

PR School Vow Position Paper

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Bible Text: 2 Timothy 3
Preached on: Tuesday, August 10, 2021

First Reformed Protestant Church

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Let us call upon the name of our God together in prayer.

Our Father which art in heaven, we draw nigh unto thee as thy Spirit draws us to thyself in the bonds of covenant love and fellowship, and as thou hast spoken to us from thy word, the truth of thy everlasting covenant of grace and thy claim upon us as our God. We thank thee Father for the salvation that thou hast worked through Jesus Christ according to thine eternal counsel and decree so that we and our children and all that are afar off, even as many as thou shalt call are brought nigh unto thee and given a place in thy kingdom and made to be thy sons and daughters. We pray, Father, that thou wilt be near unto us in this evening as we assemble for the presentation of a position taken by our Council and as the consistory, the elders, and the pastor of the church present that position to us, would thou give us understanding of the principles, give us understanding of the scriptures, and we beseech thee, Father, that thou wilt by this illuminate us and show unto us the wonder of thy grace and salvation in Christ. Wilt thou also set before us tonight an understanding of the snare and danger that always threatens us, and that in these days has been laid before us again. We beseech thee, Father, for an abundance of thy mercy and grace that we may be protected by thee. We pray also that thou wilt remember our office-bearers, be with the elders and pastor especially in their sin of failing to cry a warning. We pray, Father, that thou wilt forgive their sin, wash our iniquities away in the blood of Christ, and we pray that thou wilt strengthen our consistory for its task of being watchmen on the walls. We thank thee forgiving them this work. We pray that their hand may be strengthened in it and we pray, Father, that thou wilt give to all of us the knowledge of our salvation in the blood of our Savior. We pray that thy gospel may go forth, thy gospel may be our defense. And we pray, Father, that we may hear our Savior Jesus Christ in the preaching of the gospel as well as in the bringing of the word by the office-bearers. Wilt thou cause that the light of thy face may shine upon us that we may have thy blessing and thy Spirit for we recognize that we are utterly utterly dependent upon thee. And so, Father, be near us in thy covenant love and mercy for Jesus' sake and whose name we pray. Amen.

I'd like to begin tonight by reading a letter that the consistory adopted and that was sent out to the congregation in a recent email. I read this on behalf of the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church.

Dear First Reformed Protestant Church,

With grief for our sins and with hope only in the mercy of God and the perfect righteousness of Christ, the consistory confesses our failure to warn you as the citizens of the kingdom of heaven of the danger that threatened you in the unlawful vows that the Protestant Reformed Schools required of our parents in order to enroll our children in those schools. As watchmen on the walls of Zion, our calling is to see when the sword is coming upon the land and to blow the trumpet as a warning to the people. Our calling is to hear the word at God's mouth and to warn you from God. Our calling is to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, Ezekiel 3:16-21 and 33:1-9. As under-shepherds in the flock of the Good Shepherd, our calling is to feed the flock with the pure word of God and to take the oversight of the flock. Our calling is to be examples to the flock, 1 Peter 5:1-4. In these callings as watchmen and under-shepherds, we have failed as a consistory by failing to warn you of the danger and by failing to lead you into safety.

As laid out in the Position Paper of the Council, a clear danger threatened the congregation that would cause us to promise some level of silence in the face of known error. Rather than cry out from the pulpit, as is the calling of the pastor, and rather than cry out in your homes and among the flock, as is the calling of the elders, we failed to recognize the threat and we were all too willing to explain it away. By this, the flock was exposed to spiritual danger. We are sorry before God and before you for our failure to warn you and to lead you. Not only has our failure to cry a warning exposed our members to spiritual danger but it has led to confusion in the congregation. The election of office-bearers had to be put on hold and numbers of the congregation now wonder about the implications of sending their children to the Protestant Reformed Schools. If the consistory had provided sound biblical instruction from the beginning, we would not be in this state of confusion today. For this, too, we are sorry.

With sorrow for our failure, the consistory took the following decision at our meeting of August 4, 2021. Article 18: motion is made that we, the consistory, repent of our failure to lead the congregation rightly when danger threatened us as a congregation, and that the consistory appoint the chairman and the vice president to draft a statement to the congregation for the consistory to approve. Ground when a grievous snare was laid before the citizens of the kingdom and the vow required by the schools which vow would set the institutions of a particular school and denomination above the truth, we, as watchmen, failed to cry a warning to the inhabitants of the city, Ezekiel 3:16-21 and 33:1-9. That motion carried.

This decision is not a mere formality or vain lip-service but the heartfelt repentance of the consistory for exposing you by our silence and inaction to the danger that threatens you. May our God be merciful to us in Jesus Christ and cover this sin in our Savior's shed blood. We beseech you to pray for us that the Lord may forgive us this sin and that he may strengthen us by his word and Spirit to cry out his warnings with renewed vigor. We thank God that his compassions fail not but are new every morning. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, Lamentations 3:22 and 23.

1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; 2 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: 3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: 4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: 5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. 6 Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. 7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. 8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124.

