

MINUTES
OF
KNOX PRESBYTERY

2016 ANNUAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 21, MISSOULA, MONTANA



COMMUNION OF REFORMED
EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

- * *The meeting was called to order at 8:04 AM by Presiding Minister (PM) Alan Burrow.*
- * An invitational prayer was offered by Terry Tollefson.
- * Presbytery was led in singing by Clerk Casey Christopher (Psalm 40 ("I Waited for the Lord") and "O, God of Earth & Altar").
- * Toby Sumpter gave an exhortation from the Scriptures on Pastoral Joy.
- * PM Burrow called the roll, and a quorum was established (12 of 13 particularized churches present; Trinity Church of Tri-Cities (Richland, WA) was not present).
- * Mission churches and visitors were introduced:
 - Holy Trinity Church (Colville, WA); mission church of Christ Church (Spokane, WA), Ed Iverson present.
 - King's Cross Church (Wenatchee, WA); mission church of Trinity Church (Kirkland, WA), Gene Helsel present.
 - Grace Covenant Church (Gibsons, BC); mission church of Christ Covenant Church (Grande Prairie, AB)); no one present from Gibsons; Theo Hoekstra of Christ Covenant Church (Grande Prairie) representing.
 - Valley Covenant Church (Lewiston, ID); no one present from Lewiston; Ben Merkle of Christ Church (Moscow) representing.
Justin Wallick, RCA pastor, friend and guest of Jonah Barnes (Emmanuel Chapel (Helena, MT).
- * Church Reports were made by or on behalf of the following churches, with delegates and ordained CREC ministers/pastors as indicated:
 - Christ Church (Missoula, MT). Delegates: Andrew Voelkel, Francis Foucachon (pro tem).
Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Andrew Voelkel.
 - MOTION (Andrew Voelkel; seconder not recorded) that presbytery grant an exception to CREC Constitution Article IV.B.1 and allow Francis Foucachon to serve as a voting delegate for Christ Church (Missoula) at this 2016 Knox Presbytery meeting. (Francis Foucachon, elder at Christ Church (Moscow), has been serving as pro tem elder at Christ Church (Missoula), their only other elder being Pastor Andrew Voelkel.) CARRIED without dissent.
 - MOTION (Andrew Voelkel; seconder not recorded) that Knox Presbytery approve Francis Foucachon to serve as an elder for Christ Church Missoula in accordance with CREC Constitution Article II.B. FAILED.
 - Christ Church (Moscow, ID). Delegates: Ben Merkle, Mike Lawyer. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Serving in office - Douglas Wilson, Mike Lawyer, Ben Merkle, Francis Foucachon; not serving in office - Jack Bradley, Gene Liechty, Rick Young.
 - Valley Covenant Church (Lewiston, ID; mission church of Christ Church (Moscow)); report by Ben Merkle of Christ Church (Moscow). Representatives: None. Ordained CREC

ministers/pastors: None.
Christ Church (Spokane, WA). Delegates: Kenton Spratt. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Kenton Spratt.
Holy Trinity Church (Colville, WA; mission church of Christ Church (Spokane)). Representatives: Ed Iverson. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Ed Iverson.
Christ Covenant Church (Enterprise, OR). Delegates: Terry Tollefson. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Terry Tollefson.
Christ Covenant Church (Grande Prairie, AB). Delegates: Theo Hoekstra, Jamie Soles. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Theo Hoekstra.
Grace Covenant Church (Gibsons, BC; mission church of Christ Covenant Church (Grande Prairie)); report by Theo Hoekstra of CCC (Grande Prairie). Delegates: None. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: None.
Christ Covenant Reformed Church (Billings, MT). Delegates: Chris Schrock, Ryan Yeager. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Christ Schrock.
Emmanuel Chapel (Helena, MT). Delegates: Jonah Barnes, Richard Miltenberger. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Jonah Barnes.
King's Cross Church (Wenatchee, WA; mission church of Trinity Church (Kirkland, WA)). Delegates: Gene Helsel. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Gene Helsel.
The King's Congregation (Meridian, ID). Delegates: Alan Burrow (non-voting due to PM status). Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Alan Burrow.
Trinity Church (Coeur d'Alene, ID). Delegates: Stuart Bryan. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Stuart Bryan.
Trinity Church of Tri-Cities (Richland, WA) (written report only). Delegates: None. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: Toby Wilson.
Trinity Covenant Church (Fort St. John, BC). Delegates: Desmond Jones. Ordained CREC ministers/pastors: None.
Trinity Reformed Church (Moscow, ID). Delegates: Toby Sumpter; Joshua Appel. Ordained CREC minister/pastors: Toby Sumpter; Joshua Appel.

- * *Presbytery broke at 10:05am and reconvened at 10:20am.*
- * MOTION (Ben Merkle; seconder not recorded) that Francis Foucachon, ordained in the Evangel Presbytery of the PCA, have the CREC membership requirement of CREC Constitution II. B. waived for one year pursuant to that same provision. CARRIED without dissent (2 abstaining).
- * RECEIVED report of PM of Council Douglas Wilson (*Appendix A*).
 - MOTION (Toby Sumpter; Mike Lawyer) to ratify the actions of PM Wilson as set forth in his report. CARRIED (8-7-1).
- * MOTION (Toby Sumpter; seconder not recorded) to nominate Gregg Strawbridge as the next PM of Council (2017-20). CARRIED without dissent (3 abstaining).
- * RECEIVED report of PM of Knox Presbytery Alan Burrow (*Appendix B*).

- MOTION (Mike Lawyer; Stuart Bryan) that Knox Presbytery have CREC webmaster Tim Gallant maintain a Knox Presbytery webpage on the CREC website in lieu of the current independent Knox Presbytery website, and further that Knox Presbytery overture council 2017 to have webmaster Tim Gallant do the same for all CREC presbyteries in lieu of each presbytery maintaining its own independent website. CARRIED without dissent.
- MOTION (Toby Sumpter; Terry Tollefson) to ratify the action of PM Burrow in appointing an ad hoc committee of presbytery (the "Knox Presbytery Committee Concerning Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie") to make findings and recommendations to presbytery regarding the situation at CCC following the council court of appeals ruling in Barendregt v. CCC. CARRIED (14-1-1).

* Presbytery broke for lunch at 12:06pm and reconvened at 1:05pm.

* Casey Christopher led in singing Psalm 47.

* RECEIVED written report from the Missions Commission of CREC Council (*Appendix C*).

* RECEIVED written report and recommendation (*Appendix E*) of the Knox Presbytery Committee Regarding Christ Covenant Church (CCC), Grand Prairie.

- SUGGESTION by Kenton Spratt that executive session be offered to CCC. PM Burrow offered executive session to the delegation from CCC, which DECLINED the offer.
- SUMMARY of the report and recommendation by committee chair Stuart Bryan.
- RESPONSE by the delegation from CCC (Theo Hoekstra and Jamie Soles).
- FLOOR OPENED by PM Burrow for questions to the committee or to the CCC delegation, as well as discussion of the committee findings and recommendations.
- RECOMMENDATION/MOTION¹ from the committee -

that Knox Presbytery ask Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie to invite PM Burrow to appoint a minimum of two pro-tem elders to serve alongside the CCC Council until the 2017 Knox Presbytery meeting, at which time the pro-tem elders will make a recommendation to Presbytery. We are asking the Grand Prairie elders to submit joyfully and willingly to this requirement even if they believe they personally need no help at all. If the CCC Council does not in fact need any help, the pro-tem elders will not hinder their faithfulness. If the CCC Council needs help, the pro-tem elders will serve to strengthen them. The appointed elders should seek to come alongside the CCC Council in their work in general, paying special attention to the following matters:

1. *Carefully weighing and responding to counsel in wisdom and godly submission.*
2. *Following good procedures in running and documenting decisions.*

¹ A committee recommendation may be placed directly on the floor as a motion and needs no second in light of the fact that it has already been proposed by multiple presbyters on the committee (see *Robert's Rules of Order* (revised), ch. 54).

3. *Verifying that good disciplinary process is understood and followed.*
4. *Knowing when it is fitting for officers to recuse themselves from decisions in which they have a conflict of interest.*
5. *Distinguishing between the duties and callings of elders and deacons.*
6. *Following Constitutional requirements and clarifying church membership.*

The motion CARRIED (8-7-1).

- The CCC delegation indicated that pro tem elders were not acceptable to CCC's council (session).
- RECOMMENDATION/MOTION from the committee that CCC be removed from the CREC under CREC Constitution IV. D. 6. The motion FAILED (3-13-0).
- The CCC delegation was asked if it would be acceptable to the CCC council (session) if the pro tem elder motion above were passed, substituting "advisors" for "pro-tem elders." The CCC delegation indicated that they thought it would be acceptable, and that they would take it back to the CCC council (session) for consideration.
- MOTION (Toby Sumpter; Francis Foucachon) that the previous motion concerning pro tem elders serving with CCC be passed again, substituting "advisors" for "pro-tem elders." DISCUSSION was had in which it was clarified that: (1) the advisors would not be appointed to pursue reconciliation with former church visitors or members; and (2) PM Burrow would appoint advisors acceptable to the CCC delegation, namely Gary Vanderveen (Anselm Presbytery), Terry Tollefson, and Ryan Yeager. The motion CARRIED without opposition and with 1 abstaining.
- * RECEIVED Gene Helsel's proposed CREC memorial on abortion.
 - MOTION (mover and seconder not recorded) to adopt the memorial in the form appearing in *Appendix D*. The motion CARRIED without opposition.
- * REPORT (oral) by Ed Iverson on encroachments against religious liberty in Washington.
 - MOTION (Toby Sumpter; Mike Lawyer) that Knox Presbytery request CREC Council to add the issue of trans-gendered bathroom access issue to the Same-Sex Mirage Committee's scope of responsibilities. The motion CARRIED without opposition.
- * MOTION (mover and seconder not recorded) to adjourn. CARRIED without opposition.
- * *Presbytery adjourned at 5:38pm.*

APPENDICES

- A - *Report of PM of Council Douglas Wilson*
- B - *Report of PM of Knox Presbytery Alan Burrow*
- C - *Report of the Missions Commission of Council*
- D - *Helsel Proposed CREC Memorial on Abortion (adopted by Knox Presbytery, Sep 21, 2016)*
- E - *Report and Recommendations of the Knox Presbytery Committee Regarding Christ Covenant Church (Grande Prairie, AB)*

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August 22, 2016

Brothers in the Lord, greetings.

The Lord continues to show kindness to the CREC, although it appears we have begun to enter a different season. Instead of the rapid growth we have enjoyed in some years past, we seem to have entered into a time of consolidation along with the various adjustments necessary. In the course of such adjustments, some of our churches have encountered significant challenges and controversies over the course of this last year, resulting in a more sober outlook over all.

The one significant formal action I took this last year was that of recusal. A dispute arose in our Grand Prairie church, some of the disputants filed a complaint with Alan Burrow, presiding minister of Knox. Because of the nature of the case, Knox referred the case up to Council. Because my niece is married to one of the disputants, I recused myself from the case, and asked Jack Phelps (as *pro tem*) to serve as the acting presiding minister for that case. He did this very well, appointing a court to hear the case, which has now been formally settled. As of this writing, the downstream ramifications of that settlement are still unclear, but the case itself is completed.

Another important concern is the matter of my successor, which needs to be settled by this time next year. At the last Council, Randy Booth was elected the *pro tem* presiding minister, with the idea that he would serve as presiding minister after my term. But because of one of the controversies mentioned earlier, he stepped aside last year. Jack Phelps came back into the *pro tem* role, but with no intention of succeeding me. It must be remembered that Jack has already served us ably and well as PM for two consecutive terms, and it would be a bit much to ask him to do it again. In short, we need some nominations of men who would be willing to serve as the presiding minister of the CREC. I would request that this matter of nominations be an item of discussion at your respective presbyteries this year.

The main things I have been occupying myself with this last year concern what might be described as coming from a general desire to “tidy up.” Following our presbytery meetings last year, we successfully settled on a new logo for the CREC, and I commissioned and oversaw the development of a new web site for us. One new feature of this web site is something I can announce now—instead of the presiding minister having to manage a file system for the Ministerial Data Sheets (MDS), the web site will soon contain a password-protected feature where ministerial candidates and pastors without a call can fill out their profile, in accordance with our MDS template. This means that when a church is undertaking a pastoral search, all they will need to do now is get a code from the presiding minister to review the available profiles.

The last item of “tidying up” concerns our governmental documents. One of the things I have

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sought to do since becoming presiding minister is to become thoroughly acquainted with them, reading a page or two on almost a daily basis. Doing this, I have read through our Constitution, Memorials, and Book of Procedures repeatedly.

What I would like to do is use this presiding minister's report as a means of cleaning these documents up. But of course, one of the first questions that will arise is whether I have the right to do this. Illustrating one of the problems I found, the answer to *that* question, according to our documents, is both *no* and *yes*.

No: "In this way, the Presiding Minister represents the broader assembly for any action empowered to that assembly by this constitution, except for the following: . . . *amending confessional or governmental standards*" (Constitution IV.C.9.a).

Yes: "Actions of the Presiding Minister of Council on behalf of Council reported to all and approved by two-thirds of Presbyteries shall be deemed as approved by the CREC Council. When two-thirds of the Presbyteries ratify an action or adopt a report, it will be consider an act of Council. *When such would result in a constitutional amendment*, three quarters of the Presbyteries must ratify. Confessional Standards cannot be altered or modified by this means" (Constitution V.D.1.c).

The first prohibits the presiding minister from amending our governmental standards by this means at all, and the second stipulates the required threshold of votes to amend our governmental standards by this means. I am assuming the authority granted in the second section, which I will use to make the necessary correction in the first.

In the following, I have broken out my actions into three categories—Constitutional Changes, Book of Procedures Changes, and Recommendations for Future Action. The recommendations for future action are simply proposed agenda items for Council next year, mentioned here so that you can discuss them this year as well as next (if you like). I am limiting the number of actual changes made in this fashion (*i.e.* through action by presbyteries). I have only taken action on a handful of trivial items, and a couple important items of principle (over-reach and contradiction). All of these items below could have been addressed in this way (presiding minister action, and approval by presbyteries), but that would make this process a standard way of amending our documents, which I don't believe we want.

Thus Cromwell Presbytery, say, could entertain a motion to approve this entire report of mine, *or* could pass a motion approving the report "with the exception of" the offensive section (*e.g.* Constitutional Changes #2). I see this exercise as a matter of housekeeping, and am happy to submit to the desire of the presbyteries in approving these particular actions or not. Although they are reported to you as *actions*, they should be considered (at least by me) as having the emotional weight of *proposals*.

Constitutional Changes

In order for any of the following changes to occur to the Constitution, three-quarters of the presbyteries would have to approve. This means 5.25 presbyteries would have to vote for it, allowing in effect only one presbytery to dissent. If two presbyteries dissent on any of the following items, they would not take effect.

Under the authority granted by this Constitution, I have taken the following actions, and have submitted them to our presbyteries for ratification:

1. I have changed *consider* to *considered* in V.D.1.c

2. Memorial C:

I deleted the phrase *and enormity* from the first paragraph. It is a misuse of standard English. **Rationale:** The deletion does not alter the meaning of the sentence, and removes a distraction that takes away from the meaning.

“Given the importance ~~and enormity~~ of the task . . .”

3. I have removed the words *or governmental* from IV.C.9.a. **Rationale:** This removes the contradiction noted earlier.

“In this way, the Presiding Minister represents the broader assembly for any action empowered to that assembly by this constitution, except for the following: . . . *amending confessional ~~or governmental~~ standards*” (Constitution IV.C.9.a).

Book of Procedures

These documents can be amended by a 2/3 vote, which is 4.6 presbyteries out of 7. That means that if *three* presbyteries dissent, the change is not approved.

1. In III.3.a, *to which you called* is altered to read *to which you were called*.

“to which you were called and about which you made the good confession . . .”

2. In Appendix A, under the paragraph entitled Rescind, *toa* is altered to be *to a*.

3. In IV.3.f.i.2, I deleted the phrase *unanimous vote of* and replaced it with *decision by*.

Rationale: the CREC ought not to dictate the vote margins of an internal session matter of a local church like this. This is a serious overreach on the part of our broader assemblies.

“A ~~unanimous vote of~~ decision by the mother church session to terminate the relationship.”

Recommendations for Future Action

I recommend the following amendments to our Constitution and Book of Procedures, and submit them to you for discussion.

1. Strike *formal, non-binding, fraternal* from the Preamble of the Constitution, and add a few words. **Rationale:** Because we do not know what groups we have in mind, the current language is too specific and could easily interfere with developing such relationships.

“Membership in this confederation is in no way meant to exclude warm, ~~fraternal, and working~~ relations with other faithful Christian bodies. We therefore welcome and encourage ~~formal, non-binding, fraternal~~ any relations with like-minded churches, presbyteries, and denominations that are consistent with this Constitution” (Constitution, Preamble, p. 4).

2. In II.A, strike the word *minister*, and add a substitute word *polity*, and add a sentence.

Rationale: There is no such thing as a 2-, 3-, or 4- office view of church *minister*. I have also added a sentence that gives the stipulated definition of the word *pastor*.

“The CREC takes no constitutional position on the validity of 2-, 3- or 4-office view of church ~~minister~~ polity. These documents use the word *pastor* to refer to the man who has primary responsibility for leading worship on the Lord’s Day.”

3. In II.C, delete the phrase *often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session*. **Rationale:** For a constitution, this is unnecessary clutter, and a bit inaccurate to boot. In some bodies, for example, the consistory would be the elders and deacons together.

“Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders . . . ~~often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session.~~”

4. In II.F, delete *minister, or teacher*. **Rationale:** to make it clear we are talking about one office only, that of the pastor. The current wording was confusing to at least one 4-office church, which has an office of *teacher* distinct from *pastor*. In short, as it stands the *wording* of our Constitution could be interpreted as requiring a presbytery examination of a teacher (distinct from pastor), when the intent of the Constitution was to use three different words for the pastor.

“Any candidate for pastor, ~~minister, or teacher~~ regardless of his level of formal education . . .”

5. In II.G, delete *or teacher*, and have substituted *pastor* for *minister*. **Rationale:** same as #4 above.

“If a ~~minister~~ pastor ~~or teacher~~ has already . . .”

6. Add a new II.H, which would require subsequent renumbering for the remainder of Article II.

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Rationale: This would create the possibility of a presbytery exam for a teacher (distinct from pastor), which would provide that option for a 4-office church that wanted to function more closely with the historic 4-office practice.

“If a church holding the 4-office view would like the ordination of a teacher to be recognized on a broader scale within the CREC, comparable to the way the ordination of pastor currently is, such a church may request a modified examination of that man by presbytery.”

6. In III.M, delete *current pastoral and*. **Rationale:** Given our stance on 2-, 3-, and 4- office, this is unnecessary and confusing.

“Nevertheless, observations and questions concerning ~~current pastoral and~~ elder qualifications may occur . . .”

7. In IV.A.1, delete one Scripture reference and alter the *law of Christ* to match the other reference.

“presbyteries are urged to remember the ~~law of Christ~~ golden rule (Matt. 7:12; 3-Jn-9).

8. In III.E.1, delete *the* and *which some may draw*, and add the words *refined* and *plain*.

Rationale: This states the same standard in a straightforward way, without involving nameless others (“some may draw”).

“Furthermore, subscription does not mean that churches are bound to the Scripture references and allusions, incidental remarks or ~~the refined~~ refined theological deductions ~~which some may draw~~ from the plain doctrines set forth in the confessions.”

9. In IV.D.3.d, I delete the phrase *unless and until it is found by a future Council to be in conflict with the Scripture or the Constitution of the CREC*. **Rationale:** The right of a future Council to hear the case is guaranteed by the subsequent sentence, and this sentence appears to limit any appeal to a principled argument from Scripture or the Constitution—and not from the facts of the case, for example.

The “decision of Council shall be considered settled and binding ~~unless and until it is found by a future Council to be in conflict with the Scripture or the Constitution of the CREC~~. Decisions of Council . . .”

10. In IV.D.6, delete the word *judicial*. **Rationale:** the word *judicial* can be understood as a term of art, meaning that someone could argue that a formal court hearing is required.

“After a fair and open ~~judicial~~ hearing at Presbytery, a congregation may be removed . . .”

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11. In V.N, replace *fraternal* with *visiting*, and add a phrase about mission churches. **Rationale:** because the word *fraternal* can have a very specific meaning for different Reformed denominations, the word *visiting* accomplishes the same thing without the possible confusion.

“A simple majority of an assembly may seat candidate and ~~fraternal~~ visiting delegations, along with delegations of mission churches, . . .”

12. In Art. I of the BOP, delete two phrases and replace it with another. **Rationale:** The current requirement is cumbersome, and asks our broader assemblies to do unnecessary work, defending itself to itself.

“If there is good cause for not following these standard operating procedures in a given situation, ~~the reason for the deviation must be stated in writing and approved by the relevant broader assembly noted in the minutes.~~”

13. Concerning Art. XIII of the BOP, delete the entirety of it, and replace it with the paragraph below. **Rationale:** The current language assumes far more than we can possibly know about the requirements of other bodies seeking a relationship with us, and it ties our hands beforehand.

“The CREC welcomes and encourages warm fraternal relations with likeminded churches, presbyteries, and denominations. If a request for such a relationship comes to us from another body, the appropriate presiding minister will oversee the necessary discussions, and submit the resultant proposal to presbytery or Council. That proposal requires a two-thirds vote to approve. If a broader assembly of the CREC seeks a similar relationship with another body, the presiding minister must receive permission from the majority of the appropriate broader assembly to approach that other body. If a proposal results, the final approval must be a two-thirds vote.”

14. In XIV.1, delete the sentence about the varying colors of the logo. **Rationale:** This sentence opens the door for disputes without any mechanism for resolving them. Appropriate according to whom? Tasteful according to whom?

“of the CREC. ~~It can be presented in varying colors as appropriate and tasteful for its intended use.~~ No other emblem . . .”

15. Appendix C.III.6, add the phrase, *as appropriate*. **Rationale:** We should want our process to accommodate the possibility that the behavior of the disciplining church was outrageous and that we need not be bound to oversee a “good faith” effort to comply with a manifestly unjust decree.

“As appropriate, we shall refrain from receiving . . .”

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I thank you all for your labors in the Lord (1 Thess. 5:12).

