my painful emotions was sinful and an act of unfaithfulness to my marriage vows and my ordination vows. The ministry of Celebrate Recovery puts a significant emphasis on “making amends,” which regrettably in many of the relationships that I have hurt is limited to making a sincere apology; I wish there was more to do to make things right. So as I have done with my wife and children, my parents and in-laws, and with some number of others, I want to say to you how very sorry I am for what I have done, the sins that I have committed against God and against you, the very body and bride of Christ. I ask for your forgiveness for the sake of Christ and plead for your patience and continued grace toward me as I seek to discern God’s plan for me in the future. When the brothers at Celebrate Recovery came to learn that I was a pastor, several of them have taken to encouraging me regularly by stating their prayer for me and expectation that “God isn’t finished using you and your gifts.” I love them in Christ for that, and I pray that it is true.

If any of you would want to confront me with my sin personally, I am open to meeting with you to know more fully the hurt that I have caused you and to apologize personally, seeking your forgiveness of me in Christ. I covet your prayers and promise mine for you. Blessings in Christ to each of you, to the ministry of Presbytery, and to each of the churches that you serve in Gospel ministry.

Sincerely, in Christ,  
Stephen Rhoda

Prayer for the Rhoda family was offered by Rev. Jerry Foltz. The court stood for prayer. Due to a question from the committee, it was clarified that Mr. Rhoda is suspended from the exercise of his office.

A motion to adjourn was moved, seconded, and carried.

The prayer of adjournment was prayed by Elder Jon Hughes.

The court adjourned at 2:16pm.

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Jon Hughes, moderator *pro-tem*

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Nathan Eshelman, clerk