In Christ's service,
The Consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church.

With regard to that apology, no, that repentance, I'd like to call attention especially to the effect of the consistory's failure to warn the congregation. The effect of it was to delay the election of office-bearers which has potentially caused significant embarrassment to those office-bearer nominees. We nominated them, we announced their names, and then we put the election on hold. The nominees have been gracious in understanding these things but we recognize that whatever embarrassment was called to those nominees is our fault as a consistory and council.

Second, the effect of the consistory's failure was to lead to confusion in the congregation so that for these past weeks we've been talking and wondering what happens next and what the right path forward is, and we are sorry for that confusion. We do not like that confusion. We want truth in the congregation and that truth as it comes from the consistory. We are sorry for that confusion.

And it has also caused a level of confusion in the denomination. The saints in northwest Iowa, for example, who are under the oversight of our consistory must wonder what is happening here and so we are sorry for that confusion even beyond our own congregation.

The fruit of the Lord's turning of us has also been that, as a consistory, we are committed to sound a warning and determined to sound that warning and not fall silent. Our prayer is that the Lord will use our sin to teach us so that we may now cry a warning to the people of God. And as the letter indicated, it is our heartfelt confession that it is of the Lord's mercies alone that we are not consumed. We thank God for those mercies in Christ.

I'd like to present now the position of the council as it was delivered in the paper. My intention is not to read through that paper which can be done by every member of the congregation and studied. The word of God, the confessions are listed there, the reasons for our position are listed there, and so my intention is not to read through the paper but to present some of the key ideas. And as you look through the paper, you may notice that the council's position really lists two negative reasons why the vows that were set before the parents of the Reformed Protestant churches were unlawful. The first negative reason is that that would commit our members to an institution above the truth, and the second reason is that it would cause us to fall silent on known error.

The negative reasons for our position really rest on a positive reason that I would like to spend some more time on this evening. The point here is that there is a positive principle that underlies not only the council's position but a positive principle that underlies our entire life as God's people, our entire life as parents, and our entire rearing of our covenant seed, and that positive principle upon which this decision is based is God's covenant of grace with believers and their seed. I would like to explain that positive principle first and then look at the specific reasons why the council decided what it did.

The truth and the doctrine with which we are dealing in this whole matter of our vows is the truth of God's covenant of grace with believers and their seed. That covenant of grace is one of the richest and most beautiful truths in all of the scriptures, that truth of the covenant of grace and that reality of the covenant of grace really is all of our salvation. The covenant of grace that God has established with his people in Jesus Christ is a bond of fellowship in which he takes us to himself in Christ, dwells with us in Jesus Christ by his word and Spirit, and gives us possession in his kingdom, an inheritance in his kingdom, and makes us his own sons and daughters and his covenant friends and servants. That truth of the covenant is remarkable, that truth of the covenant is the foundation of our existence, really, as a congregation and as a denomination. It was that truth of the covenant and especially the unconditional covenant of grace that has carried us along, including carried us along to the point we are today. And that truth of God's unconditional covenant of grace encompasses some of the core, central truths of all of the word of God. That truth of God's eternal covenant of grace encompasses the truth of election for the covenant is the friendship and fellowship that God has established with his people according to his eternal decree of election, and that truth of election brings us face-to-face with our head, Jesus Christ who is the head of the covenant, the head of the covenant in God's eternal decree of election so that in this whole matter of our vow, we are dealing with our head and dealing with our Savior, and that makes this matter of our vow and this whole matter that we're considering not a matter that we look up against or that we become afraid of or nervous of how this will go in the congregation, but we

receive this with joy and embrace this and take this on with joy. The covenant of grace is established with us in our eternal head Jesus Christ according to God's eternal decree.

This truth of the covenant also brings into view the whole truth of atonement, for it is only those who are righteous that can have fellowship with God through Jesus Christ so that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is the judicial ground of our fellowship and the judicial ground of this eternal covenant of God. And that, too, takes us face-to-face with our mediator, the one who has come on our behalf, who has taken our sins upon him, who has stood in our place and atoned for all our iniquity, and who has also gained for us, by his atonement, all his righteousness and all his life and the Holy Spirit and faith and heaven and every other gift of salvation.

Also in this truth of the covenant of grace, we come face-to-face with the truth of the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit who is given to us to abide with us and dwell with us forever, and the Spirit who unites us to our Lord so that we are one plant and one body with him. It shows to us that all of our salvation, including the reception of our salvation and the appropriating of our salvation, is the work of God, the work of God through Jesus Christ by his word and by his Spirit. All of these truths make the doctrine of the covenant which stands at the foundation of this whole matter that we're dealing with a very glorious and blessed doctrine to us.

