



Potomac Conference
CORPORATION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS®

Office of the President

June 28, 2023

Greetings,

We pray this message finds you doing well and finding peace and contentment in our Savior's love.

As you know, the relationship between the Roanoke SDA Church and the Potomac Conference has been challenged over the past several months, an unenviable position for all concerned. It is our desire to clarify some issues and bring to conclusion a remedy for several concerns.

Beginning in January 2023 through the end of April 2023, together the Potomac Conference and the Roanoke Church initiated a total of twenty-three interactions which included verbal conversations, emails, and in person meetings regarding the invitation for Stephen Bohr to speak at the church. Citing Potomac Conference policy 820.00 about independent ministries and the criteria for inviting a guest speaker into any conference pulpit, the Administration respectfully asked the congregation to reconsider its invitation for Elder Bohr to speak at the church.

“There are several independent ministries within the North American Division and indeed in other territories outside the Division. It is essential to understand that there are independent ministries that are “adversarial” and “controversial” against the values of Potomac Conference rather than “supportive.” There may be instances when the leaders of independent ministries are invited to speak within the territory of Potomac Conference. Churches must use caution when considering inviting the leaders of these ministries to speak within the Potomac Conference.” ~ PC Policy 820.00

As discussions progressed, the Roanoke church made it clear to the conference that it neither agreed with the policy nor would it follow it. The SDA Church Manual gives full authorization for local conferences to decide what is best for each conference regarding invited speakers. A letter was sent from the conference administration to the church on January 30, specifying standards as outlined in the 2022-2023 Church Manual (pages 126-127).

“Authorized Speakers - Only speakers worthy of confidence will be invited to the pulpit by the local church pastor, in harmony with guidelines given by the conference. The local elders or church board may also invite speakers in consultation with the pastor and in harmony with conference guidelines. Individuals who are no longer members or who are under discipline should not be given access to the pulpit. At times it is acceptable for government officials or civic leaders to address a congregation, but all others should be excluded from the pulpit unless permission is granted by the conference. Every pastor, elder, and conference president must enforce this rule.

Contrary to counsel from the Potomac Conference Administration regarding its working policy and written guidelines from the Church Manual, the Roanoke church remained steadfast in its decision to invite Elder Bohr to speak. That decision continues to have reverberating consequences for the conference and the church.



An internal email sent from a member to the entire congregation just four days after the called meeting with conference officers scheduled for April 22, and three days before the church vote, exhibited unwarranted hostility and aggression towards the institution. Words such as tyrannical, dangerous, and negligent were used to describe the conference. Liar, evil, and being against the gospel punctuated the missive. Unchristian in its nature, the email served to further divide the church and the conference.

An article was written by an elder from the Roanoke Church and submitted to Fulcrum 7. It was filled with misinformation, assumptions, innuendo, and blatant lies. The publisher failed in its journalistic duty to verify the information with the conference. Subsequently, the disparaging remarks quickly spread on social media, and those unaware of the facts were left to believe the worst of the organization.

Given the recent actions of the Roanoke SDA Church to:

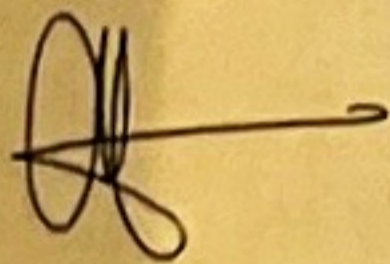
1. Set itself against Church Manual policy, which gives local conferences the right to have only those speaking in their pulpits in which they have confidence 2022-2023 Church Manual (pages 126-127) on Authorized Speakers.
2. Disregard guidelines found in local conference policy 820.00 dealing with independent speakers and ministers.
3. Cause harm and possibly irreparable damage to the integrity, reputation, and position of the Potomac Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists by publicly sharing misinformation, innuendos, and falsehoods via published articles and social media.
4. Act in a way that does not reflect a desire to find a resolution.

Therefore, on June 27, 2023 the Potomac Conference Corporation Executive Committee took the following action:

- a. Any further disregard or violation of speaker policy demonstrates that the Roanoke SDA Church wishes not to be a part of the sisterhood of churches of the Potomac Conference and may be removed from such affiliation.
- b. Any further disregard for or violation of Potomac Conference and Church Manual policies will result in further action to be determined solely at the discretion of the Executive Committee and as provided by the Church Manual.

We desire to be in harmony with our local church leadership to usher in the soon coming of our Lord. We pray that you will join us in working together to proclaim that message of hope and salvation.

Respectfully,



Charles A. Tapp
President

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