

To: Pastor Robert Overgaard

From: Ebenezer Elder Board

May 14, 2013

Dear Pastor Overgaard,

We want to sincerely thank you for the Open Letter you sent us (and posted for the broader community) on May 7. It is clear that you have read our draft paper, taken it seriously, and are engaging the topic at its core – all of which are deeply appreciated. Our singular goal in making the draft paper widely available was to foster meaningful conversation and garner feedback, both of which were furthered by your Open Letter. Again, thank you.

This letter should be considered our initial response; a more complete and deep response will require study, thought, prayer and time, and will be forthcoming. The primary focus of your Open letter is the hermeneutical approach employed in our draft paper and we want to take a thoughtful approach in both understanding your key points as well as formulating our response (which may also involve clarifications or revisions to our draft paper).

An additional point of your Open letter has to do with the possible influence or involvement of Dr. Craig Van Gelder with our draft paper. In this initial response, we want to be clear that while Dr. Van Gelder was retained as a consultant to work with Ebenezer for a planning process for a period of time between 2000 and 2002 (and was extremely helpful in facilitating a process for us to arrive at a sense for God's leading for our future as a congregation), he has not been involved with the congregation since. The books and materials by Van Gelder referenced in your Open Letter were not part of the Role of Women (ROW) study committee's study list or work. This is not to disavow Van Gelder's writings or to say that we agree or disagree with them....we merely did not use them; nor do we plan to review or use them as part of our more thorough response to your Open Letter. We do not see Van Gelder's writings as germane to the topic or work of our draft paper. Since you devoted a sizable portion of your Open Letter to the implications of Van Gelder's work, we want to clarify for you and the larger community that his work is neither connected nor necessarily relevant to our ROW draft paper.

We'd also like to extend an invitation to you to meet with us to discuss any of these issues in person. There is nothing like face to face conversation to aid mutual understanding and learning; if you are going to be in the Twin Cities, please let us know!

We will also be posting your Open Letter along with this initial response on our church website.

Thanks again, Bob, for your work and thoughtfulness. We look forward to the conversation ahead.

Ebenezer Lutheran Brethren Church Elder Board

Jim Olson, Elder Board Chair

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