

September 2, 2018

Dear Consistory of the Netherlands Reformed Church of Grand Rapids (Covell),

We are writing first to thank you for your shepherding the flock by recently warning it of the danger of the local inter-denominational event that was at least in part conceived to draw the NRC into it. It is an act of love both to those within and to those without to maintain a firm stand for the Biblical reformed doctrines, and it is un-loving to succumb to emotional appeals for unity at the expense of Biblical truth and testimony.

It is important for all of us to be fully aware of what is at stake in the differences between the NAPARC denominations (Free Reformed, PCA, HRC, ARP, etc. – see <http://www.naparc.org/member-churches/>) and the NRC. For the sake of obtaining government student loans for seminarians as well as other advantages, the NAPARC denominations like the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) have placed their seminaries under the authority and rules of accrediting agencies like Association of Theological Schools (ATS at <http://www.ats.edu/>). See <https://prts.edu/> and <https://prts.edu/about/accreditation/>. These agencies are dominated by Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant leadership, which is thoroughly un-Biblical and in rebellion against Jesus Christ. The rules they have imposed upon “accredited seminaries” not surprisingly are thoroughly contrary to the Biblical reformed faith. Furthermore, although the NAPARC denominations profess commitment to the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity, in reality many of their confessions are amended versions, so that their confessions are in reality contrary to one another and the originals. In addition, many of the NAPARC denominations allow their officers to take non-circumscribed exceptions even to the confessions which they do have. The professors in their seminaries hold all sorts of diverse doctrinal views, many contrary to the historic reformed standards. Is it any wonder that in these denominations there is widespread disagreement with the Christian Sabbath, six-day Creation, and the providential preservation of God’s infallible word in the Received Text? Is there any wonder that in some of these denominations there is even toleration of officers who reject justification through faith alone and adhere to the federal vision heresy? They are pursuing a visible unity not based upon true agreement with Biblical reformed standards but instead erroneous latitudinarian ecumenism. How can the church perform its central God-given responsibility as pillar and defender of Biblical truth with such a wrong constitutional and subscriptional foundation?

While denominations like the NRC and FPCS (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland) are far from perfect, struggling against the sinfulness of individual members and the errors of the world, nevertheless they can each with propriety still claim to be continued expressions of the historic Reformation churches of the Netherlands and Britain, respectively. In contrast, the NAPARC denominations have broken themselves from the basic Reformation model and embraced a modern ecumenical model as church organizations. This does not mean there are no true

reformed Christians within other denominations, but the church organizations themselves have fundamentally departed.

In light of the above facts and circumstances, it is with good justification that the consistory of the Netherlands Reformed Church of Grand Rapids opposed joining an inter-denominational gathering with churches that have departed from the Biblical Reformation stance. What we would ask of the consistory is this: on these same grounds should not the NRC have its own school for our own dear young children and youth? If a one-day ecumenical gathering should be regarded as a danger, what about a joint school which meets several hours from Monday to Friday much of the year? Does joining with a NAPARC denomination in leading a Christian school not invite the next generation to question, "Why have a separate school of theology for seminarians yet have a joint school for the youth? Why not share in seminary and join in church tie via NAPARC?" Indeed, could it not even be argued that seminarians can be more discerning of errors than rank-and-file youth? Is it not wise for NRC officers to see this danger now and take such steps as necessary for the NRC to have its own local Christian school, un-joined in leadership with a NAPARC denomination? Does God not call us to ask: "can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Understandably, having our own NRC school will take tons of planning and preparation, but we can all help to begin heading in that direction. Also, having a separate school does not have to mean abandoning ownership interest in current Plymouth Christian Schools property.

We would like to thank the consistory for its many labors on behalf of the spiritual well-being of the flock. Thank you as well for your thoughtful consideration of this letter. Please know that we regularly try to bring you and the many concerns you face as officers before the Lord.

Sincerely,

J. Parnell and Charlotte McCarter