Cordially in Christ,

Douglas Wilson, presiding minister (CREC)

P.S. Another item worth mentioning is the status of the report that Christ Church and Trinity Reformed Church requested from a review committee made up of the presiding ministers of our various presbyteries (re: Greenfield, Wight, Sitler). This needs to be mentioned here because there are two misconceptions that could easily arise concerning their work. The first point to make is that the report was requested by, and will be received by, the two sessions of the churches in question. The committee is not serving as a committee reporting back to the CREC, and is therefore *not* reporting its results back to the presbyteries or to Council. Rather they will be submitting their review to Christ Church and Trinity. Thus the status of that review does not properly belong in this letter, since there is nothing for our presbyteries to accept or ratify. Even when the report is released there will be nothing that our broader assemblies could act on. Secondly, on a related note, this is a *review* committee formed to offer counsel to two churches seeking it, and is not a court or an investigation. That should be kept in mind as well. And last, with all this said, I am unaware of the precise status of the report. I am suggesting to Jack Phelps that if the report is not delivered to the Moscow churches by the time our respective presbyteries meet that he provide a status report to the affected presbyteries.



To: Presbyters of Knox Presbytery
From: Alan Burrow, Presiding Minister
Date: September 18, 2016
Re: 2016 Annual Report (Oct 2015 - Sep 2016)

Brothers of Knox Presbytery:

This is my second annual report to you as Presiding Minister (PM).

My time and efforts over the past year can be pretty much summed up in two words – committees and difficulties. I served on two committees – the Presiding Ministers' Committee reviewing the handling of the Sitler and Wight sexual abuse cases, and the Same Sex Mirage Committee working on denominational proposals in light of the *Obergefell* decision and subsequent developments. I was also involved in trying to help with one major church difficulty at Christ Covenant Church (Grande Prairie, AB).

I will get to those in a minute, but let me first address one positive area I was able to work on, and that is the Knox Presbytery website.

Knox Presbytery Website

The Knox Presbytery website was woefully out of date, and further it looked like it had never fully realized the original vision, which was to have every local church submit photos, info, and advertising about their congregation. Some churches supplied the material; most did not.

I asked my church webmaster, Fred Lock, to take a look and make recommendations. We also consulted with denominational webmaster, Tim Gallant. The consensus was that the Knox website needed to be radically simplified, not only for the reasons already mentioned, but also because much online viewing nowadays is on smart phones, which means the website needs to view well on handheld devices.

Based on these thoughts for improvement, I asked Fred to take a shot at revising the website. You can see the results here: <http://knox.crecpresbytery.org/>. This is not necessarily a final product. Take a look and give me your feedback.

Moving forward, we need to decide how we want to keep up the website, for Fred cannot keep it up in perpetuity. One of the things Fred and I talked about with Tim Gallant was whether it

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wouldn't be better (it would definitely be easier) for Knox to scrap the website and instead go with a webpage on the CREC website. Tim, who is already being paid by the CREC, could easily maintain it – moreover he said he could set it up so the PM or other designee from Knox could edit and add content directly.

So ponder our future in terms of a website or webpage. We need something that is easy and workable.

CREC Council Committee on Same Sex Mirage

If you recall, in the wake of *Obergefell*, a supermajority of presbyteries petitioned PM Douglas Wilson to convene an ad hoc meeting of Council for the purpose of amending the Constitution and BOP to address same sex marriage and religious liberty issues going forward. PM Wilson is waiting on the committee to recommend specific amendments with appropriate provisions and language so the ad hoc Council does not have to start from scratch.

The committee, which is chaired by Jeff Evans, and on which Chris Schrock and I both serve from Knox, has met a number of times and discussed various proposals. In the process, we have leaned heavily on the research and advice of Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), one of the leading religious liberty defenders in the country.

At our last meeting, Jeff Evans agreed to take the initial swipe at drafting proposed amendments. Unfortunately, the process has been delayed, because we received notice from ADF that they are revamping their recommendations and sample constitutional language to better respond to the latest threats to religious liberty. They are the experts, and Jeff believes that it is better to wait and get it right the first time, rather than amend the Constitution, only to have to turn around and do it again.

The Presiding Ministers' Committee Evaluating the Handling of the Sitler and Wight Sexual Abuse Cases

One of the things the committee decided early on was that, regardless of the evaluation and report, the CREC needed to receive expert training on sexual abuse, so we would be better equipped to prevent such cases in our congregations and better prepared to deal with them when they arise (God forbid). To that end, we contacted Love & Norris, a Texas law firm that specializes in the area, particularly as it relates to churches and other ministries (Kimberly Norris' father was a PCA church planter), and their training organization MinistrySafe. You can view their website here: <http://ministrysafe.com/>.

We retained Love & Norris to review the draft report so we could get the benefit of their expert advice in that regard, and we retained MinistrySafe to give us two training sessions for to CREC ministers and elders, one in Seattle in conjunction with Anselm Presbytery's meeting this October, and the second in conjunction with CREC Council's 2017 meeting in SanDestin, Florida.

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The idea behind two training sessions is to make the training more accessible, and to make it available more quickly, so we do not have to wait another year until Council meets in 2017.

Of course, none of that comes free, but we think it is vitally important. The cost of everything is about \$14,000, which the committee thought was doable if each of the seven presbyteries raised \$2000. In Knox, that would average out to about \$170 per church, not counting mission churches. To get everything rolling expeditiously, my church, The King's Congregation, fronted \$5000 to Love & Norris / MinistrySafe. We are hoping, of course, that we are not left holding the bag. To date, we have received \$300 each from Christ Covenant Church (Billings), Emmanuel Chapel (Helena), and Trinity Church (Coeur d'Alene), for a total of \$900. I urge our remaining churches to prayerfully consider supporting this initiative.

Turning to the committee report, as I already mentioned, it is in the revision process based on advice from Love & Norris. We have known from the beginning that perhaps the only objective credibility the committee can offer is thoroughness, and thoroughness with two ten-year-old sexual abuse cases, one of which is actually three cases, and both of which involve extensive court case files, takes time – certainly more time than we would like. And then you add the fact that we are not a lone reviewer who can do the spade work then publish his or her opinion; we are a committee that must do the hard work of seeking consensus, almost like a jury.

The jury analogy fits in other ways as well. Most of you know that I spent 25 years in the courtroom. One of the things I found is that while people often joke around about juries having a “send in the guilty person” attitude or a “we won't convict no matter what” attitude, real juries, with rare exception, took their job with utmost seriousness and labored hard to do the right thing, whether that was convict or acquit. We have done the same on this committee.

Inasmuch as I am writing this report less than a week before our meeting, it seems impossible the report will be finalized before we meet. However, I wanted to do what I could to answer questions from presbyters. I cannot answer questions that touch on the report itself or my sense of the position of the committee, but what I can do is answer questions from the public case files. I will make myself available for that if you desire and if we have time.

Efforts to Assist Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie, AB

Much of what happened is already summarized in the report of the Knox Presbytery Committee Regarding Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie, and I will not repeat it. What I will relate here is a summary of my efforts early on, prior to where the committee report picks up.

I was first contacted by both sides of this matter (i.e., the Barendregt brothers and the CCC Council) just prior to presbytery 2015. In that kind of situation, I am not trying to judge the facts, for I have no means of doing so, but simply trying to give council that is biblical and godly and in keeping with the constitutions of the CREC and the local church involved.

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Initially, I thought that sending a mediation delegation to Grande Prairie might facilitate reconciliation, but I quickly changed my opinion as I learned how much water was already under the bridge, how pitched the emotions were, and how entrenched the sides were. The Council was asking for a group to come in and decide the matter, which rules mediation out, for mediators do not have authority to decide anything, nor for that matter does a non-binding arbitration panel (a non-binding decision is not really a decision).

In addition, I came to realize that the real parties in interest from the Barendregt side were not the three sons, but the parents, Dick and Joanne, who were not members of CCC, nor indeed of any church. Consequently, they would not qualify to bring a complaint against the Council, in light of the Constitution's special requirements for non-members (see CREC Constitution IV. D. 4. f)).

Given these unique circumstances, I proposed that all the interested parties (Dick and Joanne included) voluntarily agree to *binding* arbitration before a three-man panel. That way, the matter could be decided quickly with all parties in interest before the panel, which would function essentially like a court, with the result that all parties would be bound in the end per their own agreement.

This idea fell through when Dick and Joanne indicated that they did not want to participate. Essentially, they said that they just wanted to move on down the road.

This threw matters back under the normal constitutional procedures, and the Barendregt boys' complaint ultimately resulted.

When I received the complaint, it seemed to me, based on the entrenched positions and pitched feelings on both sides, that any ruling from a presbytery court of appeals was going to get appealed up to a council court of appeals. Wishing to save time and resources, I referred the complaint up to Acting PM of Council, Jack Phelps. (PM Douglas Wilson had recused himself owing to the fact that his niece was married to one of the Barendregt brothers.)

Acting PM Jack Phelps concurred with my assessment and appointed a council court of appeals. Once the court had issued its ruling, Jack sent two delegations to Grande Prairie to facilitate reconciliation and compliance with the court of appeals ruling. When neither of those delegations was able to achieve success, Jack brokered an arrangement whereby the Barendregt brothers could transfer their memberships (and their families' memberships) to Trinity Reformed Church (Moscow, ID). Jack then returned jurisdiction to Knox Presbytery on August 9, 2016, with the proviso that Jack would maintain an oversight role, given that the matter had been to the highest court in our denomination, and any action by Knox Presbytery could "have a broad effect upon the CREC" (Phelps 8-9-2016 Memo returning jurisdiction (Attachment 1)).

Knowing that Knox Presbytery would shortly have to take the matter up, and given the complex history and unresolved status, I appointed an ad hoc committee of presbytery to make

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findings and recommendations to presbytery (see Appointment and Charge (Attachment 2)). That committee subsequently filed a report which has been sent to you. *I ask that my action in appointing the ad hoc committee be ratified by presbytery.*

Judging myself in the Grande Prairie matter as best I can, I believe that I assessed it correctly when I determined that mediation would be fruitless. Indeed, there has now been a decision by the highest court in our denomination, as well as two pastoral delegations to CCC, and the matter is still not resolved.

There is one area, however, which I believe I failed to assess, and that is the potential comfort to confused congregants that an early delegation might have provided. I don't think it would have resolved the conflict (quite obviously), but it might have given congregants a tangible token of their denomination's love. I missed that one, and I subsequently sent a letter of apology to the congregation (Attachment 3).

This concludes my report.

Blessings on you, your families, and your congregations,

Alan Burrow
Presiding Minister
Knox Presbytery

APPENDIX C

Gentlemen:

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

Please include the following in the reports to your presbytery this fall.

Last year the *Missions Commission of the CREC Council* (created at the 2014 Council) created a set of *guidelines* to recognize CREC recommended missions endeavors. We also reviewed the missions efforts across the CREC and other opportunities that meet CREC approved criteria. We reported and copied that to the Presbyteries (2015) (attached). We are not sure how all the Presbyteries acted on that, but we want to take a further step at this year's Presbytery meetings.

Now it is our task to provide *recommendations to the Presbyteries of CREC recommended mission opportunities and suggested goals of engagement* for the various presbyteries through the churches of each Presbytery. We are asking you to lead the charge in your Presbytery to make recommendations and engage your Presbytery.

We had "pilot" program on that with the Augustine Presbytery (2015) that Gregg Strawbridge led. The pastors and elders in Augustine were greatly encouraged by being able to work together on this! We trust that it will be fruitful in every other Presbytery.

Engaging Presbytery to Work Together - Here's how it worked. There were three (organically) connected church planting opportunities that arose relating to the Augustine Presbytery (2015) (see appendices). They determined a support level for each church plant-missions effort, then requested each of the 15 Augustine churches support this in giving and prayer for the next year.

The result was uniting together as churches for each to give \$150 monthly in order to meet the financial support goal for Presbytery-related missions. Knowing that not all 15 churches could do this, they encouraged some churches that had the ability to provide more to assistance to do so. The result was that a large majority of the churches were financially and prayerfully engaged in these missions efforts, *together*.

Practical workings - beyond finding such mission opportunities that fit within our Presbytery; we learned several lessons about how to do this:

- 1.A Managing Church - Let one church take on the responsibility to manage the money sent. Have all participating churches send checks to that Managing Church and be accountable to disburse funds and make needed reports.

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2. Managing Funds - Encourage the churches participating to either give: 1) a monthly check or 2) a one-time check (for all the determined amount), for clear reporting. 3) Begin the support in January of the next year (despite fiscal variations in churches, if at all possible). That gives months for the churches to budget/approve the support.
3. Prayer Support - Encourage each church in the Presbytery to publicly/regularly pray for the Presbytery mission. To help with this, provide a document in one place (such as a Google doc) that provides all prayer information needed and provide updates on that one document. Continually point churches to one place for such updates.
4. Presbytery Committee Review and Renewal - Augustine plans to appoint an *ad hoc* committee to review and propose a renewal of the Presbytery missions opportunities this year (2016), for 2017. This will likely result in the termination of some missions, the continuation of others, and new missions opportunities. We will likely propose a similar range of united support (\$150-200) for each church.

For any further information on engaging Presbyteries on this process, please contact Gregg Strawbridge (wgs@wordmp3.com) [717-682-7052](tel:717-682-7052)

Grace and peace in Jesus Christ,

Csaba Leidenfrost
Chairman, Missions Recommendation Commission

APPENDICES

Council Motion from 2014

(14/10/8:20) Pastor Strawbridge moved for Council to appoint a Missions Recommendation Commission consisting of one member from each presbytery to accomplish the following:

- 1) Create a set of guidelines or principles whereby to recognize CREC Council recommended missions endeavors by May 1, 2015.

NOTE: this is not to prohibit local congregations from other efforts: this would merely provide a basis for recommendations to presbyteries and congregations.

- 2) Review the missions efforts across the CREC and other opportunities that meet CREC Council approved criteria (i.e. as in point 1).
- 3) Provide recommendations to the 2015-2017 presbyteries of CREC recommended mission opportunities and suggested goals of engagement for the various presbyteries through the churches of each presbytery.

4) Report on the commission's work to 2017 Council along with recommendations to the council to continue to further missions in the CREC.

NOTE: This is a commission and therefore will act without the need to wait for the 2017 Council.
Motion passed 13:1

AUGUSTINE PRESBYTERY (2015) UNITED MISSIONS EFFORTS

A church plant in the greater Moscow, Russia area in which there's no Reformed church; a church plant in Fairbanks, AK (led by a former Augustine church ministerial student, Mike Shover, under Covenant Bible Church CREC/Jack Phelps); and a church plant in Brooklyn, NY (led by an Augustine minister, Tony Aguilar, under King's Chapel CREC). Two of these met all of the guidelines proposed (attached). The other (Russia) seemed like a needed foreign missions opportunity led by men known to churches in Augustine. All of these will be evaluated in the wake of the 2016 meeting.

Principles and guidelines whereby to recognize CREC Council recommended missions endeavors

Introduction: the Mandate

Matthew 28:16-20 states that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in making disciples of all nations (missions). The Father gives the authority for missions to the Son. The Son commissions the apostles (the Church). The Church baptizes new converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The authority given to the Son is "in heaven" and "on earth" and includes the nations being given to Christ as His possession (Psalm 2:8).

The church is to teach them to observe *all things* that Jesus commanded. Thus, the church is to translate the Old and the New Testament into the languages of the people as needed. Missionaries must teach the whole counsel of God and not reduce the Gospel to a narrow message of individual salvation or one mere aspect of the ministry (e.g., mercy).

Mark 16:15-16 teaches the Gospel is to be taken into all the world and preached to every creature. The command to "go" is universal in its scope and directed to all peoples.

Christ's commission includes the children of believers as disciples and recipients of water baptism. They are included in the covenant and should both receive baptism and Christian instruction (Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:37-39).

The preaching of the Gospel is accompanied by the covenantal promise that those who believe will be saved and the curse that those who do not believe will be lost (John 20:23). There is no other way to be saved except through the Son (John 14:6).

Preaching the Gospel results in men being reconciled with God and being "built together for a dwelling

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place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22). Being incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church, God's people, become a community in which the Trinity dwells and all things are made new.

The mandate or commission of Christ is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit to the end of the age (Acts 1:8; 2; Matthew 28:20). Christ empowers His Church to extend into all nations. The Spirit enables the Church to accomplish her missionary commission. The church relies on God's empowering and demonstrates her inability through prayer (Luke 10:2; Romans 15:30-33; Ephesians 6:18-20; Acts 1:14; 4:24-31).

Principles

- 1) The commission of discipling the nations (missions) is given to the Church of Jesus Christ. She is the proper agent of missions. The Bible prescriptively and descriptively sets forth the Church as being responsible for carrying out the work of missions.
- 2) The Church conducts this work primarily through her commissioned officers and they are held accountable to her. After Christ commissioned and sent out the first officers (Acts 1:8) we see the same pattern followed (Acts 1:4-25; 13:1-4). The commissioned are accountable to the sending congregations (to Antioch: Acts 14:26-28; 15:30-35; 18:22-23. To Jerusalem Acts 15:1- 5; 21:17-19).
- 3) The tools given the Church for her task are the Word and the Sacraments. Preaching and the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper function as the primary method by which the nations are to be discipled. All other programs and para-church ministries must serve to enable the Church to accomplish her task.
- 4) The Office of the Believer. Although the Church is to carry out her mission through her commissioned and sent officers, non-commissioned members are not excluded. The New Testament gives us many examples of "fellow laborers" volunteering their time, gifts and resources (Luke 19:29-34; 22:9-13; 23:50-56; Acts 16:14-15; 19:29; 20:4; Romans 16:3; Philippians 4:2-3). Such "fellow laborers" can serve both here and abroad.
- 5) The important relationship between "Word" and "Deed." The preaching of the Word is often accompanied by deeds of mercy. While there are examples of the preaching of the Word in the New Testament without a record of diaconal deeds of mercy (Acts 2:14-39; 14:1-7), there are no examples of the practice of deeds of mercy independent of the ministry of the Word (Acts 3; 14:8-18). Thus, the Word must have preeminence in the mission of the Church, though never to the exclusion of deeds of mercy.
- 6) While the local church remains the calling, the commissioning, and the primary administering body for missions, churches in the CREC are encouraged to cooperate in the sending of missionaries.

Guidelines

In light of the above principles, we recommend the following guidelines. CREC Churches are encouraged to support missions endeavors where:

- 1) The mission organization or activity is led by officers of CREC Churches, held accountable to a local session of elders.

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- 2) The mission organization or activity is led by officers and members trained up by a CREC church sent to be involved in activities that directly relate to, or support, a ministry of Word and Sacraments.
- 3) The mission work is either a CREC church planting effort or directly supportive of a CREC church planting effort.
- 4) The mission work is connected to one or more CREC churches, and held accountable to at least one local session of elders.
- 5) The mission has a long-term scope (e.g. church planting versus in-and-out evangelistic efforts not connected with a long-term local ministry).
- 6) The mission work is achievable, sustainable (including the oversight of the missionary), and most likely to be self-perpetuating.

Proposed CREC Memorial on Abortion (proposed by Gene Helsel; adopted by Knox Presbytery, Sep 21, 2016)

Without exception, the God revealed in Holy Scripture sides with, and acts to protect, the weak and powerless (Dt. 10:18) and sets Himself against those who would harm or take advantage of the widow, the orphan or the alien (Ex. 22:22; Dt. 27:19.) He is the Father of the fatherless (Ps. 68:5) and those who love Him are called to imitate Him (Jas. 1:27).

Throughout Scripture, unborn babies are regarded as immature human beings, and therefore true bearers of God's image (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 127:3-5) and objects of His loving care. From the twin boys struggling in Rebekah's womb to the pre-born John the Baptist who leaped for joy at the approach of his pre-born Savior, God clearly regards the unborn as His handiwork (Ps. 139:13-16; Is. 44:2). Babies in the womb are persons with legal standing (Ex. 21:22-25), covenant status (Ps. 22:10), continuity of personhood (Judg. 13:2-5; Ps. 51:5), and the cognitive capabilities requisite for true worship (Lk. 1:41-44). Jesus himself demonstrated great love and concern for small children (Mt. 19:13) and pronounced dire consequences for those who would mistreat them (Lk. 17:2). To love children is to imitate God.

Because pre-born humans bear the image of God and are innocent of criminal wrongdoing, the act of abortion is murder (Dt. 5:17). While all sin is deserving of judgment (Ro. 6:23), the sin of murder is especially egregious because it is a Satanic, all-out assault on the image of God (Gen. 3:15, 9:6). Biblically, the unlawful taking of human life performed by individuals results in a corporate guilt that defiles the land (Dt. 21:1-9).

Until very recently, the Church of Jesus Christ has strongly and uniformly opposed abortion. The Didache, a first century summary of Christian ethics, explicitly prohibits abortion and infanticide. And the early Church was known throughout the Roman Empire for its rescue and adoption of unwanted infants abandoned and left to die of exposure.

Therefore, we detest and decry any and all taking of pre-born human life whether through the various types of abortive procedures, the use of the so-called morning after pill, or the use of abortifacients. This includes aborting babies that are the result of rape and incest, and especially aborting those whose race, gender or physical and/or mental capabilities are not to the parent's liking. Even in those rare circumstances when a pregnancy causes an immediate threat to the life of a mother, the calling of doctors and surgeons is to do all they can to preserve life, not take it.

We oppose abortion not only because it assaults God's image by taking innocent human life, but also because it wreaks spiritual and emotional devastation on the mothers who have abortions and those who encourage them to do so. Parents shoulder the responsibility of bringing into existence beings who will populate eternity. Taking the lives of these children unjustly tears the fabric of love that unites parents to their children and sears the conscience (1 Tim. 4:1-2; Eph. 4:17-24).

We are therefore committed to stridently oppose all local and national entities that promote and provide abortion services. At the same time, with equal vigor, we are committed to support and

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fund organizations that promote the cause of the unborn and provide support and services for men and women who are grappling with the challenges and decisions attendant to unplanned and/or unwanted pregnancies or who are suffering from the guilt of having taken an innocent human life (1 John 3:18; Ro. 12:15). Additionally, we applaud and support the people and organizations laboring to expose the wickedness and extent of the abortion industry (Eph. 5:11).

While applauding most efforts to protect the unborn, we abhor the violence of anti-abortion vigilantes who are willing to destroy property and even to take life in their attempt to oppose this sin. We eschew the weapons of the flesh, wielding instead with the weapons of the Spirit (2 Cor. 10:4): Gospel preaching (2 Tim. 3:2-3), psalm-singing/corporate worship (Ps. 29; 2 Chron. 20:20-22), prayer (Mat. 5:44, Eph. 6:18), apologetic discussion (1 Pet. 3:15-16; 2 Cor. 10:5-6), as well as peaceful protest and civil disobedience (Ex. 1:17; Dan. 3:16-18, 6:10).

