

To the consistory of Byron Center PRC,

I thank the consistory for the letter dated 3-2-2021. In this letter the consistory expresses sadness regarding the request for our membership papers. As the consistory notes God has appointed you to care for our souls. The consistory has *said* they have sadness and that they care for our souls, however, we find little evidence of this in the actions of the consistory. Rather we find that the consistory has been derelict in her duties of seeking those sheep which she has driven away. There has been no effort to visit or comfort or even find the lost sheep of your fold. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1John 3:18)

The consistory is correct that at our confessions of faith my wife and I made a vow before God to "submit to church government." It is our belief that we are fulfilling our vow in this regard. Two elders and three deacons lawfully called and equipped by Christ faithfully discharged their offices by calling us to come out of Byron Center church. They did this because they saw corruption in the life and doctrine of that congregation and denomination. This call was based on the teachings of Belgic Confession Articles 27, 28 and 29.

All of the office bearers at First Reformed Protestant Church were called by Christ, the head of the Church, through the proper and lawful manner as prescribed by the Church Order. They are not self-appointed to their offices. Their office is a continuation of that which they had been ordained and installed into within the Protestant Reformed Churches. As such they are not acting on their own accord but as the representatives of Christ in the church institute. Such continuation of office has been the legitimate practice of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924 as well as that of the Secession of 1834 and the Protestant Reformation.

The consistory is correct that the way of protest and appeal is the primary way to address grievances within the church. However, this way has been followed. Rev. Lanning did protest his discipline. The consistory rejected that protest. Many other members of Byron Center church protested various decisions of the consistory relating to these matters but the consistory refused to address these protests before going to Classis. Further there is no rule that one must follow the way of protest and appeal through every single possible step and appeal process. Once one is convinced that their voice has been heard and rejected they are free of their duty to continue blowing the trumpet from the walls of Zion (Ezekiel 33:1-9). This freedom includes the freedom to leave and join or start a new church institute for the worship of Jehovah.

We understand that the consistory of Byron Center PRC believes she has done and is doing the will of the Lord. However, it is our evaluation of BCPRC that she is in fact the church as outlined in the Act of Separation. This is seen in the lack of genuine love for the sheep who have left. As well as the illegal and unrighteous relieving of two elders from their duties with the subsequent excusing and self justifying "apology" given for such actions. Likewise this is evidenced by the rejection and deposition of Rev. Lanning for a faithful preaching of a word of repentance. Such are the marks of an apostatizing church.

Consider the Word of the Lord, "Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:" (Exodus 23:1-2) Also, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." (John 16:2-3) As well as "Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? [...] The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: [...] Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle." (Ezekiel 34) And finally, "The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause." (1Samuel 24:15)

We pray for you that the Lord grants you repentance for the sins you have committed against and within the bride of Christ. If the Lord gives you this great gift, know that He is faithful to forgive. Likewise, if you do confess your faults one to another we are willing to forgive and will receive you again into our fellowship as brothers in Christ.

In humble submission to our faithful Prophet, Priest and King,

Matthew and Christina Overway
3-10-2021