



SAINT ANDREW'S CHAPEL

A Reformed Congregation

December 5, 2025

Dear Members of Saint Andrew's Chapel,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you may already know, after prayerful consideration, the Session has decided that it is wise to hold our next congregational meeting on Sunday, December 14, 2025, at 12:00 p.m.

The purpose of this letter is to communicate openly during this season of deliberation, seeking clarity and fostering deeper fellowship while minimizing distractions from our primary calling to shepherd the flock entrusted to us. Although we initially planned to wait until after the Standing Judicial Commission hearing regarding Dr. Parsons' appeal, recent developments have convinced us that calling this meeting now is the best course.

This letter addresses three key areas:

1. Developments within the Central Florida Presbytery (CFP) since July 20, 2025
2. The theological and ecclesiastical framework that the Session has used
3. Vision for Saint Andrew's Chapel moving forward

We also encourage you to read the **accompanying FAQ document**, which provides specific answers to practical questions about the process, implications for our pastors, and other important matters. This decision to move up the meeting is based on principle, not pragmatism. We invite ongoing prayer and fraternal dialogue as we seek the Lord's will together. Our aim is to ensure that every member of Saint Andrew's Chapel is well informed as we approach this important meeting in the life of our church.

We reaffirm our shared commitments to the sufficiency and authority of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16–17), the Westminster Standards, confessional Christianity within the Reformed tradition, biblical governance, and the ordinary means of grace in ministry. We value the peace, purity, and unity of the church and prioritize principle over expediency in all matters.



Developments Within the CFP Since July 20, 2025

Significant and sobering developments have occurred within the Central Florida Presbytery (CFP) over the past year, and especially since July 20, 2025. These events have been central to the Session's discernment process and prompted us to bring this matter before the congregation sooner than initially planned. As a reminder, a brief summary of events leading up to this past summer includes two judicial commissions formed at the November 2024 meeting (Pastor Burk's investigation and an allegation that the Session did not follow its bylaws regarding a records request) and an April 2025 report making five allegations against the Session related to diaconal duties, bylaws violations, fiduciary nonfeasance, improper calls for our teaching elders, and failure to maintain accountability over the teaching elders or staff. The Session provided responses to each of these five allegations, which were deemed adequate and rendered the case closed by the CFP.

The August 2025 CFP Meeting

At its August meeting, the CFP considered forming a commission to extend a pastoral hand to Saint Andrew's Chapel. The original motion proposed a pastoral commission to provide encouragement and show brotherly love, since Saint Andrew's Chapel had received only judicial communications from the CFP to that point. The original motion sought fellowship, not discipline. However, a substitute motion was introduced that significantly altered the nature of the proposal, warning that noncompliance with presbytery rulings could be deemed insubordination (contumacy) by the Session—even though the Session was actively pursuing appeals through higher courts to resolve the issues in an orderly manner. This warning appeared to preempt the appeals process, immediately branding the Session as contumacious as if a final ruling had already been issued, rather than allowing the appeal process to take its course. While sessions may indeed face review or censure, the substitute motion then extended this warning by stating that such contumacy would "leave Saint Andrew's Chapel open to charges," language that the PCA's Book of Church Order (BCO) does not support. The BCO contains no mechanism for charging or censuring a congregation as such. The substitute motion narrowly failed, and the original motion passed. Yet the considerable division within the Presbytery over the appropriate course of action was evident in the close vote, with some presbyters favoring a more pastoral approach and others advocating a more disciplinary approach.

The October 2025 CFP Meeting

At the October 14, 2025, CFP meeting, several significant events occurred that proved decisive in the Session's discernment process. The first concerned a complaint that was filed in August and that contained unsubstantiated allegations. This complaint was withdrawn by its author at the October meeting, but in the meantime, these privileged materials had been distributed to presbyters as part of the standard process. An unknown CFP teaching elder subsequently shared the materials with a news outlet before any judicial review could occur, leading to the publication of unsubstantiated information. The complaint's withdrawal meant that the information would otherwise have never been officially acted on. Yet the public dissemination of that information inflicted pastoral and reputational injury on our church and leadership.

At that October meeting, a longtime and highly respected teaching elder moved "that CFP admonish the member of the court who shared this information and ask him to acknowledge his wrongdoing in sharing this information in this way.

The author of this proposed motion also stated:

Given the fact that communications from the CFP Stated Clerk are intended for members of the court, and that matters related to complaints and appeals are confidential, it is deeply troubling to learn that a member of the Presbytery violated that confidentiality by sharing information from an unheard complaint, containing unsubstantiated accusations, with a news outlet (MinistryWatch), which then published the material online. We appeal to his conscience before God and ask him to humbly admit his sin to this court.

