



COMMUNION OF REFORMED EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

CREC Triennial Council 2017 - San Destin, FL

November 15-16, 2017

Douglas Wilson, Presiding Minister of Council, convened. 11/15/17 2PM

I. Invocation/Uri Brito

II. Exhortation/Randy Booth

- Douglas Wilson led the singing of the Doxology

III. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum - Douglas Wilson

Anselm - Jack Phelps & Bogumil Jarmulak
Athanasius - Al Stout & Rob Hadding
Augustine - Duane Garner & Peter Jones
Calvin - Garret Craw & Mike Denna
Knox - Alan Burrow & Toby Sumpter
Tyndale - Burke Shade & Derek Hale
Wycliffe - Todd Davis & John Barach
Quorum was established

IV. Adoption of Agenda Jack Phelps moved | Toby Sumpter second | Agenda adopted w/o opposition

V. Consent Agenda - Jack Phelps moved | Burk Shade second | Approved w/o opposition

Action Item 1 Minor Constitution Fixes

1. Change *consider* to *considered* in V.D.1.c
2. Delete the phrase *and enormity* from the first paragraph.

Action Item 2 Minor Book of Procedures Fixes

1. In III.3.a, alter *to which you called* 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*.

Action Item 3 Web Site Adjustment

Motion for Council to authorize Webmaster Tim Gallant to maintain presbytery webpages within the CREC website in lieu of the presbyteries maintaining seven separate websites at seven separate web addresses.

Knox made this motion in 2016, and a few weeks later, Anselm did the same. Knox also passed a motion to ask Council to consider the same for all CREC presbyteries. The idea here is not to force this top-down on the presbyteries, but to allow them to consider it. The underlined words represent my adjustments as presiding minister.

Action Item 4 Presbytery Realignment

Christ Presbyterian Church in Knoxville (Mike Pasarilla) requests the blessing of Council to switch presbyteries. They want to change from Augustine Presbytery to Athanasius. This is being requested for practical reasons, and was approved by both presbyteries.

NOTE: Athanasius Presbytery voted on 11/14/17 to accept Christ Presbyterian Church's request for realignment and received them into their presbytery.

Action Item 5 Presbytery Merger

Also for practical and logistical reasons, Anselm Presbytery is requesting the blessing of Council to have Calvin Presbytery merge and become part of Anselm. This has the agreement of both presbyteries.

Action Item 6 First Reading of a Proposed Memorial on Abortion Proposed CREC Memorial on Abortion

*The proposed action here is to register this item as having been read, and therefore eligible for consideration at Council in 2020. The text for this proposed memorial can be found in **Supplementary Material 1**.*

VI. Council/Presbyteries Conversation - Douglas Wilson introduced the plan for the conversation between council and presbyteries.

Discussion Item 1 - 30 Minutes Were Allotted

What did your presbytery think of the MinistrySafe presentation? Is this something you want the CREC to pursue? Any concerns? Are there any polity or constitutional questions about having such a relationship with a parachurch organization? Any concerns about how to protect parishioners from false accusation?

- Jack Phelps spoke for Anselm - Overall the presentation was helpful. Concern about the Government agencies to which abuse cases are reported.
- Rob Hadding spoke for Athanasius - Pleased with the work of MinistrySafe, believes churches should make use of those resources.

- Virgil Hurt spoke for Augustine - Perhaps council should make a recommendation to individual churches.
- Garret Crow spoke for Calvin - Echoed the sentiments of the other delegates.
- Alan Burrow. spoke for Knox - The content of the presentation was really good. The CREC cannot as a whole enter into a relationship with MinistrySafe, but individual churches could enter into a relationship. All work with Love and Norris has been concluded.
- Derek Hale spoke for Tyndale - Working with MinistrySafe should be done on a church by church basis. Concern about false accusation, wanted to thank the PM's for their work on the Report.
- John Barach spoke for Wycliffe - Thought families of our churches would be grateful for our churches using MinistrySafe rather than reinventing the wheel.
- Alan Burrow emphasized each church needs to know state laws regarding reporting requirements, and checking insurance policy.
- DW summarized

Discussion Item 2 - 25 Minutes Were Allotted (Overture has been referred to a committee in Knox.)

What did your presbytery think of the Overture on Abuse submitted by Knox Presbytery? This can be found in *Supplementary Material 2*. Would you like it to be brought to Council 2020 as is? Would you like it to be referred to a committee of Council to be reworked into a memorial? Would you like to do nothing with it?

- Jack Phelps spoke for Anselm - Confused regarding what an “overture” is. Glad Knox is going to have a committee working on it.
- DW noted the language of Article IV, A. 7.
- Al Stout spoke for Athanasius - Concerned that Knox was not the right presbytery for this committee. Recommended that the PM perhaps form a broader committee.
- Steve Hemmeke spoke for Augustine - Felt that Knox’s preliminary proposed overture had a lot of good content to start with. However, felt that the next PM form a committee to write position on Abuse.
- Garrett Crow for Calvin - Nothing to add. Curious as to the rationale. A different form that would be a more concise statement.
- Alan Burrow for Knox - Knox commissioned the new PM of Knox to form a committee to refine the overture, but agreed with it in principle.
- Burke Shade for Tyndale - Wants to have it use more biblical terms. Shouldn’t come to Council in 2020.
- John Barach for Wycliffe - Should be worked on by a committee comprised of members from the whole CREC.
- Toby Sumpter provided background on the overture.
- DW summarized and exhorted that “abuse culture” will be a large pastoral issue over the next several years.