In conclusion, we vehemently oppose the sin of abortion for love's sake: love for God, love for the unborn, love for the parents, and love for the nations languishing under the curse of this heinous sin (Rom 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Dt. 21:1-9). We pray for wisdom to engage our unbelieving culture winsomely, resolutely and decisively. And we pray for grace to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:14-15) to our brothers and sisters in other churches and denominations currently thinking through, or rethinking, what God has revealed about the preciousness of human life before and after birth (Ps. 139:1-16).

APPENDIX E FOLLOWS

Report of Knox Presbytery Committee Concerning Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie
Pastors Joshua Appel, Stuart Bryan, Kenton Spratt¹
September, 2016

I. Background

On April 23, 2016 a CREC Court of Appeals issued a judgment, “In the Matter of Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church.” (This judgment was subsequently altered on June 3, 2016 and the numbering of Section IV changed. See Appendix A.) The matter concerned a Complaint raised by three members of the congregation, Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt. These men objected to the CCC Council’s² disciplinary actions against their parents Dick & Joanne Barendregt who were not members of Christ Covenant Church but who regularly attended worship. Subsequent to the Complaint being filed, the CCC Council proceeded to discipline Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt. These men appealed their discipline and that appeal was joined with the Complaint in the work of the Court.

Subsequent to receiving the Court’s judgment, Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt complied with the Court’s ruling and expressed repentance to the CCC Council for their frequent lack of respect toward the officers and for putting undue barriers in the way of effecting personal meetings with them. While the Barendregt brothers complied with the Court’s ruling, the CCC Council refused to do so. They believed that the judgment of the Court was erroneous, communicated the same to Acting PM Jack Phelps³ on May 15, 2016 (see Appendix B), and recommended to their congregation of Christ Covenant Church that the congregation leave the CREC.

Following this recommendation, the CCC Council met with the members of the congregation who expressed disagreement with leaving the CREC. The members of the congregation urged the CCC Council to reconsider and determine if they could come into compliance with the Court’s ruling. Simultaneously, Elder Dan Glover from Trinity Covenant Church in Fort St. John, British Columbia, met with the CCC Council to the same end.

Shortly thereafter, on June 16-17, 2016, PM Phelps sent a Delegation to Grande Prairie consisting of Pastors Stuart Bryan, Dan Glover, and Kenton Spratt. These men invited Elder Timothy Van den Broek to join them. The Delegation met with the CCC Council, with Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt (and their families), and with members of Christ Covenant

¹ While Elder Dan Glover was originally appointed to this committee, he was unable to continue participating on the committee because he moved his family from Ft. St. John to begin school. Before the move and the beginning of his schooling, he suggested that the committee contact Pastors John Barach and Garry Vanderveen as well as a former elder at CCC, Tim Gallant, in order to get a fuller picture of the situation in Grande Prairie. The members of the committee did contact each of these men as part of our work.

² Christ Covenant Church in Grande Prairie calls its gathering of elders a “Council” rather than a Session. In deference to their language we have retained this title. However, we have endeavored to eliminate confusion with the CREC Council by labeling the local session the “CCC Council” throughout.

³ Because his niece is married to one of the Complainants, PM Douglas Wilson recused himself from this case and Assistant PM Jack Phelps became the Acting PM for this case.

Church. As part of its charge, the Delegation endeavored to persuade the CCC Council to submit to the Court's judgment and made some progress toward that end. The Delegation issued a Report on July 6, 2016 (see Appendix C) and concluded that the Court's judgment was fundamentally sound while making a series of recommendations to PM Phelps, to the CCC Council, and to Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt in order to effect reconciliation.

The CCC Council responded to this Report in a document dated July 8, 2016 (see Appendix D). While agreeing with a few observations from the Report, the CCC Council was unwilling to concur with most of the Report's conclusions and unwilling to comply with most of its recommendations.

On July 7-8, 2016 PM Phelps sent a Pastoral Commission to Grande Prairie consisting of Pastors Joshua Appel and Dan Glover in order to foster reconciliation between the Complainants and the CCC Council. Their efforts were largely unsuccessful. The Commission issued a Report dated July 15, 2016 (see Appendix E).

II. Concerns of this Committee with the recent actions of the Grande Prairie Council.

- A. The CCC Council has repeatedly failed to heed the counsel offered to them by their PMs and broader CREC bodies.
 1. Prior to the ruling of the Court: While the Committee acknowledges that the nature of these communications was advisory and not binding, CCC Council's refusal to listen to this wisdom exacerbated difficulties in the church and has proved indicative of the way they have responded to the rulings of the Court.
 - a) The CCC Council refused to follow the counsel of PMs Alan Burrow & Douglas Wilson when they suggested that the CCC Council clarify the nature of their action against Dick & Joanne Barendregt (See Appendix A, III.A.5).
 - b) The CCC Council failed to heed PM Burrow's warning about proceeding in discipline against Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt while a Complaint was pending (See Appendix A, II.C.1).
 - c) The CCC Council failed to heed the request of the Court to cease their actions against Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt until the Court could issue its judgment regarding the Complaint that had been filed regarding their action against Dick & Joanne Barendregt (See Appendix H).
 2. In response to the ruling of the Court:
 - a) The CCC Council initially announced its refusal to comply (Appendix B).
 - b) The CCC Council publicly declared orally and in writing that the Court didn't understand the situation, missed the mark in its ruling and showed disregard (perhaps disrespect) for the authority of the local church government. They declared in their response that the Court needed to repent for certain failures in its judgment. They write, "these actions of the complainants and the Court call for repentance on their part" (Appendix B, "Specific Concerns with the Court's Ruling", #4).

- c) Even after deciding to try and comply with the Court's Ruling, the CCC Council continued to describe the ruling as fundamentally misguided. The Pastoral Commission notes in its report that "it was clear that [the CCC Council] still understood the Court's focus on their procedural failures as a clear misplacement of priorities" (Appendix E, 2.e).
- d) With respect to the Court's ruling, Item IV.D, it is questionable whether the CCC Council has complied. While the CCC Council did ask forgiveness for failing to clarify the nature of the actions against Dick & Joanne Barendregt as PMs Burrow and Wilson had advised (see Appendix F, A.a), thereafter they refused to comply with the Delegation's recommendation that they do this now in the interests of reconciliation (See Appendix C, III.3.c). They write, "Under 3c we find that the requirement for a 'short summary of [our] action against Dick and Joanne Barendregt and the rationale for it' shows mainly that much of what we have done was somehow not noticed. That summary can be found in many early letters but it is focused... in the response we gave the Complainants on January 16. We can photocopy it and give it out again, but it is not as if we have not done it" (Appendix D, "Points at Which There Seems to be Significant Disagreement", #3). In other words, the CCC Council refused to clarify the nature of their actions again. This calls into question the legitimacy of their confession.
- e) With respect to the Court's ruling, Item IV.E, it is also questionable whether the CCC Council has complied. "The [CCC] Council shall seek the Barendregt brothers' forgiveness in writing, without qualification, for disciplining them" (Appendix A, IV.E). The words "without qualification" are important. While the CCC Council did issue a written apology to Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt on June 21, 2016, the apology was heavily qualified and confined to what they labeled an "unwritten rule" about discipline with a complaint pending (See Appendix F, A.c).
- f) Even apart from the question of whether their action complies to the letter of the Court's ruling, the spirit in which the CCC Council has gone about complying with the Court's ruling has been deficient. Most notably, the CCC Council has refused to take seriously the violation of biblical due process in its discipline of Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt. These failures are described in the Court's Ruling in II.C.2 (pages 7-8). These issues have been characterized by Pastor Hoekstra as a "smoke screen" hiding the "real issues" at stake. So far as this Committee is aware, the CCC Council has never admitted the significance of failing to follow Biblical due process. When they have mentioned process at all it has been to minimize its importance. They write "we are always more concerned with actual sin which is the real issue, than with conflict and quarrels over procedure which are often more the devil's playground" (Appendix B, "Specific Concerns with the Court's Ruling", #4). They have justified to themselves their actions and only appear to have issued their apology to satisfy a technical "compliance" with

the directions given by the Court so that they can comply with the desire of the congregation to remain in the CREC. This attitude toward the Court's ruling is evident in CCC Council's initial response (see Appendix B) and was noticed by both the Delegation (Appendix C, III.3.a) and the Commission (Appendix E, 2.c).

3. In response to the Pastoral Delegation:
 - a) In the interests of peace and possible reconciliation the Delegation recommended that the CCC Council draft a short summary of their action against Dick & Joanne Barendregt (Appendix C, III.3.c). The CCC Council refused to do so (Appendix D, "Points at Which There Seems to be Significant Disagreement", #3).
 - b) The CCC Council refused the recommendation of the Delegation that they invite a pro-tem elder or elders to advise them regarding this discipline case and to strengthen their inner workings. They stated that they alone understood the situation and could accurately assess what to do (Appendix D, "Points at Which There Seems to be Significant Disagreement", #2).
- B. The CCC Council has several times presented itself as wanting to follow or actually following the counsel given to them while failing to follow that very counsel, an inconsistency that the Court notes in its ruling (Appendix A, II.C.1). For example:
 1. In the CCC Council's response to the Court ruling they claim that they followed PM Burrow's counsel regarding a letter they wrote to the congregation (Appendix B, "Specific Concerns with the Court's Ruling", #2). However, as the Court's judgment notes, a careful reading of the material indicates that the CCC Council ignored the counsel offered by PM Burrow that challenged their actions and utilized only those points that confirmed what they were already doing (Appendix A, II.A.5).
 2. As part of the Court's ruling, the CCC Council was given 30 days to invite a Delegation to Grande Prairie to help facilitate reconciliation between the Complainants and the Council (Appendix A, Item IV.G). The CCC Council, however, announced its refusal to comply and delayed inviting the Delegation. PM Phelps reports that, in response to their inaction, he made plans to send the Delegation and notified the CCC Council of the same (Appendix I). Two days after PM Phelps notified the CCC Council that the Delegation was coming, the CCC Council wrote a letter to the congregation claiming that they had invited the members of the Delegation (Appendix J). This misrepresents what actually took place (Appendix K).
- C. The CCC Council's actions seem to have been driven by an understanding of church authority that leans toward independency.
 1. In their response to the Court's ruling, the CCC Council reveals their disregard for the broader courts of the CREC when they write that "we were told by [Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt] that they would not talk with us in these visits about any of the issues that had arisen because it was out of our hands once gone to Presbytery. We reject the church polity revealed in that concept, and we

said as much to them. However, that was their stand, so it was at that point that we closed the Table” (Appendix B, “Specific Concerns with the Court’s Ruling”, #6). In other words, the CCC Council disciplined these men because they wanted to wait for the Court to issue its ruling on their Complaint - indeed, as the Ruling of the Court notes, PM Phelps and Burrow were both counseling the Complainants *not to discuss these matters* with the CCC Council (Appendix A, II.C.2.b.(7)) and yet the CCC Council disciplined them.

2. CCC Council writes elsewhere in their response, “Being part of a broader assembly is always voluntary for the benefit of the local church as well as the broader body. It is not the same as Christ’s required involvement of individuals in a local church body” (Appendix B, “Specific Concerns with the Court’s Ruling,” #1). The meaning which the Council is attaching to this statement is unclear.
3. Pastor Hoekstra distributed a document dated May 25, 2016 in which he endeavored to substantiate that their local congregation was not obligated to submit to the Court’s decision because “original authority” lies with the local session (See Appendix G). It is unclear exactly what Pastor Hoekstra believes he has proven with this document.
4. The CCC Council refused to give the members of the Delegation a list of church members, making the Delegation’s task of contacting specific members more difficult. The Delegation reported, “During the meeting it became evident that there were different understandings and emphases of church governance in operation as exemplified in pastor Hoekstra refusing the Delegate’s request for a congregational directory on the basis of the local church’s essential autonomy in possessing “the keys of the Kingdom.”” (Appendix C, II, p. 1)
5. The Delegation noted elsewhere in their Report “that there were different understandings of the relationship of the local church to the broader body that caused some friction and chafing on Pastor Hoekstra’s part in particular and the [CCC] Council’s in general. Theo seemed keen to be seen as directing all the activities of the Delegation and made our task of contacting the congregation more difficult. This made the Delegation’s involvement more challenging and uncomfortable than necessary. There was a sense from these meetings that Pastor Hoekstra was working with the Delegation under outside pressure from the local body and not according to his own convictions, commitment to CREC distinctives, and thankfulness for help from the CREC.” (Appendix C, III.1.f)
6. The Pastoral Commission of July 7-8, 2016 also found “that at least some of the [CCC] Council’s (and especially pastor Theo Hoekstra’s) understanding of church polity is potentially in tension, at least in practice, with that of the CREC at the denominational level, and at least where church courts are involved.” (Appendix E, 2.f)
7. The Pastoral Commission also found that posture of the CCC Council, and especially pastor Theo Hoekstra, toward the Court’s decision and the Delegation’s report was conspiratorial and suggested they were deliberately set

against the CCC Council in a biased way (Appendix E, 2.h).

- D. **Summary:** The attitude of the CCC Council toward the broader church was not one of humble submission, true compliance, or trust in the men of the CREC. Pledging mutual submission to one another in the Lord means that when we seek the wisdom of the broader assembly we agree to submit to that wisdom - unless, of course, the integrity of the Gospel is at stake. This submission has not been manifest. Instead there has been dismay and frustration and a retrenchment in their belief that only their own actions convey true wisdom.

III. Recommendations to Presbytery

This Committee recommends to Knox Presbytery that the following actions be required of CCC. Barring compliance with these recommendations (without qualification), the Committee recommends that Presbytery remove CCC from membership in the CREC. The Committee believes that CCC's response to the CREC Court has injured the ability of other members of our presbytery to labor effectively alongside them. It is very difficult to reconcile their ongoing attitude with continued good faith participation in the CREC. This Committee is concerned that the actions of the CCC Council are subversive of the health of that local congregation and injurious to the reputation of the CREC. For the ruling of the Court to be flouted so flagrantly without repercussions would be detrimental to the long-term health of our group of churches.

- A. We recommend that Knox Presbytery ask Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie to invite PM Burrow to appoint a minimum of two pro-tem elders to serve alongside the CCC Council until the 2017 Knox Presbytery meeting, at which time the pro-tem elders will make a recommendation to Presbytery. We are asking the Grand Prairie elders to submit joyfully and willingly to this requirement even if they believe they personally need no help at all. If the CCC Council does not in fact need any help, the pro-tem elders will not hinder their faithfulness. If the CCC Council needs help, the pro-tem elders will serve to strengthen them. The appointed elders should seek to come alongside the CCC Council in their work in general paying special attention to the following matters:
1. Carefully weighing and responding to counsel in wisdom and godly submission.
 2. Following good procedures in running and documenting decisions.
 3. Verifying that good disciplinary process is understood and followed.
 4. Knowing when it is fitting for officers to recuse themselves from decisions in which they have a conflict of interest.
 5. Distinguishing between the duties and callings of elders and deacons.
 6. Following Constitutional requirements and clarifying church membership.
- B. We recommend that Knox Presbytery question Pastor Theo Hoekstra on the floor of Presbytery for the sake of ascertaining the theological and practical reasons behind his actions and responses to the broader assembly. Presbytery should be free to add their

own questions or follow-up questions, but we suggest that Pastor Hoekstra should be asked:

1. Please explain your rationale for refusing the Delegation access to your church directory.
 2. Please explain your comment in response to the Court, "Being part of a broader assembly is always voluntary for the benefit of the local church as well as the broader body. It is not the same as Christ's required involvement of individuals in a local church body." (Appendix B, "Specific Concerns with the Court's Ruling", #1)
 3. Do you continue to believe that "membership [in the CREC] is detrimental rather than helpful in [y]our task of opposing sin and strengthening the church in faith"? (See Appendix B, "What CCC Council Has Felt Compelled to Recommend", #1)
 4. What is your understanding of "original" versus "delegated" authority? (See Appendix G)
 5. What is your understanding of the "spiritual authority" of the CREC?
 6. What is your understanding of the role the broader assemblies play in the life and decisions of local congregations?
 7. Why did you and the CCC Council judge it appropriate to proceed with discipline against members who had made a Formal Complaint to presbytery?
 8. Do you agree with Article 31 of the Church Order of Dordt, "If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order"?
 9. You seemed concerned to be directing all the activities of the CREC delegations (See Appendix C, III.1.f). Does this posture reflect your understanding of church authority? For example, you communicated to the congregation that you had invited the June 16-17 Delegation to Grande Prairie; however, PM Phelps reports that he had actually decided to send the Delegation absent your invitation (See Appendix K).
- C. Following the question period we recommend that Knox Presbytery, after a period of discussion, make one of the following determinations:
1. Pastor Theo Hoeksta's views and practices in relation to the broader body appear to be in accordance with the word and spirit of the CREC Constitution.
 2. Pastor Theo Hoeksta's views and practices in relation to the broader body appear not to be in accordance with the word and spirit of the CREC Constitution.

If the latter determination is made, we recommend that Presbytery appoint a committee to more carefully examine Pastor Hoekstra's views and to advise Presbytery via PM Burrow on a course of action within 90 days.

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The Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches

Court of Appeals: In the Matter of Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church

April 23, 2016

Preface

Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church (hereafter, the *case*) involves three members of a congregation who made a formal Complaint against the actions of the leadership of the church for excluding their parents from communion.¹ The parents were not members of the congregation. Subsequently, the leadership of the church barred the three members from both communion and attendance in worship because of the way they responded to the actions against their parents. The three members then made a formal appeal of their discipline. The will and prayer of the Court is that the parties in this dispute, through submitting to the following rulings, may experience reconciliation and unity within the congregation.

I. Summary of Events

A. The Complaint²

1. Dick and Joanne Barendregt were regular attenders, but not members of Christ Covenant Church (hereafter, CCC). The ruling session of the congregation (locally called a “Council” and hereafter, CCC Council or Council) excluded Dick and Joanne Barendregt from receiving communion.³ This exclusion was communicated by letter (8/10/2015).
2. Morgan, Caleb, and Jeremy Barendregt (hereafter, Barendregt brothers), three members of CCC, filed a formal Complaint on Jan. 26, 2016 against the CCC Council’s actions against Dick and Joanne Barendregt.

B. The basis for the Complaint before the broader church according the CREC Constitution

1. The Complaint was filed under Article IV.D.4 of the CREC Constitution with the Presiding Minister (hereafter, PM) of Knox Presbytery, Alan Burrow. PM Burrow determined that the Complaint was not frivolous and that it alleged “gross misbehavior” on the part of the CCC Council, thus qualifying it under the applicable constitutional provisions.
2. After pastorally advising the parties for some months, PM Burrow determined that it was in the best interests of the parties involved to refer the matter to the CREC Council level, and thereupon made such referral in accordance with Article IV.D.4(g).
3. The Presiding Minister of the CREC Council (Douglas Wilson) then referred the matter to the Assistant Presiding Minister (Jack Phelps), appointing him as Acting Presiding Minister in this case.

¹ Some confusion in the record of the case rests in whether the actions here were “discipline” or “excommunication” or something else. The Court is referring to this without bias as “exclusion.” By “communion” the Court is specifying the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

² See Appendix 1: The Complaint.

³ All page numbers referenced are from the Christ Covenant Church binder dated March 2016. Dates refer to the date of the correspondence in printed or electronic form.

4. PM Phelps appointed a court of five CREC elders: Uri Britto, Stuart Bryan, Jason Farley, Gregg Strawbridge, and Steve Wilkins. Gregg Strawbridge was elected as chairman of the Court.
- C. The Discipline of the Complainants: Suspension from Communion and Worship⁴
 1. After the Complaint was filed and as the Court was beginning to review the case, the CCC Council disciplined the above three members (Barendregt brothers), excluding them from communion and from attending worship on Feb. 26, 2016.
 2. The Barendregt brothers made formal Appeal of this discipline on Mar. 3, 2016. The Acting Presiding Minister and the Court agreed to consolidate the Complaint and Appeal in this case.
 3. This Appeal is properly before the Court under Article IV.D.3 of the CREC Constitution. PM Phelps and the Court determined it was not frivolous and alleged “gross misbehavior.”
- D. Therefore, this matter has been properly laid before the Court in accordance with biblical and CREC standards of polity and brotherly love.

II. Discussion and History

- A. The Court reviewed the CCC Council’s exclusion of Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion in order to address the propriety of CCC’s actions. Though not a part of the formal Complaint presented to this Court, the Council’s decision to exclude Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion precipitated the Complaint and subsequent discipline.
 1. *In the judgment of the Court, this action by the Council was within their constitutional authority.* Article 4 of the CCC constitution reads, “Christians who attend church regularly, but are non-members, are subject to pastoral admonishment from the church but not excommunication. Such admonishment may include excluding the person from partaking of communion.” This article clearly gives the elders authority to exclude non-members from the table of the Lord.
 2. *In the judgment of the Court, the CCC Council’s action to exclude Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion may have been a biblically justifiable action.* Paul gives church officers the authority to exclude those who are divisive from the congregation after warning (Tit. 3:10).⁵
 3. *On the matter of whether the exclusion of both Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion at CCC was actually warranted and fully justifiable, the Court makes no judgment* for the following reasons: a) the charge of the Court from PM Phelps begins with the Complaint and therefore the scope of our inquiry is limited; b) Dick and Joanne Barendregt are not subject to the Court, and therefore, c) the Court has not received their direct testimony in the facts of the case.⁶

⁴ See Appendix 2: Discipline Letters Regarding the Barendregt Brothers.

⁵ “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned” (NKJV Titus 3:10–11).

⁶ This may seem unsatisfactory, but the Court must follow the biblical principles of justice in which every fact must be established by multiple lines of evidence and the accused must be given opportunity to defend themselves. In the record of the case, testimony that Dick Barendregt had acted divisively was presented. Given the limited scope of our work, the Court did not depose or seek evidence from Dick and Joanne Barendregt on their side of the issues. Therefore, we cannot properly rule on the alleged divisive behavior.

