

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OFFICE OF THE MODERATOR

Dr. Kenneth Gary Talbot
P. O. Box 6321 / Lakeland, Florida / 33807
February 6, 2006

~ For Public Release ~

The deposed session of St. Peter Presbyterian Church (R.C. Sproul, Jr., Laurence Windham, Wayne Hayes, and Jay Barfield) sent the following letter of confession, repentance, and apology to the Moderator and Elders of the Westminster Presbytery on February 2, 2006. The letter of response from Westminster Presbytery is also included. **Clarification:** While these men were deposed (defrocked) from office for their continued pattern of actions in violation of the Book of Church Order, they were not brought to trial on personal issues from other allegations that were made. Westminster Presbytery was considering a further investigation of the allegations of personal sinful behavior against them to determine if there was sufficient evidence that a trial regarding these allegations was necessary. The apology letter states “Deposed without censure” means that these men individually had not yet been dealt with regarding personal sinful behavior at trial and therefore were in good standing as laymen until such trial would take place. The ‘deposition’ or ‘removing them from office’ was and is a ‘censure’ by the Presbytery for their actions as officers in the church. In this letter of confession, apology and repentance, these men admitted to a full acknowledgement of the validity and authority of the Declaratory Judgment of January 26, 2006. Furthermore, a list of the individuals who were abused by this deposed session is being sent to each of the deposed elders with the expectation that they will, as truly repentant men, write a letter of apology (without any justifications, thereby making it an apology and not an excuse) to these families. The Reformed world is now waiting to see if the apology is genuine or not. The burden of proof is upon the words and actions of these men. If they were sincere in their apology, and it was not just an expedient move for them, they will give evidence in all that they write, preach, teach, instruct, counsel and in their actions towards the RPCGA and those who have been offended by their former conduct as officers in the church. They will be observed and judged by the Reformed community at large as to the sincerity of their repentance.

Letter of Confession, Repentance, and Apology

Dear Mr. Moderator and Brethren of Westminster Presbytery:

In light of our desire to teach and practice paedocommunion, and because of the complaints that have been submitted to the presbytery, we believe it is our duty to respectfully submit the following letter.

As you know, when R.C. joined the RPCGA, it was on the understanding that he would neither teach nor practice paedocommunion. When Laurence was examined the same night he had not yet determined his final position on paedocommunion. Since that time the Session of St. Peter Presbyterian Church has come to the conviction that we can no longer abide by the vows of the RPCGA. We acknowledge that for some time we have been in violation of our vows on this issue and humbly repent and seek your forgiveness for failing to inform the Presbytery and for teaching and practicing that which was agreed not to be taught or practiced. If we had been aware of the 1997 General Assembly Act on paedocommunion, which forbids even holding to the paedocommunion doctrine and practice, let alone not teaching or practicing it in our ministries and church, it is likely that we may have never considered joining with the RPCGA. We know that failure to inform us of this Act was an unintentional oversight by Presbytery and we harbor no grievances on the matter. However, we now realize that given our current teaching and practice we can no longer stay within the denomination.

In consideration of the above, we, the Session of St. Peter Presbyterian Church of Bristol, Mendota and Abington, Virginia, request to be dismissed from the Westminster Presbytery of the RPCGA while deposed from office w/o censure and to be hereby released from any association or affiliation with the RPCGA.

In addition, we confess that because of instances where our offices and authority have been mishandled, some families have been hurt and others unknown to us could have been offended. To those that have made it known to us we have apologized. Further, we are aware of the embarrassment that this has caused to the good name of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly. Consequently, we repent and apologize, and ask for your forgiveness as well as from those unknown families who have been affected.

We want to thank you and the brethren of Westminster Presbytery (RPCGA) for your friendship, kindness, and gracious patience shown to this Session over the past four years.

Furthermore, as a result of the Declaratory Judgment of January 26, 2006 having been deposed without censure from the ministry of Westminster Presbytery we request that you dismiss us from the jurisdiction of the Westminster Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly.