Discussion Item 3 - 30 Minutes Were Allotted

Looking ahead to the first three action items of Council Business, you will there find three proposals that concern the authority of the presiding minister and the processes of amending our documents. The three proposals are not consistent with each other. Please discuss whether in your view the CREC is in greater danger from executive overreach or from slow-moving committees. After discussing the features of the various proposals, please inform the presiding minister of Council, which proposal you would like Council to take up first, which second, and which third.

- Augustine withdrew their action item (2) (under XI. Council Business), in favor of Anselm's proposed action item (3)
- Preference of Order for Agenda:
 - Anselm - Anselm
 - Athanasius - Anselm, DW
 - Augustine - Anselm, DW
 - Calvin - Anselm, DW
 - Knox - Anselm, DW
 - Tyndale - Anselm, DW
 - Wycliffe - Anselm, DW

Discussion Item 4 - Douglas Wilson withdrew this discussion item as Knox Presbytery voted to task the new PM of Knox (Stuart Bryan) to take some preliminary steps in organizing the writing of an overture or memorial on what some have called the “eternal subordination” of the Son.

Douglas Wilson took a three straw polls on these items for Thursday's (11/16) business:

Action 21 - Favorable

Action 23 - Favorable, but two nays.

Action 25 - Points b & c did not pass Anselm. Point a. will be taken up tomorrow.

COUNCIL RECESSED 11/15 5PM

COUNCIL RECONVENED 11/16 9AM

VII. Status of Committees

- Committees to be disbanded: 1. Relations to other Reformed bodies (Garry V.) 2. Division into more presbyteries (Randy Booth) 3. System of doctrine (Garry V.) 4. Child security (Uri Brito).
- Toby Sumpter Moved to ratify Douglas Wilson's action as stated in his PM report to disband these committees | Burke Shade second | Approved w/o opposition
 - Next PM should appoint a new committee for the Child Security Committee with Uri Brito being consulted.

- Al Stout Moved to ratify Douglas Wilson’s action (as PM) to "disband and reform the Same-Sex Marriage Committee, adding an additional task. That task comes from a motion from Knox (2016) to add the issue of transgendered bathroom access to the Same-Sex Marriage Committee’s scope of responsibilities." | Todd Davis Second | Approved w/o opposition.

VIII. Committee Reports

- Csaba Liedenfrost was invited to speak about to the Missions Committee Report.
 - Jack Phelps moved to adopt the Missions Committee’s report | Garret Crow second | The Missions Committee’s Report was adopted w/o opposition.
- Jack Phelps spoke to the contents of the Creedal Standardization Committee’s Report. Jack noted this amendment to the report: In the Definition of Chalcedon, the word "virgin" should not be capitalized.
 - The committee’s report stands as a motion. The Creedal Standardization Committee’s Report was adopted w/o opposition.

IX. Letter from the Presiding Minister

- Action 1 - Ending the CREC's contractual agreement with Love/Norris.
 - Alan Burrow suggested a change to the language of Douglas Wilson’s action to: “we are terminating the business relationship (if any) between the CREC & Love/Norris/MinistrySafe, effective Nov. 17, 2017.” | Action was ratified as amended w/o opposition.
- Action 2 - Douglas Wilson declined to hear Dennis Tuuri's complaint (Re: RCC) and Gabe Wetmore's amicus.
 - Jack Phelps moved | Peter Jones second | Action was ratified w/o opposition.
- Action 3 - Douglas Wilson’s action to limit the posting privileges on the CREC's Listserve.
 - Al Stout Moved | Garret Crow Second | 5 Ayes 9 Nays | Action was not sustained.
 - Mike Denna moved that the next PM of Council form a committee to define rules/regulations for the CREC Listserve | Bogumil Jarmulak Second | Motion Carried
- Toby Sumpter moved that Douglas Wilson elaborate on the paragraph in his PM letter regarding the Christ Church session’s response to the PM Report *on* Christ Church | Burke Shade Second | Motion Failed
- NOTE: Douglas Wilson’s action as PM to disband certain committees was addressed above under *VII. Status of Committees*.

X. Letter from the Acting Presiding Minister

- Toby Sumpter Moved to ratify Jack’s actions as Acting PM in the Grand Prairie Case | Peter Jones Second | 11 Ayes 1 Nay 2 Abstentions

XI. Council Business

- NOTE: Action Items 1-3 were three different attempts to address the same constitutional issue; during Discussion Item 3 (see above), Item 2 was withdrawn in favor of Item 3, and the Council delegates expressed their overwhelming preference for the proposal contained in Action Item 3 (see below); Douglas Wilson thus withdrew Action Item 1.
- **Action Item 3** - Garrett Crow Moved | Al Stout Second | Motion Carried with 1 Nay
 - **The proposed new version of V.D.1.c would read:**

"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 considered an act of Council. ~~When such would result in a constitutional amendment, three-quarters of the Presbyteries must ratify.~~ **The Constitution and** Confessional Standards cannot be altered or modified by this means."
 - **The proposed new version of Article VIII.A would read:**

“This Constitution of the CREC, excluding the article containing the confessions of faith, may be amended at any time by a three quarters majority at any regularly scheduled meeting of the Church Council **which includes properly scheduled *ad hoc* meetings.**”
- **Action Item 4** - Jack Phelps Moved | Al Stout Second | Motion Carried
 - “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**).
- **Action Item 5** - Peter Jones Moved | John Barach Second | Motion Carried with amendment to drop the underlined phrase as well as the word “minister.”
 - II.A, strike the word *minister*, and add a substitute word *polity*, and add a sentence.

