

The question has been asked, “Why would you leave the PCA at this particular time? Why not stay and continue the dispute with those who have opposed your views, going to trial if need be?” There are a number of factors that have persuaded me to follow our congregation into the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC).

We (AAPC) have tried to seek peace and reconciliation with our brethren in the PCA. Though we have not been successful in every case, we have made sincere and good faith efforts to do so. We have also sought to preserve our relationships with our brothers and though we have not always been successful here either, we continue to stand ready to receive them and welcome them back into our fellowship at any time.

Further, we (AAPC and I) have sought to be submissive to Presbytery throughout the entire time. More than once I have expressed my willingness to submit to their judgment regarding the controversy over my views. I have made it clear throughout that, if Presbytery judged my views to be out of accord with the Confessional Standards of the PCA, I would submit to that judgment and withdraw if I believed I could not in good conscience agree with it. I have been willing to submit to the directives of Presbytery in each of the investigations that were carried out and sought to be completely honest regarding my views in response to Presbytery’s inquiries.

We strongly disagreed with the indictment brought against our Presbytery by the Standing Judicial Commission charging the Presbytery with gross neglect. I thought the charges were unwarranted and without basis in fact and was very sorry that Presbytery was willing to admit guilt to either of them. The Presbytery has sought to be conscientious and faithful in dealing with this matter, and, by and large, the spirit with which they sought to fulfill their duty was remarkable given the pressures that were put upon them from outside.

Furthermore, throughout this ordeal the elders and I have been weighing the importance of answering legitimate questions and responding to misrepresentations against a consideration of the best interests of our own congregation here. I have held the position that if our elders ever came to the conclusion that I should drop everything, I would submit to that counsel.

This time finally arrived. After the decision of Presbytery on January 19, the elders unanimously recommended that I not seek to continue my involvement in this dispute. This judgment was affirmed by the congregation which stood unanimously in opposition to me continuing to seek to defend myself against what we viewed as unwarranted charges. Given this reality and given the fact that Presbytery did not believe that it could come to a definitive judgment, I thought it wise not to go against what had become the judgment of our elders and the congregation, as well as a large number of elders and ministers outside of our congregation (both within and outside of the PCA).

There were many reasons which persuaded the elders to determine that the time for our withdrawal from the PCA had arrived (in addition to the weariness of our congregation with this matter):

Presbytery’s decision not to conduct a trial of me was influenced by the stated unwillingness of some to submit to the outcome of a presbytery trial if that trial resulted in a decision in my favor. Some of the members of the Presbytery informed us that they had already decided to file a complaint against the decision of the Presbytery to the SJC if a trial by the Presbytery exonerated me — regardless of what the trial evidence showed. They also acknowledged that the SJC would reverse any decision which exonerated me. This seemed to influence Presbytery’s decision not to hold the trial itself, but rather to refer the matter directly to the SJC for final disposition. Furthermore, I believe Presbytery feared — based on threats set forth in the indictment of the presbytery — that if it did try me and, upon receiving and reviewing the evidence adduced by my accusers and by myself in my defense, exonerate me, the Presbytery would be cut off from the PCA.

With that avenue of resolution foreclosed, I was left with the prospect of a trial before the SJC. This meant that I would have had to go before a group of men who had not only twice previously faulted Presbytery for failing to find a strong presumption of guilt that my views were out of accord with our confessional standards but had indicted the Presbytery on the basis that this fault was so clearly contrary to our constitution that it constituted a strong presumption of guilt that the Presbytery had committed grossly unconstitutional proceedings in “a fundamental neglect of the Biblical responsibilities of the eldership.”

These remarkable and unprecedented developments, coupled with the extraordinary judgment of my views by the PCA Study Committee, which had judged me to be out of accord with our confessional standards without asking for any clarification or for a response on my part (and without any constitutional authority for effectively trying me in this manner) led me to believe that the pressure to convict me would overwhelm the concern for a just, accurate judgment based on the evidence adduced at trial.

I was also aware that my withdrawal could result in quelling the widespread (and, in my view, mistaken) animosity toward the so-called “Federal Vision.” If in fact tensions could be lessened by my removal, that would work for the good of the Church.

In light of all these factors, the counsel of many supporters (and opponents alike) was that it would be best for the peace of the church simply to withdraw from the PCA. After our congregation decided (without opposition) to withdraw from the PCA and requested that I continue as pastor, I decided that this was the wisest course to pursue at this time.

I continue to maintain that the charges of heresy made by a few against me are completely and utterly unjustified. Whatever one may think regarding the conformity of my views to the Westminster standards, the charges that I deny the sovereign grace of God in salvation, justification by faith alone, or the absolute necessity of faith in order to receive the blessings of the salvation of Christ Jesus, are false and without foundation.

That is not to say that I can justify every decision I made in the course of the controversy or that I desire to stand by every statement I made in an effort to explain my views. I have acknowledged that there are numerous statements I have made that could have been much clearer and I am grateful for the help of many in helping me to clarify various points. In addition, there were other judgments and decisions that I made that may not have been the wisest or best. I regret anything that I have done through a lack of wisdom or bad judgment that contributed to the disintegration of trust between myself and the PCA.

We are all very thankful for the many years we have enjoyed in communion with the PCA and look forward to a continuing relationship with many brothers who remain in it. We do not leave with any bitterness or self-pity but are looking forward with great anticipation to serving the Savior in conjunction with the faithful brethren of the CREC. We request the prayers of our brothers in the PCA and elsewhere that we might continue to serve the Triune God with sincerity and uprightness.

Sincerely in our Savior,

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