

June 11, 2022

Mrs. Carlota 

RE: Response to Your Communication Sent for Our Meeting on April 17, 2022

Dear Carlota,

Greetings in our precious Savior's name! We are writing in response to the email you sent to the Session with attachments on April 7. The Session has earnestly considered what you wrote over some time and with prayer. We discussed what you wrote at our April 17 meeting, erected a committee to consider the matter further, heard a report from that committee at our regular May meeting, and have heard further reporting from the committee since then and formulated the response below. We pray that this response will help address your concerns in a way that is truly beneficial and honoring to our Lord. What follows includes an expression of our gratitude to you and an acknowledgement of sins and weaknesses on our part, together with a request that you would forgive us, and we hope this helps meet your concerns and contribute to our being reconciled with you and your healing from the hurts you describe.

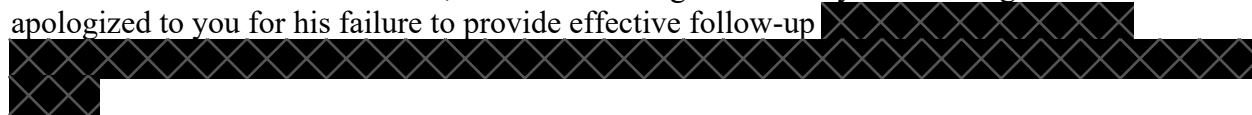
In addition, after giving you some time to consider what we've written here, the Session would like a committee to meet with you and Michael together (since he is a party to some of the matters detailed in your letter) in the near future to address further what's written below in any way that would be useful. At that meeting, we would also like to describe some significant, additional concerns we have related to what you wrote, which we believe also need to be addressed. Our hope is that such an in-person meeting would also allow more interaction with you as we seek a common mind about the very important topics you have raised. For now, though, we feel it most important that we first communicate what is said below, with all heartfelt sincerity.

Our Gratitude and Prayers

From the outset, we want to express our sincere appreciation for your deep interest in the well being of our beloved church, your desire to see the ministry at New Covenant faithfully honor the Lord, and your willingness to communicate with us about concerns you have about that. Clearly you have put quite a lot of time and effort into thinking and writing about this, for which we are grateful. Your sympathy for those who are weak is also very valuable, as is your desire that they be properly cared for and protected. We also appreciate that you have experienced significant distress over the topics about which you have written, and we are sorry to see that and hope that we can be faithful and helpful shepherds in our response. Please be assured that our thoughts, cares, and prayers are with you, and that we are committed to walking alongside and helping you in every way we can in the hopes of assisting you in general and also restoring greater unity between you and us. We pray earnestly that what we write below would serve those and other God-honoring ends.

Our Sins and Failings

In addition, we want to acknowledge with sadness that the Session of New Covenant certainly has many failings and sins, some of which you have correctly noted. We do acknowledge that home visitation has been a weakness for our Session, which is something we have discussed and are seeking to improve. No doubt this area of weakness has a negative effect on the ministry that the church provides, which we sincerely regret. We also acknowledge that we have made less progress than is desirable in actively maintaining the membership role of the church with regard to some inactive members, particularly in the lead up to and following the retirement of Pastor Hollister as well as COVID. While we are very active in seeking to shepherd the church in many ways, this has still been an area of weakness for us, which we do genuinely regret, and something we are seeking to improve upon now and expect will also improve considerably after finding and installing a new pastor. We acknowledge too that we have not made enough progress with regard to some counseling and possible disciplinary concerns that exist within the church's membership, which again is something we are seeking to remedy in general and hope that pastoral transition will aid us in further addressing. Upon further reflection, Pastor Strange and Pastor Mininger also repent and ask your forgiveness for an initially insensitive and unhelpful response to you during their meeting with you in May 2021. While they do not remember or believe that anyone rolled their eyes, they were quite surprised and taken aback at how that meeting went and believe that their initial reaction to you lacked proper patience and showed unhelpful frustration. They are very sorry that this hurt you, and they wish to apologize for this and seek your forgiveness. Finally, Pastor Mininger has already acknowledged to us and apologized to you for his failure to provide timely communication to you regarding your request to meet with him in October 2020, and Pastor Strange has already acknowledged to us and apologized to you for his failure to provide effective follow-up



In all that we do, Carlota, we recognize with sorrow that our sins and failings continue to make their mark upon our ministry, individually and together, and we do seek your continued patience and forgiveness, knowing that in the body of Christ love must indeed cover a multitude of sins, including our own (1 Pet 4:8). We do not take this fact at all lightly but instead seek to lead the flock in the posture and practices of repentance and continually seeking renewal and refinement, and we are most grateful that we can do this in light of and on the basis of the completed life, death, and resurrection of our Savior as well as his continued priestly intercession for us and for the whole body, trusting ultimately in him to shepherd and provide for the flock, even through or even despite our imperfect efforts. Without this, we would certainly have no hope!

So then, please do accept this letter as an expression of our love for and desire to be reconciled to you in the Lord. Following up on this, the committee tasked to meet with you and Michael to discuss this letter and related matters consists of Pastors Strange and Mininger and Elder Hollister. If possible, they would like to meet with you and Michael after the evening service on June 26. Would you please let Pastor Strange know if that is possible or if something else is needed schedule-wise? Thank you, sister.

Sincerely in our Savior's love,
The Session of New Covenant Community Church