“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.

- **Action Item 6** - John Barach Moved | Derek Hale Second | Motion Carried
 - In II.C, delete the phrase *often called a board, a council, a consistory, or a session*.
“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.~~”

- **Action Item 7** - John Barach Moved | Burke Shade Second | Motion Carried
 - In II.F, delete *minister, or teacher*.
“Any candidate for pastor, ~~minister, or teacher~~ regardless of his level of formal education . . .”

- **Action Item 8** - Peter Jones Moved | Burke Shade Second | Motion Carried
 - In II.G, delete *or teacher*, and have substituted *pastor* for *minister*.
“If a ~~minister~~ *pastor* ~~or teacher~~ has already . . .”

- **Action Item 9** - John Barach Moved | Bogumil Jarmulak Second | Motion Carried with 3 Abstentions
 - Add a new II.H, which would require subsequent renumbering for the remainder of Article II.
“If a church holding the 4-office view would like the ordination of a teacher to berecognized 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.”
 - *NOTE: Renumbering of the remainder of Article II is now necessary because this item passed.*

- **Action Item 10** - Peter Jones Moved | Burke Shade Second | Motion Carried
 - In III.M, delete *current pastoral and*.
“Nevertheless, observations and questions concerning ~~current pastoral and~~ elder qualifications may occur . . .”

- **Action Item 11** - Burke Shade Moved | Rob Hadding Second | Motion Carried
 - 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).”

- **Action Item 12** - Al Stout Moved | Bogumil Jarmulak Second | 9 Ayes 4 Nays
1 Abstentions
 - Burke Shade Moved to delete the modified statement in Action 12 | Duane Garner Second | Motion Failed with only 2 ayes.

- **Action Item 13** - Al Stout Moved | Jack Phelps Second | 10 Ayes 4 Nays | Motion failed.
 - In IV.D.3.d, 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*.
 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 . . .”
 - John Barach Moved to amend Action Item 13 by removing the strikeout and add “unless it is found to be in conflict with the Word of God, the confessions, the CREC constitution, or the facts of the case.” | Bogumil Jarmulak Second | 7 Ayes 5 Nays 1 Abstention | Amendment approved

- **Action Item 14** - Jack Phelps Moved | Burke Shade Second | Motion Carried
 - In IV.D.6, delete the word *judicial*.
 “After a fair and open ~~judicial~~ hearing at Presbytery, a congregation may be removed . . .”

- **Action Item 15** - John Barach Moved | Toby Sumpter Second | Motion Carried
 - In V.N, replace *fraternal* with *visiting*, and add a phrase about mission churches.
 “A simple majority of an assembly may seat candidate and ~~fraternal~~ visiting delegations, along with delegations of mission churches, . . .”

- **Action Item 16** - John Barach Moved | Peter Jones Second | Motion Carried
 - In IV.3.f.i.2, delete the phrase *unanimous vote of* and replaced it with *decision by*.
 “A ~~unanimous vote of~~ decision by the mother church session to terminate the relationship.”

- **Action Item 17** - Al Stout Moved | No Second so motion failed

- In Art. I of the BOP, delete two phrases and replace it with another.
“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.~~”
- **Action Item 18** - Burke Shade Moved | Rob Hadding Second | Motion Carried
 - Concerning Art. XIII of the BOP, delete the entirety of it, and replace it with the paragraph below.
“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.”
- **Action Item 19** - Burke Shade Moved | John Barach Second | Motion Carried
 - In XIV.1, delete the sentence about the varying colors of the logo.
“of the CREC. ~~It can be presented in varying colors as appropriate and tasteful for its intended use.~~ No other emblem . . .”
- **Action Item 20** - Burke Shade Moved | Mike Denna Second | Motion Carried
 - Appendix C.III.6, add the phrase, *as appropriate*.
“As appropriate, we shall refrain from receiving . . .”
- **Action Item 21** - Alan Burrow Moved | Derek Hale Second | Motion Carried with 1 Nay
 - Modification of the Memorial on Terrorism (See ***Supplementary Material 3***)
 - NOTE: Before the vote, Stuart Bryan was invited to speak to this motion with unanimous support from council.
 - Bogumil Jarmulak Moved to have the next PM form a committee to revise and improve the Memorial on Terrorism. | Jack Phelps Second | Motion Carried
- **Action Item 22** - Knox determined to not refer this item to Council yet.

COUNCIL RECESSED FOR LUNCH 12PM

COUNCIL RECONVENED 2PM

NOTE 1: Garret Crow was not in attendance at the Thursday afternoon session due to needing to catch a flight.

NOTE 2: Rob Davis was one of Tyndale's delegates for the Thursday afternoon session.

- **Action Item 23** - Al Stout Moved that the ordination changes be referred to a committee of council to report out to all the presbyteries no later than 30 days before the presbyteries meet in Fall 2018, this will be the responsibility of the next PM to form this committee. | Toby Sumpter Second | Motion Carried
 - NOTE: Before the vote, Duane Garner highlighted a few of proposed changes to the ordination process.

