

May 9, 2019

We, the delegates of the 2019 General Assembly of the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America (ARBCA), having waited on the Lord and the completion of the legal proceedings, affirm the process of justice by which Thomas J. Chantry was found guilty of four counts of child molestation. This conviction follows a previous conviction of two counts of aggravated assault on a minor. Fair opportunity was given for a case to be made to a jury of Mr. Chantry's peers either that he was guilty beyond reasonable doubt, or the opposite. The result of this process was a verdict of guilty beyond reasonable doubt. This process is in keeping with the Word of God and our confession of faith which both teach that crimes are to be prosecuted and punished by the civil magistrate (Rom. 13:3-4; 2LCF 24.1).

In light of this process of justice and its result, and in light of the devastating and far-reaching effects of Mr. Chantry's actions, we, the delegates of the 2019 General Assembly of ARBCA, express our sincere and profound sorrow and sympathy to the victims of this abuse, to the victims' families, and to all affected. We pray for the healing and restoration of these image bearers. We also pray that the dishonor done to the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, his gospel, and his churches may in time be overcome.

Physical and especially sexual abuse of children are amongst the most heinous sins and despicable crimes that one can commit and must be condemned by all, especially those who follow Christ. This is in keeping with one of the most frequent themes in Scripture—God's condemnation of the oppressor. We, the delegates of the 2019 General Assembly of ARBCA, condemn these sins and are committed to taking steps, within our power, to prevent this from happening again. And to that end, we, the delegates of the 2019 General Assembly of ARBCA, have passed several motions that had already been proposed prior to learning of the verdict in this case. These motions, among others passed, take steps toward implementing a policy on the reporting of child abuse; increasing education on mandatory reporting laws; and requiring transparency for any committee, council, or person acting in an official capacity on behalf of ARBCA.

Furthermore, we have initiated discussions to examine and reconsider the organizational structure and documents of our association in order to ensure that the intent of our Confession of Faith is realized in practice, namely that it is the churches who possess and exercise associational power through their delegates at the General Assembly.

With broken hearts,

The Delegates of the 2019 General Assembly of ARBCA