

Protest regarding decision to call in the church visitors

11/23/2020

Information:

- On Tuesday, November 10, 2020, the consistory of BCPRC adopted a recommendation to “require Rev. Lanning to resign as editor of the *Sword & Shield* publication.” In response to this decision, the consistory received a number of protests objecting to this decision.
- On Sunday, November 15, 2020, during the morning service, Rev. Lanning preached a sermon on Jeremiah 23:4, 14, titled, “Shepherds to Feed Them.”
 - The consistory met immediately following that service at the request of an elder who was “humbled” by the sermon and wished to discuss what that might mean for the consistory. There was a discussion about possible responses to the sermon, including repenting and turning from our November 10, 2020 decision.
- Two days later, on Tuesday, November 17, an elder came with two recommendations regarding calling in the church visitors for advice:
 - That we convene as a consistory to discuss seeking the advice of the Church Visitors in regards to our decision of: “Removing Rev. Lanning as editor of the *Sword and Shield*”.
 - Grounds: We are divided as a consistory on our decision and have charges of sin brought before us within our own consistory against the 9th commandment.
 - Request advise from the Church Visitors, regarding the sermon preached on the morning of 11-15-20, “Shepherds To Feed You” Jeremiah 23: 4, 14, with regards to direction for going forward.
- On Wednesday, November 18, 2020, the consistory met to discuss the recommendation to bring in the church visitors.
- On Thursday, November 19, 2020, the consistory met to discuss the sermon, “Shepherds to Feed Them.”
- On Friday, November 20, 2020 at 11:11 pm, the advice of the church visitors that we “immediately relieve Rev. Lanning of his ministerial duties according to Article 14 of the Church Order until the concerns of the consistory over his Jeremiah 23:4&14 sermon are resolved” was sent out to the consistory. Also included with this advice was the recommendation of two elders that we meet the following day (Saturday, November 21) at 1:00 pm to discuss the recommendation of the church visitors.
- On Saturday, November 21, 2020, the consistory met with the church visitors to consider their advice.

Recommendation:

- 1) That the consistory of BCPRC declare that we erred by requesting assistance from the church visitors.

The consistory acted hastily by taking this action. In the case of the decision we adopted to remove Rev. Lanning as editor of *Sword & Shield*, only one week had taken place between the time that we adopted our decision and a recommendation was received to call in the church visitors. In the case of the sermon, only two days had passed before a recommendation was received to call in the church visitors, and only six days elapsed before the decision was made.

The proper, orderly way to act would be to meet as a consistory, consider the material before us (including protests and other letters), assign a committee to study the material and bring carefully worked out advice to the consistory, carefully consider that advice at a future meeting, and vote on the recommendations brought by the sub-committee.

In this case, none of those things took place.

My grounds for declaring that we erred are as follows:

1. By acting so hastily, we never even made a ruling on the protests we received, or the sermon preached just a few days prior. This is to disregard the command that the elders “rule” found in 1 Timothy 5:17.
2. By requesting aid before we had even started doing our work, we did not do our work with “diligence,” contrary to the command of Jesus Christ through his apostle in Romans 12:8, “he that ruleth, with diligence,” where diligence can be described as careful and persistent work or effort.
 - a. This command is also found in the *Form for Ordination* that we “be diligent in the government of the church.”
3. By immediately searching out outside counsellors, we did despite to the name of Jesus Christ, the King of the Church, who equips his people with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:27) and 1 John 2:20, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”
 - a. By requesting aid before we did our work, was to declare that Christ had not equipped us with the wisdom necessary to do the work required in the office of elder.
4. We abdicated our office of elder.
 - i. It is our duty “particularly” to “have regard unto the doctrine and conversation” of our pastor (*Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons*).
 - ii. By refusing to do our work with regards to our pastors “doctrine and conversation” and by turning to outside counsellors, rather than laboring in our office, we did despite to the Spirit of Jesus Christ who has promised to guide his church “into all truth” (John 16:13).
 - iii. By not doing our work we have acted disobediently to the command that we are “duty bound diligently to search the Word of God” (*Form for Ordination*).

Brothers, I ask that we be given an opportunity to do our work in the confidence that God will lead and guide us by his word and Spirit into all truth.

Sincerely in Christ,

Elder Dewey Engelsma