And now to start to bring this truth of the covenant home more specifically and more focused upon the matter of our vows, the truth of God's covenant of grace and this fellowship that he establishes with us in Jesus Christ is a matter of his claim upon us. In the covenant of grace, God claims us. The covenant of grace as this bond, this clasp of fellowship between Jehovah and his people in Christ is Jehovah's own taking hold of his people, and it is Jehovah's bringing of his people to himself in Christ. It is Jehovah's embrace of his people and his claim of his people as his own people and as their God, and that becomes evident when we look at some of the outstanding passages that speak of the covenant. First of all Genesis 17:7 which we read tonight, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

Now that language of God being a God to us in this covenant and being a God to our seed after us, this language speaks of that bond and that fellowship. He says to us, "I am yours." That's the language of love. That's the language of fellowship, "I'm yours." But that language of God as the language of fellowship is also the language of his claim upon us. He says to us, "I am your God. When you, as my people, live in this world, I am your God." There's all kinds of gods in this world, gods many, and there's all kinds of lords, lords many in this world, but amidst all of those gods and all of those lords which are not true gods or true lords in any sense, but amongst all of those gods and all of those lords, I say about you, "I am your God. I belong to you." And when someone asks you, "Whose are you?" Then you say, "I am God's. I am Jehovah's for he has made his covenant with me and my seed after me and their generations to be a God unto me and to my seed after me."

And then also in Revelation 21:3 we read very similar language with an addition. In Revelation 21:3, God teaches, "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Now again, that language of the covenant in Revelation 21:3 is a language of fellowship, "I will dwell with them." That's fellowship. He lives with us. And "my tabernacle shall be among them. My house where I live will be among them." That's fellowship. An aspect of that fellowship is that he says about us, "You're my people. They shall be his people." And then, again, "God himself shall be with them and be their God." There is that whole matter of God's claim upon us and taking hold of us according to his eternal decree of election in Jesus Christ in this covenant fellowship.

"I am your God and you are my people," and when all of the people of this world ask me to whom does this church belong, then God's own answer is, "They're mine. They're mine." That's the covenant. That's this covenant fellowship, this bond of covenant fellowship. In that bond of fellowship in which God dwells with us, he lays claim to us and lays hold on us and says about them, "Those are my people."

That truth of God's claim on us is also evident in the baptism form in which we read, secondly, "Holy baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, for when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing and avert all evil or turn it to our profit." That's this covenant of grace that God makes with us. It involves our adoption as his children and his heirs. He claims us in this covenant and lays hold on us in this covenant fellowship.

And that truth of this claim of God upon us, as an aspect of that fellowship, teaches us, then, why the covenant is unconditional and must be unconditional through and through in all of its parts. Whether you're talking about God's decree of the covenant, whether you're talking about God's establishing of his covenant in the cross of Christ, or whether you're talking about his bringing us by the Spirit into the... of that fellowship, the conscious enjoyment of that fellowship, that's all unconditional because this covenant fellowship is God's claim on us where he says, "This people is mine. They belong unto me." That claim shows the sovereignty of God in this covenant.

When we talk about God's claim on us now as it applies to the vows that we make in our life, we ought not first think of God's claim as it affects what we do but God's claim as it teaches us what he does. God's claim on you in the covenant is your salvation. You can think of that claim upon you as your whole salvation. It's Jehovah God taking hold on you and saying about you, "You are mine. You are mine. I claim you." And whenever Jehovah does that, lays hold upon his people in Christ and claims them, then he is teaching his people, "That means, my people, I'm responsible for you. I'm responsible for you because you're my people and what happens to you is on my shoulders. It's my

responsibility to see to your being my sons and daughters, and see to it that you have the inheritance of eternal life and the righteousness of Jesus Christ."

God claims us and by that gives to us all of our salvation. When it comes to every full God's claim upon us and taking hold of us is our salvation. When it comes to the full of sin and guilt, the child of God falling into sin and being exposed and convicted of that sin before the law of God and then God's claim upon his people means that he is responsible for the covering of that sin in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he says to his people, "Yes, you have sinned but, my people, I hold you in Christ. You are my people and therefore I cover you in the blood of the Lamb." Or when it comes to facing the enemy of death, that last enemy, and death stakes a claim on us and says, "You can see your body failing you and you can see your breath and feel your breath leaving you, because I own you," then the word of God in the covenant over against that enemy, death, is, "but that's my people and that child of God belongs to me, and I have laid claim on him and clasped him to myself in this covenant of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, death, you have no sting. No sting. You have no victory, grave, for the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ."

Death itself cannot claim us but Jehovah God does in this covenant of grace, and that's true also with regard to the devil. When the devil comes as a fierce foe and a crafty foe, almost unbelievably crafty, then Jehovah God comes to his people and says, "But I lay claim on you and you belong to me, and therefore the devil will not overthrow you. The gates of hell will not overthrow my church founded upon the cornerstone in whom I have established the covenant." That claim of Jehovah God upon us as he brings us to himself in his own covenant fellowship is all of our salvation.