- John Barach brought attention to that fact that Council ought vote on officially ratifying Douglas Wilson's action as PM appointing a committee to deal with referrals, appeals, & complaints. John Barach Moved | Mike Denna Second | Motion Carried
 - "My third action in this affair was to appoint a committee to propose revisions to our constitutional language that would amend some of the ambiguities in our documents that this case revealed. I have asked Jack Phelps to chair the committee (10/3/17), and to fill the committee with two or three men to help him (See *Supplementary Material 4*)."

- **Action Item 24 - Anselm Constitutional Review Committee Report 2017**
 - Jack Phelps Moved | Todd Davis Second | Motion Carried
 - Amend IV.D.2 to read thus: "A referral is a written request by a local church Session **or any member of the Session** or a regional Presbytery asking a broader assembly (Presbytery or Council, as the case may be) to accept jurisdiction for deciding a matter that would normally be decided by the more local assembly. Normally, all matters should be handled at the local church level. However, should a local church Session **or any of its members**, or subsequently a Presbytery, determine that the matter implicates the policies or reputation of a broader assembly, or that it otherwise justifies the consideration of a broader assembly, the more local assembly **or any member of a church session or presbytery** may refer the matter to the broader assembly. All referrals should be sent to the Presiding Minister of the broader assembly. The Presiding Minister may, subject to approval of the broader assembly, exercise discretion to accept jurisdiction over the matter. The Presiding Minister may subsequently, subject to approval of the broader assembly, remand the matter to the more local assembly."
 - Jack Phelps is tasked with reviewing this in the Referral, Appeals, and Complaints committee.

- **Action Item 25** - Jack Phelps Moved to adopt item "a." as amended (items "b." and "c." were dropped in Anselm Presbytery) including John Barach's suggestion of adding "ordinarily have to be" | Al Stout Second | Motion Carried

- Amend BOP Article XI.2.c.ii to read thus: “The Presiding Minister appoints an Ordination Examination Committee of five to oversee the evaluation; **the majority of members of the committee ordinarily have to be ordained ministers/pastors/teaching elders under Book of Procedures Article XI, or recognized as ministers/pastors/teaching elders under Book of Procedures Article XII.**”
NOTE: Al Stout Moved to add the phrase “the majority” | Rob Hadding Second | Motion Carried, however, this was redundant as Anselm’s language already contained “the majority.”
- **Action Item 26 - Need to appoint a committee to develop CREC social media.**
 - Mike Denna Moved | Todd Davis Second | Todd Davis withdrew his second | No Second so motion failed
 - Duane Garner Moved that the CREC not have Social Media Presence | Rob Hadding Second | 5 ayes 6 nays 1 abstention Motion Failed
 - Toby Sumpter Moved to ask the next PM to form a committee of council to research how and whether the CREC should have a social media presence and report no later than 30 days before the presbyteries meet in fall 2018 | Todd Davis Second | Motion Carried with 1 nay
 - NOTE: Virgil Hurt was permitted to speak and informed Council that Steve Wilkins' assistant made the original CREC Facebook account.
- **Action Item 27 - First Reading of a Proposed Overture on Abuse**
 - Knox determined to not refer this item to Council yet.

XII. Election of Officers

- Bogumil Jarmulak withdrew his name as PM *pro tem*.
- After discussion it was determined that nominations from the floor were in order.
- Toby Sumpter on behalf of Knox Presbytery nominated Randy Booth for PM *pro tem*. Al Stout Seconded
 - Garret Craw spoke to his willingness to serve as PM *pro tem*.
 - Randy Booth spoke to his willingness to serve as PM *pro tem*.
- Vote was take via written ballot. Garret Craw abstained from voting in order to prevent a tie vote. 11 Votes for Garret Craw & 2 Votes for Randy Booth | Garrett Craw was voted in as the new PM of *pro tem*.
- Toby Sumpter Moved for Virgil Hurt to be the next PM | Derek Hale Second | Virgil Hurt was elected the next PM.

XIII. Miscellaneous

- Al Stout moved that the member churches be exhorted to reimburse Christ Church Moscow | Mike Denna Second | Motion Carried
- Toby Sumpter moved we hear Al Stout's recommended amendment to the agenda | Al Stout Second | Motion Failed
- Al Stout Moved that the agenda be amended to discuss the next PM appointing a committee of council to hear this Constitutional Amendment | Burke Shade Second | Motion Carried
 - Al Stout Moved that the next PM appoint a committee of council to hear this constitutional amendment. However, after discussion Al Stout withdrew the Motion to appoint a committee, as it was deemed this could simply be referred to the Constitutional Review Committee, and no new committee needed to be formed.
 - Al Stout's recommended amendment was referred to the Constitutional Review Committee - *Modify 4.A.3 the third sentence to read "General costs associated with hosting the broader assembly will be borne by a geographic host church of the broader assembly, where that assembly is meeting." An additional sentence at the end of the section will read: "Specifically for Council, Presbyteries of the CREC shall make a good faith effort to reimburse the host church."*
- Alan Burrow moved to change the agenda to discuss the location of next council | Al Stout Second | Motion Carried
 - Bogumil Jarmulak Moved that Chicago be the location of the Triennial Council 2020 | Peter Jones Second | Motion Carried
 - The next PM will be tasked to set the dates in coordination with the presbyteries.
- Burke Shade was invited to speak to Council and Presbytery delegates, in order to say farewell after his resignation and express his gratitude and love for the brothers and sisters in Christ in the CREC.
- Douglas Wilson asked permission to write a thank you note to Kimberly Norris on behalf of the CREC.
- Douglas Wilson opened discussion on Action Item 6 in Consent Agenda regarding the memorial on abortion.
 - Toby Sumpter pointed out the clause addressing the common objection about the pregnancy being a threat to the life of the mother. It leans towards no exceptions, while also taking into consideration the pastoral difficulty of very rare medical situations.
 - Bogumil Jarmulak spoke to the differing medical standards around the world. Al Stout also registered concern that we be very careful regarding the circumstance of danger to the mother.
 - John Barach questioned the word "stridently" and the phrase "without exception."
- Douglas Wilson brought up a note on VII. Status of Committees: "Same-Sex Marriage Committee" expand their scope to include transgender and gender identity issues.

