

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OFFICE OF THE MODERATOR

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April 4, 2006

Subject: Deposition From Office Is a Censure

When James McDonald of Family Reformation Fellowship asked to be dismissed from Westminster Presbytery of the RPCGA, the request in some denominations would be "to demit" the ministry. However the RPCGA has no provision for demitting the ministry. The RPCGA either "transfers" a minister to another denomination or "deposes" them from their credentials and removes them from office. We can see by the question that confusion could result from this, especially in light that Mr. McDonald was not "censured," that is, no charges of a personal nature were brought against him; therefore, he was not as a individual personally "censured." However, because we are Presbyterian and believe that independency is a violation of Scripture, when Mr. McDonald requested to be removed from his vows, his removal could only come by means of "deposition" because "independency" is not (1) a biblical position, (2) supported by this denomination, and (3) we allow no one to leave with their credentials who are not transferring to another denomination. Thus, Mr. McDonald was, as it relates to his office as a minister "censured" in that he was stripped from his credentials and removed from office by his own request for he was moving to a doctrinal and practical position that is errant, "independency". He left the RPCGA with no credentials; therefore, he is no longer a minister of the Gospel. He would, of necessity, need to be re-ordained by some independent group or join another denomination who would then re-ordain him.

The same circumstances is true for Mr. Marion Lovett also.

Now concerning Bristol, the Session of St. Peter was deposed, not by request, but as a result of their many violations, (1) pastoral abuse, (2) fraud in using the Tax ID number of another denomination (knowingly and willingly), (3) because of their many violations of the BCO and the breaking of the vows, which included their non-confessional practice of communion. Thus, the Session was adjudicated as ministers and deposed from their ministerial credentials and office by the Presbytery. The Bristol Session, Mr. McDonald, and Mr. Lovett were therefore put out of office by deposition which is a censure as it relates to the Ministry or the Office of Elder. However, of the four according censures (admonition, rebuke, suspension or excommunication) these men were not censured for personal issues. Mr. McDonald and Mr. Lovett would fall under D7:6B of our BCO as a "request", whereas Bristol would fall under D7:6A "Adjudication". (see below). That would mean the St. Peter Session were deposed with charges and Mr. Lovett and Mr. McDonald without charges by their request. The Reformed Presbyterian General Assembly's BCO: D7:6 A & B states:

- A. *"A Deposition is a form of censure more severe than a suspension. It consists of a solemn declaration by the trial judicatory that the offender is no longer an officer of the church."*
- B. *"When an officer is deposed from his office, the presbytery shall erase his name from the roll of presbytery, and dismiss him to a particular congregation. The Deposition of an officer may be without charges upon the request of the deposed."*

I trust that this adequately clarifies our position that deposition is a censure, and a rather serious censure.

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