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Notes on the Meeting of the Consistory of the First Reformed Church

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1 August 1858

Holland, Michigan

At a meeting of the consistory of the First Reformed Church at which Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte presided and at which Gerrit Wakker served as clerk, a few major items came to its attention and the minutes⁴¹ were unusally long. One person who appeared had suffered loss by fire because his neighbor had burned trees nearby. Another person had a major difference with an elder and sought help. Elder Wilterdink was asked why he has neglected his duties and no longer came to church. He was in contention with Elder Broek. A great deal of time and attention was paid Wilterdink. The meeting concluded at a "late hour."

In Dutch; translation by Rev. William and Althea Buursma, 2000.

Original in the records of the Pillar Christian Reformed Church at the Joint Archives of Holland, vol. II, pp. 66-69.

Consistory Meeting Held on August 1, 1858

Absent: Keppel, Plugger, and Hekhuis; and Labots, because of illness.

ARTICLE 1 – Slachter and Nagelkerk are both present. After the president had opened with prayer, he asked Brother Slachter the purpose of his appearance. He indicates that he wishes help or counsel in connection with the loss he has sustained because of a fire which was started by the intentional burning of trees on the property of Brother C. Vorst. The president proposes that a committee be appointed, consisting of Brothers Ploeg, de Vries, and te Roller to investigate the matter and to attempt to satisfy both parties.

ARTICLE 2 – Brother Hekhuis enters the meeting.

ARTICLE 3 – The president asks Nagelkerk, who had refused to shake hands with Brother Broek, the purpose of his coming to the meeting. Nagelkerk replied that he would not be able to shake hands with Broek until differences between them had first been removed. He came with accusations against Brother Broek, claiming that he, Broek, had justified the conduct of Nagelkerk's wife, who had left him. He asserts that Brother Broek has spoken to several members of the consistory, who have been frequently involved in the argument between Nagelkerk and wife. After a long presentation by Nagelkerk, he was requested to be specific in his accusation, whereupon he made reference to a statement made by his wife who had left him. A committee was appointed to investigate the matter with Mrs. Nagelkerk, in the presence of Nagelkerk himself. The committee consists of Rev. van Raalte, and Brother Broek, as well as Mr. P. Naber, who earlier had been involved with Mr. Broek in a tax question concerning a legacy. Nagelkerk had objections to his conduct as well.

ARTICLE 4 – The minutes were read and approved.

ARTICLE 5 – Brother Hekhuis, who was asked about his absence from the previous meeting, indicated that it was because of the illness of his child, who has since died.

ARTICLE 6 – The committee mentioned in Article 5 of the August 19 meeting reports. They have heard many accusations from Brother Wilterdink, similar to those reported

by Rev. van Raalte. Wilterdink, however, does not give specific reasons why he has withdrawn from his office as elder and from public worship services. He only mentions that he cannot have fellowship with a congregation such as ours and that nothing can be done about the matter. After many efforts of the committee and, specifically, by Brother Wakker, Wilterdink was urged to present what must be the real reason for his conduct.

Previously he had brought accusations concerning the administration of baptism and the preaching, but doing so without grounds to substantiate his objections. And as far as the preaching is concerned, he has made critical remarks to individuals since he has left. Brother Wakker emphasized that a Christian must be honorable, and if what the speaker (Wilterdink) asserted was true, then this must be the reason why he has withdrawn from the fellowship. He should have simply informed the congregation about his conscientious objections, rather than to just walk away, leaving rumors widespread and contributing to devastation.

Brother Broek, who had been delayed because of not feeling well, entered the discussion and was accused by Wilterdink of untruth and duplicity in the entire matter. He, therefore, said that he could no longer maintain fellowship. Brother Broek, acknowledging that he might have been in error, asked Wilterdink if it was not true that they had both indicated to the consistory that everything between them had been forgotten and forgiven. A paternal handshake had followed, which Wilterdink acknowledged to be a fact.

Brother Wakker observed that it astonished him to hear, after all that had been said, that it came down to (illegible). He also asked why he had not in the very beginning mentioned this, because then so many controversial words could have been unspoken. Wilterdink defended himself by talking about other things and said that there had always been things to which he had objected. He could no longer have any fellowship

with us as congregation, especially because of problems of baptizing infants who, according to him, were "outside the congregation." It was his judgment that this overthrows the fundamentals of the faith.

After much and repeated discussion, Rev. van Raalte attempted to show that the accusations were ungrounded. He added that even if it were true, as (Wilterdink) thought, that this was not an adequate ground for his behavior. He points out that this method is used in some of the provinces in the Netherlands in the Secessionist Church, and that in the other provinces, this procedure is tolerated. Nothing seemed to help, and the committee then asked if this was the only and real reason motivating Wilterdink.

He was asked if this was now his position, and he answered in the affirmative. The question was asked if the congregation should now be informed of this reason, and Rev. van Raalte indicated that he would be willing to do so.

After the committee earnestly counseled him not to give any reason for uproar in the congregation, which would frustrate the ministry of the gospel by all kinds of rumors, the previous statement was written as he declared and read by him, and it was approved with a small change. The statement written in pencil reads as follows, and the original is attached to this page:

Copy: Brother Wilterdink states that he can no longer have fellowship with this congregation, because children of people who are not members are baptized. His protest against this sent to classis was not heard. For this reason, he distances himself from all ecclesiastical fellowship. He does, however, wish to maintain fraternal relationships.

He adds that it is openly preached here that such children must be viewed as covenant children, Rev. van der Meulen having publicly so stated.

After this report and having heard the clarification by Mr. Wilterdink, the consistory judges the following: Further discussions about this matter are hereby discontinued. As a consequence, next Sunday the congregation will be informed of the above statement. Brother te Roller wondered if the reading of this statement was not too great a shame, considering that (Wilterdink) is an old and pious man.

The president, in this context, asks whether it is correct in the case of forsaking the office of elder and resigning as a member to handle the matter in this way. Some of the members of the consistory share this point of view. However, the consistory judges that in the current circumstances, Wilterdink's age and time of service can be taken into consideration. The matter was left at this stage.

ARTICLE 7 – Brother Broek, having noticed that the catechumens, especially the older classes in the absence of the pastor, do not faithfully attend the classes. He suggests speedy action before this abuse continues. The president takes upon himself the charge that at the first opportunity he will use appropriate methods to prevent this problem.

ARTICLE 8 – Because of the late hour, the review of the books were postponed to the next meeting.

ARTICLE 9 – The meeting was closed with prayer by Brother Hekhuis.

A. C. van Raalte
G. Wakker

· Congregational Meeting of September 21, 1858

After Brother Labots had opened the meeting with prayer, and the singing of Psalm 119: 17, the pastor informed the assembly that the purpose of the present meeting was to discuss the salary of the pastor with the congregation. To this point, not even \$100.00 has been received, even though eight months of this year have already passed by. The consistory shares this concern for the pastor's needs, knowing full well that the arrears in the payment are brought about, not because of unwillingness but because of the pressure and financial situation we find ourselves in. The question is asked as to how we can now make the best arrangement for the pastor's salary.

Brother Keppel strongly urged that this matter must be addressed and pointed out the general lack of the requisite concern for the support of the pastor. He feared unholy consequences. Brother Schelman urged a monthly, or quarterly, payment, and that everyone, without delay, should fulfill his obligation, since as long as this situation continues, no blessing will rest upon us. He adds that the consistory has delayed too long already.

Brother Kamper proposes that each person should do what he can. Hoogesteeger suggests that the salary should be gathered through a canvas of the congregation,