- Douglas Wilson proposed this additional phrase be added to our preamble: "... presumed spiritual maturity, assumed scholarly sophistication, **compromise with any forms of sexual & gender related relativism,** or outright lying..."
- Jack Phelps moved an amendment to agenda to discuss Douglas Wilson's proposal | Mike Denna Second | Motion Carried with 11 ayes and 2 nays.
- After discussion, Mike Denna Moved to amend the preamble by adding Douglas Wilson's proposed phrase | Toby Sumpter Second | Motion Carried with one abstention.

XIV. Closing Prayer

NOTE: Ben Zornes took Minutes.

Supplementary Material 1

First Reading of a Proposed Memorial on Abortion

Proposed CREC Memorial on Abortion¹

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

¹ Proposed by Gene Helsel. Adopted by Knox Presbytery, Sep 21, 2016.

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).

Supplementary Material 2

A Pastoral Statement on Abuse: What is “abuse”?

While sin is always an abuse of God’s goodness, His creation, and other men and women made in the image of God, we understand and define here “abuse” as the chronic, intentional, hard-hearted verbal, sexual, or physical assault of another human being. Over time, some people demonstrate a hardness of heart that refuses to truly repent of certain forms of hatred, malice, and cruelty that manifest themselves in verbal, sexual, and/or physical violence. This treatment often occurs in the context of relationships of trust between a person in authority or with greater physical strength and someone under authority or with lesser physical strength. Rather than building up, strengthening, and glorifying, this misuse of trust and authority degrades, humiliates, and defrauds another person of his/her dignity and moral responsibility. On the other hand, sensitivity to abuse has also created the opportunity for people in relatively weaker positions to falsely accuse those in relatively stronger positions. False accusations of abuse are themselves also abusive.

The Bible often associates the following sins with patterns of abuse: angry outbursts, revenge, lust, sensuality, envy, greed, lies, treachery, drunkenness, arrogance, grumbling, and bitterness (2 Tim. 3:1-9, James 4:1-10, 2 Pet. 2:1-22, Jude 3-16). In short, what we mean by abuse is not derived from the world's use of the term. We define it as anything that bears a spiritual kinship to the kind of abuse that was thrown at Christ on the cross. “And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!”” (Mark 15:29–30, NASB)

Biblical examples of this behavior include:

Laban’s mistreatment of Jacob (Gen. 29-31). Jacob was an employee and aspiring son-in-law who was the victim of Laban’s ongoing, long-term lies and changed wages, all in the context familial bonds. Jacob eventually fled from Laban’s abuse under the blessing of God.

Potiphar’s wife’s false accusation of Joseph (Gen. 39). Joseph was in a subordinate position in Potiphar’s house as a servant but with regard to Potiphar’s wife was viewed as being in a relatively stronger position as a man. Joseph was the victim of false accusations of sexual aggression by Potiphar’s wife. And though Joseph fled, he was sentenced to prison, and suffered there under the blessing of God.

Pharaoh’s affliction of the children of Israel in Egypt (Ex. 1-14). Pharaoh treated Israel harshly, including deprivation of straw for making bricks, accusations of laziness, angry threats, and murderous violence to their children. This was persistent, even though Pharaoh promised to change or free Israel numerous times. Eventually, Israel left Egypt under the blessing of God.

Saul’s persecution of David (1 Sam. 18-28). Saul’s intense jealousy of David led to angry and violent outbursts against David, followed by periods of professed remorse and depression. Nevertheless, over time, David fled from Saul and remained out of his reach all under the blessing of God.

False teachers of the New Testament (2 Tim. 3, 2 Pet. 2:1-22, Jude 3-16). Paul warns Timothy about certain teachers who will be “abusive,” who have “the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” and “who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions” (2 Tim. 3:1-9). Paul says to “reprove, rebuke, and

exhort” concerning these things (2 Tim. 4:2) and he admonishes Titus to warn these sorts of divisive people twice and then have nothing more to do with them (Tit. 3:10).

1. The Image of God, dignity, moral agency, and responsibility

We affirm that all human beings are made in the image of God, supplying each one with equal dignity, value, and worth, which is to be received with thankfulness, respect, and joy. We affirm that the just and gracious treatment of other people is used by God to make them stronger, wiser, and enabled to use their gifts and abilities with greater freedom. We affirm that the Bible calls this love. We deny that it is ever right for a man or woman to be degraded through violent words or actions.

