

Protest-W. Koops

protest has also been provided to the Stated Clerk of Classis East and to the Stated Clerk of Synod.

Brothers, we thank you for your willingness to labor with us these last months in numerous meetings, phone calls, and email correspondence. It has been and remains our constant and sincere prayer that God would show you the errors of your way in regard to Rev. Lanning's deposition and the schism it has caused within our congregation and the denomination. May God work true repentance mightily in your hearts and a desire to confess these errors before God and men. A godly man, rich in wisdom, counseled us early this year with the words of James 5:16, to ward off all bitterness and anger and to look toward the beginnings of reconciliation. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

May God be gracious and merciful to us all.

In Christian love,
Alex & Bethany Kingma

Protest of Mr. Wesley Koops

April 14, 2021

Dear Delegates of Synod 2021,

I submit this protest of the decision of Classis East, found in Article 37 of the January 2021 minutes of Classis East. I am sending this protest to synod since the Synodical Deputies that were in attendance at the January Classis meeting concurred with the Classis East decision of Article 37. It seems in order then that Synod 2021 will have to approve the work of the synodical deputies. Hence I send this protest to synod.

The decision of Article 37 reads:

"II. Recommendation: that Classis East concur with Byron Center's decision to depose Rev. A. Lanning and advise Byron Center's Consistory to proceed with the deposition of Rev. A. Lanning from the office of the word and sacraments."

Information

The case of Rev. A. Lanning's suspension and deposition was a crucial and watershed event for our beloved churches. I contend that Classis East, in its decision to concur with the deposition of Rev. A. Lanning, erred because it did not properly follow Article 30 of our Church Order in regard to "*and that in an ecclesiastical manner.*" The ecclesiastical manner in which we proceed in our churches must be the distinguishing mark that separates our ecclesiastical courts (classes and synods) from the secular courts. That distinguishing mark and difference is given in

Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." The framework as taught in Galatians 5 is what separates our church courts from the secular courts and must govern our manner of proceeding.

I contend that Classis East erred in two respects.

First, Classis East moved forward too quickly with its decision to proceed with deposition before all of the events, circumstances, materials, and events could be fully revealed and understood. This is proven by the following pending circumstances that were in process:

a. The public writings in the *Standard Bearer* plus *Sword and Shield* give clear evidence of the ongoing doctrinal dispute in our churches over the place of our works, the activity of faith, the shades of antinomianism, grace and works principles, and many other troubling doctrinal issues. These ongoing and troubling issues were a clear indication that doctrinal differences lay at the very center of the unrest and upheaval in our churches. I quote from Rev. Koole in the *Standard Bearer*. "*Ecclesiastically—in light of the controversy stirring within our churches and the disruption of unity and oneness of mind on various issues, including doctrine. Issues and charges spilling over into our broader assemblies, issues that must be settled if we are to go forward in unity and at peace internally*" (*Standard Bearer, February 1, 2021, Editorial by Rev. Koole*). These unresolved doctrinal differences were also what, I believe, gave rise to the process of the suspension and deposition of Rev. Lanning. Synod 2018 defined the doctrines in print but we continue to struggle with the error, which proves that we have not emerged completely from doctrinal error. Doctrine was at the heart and still continues to be.

b. It is clear that the work at the Consistory level at Byron PRC was not done as required in Article 30 of our Church Order. Church Order Article 30 states: *In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common*" (emphasis, wk). The pending protests and letters give evidence that things were still developing. We know also that there was an existing serious charge against Rev. Lanning from the editors of the *Standard Bearer*. A separate issue but one of major consequence in this case. This all added up gives clear evidence of unresolved conflict between our ministers and leaders in our churches and clearly the work in Byron PRC was not finished.

Second, Classis East, in its haste to make a decision on deposition, skipped over and did not provide sufficient time for our biblical calling to

seek either a peaceful resolution or a definitive and peaceful separation of the parties. The actions of Classis East do not indicate that every avenue of peace, unity, and potential reconciliation was exhausted with the parties involved. By its manner, Classis East did not follow the instruction of Article 30, that being "*and that in an ecclesiastical manner.*" It was evident that both Rev. A. Lanning and his consistory requested judgment of Rev. A. Lanning's suspension and deposition. However, their requesting judgment by Classis is not a sufficient ground for declaring it legally before Classis and proceeding with judgment. In fact, it is all the more reason to declare it unfinished at the lower ecclesiastical level. Especially since Rev. A. Lanning had expressed publicly, and in his writings, his love for our Protestant Reformed Churches and his desire that they be unified in the truth of the gospel and not divided. The Classis could have and should have given time, as it has in the past with other cases, appointing help to address the pending letters, protests, charges, and strife in Byron Center PRC. This would have been the orderly way to address the strife within Byron Center PRC. More time was needed and should have been given. Even the commentary by VanDellen and Monsma on the Church Order as a rule require three to six months of suspension before a decision is made on deposition of a minister (Church Order, Article 79).

Some biblical grounds for our urgent call to proceed in an "*ecclesiastical manner*" are as follows. The Scriptures call us to bear patiently with one another and exercise charity as we deal with strife and sin within the church.

- a. Col. 3:12-14 "*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*"
- b. Matt. 5:23-24 "*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*"
- c. Eph. 4:32 "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*"

Submitted in love for our churches,
Wesley Koops