

## **Preface to the CREC Pastoral Commission Report**

May 15, 2006

Some of the members of the CREC Pastoral Commission have been involved with SPPC since January of this year. The Commission was formally commissioned on March 4, 2006, after a SPPC Heads of Households meeting where the 45 available heads of households voted unanimously to request that the CREC move forward with the Commission. Moreover, each head of household, by his vote, entered a "covenant to follow the recommendations of the Commission in the spirit of submitting to the government of Christ." It should be noted that none of the Commission members, prior to our current involvement, had any close associations or communication with any of the members of SPPC or the former SP session members within the past several years. We have offered our service to SPPC for the sake of a sister congregation that sought our help, wherein we thought it to be our Christian duty to render aid, if possible.

Since that time we have read many documents, over 400 emails have been received and responded to, numerous conference calls and individual phone calls have been received and made, trips made from across the country, and we have spent many hours personally visiting with the members of SPPC and others. In addition, the members of the Commission have labored together to provide the best pastoral counsel we could under these circumstances, recognizing that time restraints were an important factor as we were seeking to minister to numerous hurting families and individuals in the SPPC community. We trust that you will also understand that each of us are very busy with other responsibilities that also have placed great demands on us during these past few months.

While it was our desire to see all the SPPC families come together in peace and unity at the end of this process, it became apparent, very early, that this was unlikely. We would principally presume that the default commitment of any family or person is to the church that they have covenanted with, and that they would labor hard to remain together as the household of God; being long-suffering and forgiving. We also realize that sometimes circumstances are such that local church unity cannot be achieved and separations become inevitable. Such is apparently the case with SPPC. Thus, the Commission is giving its approval for those families that do not desire to continue with SPPC to leave and form a new church. Our hope is that this would be a peaceful parting of brothers and sisters in Christ, and that efforts would continue toward ongoing fellowship and affection toward one another in spite of differences.

The Commission has been disheartened by the fact that some SPPC members have apparently worked apart from the Commission and pursued their own investigation; in effect, forming their own separate commission. This has had the impact of undermining the Commission's work at critical points. It should be remembered that the Commission had access to far more information than it might appear on the surface. The Commission has acted in good faith toward all the members of SPPC, and we expect the same respect in return. We call on those who have engaged in this activity to stop these pursuits and to keep their original pledge to submit to the Commission's Report. We do not want to see future relationships jeopardized. There are still difficult days ahead of us all, and a charitable spirit toward one another will be necessary if we are to honor Christ and His church.

For those who might find themselves disappointed with the Commission's Report (or some part of it), we would simply ask that you consider the various factors mentioned above, plus all the things you might not be aware of, as well as the limitations of men and the power and grace of our sovereign God. Pray for us and for the families and individuals who are affected by all this. It is easy to be a critic; as Spurgeon said, "Any fly can find a sore." This entire trial is a test of your faith and maturity in Christ.

Each of you has the opportunity to make things smoother or more difficult in the days ahead. We call on everyone to guard their hearts and mouths, and to pray for one another. One of the most difficult challenges some will face will be overcoming the temptation to be bitter. The apostle Paul warns us in Ephesians:

<sup>29</sup> Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (4:29-32).

And the author of Hebrews admonishes us:

<sup>12</sup> Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. <sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: <sup>15</sup> looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (12:12-15).

We urge you to meditate on, and even to memorize these passages of God's word, as they will serve both you and the broader Christian community well.

The Commission wants to thank all those who have assisted us with our work and who have shown us patience, kindness and hospitality. As we will continue to work with many of you in the days ahead, we anticipate God's blessings as we all press forward by the grace of God.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. <sup>10</sup> But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. <sup>11</sup> To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 5:6-11).

In the service of Christ and His Church,  
The CREC Pastoral Commission