We affirm that this “respect” and “degradation” are to be defined by the Word of God in its entirety. We deny that autonomous man has the right to define these standards by popular opinion, psychological consensus, or subjective feelings.

We affirm that every individual is morally responsible for their own actions, including victims and perpetrators. We deny that any sin or assault may be blamed on God, circumstances, or another person.

2. Significant Sin but not unique or impervious to grace

We affirm that cruel, malicious, and violent words and actions are truly destructive, bearing long-lasting consequences to everyone involved. We deny that the destruction of abuse is so unique or harmful that perpetrators or victims are beyond the reach of the healing grace of Christ.

We deny that “demonizing” perpetrators or “deifying” victims is helpful for healing or arriving at true justice. We affirm that the truth of sin, the truth of the cross of Jesus, and the truth of God’s final justice in Heaven and Hell are truths that set people free from the bondage of all guilt, shame, pain, and fear.

We deny that human vengeance works the righteousness of God. We affirm that vengeance is the Lord’s and He will repay all evil, either in the cross of Jesus or in Hell forever. We also affirm the civil magistrate’s God-given duty to deal out God’s justice in this world, punishing evildoers and rewarding those who do good, according to the standards of Scripture. We affirm that it is possible to find true peace in God through Jesus Christ in this life despite the horrors of abuse, injustice in the courts, or lies and deception that do not provide enough evidence for proper convictions. We affirm that this peace will be fully realized at the Last Judgment and the Resurrection of the Just.

3. The Gospel for Victims vs. The Gospel of Victims

We affirm that there is only one fully innocent victim of abuse in the history of the world and His name is Jesus Christ. We affirm that many others have endured undeserved and evil treatment but never as sinless victims. We affirm that victims must be defended from all false accusations, false guilt, and false shame. But we deny that it is helpful to refuse to address true sin, true guilt, and true shame in victims wherever it arises, though we certainly affirm that this must be done with great care.

We affirm that the source of healing, freedom, and joy for all abuse victims is found in the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We affirm that by His stripes, all may be healed. We affirm that the abuse He received and the death He suffered was in solidarity with all sinners and all who suffer under the pain of sin and who place their trust in Him. We deny that there is any true peace or joy or healing apart from entrusting all suffering to Him.

We deny that evaluating abusive situations and attendant suffering is simple or easy. We deny that any two abusive situations are completely alike. Furthermore, we deny that there is only one way to handle very similar situations. We affirm that suffering cruelty and injustice may

sometimes be fled under the blessing of God and may sometimes be endured under the blessing of God. We also affirm that people may flee suffering in sinful and bitter ways, and likewise, people may endure suffering in sinful and bitter ways. We also affirm that all wicked perpetrators who repent and turn to Christ will end up in Heaven, while all victims of abuse who cling to their own pain and bitterness and who refuse to turn to Christ will never escape their suffering. We affirm that childlike faith in Jesus Christ is all that is necessary for salvation. We affirm that this salvation in Jesus Christ includes healing for every form of pain, shame, guilt, and fear. We affirm that confession of sin and forgiveness for the sake of Christ do truly set captives free, cleanse all shame, and heal broken hearts. We deny that apologies calculated to appease hurt feelings accomplishes gospel healing.

4. Friends, Counselors, and Pastors

We affirm that God created people for community, including families, marriage, friendship, the Church, and other natural associations. We affirm that these bonds of trust and love are intended by God to create the kind of mutual dependence that respects, honors, and glorifies individual gifts, talents, and responsibilities. We affirm that in a fallen world these bonds of trust and love are often twisted, becoming means of manipulation, vengeance, cruelty, and great harm.

We deny that good intentions are sufficient for providing true help in difficult circumstances, and therefore even well-meaning friends can sometimes perpetuate unhelpful patterns of sinful dependency. We affirm that all true, gospel help strengthens individuals to take responsibility for their own choices, learning to evaluate their past, present, and future by the cross of Jesus.

We affirm the natural goodness of friendships, family, and specialized vocations in counseling, especially when these individuals are Christians who know Christ and obey His Word.

Nevertheless, we deny that these forms of community and friendship can replace the work of pastors and elders, who have been given the task of watching over the souls of God's people.

While we affirm that wise pastors will seek wisdom from many counselors, we deny that abuse and its attendant consequences fall beyond the scope or authority of ordinary Christian ministry.

5. The Sufficiency of Scripture

Finally, we affirm that the Bible is sufficient for dealing with the sins of cruelty, malice, violence, lust, lies, and anything else that the Bible recognizes as abuse. We also affirm that the same God who speaks in Scripture also speaks in the natural, created order. Nevertheless, because of the sinfulness of mankind, we deny that natural revelation is sufficient for curing the effects of sin.

We affirm that the Bible teaches the equal dignity of male and female in creation and in redemption. We deny that this equal dignity is in anyway set aside by the glorious hierarchy that God has ordained in marriage between a man and his wife, in a family between parents and children, and in the many other relationships of authority and subordination (e.g. employer and employee, magistrate and citizen, teacher and student, pastor and congregant, etc.). We affirm that where God gives authority, He also gives responsibility, and when any authority is used to harm subordinates, it would be better for a millstone to be tied around their neck and drowned in the sea than to cause those under their care to stumble.