4. *In the judgment of the Court, the process used by the CCC Council to redress their concerns with Dick and Joanne Barendregt was pastorally unwise.* The process did not include clear warnings to Dick and Joanne that their words and actions were leading toward exclusion from the Table. We agree with PM Burrow who advised that it would have been better for the Council to “have proceeded to ask Dick and Joanne to change their attitude or leave, and then if they refused, withhold the Table” (10/27/16). Had a sequential procedure been used, including several warnings via personal contact, then it would have been clear that the Council was acting both constitutionally and biblically.
5. *In the judgment of the Court, the Council erred in rejecting CREC Council PM Wilson’s and Knox Presbytery PM Burrow’s suggestion on October 14, 2015 to clarify the exact nature of the action against Dick and Joanne Barendregt.* The CCC Constitution clearly limits the authority of the elders toward non-members. Non-members are not subject to “excommunication,” but are subject to admonishment and exclusion from communion. The Council’s failure to clarify the exact nature of their action against Dick and Joanne Barendregt fostered an atmosphere of confusion and suspicion.⁷

B. The Complaint

1. **First Complaint:** “We believe the session of CCC is in breach of the ninth commandment. Following the session’s decision to place Dick and Joanne Barendregt under discipline, the session has made public statements (verbal and written) that are false and have spread rumors and gossip about our parents to the congregation (i.e., blatant public sin, violation of 1 Cor 5:11, etc.). They have subsequently damaged reputations and have caused division in the church.”
 - a) *In the judgment of the Court, the Council is not guilty of a breach of the ninth commandment.* The Council excluded Dick and Joanne Barendregt privately from the Table at CCC; then Dick and Joanne Barendregt refused to acquiesce quietly with that decision. As a result, the Council issued a public statement explaining why they had made their decision. Pastor Hoekstra was charged to explain this to the congregation on Sept. 13, 2015. Both statements clearly identify the issue with Dick and Joanne Barendregt as a refusal to honor and respect the Council which was manifest in various public actions including the refusal to become members of the congregation. Private correspondence also cites Dick and Joanne Barendregt’s refusal to attempt reconciliation with Leo Wattel over a matter(s) of dispute (not disclosed to the Court). The first public letter to the congregation states, “[Dick and Joanne Barendregt] have in past years and again this year shown their subversive lack of respect for the council ... we have a great concern that this kind of attitude if left unchecked will act like a leaven in the church and must be confronted.”⁸ This charge was clarified in a second public statement when the Council quoted PM Burrow to the effect, “The real issue here is not membership or non-membership, but respect for the leadership and peace in the body. No Christian should attend a church where they do not respect the leaders

⁷ The lack of clarity on the part of the Council is further evidenced in that they continued to refer to their actions against the Barendregt parents as “excommunication” “minor,” even in their written response to the Court (p. 2 of the ending number scheme in the CCC binder).

⁸ P. 11 of the binder provided by CCC.

and aren't willing to trust and follow them, for the effect is divisive, and Paul says to separate from a divisive person (Rom. 16:17, Tit. 3:10)."⁹

- b) The Barendregt brothers read the Council's initial public statement exceptionally critically, leading to a view that the letter was making many accusations against Dick and Joanne Barendregt. In light of this misreading, the Barendregt brothers publicly and vocally demanded proof from the Council to substantiate the action taken by the Council. Jeremy Barendregt went so far as to charge the elders publicly with slander. Jeremy's decision to begin the interaction by publicly defaming the Council (an action which later, to his credit, he confessed as wrong) certainly did not manifest a willingness to understand before speaking. James commands us, "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19). The Barendregt brothers' initial responses to the Council's action were the exact opposite of this. Rather than seek out the Council in an effort to grasp why this decision was made, showing the humility and respect demanded of them by Scripture (Heb. 13:17), they demanded proof. While the brothers made noticeable attempts to communicate respectfully in some of their subsequent correspondence, a disrespectful and dismissive tone too often manifested itself. For instance, on Nov. 7, 2015 Jeremy insisted that true reconciliation could only happen if "a few members of council vacate their positions" – an unnecessary statement that simply stirred up greater antagonism. *In the judgment of the Court, the Barendregt brothers should seek the Council's forgiveness for their frequent lack of respect which established an adversarial tone in their interactions with the Council.*
2. **Second Complaint:** "We believe that the session has shown great prejudice and blatant abuse of their authority in the church with their dealings with Dick and Joanne by using and [sic] issue that Leo Wattel, Dick's brother-in-law and a member of the session, has against Dick as a pretext for discipline without first having Wattel present his accusation to Dick privately."¹⁰
 - a) *In the judgment of the Court, the Council was out of order by not insisting that Leo Wattel recuse himself from proceedings concerning Dick and Joanne Barendregt's exclusion from communion. Considering the history of broken personal and business relationships, no Council proceedings concerning Dick and Joanne Barendregt should have continued without Leo Wattel recusing himself.*¹¹ Given the extent of the breach of relationship, as evidenced in the record of the case, Mr. Wattel's participation in these decisions gives the appearance of prejudice and

⁹ P. 72 of the binder provided by CCC. Romans 16:17 is as follows: "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them" (NASB).

¹⁰ The Complaint included this grammatical error (*sic erat scriptum*, "thus was it written").

¹¹ The views of Leo Wattel (LW) toward Dick Barendregt (DB) are expressed in a letter, dated Apr. 4, 2013 provided by the Barendregt brothers. The letter testifies to Leo Wattel's desire for reconciliation with DB and concern for DB's soul. It also refers to DB breaking contract with LW. The letter repeatedly refers to DB as being like King Saul who was seizing power and alleges instances of DB's sinful conduct. The Court is not making any judgment about the truth of the matters alleged in the letter; however, we are citing this as an indication of a significant conflict of interest between LW and DB.

taints the actions of the Council.¹² The Court does not judge that the Council showed great prejudice in these actions and the Court does not judge that the history of the conflict between Leo Wattel and Dick and Joanne Barendregt was the driving issue behind the Council's action (exclusion of Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion). However, without asking Leo Wattel to recuse himself from those decisions, the actions of the Council appear conflicted.

3. **Third Complaint:** "In our subsequent request that the session of CCC provide evidence for their accusations, the session not only refused to provide proof and/or witnesses but also have required us to apologize for questioning them and threatened us with disciplinary action if we continued to push the matter."
 - a) Within the context of the Barendregt brothers' initial public accusations against the Council, the Council decided not to respond to the Barendregt brothers' demand that the Council substantiate the reasons for their action of excluding Dick and Joanne Barendregt from the Table. The Council reasoned that the sons' demand was disingenuous and would have drawn the Council into a never-ending dispute. The Court sympathizes with the CCC Council's actions, given the Barendregt brothers' immediate antagonism to their action. However, over time the Council's actions were inadequate to the situation.
 - b) *In the judgment of the Court, the Council erred in their continuing refusal to respond to the Barendregt brothers' requests to substantiate their actions.*
 - (1) Many of the Barendregt brothers' requests for proof revealed simple misunderstandings and misreadings of the Council's original action and a response could have cleared up many of these issues.¹³ Issues that needed clarification were as follows: (1) the exact nature of the action taken against Dick and Joanne Barendregt, (2) the actual rationale for excluding Dick and Joanne Barendregt from the Table (dispelling any rumors of secret sin, etc.), and (3) the specific reasons the Council decided that Dick and Joanne Barendregt were guilty of divisiveness. The Scriptures remind us that "the first to present his case seems right" (Prov. 18:17). The Council's refusal to respond prevented the Barendregt brothers from hearing their side of the case and prolonged the dispute. The Court recognizes that it has not been privy to the whole context and history of the situation that has existed between the elders, congregation, and the Barendregts which provoked the actions of the Council; however, *it is our judgment that the Council could have responded with more specificity to the Barendregt brothers' requests for more information regarding the grounds of the Council's judgment and a more full justification of their actions.*
 - (2) The Council requested that the Barendregt brothers present a list of complaints on Nov. 12, 2015: "If you believe you cannot or for any reason refuse to repent publicly of the accusations you have been making against us as a council or against individuals in the council, please have them written up and come with the needed proof and witnesses to our next council

¹² At the time of the action to exclude Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion, the Council consisted of Theo Hoekstra (minister), George Plante (elder), Gary Duke (elder), and Leo Wattel (deacon) (as explained by Pastor Hoekstra, 4/8/2016).

¹³ As PM Burrow suggested on Oct. 22, 26, 27, 2015 and which the Council refused on Oct. 27, 2015, pp. 58-65.

meeting.”¹⁴ When the brothers responded to this demand for written charges on Nov. 14, 2015 (and then again on 1/14/2016) by modifying and reissuing their initial requests for proof, it seems to the Court that the Council had an obligation to respond. Even if the Council’s response had not been accepted, it would have demonstrated good faith and removed the Barendregt brothers’ objection that “the Council never responded to our requests for proof.”

4. **The CCC Council’s Charge of Modified Complaints.** The Council made the accusation that the Complaints were substantially changed from their presentation to them versus when they were formed into the Formal Complaint to PM Burrow and finally the Court. On Jan. 14, 2016 the Barendregt brothers presented a list of complaints to the Council and personally presented to the Council on Jan. 16, 2016. Failing to receive satisfaction, on Jan. 26, 2016 the Barendregt brothers filed a formal Complaint with Knox Presbytery – which Complaint was referred by PM Burrow to the CREC PM of Council and thence to this Court. On Feb. 2, 2016 the Council made an objection to this Court that the formal Complaint sent to the Court had been substantially changed from that which had been presented to them on Jan. 14 and 16, 2016. Specifically, the Council objected that the Complainants did not take issue with closing the Table to their parents in the formal Complaint sent to the court; however, they did take issue with this in their meeting of Jan. 14, 2016. The concerns of the Council are noted. Though formatting is changed, and some of the original questions are combined or left off, the substance of the Complaint that was submitted to the CREC is the same as what was presented to the Council. *In the judgment of the Court, the Complaint formally submitted to the CREC was not substantially changed from the complaints originally submitted to the Council.*

C. Discipline of the Barendregt brothers

1. Subsequent to the Complaint, the Council enacted formal discipline with the Barendregt brothers. In a letter dated Feb. 25, 2016, the Council writes, “Given the direct opposition and divisiveness we must let you know that apart from repentance you are not welcome in our worship and the Table is closed to you until we hear from the court of Presbytery.”
 - a) PM Burrow warned the Council: “Your course of action in pursuing formal discipline at this juncture is highly inadvisable . . . creates the appearance of vindictiveness . . . [and] is a big mistake” (2/4/2016, p. 149). Despite the Council’s repeatedly expressed willingness to submit to the broader church: “...we willingly submit to their oversight and decisions” (9/19/15, p. 27) — proceeding to discipline in a pending case is inconsistent with this professed submission to the broader church.
 - b) Since the disciplinary actions in both cases revolve around claims to the right submission to authority, the Council should have shown proper submission to their broader church authority (PM Burrow) and to the Court. The Council even wrote to the Barendregt brothers, regarding proceeding with discipline, “However, we do not find ourselves so open to the advice of Presbytery given their limited knowledge of the situation to this point” (2/5/2016). The Council’s

¹⁴ P. 85 of the CCC binder.

refusal to heed PM Burrow's advice reflects the same lack of submission of which the Council accused Dick and Joanne Barendregt. *In the judgment of the Court, the CCC Council was out of order to enact formal discipline with a pending formal Complaint.*

2. *In the judgment of the Court, the Council did not follow biblical process in censuring the Barendregt brothers from the table and worship.*
 - a) The exact nature of the action taken against the Barendregt brothers is unclear. The letter of Feb. 25, 2016 (under the subject line: "keys of the kingdom") states that "apart from repentance you are not welcome in our worship and the Table is closed to you until we hear from the court of Presbytery." The Council does not specify whether this is excommunication, suspension, or another form of discipline. Given the confusion over the original actions of the Council against Dick and Joanne Barendregt, it is unfortunate that the Council was not more specific and judicial in their dispensing of discipline.
 - b) The disciplinary action of the CCC Council was inconsistent with their constitutional process.¹⁵
 - (1) Between Feb. 3 and Feb. 25, the Council did repeatedly call for repentance. However, the Council was calling for repentance on the very matter of dispute on which a Complaint had been lodged. The Council's letters repeat the same concerns, rather than specifying charges, producing evidence, and meeting with the accused to hear their side or their repentance. While the truth of the accusations against the brothers may seem self-evident to the Council, the Court finds the *process* out of order.
 - (2) The speed with which the Council made these decisions was detrimental to the process. The Barendregt brothers were warned that they were in the process of formal discipline on Feb. 3, 2016. Absent any sort of public trial or a list of specific charges, the Council wrote on Feb. 25, 2016 that these men were no longer welcome at the Table or at corporate worship. While it is understandable that the Council wished to see these issues resolved soon for the health of the elders and the church (p. 145), their precipitous action has all the marks of haste rather than careful deliberation.
 - (3) This action also highlights an inconsistency: Dick and Joanne Barendregt (non-members) were permitted to worship, but not partake of communion, while the Barendregt brothers (members) (but not their wives) were not allowed to receive communion, nor attend worship. This inconsistency highlights a lack of careful, judicial thought and intention in the actions of the Council.
 - (4) From the record of the case, deacons were functioning in the Council making disciplinary determinations, despite the CCC Constitution's statement that discipline is applied by "the formal action and judgment of the elders in

¹⁵ The CCC constitution states, "The elders in council shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum, these procedures should include a clear and timely warning to the individual that he or she is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications each involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders in council" (p. 5).

council” (Article 4 of the CCC constitution, p. 5).¹⁶ This was also true in the case in the exclusion of Dick and Joanne Barendregt.

- (5) From our interview with Pastor Hoekstra (3/10/2016), it is clear that Council had made no determination regarding the necessity of a trial or hearing and thus had not determined specific procedures for this case, despite the constitutional requirement: “The elders in council shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved” (CCC Constitution, p. 5).¹⁷
- (6) The Council did not use a process of multiple meetings to clarify accusations and produce witnesses, etc. In fact, in the only meeting that was scheduled (with Caleb Barendregt), the Council did not attend (without warning).¹⁸
- (7) In the attempt to schedule meetings between the parties, the purpose of such meetings was entangled with knowing the proper actions after lodging a formal Complaint. For example, PM Phelps specifically advised Jeremy Barendregt, “I believe you would be wise to hold your peace. . . . You might politely and respectfully say that you have referred the matter to the broader church and would prefer to trust in that process, which is your right under the CREC Constitution. Beyond that, you have a right to remain silent” (2/19/2016). Jeremy chose to follow this advice and remained silent (e.g., letter 2/22/2016 from Morgan). The Council then charged the brothers: “However, you have made it clear that there is no such change of heart and you are not even willing to speak about any part of it with us until the court of Presbytery gives its judgment” (2/25/2016 “keys of the kingdom”). Thus while PMs Burrow and Phelps advised the Barendregt brothers to let the Court do its work, the Council was making further accusations about the brothers’ unwillingness to meet or speak on the matters of which they had been advised to await for the Court. Clearing up this kind of confusion is the very purpose of the CCC Constitution’s helpful requirement of “two or three visits or communications each involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders in council.” This standard in this case was not met.

c) Therefore, *in the judgment of the Court, the Council’s suspension from communion and shunning from worship of the Barendregt brothers should be rescinded.*

3. Both the Council and the Barendregt brothers made reconciliation more difficult by adding too many barriers for necessary face-to-face meetings. This case is very messy

¹⁶ The duties of elders and deacons are separated in the Constitution of CCC. It is specifically stated that elders have the duty of “administering church discipline and restoration” (p. 3). While it is true that deacons may be given other responsibilities, e.g., “any other duties the elders in council may assign to them” (p. 3) - there is a *prima facie* case that discipline (in terms of the CCC Constitution) is an *exclusive* elder duty. Further, there is no report in the record of the case presented that the “elders in council” assigned disciplinary actions and decisions to the deacons.

¹⁷ Specific procedures would at least include whether a trial or hearing is necessary in this case.

¹⁸ The lack of meeting and missing the specific meeting was reported in the Court’s interview with the Barendregt brothers (3/17/2016) and stated in the correspondence they provided, entitled, “Exchange leading up to Excommunication.” Referring to Feb. 17, 2016, this document includes this note between emails from Feb. 17 and 18: “This was the day Caleb was suppose too [sic] meet with the session, without notice they did not show up. This was the third meeting that never happened.”

with many emails and texts providing most of the substance. The Court sees many misunderstandings that fueled suspicion, anger, and broken fellowship that may have been avoided had regular face-to-face meetings been pursued as the first course of action. The failure to effect face-to-face interaction and discussion was detrimental to the process.

III. Findings

- A. The CCC Council's exclusion of Dick and Joanne Barendregt from Communion (8/10/2015)
 1. In the judgment of the Court, the exclusion of Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion at CCC by the Council was within their constitutional authority.
 2. In the judgment of the Court, the Council's action to exclude Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion may have been a biblically justifiable action.
 3. On the matter of whether the exclusion of both Dick and Joanne Barendregt from communion at CCC was actually warranted and fully justifiable, the Court makes no judgment.
 4. In the judgment of the Court, the process used by the Council to redress their concerns with Dick and Joanne Barendregt was pastorally unwise.
 5. In the judgment of the Court, the Council erred in rejecting CREC Council PM Wilson's and Knox Presbytery PM Burrow's suggestion on Oct. 14, 2015 to clarify the exact nature of the action against Dick and Joanne Barendregt.
- B. The Complaint
 1. First Complaint
 - a) In the judgment of the Court, the CCC Council is not guilty of a breach of the ninth commandment.
 - b) In the judgment of the Court, the Barendregt brothers should seek the CCC Council's forgiveness for their frequent lack of respect which established an adversarial tone in their interactions with the Council.
 2. Second Complaint
 - a) In the judgment of the Court, the CCC Council was out of order by not insisting that Leo Wattel recuse himself from proceedings concerning Dick and Joanne Barendregt's exclusion from the Table.
 - b) In the judgment of the Court, the CCC Council should require Leo Wattel to recuse himself from any future decisions of a disciplinary nature relating to the Barendregts (sons or parents).
 3. Third Complaint
 - a) In the judgment of the Court, the Council erred in their continuing refusal to respond to the Barendregt brothers' requests to substantiate their actions.
 - b) In the judgment of the Court, therefore, the Council should seek the Barendregt brothers' forgiveness for failing to respond to these requests that the Council substantiate their actions.
 4. In the judgment of the Court, the list of Complaints formally submitted to the CREC was not substantially changed from the Complaints originally submitted to the CCC Council.
- C. Discipline of the Barendregt brothers
 1. In the judgment of the Court, the Council was out of order to have proceeded with discipline against members with a pending formal Complaint from those members.

2. In the judgment of the Court, both parties should seek forgiveness for placing unnecessary barriers in the way of effecting face-to-face meetings.
3. In the judgment of the Court, the Council's discipline of the Barendregt brothers shall be rescinded.¹⁹

IV. Actions - The Court therefore, directs the parties of this case to do the following:

- A. Both parties, within 30 days of this ruling's delivery, shall report to PM Jack Phelps on how they intend to respond to the Court's findings.
- B. The Council shall communicate the Court's entire opinion to their congregation or heads of households.
- C. The Barendregt brothers shall seek the Council's forgiveness in writing, without qualification, for their lack of respect which established an adversarial tone in their interactions with the Council and for placing unnecessary barriers in the way of effecting face-to-face meetings with the Council.
- D. The Council shall seek the Barendregt brothers' forgiveness in writing, without qualification, for failing to respond to requests to substantiate the Council's actions against their parents and for placing unnecessary barriers in the way of effecting face-to-face meetings with the Barendregt brothers.
- E. The Council shall seek the Barendregt brothers' forgiveness in writing, without qualification, for disciplining them.
- F. The Council shall publicly declare to the congregation that, at the direction of the Court, the discipline against Morgan, Caleb, and Jeremy Barendregt has been rescinded.
- G. A delegation selected by PM Phelps shall be invited by the Council and Barendregt brothers to oversee a meeting for the purpose of reconciliation between the two parties.

V. Pastoral Exhortation

- A. Though we are a Court which has acted judicially, we are also pastors who desire the gospel to bear fruit in this dispute. Therefore, we urge you brethren to pursue reconciliation. Breaches of relationship within the Church are evident even in the New Testament churches, such as the relational difficulties between Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2). Matters of dispute should be resolved by following biblical procedures, seeking to maintain spiritual fellowship in the bonds of love, and submitting to the brethren (and broader church) for the sake of the peace and purity of the church.
- B. In this case, all parties failed to resolve differences by following biblical procedures with a peaceable spirit. Dissension and division in the congregation resulted. No judgment on the Court's part will mend broken relationships. However, it is our prayer and counsel that all parties, by hearing this ruling will lay aside differences, be humble, acknowledge any and all failures of love, and strive for peace with one another. Jesus died for us all. Let us give of ourselves for the love of the brethren. Through this we hope you all may find rest together in the congregation or separately in multiple congregations.
- C. Hebrews 12:14 commands: "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." Romans 12:18-19 says: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."²⁰ In Hebrews 12:14, there are two parallel objects to be "tracked down": peace and sanctification. The consequence of failing to do this is

¹⁹ Specifically, the discipline is the Barendregt brothers' suspension from communion and shunning from worship.

²⁰ The term "pursue" (*dioko*) means "eagerly strive," or "track down." The term is often translated, "persecute."

profound: “without which no one will see the Lord.” A lack of such peace is called, “coming short of the grace of God” and a “root of bitterness” (see also Dt. 29:18). If this happens, “by it many be defiled” (v. 15). The consequences of our lack of peace with others are not only severe for us (even eternally), but also they affect many downstream. We urge all parties to avoid a root of bitterness. The way out of bitterness is forgiveness.

- D. Jesus clearly calls us to this, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Mt. 6:14-15). The end of the parable of the “Unforgiving Servant,” (e.g, “seventy times seven”) is very strong: “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” (Mt. 18:34).
- E. This Court of pastors hopes our final action enjoined above (a reconciliation meeting) may result in peace in the congregation.

Appendix 1: The Complaint

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a formal complaint to the Presbytery of the CREC.

We are laying a complaint of gross misbehavior against the session of Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie, (CCC) according to Article IV, Subsection D, 4, d), ii of the CREC Constitution.

Our charges are the following:

1. We believe the session of CCC is in breach of the ninth commandment. Following the session's decision to place Dick and Joanne Barendregt under discipline, the session has made public statements (verbal and written) that are false and have spread rumors and gossip about our parents to the congregation (i.e. blatant public sin, violation of 1 Cor. 5:11, etc.). They have subsequently damaged reputations and have caused division in the church.
2. We believe that the session has shown great prejudice and blatant abuse of their authority in the church with their dealings with Dick and Joanne by using an issue that Leo Wattel, Dick's brother in-law and a member of the session, has against Dick as a pretext for discipline without first having Wattel present his accusation to Dick privately.
3. In our subsequent request that the session of CCC provide evidence for their accusations, the session not only refused to provide proof and/or witnesses but also have required us to apologize for questioning them and threatened us with disciplinary action if we continued to push the matter.

