

**Report from the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches  
Pastoral Commission for  
Saint Peter Presbyterian Church, Bristol, TN**

May 15, 2006

Dear saints of Saint Peter Presbyterian Church,

We greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. At your request, the moderators of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches [CREC] appointed a Pastoral Commission to assist you in your time of need by providing pastoral counsel and directives. Our hearts go out to each of you as our brothers and sisters in Christ, and it is our desire and anticipation that Saint Peter Presbyterian Church [SPPC] will mature from this time of trial.

The Pastoral Commission was greatly heartened by our recent visit with you. Your obvious love for Jesus and commitment to His Kingdom was a cause of joy to us, as was your united desire to glorify God in the midst of this trial. We wish to commend the former session of SPPC, as the fruit of their labors was evident in your Christian demeanor and character. Our prayers for you continually ascend to the throne of grace, as we ask our loving God and Savior that He grant you wisdom and grace as you trust in Him.

The Pastoral Commission knew that as we entered into this situation it was unlikely that we would reach the end of our work and be able to provide an ideal solution to the various problems we are dealing with. We are keenly aware that we are limited men, with limited time, and limited knowledge. Nevertheless, God is aware of all these limitations, and thus we have depended on Him to direct our steps and to give us wisdom from above.

As we move to our report, we would remind you that both the former session and the members of SPPC covenanted to: "follow the recommendations of the Pastoral Commission in the spirit of submitting to the government of Christ."

Quoting from our commissioning document: The CREC Commission has the following tasks:

- a. *To provide pastoral guidance for any immediate needs of St. Peter.*
- b. *To provide pastoral recommendations to the congregation(s) of St. Peter and Covenant Reformed [CREC]. [Covenant Reformed Church in Knoxville, TN was considering the possibility of sponsoring SPPC as a mission church.]*
- c. *To review the fitness of the deposed Session of St. Peter for ministry, whether by licensure or ordination under the CREC process.*
- d. *To provide a report to be reviewed by a panel of ten prominent Reformed elders (from outside the CREC), so as to provide accountability and a review process for the CREC's actions.*

Taking these tasks in order, we report the following:

***To provide pastoral guidance for any immediate needs of St. Peter.***

1. At a meeting between the Pastoral Commission and the former Steering Committee of SPPC, the Steering Committee was disbanded. This was done with the unanimous approval of all seven members of the Steering Committee, and the three Pastoral Commission members who were present.
2. The Pastoral Commission is now providing direct pastoral oversight of the immediate needs of SPPC.

***To provide pastoral recommendations to the congregation(s) of St. Peter and Covenant Reformed (CREC).***

1. It is our recommendation that SPPC be governed by a session *pro tempore*, consisting of the five original Pastoral Commission members. These elders *pro tempore* will remain as part of the session, along with any duly elected elders, until such time as SPPC is placed under the care of another CREC church or is particularized.
2. It is our recommendation that the members of SPPC affirm by vote a Constitution provided to them by the session *pro tempore*. Should any member of SPPC not agree to be governed by this Constitution, they will be helped by the session *pro tempore* as they seek out a new church home.
3. The Pastoral Commission will appoint a secretary to keep and maintain a book of minutes, as well as a temporary moderator to conduct meetings until elders are elected.
4. Regarding the financial management of SPPC, the Pastoral Commission directs:
  - a. The appointment of John Vernot as the SPPC treasurer.
  - b. The implementation of all the recommendations of Robert Bradley C.P.A., concerning accounting software and accounting procedures.
  - c. The provision and pay for any needed training for John Vernot, to the end that he might become proficient in the proper use of SPPC's accounting software and procedures. If necessary, a computer shall also be provided.
  - d. The treasurer shall provide monthly financial reports to the session.
  - e. The treasurer shall provide the following reports to the congregation of SPPC on a quarterly basis, no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the months of January, April, July, and October: 1) Year-to-Date Standard Balance Sheet; 2) Year-to-Date Standard Profit and Loss. In addition, the treasurer should be prepared to provide detailed information on specific income and expenditures.
  - f. The session *pro tempore* shall review the finances of the church and make specific salary recommendations to be voted on by the members of

SPPC at a duly called business meeting. Until that time, some remuneration for services shall be paid to Laurence Windam, Wayne Hayes, Jay Barfield, and R.C. Sproul, Jr., as determined by the session *pro tempore*.