We affirm that the Bible teaches the unique glory of the image of God in woman. We affirm that she is the glory of man and that she was created to be honored and protected as the weaker vessel. We affirm that this honoring and protecting is designed by God to ordinarily come through wise and godly fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons. We also affirm that every woman is responsible before God for her own words, actions, choices, and responses. We deny that the relative weakness of a woman means that she must not cultivate a godly and feminine strength.

We affirm that biblical femininity may sometimes include godly deception, physical and even lethal force, as well as bold confrontation.

We affirm that the Bible teaches that the glory of men is their strength and this strength is given by God to be used sacrificially for the protection and honor of all others. We affirm that God has given particular men to the Church to lead and govern and protect the flock of God, under the oversight of Jesus Christ the Chief Shepherd. We affirm that older women should teach younger women to grow in holiness and wisdom, to love and obey their husbands, to love making home, to love the fruitfulness of children, and to be industrious in every way, adorning the gospel of Christ. We deny that the calling of men to lead and care for the people of God as pastors is in any way a handicap for women or children who have suffered abuse. Rather, we affirm that God has ordained male authority in the Church for the blessing of His people.

Supplementary Material 3

Modification of the Memorial on Terrorism

Memorial E. Terrorism

1. Because God is the Sovereign Lord, all of history is under His control. Nothing happens apart from His knowledge and without His divine decree (Dan. 4:34-35). Therefore, we must view acts of terror in the light of God's sovereignty rather than from the carnal point of view. It is God who brings disaster upon men and nations for His holy and righteous purposes (Gen. 50:19; Amos 3:6). While not denying that wicked individuals commit these acts, we affirm that God is active in these events for His glory and honor (Acts 2:22-24; 4:24-30).

2. Many formerly Christian nations in the West, particularly the United States of America and Canada, have grievously sinned against the true and living God, and His Son Jesus Christ, and have slipped into wholesale idolatry and polytheism. We have done this in the name of tolerance and acceptance, tolerating everything except the truth. Civil and religious representatives tell damnable lies when they say that the faiths of Abraham and Mohammed are the same, that Yahweh and Allah are the same, that the living God wants His people to commune with infidels, and that we ought to regard as enemies those who believe in such a thing as truth (Ex. 20:3, John 4:22, Eph. 4:3-6). These are lies which we believe to our own destruction. Therefore, God has brought and continues to bring judgments upon us as a warning to all that turn their face against the living God. The only faithful response is confession of sin, drawing near to Jesus Christ, and repentance (Joel, *passim*). Apart from repentance we will find no blessing for our nations in these events, particularly if we band together to pursue the spread of humanistic goals. It is appropriate for nations to respond to terrorist attacks by using military force in order to bring terrorists to justice. Furthermore, it is lawful for believing Christians to participate in such military responses. However:

- It is not lawful for women to be mustered for combat service, for our Lord has declared it an abomination for women to don the martial attire of a man (Deuteronomy 22:5). Christian fathers must protect their daughters from being seduced or coerced into such a circumstance, and the Church must support them as they do so. It is the duty of men not women to protect their countries (Jer 51:30).
- It is not lawful to respond to terrorist attacks in the name of false gods or with a proud and arrogant spirit (Is. 10:5-19). No nation has the right to expect God to bestow blessing upon any military response so long as that nation embraces false gods and practices wickedness. In the West, we must repent the idols of pluralism, the carnage of abortion, the mustering of our daughters for combat service, and the honoring of the perversion of sodomy. Though it is lawful and right to respond militarily, if a nation protects these and other corruptions as a way of life, it cannot expect to enjoy God's blessing upon such endeavors, or anything other than continued judgment both on the battlefield and off.

Therefore, mindful of the judgments of God (2 Cor. 5:9-11; 1 Thes. 4:6; Rev 18:8; 19:1-5, 11), the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches urges our leaders and peoples to fear God, to honor His Christ, to confess our sins, and to seek His blessing as we respond to terrorist attacks (Ps 2:10-12; 110).

Supplementary Material 4

Letter from the Presiding Minister

October 15, 2017

Brothers in the Lord, greetings,

I trust that this letter finds you well, growing and thriving in the grace of our Lord Jesus. As of my last letter to you, the situation in Grand Prairie had not been completely resolved. Since then it has been (more or less). A court was appointed to adjudicate a dispute that had arisen there. In short form, the decision of the court was displeasing to the leadership of Christ Covenant Church, and they have as a consequence departed from the CREC. Trinity Reformed Church in Moscow received some of their former members into membership at TRC, and is now overseeing a small group that meets on the Lord's Day in Grand Prairie. A decision has yet to be made on whether a formal church plant there is viable. More details about that case can be found in the letter from Jack Phelps, who served as the acting presiding minister in that situation. Second, on September 8, 2017, I sent a letter to the Council delegates, explaining to them that I had determined the following: The business arrangement between the CREC and MinistrySafe will expire on noon of Monday, November 20, 2017. I am asking you to receive and ratify this action.

