

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Minutes of the *Ad Interim* Commission
February 3, 2022

The *Ad Interim* Commission (“AIC”) of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met on February 3, 2022 by Zoom video conference call.

1. Elders present were Moderator Frank Smith (Moderator, Atlanta RPC), Richard Blankenship (Clerk, Second RPC, Indianapolis), John Cavanaugh (RPC of Southside Indianapolis), Andy DeRosa (Elkhart RPC) and Philip McCollum (Bloomington RPC).
2. Frank Smith constituted the Court in prayer in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church at 6:35 p.m.
3. It was moved, seconded, and approved to accept, effective February 3, 2022, the resignation of Jared Olivetti as pastor of Immanuel RPC, to dissolve his pastoral relationship and to declare the Immanuel RPC pulpit vacant. It is understood that the Immanuel RPC Session is handling all necessary details including matters of pulpit supply, the administration of the sacraments, and the moderating of a call. A Declaration of Vacant Pulpit is to be provided to the Clerk of the Session of Immanuel RPC, a copy of which is attached to these minutes along with Jared Olivetti’s resignation letter.
4. It was moved, seconded, and approved to accept, effective February 3, 2022, with appreciation for his service, the resignation of Jason Camery from the RPCNA Home Mission Board of Directors. His resignation letter is attached to these minutes.
5. It was moved, seconded, and approved regarding Communications 22-4A and 22-4B to appoint an Inquiry Committee consisting of Philip McCollum and Richard Blankenship to inquire further into the concerns reported to the AIC by three families and the Session of First RPC of Grand Rapids. The Inquiry Committee is to report their findings and any recommendations to the Presbytery at the Presbytery meeting scheduled for March 3, 2022. A copy of Communications 22-4 and 22-4B is attached to these minutes.
6. It was moved, seconded, and approved, at the request of Mark Brown, to dismiss him and his candidacy as a student under care from the Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery and to transfer his candidacy back to the Presbytery of the Alleghenies. His certifications are to be transferred to the Presbytery of the Alleghenies.
7. It was moved, seconded, and approved to change the starting time of the March 3, 2022 Presbytery meeting from 2:00 pm on March 3, 2022 to 10:30 am on March 3, 2022.
8. It was moved, seconded, and approved to direct the AIC Clerk to discuss with Andrew Falk and ascertain whether he authorized legal counsel retained by the Presbytery to draft a joint defense agreement. If he did not authorize that work, he will be directed to request an appropriate adjustment in the billing to delete charges for that work. If the billing for the joint defense

agreement was authorized the Clerk will direct the Presbytery Treasurer to make payment as billed.

9. Receipt of a February 2, 2022 update from Jeff Kessler was acknowledged. The update was regarding an accusation against him by two families of the RPC of Lafayette related to his appointment by the AIC and his serving as a provisional elder at Immanuel RPC. It is understood that an unnamed third party has been asked to assist in pursuing a Matthew 18 reconciliation.
10. It was moved, seconded, and approved, to adopt the Litigation Hold letter drafted by outside legal counsel and to appoint the Clerk of Presbytery, Adam Kuehner, to provide the information requested by legal counsel in order to distribute the letter to the appropriate parties in the Presbytery.
11. The draft AIC Report to Presbytery was approved for submission to Presbytery granting the Clerk the ability to make any necessary grammatical corrections prior to submission to Presbytery.
12. The minutes of the meeting were reviewed and approved.
13. Andy DeRosa adjourned the Court in prayer in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church at 8:08 p.m.

Frank J. Smith, Moderator
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

F. Richard Blankenship III, Clerk
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Ad Interim Commission

1/15/22

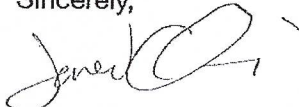
To the Ad Interim Commission of the Great Lakes/Gulf Presbytery:

Today, January 15, 2022, I have announced to the congregation my intention to resign as pastor from Immanuel RPC. My cessation of service will begin on January 17, 2022. I understand that the congregation has two weeks to offer their thoughts to you, and that I am not technically able to request my release from the pastoral relationship until January 29, 2022.

Because I am also informing the Synod Judicial Commission, I wanted to make sure you were in the loop and prepared to act with appropriate urgency on the matter at the soonest possible date. I request that the resignation be accepted and the pastoral relationship be dissolved on January 29, 2022.

Please let me know if this letter will suffice as my request when January 29 comes around or if I will need to communicate with you again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jared Olivetti", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jared Olivetti

Jason Camery
Marion RP church
Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery
01/17/2022

Clerk of Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery
Adam Kuehner

Dear Adam:

It is with regret that I tender my resignation from the RPCNA Home Mission board of directors, effective immediately. Could you please forward this letter to the GLG Ad-interim commission, thank you.

I am grateful for having had the opportunity to serve on the board of this fine organization for the past couple of years and I offer my best wishes for its continued success.

Sincerely,

Jason Camery
Pastor, Marion RP church

This communication is for the Ad Interim Commission of Great Lakes / Gulf Presbytery. Please forward it to the Clerk of the AIC, in keeping with *Directory for Church Government*, Chapter 4.9.