Please see the attached document "Reasons for Barendregt Complaint" and accompanying attachments for detailed explanations. Thank you for considering our complaint.

In Christ,

Jeremy Barendregt, Morgan Barendregt, and Caleb Barendregt

Appendix 2: Discipline Letters Regarding the Barendregt brothers

From: Theo Hoekstra [mailto:thoekstra@dccnet.com]
Sent: February-25-16 9:44 PM
To: Jeremy Barendregt
Subject: keys of the kingdom

Dear Jeremy,

May the Lord give ears to hear, and a heart to understand. It would have been so good to hear of a change of heart on your part, both for your opposition to the necessity of closing the Table to your parents and especially for the way in which you have done so. However, you have made it clear that there is no such change of heart and you are not even willing to speak about any part of it with us until the court of Presbytery gives its judgment.

In Amos 3 God warns the people of Israel saying, “Can two walk together if they be not agreed?” He is pointing out that the agreement they had made, the covenant they had entered, Israel had broken, and they could not walk together in that way. We believe you have broken the membership “covenant” you made with us in what you have done on this issue from the beginning. Even the public statements we have made were necessitated by your opposition and your parent’s reaction to our decision. We stand by the statements, but see you only trying to use them to attack us rather than to understand the issue. In the end we must remember the words of Jesus, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

With you, we do look forward to the judgment of Presbytery. We pray it will help us make fruitful progress here. However, we have a calling to be faithful here in Christ Covenant now and in the future that is never passed off to another body. The Presbytery court will give what the CREC Constitution calls a judgment with “spiritual authority.” What that means is that they will seek to speak truth into our situation, but the ultimate responsibility and decision here remains with us always. This is where the keys of the kingdom are given.

To be clear, we are concerned that you have exhibited an intransigent opposition to us from the time you found out we had closed the Table to your parents. It has been disrespectful, in many ways dishonest, quarrelsome and divisive. We will be sending the record to the court of Presbytery as soon as we have word on who will be involved. Yet in the meantime, the word of God is very clear on what we must do with one who is divisive in the congregation. After warning them once or twice we must have nothing to do with them (Rom.16:17, Titus 3:10). It might seem unloving, but sometimes it is necessary. We have tried hard to warn you.

Given the direct opposition and divisiveness we must let you know that apart from repentance you are not welcome in our worship and the Table is closed to you until we hear from the court of Presbytery. We are more than willing to visit together and re-evaluate at that time. We want to be clear that closing the Table does not apply to your wife. It is our hope and prayer that this will give us all a time to quietly evaluate everything, and perhaps we will see a new note in future conversations.

For the council

Christ Covenant Church

THE APPEAL OF DISCIPLINE (EXCLUSION FROM COMMUNION AND WORSHIP)

To Whom It May Concern this is a formal appeal under article 4 D.3 of the CREC constitution

We are appealing the excommunication of Jeremy Barendregt, Morgan Barendregt, and Caleb Barendregt for the following reasons:

We did not have a meeting with the session after being informed that the formal process of discipline had begun.

We have been excommunicated after submitting a formal complaint to the broader CREC assembly.

We have been accused of breaking the 9th and 5th commandments without any specific (time, place) context as to how these commandments were broken.

We have been accused of the following:

From: Theo Hoekstra

Date: February 25, 2016 at 9:44:52 PM MST

“To be clear, we are concerned that you have exhibited an intransigent opposition to us from the time you found out we had closed the Table to your parents. It has been disrespectful, in many ways dishonest, quarrelsome and divisive”. Without any proof or evidence.

We have been told we are no longer welcome to worship at Christ Covenant Church, and no road to repentance has been laid out to us.

We did not have an official trial prior to our excommunication as per Art 4 of the CCC constitution.

In Christ

On behalf of Jeremy Barendregt, Morgan Barendregt, and Caleb Barendregt

Appendix B

CCC Council's Response to the CREC Court Ruling on the Barendregt Complaint and Appeal.

May 15/16

Introduction

What do you do when you do not believe you can submit with a good conscience in a relationship in which you want and ought to submit? This is a fine question when it is hypothetical. It is a hard question when it is the reality that is upon you. The nature of the relationship with the one you are called to submit to makes a difference. Yet this is always a difficult question, and can be of the *greatest* difficulty for a couple of reasons. There can be great difficulty because of the repercussions of refusing to submit, repercussions not only for yourself but for others affected by your decision. There can also be great difficulty because the necessity of refusing is not always as clear as if someone tells you to say, "Caesar is Lord." Often our pride can deceive us into thinking we are "obeying God not men," when in fact we are simply being unspiritual. For Peter and John, the call was clear when they said to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:20, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right to obey you rather than God." What about us? We are seeking to respond to those who belong to God! Still, we know that those who belong to God can seriously err as well. So the question is still before us.

On the ruling of the Court of the Council of the CREC, we are thankful that they rejected the accusation of slander made against us. We are also thankful for the time each member of the Court took out of their busy schedules to deliberate. It was no doubt far from easy as we sent them almost 200 pages of letters, phone texts, e-mails, affidavits from witnesses to look at, and only a few comments to try to help them stay on track. And we do not pretend to have all wisdom in procedure or to have "done all well" as Jesus did. Yet to "seek forgiveness, in writing, without qualification" for all manner of procedural faux pas? We do want to thank the Court for their efforts, but we cannot support a number of their judgments. *In fact, we find a number of the "actions" required of us on p.10 unconscionable as elders of this church.* To carry out requirements D, E, F, and G would be to *pretend* to agree that the fault in the whole conflict is mainly ours. And we would be tempted to do that. But only if we thought it would strengthen faith and unity among us. Certainly in the long term, we do not believe it would.

This leaves us in such a quandary. We have from the beginning tried to say as little as possible to protect the names of those involved and maintain peace in the congregation. Every member of the CCC Council has the greatest aversion to conflict. *That's why we were willing in October to accept binding arbitration of an outside court without even knowing the outcome.* That was not an easy decision. We wondered if we were being unfaithful. Yet in the hope of peace we decided to go with it. Unfortunately, accepting binding arbitration of an outside Court back in October to avoid escalating conflict was unacceptable to the complainants. And here we are after half a year of struggle, required to seek forgiveness for procedural faults, which we question more than a little. Worse yet, we believe it would serve to cover over the problem and leave it festering if we agree to the ruling. It should be noted that in the situation upon us now, none of us have agreed beforehand to submit to whatever decision this Court makes. And though we want to and would gladly do so if we thought we could, we find we cannot. It should also be noted that from the beginning we tried to say as little as possible to protect the names of the people involved, but at this juncture we believe the only way open to us is to make our concerns and defence quite public. Our Constitution suggests the possibility of a public trial in some cases. That is indeed what this has become.

In what follows we wish:

- a/ to make a couple of historical points so the real issue is not lost in arguments on procedure
- b/ to respond a little more specifically to a number of significant points in the ruling of the court
- c/ to lay out our decision recommending what we believe is the most hopeful long-term answer
- d/ to reveal a way forward for those under discipline that is both peaceful and faithful for all

Historical Points to Maintain Spiritual Orientation

1. We closed the Table to Dick and Joanne Barendregt in August 2015 due to years of lack of respect for the leadership, and open unwillingness to submit to the authority of a local church. Their attitude and actions, also rejecting proper membership in the church, clearly made a mockery of Table fellowship. As we tried to deal with this it also became apparent that Dick knew there was a relationship problem with a Christian brother needing some work. And on the basis of Matt. 5:23,24 we made clear there was no way around it. It was pointed out that he did not have to agree with any concern the other brother raised. If they did not reach agreement and gain restored fellowship, the church could be involved and make a judgment. By way of procedure, the Pastor visited alone first in the hope that counsel resting on an old friendship would be better received than authoritative confrontation. It was at that meeting that Dick revealed they had a letter of concern from Leo that they had never opened. (This issue was picked up in the phone texts trying to set up another meeting as seen in the record.) Sensing no progress in the private visit, the Pastor tried to set up a 2nd visit with a member of Council present. However, the visit by two from Council was flatly rejected by Dick, as the phone texts reveal. In subsequent texts Joanne showed herself in agreement with Dick. Seeing her agreement, as well as the threatening language of Dick against visiting with Joanne in his absence (again, all in the phone texts), no further visit was made to Joanne either.
2. Our phone texts and e-mail to Dick and Joanne in July indicating that the Table in CCC was closed to them were not answered, so a letter was sent to his address in August. (Remember, a further visit was refused). The letter was opened by one of the sons and Jeremy wrote an immediate e-mail back to us challenging the action taken. For the purposes of our decision on the Court's ruling the one thing of note from that e-mail of August 21 was as follows: *"It is no secret to you that my dad does not respect the Council of this church...could not in good conscience place himself under their authority."* We have no interest in quarreling about the issues in mind, whatever they are. Our concern is simply that in this situation, biblically & constitutionally, Table fellowship is clearly broken. The e-mail was copied to the other brothers as well. None disagreed. They all knew. The fault that the Council does repent of is that this action was long overdue.
3. Apparently, the letter of Mid-August revealing our decision to Dick and Joanne was withheld from them by the three sons. This was revealed by Dick to Alfred in a phone text. On September 6 Dick and Joanne took part in the Lord's Supper. When two elders tried to speak with them and give them the decision in the parking lot after church, a public scene was made. Accusations were made against the elders, as if they made the

scene, but we reject the accusations. Following that, as seen by many, over the next two weeks the one serving the Lord's Supper was accosted during the meal and asked by Dick if he agreed with Council. This is all so unacceptable. But what we want to note from all this is that the real spiritual issue was clearly visible very early. **And we must not allow procedural arguments to cover it. Everything we are accused of grew out of the reactions to what we believe was a fully necessary confrontation of a spirit of rebellion.** Could we have done better? Paul talks about all having clay feet. But an "unqualified seeking forgiveness" (Actions, p. 10) for what we cannot even name would be deceptive and perverse. As we said, Jeremy's letter of August 21 showed they all knew a mockery was being made of Table fellowship before the Council took any action or said a word.

4. Seeing the way this conflict was ramping up, we decided to contact the Presiding Minister of Presbytery to see if he would/could send a court of three men in to hold a hearing and give a judgment from outside. On our part this was to prevent anyone from thinking that this was personal for us. It turned out that the Barendregts had also been in contact with him before us. Rev. Burrow said he would send a court in, but only if we would all agree beforehand to accept the ruling, whatever the decision. Even though they were visitors only with no right of appeal etc., Dick and Joanne were welcome to be involved with the three sons. As Council we indicated our agreement with whatever that Court decided, before knowing the results, trusting that the Court would do right. Dick and Joanne, however, decided to withdraw from worship with us instead. And for their part, neither did Jeremy, Caleb or Morgan agree to accept that Court's ruling. Instead they decided to take Rev. Burrow's alternative of an appeal down the line.
5. What do we want to say? What is all this about? We want to say that this is the spiritual issue that everything else tries to cover up with quarrel over procedure. This is the sin that has been among us as a bitter root growing up and causing trouble and defiling many. **And we cannot allow the Court's failure to see the true extent and nature of the problem to prevent us from dealing with it.** Apologizing for procedure in this situation, even though we will always question if we could have done better, would necessarily fertilize the bitter root. It might allow a cautious truce for a while, but we cannot see how it can serve to promote the true unity of the church.

Specific Concerns with Court's Ruling

1. The Court says at the top of page 7; "The Council's refusal to heed PM Burrow's advice reflects the same lack of submission of which the Council accused Dick and Joanne Barendregt." This statement says perhaps more than any other single comment in the whole ruling. The Court had access to all the abusive language, the open refusal to meet by Dick, and the many disrespectful e-mails that we received from Jeremy, Caleb and Morgan throughout this ordeal. (Putting "with all due respect" at the end of an e-mail does not in the least make it an attempt to be respectful.) And the Court still compares our carefully considered decision as Council not to take PM Burrows "advice" on that particular occasion, as showing the "same lack of submission" as has been shown to us.

We hardly know what to say. They know and openly admit that Rev. Burrow's comments were advice, and that primary responsibility and authority always belong in the local Council. Being part of a broader assembly is always voluntary for the benefit of the local church as well as the broader body. It is not the same as Christ's required involvement of individuals in a local church body.

2. The Court says in #5, page 3; "The Council erred in rejecting CREC Council PM Wilson's and Knox Presbytery PM Burrow's suggestion on Oct. 14, 2015 to clarify the exact nature of the action against Dick and Joanne Barendregt." We would note that our letter to the congregation on November 4th was given with that exact effort in mind. It was sent on the advice of Rev Burrow. It was approved by Rev Burrow. It even contained some of his language. In fact we did not believe that what we had written was so confusing, but we apologized for it anyway on their advice.
3. The court says in 3b(1) on page 5 that many of the Barendregt brother's requests for proof "revealed simple misunderstandings and mis-readings" of Council's original action and a response could have cleared up many of these issues. Then they give 3 examples of what could "easily have been clarified." We agreed with them then and now that the proofs required revealed very simple misunderstandings and mis-readings. But it was our experience that nothing seemed to be "easily clarified." We believed then and now that trying to answer would simply have drawn us into quarrel. And Paul says in his second letter to Timothy 2:24, "The Lord's servant must not quarrel." It is for that reason that we refused to answer. We indicated, as the Court seemed to understand, that the letters "were our answer" (ie. Read them more carefully). Notice also, in our letter to the congregation of Nov. 4th we had already tried to clarify the first example the Court gave. It had been sent with Rev. Burrows approval. But it only drew more conflict. And Jeremy's e-mail of August 21 showed clearly they needed no proof for the second and third of the Court's examples. "It is no secret....."
4. The court says on page 6 #4; "In the judgment of the Court, the Complaint formally submitted to the CREC was not substantially changed from the complaints originally submitted to the Council." At this point we take serious issue with the Court on a matter not even properly before them. The second of three complaints sent to the Court had not been presented to us for an answer first, as procedure requires. If it had been we believe it would never have gone there as it clearly had no reason to go. We were not concerned with the wording changes and the combining of some accusations by the three Barendregts in complaints one and three. But the complaint that Leo should not have had any involvement, was wholly added. And that is clearly a substantial change.

Yet, even so, we are always more concerned with actual sin which is the real issue, than with conflict and quarrels over procedure which are often more the devil's playground. Of much greater concern to us is the complaint itself and the Court's ruling. A few words were taken out of context from a private letter of spiritual concern for the soul of a brother. These few words are used against us as a Council, and against the

Council member who courageously tried to confront perceived sin out of love for his brother. The letter was not a letter of grievance, but of loving concern because of a pattern of behaviour in the church that had hurt many in the past and caused much broken fellowship among us. We showed the Court a letter from another church Council revealing the grievous nature of this pattern in the past. And this is the result of all this. We stand with Leo and are more than willing to show everyone the full letter he sent as our defence. Far from being a reason to recuse, it showed a love most of us lack. We have appreciated Leo's input. And the Court's manner and use of this letter to support the second complaint rather than call for repentance for it, becomes a strong reason we are making a recommendation to the congregation that we find appalling in so many ways. The word "slander" is far too much used so we do not wish to use it. However, these actions of the complainants and the Court call for repentance on their part. We defend our actions as well meant and honourable.

5. We would note in passing by way of a question. Why is there no requirement of repentance for the charge of slander itself made against us? The charge of slander against us is the one charge that was clearly rejected. It was made publicly. And though there was a letter of repentance for the public nature of the accusation, the repentance did not touch the charge itself.
6. The Court says in #2 on page 7; "In the judgment of the Court, the Council did not follow biblical process in censuring the Barendregt brothers from the Table and worship." They also question in 2b)(3) our being open earlier to Dick and Joanne continuing to worship with us while requesting the sons to withdrawn until the ruling of the Court. They call it "inconsistency." On the first matter, we feel challenged but not convicted, even on the matter of too few face-to-face meetings. We would have liked to see more face-to-face, but when we visited two of the brothers together early on, the antagonism was complete and obvious. Before the meeting began a recording device was placed on the table. There is reason we were reluctant later to accede to their request to visit with them as a group of three, thinking it unwise and divisive. The Pastor offered to visit individually and privately a couple of times, but was not taken up on it. We would also point out that we tried to visit face to face individually in spite of the difficulty after the complaint was sent to Presbytery. However, we were told by each one that they would not talk with us in these visits about any of the issues that had arisen because it was out of our hands once gone to Presbytery. We reject the church polity revealed in that concept, and we said as much to them. However, that was their stand, so it was at that point that we closed the Table. As for asking them to withdraw from worship, it was felt necessary because of the level of tension in the church created by all of this. When we had earlier closed the Table to Dick and Joanne and invited them to continue to worship, our invitation was in the hope that if they did so it would be without conflicting and raising tension.
7. The Court says in 2b)(5) on page 8; "Council had made no determination regarding the necessity of a trial or hearing and thus had not determined specific procedures for this

case, despite the constitutional requirement.” It sounds like we are not concerned at all with procedure or our Constitution. We willingly admit that our priority is with opposing sin and promoting the fruit of the Spirit. However, we recognize that procedure can help. We would suggest that on a more careful reading our Constitution lays out some helpful guidelines on the matter of discipline, but also recognizes the “case by case” nature of each one. In that way it allows for the elders, with some thoughtful help, to respond to each situation in the best way they believe they are able. We did not believe this called for a formal trial. But we did not have to write that down. All actions were determined in Council to the best of our ability, given the situation. This was far from a text book “case,” but warnings were given beginning in the middle of January that the conflict was moving in the direction of discipline. And the action of formal discipline was not taken until a visit on these matters was rejected. We hear echoes of our efforts with Dick.

8. The Court says; “The Council shall seek Dick and Joanne’s forgiveness in writing, without qualification, for their failures in process to redress the council’s concerns with them.” We have already mentioned that the Pastor visited alone first to try to bring the counsel of a friend. No progress was seen. We followed with a requested visit from two in the Council. That request was adamantly rejected. Now the Court says we are to apologize without qualification for our failure of process? At this point we are feeling like Peter and John. We believe we have been and are compelled to oppose sin. We believe that even though Dick and Joanne were not members, it was right that we treat them as members, meaning we have concern for their actions. We still do.

What CCC Council Has Felt Compelled to Recommend

Given that this complaint and appeal for some reason went straight to the broadest or highest court of the CREC, there appears no recourse for us to appeal the decision by pointing out some of these difficulties. Even though the difficulties are not small. A Court cannot properly negotiate a decision after the fact. That’s the reason for a lower and higher Court normally in place. We believe that even to try to appeal to the Court would prolong what has already been drawn out far beyond anything seemly, and would only cause further destruction. It seems to us there are two ways forward which we can follow in a good conscience. We could simply do what we believe must be done and let the CREC remove us from membership for lack of submission. Or we can leave as quietly and peacefully as possible, sparing them the time and energy doing what none would relish.

1. In that light we have decided to recommend that we withdraw from the CREC. As we wrote earlier, membership in a broader church communion is voluntarily undertaken for the benefit of the local church. It is not a command of God or of the essence of the church. When it is determined that such membership is detrimental rather than helpful in our task of opposing sin and strengthening the church in faith, we may wish to withdraw.

2. As this would mean a change in our constitution, the constitution itself calls us to give the congregation 30 days to respond to this decision. To that end, over the next week we would invite anyone who would like to speak with a couple of Council members to call and we will seek to set the visit up. After May 22nd, we will set up a number of evenings in which two Council members will be available to speak with the members of the congregation. Each member or couple is asked to put their name in a time slot, and visit for up to an hour. A further visit can be set up if anyone desires further input or information. Please be sure, this is not a meaningless exercise. This matter seems so far beyond us. We need to hear you. This is a way of helping the Council to consider the impact of this decision, and consider if there are yet alternatives before ultimately going ahead.
3. One of the things to consider is our desire to gain a unified vision for the church. As we consider this turn of events and what God might have in store for us, it is worth considering also whether it might in the end allow a unity in the body that has been so elusive to this point. It is our desire to see a fulsome repentance by Jeremy, Caleb and Morgan, both for the disrespect and antagonism as well as the charge of slander laid against us. (We are unsure why the Court did not require repentance for the slander charge.) We also want to see repentance for the simple fact of resistance to our concern and action with their parents. Unity in this church, with our Confessions and understanding of Christ's commands, requires that. Such full repentance could well see us continue together and find true unity. However, failing that, with repentance only for the disrespect and the slander charge, it is still possible that we could see the censure lifted even if we cannot continue together. And we would rejoice in that as well.
4. It is not our desire to move into and remain in an independent position in the long term. We do believe that involvement with other churches in some sort of organization is a good thing, for the benefit of the churches. It will sometimes break. But it is still good. Even the occasional break should challenge everyone to humble himself, calling on the Lord for grace and understanding. However, there are different forms of organization and there may be other churches looking for greater connection. There are many things we could explore. A short period of independency may be acceptable.

The Way Forward for the Appellants

1. We do not require of you that you agree with our action with your parents in order for the censure to be lifted. However, we do need to see repentance for accusing us of slander against your parents, an accusation you knew was false as seen in Jeremy's letter of Aug. 21. We also need to see repentance for the general disrespect shown to us as we had revealed to you in our response to your complaint to us in January. *Though we cannot do what the Court required in a good conscience, "seek forgiveness for failure in procedure, unqualified," we do plead with you to forgive both our true lack*

of wisdom and the frustration that came up at times, as well as the things you believe we did wrong but that we cannot agree with. We will also seek this in person.

Our desire is to encourage each one to serve the Lord in a free and good conscience within the body of the church. We do not mean the “invisible” church but the body of the church found in a group of real people with specific names and organization. We live in a world where there are many such small bodies which are all part of the one great body of Christ. And there are many that pursue somewhat different pictures of what the church should look like. We want to encourage you to find a place where you can serve and live willingly and freely.

2. We are not urging you or telling you that you must move on to another church, unless that is necessary for peace. It is certainly a common way of dealing with things in a large part of the church today. Some of the advice given to us was of that nature as a better way to deal with all of this. At the same time, it is also true that a house divided cannot stand. Therefore, for the sake of unity given all that has happened, we need to be clear that there is only one way forward for us all together, and that is the way of full and heart-felt repentance for opposing our concern and action with your parents.

