

March 2022

Fathers and Brothers of the Great Lakes-Gulf,

I propose that the current Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA be divided into two presbyteries, effective at the 2022 Synod meeting. One, stretching from Hetherton to Orlando would remain named as the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. The other would be named the Illinois-Indiana Presbytery. This proposal would have to be approved by the RPCNA Synod, but we can make a request and recommendation.

Rationale:

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery has more work than it can efficiently do in its current framework. This has been acknowledged by a number of people. Some have suggested regional commissions to be erected to disperse the load. It's good to consider possibilities like this one. However, no such category exists constitutionally, and creating new administrative layers often produces unintended consequences of a negative kind, even if well-intentioned. The simplest, most structurally sound method would be to create two presbyteries. Though in this proposal the Illinois-Indiana Presbytery would be numerically larger than the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, the number of delegates to each would be similar. The new Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery would also still be larger than three other presbyteries in the RPCNA.

In light of the numerical imbalance of a strict geographical division and in light of recent events, the proposed presbyteries are intentionally aligned to promote healing in each place in such a way that churches are best able to fulfill our callings to magnify the Lord and balance the numbers to a greater extent. There may come a time to revisit this alignment in future years, but it seems wise to divide ourselves in such a way as to allow brothers to labor together who are like-minded in philosophies of administration. We all long for the peace and prosperity of Zion, and the fruit of this proposal would be to make the presbyteries effective in their callings by distributing the workload which is necessary at this juncture and to do so in a way that best facilitates peaceable co-laboring.

Proposed Presbyteries:

The proposed presbyteries are as follows (Membership numbers are taken from 2022 reports to presbytery or the 2021 Minutes of Synod where necessary. Estimated Delegates numbers are based on the number of delegates a congregation usually sends plus an estimate of the retired pastors who regularly attend presbytery who are a part of the congregations listed):

Great Lakes Gulf Presbytery	Membership	Estimated Delegates		Illinois-Indiana Presbytery	Membership	Estimated Delegates
Atlanta	17	1		Bloomington	187	4
Belle Center	59	2		Christ Church	87	2
Grand Rapids	50	2		Columbus	136	3
Durham	39	2		Elkhart	59	2
Hetherton	20	2		Immanuel	174	3
Lafayette	150	3		Second	235	4
Marion	48	2		Southside	277	4
Orlando	124	3		Sparta	26	1
Selma	17	1		Terre Haute	39	2
Southfield	68	2		Westminster	19	1
Sycamore	63	2				
SWORP	33	3				
Totals	688	25			1239	26

Recommendation: That the presbytery endorse the following recommendation to synod:

That effective at the 2022 Synod meeting the RPCNA Synod establish the Illinois-Indiana Presbytery comprised of the following congregations: Bloomington, Christ Church (Indiana), Columbus, Elkhart, Immanuel, Second, Southside, Sparta, Terre Haute, Westminster (Illinois).

Respectfully Submitted,
James Faris