



Saint Peter

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

John and Julie Austin
Calima Drive
Abingdon, VA

Dear John and Julie:

The session of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church has several things to repent of to you and seeks to ask forgiveness for these sins against you. Due to the interconnected nature of these sins, they are not listed in any order of magnitude or importance.

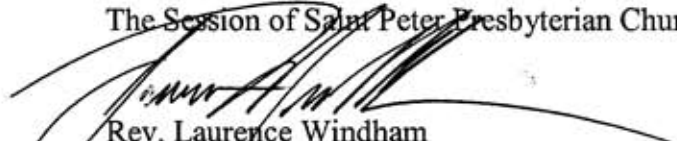
1. We repent of not giving you the proper vows from the BCO of the RPCGA when you joined Saint Peter. This caused confusion as to the import and meaning of the vows you subscribed to, and served to further confuse a bad situation.
2. We repent, as the elders of this body being held responsible, for the lack of sanctification in our body (including ourselves) in various areas of life practice. Sanctification, as you know, progresses in the lives of Christians in various ways. What is easy for some is a besetting sin in another. While we have dealt with these sins at various times, we did not know about others, and would have dealt aggressively with them had we known. However, it is our responsibility to be aware of these things, and to deal with them. In that duty, we failed.
3. Due to that failure, as well as our failure in shepherding your family in a sensitive and wise manner, a root of bitterness was allowed to develop. Unintentionally, we embittered you to the degree that your transfer, which should have easily been dealt with, became a matter of church discipline. We repent of our failure as shepherds of your family.

4. We repent of our failure to adequately communicate to you the nature of our concern for your leaving. We never desired to compel you to violate your convictions on baptism, worship modes, or communion. We never desired to keep you here against your will. We only desired to do things decently, and in good order. We only desired that you meet with us as a session, and that your transfer be to another church. Our practice regarding the nine families that have left our church previously has born out that we are not restrictive in our transfers, embodying a wide variety of denominational positions. However, because of our failures as shepherds, you felt thoroughly alienated from the session, and became mistrustful of our motives and desires; hence, you refused to meet with us, even refusing to accept delivery of letters sent to you. We bear the blame for this, and for this, we repent.
5. We repent of misinterpreting the BCO of the RPCGA in our pursuance of censure against you. This was unintentional, because we truly thought we were following the limitations placed upon us by the BCO. However, we were (through our error) unaware of the presbytery motion (which would not have been in the BCO) that also had a form of erasure without trial. This somehow became the type of censure being pursued, without our full understanding of the purpose or intent of the presbytery motion. This was our fault. It was NEVER our intent to deprive you of a free hearing and full due process. However, we were not thorough in our research, and this caused you to perceive that you were being deprived by an autocratic session of your rights. We ask your forgiveness for this.
6. We repent of the hurt that has been caused by our request to our membership to refrain from contact with your family. This was not meant to be a punishment against your family, but a protective measure by the session of the rest of our body for what we perceived as a divisive force in the church. However, it caused a further inflammation of an already strained situation, and made reconciliation even more difficult.
7. We are also deeply sorry for the inflammation of the situation brought about by our updates to the men of the church as to your situation. Despite our most sincere efforts to communicate the facts of the case as we understood them to the men, and our efforts to be as clear as possible, it appears that you received somewhat incomplete reports as to what transpired and what was said, and the overall tone of the meeting. We wish we had taped the meetings so you could hear what was actually said, but we have no record as such. However, this inflammation of the situation, whether through our failures to communicate clearly and properly, or through the misinterpretation of the men's reports to you, is our responsibility. For this, as well, we ask your forgiveness.

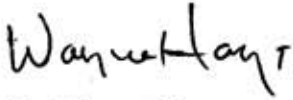
John and Julie, as a session, we ask your forgiveness for all that we have done that has wronged you. We pray that you will not only forgive us, but pray for us, as we move forward. As we have stated in our attached letter of transfer, you are fully released from your status as members of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church, and all articles of censure

have been removed. A copy of this letter, as well as the letter of transfer, along with all prior correspondence is being forwarded to presbytery for their review and action.

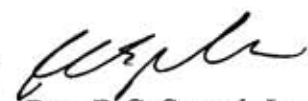
The Session of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church




Rev. Laurence Windham



Elder Wayne Hays



Rev. R.C. Sproul, Jr.



Elder Jay Barfield

Cc: Dr. Kenneth Talbot and Rev. Reed Best, Westminster Presbytery