And that's true, then, not only with regard to those enemies that he fights against but that's true with regard to all of the fellowship itself that we enjoy with him. Jehovah God in this claim of the covenant gives us his gospel. He speaks to us in his covenant with us. He speaks to us the comfortable words of scripture. He speaks to us the holy gospel of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ and by that speaking to us, fellowships with us. He gives us his Spirit to take that word and carry it into our hearts so that we know that word and understand that gospel and believe it, and by that Spirit he fellowships with us and abides with us, and by that word and Spirit he carries us into his own bosom and sheds abroad his own love in our hearts so that we know him and all of that love and mercy.

That's the claim of God upon his people in covenant fellowship. That claim, then, also explains the separation that exists between the church of Jesus Christ and the wicked world and the separation that exists between the church of Jesus Christ and the apostatizing church, or the false church. This claim of God in the covenant explains the whole antithesis, "To whom do you belong? Whose are you? About whom do you say, That's my God? And about whom does God say, That's my people?" We say that about Jehovah God, he's our God, and not all of the gods of the world and all of the gods of the lie in an apostatizing church. Those are not our gods. We do not belong to them. This

whole matter of the covenant explains that antithesis and explains why it is that the people of God dwell in safety alone, in spiritual safety alone; not as physical hermits in the world but spiritually antithetical to all that is in the world and to every lie that speaks against this God and against his sovereign grace in Jesus Christ.

That takes us, then, to that covenant fellowship of God with his people in Jesus Christ in that claim, for that claim of God upon us, then, in his covenant fellowship with us explains the whole life of the child of God in this world. That claim does not explain only an isolated part of the life of the child of God, once in a while when he stands up to say something at baptism and once when he makes confession of his faith and so on, but the whole life of the child of God flows out of that covenant of God and flows out of that claim of God upon his people. When he says to us, "I am your God and you are my people," he is teaching us our whole life in this world. And that, too, is Genesis 17:7 when God says, "I establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." He goes on to say, "And I will keep my covenant, live my covenant, guard my covenant. And this relationship that I have established with you in Christ and this claim that I have made upon you that you are mine, my own family, you live that covenant your whole life. From the time of your youngest infancy at eight days old being circumcised, for your whole life you live that covenant, you live that fellowship, you live out of my claim upon you. You lay out of my sovereign grace unto you."

That's true in every aspect and facet of the life of the child of God, then. That's true in his workplace if he is the employee and then he submits to the boss. And why does he do that? Because God has claimed him and God has established his covenant with him and brought him to himself in this bond of covenant love and says to him, "Now you live in your workplace according to the commandments that I have given." Your whole life flows out of that relationship. Or in his covenant home, he raises his children and lives in his marriage or lives in his single life out of that covenant of grace. That covenant of grace is the motivation for all of his life and the covenant of grace explains why he does what he does. "God has claimed me and in that claim has brought me unto himself and said, I'm your God and you're my people, and has given me my Savior for the covering of all my sins in all my life."

And that's true also with regard to the rearing of our covenant seed, then. The church of Jesus Christ, the parents in the church of Jesus Christ rear their covenant children out of that covenant. The rearing of those covenant children and all that they vow to do in the rearing of those covenant children flows out of this covenant and that, too, is the baptism form. "Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts, therefore are we by God through baptism admonished of and obliged unto new obedience, namely that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that we trust in him and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength, that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature and walk in a new and holy life."

There are two parts in the covenant and our part in the covenant flows out of that covenant of God and flows out of that claim of God upon us so that our whole life in this

world, and our whole life in the home, and our whole life in the church, flows out of it. It never goes the other way. The covenant doesn't flow out of our part. God's grace to us is not the fruit of our obedience to him. It never goes backwards. It never goes that way, but our whole life flows out of the covenant and flows out of God so that everything we do in our life, and every calling we have in our life, can be traced back to that covenant, that mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

And that explains our entire life as really a vow to God in this covenant. Your whole life is a covenant vow to God. God has laid claim on you and said, "You belong to me and I belong to you." The child of God's response to that is this, "Thou art my God. I do belong to thee and thou dost belong to me, so that in all my life, I am living out this vow before thy face that I am thine and thou art mine."

Now that comes to expression in certain specific instances in the life of the child of God. That comes to expression in a man's confession of faith so that he stands up and promises to adhere to this doctrine and to reject all heresies repugnant thereto, and to lead a new godly life. And he makes a vow that he believes the truth of the scriptures and the articles of the Christian faith in which is taught here in this Christian church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation. He makes those vows to submit to church government, and in case he should become delinquent, which may God graciously forbid, to church discipline. He makes that vow at that instant in his life, but that doesn't mean his vow is only the matter of that instant. That simply reflects that this vow is his whole life. In his whole life, the word of God is the governing principle. In his whole life, he rejects all heresies repugnant to that truth and adheres to the true doctrine of the scriptures. In his whole life, he does those things. Same thing with regard to the vows at baptism, and that happens in a moment of time, at an instant, but the child of God in making those vows to bring up his children in the aforesaid doctrine, which he confesses to be the truth, or to help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of his power, that's a vow that encompasses his whole life in the rearing of those children.