Laurence Windham
R. C. Sproul Jr.
Wayne Hayes
Jay Barfield

(Signatures and date are on the original faxed copy).

[The following letter was sent to R. C. Sproul Jr., Laurence Windham, Wayne Hayes, and Jay Barfield on February 3, 2006, by the Moderator, at the direction of the Elders of Westminster Presbytery in response to their Letter of Confession, Repentance, and Apology.]

To: The Deposed Session of St. Peter Presbyterian Church

Dear R.C., Laurence, Wayne and Jay;

On behalf of Westminster Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly and as its Moderator, I want to thank you for your letter of repentance dated February 2, 2006.

We appreciate your sincerity in confessing to the violations recorded in the Declaratory Judgment of January 26, 2006 from the Westminster Presbytery.

We are thankful for your honesty in confessing your violations concerning the teaching and practicing of paedocommunion which is in violation of our standards. Your confession and repentance is received and you are forgiven.

We also appreciate your confession of mishandling your offices and authority as ministers in the Church of Jesus Christ to those who have been hurt and offended by your actions. We will encourage them to contact you concerning these offences. We believe, with your desire to make things right with the family of God, where such offences have been made, whether intentional or not, you will do the right thing by them. (Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 15 Section 6) Your confession and repentance is received and you are forgiven.

Further, we greatly value your concern for the good name of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly, and the professed repentance for any embarrassment you have caused the denomination, whether by word of mouth, by writing and/or by your actions and deeds, which were in violation of our Book of Church Order. Your confession and repentance is received and you are forgiven.

We are most grateful for your recognition of our *"friendship, kindness and gracious patience shown to the session over the past four years"*. We thank you for your expression of and recognition of our leadership and the love we have for you as brethren.

Finally, in recognition of our authority and proper proceedings, according to the Book Of Church Order, regarding your deposition from the ministry, and in light of your confession and repentance to the above mentioned issues, we accept your word, that you have knowingly and willingly given true repentance in a spirit of humility, hereby

grant you your request to be “*dismissed from the jurisdiction of the general membership of Westminster Presbytery.*”

The Presbytery would also like to take this opportunity to, once again, apologize to Dr. R.C. Sproul Jr. for our failure to disclose our 1997 General Assembly Act concerning paedocommunion. Our intent was never to mislead any individual concerning our position. We recognize that even though we offered R.C. to remain in the RPCGA on the condition that he would not teach (in any fashion) or practice (in any fashion) paedocommunion. We did this because R.C. came to us in good faith promising not to teach or practice paedocommunion; however, we understand that it created a very difficult circumstance because the other three elders were not extended that same provision. For our failure, we apologize and ask you for your forgiveness. We greatly appreciate your recognition that this oversight was “*unintentional...[and that you]... harbor no grievance regarding this matter.*”

We pray that you go in peace, honor your repentance, and serve our living God whose Son Jesus Christ is Lord over all creation. Again, we praise God for your confession and repentance. We pray and exhort all Christians to seek repentance and reconciliation as you gentlemen have professed in your letter because as Dr. R.C. Sproul Jr. has written, “*...a true man takes responsibility for his failures. That is why a godly man’s best posture is on his knees repenting...*” (“When Bucks Fly” in Family Reformation Magazine, page 34, Fall 2004). We believe you men have modeled this attitude before all, and we are most humbled by your humility. Be assured that our love and prayers are for each of you.

Ordered this 3rd day of February, 2006 and sent to the office of the Stated Clerk.

Your servant in Christ and on behalf of all members of Westminster Presbytery,

Kenneth Gary Talbot

Dr. Kenneth Gary Talbot
Moderator

A copy of this letter will be sent by certified mail.

[With the admission, confession, repentance and apology, Westminster Presbytery believes that we are required to take these men at their word (Luke 17:3-4: “*Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.*”). It is our prayer that these men will abide by their professed repentance and prove themselves as changed men for the glory of Christ and His Kingdom].

