

April 3, 2007

This is an effort to formulate a statement in relation to the two following questions in articles V. and VI, in the "Bishop Committee Report" at Stuarts Draft on April 7, 2005

V. How do congregations work with Pastors who are failing significantly;

- in their role as Leaders
- and/or Doctrinal error?

VI. How do we deal with moral failure in the life of a Leader?  
(We are defining "moral failure" as sins of a sexual nature).

When correcting a failing Pastor, (Bishop, Deacon, or Minister) Consideration should be given first of all to scriptures such as; I Tim. 5:1 and 5:19 & 20 also Gal. 6:1  
The Matt. 18<sup>appt</sup> appeal should be applied,

It is well to consider the ordination charge,

- Is he (the failing pastor) willing to come back to the things he said "yes" to at his ordination?
- Has he made restitution for his wrong?
- Does he now meet the biblical qualifications for the office?

When there is moral failure, The effects will be much more far reaching, and to find the best method of correction is much more difficult.

It seems difficult to cover this issue with a blanket statement for all situations. Many questions could be asked, following are a few,

- Should this "failure" be used as a window into the person's life to discern the heart of the person?
- Is this "failure" a result of a deep rooted sin?
- Or was it in fact a one time sin?
- Should each case be evaluated before making a final decision?

(One fallen minister, many years after his own failure, writes: "In my case, moral failure was the sin which was visible to the church. There were, much to my chagrin, other issues which were perhaps more heinous to God than that which was visible to man. It takes time to root these out and replace them with godly characteristics.")

Things to consider when a pastor has fallen sexually;

- He has disgraced himself, (Proverbs 6:32)
- He shamed his family,
- He debased his office,
- He betrayed a public trust,

This Committee sees a need to take measures to avoid shipwreck in this area.

Some suggestions;

- Give more attention to pride, covetousness, and moral purity during pre-ordination interview.
- Establish directives for prevention. (such as)
  - Maintaining a proper emotional reserve with those of the opposite sex,
  - Not counseling a person of the opposite sex without a third party being present. (preferably a spouse) etc.

When there is "adultery" and/or "sexual abuse" by an ordained (Bishop, Deacon, or Minister) he has disqualified himself for public church office and needs to be removed. Forgiveness needs to be granted and membership restored when there is repentance and proper restitution. There are however some very important factors which need to be considered when or if there is consideration to restore to public office.

- Is it biblical?
- How will it effect the following?
  - The minister's wife and children,
  - The other sexual partner,
  - Others who were deeply hurt,
  - Those who felt betrayed,
  - Those who formerly had highly respected him as a pastor, (the list could go on and on).
- Will he be able to minister effectively to the above and others?
- Will he be able to serve with integrity?

Following are some quotes from an article in "Christianity Today" of April 3, 1995  
By R. Kent Hughes and John H. Armstrong

- Repentance is not enough for returning fallen ministers to the pulpit.
- The "forgiveness approach" is inadequate because it does not deal realistically with two facts:
  - First, adultery is a great sin;
  - And second, pastoral adultery is a greater sin.
- Remaining in public ministry will in some cases foster deeper self-deception, leading men to eternal ruin in the final day.

The writers of this article titled  
"Why Adulterous Pastors should Not Be Restored"  
Argue for the importance of keeping separate  
the restoration to the body of Christ and restoration to pastoral leadership.

This is a statement given in relation to the two following questions in articles V. and VI, in the "Bishop Committee Report" at Stuarts Draft on April 7, 2005

V. How do congregations work with Pastors who are failing significantly in their role as Leaders?

1. This committee, over the next year, will endeavor to put together a document that outlines procedures that could be helpful in providing a basis to start from. These suggestions would be non-binding and would represent an official policy. Please bring your input.

When correcting a failing Pastor, (Bishop, Deacon, or Minister)

The following scriptures should be considered;

Matt. 18 steps of appeal,

I Tim. 5:1; 5:19 - 22 also Gal. 6:1

1. Entreat with respect,
2. Confirm the accusation with two or three witnesses,
3. When sin or significant failure is confirmed, a clear explanation should be given to the congregation.

If the leader does not demonstrate genuine repentance he needs to be dealt with in the same manner as any other erring member.

(We believe I Tim. 5:19-21 is addressing specifically, erring Leaders)

When a situation can not be resolved internally, we encourage seeking help from other local congregations and the constituency until resolution is achieved.

If the leader has been open to correction consideration should still be given to the following,

- His original ordination charge,
- Is he (the failing pastor) willing to come back to the things he said "yes" to at his ordination?
- Has he made restitution for his wrong?
- Does he now meet the biblical qualifications for the office?

VI. How do we deal with moral failure in the life of a Leader?

(We are defining "moral failure" as sins of a sexual nature).

1. We propose again to put in writing some ideas that would be helpful in dealing with, and reporting the action taken, to the larger body of ministers.

When there is moral failure, the effects, and consequently the correction, will be much more significant, I Cor. 6:18

When a pastor has fallen sexually;

- He has disgraced himself, (Proverbs 6:32)
- He shamed his family,
- He debased his office,
- He betrayed a public trust,

Sexual sin is generally not a "stand alone" sin. It is more typically the tip of an iceberg of other sins. Because of this, those attempting to resolve the situation should carefully and thoroughly explore the roots of the sin.

(One fallen minister, many years after his own failure, writes:  
 "In my case, moral failure was the sin which was visible to the church.  
 There were, much to my chagrin, other issues which were perhaps more heinous to God  
 than that which was visible to man. It takes time to root these out and replace  
 them with godly characteristics.")

We believe that effects of "sexual sin" by an ordained Bishop, Deacon, or Minister are significant enough that he should be permanently removed from office if he has committed such sins. We believe that forgiveness, and restoration to Christ and the Church, to the repentant sinner, should be separate from the restoration to office. Where involvement was minimal and restoration to office is considered, the following points should be taken into account;

1. How will it effect the following?
  - o The minister's wife and children,
  - o The other sexual partner,
  - o Others who were deeply hurt,
  - o Those who were betrayed,
  - o Those who formerly had highly respected him as a pastor, (the list could go on and on).
2. Will he be able to minister effectively to the above and others?
3. Will he be able to serve with integrity?

This Committee sees a need to take measures to avoid shipwreck in this area.

Some suggestions;

- Give more attention to pride, covetousness, and moral purity during pre-ordination interview.
- Establish directives for prevention. (such as)
  - o Maintaining a proper emotional reserve with those of the opposite sex,
  - o Maintaining a healthy marriage,
  - o Encouraging accountability for moral purity and healthy marriages, with our fellow ministers or other brethren,
  - o Not counseling a person of the opposite gender unless a third party is present. (Preferably a spouse)

This statement is intended to give direction in an effort to keep the church pure, not to bring judgment on any situations that have been resolved in the past.

We invite comments, correction, or any input helpful in finalizing this statement.

Please respond to one of the following in the next month;

John U. Lapp  
 Glen Yoder  
 Joseph Peachey  
 Tim Miller  
 Roman B. Mullet