The whole life of the child of God is this vow of the covenant before the face of God, "I am thine. I am thine." And that's one of the reasons why Jesus says in Matthew 5, "Let your yea be yea and your nay, nay." When you live life among the people of God in the church, first of all, you don't swear an oath by anything other than the name of God. Don't swear by heaven or by earth or by the temple or any other such thing because only God can judge the heart. But in your life among God's people in the church, let your yea be yea. You don't have to confirm everything with a vow or with an oath or with a promise. When you say, "Yes, this is what I believe. Yes, this is what I'm going to do." That's because your whole life is lived before that face of God, your whole life is lived out of this covenant of God in which he has laid claim on you, and you recognize that claim. And so your whole life in the church is yea, yea, and nay, nay. Your whole life is, in a sense, then, that vow. Everything you say, everything you do is to be living out that response to the covenant claim of God in his grace upon his people, "You are my people and I am your God." And the child of God says, "Yes. Yes." And lives his whole life out of it.

Nothing, nothing on this earth may come between that claim of God upon you and him. Nothing. No earthly institution may come between that claim of God upon you. No vow or promise that you make to an earthly institution may come between the covenant claim of God upon you and him. No school and institution of this earth, no Christian school an institution of this earth may come between God's claim upon you and your life of obedience to him. Never may the child of God say, "Well, God has claimed me and in all of my life I am to live for him and to live for him as he's known in his gospel, and known in his doctrine, known in his truth, but when it comes to this institution, then that will come between him and me. And if this institution goes against him, well, that's too bad for him because I have this vow to this institution."

That's really the essence of the promise that was required of the parents of our church and churches in order to attend the Protestant Reformed schools. A promise was required. The promise was this, "Will you give us your assurance that you will not militate against the Protestant Reformed schools or teachers, or in some cases the Protestant Reformed churches? Will you give us your assurance?" That's a promise. Now there's all kinds of debate about what constitutes a vow or a promise or an oath. All of that, really, is beside the point because the moment the child of God says, "Yes," whatever he calls it, vow, promise, whatever, the moment a child of God says, "Yes, I will not militate against that institution," and the moment he says, "Yes," as an unqualified statement about that institution, he has said, "That institution is above the truth for me. That institution, really, is above God for me. All of my life is to be lived out of this covenant fellowship. My life, therefore, is to be antithetical and to stand over against the lie and over against any institution that teaches that lie." But the moment I say, yes, with an unqualified statement that I will not militate against this institution, then I have placed that institution above the truth and above God, and at that moment, I am not anymore living out of the covenant claim of God upon me. He says to me, "You're mine. You belong to me." And the moment I say to an institution, "I won't fight you," unqualified, "I won't fight you. I won't militate against you. I won't undermine you. I won't bring you into disrepute." The moment we say that to an institution, we are saying to some degree about that institution, "I'm yours. I'm yours." Though God has said, "You are mine," we now have placed that institution between us and Jehovah.

There has been a lot of debate as well about the idea of militate, what does it mean to militate, and an argument has been made that militate simply means an unlawful working against an institution so that that vow would allow someone in a lawful way to address concerns they have with an institution. The only thing that's being asked for is that no unlawful activity happen. Well, in the first place, that shows the weakness of that vow. What does it mean to militate? What does it mean to undermine or bring into disregard or disrepute? If that's not defined, then how does anyone know what they're promising? But in the end that doesn't matter exactly how one defines militate because the word of God calls the church to be a militant church and to contend, and to contend against the lie and to contend against, therefore, the false church that harbors that lie and that teaches that lie, we're a militant church. That militancy is expressed even in our name, we're Protestant, the Reformed Protestant church, so that our calling is always to militate and

always to undermine the lie and to bring that lie into disrepute and to militate against the institution that teaches that lie.

And that is the first reason, then, why the council has taken the position that these vows are unlawful because they would bind us to an institution above the word of God. The second reason is that it would bring us into silence regarding known false doctrine. The doctrine of the Protestant Reformed churches is from the devil. It's hellish. The Protestant Reformed doctrine is a lie. It's a departure from what the Protestant Reformed churches have taught in the past regarding the unconditional covenant of grace. The Protestant Reformed churches, most of the time shrewd enough not to use the word "condition" or "prerequisite" or "precede," but not always shrewd enough, teach prerequisites and conditions for fellowship. That has been demonstrated in many places over many months and even over years. I take it for granted that every member of First Reformed Protestant church and the Reformed Protestant churches has seen something of that. By signing the Act of Separation or by joining the congregation, acknowledges the teaching in the Protestant Reformed churches is the devil's theology. Conditions in the covenant are abhorrent. Conditions for my assurance of salvation or my experience of fellowship with God are monstrous. Those take away from the glory of God. Those are a direct attack upon Jesus Christ in whom the covenant is unconditionally established, and the doctrine from hell that the Protestant Reformed churches teach and tolerate is a doctrine that has and will work through every other Protestant Reformed institution. The Protestant Reformed schools have and will teach Protestant Reformed theology, we expect them to, they must, and when they do that, they do not violate the separation of the church from the school. When the Protestant Reformed schools teach Protestant theology, they are doing what the parents and association of that school demand of them. They demand that the doctrine of those schools be Protestant Reformed and that violates a different principle that the content of the instruction must be pure and the truth of the word of God, but the Protestant Reformed schools have and will teach the lie out of hell that the Protestant Reformed churches have embraced and tolerated, a vow to be silent in any regard towards that lie, and the institution that teaches it is avowed to fall silent with regard to the truth, and a vow to tolerate that lie to some degree. And it doesn't matter whether that degree is openly and publicly, or it doesn't matter whether that degree is privately and silently, to some degree there is a promise that, "I will not militate against the Protestant Reformed churches or against the schools that are going to teach that Protestant Reformed doctrine."

