

d. "Every child of God is rewarded according to good works and every good work is rewarded according to God's grace" (Synod 2020, p. 114).

e. "...we must speak of the reward of grace and without the fear of the justification template being laid over what we are speaking of. We speak not of justification, not of justification by faith alone, when we speak of the reward of grace, but of the reward of grace as taught in the Word of God and in the creeds" (Synod 2020, p. 115).

2. Although this sermon states, again and again, that we are justified by faith alone on the basis of Christ's work alone, in the end the reward of grace (which includes our experience of blessings of salvation) is separated from our justification by faith and instead tied to our works. The sermon may not have explicitly stated that we can merit with God by grace, but it effectively severs the connection between Christ's cross and our reward, and inserts our obedience—thereby establishing a "new and strange justification of man before God" (Canons Head II, Rejection of Error 4).

3. The explanation for why we are graciously rewarded, despite our imperfect obedience, is not that God graciously rewards us in the way of imperfect obedience, but that Christ merited the reward for us (Canons Head II, Article 8 and Rejection of Error 3). We always receive God's grace, including the reward of grace, through him who is the Way (John 14:6). Any attempt to insert our works into the process of how we receive anything from God displaces Christ (Gal. 2:21, Synod 2018 Art. 62, B, 1, a, 4), b), p. 70 and b, 1), c), (4), (a), p. 72).

May God bless your deliberations on these weighty matters.

In Christ,
Brian Buitter

Protest of Mr. Kent Deemter

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene June 8, 2021
in Georgetown PRC, Hudsonville, MI

Dear brothers in Christ,

I am writing you out of a heartfelt desire for the restoration of peace and unity in our midst. I pray that God strengthen and humble us to seek peace knowing that "the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:11).

Rev. Lanning has faithfully served as a pastor in the Church of Christ

for 14.5 years. I have personally benefited from his labors as my pastor and know him to be a humble and loving servant of God. Lord's Day 43 calls me to defend and promote the honor and good character of my neighbor as much as I am able. Out of love for Rev. Lanning, the men of Classis East, and the broader body of Christ, I am protesting the actions of Classis East, January 2021. I believe that there were significant injustices that need to be addressed.

I've broken this protest down into the following three sections:

- Objection 1 - Regarding the legality of the deposition case.
- Objection 2 - Regarding conflicts of interest.
- Request for Action.

Objection 1:

I believe that Classis East erred in declaring the deposition case of Rev. Lanning legally before it (reference Article 29 of Classis East January 2021 minutes).

1. I contend the case was not legally before Classis East in the first place because the work was not finished at the minor assembly (Byron Center's consistory) as required by Article 30 of the Church Order. A letter from Byron Center's consistory and Rev. Lanning requesting the judgment of Classis does not automatically mean that the work was finished at the minor assembly. This is evidenced by the following:
 - a. The time between the sermons preached, suspension, and deposition was inconceivably short. As with all significant ecclesiastical matters, this case needed to proceed slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully. The timeline of this case does not attest to the thorough and methodical deliberation that was needed.
 - b. The elders of Byron Center Church had not yet done their own thorough evaluation of the Jeremiah sermon.
 - c. There were unresolved protests at Byron Center relating to the case. Working through these protests would have allowed the consistory to see things from varied perspectives.
 - d. There were unresolved charges of sin within the Byron Center consistory (charges of sin between fellow elders). Working through these charges prior to bringing Rev. Lanning's case to Classis would have been beneficial for all parties.
 - e. God-ordained elders were relieved of their duties and not present during all deliberations. Lively debate among God-ordained officebearers is essential. Dissenting voices allow the full body to see multiple angles and work towards a fair, balanced, well thought out and God-honoring decision.
2. I contend the case was not legally before Classis East in the second

place because the nearest neighboring consistory did not render a judgment on the matter as required in Article 79 of the Church Order. If Unity PRC, as the nearest neighboring church, was considered conflicted, there were several other PR churches closer than Trinity with well qualified officebearers equipped for the work. Consistories and Classis are bound by the Church Order. The Church Order requires that the nearest neighboring church judge the matter. That judgment was never made.