- g. The Pastoral Commission will move toward an equitable distribution of funds from SPPC to the Highlands Study Center. The amount and reasoning behind the amount will be presented to the congregation for comment before the funds are disbursed.
5. It is our recommendation that those members of St. Peter who wish to particularize as a church distinct from SPPC accomplish this by becoming a mission work of a CREC church. This process is outlined in the CREC Constitution and Book of Procedures, and is to be overseen by Gregg Strawbridge, Moderator of the Augustine Presbytery of the CREC. Additionally:
  - a. This new work shall receive a one-time gift from SPPC commensurate with her relative numbers of member households as determined by the Pastoral Commission.
  - b. The newly formed Mission Church shall not use the name "Saint Peter."
  - c. This new church and SPPC shall agree to:
    - i. Quarterly joint fellowship meetings for the first year.
    - ii. A statement signed by each household that promises, the Lord being their helper, to not speak ill of one another and pledge to work diligently to show respect for the other congregation, and to pursue peace and fellowship with one another.
    - iii. To agree, until each church becomes a full member church in the CREC or some other denomination or confederation, to binding arbitration from the moderator of the CREC Augustine presbytery if a dispute between the two churches shall arise.
6. For the peace and purity of the church, it is our recommendation that the members of SPPC refrain from contact with those who are *obviously contentious, suspicious, and do not exhibit the characteristics of brotherly love*.
7. It is our recommendation that Covenant Reformed Church (CREC), continue to provide pulpit supply for SPPC, but that she not become the CREC sponsoring church for SPPC at this time.

***To review the fitness of the deposed Session of St. Peter for ministry, whether by licensure or ordination under the CREC process.***

1. It is our finding that there were significant pastoral mistakes, errors and sins by the former Session. Specific recommendations will be shared with each of them individually, and we anticipate evidences of godly repentance from these men. While we regard this as unlikely, should any of these men persist in sin,

they will be subject to public rebuke, according to the instructions of 1 Timothy 5:20.

2. It is our finding that none of the former Session members are disqualified from potentially serving as officers in the church, but rather must go through the proper processes of constitutionally being nominated and duly elected to office, along with the necessary ordinations and installations. This process involves the double witness of the session *pro tempore* serving SPPC, and her members. While the Pastoral Commission has not disqualified any of the former session members, it is important to note that it will be the actual votes of the SPPC membership, working in conjunction with the session *pro tempore*, that will make the final determination as to each man's personal fitness to serve as an officer in the congregation of SPPC.
3. The four previous session members shall be considered for re-ordination or re-installation to office separately in the months to come. Although Mr. Sproul was deposed from the ministry (primarily for violations of the RPCGA BCO which would not apply in the CREC), we have determined that since he had been previously examined for ordination (by three different presbyteries of three denominations ARPC, PCA, and RPCGA), he shall not be required to fulfill the process for ordination and shall be considered ordained within the CREC accordingly. Therefore, the session *pro tempore* will begin a series of discussions with Rev. Sproul and the congregation to the end that the provisions of the Constitution regarding election and installation of a minister may occur. Respecting the court of the Reformed Presbyterian Church General Assembly [RPCGA], we believe the other men must be re-ordained, should they be called to serve as elders.
4. The session *pro tempore* will work pastorally with each of these men, giving personal counsel and guidance, and will make further recommendations as to an appropriate time and manner for their service to the church.

***To provide a report to be reviewed by a panel of ten prominent Reformed elders (from outside the CREC), so as to provide accountability and a review process for the CREC's actions.***

This report has been distributed to the panel of elders for review and comment.

**CREC Pastoral Commission members:**

Pastor Randy Booth, [chairman], pastor of Grace Covenant Church, Nacogdoches, TX.  
Elder Patch Blakey, ruling elder at Trinity Reformed Church, Moscow, ID.  
Pastor Virgil Hurt, pastor of Providence Church, Lynchburg, VA.  
Pastor Gene Liechty, pastor of Christ Church, Cary, NC.  
Pastor Dennis Tuuri, pastor of Reformation Covenant Church, Oregon City, OR.