This is the teaching of your pastor with regard to the Protestant Reformed denomination: she's a whore. She is an apostatizing church. And that is not said to be inflammatory, that is said as the spiritual reality of the case. That's what an apostatizing church is, she is a church that ought to be the bride of Christ, she is a church that ought to embrace him and his truth but she departs from him and his truth and she goes to another lord and another husband. That is not the truth of Christ, that's the behavior of a whore, and that's what the word of God calls an apostatizing denomination and the apostate church in Revelation 18:4. She's Babylon and God's people are called to flee out of Babylon. That's what we said as a church about our separation from the Protestant Reformed churches, we were fleeing out of Babylon. Babylon, that spiritual adulteress. Babylon, who rides the beast

that is antichrist. Oh, our confession about the Protestant Reformed churches is not that every individual is a reprobate but the institution, the denomination is a spiritual adulteress.

Now does that degrade the institution, that is, the Protestant Reformed churches? Does that bring into disrepute that denomination? Does that militate against those churches? I would almost think everyone both within this building and without this building, friend or foe, would say, "Yes, that militates against the Protestant Reformed churches. You called her a whore. Yes, that degrades her and brings her into disrepute." That's not done with hatred but with love for the truth and love for God and love for the Lord Jesus Christ and love for his unconditional covenant of grace.

And the Protestant Reformed churches as that adulteress woman are busy right now wiping her mouth, wiping her mouth. In Proverbs 30:20 it says that's the way of an adulteress woman, she eats, which is that way of saying she commits her whoredoms. She eats and then she wipes her mouth and says, "I have done no evil." That's what the Synod 2020-21 was, a whole denomination wiping her mouth in the face of all the accusations here departing. She wiped her mouth and said, "I have done no evil." That's what the leadership in the Protestant Reformed churches are busy doing now in response to Wingham or Cornerstone Reformed Protestant Church, in response to Edmonton, and in response to others. Ministers are writing letters that amount to wiping their mouths and saying, "We have done no evil."

When parents say about that institution or about the schools that will teach the doctrine of that institution, "We promise, we give our EA, we give our word that we will not militate against your institutions, we will not undermine them, we will not bring them into disrepute," then parents are saying in some regard, "We're going to fall silent with regard to the whoredom and whorishness of those institutions."

What must be done? And now we come to practical considerations, two practical considerations regarding the matter of these vows. In the first place, if anyone has signed that vow not to militate and the consistory understands its failure, the consistory's failure has opened that danger to you. And so we do not say this to shine the spotlight on anyone except ourselves, we do not say this to divide the congregation but to unify us in the truth and to unify us with regard to our confession. But if anyone has signed those vows, then remember Deuteronomy 23:21-23, "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth." That is, if that vow is maintained and the school year begins and the children go to the Protestant Reformed school and we have that vow on our lips, then God requires it of us and we have brought ourselves into a position that is impossible, into two contradictory vows. On the one hand, the vow that we belong to God, that his truth is above all, and on the other hand, that we will be silent over against the known false doctrine in those institutions. "But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee."

Therefore now before the children return to school, now is the time to forbear to vow which includes going to the Board and instructing the Board that if we have signed yes to that vow, we must remove our yes to that vow.

That's the first bit of practical instruction. In the second place, we ought to consider the question that lies behind that vow that the Protestant Reformed schools laid before us. The Protestant Reformed school's question is this to you and to me, "What are you doing here? What are you doing here?" The Protestant Reformed Boards looked around, they saw what we said, they heard it, they heard us say, "You're Babylon. Your Protestant Reformed churches are Babylon." They heard us pray about wiping their mouths as a denomination. They heard us call the theology that they are committed to the devil's theology and a lie out of hell. They heard all those things and they saw parents of our church coming to enroll their children and the school said, "Why are you here?" Now they laid an unlawful vow before us but what about that question? We have to face that as parents. Over here you say, "Protestant Reformed denomination, you're a whore, spiritually you're a whore, and I'm going to send my lambs to your school." They hear us say over here, "Your theology is of the devil." And they hear us say over here, "I'm going to send my lambs to your school to hear chapel speeches by ministers whose theology is devilish, to hear prayers about prophets that you've murdered, that those prophets would repent of their sin. We know what you are but we're sending our children."