Fallible as it is, our Constitution was written to support the unity of the church. It is a vision of the church which we believe is based on Scripture and to which all confessional members have agreed. It required you to help us speak to your parents on this issue when you learned we had decided we needed to deal with it. Even now, they must be urged to join a church where they can practice full membership and life in a flesh and blood congregation with names and faces and responsibilities to each other.

3. We long to see reconciliation with you and all who have withdrawn from worship with you. However, we are not prepared to compromise on these matters to accomplish it. You said earlier you thought this was “a bit religious with us.” In fact, it is, and we have to take seriously that repentance is part of true faith. We also take seriously that the Lord will one day hold us accountable for whether we have given warning where we believed it had to be given. Acts 20:26,27.

For the Council of Christ Covenant Church

Appendix C

Report of the June 16-17 Delegation to Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie

Pastors Stuart Bryan, Dan Glover, Kenton Spratt

July 6, 2016

I. Introduction

On June 13, 2016 Acting PM Phelps issued a Memorandum containing a “Charge to the Delegation” to Pastor Stuart Bryan, Pastor Dan Glover, and Pastor Kenton Spratt. The Delegation was sent to meet with those from Christ Covenant Church on June 16-17 on the basis of the CREC Appeals Court ruling of April 23, 2016, amended by the Court on June 3, 2016, Item G on page 10. According to the Charge, “The primary responsibility of the Delegation was “to spiritually strengthen and encourage the congregation, including its leadership, to the end that the church in Grande Prairie comes into full compliance with the Ruling of the Court...”. In accord with item #7 of the charge, the Delegation invited Timothy van den Broek, an elder at Trinity Reformed Church, to assist the delegation in its efforts because of his more extensive personal relationship with the Complainants.

II. Activities

Thursday, June 16

Thursday morning, Delegates Bryan and Spratt along with Timothy van den Broek met for breakfast, discussion, and prayer beginning at 9:00 a.m. Then at 11:15 we picked up Delegate Dan Glover from the airport. We returned to the hotel for a brief discussion and planning. During this meeting we chose Kenton Spratt to serve as Moderator for the Delegation.

Following this brief planning meeting, we went to lunch with several members of the GP Council. Lunch included Pastor Theo Hoekstra and Deacons Leo Wattel, Robin Shoemaker, and Alfred Joosee. The delegation inquired pastorally as to the spiritual health of the leaders, their wives, and the church. It became evident that many of them and their wives were worn thin, given to bitterness, frustrated with the slow and mistaken (in their minds) rulings of the CREC, and concerned for the future of the congregation. Pastor Hoekstra gave the Delegation a document “CCC Mtg. with Delegation of CREC Council (June 16/16 Mr. Mikes for Lunch)” that summarized the GP Council’s current position (See Appendix “A”). During the meeting it became evident that there were different understandings and emphases of church governance in operation as exemplified in pastor Hoekstra refusing the Delegate’s request for a congregational directory on the basis of the local church’s essential autonomy in possessing “the keys of the Kingdom.” These differences were spelled out in a document given to the Delegation at the lunch entitled “Church Authority in Reformed/Presbyterian Polity” dated May 25/16 (See Appendix “B”).

The Delegation then met with Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt along with their wives from 3pm until approximately 6:30pm. This conflict and the resulting church discipline has

caused much pain and heartache in their families. The Delegation endeavored to help them see the gravity and seriousness of their actions, how disagreement does not require disrespect and acrimony, and any rescinding of discipline does not mean there was no warrant for it.

The brothers were insistent that in their opinion, even if the discipline against them were rescinded, unless the matter with their parents were resolved satisfactorily, things would be right back where they had been prior to the discipline. We inquired what “satisfactorily” meant. The Delegation proposed having the GP Council summarize the exact action against their parents and the rationale for that action, dispelling any rumors of secret sin, etc. This proposal was met with varying levels of satisfaction. The thought, expressed more strongly by some, was that a change of leadership was also necessary for their trust to be restored and the health of the church. The three brothers expressed frustration that they were lumped together with their father and were treated essentially as a single entity. They emphasized that they did not agree with each other or their father on everything in this dispute.

At 7:00pm the Delegation then met with the GP Council including Pastor Theo Hoekstra, Elder Dale Callahan, Deacons Leo Wattel, Alfred Joosee, and Robin Shoemaker, and Elders currently on leave Jamie Soles and George Plante. Elder Gary Duke joined for part of the meeting via conference call. The Delegation endeavored to emphasize the importance of submitting to the Court’s decision and modeling submission to the Congregation. There were some strong expressions of exasperation, frustration, and mistrust on the part of some of the leaders. Later both Gary Duke and Theo Hoekstra asked forgiveness for their own words and outbursts. It was also clear at this meeting that different conceptions of the role of the broader church were at play - what is the nature of the broader church’s authority? The initial underlying conviction regarding the Court’s ruling, as expressed in Pastor Hoekstra’s own written words given to the Delegation at the previous lunch meeting, was that this “Whole issue of procedure is smoke and mirrors, but this Court failed to see that...”. Though Pastor Hoekstra expressed regret for stating that in writing, the Delegation thinks it is in fact a fair summary of the Council’s beliefs expressed in the course of our discussions. Our main labor in this meeting was fielding questions regarding the Court’s judgment, endeavoring to explain the Action Items in terms of the Findings, and explaining why “procedure” in the case of discipline is no small matter. These explanations helped the GP Council increasingly understand and read the Actions in context and become more open to compliance. The Delegation then departed at around 11:30pm so that the GP Council could deliberate.

Friday, June 17

The Delegation made itself available to any members or former members of CCC who wanted to meet and explain their observations regarding the congregation, who had questions about the Court’s decision, or who needed counsel/advice. We had fourteen different family meetings from 9:00 a.m. until approximately 5:30 p.m. The meetings were as follows:

1. Leo & Yolanda Wattel
2. Bernice Shoemaker

3. Ethan Atwood
4. Alex Barendregt
5. Nathan Shoemaker
6. Alfred & Juanita Joosee
7. Evert Vandebeek
8. Theo & Margaret Hoekstra
9. Dale & Bonitta Callahan
10. Brad & Alyssa Donovan
11. Travis & Stephanie Fehler
12. Jesse & Timbrel Penner
13. Steve Vanden Brink
14. Gary Duke via teleconference

We met with ardent defenders of the GP Council, with confused members, with questioners, and with those deeply torn. Some agreed overall with the Court's ruling but found it overly harsh toward GP Council, especially in light of the fact that the PMs and then the Court did not come to GP for face-to-face meeting as were requested early on by all parties involved. Others agreed with GP Council's discipline of the Barendregt brothers but disagreed with their recommendation to leave the CREC in response to the Court decision. One person expressed godly repentance for matters in a letter he wrote. Three evenhanded members appeared to see things with extreme clarity (showing the kind of wisdom and carefulness normally associated with leaders). There were a number of common themes in all these meetings. Many expressed a high degree of love and appreciation for the GP Council and their sacrificial work on behalf of the congregation. This was true of even those families who were critical of the leadership's handling of this situation and the lack of apparent wisdom in this conflict. Nearly all felt it important for the Delegation to understand the historic "fault lines" in this congregation stemming back to a United Reformed Church in which many families had been members and some officers. There was persistent frustration with gossip on the part of the "other" group mischaracterizing "my" group. Those who had endeavored to bridge this gap expressed frustration that their efforts seemed fruitless.

Following these meetings, the Delegation met with the GP Council and they presented us with some proposed actions in order to comply with the Court's decision. There was some feeling expressed that there was undue pressure due to time to conform to the ruling. The Delegation assured the Council that they needed to take the necessary time and work to ensure that they understood and believed in the rightness of their course of action. We agreed not to discuss the specific items that the GP Council was still working through at the congregational meeting.

At 7:00pm the Delegation then met with the Congregation as a whole as per item #6 of our charge. Pastor Theo opened the meeting with prayer and a brief exhortation from Ephesians 1. He then handed the meeting over to the Delegation. Kenton Spratt served as Moderator of the meeting. He explained our presence at the Church, introduced himself and Timothy van den Broek, and invited the other members of the Delegation to introduce themselves. Following these introductions, Pastor Spratt explained the nature of our charge and also gave some

account of the background and work of the Delegation thus far. Pastor Bryan then delivered an exhortation from Genesis 45, encouraging the members of the congregation to view these events in light of God's Providence and Sovereignty. Pastor Spratt then opened the meeting to questions from the Congregation which formed the bulk of the evening. At first it seemed that there weren't many questions, but as time went on it was apparent that there were many unanswered questions and once the questions started they came steadily throughout the evening. The questions centered around two issues: (1) why is it important for the GP Council to submit to the Court and how can they retain respect in so doing?; (2) why did the Court place such a huge emphasis upon "mere procedure?" The congregation also wanted to express frustration that sending a personal delegation to GP took so long, that presbytery had failed to send any delegation, and that the Court rendering the judgment had failed to appear personally in GP. Many felt betrayed or discouraged by the apparent lack of care or interest and suggested that the Court's failure in procedure was incongruent with their judgment. In spite of some more intense moments, the explanations were listened to and considered. The evening ended with a word from Dan Glover from the book of Philippians and the relational conflict conveyed in that letter. The meeting ended around 10:30 p.m. and the Delegation stayed around for another hour visiting with members of the congregation. The overall impression from the congregation was that they were appreciative of our work and more hopeful of resolution than they had been previously.

Following the congregational meeting the delegation sought to rearrange their departure times to allow for individual meetings with Caleb & Mallory Barendregt, Jeremy & Amelia Barendregt, and Morgan & Ashleigh Barendregt separately. Unfortunately there were no flights in the later afternoon or evening out of Grande Prairie, and we were up against our obligations on the Lord's Day and with our home churches. An email was sent on June 21st to each of the families expressing our desire and regret at being unable to meet again.

III. Recommendations of the Delegation

1. Recommendations related to the CREC and CREC Council

- a. **The CREC should proceed with securing compliance with the Court ruling.**
The Delegation believes, after interviewing many of the various parties involved and witnesses to the church dispute, that the judgments of the Court regarding the case were fundamentally sound. The interviewed parties together produced a fairly clear and cohesive picture of the situation to the Delegation that was very much in keeping with the Court ruling. It was our sense from the congregation's question period that some assumed that had the Court visited, the ruling would have been significantly different. Our sense is that were the Court to have visited the rulings against the GP Council would have been very similar, although in some places probably *more* severe, not less (e.g. the lack of dispassionate objectivity, and the amount of conflict of interest and polity dysfunction that was not entirely clear at a distance).

- b. **A letter should be sent from PMs Burrow and Phelps (or others responsible) expressing their regret for not seeing that face-to-face meetings took place as part of the process.** In spite of what we feel was the Court getting their ruling right, most, if not all, of the congregants and leadership we spoke with believed that the failure to have a face-to-face meeting was a significant failure in process. Stuart Bryan, as a member of the Court, was able to extend a verbal apology at the congregational meeting, but a written statement from those overseeing matters would carry more weight and may help the leadership and congregation as they work through these matters.
- c. **PM Phelps should review and respond to the document submitted by the GP Council** “To the Congregation Christ Covenant Church June 17” to determine if they are in compliance with the Court ruling and communicate the results to the necessary parties. The Delegation has forwarded to Acting PM Phelps the proposed actions of the GP Council in order to comply with the Court’s decision. The Delegation recommends that Rev. Phelps review this document as soon as possible to determine if they are in compliance. If so, then the Delegation recommends that the GP Council fulfill its compliance by communicating their actions to the Complainants as soon as possible.
- d. **PM Phelps, in cooperation with GP Council and Complainants, should send a Pastoral Commission to GP to oversee personal meetings between Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan and the GP Council as well as between them and others in the congregation to facilitate repentance and restoration.** Once the issue of compliance with the Court ruling is settled there will still be much pastoral work with coming alongside the congregation and leadership in walking out the implications of the ruling. Ideally the same people should be involved in order to minimize the work in getting up to speed with a complex situation with a long history.
- e. **PM Phelps should consider removing some of the specific information from the Court’s judgment** in footnote 11 which quotes from a letter from Leo Wattel to Dick Barendregt. This has occasioned the Wattels’ considerable trouble, as this was a personal letter that they had sent to DB and never shown to anyone else. The offending sentence is this: “The letter repeatedly refers to DB as being like King Saul who was seizing power and alleges instances of DB’s sinful conduct.” They also expressed the desire for an apology to accompany this action.
- f. **PM Phelps should inquire into Theo Hoekstra’s and CCC Council’s views of church polity and perhaps more particularly their desire, ability, and willingness to conduct themselves peaceably in accord with CREC polity.** It was clear to the Delegation that there were different understandings of the relationship of the local church to the broader body that caused some friction and

chafing on Pastor Hoekstra's part in particular and the Council's in general. Theo seemed keen to be seen as directing all the activities of the Delegation and made our task of contacting the congregation more difficult. This made the Delegation's involvement more challenging and uncomfortable than necessary. There was a sense from these meetings that Pastor Hoekstra was working with the Delegation under outside pressure from the local body and not according to his own convictions, commitment to CREC distinctives, and thankfulness for help from the CREC. If true this will only cause problems for the congregation down the road.

It should be noted, however, that Dan Glover reported to the Delegation that in his previous communications with Council and Theo that he found them willing and open to hearing how they might resolve the situation in such a way that they could stay within the CREC.

- g. **PM Phelps should seek to provide some means to strengthen and come alongside the eldership.** Besides Pastor Hoekstra there are only two other elders. Pastor Hoekstra is struggling himself with polity issues as well as exhaustion, frustration, and anger regarding the situation. Gary Duke is away from the congregation a large amount of time due to a lack of local work and was clearly emotionally overcome by the difficulties that made objectivity and dispassionate judgment impossible. Dale Callahan, although apparently effective in caring for the flock, seems to struggle in addressing conflict, and has confessedly no inclination in helping overcome the endemic procedural problems. It is our opinion that the eldership, in its current state, is not sufficiently strong to deal well with the difficulties they face. It would be a great blessing to the congregation to have an outside elder come alongside them to provide dispassionate help in their decision making (at least on anything to do with this conflict) as well as perhaps seeking to add a local elder who has not gone along with the historic fault lines in the church.

2. Recommendations related to the Complainants

- a. **The Delegation recommends a Pastoral Commission on behalf of Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan along with their wives to help them walk out their repentance.** The Court censured the brothers for their disrespectful and dismissive attitude toward the elders in GP. While the brothers have formally asked forgiveness for this disrespectful attitude, they need to be encouraged to work out that repentance from head to toe. They need to see that there is a way they could have expressed their opposition to the GP Council's actions against their parents and them while being respectful at the same time. They need to be helped to see that their disrespect contributed to this situation and the way that the GP Council felt compelled to respond to them. In other words, the judgment of the Court was that the Council deprived the boys of biblical due process; the

guarding their own hearts and lips. In addition, the GP Council was clearly dismissive of the seriousness of the Delegation's concern for good order, and although we feel we made some progress in this area, it is likely that more needs to be done.

- b. **PM Phelps should work with, or assign someone to work with, the GP elders to develop effective operational procedures.** In light of the pervasive and systemic dysfunction of the GP Council found in the Court's ruling and the Delegates' own observations, the Delegation recommends that PM Phelps work in conjunction with the GP Council to help them develop effective operational procedures that will enable them to shepherd the congregation more faithfully. This work would seek to address the following issues:

- i. **The elders of the GP Council should begin immediately functioning according to their constitutional roles in distinguishing elders from deacons.** The disciplinary decisions involving the Barendregts were jointly made by elders and deacons meeting in council. This is contrary to the CCC Constitution, the normal practice of other CREC congregations, and subversive of good order. Several of those interviewed (complainants, members of the congregation, and a former officer) indicated that this intermingling of the duties of deacons and elders was profoundly confusing. Some stated that while they had been comfortable voting for certain men to serve in a diaconal role, they would not have voted for the same man to serve as an elder. When these members cast their votes for office, it was unclear to them that the GP Council was essentially treating these roles as interchangeable in the daily governance of the church. This is contrary to their own constitution and should be corrected immediately.
- ii. **Elders who have a potential conflict of interest in disciplinary matters must recuse themselves.** Members of the GP Council who have close familial relationships with individuals under discipline have failed to recuse themselves from such decisions. The Court censured the GP Council for this failure in the case of Deacon Leo Wattel. However, the Delegation found that Deacon Alfred Joosse is the uncle of Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt and has not recused himself. Further, the Delegation discovered that Deacon Robin Shoemaker, who had recused himself from the initial proceedings against the Barendregt brothers because his daughter is married to Jeremy, appears to be involved in such decisions now. Following recommendation 3.a. will deal with this problem among the deacons but, in the future, elders should be careful to recuse themselves from disciplinary decisions when there are close familial ties.

As in the Court's judgment with Mr. Wattel, the Delegation makes no judgment as to the fitness of these men for office or their general Christian character. We found no evidence of malicious intent. However, the Council's refusal to follow good order and to have these men recuse themselves from these decisions has done much to exasperate the tensions and conflicts in the congregation. Family and church loyalties are being strained to the breaking point. The influence that family might have to encourage fellow family members to honor the voice of the church has been undermined by those very family members being the voice of the church. It is the place of those elders who are not related or closely associated with a particular case of church conflict or discipline to free up those elders who are so that those elders can focus on shepherding their own homes through such difficult times. This is not to call the recused men's character into question but to protect them and their homes from undue additional strain as well as from potential accusations of partiality which may then call the entire actions of the elders into question.

- iii. **The elders must endeavor to keep complete, orderly, and accurate records and communication.** The Council minutes have no record of who moved specific actions, who seconded such actions, whether such actions were the unanimous decision of the Council, and whether any members of the Council recused themselves from specific decisions (aside from the general recusal of Leo Wattel). It is also noted that correspondence frequently doesn't clearly state who the actual signatories are.

The CCC Constitution states that "The elders in council shall establish the specific procedures for all formal discipline on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate to the circumstances and individuals involved. However, at minimum, these procedures should include a clear and timely warning to the individual that he or she is in the process of formal discipline, two or three visits or communications each involving two or three witnesses, and clear records and/or minutes of the entire proceedings kept by the elders in council." (Article 4: Church Discipline, para. 5). Both the Court and the follow-up delegation found that there was lack of proof that this CCC constitutional process was followed in the case of the Barendregt brothers' discipline. The same goes for the procedures laid out in the following paragraphs on page 5, Article 4 of the CCC Constitution.

- iv. **The elders must endeavor to communicate in a clear and timely manner with the congregation.** There was general frustration expressed by members of the congregation not involved directly with the leadership, with the lack of communication between the GP Council and the congregation regarding the discipline process and what was being

done and why. Some of the lack of communication from the GP Council to the congregation was out of an admittedly admirable and biblical desire to not share details of sin in a broader context than absolutely required. However, they could have made public statements clarifying that their action was not due to gross immorality, public scandal, etc., which would have stemmed some of the gossip or confusion.

- c. **The GP Council should draft a short summary of their action against Dick and Joanne Barendregt** and the rationale for it which will be presented to the Complainants at the personal meeting recommended in III.1.d. under “Recommendations related to the CREC and CREC Council.”
4. Recommendations related to the whole Congregation
 - a. **Everyone in the church body not involved in the historic disagreements must refuse to take sides on the issues that go back to the previous church.** The fault line in the congregation must be eliminated by maintaining allegiance only to Jesus Christ in one’s thoughts, words, and actions. It is clear that many of those who were never involved historically in the problems from the previous church have taken sides (or felt pressured to take sides) and frequently adopted one of the competing narratives of those who were involved. This is not right, and has served to foment division in the body. Each saint must see that his allegiance is not first to family, nor to a narrative, but to the Lord Jesus.
 - b. **Everyone in the church body must consciously reject speaking and listening to gossip** and seek to please the Lord by acting faithfully according to the knowledge they personally possess. It is clear that much of the knowledge in the congregation is second-hand and that knowledge has been combined with personal knowledge to create narratives that serve to reinforce the fault line going back to the problems in the previous church. “Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases” (Prov. 26:20).
 - c. **Everyone in the church body should endeavor to view each Barendregt family as distinct from each other.** All pastoral labor (including from presbytery) and congregational interaction with Caleb & Mallory Barendregt, Jeremy & Amelia Barendregt, and Morgan & Ashleigh Barendregt should consider each family as distinct from each other and their parents, Dick & Joanne Barendregt. Treating each Barendregt related family as a separate entity should extend to members of the family not immediately involved in the current discipline actions as well. It is clear to the Delegation that the act of constantly lumping them all together as if each were to blame for the actions of the other and acting like they all hold the same view on all points, has been a contributor to the breakdown of relationships in the church.

Appendix A

CCC Mtg. with Delegation of CREC Council (June 16/16 Mr. Mikes for Lunch)

Whole issue of procedure is smoke and mirrors, but this Court failed to see that and everything now sits there. We will consider making that case to the whole Council in 2017, but that mtg is too far away to help us now;

1. We have complied as far as we able to with any integrity and honesty.
(We have the letter to the congregation and the appellants.)
2. We are prepared to consider lifting discipline of the appellants, but given the history of our few meetings and the reason for so few we feel it would not go well without outside involvement. (Delegation facilitate visit?)
3. "A house divided cannot stand." Cf. also Acts 15, even Paul and Barnabas.
4. They will need to own August 21st statement and repent of causing us and whole congregation untold grief for almost a year, to continue together.

Possible Meeting Schedule from our Point of View

1. Luncheon to plan as we are doing.
2. Meeting with whole Council early tonight. (set time)
3. We are prepared to let people know you are at the URC building for visits.
(Give times etc. We have the whole building)
4. Look for time to meet with the three appellants with delegation & Session.
5. We convene a Congregational meeting on Friday evening, give you the floor for what you need to say, invite response, be prepared for our own response.

Appendix B

Church Authority in Reformed/Presbyterian Polity

May 25/16

One of the accusations placed against the Council here from the Court of the CREC is that we are guilty of the same lack of submission to authority that we are trying to deal with in others. We tried to show the lack of truth in that accusation but we still hear it being used. The question really is: "What are the lines or levels or types of authority in the church? Where does original or primary authority lie? Does a Presbytery have higher authority than a local Session? What is its authority in relation to the local church? Fortunately, there is no real difference on this between the Reformed and/or Presbyterian forms of government.

