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Dear Leon,

I needed some time to think about the things you said in the course of our last conversation. This is where I am at present:

- I went to my minister twice back in 2013 and 2014. The second time I showed him a letter I was going to send to the consistory. He asked me to not to send that letter as he said he would check with me at the end of the summer to see if I thought it had improved. I agreed, and did not send in the letter. I have not heard from him since. That was 3.5 years ago.
- Rev. Koole in that meeting also said “give me three years and I will be gone.” That was 3.5 years ago.
- For him to continue to do what he does each Sunday is unconscionable.
- I have experienced elders that are as bold as lions in private, but are not courageous when it matters.
- I wrote a letter in which I poured out my heart about the preaching. I received the most discouraging reply that I could imagine. In this letter the elders admit that “some” of them agree the sermon organization is not what it should be but they would go no further. They did not interact with anything I wrote. I do not know how a body of elders could have voted in support of sending that letter out.
- To add insult to injury, one elder who drafted that very letter, later came to me privately and said that he agreed with more of my letter than I could imagine.
- In a family visitation I expressed that I felt the preaching should be better and I thought the elders should do something about it. At the close of that family visitation the elder said to me, “It’s easy to be an elder at Grandville right now. Is there anything you would like the elders to work on, any programs in particular?” Easy to be an elder? Programs to work on? I truly wonder if that man has any idea what it means to be an elder.
- You say that we can’t have office bearer material leaving. But it has been happening in droves over the last number of years. I was at Hudsonville church recently and 3 of the current deacons are ex-Grandville members. At Byron Center, I noticed one deacon was an ex-Grandville member. Why is it when our members marry, they settle at other churches? These are all signs that something is amiss, so why not do something about it? Yet years go by and nothing happens. The preaching is just as bad today (and I refer to the sermons recently) as it was 5 years ago, if not worse. I can’t understand that.
- James Daane points out in his book “Preaching With Confidence” exactly what is happening at Grandville:  
“(although) the ability to empower the Word does not lie in us, it is within our potential, alas, to obscure and becloud the truth of the Word. We can place stumbling blocks and unnecessary offenses in the path that leads to faith in Jesus Christ.... Preachers today can set up obstacles to the hearing of the Word in many different ways: by reducing the gospel to moralism, by self-righteous pride, *by lazy sermonic preparation*, by turning the pulpit into a personal stage, by bad grammar, poor speaking, disregard of logic. Unable to empower the Word, ministers can still make it difficult for others to hear the Word.” p45

- Rev Cory Griess, in the November 1, 2017 Standard Bearer writes the following (and at Grandville I do not sense that power or experience in the preached Word):

“There is a power in the Word to Christ’s presence to His people. And when it does, there is an experience that takes place. A powerful experience. An experience that is deep and rich, and that even can be, yes, emotional. Where the Word is not the heart of worship the experience is counterfeit, shallow, and leaves the church lagging behind its forefathers in spiritual growth and experience.”

- Leon, what finally drove home to me that I needed to change my church membership is something Rev. Koole said at the end of his sermon on October 8; something I agree with wholeheartedly, although not in the sense that he meant it: “you need the food (preaching) to digest the supplement...there’s the real food, if you will. So, we must avail ourselves to them faithfully, regularly, prayerfully, that they might be of, that that word might be of value to us, and strengthen our faith and nourish us and give us spiritual health...it ties in as well with the church herself and where one attends the church. Not just church membership and now I have a church membership and there is some preaching here and there is some sacraments and my faith is healthy. **No, your health is not necessarily healthy. One may survive in such a church if there is enough what they say, enough gospel there. But one will not be healthy, beloved. The calling beloved, is to go where the pure gospel is...the gospel as it is declared here by Lord’s Day 25, having to do with grace, grace, grace. Christ’s sacrifice, Christ crucified and the power of God unto salvation. And then faith beloved, is fed and faith is refreshed and one has the relationship to Christ and that is the important thing, isn’t it? Beloved, feed your faith, your faith, that you may have this relationship to Christ and pray for God’s blessing upon the means of grace and that God will keep us faithful to this gospel. Amen.**
  - Leon, I am tired of just surviving, and I need my relationship and my family’s relationship with Christ to be stronger; and that can only happen under proper preaching.
- I want my sons to consider the ministry. I encourage them strongly to think about entering the ministry, even from a young age. To me there would be no higher calling, nothing better in the world than to spend an entire week, and actually one’s entire life devoted to proclaiming the good news of the gospel. Why would they want to join the ministry if their only example is Rev. Koole?

I also don’t understand the mentality behind staying in a church even though we aren’t being fed. So, it becomes I am willing to not be fed just so I can stay in a church, even when there are other options available to us where we would be fed. Am I to think less of a man who left 5 years ago and higher of a man who stayed, even though the man and his family who left have been receiving a steady diet of good, spiritual food and the man who stayed has been starving? Just so we can say we stayed in a church? Imagine that conversation at the final judgment, “Well Lord, I didn’t receive good preaching that magnified thy holy name, and I didn’t see to it that my wife and children were spiritually fed, but I stayed in the same church for a long time!” I don’t understand it. And I suppose that gets to the point of what church membership means. Is the most important thing my friends, my family, even my spiritual family that goes there, or the preaching that takes place Sunday after Sunday? We would both agree it is the preaching, and more to the point, the glory of God! Yet the preaching is not the main reason we are members where we are. If I told you my top five reasons for being a member at Grandville, the preaching wouldn’t be one

of them. I should be rebuked for keeping my family in a church where the preaching is poor and where the elders have shown no inclination that either anything is wrong, or that anything should be done about it. Yet, the alternate is true; by staying, that is somehow worthy of praise. I understand the practical implications of what I am saying, and wisdom is required. You don't simply leave when you have a minister who is not as eloquent or as gifted as someone else, and if there is trouble, you do not jump at the first sign of it. But I am not dealing with a situation where a man is just not very gifted or eloquent. Something is far more seriously wrong here.

So why am I leaving Grandville? Because to put it in the words of Prof. Gritters, for the last 5 years I have been rising up in "holy horror" about the preaching. My minister and my elders (in their official capacity) have told me nothing is wrong when everything has been wrong. Every service that my elders allow Rev. Koole to mount the pulpit with what he has been bringing up there, is a service that says to me that the elders are not truly concerned about what is inevitably going to happen. The glory of God has been robbed from Him, and my elders either could not discern it, or didn't have the courage to do anything about it. And I don't know which is worse. I do not imagine I will find a church where there are no issues or struggles, but knowing what I do about Grandville Church and the men who rule over it, I can no longer place my soul, the soul of my wife, and the souls of my children under their care.

Leon, the cause you are fighting for is worth it. If there was anything I thought I could do to help you I would stay and fight. But I have done all I can, and if I persist in this as a layperson, more harm than good would be done. For all of our talk in theory about "the office of all believer" in practice it is resigned to a useless office. As I said to you before, Grandville Church does not have enough Leon Kamps. Maybe they have left in years past, or maybe the spirit of the age, even and especially in the PRC, does not encourage and promote men like Leon Kamps. In fact, as tragic as it seems (and I thought in the past there were more) but it appears there is only one "Leon Kamps" at Grandville Church.

May the prayer of Martin Luther (a man who also knew something about standing alone) at Worms be also your prayer:

The work is not mine, but thine. I have no business here...I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world. I would gladly pass my days in happiness and peace. But the cause is thine...and it is righteous and everlasting! O Lord! Help me! O faithful and unchangeable God!...Thou hast chosen me for this work. I know it!...Therefore, O God, accomplish thine own will!

Your brother In Christ,

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