It's possible that a whore be more righteous than the church and we have to consider that. We have to consider that question that the schools have asked of us, "What are you doing here?" And any Reformed Protestant parent who desires to send their children to those schools must not only consider the removal of that vow but must also consider that question, "What are you doing here," in light of your confession regarding the doctrine of those churches and your confession regarding those institutions and what her spiritual character is. We ought to face those questions. Is there a way for a parent to answer that question, "But I can still send my lamb there? Is there a way?" And now I speak only personally. I do not speak on behalf of the consistory here which has not ruled regarding that but I speak only personally, I have not yet seen a way that a parent could answer that question, "I can still send my children." I don't see it. You know what the poison is and you know its danger. We know what the poison is. We know its danger. What are we doing there? You have to face that question and you and I have to answer that question with regard to those schools.

I reiterate, the consistory is at fault, your pastor is at fault for having my mouth shut for all this time, for not telling you these things. I'm at fault and have exposed you to danger. I am sorry for the danger I have exposed you to and so this advice and this practical consideration is not given to beat you down. Not in any way but so that we can discuss these things and see together our calling as those who are in glorious, beautiful covenant of Jehovah God who has come to us in Christ and claimed us as his own, forgiven all our sins in his precious blood, and forgiven us and our children and given us a life, a beautiful life of vows to live before his face.

I thank you for your attention. At this time, we're going to open it up to questions and answers. I'll be glad to speak on behalf of the consistory as best I can in these answers with the understanding that if any of the elders would like to answer any specific questions they are welcome to.

There was a question sent in. Adams' response letter, so this is the response letter to our council's position paper, states that the FRPC council's characterization of the questions as vows is wrong and they are not vows. Why does the council of FRPC insist on calling it a vow? What distinguishes a vow from the requirement of Matthew 5:37, "But let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay"?

I think that was probably answered in the speech but briefly whether you call them vows, promises, statements, whatever, does not make a difference because what was required of the parents to go to that school was a yea. It was some affirmation that we would not, I think in Adams' case was to bring them to disrepute, the institutions, or in other cases not militate against or undermine those institutions. The moment we are required to say yea to that and give our affirmation, at that moment we have said, "This institution with this unqualified yea, this institution is above the truth."

Regarding the fifth question from Adams used by the council as an example of being corrupt and causing God's people to place institutions above the truth, the question states you may not publicly or openly degrade or bring into disrepute this school. Are not the key words here "publicly or openly"? By affirming the question, as a parent I am not eliminating my ability to address any errors to the truth, period, but rather agreeing to the manner in which I will address the error which is promising to use the grievance procedure provided by the school.

I think that, too, was addressed to some degree in the speech. Whatever promise we make that we will not bring into disrepute the institution that teaches Protestant Reformed doctrine, is a promise that to some degree, whatever that degree may be, we will fall silent regarding that false doctrine.

Then with regard to publicly or openly, the fact of the matter is that we, as a church of which our parents are members, have already called the Protestant Reformed churches Babylon. Publicly we have done that. We have brought those churches into disrepute. We have militated against them. The prayers from this in the worship services here are not going to be prayers for the Protestant Reformed schools. We will not be praying for those schools as a congregation. We may even be praying that the Lord preserve our children in those schools from the poison and the impure milk that will be served to them. Those will be public prayers live-streamed to whoever wants to see them. So if someone stands on that word "publicly or openly," already we publicly and openly bring those schools into disrepute.

Another question. The Adams' response letter states the words "degrade and disrepute" were intentionally used as they mean to treat someone with disrespect or to bring into low esteem. Does the FRPC council understand these words to mean something different than

this? If they do agree with the definition, do they not also agree that it would be wrong for someone to have a grievance that brings the school into disrepute or in a degrading manner? This, to me, would imply that the question does not close the door on addressing error in the school but rather how it is addressed.

This is how Jesus speaks regarding the institute of his day and the scribes and Pharisees who were the leaders of the institute in that day. Matthew 23. We could almost pick a passage at random from Matthew 23 but just this one, verses 34 and following.

"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Or this, "ye blind guides." Or this, "ye hypocrites." Or this, "ye whited sepulchres." Or this, "ye generation of vipers." All of that is the Lord's words to the church institute of his day. Is that bringing them into disrepute? Is that degrading them? I don't see any other way, friend or foe, than to say, "Yes, he absolutely was."

And so whatever "degrade or disrepute" means, even if it means to bring some institution into low esteem by warning everyone about that institution, warning them about the dangers of that institution, then, yes, our public work is to bring that institution into disrepute and to degrade it. The attitude of the heart is one thing, the attitude of the heart is love for God, love for his truth and love for God's people, but the words are degrading and the words are to bring into disrepute.

Then in that same line of questioning, if I could summarize a little bit here, isn't the real issue for that family that would want to use the Protestant Reformed schools that after working with the School Board to show them the error and that the Board insists on it, that they would still want to keep their children enrolled? Are they not compelled to leave the school at that point? No family is ever forced to enroll in a school and then say, "I have no other choice but to keep them in this school and therefore must keep my conscience free to publicly point out the school's error."