The motion exhorted those responsible for the leak to repent, emphasizing that such behavior violated vows to seek the peace and purity of the Church. The motion failed, 38-39. While we cannot speak to the reasons that individual presbyters voted as they did, this outcome was deeply troubling to the Session, as it appeared to indicate that a majority did not share our concern about the breach of confidentiality and its consequences.

A Defining Moment in Our Discernment

That outcome was a significant moment in our Session's discernment process. We understand that some presbyters may have held different views about confidentiality obligations or the appropriate remedy for breaches. However, the Session believes that the principles at stake transcend procedural questions and involve fundamental biblical ethics regarding loving one another (1 John 4:7; Matt. 7:12), truth-telling (Ex. 20:16), protecting others' reputations (James 4:11), and maintaining trust within the body of Christ. Some presbyters argued that because "the BCO does not prohibit disseminating information," such actions were permissible. The Session respectfully but firmly disagrees with this reasoning. We believe that when "not prohibited by the BCO" becomes the measure of right and wrong, it risks subordinating biblical principle to procedural technicality.

Theological and Ecclesiastical Framework that the Session has Used

Scripture provides the foundation for Presbyterian principles, seen in the council of elders in Acts 15, oversight in 1 Timothy 5, and the plurality of elders in Titus 1. We affirm a biblical ecclesiology within the Reformed tradition, consistent with the Westminster Standards, that allows for ordered cooperation among churches without undue burden.

This vision aligns with the PCA's founding spirit of a "light-touch Presbyterianism," where authority is ministerial and declarative, not magisterial or coercive (PCA BCO, Preliminary Principle 7). We acknowledge that faithful Presbyterians disagree about how "light" or "heavy" the touch should be in various circumstances. However, the Session believes the vision articulated by the PCA's founders, emphasizing ministerial and declarative rather than magisterial authority, should guide our understanding of proper presbyterial relationships.

As articulated by Dr. Morton H. Smith, the PCA's first Stated Clerk, and echoed by Dr. Francis Schaeffer, the church must pursue both purity and observable love among believers, holding form and freedom in balance. This echoes the Savoy Declaration's vision of mutual communion among equal churches—synods for counsel, not control.

Vision for Saint Andrew's Chapel Moving Forward

As explained in the accompanying FAQ document, the Session will recommend that the congregation release us from our obligation to wait thirty days after Pastor Burk's appeal is decided by the SJC before a Session recommendation is given. If this motion is approved, we will then present our recommendation regarding PCA affiliation for congregational debate and vote.

Should the congregation vote to leave the PCA, our intention is to remain independent for a season while studying potential future fraternal relationships with other churches for mutual accountability and encouragement, rooted in the Westminster Standards and open to cooperation with other confessional Reformed bodies. This model reflects historic presbyterianism: accountable, connectional, and fraternal, but non-coercive. We recognize that this season of independence may, in time, lead us to join another denomination. Given the challenges we have encountered within the CFP, we intend to devote substantial time to speaking with the men of any prospective presbytery and carefully studying how they handle matters of doctrine, discipline, and mutual care before making any formal commitments. We believe that this approach honors both the Presbyterian principles we cherish and the lessons we have learned through our recent experiences.

This is a commitment to pursue a form of government that better serves mutual edification and gospel partnership while avoiding the adversarial dynamics we have experienced. Throughout this process, we remain committed to truth in love (Eph. 4:15), to confidentiality where appropriate, to patience, and to peace. Whatever we do, let it be for Christ's honor, our flock's edification, and the advancement of the gospel, not out of frustration but out of faith.

Closing

As the Session of Saint Andrew's Chapel, our mission remains steadfast: to preach the Word in season and out of season, to worship in Spirit and in Truth, to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples; baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded (Matt. 28:18–20). We humbly ask for your prayers for wisdom (James 1:5) and unity in the truth (Eph. 4:3), trusting that “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,” will guide us through these deliberations (Phil. 4:7).

Please remember to review the accompanying FAQ document for answers to specific questions and contact your elder for any additional questions about what happens to our pastors, the implications of this decision, the process and timeline if a departure occurs, and other practical matters if the congregation votes to leave the PCA.

“So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” (Rom. 14:19)

With gratitude to God for His faithfulness,

The Session of Saint Andrew's Chapel