1. "The decisions of the assemblies with regard to the local congregation are **spiritually authoritative**. If the elders of a particular congregation choose to refuse the instruction of the **broader church**, the congregation may do so without loss of property. However, if their disregard of godly counsel is particularly egregious, the congregation may be removed from membership in the CREC...." Article IV D 5 p. 18. CREC Constitution.
 - a. The term "*broader church*" is carefully chosen to avoid the idea that decisions of Presbytery have a higher authority or judicial force in terms of the keys of the K.
 - b. The term "*spiritual authority*" is carefully chosen to show its distinction from the original or primary authority of the local church. There is an obvious sense in which all church authority is spiritual, but because the authority of Presbytery is derived and secondary it is to be persuasive, respecting the original authority.
 - c. Though it is without careful explanation in our Constitution, this is totally in line with the Reformed churches since the time of the Reformation.
2. In explaining the comparison of the authority of local sessions to the broader body, Vandellen and Monsma in their 1967 work, Revised Church Order Commentary have this to say about Reformed church government and ecclesiastical assemblies:
 - a. "...consistories (aka session) exercise original authority, authority imparted by Christ directly to the various office-bearers,....Major assemblies on the other hand, exercise only delegated authority:" p. 114.
 - b. "All ecclesiastical authority, given unto his church by Christ, resides in the particular church. The keys of the kingdom of heaven, given to the apostles by Christ,....exercised by the office-bearers who had been chosen under their guidance...." P. 115.
 - c. After explaining the rejection of the word "jurisdiction" to describe the authority of the broader assembly, the Commentary goes on to explain that even the word "authority" applied to the broader assembly is: "a moral, spiritual, guiding influence....an authority which seeks to persuade and guide, and which all the churches have voluntarily agreed to respect..." p. 117.
3. In line with the Word of God, the Commentary points out that the authority of the local session is primary as to its "origin", "necessity", "being", "duration" and "purpose". The spiritual authority of the broader body is for the benefit of the local body. But the local body can no more hand its responsibility over to the broader assembly, than a husband can hand his over to his wife. Adam's excuse was not accepted. As in Hebrews 13:17, it is the local session which will be held accountable to God. That's why we listen, and the words of many counsellors carry weight, but the responsibility remains ours, always.

Appendix C



Kenton Spratt <ks@ccspokane.com>

Update from Acting PM Phelps's delegation to Grande Prairie

3 messages

Kenton Spratt <ks@ccspokane.com>

Tue, Jun 21, 2016 at 5:41 PM

To: jeremy@certek.ca

Cc: Dan Glover <dtglover@telus.net>, Timothy van den Broek <timothyvandenbroek@gmail.com>, Stuart Bryan <sbryan@trinitycda.org>, Jack Phelps <cbcelder1@gmail.com>

Jeremy & Amelia,

Greetings in the Name of Christ. We wanted to thank you for meeting with us last Thursday and apologize that we had to leave early Saturday morning and were unable to meet with you again before our departure. We had 17 meetings following the meeting we had with you during our stay in Grand Prairie, and simply ran out of time. Our earnest desire was to meet with you individually and not merely as "the three brothers" after speaking with the leadership and congregation. We did try to rearrange our flights to make that possible, but there were no flights in the later afternoon or evening out of Grand Prairie, and we were up against our obligations on the Lord's Day and with our home churches.

We wanted to let you know that there has been some significant movement on the part of the Council. Our Delegation has submitted their proposed course of action to Acting PM Phelps for his approval. We are hopeful for a good outcome, but know much work remains. We know that this has been a great weight upon each of you and your wives and so wanted to keep you informed. We will be recommending to PM Phelps a further delegation to help bring reconciliation to the church in Grande Prairie. We believe we are in a position to make specific recommendations. We would also ask that you endeavor to comply in every lawful way and be respectful to the leadership of the church. Please continue to think through your actions and words and confess any outstanding sin you are able to see on your part. Your sin is not excused by the wrongs of others. Be more grieved over your own sin than any wrong done to you.

Make it your prayer and goal to honor the Lord Jesus, and seek the peace and purity of His church.

On behalf of the delegation,

Grace and peace,

Kenton

--

Kenton D. Spratt

Pastor

Christ Church, Spokane

509-690-7488 (cell)

509-329-0314 (church office)

www.ccspokane.com

Kenton Spratt <ks@ccspokane.com>

Tue, Jun 21, 2016 at 5:41 PM

To: morgan@certek.ca

Cc: Dan Glover <dtglover@telus.net>, Timothy van den Broek <timothyvandenbroek@gmail.com>, Stuart Bryan <sbryan@trinitycda.org>, Jack Phelps <cbcelder1@gmail.com>

Morgan & Ashleigh,

Greetings in the Name of Christ. We wanted to thank you for meeting with us last Thursday and apologize that we had to leave early Saturday morning and were unable to meet with you again before our departure. We had 17 meetings following the meeting we had with you during our stay in Grand Prairie, and simply ran out of time. Our earnest desire was to meet with you individually and not merely as "the three brothers" after speaking with the leadership and congregation. We did try to rearrange our flights to make that possible, but there were no flights in the later afternoon or evening out of Grand Prairie, and we were up against our obligations on the Lord's Day and with our home churches.

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Appendix C (cont.)

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On behalf of the delegation,

grace and peace,

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509-690-7488 (cell)
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Kenton Spratt <ks@ccspokane.com>

Tue, Jun 21, 2016 at 5:41 PM

To: caleb@certek.ca

Cc: Dan Glover <dtglover@telus.net>, Timothy van den Broek <timothyvandenbroek@gmail.com>, Stuart Bryan <sbryan@trinitycda.org>, Jack Phelps <cbcelder1@gmail.com>

Caleb & Mallory,

Greetings in the Name of Christ. We wanted to thank you for meeting with us last Thursday and apologize that we had to leave early Saturday morning and were unable to meet with you again before our departure. We had 17 meetings following the meeting we had with you during our stay in Grand Prairie, and simply ran out of time. Our earnest desire was to meet with you individually and not merely as "the three brothers" after speaking with the leadership and congregation. We did try to rearrange our flights to make that possible, but there were no flights in the later afternoon or evening out of Grand Prairie, and we were up against our obligations on the Lord's Day and with our home churches.

We wanted to let you know that there has been some significant movement on the part of the Council. Our Delegation has submitted their proposed course of action to Acting PM Phelps for his approval. We are hopeful for a good outcome, but know much work remains. We know that this has been a great weight upon each of you and your wives and so wanted to keep you informed. We will be recommending to PM Phelps a further delegation to help bring reconciliation to the church in Grande Prairie. We believe we are in a position to make specific recommendations. We would also ask that you endeavor to comply in every lawful way and be respectful to the leadership of the church. Please continue to think through your actions and words and confess any outstanding sin you are able to see on your part. Your sin is not excused by the wrongs of others. Be more grieved over your own sin than any wrong done to you.

Make it your prayer and goal to honor the Lord Jesus, and seek the peace and purity of His church.

On behalf of the delegation,

grace and peace,

Kenton

--

Kenton D. Spratt
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www.ccspokane.com

Appendix D

Response of Christ Covenant Church to June 16,17 CREC Delegation

July 8/16

We want to thank Rev. Stuart Bryan, Pastor Dan Glover, Rev. Kenton Spratt and elder Timothy VandenBroek for coming out to Grande Prairie to seek to help with the pastoral issues here. Given everything involved, the issues are not easy to deal with and the men worked long and hard to try to make progress. We recognized significant remaining differences between us that rest partly on different general convictions. Some of these, such as church polity, came out at the congregational meeting. Yet we felt in the end we were able to come very close to compliance with the Court without trampling consciences.

At the same time, when we read the official report, we have to say that we are once again somewhat disappointed on a number of counts. There were a number of things we could agree with. We had actually talked some time ago of having to work on some of these when we felt we were in a space as a congregation and Council to do so. At the same time, there were some things that left us feeling somewhat betrayed. And there were others that left us thinking we were either not understood or otherwise just in clear disagreement about the heart of the issue here. We did not see room left within the report to deal with what we believe are the deeper underlying heart sins behind the difficulty. But without being able to deal with them we see no road to peace trying to worship together. The delegation did not speak with the same authority as the Court but they came with a directive from Rev. Phelps and their counsel will carry a lot of weight with a lot of people. We will continue to strive to deal with the issues faithfully, and given the congregation's expressed desire to try to stay in the CREC, we are willing to make a presentation and defence to the Fall meeting of Council in 2017 if necessary.

Points of General Agreement.

1. Under 1b p.5 we agree that face-to-face meetings with the Court early on might have served better in trying to work through this with understanding.
2. Under 1d p.5 we have also agreed with them that we must meet with those who had been under discipline before they return to worship, and that it should be facilitated by a delegation from the CREC.
3. Under 3bi on p.8 we have for some time agreed that it would be good to move to greater clarity between elders and deacons in the normal working of the Council. This is something that we would like to hammer out carefully in a re-wording of the Constitution with input from the congregation.
4. Under 3bii on the same page we do see the value of closely-related family members recusing themselves on disciplinary matters, though we are unsure of trying to codify that as a requirement. It might, as was written, allow family members on Council to speak more easily into the lives of those involved in the discipline.
5. Under 3 b iii on p.8 we agree that clearer Minutes of meetings should be kept. We had done some work toward that end. But Mike Donovan from FSJ also encouraged us both to simplify our Minutes and include movers and seconders etc., and to follow Roberts Rules of Order more closely in the meetings even if we do not adopt them.
6. We also appreciate the advice of the Delegation to avoid all divisive activity, including participating in gossip or banding together in groups or any political activity.

Points in Feeling Somewhat Betrayed.

1. When we met with the delegation we were unreserved and spoke openly about our concerns with what we see as very divisive activity on the part of those we had placed under discipline. We also spoke about our concern that the Court had themselves failed much procedurally, and yet on the basis of procedure laid most of the problem for the whole issue at our door. We tried to point out that they were trying to bring us back together as a congregation without allowing us to deal with the underlying issues. We also readily apologized if we felt there was too much frustration in our voices.

For us, the interpretation of this by the delegation as a spirit of anger and bitterness etc. prevailing in the Council was a betrayal of our trust in them. We do not say that we have never been in any way angry about what has been done. But we know that “man’s anger does not work the righteousness of God.” Yet the Word of God does not say, “Never let your voice rise.” It does say, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger,” and we take this seriously. Nor do we live with a spirit of bitterness or we would resign the office. We do not all think alike but we seek consensus in meetings by mutual submission, and they are always peaceful even if we are sometimes frustrated. Also, Rev. Stuart himself noted in his last words to us, “all our communication with those earlier placed under discipline has been pastoral.” Christ Jesus will be our judge.

2. Theo revealed to the delegation that there seems to be a somewhat different view of church polity at work between the Council of CCC and the CREC. We tend to follow the Continental Reformed concept much closer, as the handout explained. We tried to work with the delegation in that light with a cooperative spirit.

In 1f on pp.5 and 6 this is interpreted by the delegation as calling into question our views on church polity and perhaps more particularly “our desire, ability, and willingness to conduct ourselves peaceably in accord with CREC polity.” Theo is said to be “chafing” under this difference. We are said to have “made their task of contacting the congregation more difficult.” Theo is painted as “keen on directing all the activities of the delegation.”

We would like to argue that there needs to be room for Continental Reformed church polity within the CREC. Reformed church government welcomes involvement from the broader church as a “derived and secondary authority”, but still beneficial. We resisted giving the delegation an active list of congregants as if the delegation was in primary authority. But far from making contact difficult, we rented a building for all to come to and invited everyone to visit with them.

3. Under 1g p. 6 we disagree with their very negative report on Gary, Dale and Theo. If objectivity requires dispassion, the prophets themselves were in a hard place. Dale expressed that meetings and Constitution are not his favourite time spent, and used colloquial language. But we see no problem there. Theo says he’s not exhausted, and though we are all sinful he does not find anger to be a particular problem. We would ask the congregation to judge for themselves on these things and feel free to speak with any of the Council members or their families about it.

Points at Which There Seems to be Significant Disagreement.

1. Perhaps our greatest disagreement continues to be on the road forward to unity in the congregation. The CREC has required only that the appellants apologize for disrespect to Council, which has already been done. Then, with a reconciliation meeting, they would return to worship. We were willing to rescind discipline on that simple basis. However, we clearly revealed too that the road forward in unity together had to include public repentance for the divisive nature of the opposition to our actions with Dick and Joanne from the very beginning. They had full knowledge of the true nature of the problem as revealed already in Jeremy's letter of August 21. And when a binding arbitration Court was offered in October that could have avoided all this, only the Council signed on. It can of course be argued that we over-reacted in February trying to relieve some of the conflict, but the heart of the problem had never changed.
2. Under 1g we do not believe that having an "outside elder appointed by Rev. Phelps to come alongside to provide dispassionate help in making decisions especially on anything to do with the conflict" would be helpful. We have found critical difference between CCC Council and those on the outside when it comes to understanding the heart of the problems. We have done all we can to listen to and respond to their concerns, agreeing with some, submitting to many. But ultimately we will be held responsible before the Lord on what happens here. Is it true that we are "not sufficiently strong to deal with the difficulties we face" as they suggest? Problem is we are not agreed on the nature of the difficulties. But still, we would appeal to the apostle Paul, "When I am weak, then I am strong. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness." This difficulty brings us so much into prayer, and even fasting, before God. There is much strength in that.
3. Under 3c we find that the requirement for a "short summary of (our) action against Dick and Joanne Barendregt and the rationale for it" shows mainly that much of what we have done was somehow not noticed. That summary can be found in many early letters but it is focused in Appendix A in the response we gave the Complainants on January 16. We can photocopy it and give it out again, but it is not as if we have not done it. Also, as we said, this action was not "against" them but "for their spiritual welfare."
4. In 4b we agree as said earlier that we must reject speaking and listening to gossip. However, it is our experience as we tried to come to grips with the depth of the problem, that most people's narrative rests on first-hand knowledge, not hearsay.

We remain willing to visit with the appellants and a delegation from the CREC to seek reconciliation. However, the way forward together in peace must deal openly with the heart sins involved in divisively opposing our efforts to admonish their parents. I Cor. 11 and our Constitution too, says we may sometimes feel compelled to close the Table of Communion with the Lord, also to visitors when earthly communion between brothers is clearly broken.

For the Council of Christ Covenant Church

Appendix E

Report of the Pastoral Commission Pastors Joshua Appel and Dan Glover 15 July 2016

1. Activities and Charge

- a. The Pastoral Commission traveled to Grande Prairie on July 7-8. According to the charge of July 6, provided by Jack Phelps (appendix A), the Commission judged that it would be best to meet first with the parties separately in order to identify any remaining barriers to reconciliation with the goal of a joint meeting the following day. The initial meetings took place on July 8. The Commission met with Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan Barendregt for 3 hours in the afternoon and then with the CCC Council for 4 hours in the evening. Based on the findings of the Commission, no joint meeting of reconciliation was able to be accomplished.
- b. Jack Phelps' charge to the Pastoral Commission contained three major directives:
 - i. To spiritually strengthen and encourage the congregation, including its leadership, to the end that the church in Grande Prairie come into full compliance with the ruling of the Council Court (*Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church Ruling, April 23 2016, amended June 3, 2016*)
 - ii. Preliminarily, the Pastoral Commission must satisfy itself that the manner in which the CCC Council carried out the directives of the Court Ruling are truly in compliance with the provisions of the Ruling. Likewise, the Commission must satisfy itself that the Complainants, in their previously accomplished compliance, are continuing to respond in a way that leads to peace.
 - iii. The Pastoral Commission must ensure that the meeting of reconciliation reflects more than mere technical compliance with the CREC Council Court's decision, but is grounded in genuine humility, confession, forgiveness, and desire for reconciliation.

2. Findings

- a. In its meeting with the Barendregt brothers, the Pastoral Commission found that, while the brothers were satisfied with the directives of the Council Court, they believed that much harm has been done to their reputations in the actions taken by the CCC Council in the time since the Court's decision. Specifically, they believed that the CCC Council had made the conflict in the congregation worse by insisting that the Court's decision was wrong on several significant points and recommending to withdraw CCC from the CREC. In keeping with this, the brothers believed that the CCC Council should apologize to them for the outcome of their unwillingness to comply in a timely manner with the Court's ruling. They saw no way forward to reconciliation without such an apology. The Pastoral Commission pointed out that this further apology would be over and above what

the Court required of CCC Council in their original ruling and the B brothers recognized this.

- b. The B brothers also pointed out that they have never received or seen a copy of the binder that CCC Council submitted to the Court for purposes of the Court's investigation.
- c. In its meeting with the CCC Council, the Pastoral Commission found that, while already having rescinded the formal discipline against the B brother's, the Council's actions and posture toward the Court's decision fell short of full, unqualified compliance. The CCC Council had met the previous evening to discuss the report from the Pastoral Delegation (June 16-17) and had drafted a response which was given to the Pastoral Commission. The report expressed frustration that the Pastoral Delegation's report "was found to be as negative toward the Council of CCC as the earlier report [Court's decision]." It continued to lay out three ways the Council could move forward now that the disciplinary action against the B brothers had been rescinded (these options are materially the same ones contained in the Council Report of June 17 sent to the church, see Appendix B) :
 - i. The way forward for all requires a public repentance on the part of Jeremy, Caleb, Morgan, for "the divisive nature of the opposition to our actions with [their parents] from the beginning".
 - ii. The way forward is not together but apart, but still in peace.
 - iii. The alternative to the first two options involves beginning the process of formal discipline.
- d. The Pastoral Commission took time to make sure the CCC Council understood that the first option added a condition for reconciliation not required by the court. Likewise, the second and third options were understood to be contrary (though the second might be mutually agreeable) to reconciliation and the spirit of the Court's ruling. The Council understood that such was the case, but cited "reasons of conscience" as to why they could not fully comply with the Court's ruling in an unqualified way. It should also be noted that they were unwilling to offer an unqualified apology for disciplining the Barendregt brothers as per the Court's directions (IV. F.) but felt that their movements to date toward compliance represented a display of both a willingness and desire to work with the CREC as fully and honestly as they believed they could. The Commission notes that CCC Council views the additional confession of the B brothers not as a condition for discipline to be rescinded (it has been rescinded) but as a necessary condition to walk forward together in reconciliation.
- e. The Pastoral Commission found that, though the Council was willing to apologize to the Barendregt brothers for "all failures in process," it was clear that they still understood the Court's focus on their procedural failures as a clear misplacement of priorities, believing the spirit of the boys opposition to the discipline toward their parents to be the material issue of the matter. In our judgment, while the Council does admit to failures of process, they still do not fully agree with the

court about how significant certain “failures of process” were, nor how they affected those under discipline, others within the congregation who were not directly involved, or how they appear to those examining the disciplinary process after the fact (the Court), nor do they fully appreciate some of the the obstacles such failures of process posed to the disciplinary process the Council was pursuing, even had that discipline been fully justified (as CCC Council clearly believes it was).

- f. The Commission also found that the CCC Council’s understanding of authority and what was referred to as “the keys of the kingdom” was largely in line with the findings of the previous Delegation report (III. F. and Appendix B). This understanding seems central to the Council’s resistance to some of the directives and recommendations of the Court and the Delegation. CCC Council clearly sees the ultimate authority and responsibility for the faithfulness, purity and obedience of the local congregation as resting with the local session/council rather than with the broader assembly, even when the local congregation is voluntarily part of a broader body of congregations. While CCC recognizes and appreciates the communion of the broader CREC and wishes to maintain its relationship with the CREC (which the Commission understands has historically been a willing and positive one), CCC Council believes that it had to make a call in the midst of the “on the ground” circumstances to proceed with discipline toward the B boys for the boy’s open criticism and disagreement with the discipline measures taken against their parents. It appears to the Commission that at least some of the Council’s (and especially pastor Theo Hoekstra’s) understanding of church polity is potentially in tension, at least in practice, with that of the CREC at the denominational level, and at least where church courts are involved. The Commission sought to emphasize the CREC as a body of co-pastors coming *alongside* rather than as a holder of authority *over* the member churches.
- g. The Commission notes that when questioned about the B brother’s (and other congregants’) right to disagree with a decision or action of Council, the CCC Council clarified that they recognized that the B brothers had the right to disagree with the Council’s discipline of their parents. In this particular case, however, Council’s actions toward the B boys was interpreted by them and others in the congregation as Council requiring complete agreement and support of their disciplinary actions toward the B brother’s parents. For their part, Council believes that it could not allow (what they viewed as) the divisive nature of the B boys opposition to CCC Council to continue any further than it already had when they moved forward with the discipline process due to the harm it was causing the congregation. We believe this confusion was central to the conflict.
- h. Finally, the Commission appealed to the Council to reconsider their views of the Court’s findings, findings which did not oppose CCC’s view that *some* form of initial disciplinary action toward the B brothers may have been justified but which found that failures in process and communication had called the legitimacy of the overall disciplinary actions into question and which seemed to indicate that they

thought the court was deliberately set against them in a biased way. The Commission encouraged the Council to see the work of the Court and the Delegation as the work of good, wise, and sober men; and that they should openly receive the decision of the Court and carefully consider the possibility that the recommendations of the delegation were right. Ultimately, the Council's perspective on this issue and their disposition/attitude toward the recommendations of the Court and the Delegation, combined with items above, prevented the Commission from making significant progress toward securing full compliance with the Court's rulings.

- i. The Commission learned from CCC Council that a relative of the B brothers has begun renting another church building in town under the name of the CREC. This was brought to Council's attention when the pastor whose building was being rented asked Theo about it, knowing that CCC was the only CREC congregation in town. For their part, the B boys insisted that they have made it clear that the gathering is not a CREC work and that Jack Phelps gave them permission to begin meeting since they had not been able to return to their church.
- j. The Commission found that CCC was not aware that the B boys had appealed their discipline to the CREC until the Court decision was handed down. Up until that time, CCC believed that the only matter before the Court was the question of the B parent's discipline.
- k. In light of these remaining barriers (both the Complainants and the CCC Council believing an additional level of apology/confession on the part of the other is necessary for true repentance to happen and true reconciliation going forward), the Commission decided that too many barriers remained to make a reconciliatory meeting between the parties advisable at this time.

3. Recommendations

- a. Given our findings we recommend four things:
 - i. First, since reconciliation based on the court's ruling is currently at an impasse, we recommend that Barendregt brothers and the CCC Council part ways peacefully. Pastor Theo Hoekstra told the Commission that the Council wanted peace and was willing to release the brothers in good standing and with the Council's blessing. For their part, the Barendregt brothers were willing to leave on those conditions.
 - ii. Second, we recommend that Presiding Ministers Jack Phelps and Alan Burrow plan a trip to Grande Prairie as soon as possible to conduct a final meeting between the CCC Council and the Barendregt brothers to secure the brother's transfer to another church in good standing and with the Council's blessing. We believe that such a meeting is essential to secure the foundations for a peaceful coexistence in the future. ***We want to stress that such a meeting needs to be timely to prevent further deterioration to an already highly strained situation.*** We also

recommend that the Presiding Ministers speak with the entire congregation of CCC and explain how to understand the Barendregt's departure. We further recommend that the PMs clearly outline how the church community should respond to the outcome going forward.