There is a valid question there and a valid point to be made. With regard to the voluntary nature of the school, that does not excuse the unlawful vow. Yes, it's true that using the schools is voluntary but so is joining a labor union, and the labor union's vow is unlawful not only because there's the threat of a strike against the fifth commandment, but the labor union's vow is unlawful because there is an unqualified promise to an institution that places that institution above the truth. So when the schools make this unqualified promise or require this unqualified promise, they're doing the same thing. The voluntary nature of it doesn't make the vow right. But there is a question in there for us as parents.

If using these schools is voluntary and you already know what you think about the doctrine that will be taught in those schools, then isn't the issue whether you go there at all? That is a valid question for us to consider.

All right, that exhausts the questions on that list, I believe. Are there any others that were collected?

All right, first: how do we respond to a thought that "we may be making a mountain out of a molehill"?

I understand this question to mean that what was required of the parents was perhaps not so serious, a molehill, that we have elevated it to this matter of vow-keeping and have made a mountain out of it. My response to that thought would be that the matter of vow-keeping is never a molehill. It's never a minor matter. The matter of the vows that we live is the matter of our whole Christian life and the matter of God's claim on us in his covenant of grace. Jehovah God has claimed us as his people. He says, "You are my people." Now everything in your life is to be that confession, "Yes. Yes, we are thy people. And yes, we know thee through thy truth and thy gospel and are thy children."

So this matter is never a molehill, it's always a mountain, so much so that if the consistory of this church would put a paper before you that said, "Will you promise or can you give us your assurance that you will not militate against this church," you may not sign that. Though at this moment you agree with everything this church teaches, though at this moment you agree with the doctrine, though at this moment you worship here before God with joy, you may never sign a document that says, "Will you promise never to militate against this church?" And that's not the promise of confession of faith either. The promise of confession of faith is about the truth. Do you believe the doctrine taught in the Old and New Testament and in the articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian church at this moment to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation? But that is never a promise that therefore I am a member of this church now and forever, no matter what happens in this church, but rather the moment this church departs, then you must either reform her from within or you must go too. We simply may not make these kinds of vows to an institution. So, no, this is not a molehill. Vows are never a molehill. The life of a child of God is never a molehill. It's the mountain of the covenant of grace, glorious mountain, beautiful mountain. Let's not try to take down that mountain.

I think I'm reading this correctly: are you implying the main reason we do not have nominations is because of this issue of a vow?

Yes, I am implying that and the way this unfolded is that the council made its nominations of office-bearers, in the nomination process it did not come up, and the elders can correct me here on how this went, but it did not come up regarding this whole matter of what the schools had required of all of our parents, including those we were nominating for office. Then we published the names after the two week or three week approbation period, whatever it was, we published the names, we set the date of the

congregational meeting and then within the council, we could say maybe a light bulb went off, or within the council we realized, "Wait a minute, what about the formula of subscription vow?" So if we have office-bearers who had promised, "I will not militate against the Protestant Reformed churches," who at the same time as promising, "I will exert myself to keep this church free from errors," including if that means militate against the Protestant Reformed churches, how is that office-bearer going to keep both?

The concern was not that any of the men nominated would fail to keep their formula of subscription vow. There was no indication, no thought on the part of the council that any of the men nominated would fail in the formula of subscription vow but the question was can he make both of those vows at the same time? And when we studied that, we saw this involves more than just special office, this has to do with all of our life in the church with regard to this vow. This vow is simply unlawful that the schools required of us. Well, now what? The names are announced. We've got a congregational meeting set. So we concluded we need time to state our position as a council so that we can lead the congregation through this and we'll have to put off elections. And again, whatever embarrassment we have caused to the men who were nominated, we are sorry for that. We recognize that this whole confusion that we're in is due to our lack of instruction.

Last question that I have: by being silent in regards to the PRC and their schools, are we not denying our God under persecution, something we all will be facing as the days of Christ are near?

By being silent in regards to the PRC and their schools, are we not denying our God under persecution, something we all will be facing as the days of Christ are near? That is the very pertinent question that we have to face. What is the implication of being silent in regards to the Protestant Reformed schools and the Protestant Reformed churches whose doctrine we are well aware of? The question is what does it take to shut up the church? When does the pressure become too great for the church to speak out against the lie? Is it with regard to the schools? Then what about when you cannot buy bread or when we will be imprisoned? I keep saying "you," let me say "we." What about when we are imprisoned or when we cannot buy bread or when we watch our children hauled off to jail or whatever it may be?

So there is a test here, a real test with regard to the last times. At what point may we be silent about false doctrine? And the answer is there never is that point. There never is that point. Following Jesus Christ means we take up our cross and deny ourselves and lose our lives for Jesus' sake and the gospel's. Nothing more important than Jesus and the gospel.

So I appreciate this question if I'm understanding it correctly that it puts this whole matter into the perspective of the last days and the fact that this is not the end of the persecution that will be coming. It's not the end of the temptation that will be coming our way either and so this calls us to be...