Third, an unfortunate set of circumstances unfolded at Reformation Covenant Church in Oregon City. The short form is that several elders resigned abruptly, leaving Dennis Tuuri as the sole elder. Three pro tem elders were appointed by Jack Phelps (Gene Helsel, John Stoos, and Garry Vanderveen). In the course of

their labors, they determined to set new elder candidates before the congregation, which constitutionally required a unanimous vote of the session. Because of the tensions in the congregation, Dennis had voluntarily refrained from voting, but had not been removed from the session. When a slate of new candidates was put forward, Dennis attempted to vote on them, and the pro tem elders did not count his vote.

After this formal action on the session's part, Jack determined (and I agreed) that Dennis had legitimate grounds for an appeal. Jack expended a considerable amount of effort trying to find out from Dennis whether he was going to appeal. Dennis did not respond to Jack's calls and emails, and did not appeal within the time limit established by the Book of Procedures (Art. X.3). I had told Jack during this time that if Dennis appealed, I would appoint a court to hear the case. Just last month, I received a complaint (not an appeal) filed by Dennis (9/23/17), which I declined to hear because I did not believe that his complaint fit our constitutional definition of a complaint. I believe that when the pro tem elders declined to count his vote, that constituted a formal action that could have been appealed. In our Constitution, a complaint is defined as a charge that has not been adjudicated for one of four specific reasons. I did not believe that this case was "not adjudicated" for any of those four reasons, and that a formal action had been taken which would have justified an earlier appeal. In addition to rejecting Dennis's appeal, I also turned down an amicus submission on behalf of Dennis from Gabe Wetmore (9/28/17, 9/30/17). So I have taken three actions with regard to this situation. The first is that I rejected the complaint on constitutional grounds. I am specifically making no comment on the merits of the complaint itself. As came out in my discussion with Gabe, if the refusal of voting rights to Dennis constituted a formal action on the part of the session, then I believe the reasoning for my refusal

stands. But if it is determined that the refusal to let him vote was not a formal action because it was not properly adjudicated at the local level, then it could follow that hearing this complaint would be appropriate.

The second action is this. Because there is no time limit on when a formal complaint can be filed, I notified Dennis (10/12/17) that he had one week to register a formal request for referral from the session of RCC (with regard to the substance of his complaint), and I notified the session of RCC (10/12/17) that they had one week from the receipt of that letter (if sent) to refuse or refer it. If they

refuse it, then a new clock would start within which an appeal could be made. If they refer it, then the presiding minister of Anselm or I will take appropriate action. If they take no action, then one of the four criteria for accepting a complaint would be fulfilled. In either case, I would accept the appeal/complaint. If it comes to me as an appeal, I would make it clear to the court that their task would not include a restoration of the status quo ante, but rather simply a determination of the rights and wrongs of the case. This one item is constitutionally tricky because in effect it is treating an appeal like a complaint. Prior to finalizing this letter, I received notice that Dennis had indeed made a formal request that the session of RCC refer the case to Council (10/13/17). I do not yet know how the RCC session will respond.

With the submission of this letter, I am (perhaps) asking Council to ratify my action in declining to hear this complaint. If Council does so, then the denial would be sustained. If Council declines to ratify my action in this, then the way would be open for the next presiding minister to appoint a court to hear the complaint. But remember that your action one way or the other could affect the current request for referral. So whether or not I am asking for action from Council depends on the outcome of what I describe in the previous paragraph, which I will not know at the time I submit this letter. I am sorry to leave a mess for the next presiding minister, but there it is.

My third action in this affair was to appoint a committee to propose revisions to our constitutional language that would amend some of the ambiguities in our documents that this case revealed. I have asked Jack Phelps to chair the committee (10/3/17), and to fill the committee with two or three men to help him.

For various reasons, I am disbanding the following committees:

1. Relations to other Reformed bodies (Garry Vanderveen). As I understand it, Gary's ability to run with this task was impacted by his transfer into the PCA.
2. Division into more presbyteries (Randy Booth). This committee languished.
3. System of doctrine (Garry V.) The same rationale applies here as with #1
4. Child security (Uri Brito). This committee felt that their work was rendered somewhat moot by the report to Christ Church along with the involvement of MinistrySafe.
5. I believe the task of the Same Sex Committee to be one of some urgency, and so I would recommend shaking this committee up in such a way as to get a report soon. But I will leave that task to the next presiding minister.

Next, I have worked together with Andrew Crapuchettes on a web site that should address our MDS difficulties. Our existing active MDS files have been uploaded into profiles at PastorCV.com, and we are creating a system that searching pastors and searching churches can both use. The profiles are under the control of the individual concerned, and the search field is adjustable.

And last, since we last met, the committee made up of the presiding ministers of the CREC delivered to us the report that the session of Christ Church had requested of them. We do thank the committee for the labor they expended on our behalf. Upon receiving the report, we posted it

on our web site the following day, and also had it posted on the CREC web page. A few weeks after that, we held a congregational meeting where we detailed our reactions to the report. Because we did not want it to turn into an Internet thing, we did not hand out any materials. But in summary, we particularly noted that Part 1 and the Appendices were just the sort of report we had requested, and we outlined a number of the adjustments and corrections that we had made or were making in line with the report. At the same time, for various reasons, we believe that Part 2 was out of line, and we explained why we believed that to our congregation. That said, we are glad that this chapter is over, and we will be much more careful in the future. Thank you for the privilege of serving you as presiding minister. May God richly bless you all.

Cordially in Christ,
Douglas Wilson