- iii. We recommend that the Presiding Ministers meet with the CCC Council to discuss the compatibility of the Council's understanding of polity with that of the CREC and to review with them the ways the Council has acted in response to the Court's findings and the Delegation's report.
- iv. Finally, we recommend that the Presiding Ministers listen to CCC Council's concerns with how the denominational and Court process communicated a lack of pastoral concern for them and made it seem to Council and many in the congregation like they were being misunderstood and unfairly opposed by the applicable CREC representatives.

Appendix A

Memorandum

Date: July 6, 2016

To: Rev. Dan Glover, Rev. Joshua Appel

CC: PM Burrow

From: Rev. Jack E. Phelps, Acting Presiding Minister, CREC

Re: Appointment of a Pastoral Commission in the matter of ***Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church***

In the CREC Appeals Court's ruling of April 23, 2016, amended by the Court on June 3, 2016, Item G on page 10 required Complainants and Defendants to request of PM Phelps a delegation "to oversee a meeting for the purpose of reconciliation between the two parties." As of June 10, no response to this requirement had been received from the Session of CCC so a delegation was appointed and sent to Grande Prairie without an invitation. On June 16-17, 2016, the delegation, consisting of Pastors Stuart Bryan, Kenton Spratt and Dan Glover, visited Christ Covenant Church under authority of a charge issued on June 10, 2016.

Shortly after noon today, July 6, the delegation delivered its final report of the visit to Grande Prairie. In the recommendations section of the report (III.1.d) the delegation recommended the following:

PM Phelps, in cooperation with GP Council and Complainants, should send a Pastoral Commission to GP to oversee personal meetings between Caleb, Jeremy, and Morgan and the GP Council as well as between them and others in the congregation to facilitate repentance and restoration. Once the issue of compliance with the Court ruling is settled there will still be much pastoral work with coming alongside the congregation and leadership in walking out the implications of the ruling. Ideally the same people should be involved in order to minimize the work in getting up to speed with a complex situation with a long history.

In keeping with the delegation's recommendation and under the authority granted to me as Acting Presiding Minister, I hereby appoint Pastors Joshua Appel and Dan Glover as a Pastoral Commission to assist Christ Covenant Church achieve godly reconciliation between the parties in the dispute and to aid the Council of Elders and Deacons, together with the whole congregation, in restoring peace within the church.

Charge to the Pastoral Commission

1. The Pastoral Commission is to travel to Grande Prairie during the weekend of July 8-10 to meet with the Elders and Deacons of Christ Covenant Church (locally called a “Council”), the Complainants in the above listed court case, and other members of the congregation as it sees fit.
2. The primary responsibility of the Pastoral Commission is to spiritually strengthen and encourage the congregation, including its leadership, to the end that the church in Grande Prairie comes into full compliance with the Ruling of the Council Court (***Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church Ruling***, dated April 23, 2016, as amended June 3, 2016), including a peaceful reconciliation among the parties.
3. As a preliminary matter, the Pastoral Commission must satisfy itself that the manner in which the “Council” carried out the directives of the Court Ruling are truly in compliance with the provisions of the Ruling. By the same token, the Pastoral Commission must satisfy itself that the Complainants, in their previously accomplished compliance, are continuing to respond in a way that leads to peace.
4. It is exceedingly important for the Pastoral Commission to ensure that the meeting of reconciliation reflects more than mere technical compliance with the CREC Council Court’s decision. The very soul of the church is at stake in this matter. Genuine humility, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation on both sides of the table are the goals of the planned meeting. Anything less will not resolve the issues that have troubled Christ Covenant Church for the past several months.
5. It is not the duty of this Pastoral Commission to resolve all the issues set forth in the Delegation’s report. Its mission is focused on Item III.1.d.
6. The Pastoral Commission shall file a written final report of the visitation with the Acting Presiding Minister of the CREC Council.

Appendix B

Council Report

July 7/16

Christ Covenant Church

Report on Pastoral Discussion and Decisions

July 7th

1/ A lengthy discussion was held on the pastoral issue before us. Alfred and Robin were able to join in by speaker phone. We received the 14-page report of the June Delegation from the CREC an hour and a half before our meeting. We found it discouraging on some counts. There had been some frustration expressed by the Council to the delegation, but it was only evidence to them of sinful anger and bitterness on our part. Also, we thought Rev. Phelps had agreed our actions brought us into compliance, but now it seems there are still questions. In the end we agreed that we simply need do what we believe is necessary before God, and be prepared if necessary to defend our actions in entirety to the Fall 2017 mtg of Council.

2/ It was moved and seconded that “We continue the course earlier laid out as the only way forward for all together in peace and unity. (*Letter (a) below, is an amended decision after conversation with the delegation, seeking to make a number of things more clear.*)

a/ The way forward for all of us together is very much like what we laid out much earlier, in our response to the Court. The real problem is not just a lack of respect for the Council. It is the divisive nature of the opposition to our actions with Dick and Joanne from the very beginning. We do not require agreement on all things in CCC. We allow even significant theological difference as in paedobaptism or credo baptism. Yet for peace in the congregation there must be acceptance of how things will be taught and done as revealed in Confessions and Constitution, and a peaceful spirit on that.

Therefore, for us to go forward together requires public repentance on the part of Jeremy, Caleb and Morgan for the divisive nature of their opposition to our actions and concerns for their parents from the very beginning. They had full knowledge of the true nature of the problem as revealed in Jeremy’s letter of August 21. We remain willing to work this out with them in a meeting between us and each of them in the presence of a delegation sent by Rev. Phelps to facilitate their return.

b/ The way forward, not together but still in peace, as urged by the Court of the CREC is for these brothers to follow the advice of Rev. Burrow (letter Oct. 6): “No Christian should attend a church where they do not respect the leaders and are not willing to trust and follow them, for the effect is divisive, and Paul says to separate from a divisive person (Rom. 16:17, Titus 3:10).”

c/ The alternative to (a) and (b) involves beginning the process of formal discipline.”
Approved.

Rationale

1. The brothers here named knew the disrespect of their parents as revealed in Jeremy's letter of August 21, and still withheld the letter closing the Table from their parents.

2. The brothers rejected binding arbitration offered in Oct. to prevent the rising conflict.

3. Till the middle of January, the brothers resisted writing out their specific charges as Rev. Burrow pointed out was necessary if this pathway was followed (see letter Oct. 22nd) and as we consistently called for, rejecting their letter of Nov. 14 demanding defense.

4. The brothers evidenced consistent disrespect to Council in their e-mails as revealed by Council in our five-page response to their accusations on January 16.

5. These options allow for peace for all without compromising anyone's conscience.

Brief Report on Meeting with Joshua Appel and Dan Glover

1. The meeting was intended as preliminary to meeting together with those who had been under discipline, before they return to worship together with the congregation. Theo read Rom. 14:13-23, leading in prayer and saying a few words about doing all things in faith. We had a very open meeting that lasted to 11 p.m., but we found that our conviction that there must be repentance for the divisive nature of the opposition to our actions regarding Dick and Joanne remained a sticking point. The brothers of the Delegation felt they were not able to go beyond the requirements of the Court which only required repentance for disrespect to council.

2. In the end, we can only say we gained some understanding all around. We made our concerns clearer in point a above, and appreciate the counsel. Dan Glover asked forgiveness for failing to speak more openly on some of the issues he questioned in the report when he signed off on it. We indicated that we were willing to meet with the Barendregt brothers, but we had to be willing to deal with what we fully believe are the real heart issues involved here that started the whole conflict. The Delegation did not think they could go forward in that manner at this point, so no meeting was held on Saturday. We did consider the possible merits of going forward separately for the sake of peace if that seems necessary, and we hope to hear from them soon on how they see this proceeding from the perspective of the CREC.

(We will publish the Report of the Delegation, our Response and any other information next week when we have had a chance to get them to the Printer.) **For the Council of Christ Covenant**

Appendix F

Dear

June 21, 2016

This letter comes to you in the hope that with a multitude of counsellors we may see help and healing for all. This has no doubt been a trying time for you as well as for us. In light of the recent visit of the delegation from the Council of the CREC we would like to see if we can move forward to restoration in the congregation. As you know we have had serious disagreement with the appointed Court, serious enough to recommend leaving the CREC. However, in response to our visits with many members of the congregation, as well as the advice from a number of outside counselors, we have agreed to make every effort to remain as part of this body of Churches. In our meeting with the delegation we were able to find a way to comply with the rulings of the Court that did not trample on our consciences. In that light we would like to communicate the following with serious intent, and hope for restoration.

A/ The Call to Repentance on our Part

- a. The Council seeks the Barendregt brothers' forgiveness for not responding to requests to substantiate the Council's actions concerning their parents." This is understood in light of Court's words in B.3.b.1. "It is our judgment that the Council could have responded with more specificity to the Barendregt brothers' requests for more information regarding the grounds of the Council's judgment and a more full satisfaction of their actions."
- b. The Council seeks the Barendregt brothers' forgiveness for failing to reach out as we should have for face-to-face meetings, which failure added unnecessary barriers to resolution of the issues.
- c. The Council seeks the Barendregt brothers' forgiveness for proceeding with discipline while a formal complaint they had made against us to Presbytery was pending, and for all failure in process. (It is not codified in the Constitution of the CREC that a Council may not proceed with such discipline if they deem it necessary, but we were so advised and it seems to be an unwritten rule.)
- d. The Council wishes to make known to you and the congregation that the discipline against you and your brothers has been rescinded.

B/ Building a Healthy Church

- a. In all of this we are reminded that Christ says; "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." This gives us much confidence, for in ourselves we would have no hope of accomplishment. Still, in that same passage of Matthew 16 Christ tells us that it is also through the efforts of the church leadership that he will do this. And that includes the use of authority, as difficult as that may be.
- b. As to how this building up will be done on the part of the leadership, Peter helps us perhaps most in I Peter 5:1-4 where he calls us to shepherd the flock, exercising oversight, willingly, not for shameful gain, and not domineering but being examples to the flock. *Our disagreement with the judgment of the Court does not mean that we think we have done all things without fault. We are sinful men and do seriously ask forgiveness for every failure in love and understanding. It is our hope that we might all grow in faithfulness and see the plans of the Lord for his people prosper among us.*

- c. As for how this building will be done on the part of all in the church, the following verses in I Peter 5:5-11 continue to teach us. There is a call to be subject to the elders that is in line with and explained somewhat by Hebrews 13:17; “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” He also calls us all to exercise humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. This humility toward one another must begin with humility before God who is over all things. And it is in that humility, serving one another, that we will resist the devil and be confirmed, strengthened and established in Christ.

C/ The Way Forward in the Grace of God

- a. There are a lot of things to talk about for us to move forward together as one body with one mind and one purpose as Paul calls us to do in I Cor. 1:10: “I appeal to you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
- b. To that end we would like to visit with each one who was placed under discipline with his wife present. We are willing to have this visit take place with a third party sent by Rev. Jack Phelps to help facilitate the discussion as the delegation he sent last time recommended.
- c. According to that delegation that was here from the Council of the CREC, “it would be best if the first time CCC Council and the Barendregt brothers met after the discipline was rescinded wasn’t at the Lord’s Day worship but prior with a mediator to assist.” With Dale away the week of June 26-July 3rd, and Gary away for work at the same time in Langley, we have asked Rev. Phelps to try to arrange a mediator to be here the week of July 4-8 to assist our visit. Please let us know if that will work for you.
- d. We are reminded of the words of Paul in Romans 12:15-18: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

We wish to assure you that it is our sincere desire to find agreement and rebuild a trusting relationship that honours God. We are willing to strive toward that end. We do not see where all this will lead at this time, but we will continue to hope in God. As Paul says in Phil. 3:16 “Only let us hold on to that which we have attained.” What we have attained is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, no trust in ourselves.

For the Council

Church Authority in Reformed/Presbyterian Polity

May 25/16

One of the accusations placed against the Council here from the Court of the CREC is that we are guilty of the same lack of submission to authority that we are trying to deal with in others. We tried to show the lack of truth in that accusation but we still hear it being used. The question really is: "What are the lines or levels or types of authority in the church? Where does original or primary authority lie? Does a Presbytery have higher authority than a local Session? What is its authority in relation to the local church? Fortunately, there is no real difference on this between the Reformed and/or Presbyterian forms of government.

1. "The decisions of the assemblies with regard to the local congregation are **spiritually authoritative**. If the elders of a particular congregation choose to refuse the instruction of the **broader church**, the congregation may do so without loss of property. However, if their disregard of godly counsel is particularly egregious, the congregation may be removed from membership in the CREC...." Article IV D 5 p. 18. CREC Constitution.
 - a. The term "*broader church*" is carefully chosen to avoid the idea that decisions of Presbytery have a higher authority or judicial force in terms of the keys of the K.
 - b. The term "*spiritual authority*" is carefully chosen to show its distinction from the original or primary authority of the local church. There is an obvious sense in which all church authority is spiritual, but because the authority of Presbytery is derived and secondary it is to be persuasive, respecting the original authority.
 - c. Though it is without careful explanation in our Constitution, this is totally in line with the Reformed churches since the time of the Reformation.
2. In explaining the comparison of the authority of local sessions to the broader body, Vandellen and Monsma in their 1967 work, Revised Church Order Commentary have this to say about Reformed church government and ecclesiastical assemblies:
 - a. "...consistories (aka session) exercise original authority, authority imparted by Christ directly to the various office-bearers,....Major assemblies on the other hand, exercise only delegated authority:" p. 114.
 - b. "All ecclesiastical authority, given unto his church by Christ, resides in the particular church. The keys of the kingdom of heaven, given to the apostles by Christ,....exercised by the office-bearers who had been chosen under their guidance...." P. 115.
 - c. After explaining the rejection of the word "jurisdiction" to describe the authority of the broader assembly, the Commentary goes on to explain that even the word "authority" applied to the broader assembly is: "a moral, spiritual, guiding influence....an authority which seeks to persuade and guide, and which all the churches have voluntarily agreed to respect..." p. 117.
3. In line with the Word of God, the Commentary points out that the authority of the local session is primary as to its "origin", "necessity", "being", "duration" and "purpose". The spiritual authority of the broader body is for the benefit of the local body. But the local body can no more hand its responsibility over to the broader assembly, than a husband can hand his over to his wife. Adam's excuse was not accepted. As in Hebrews 13:17, it is the local session which will be held accountable to God. That's why we listen, and the words of many counsellors carry weight, but the responsibility remains ours, always.

Appendix H

APPENDIX H

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I suggested that their council cease acting on this case until our Court has an opportunity to issue a judgment regarding the complaint; in particular that they consider cancelling this meeting tonight. He demurred and insisted that the authority to make such decisions rests primarily with the local church and that they have felt that for the health of the congregation they needed to act - and that they need to inform the congregation what their action has been - namely excluding the Barendregt sons from the Table and asking them to cease attending Lord's Day worship until this matter is resolved. He did offer to record the meeting.

Memorandum

Date: June 10, 2016

To: Elders/Deacons of Christ Covenant Church, Grande Prairie

CC: PM Burrow

From: Rev. Jack E. Phelps, Acting Presiding Minister, CREC

Re: Court directives in *Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church*

In the CREC Appeal Court's ruling of April 23, 2016, amended by the Court on June 3, 2016, Complainants and Defendants were given specific directives which must be satisfied if Christ Covenant Church is to remain in good standing with the CREC. These are set forth on page 10 of the Court's Ruling.

According to my records, partial compliance has been accomplished, as follows:

Item A:

On May 7, each of the Complainants individually notified me of their intent to comply.

On May 15, the CCC Council sent its response to the Court ruling.

Item B: Although it was not formally communicated to me, I have been informed both by members of the Council and by members of the congregation that this item was complied with.

Item C: On or about May 12, Complainants sent the required notice to the CCC Council.

Items D, E & F: No action has been taken on these directives and the CCC Council's May 15 Response clearly indicates the Council does not intend to comply with these items.

Item G: While I have discussed this item in telephone conversations with members of the CCC Council, no formal action has been taken by the Council to comply with this directive.

Where does this leave us? Let me summarize:

1. Complainants have complied with the Ruling of the Council Court.

2. The CCC Council has complied in minor part with the Ruling.
3. The CCC Council has formally informed me that it does not intend to comply with the more significant issues covered by the Court's Ruling and has, instead, recommended that Christ Covenant Church "withdraw from the CREC."
4. Meanwhile three members of CCC remain under a ban which disallows them the fellowship of the church and access to the means of grace.
5. By the admission of nearly everyone in Grande Prairie to whom I have spoken over the past weeks since the delivery of the Court's decision, confusion, uncertainty, turmoil and disunity continue to be problems in the congregation.

While directive G of the Court's Ruling has not been obeyed, as Acting Presiding Minister of Council, I have determined that the best course of action at this time is to send a delegation of pastors to Grande Prairie to assist CCC's leadership and members resolve the matters yet outstanding in the Ruling of the Court. Seven weeks have expired since the Court issued its Ruling. Nearly four weeks have passed since CCC's formal reply to the Ruling was sent to me. For the sake of the Body of Christ, this matter needs to come to a conclusion. Not the least of my concerns is that three families of CCC remain under a ban which the highest court in the CREC has found to be unjust.

It may well be that CCC's response of May 15 no longer reflects accurately the position of leadership. However, it is currently our only basis of judgment since no subsequent official communication has modified it. In any case, it will be part of the responsibility of the visiting delegation to investigate and address these matters.

The delegation will consist of Pastors Kenton Spratt, Stuart Bryan and Dan Glover. You can expect their arrival in Grande Prairie in the evening of June 15, 2016. I will ask them to work with the Council concerning an appropriate schedule of meetings during their time in Alberta.

Appendix J

To the Congregation Christ Covenant Church June 12

We want to thank all those who made time and effort to request a visit with us to let us know their thinking on the pastoral issue before us and ask any questions that might be on their minds. The visits were all quite encouraging to the Council. Many of you know that a letter was also circulated and signed by some. The sentiments expressed were similar.

1. Moved and seconded: “We re-consider recommending to withdraw from the CREC, and seek to cooperate with Court of Council on the matter of Barendregts vs. CCC Session where we are able.” Approved. Three reasons were added:
 - a. This is a response to visits requested by congregation members.
 - b. This is a response to advice from counselors outside the congregation.
 - c. This is a response to some unseen avenues of appeal that have opened up.
2. In light of the decision to reconsider and strive to move forward with the Court where we can, Leo asked to recuse himself from official decisions on the pastoral issue with Dick and Joanne Barendregt and their sons. Approved by all.
3. Moved and seconded: “Council defends Leo’s clearly stated concern and manner on the issue as honourable, & reminds everyone the Court’s concern was with the ‘appearance’ of his involvement.” Approved.
4. On discussion of “action” items required by the Court. Moved and seconded, “We announce to the congregation the Court’s removal of its requirement E, to seek forgiveness from Dick and Joanne Barendregt for lack of proper procedure as they claim it was beyond the limits of their own stated jurisdiction.” Approved.
5. Under item D, “The Council shall seek the Barendregt brothers’ forgiveness in writing...” we decided to split the question and deal with the two items separately.
 - a. Moved and seconded: “The Council seeks the Barendregt brothers’ forgiveness for not responding to (all) the requests to substantiate the Council’s actions concerning their parents.” Approved with appreciation that the Court did seem to approve the clarifications in II B 1. on p. 3.
 - b. Moved and seconded; “The Council seeks the Barendregt brothers’ forgiveness for failing to reach out as we should have for face-to-face meetings, which failure may have added unnecessary barriers to resolution of the issues.” Approved.
6. Moved and seconded: “Items F, G, and H be combined and we request Rev. Jack Phelps to send a delegation of 3 men to Grande Prairie as soon as feasible when we hope all Council members and Barendregts can attend. The goal will be to help address the issue of discipline concerning the Barendregt brothers and unity in the congregation with a view to seeking reconciliation. Approved.
7. The council will send a written letter of apology to the Barendregt brothers, as well as forwarding the same to Rev. Jack Phelps.

Sincerely, Council of Christ Covenant Church

Memorandum

Date: September 7, 2016

To: Pastors Stuart Bryan, Joshua Appel, Kenton Spratt

From: Rev. Jack E. Phelps, Assistant Presiding Minister, CREC

Re: Question concerning *Barendregt v. Christ Covenant Church*

As a committee of Knox Presbytery, you have requested clarification regarding the sending of a CREC Council Delegation to Grande Prairie the week of June 13, 2016, to assist Christ Covenant Church in coming into compliance with the ruling of the CREC Council Court, originally issued on April 23, 2016 and amended on June 3, 2016.

Having spent several days assembling a delegation of men to serve in this capacity, on Friday, June 10, I drafted and delivered to the CCC Council a memorandum concerning an upcoming visit by a CREC Council Delegation. In the memorandum, I cited the fact that the Court ruling had been delivered to CCC seven weeks prior. I further noted that four weeks had passed since the CCC Council had issued its refusal to comply and its statement of intent to lead CCC in withdrawing from the CREC.

I also pointed out that one of the items in the Court's direction which had been ignored by the Council was Item G on page 10 of the amended ruling. This was the provision that reads, "A delegation selected by PM Phelps shall be invited by the Council and Barendregt brothers to oversee a meeting for the purpose of reconciliation between the two parties." No such invitation had been tendered by the Council. I explained that I believed it necessary for the delegation to be dispatched to begin restoring the peace of Christ to the congregation, especially since the disciplined families were still under a ban that had been ruled against by the CREC Council Court.ⁱ

The following week, on Tuesday if I recall correctly, I received a copy of a document that the CCC Council had distributed to its congregation on Sunday, June 12. I was quite surprised (not to say shocked) to see the document state that a delegation was coming later in the week as a response to the invitation of Council. This was a misleading statement at the very least. I find this to be troubling behavior by officers in Christ's church.

In any event, the delegation did visit Grande Prairie from June 15 until about June 19, 2016. Subsequently, the delegation filed a detailed report of its visit, as required by its charge.

ⁱ For clarity, I will point out that the three Barendregt families had expressed their desire to have the delegation sent to Grande Prairie. The Court ruling, however, specified that both parties were to participate in the invitation. No invitation from the Council had been forthcoming, in spite of the fact that I had had telephone conversations with at least two members of the Council during which I had urged them to issue the invitation.