

Dear Consistory of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church,

We, Ryan and Hailey Schipper, hereby request that you send our membership papers and other records of our church membership to our home.

We understand that you regard our actions as charter members of First Reformed Protestant Church to be schismatic. Not only do we reject this characterization, but we also maintain that for you as a consistory to hold to this position will lead Southwest PRC down a dangerous road. It will prejudice the congregation against a true church and the fellow saints who are members there. It will also falsely soothe the consciences of the congregation, healing them “slightly” (Jer. 6:14), and hardening their ears against the clear, sound doctrine proclaimed in that true church. The result will be a susceptibility to the false doctrines that have been and are being advanced in the PRC. Because we love Southwest and the PRC, we offer this brief defense of our actions in order that you may be duly warned and, we pray, pricked.

Synod 2018 identified a cancer in the PRCA; a vile, deadly cancer which “displaced the perfect work of Christ.” The cancer was deeply rooted, as evidenced in that at least an entire consistory (Hope), five ministers, (the authors of the Doctrinal Statement plus Rev. Overway) and really all of Classis East either plainly believed that the cancer was in fact the truth or at least could not bring themselves to reject it, since they would not sustain Connie Meyer in February of 2018. Rather than reacting with horror at their awful sin of displacing the perfect work of Christ and the revelation that there was a deadly cancer in their midst, the PRCA changed virtually nothing. The revelation of a deadly cancer should have moved every minister to bring their scalpel to the pulpit to cut that error out of the hearts of the denomination in which it had taken root, and consistories should have insisted upon this. Instead, the overwhelming message throughout the churches was, “This wasn’t really cancer, it wasn’t really heresy, synod precisely didn’t call it heresy, and anyone who calls it heresy is a slanderer. It really was just a mistake over words, and now we know that saying ‘In the way of...’ makes everything OK, so we can all move on. The real problem is antinomians and these uncharitable people who sit on

the edge of their pews to try to hear their minister make a mistake. The real problem is those who insist that there is cancer among us and call us to cut it out.”

Naturally, everyone claims to agree with Synod 2018. Naturally, Classis East of September 2018 adopted Synod’s decisions as their own. But when Sword and Shield came onto the scene, one of its stated purposes was to educate God’s people on the decisions of Synod 2018, thereby to cut that cancer out of the hearts of God’s people; and for this the magazine was widely and vigorously condemned. This gives the lie to the claim that “we all agree with Synod 2018.” This makes plain that the denomination “walks in lies.” No one can judge the hearts of individuals, but the plain truth is that the denomination as a whole has not reckoned with its sin. Thus, in his Jeremiah 23 sermon, Rev. Lanning rightly called *the denomination* - not specific individuals as if he could know their hearts, but the *denomination* - to repentance. Fabricated grounds notwithstanding, by deposing Rev. Lanning, the PRCA has refused the necessary rebuke that sound doctrine must always bring against sin. In doing so, it refuses the only cure for its cancer and has set itself on the road of apostasy.

Already God is confounding the judgment of the PRCA. The evidence of this is that in the six-year history of this controversy, the *exclusive* objects of Christian discipline (or a sort of pseudo-discipline of being “relieved” of the duties of their office) have been those who insist on sound doctrine. The elder at Hope, the minister and deacon at Wingham, two elders from Byron Center and now Rev. Lanning. Meanwhile, the consistory who adamantly defended false doctrine against Neil and Connie Meyer and the four ministers who authored the Doctrinal Statement were never formally called to account. Even when a minister was subjected to a Formula of Subscription examination, the denomination was assured that this was “to remove any suspicion concerning his understanding and convictions” (Standard Bearer editorial, 7/1/2018). How a minister who apparently was free of suspicion regarding his understanding and convictions could then be allowed simply to resign months later is beyond our understanding.

We are aware that, for example, Hope consistory has made various apologies over the course of these events. This is all well and good, and we do not dispute the sincerity of any apologies that have been made. Nevertheless, the consistent pattern is that Christian discipline has been exercised on those who insist on sound doctrine, and many worthy objects of close scrutiny are instead upheld as men of honorable reputation. The latest and finest example of this is Classis' near incapacity to condemn an explicitly conditional statement made in a sermon, as if its allegedly being mis-spoken makes it any less heretical. Defending the name and reputation of a man was of greater concern than defending the name of Christ, which was blasphemed by that statement, mis-spoken or not.

We say again, God is confounding the judgment of the PRCA. Unless God grants repentance to the PRCA (in which case we would joyfully place our membership within her again), she will only slide farther into apostasy. Do not be surprised when error abounds. On the contrary, be surprised if any condemnation of error will be permitted for much longer. We cannot in good conscience remain in a denomination which has corrupted the marks of the true church and begun to take on the marks of the false church. Christ has called us out. We pray that you will be made to see the truth of what we say. We remain confident that "The Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof" (L.D. A. 54).

In Christian love,

Ryan and Hailey Schipper