Objection 2:

I believe that our churches erred in allowing conflicted officebearers to advise, deliberate, and render judgment in Rev. Lanning's deposition case.

1. I contend that our churches should not have sent advisors into Byron Center's consistory room who had unresolved sin charges against Rev. Lanning.
2. I contend that many of the delegates to Classis East were conflicted and should not have deliberated or rendered judgment in Rev. Lanning's deposition case. A critical aspect of the deposition case was to determine if Rev. Lanning publicly charged the February 2018 delegates with unrepentant sin (reference Minutes of Classis East Deposition Case, p. 4, A, 1—"In these sermons he publicly charges ministers and officebearers of the PRC with unrepentant sin."). Rev. Lanning claims "these sermons did not bring a formal charge of sin against officebearers to the pulpit, but rather reproved, rebuked, and exhorted the congregation and the denomination with all longsuffering and doctrine" (reference Agenda pp. 173 and 174 / Deposition Case pp. 61/62 ground 3). I contend that any individual who was a February 2018 delegate was conflicted and should not have rendered judgment in Rev. Lanning's case. It is difficult to imagine that the very men referenced in the Jeremiah sermon could judge this case with impartiality. This conflict of interest could have been easily remedied by bringing in non-conflicted delegates from each church. God has richly blessed us with many wise officebearers. There was no reason to have conflicted delegates deciding a case of this significance.
3. I contend that Rev. Lanning's father-in-law should not have rendered judgment as a synodical deputy in this case. Regardless if he expressed opposition or support for the deposition, his presence places undue pressure on the other officebearers trying to render impartial judgment. His presence alone brings unnecessary emotion and influence.

Even civil courts understand that impartiality is required for fair and balanced judgments (reference American Bar Association Rule 2.11(A) on Disqualification: "A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned...").

Requested Action

Is Rev. Lanning guilty of the sin of public schism? That is a very serious question and must be answered through an orderly and just process that is above reproach. We need to hear the answer to this question from:

- Byron Center's FULL consistory upon completion of ALL the work.
- Byron Center's nearest neighboring church.
- A non-conflicted Classis / Synod.

I ask that Rev. Lanning's deposition case be sent back to Byron Center's consistory for more work and that the nearest neighboring consistory render a judgment if necessary. Understanding that it may not be possible or practical for this to happen, out of love for Rev. Lanning, the consistory of Byron Center, our broader assemblies, and the body of Christ, I ask that synod acknowledge these errors and work towards reconciliation with Rev. Lanning and the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church. May God grant us peace and unity in the Truth.

In Christ,
Kent Deemter

Protest of Mr. Nathan Doezema

April 14, 2021

Dear brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ,

I herein protest the decision of Synod 2020 in Article 51, C, 2, b, c, d on pages 80-82 in the 2020 Acts of Synod.

First of all, I contend that this decision is contrary to Scripture and the confessions because it gives good works a place and function they do not have in the reception of the blessings of salvation. When we are talking about the way in which mercy is received, the good works of believers must be entirely excluded. Faith is always the only way in which we receive all the blessings of salvation.

As I will presently demonstrate by many quotations, our Three Forms of Unity (the Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, Belgic Confession) and Scripture as a whole do not teach that some activity of ours (repentance, good works in this case) is necessary before we enjoy particular blessings of salvation (including mercy). Rather, they teach that the only way in which we ever receive any of the blessings of salvation (both for the first time and throughout our entire life) is through faith in Christ, which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts by means of the gospel. When we are talking about receiving blessings (mercy), we must speak of faith and faith alone as the way in which we receive all blessings from God, and we must exclude all of our activities from this way. As its inevitable and immediate fruit, repentance will always accompany faith, but it may never be made part of that way in which we receive any of the blessings