To the Ad Interim Commission of Great Lakes / Gulf Presbytery:

We represent three member households of First Reformed Presbyterian Church (Grand Rapids, MI). During the month of December 2021, we (together with one other household) have all found it necessary to begin worshipping elsewhere. We are currently all still members of First RPC; but we do intend eventually to become members of other local congregations. The stated reasons for our departures have centered around our minister, Mr. Craig Scott, and his public ministry among us.

Between the years of 2018 and 2021, Sean McDonald and Will Luke privately brought various concerns to Mr. Scott (3-4 times each), especially pertaining to harsh and uncharitable statements in public and pulpit ministry. Following these private meetings, what we have observed consistently from Mr. Scott is temporary repentance without long-term change.

Mr. Scott and Jake Schwartz (our ruling elder) have also expressed being offended by people who seek respectfully to speak with them about concerns. In December 2020, in the context of someone having addressed concerns to them, they both referred to our congregation as "unsubmissive and disrespectful."

In September 2021, during a men's study for potential elders, Mr. Schwartz mentioned that ministers have more authority than ruling elders. When Sean McDonald sought clarification (on the understanding that ministers and ruling elders are equal in authority), Mr. Schwartz and Mr. Scott both defended the position that ministers have more authority than ruling elders; and used, among other arguments, the argument that ministers are styled "Rev." while ruling elders are not. Mr. Scott furthermore spoke of the inappropriateness of anyone, including ruling elders, to challenge a minister's sermons, since the minister has gone to seminary and studied the passage in question.

In response to our leaving, the Session has called us to meet with them in constituted court in order to hear all our concerns in more detail. Because of the many times we have already brought concerns, having had our trust betrayed in various ways, and believing these issues are far more vast than we have the right or capacity to address individually, we no longer believe it is wise, helpful, or prudent to bring matters to Session.

We humbly request that the Presbytery send a visitation committee to First RPC (Grand Rapids, MI), in order to evaluate the situation as it currently exists in our congregation.

Respectfully,
Sean McDonald
Laura McDonald
Daniel Cross
Will Luke
Savannah Luke

Fathers and brothers,

First RP Session received this communication containing accusations against the elders. The communication was then approved to be sent to AIC without endorsement. We do not desire to be defensive; however, God's law requires the defending of one's name when it is unjustly accused (WLC 144). The following is a brief response to the communication, and the pastoral context which is absent.

First, Session desires to receive the communication with humility. The households are not random members, but a very close group of friends. The households departed from First RP in December 2021 without any prior dialogue or communication with any single member of Session, nor with Session as a court. The households departed suddenly, stating they want to leave "as peaceably as possible." Christians in Grand Rapids have since contacted the elders to state that one household has been slandering the elders before other Christians in the city. In response, Session has sought to be humble and hear the concerns. Session has contacted the households by phone, email, and letter, but they have not responded. Session has also invited them to a congregational open forum on January 26 with Stephen Rhoda as moderator. Session also conducted a congregational meeting on December 26 to hear any concerns from the congregation. No concerns have been given to Session.

Secondly, the households are attending the Free Reformed Church seeking to transfer membership. First RP has not opposed this transfer, although two elders of the FRC contacted us to state their concerns over the households' 'divisive' behavior and their personal experience of one household's reputation in Grand Rapids. The elders informed us of their plan to meet with the households and encourage them to return to First RP and reconcile with the Session. The households then sent the communication to the AIC after this meeting.

Third, Session firmly denies the accusation that the elders believe the church to be 'unsubmissive and disrespectful.' The Elders, without a doubt, believe in the *parity* of the eldership, with both TE and RE *equally* receiving the keys of the kingdom with the power of jurisdiction, concluding that no elder has either more or less, but *equal* authority; and the ruling elder has the right and duty to raise any concerns with the preaching of the Word.

Fourth, Sean McDonald did speak to Pastor Scott on three occasions in 2018-19 concerning comments from the pulpit. Two of these were clarifications of content, and one was over uncharitable speech. Pastor Scott clarified the misunderstandings and did sincerely apologize and repent for the uncharitable speech. However, the other meetings were not due to Pastor Scott's speech but concerns over Sean McDonald's long time pattern of behavior noted by brethren within and without the congregation.

Fathers and brothers, this is some of the pastoral context and background of the communication. First RP Session has sought to be humble and seek reconciliation, but the households have refused our communications.

In conclusion, we find it disingenuous and confusing for these individuals and families to announce their intention to transfer their membership away from our congregation while also calling for Presbytery involvement in the very same letter. In the end, we believe that the ministry of Session as a court of the house of Christ is being circumvented and disrespected by this letter and its appeal for Presbytery visitation.

Yours in Christ,
First RP Session
Craig Scott
Jake Schwartz
Stephen Rhoda

Declaration of a Vacant Pulpit

Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church Lafayette, Indiana

The pastor of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church presented his resignation to the Ad Interim Commission on the 15th day of January in the year 2022.

The resignation was accepted by the Ad Interim Commission at its meeting on the 3rd day of February in the year 2022 to take effect on the 3rd day of February in the year 2022, and the pastoral relationship was dissolved. May the Lord guide the congregation to the choice of another under-shepherd.

It is understood that the Session of Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church is handling the necessary details regarding pulpit supply, administration of the sacraments and moderating a call.

F. Richard Blankenship, III
Clerk of the *Ad Interim* Commission

Frank J. Smith
Moderator of the *Ad Interim* Commission