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November 14, 2026

A Pastoral Letter
To the Clergy & Members of the Reformed Episcopal Church,

In recent days various social media posts and articles have circulated, focusing on Fr. Lee Nelson and his recent ministry as a missionary of the Board of Foreign Missions in Germany.

An unfortunate consequence of social media is that communications may contain only a part of the larger truth, omit relevant information, or not agree with received testimony. This can easily lead to confusion and create angst and concern in the hearts of many, especially when it involves serious claims and allegations.

We, the bishops of the Reformed Episcopal Church, are aware of what is being posted online. It is our desire to provide you with some background information which these online authors and articles may lack. We pray that this will help you more fully understand the situation and provide some measure of clarification.

As shared online, there is an active investigation regarding complaints brought by Fr. Lee Nelson regarding his recent ministry in Germany during 2025/2026. Fr. Lee, a priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth (ACNA), was called by the Board of Foreign Missions (REC) to become the business and program Manager/Director at the KnüllCamp Training and Retreat Center in Germany as Bishop Meyer transitioned into retirement. After visiting the KnüllCamp twice and being apprised of the situation and plan, the Nelsons relocated to Germany. Unfortunately, the intended plan did not come to fruition, and Bishop John Boonzaaijer, President of the Board of Foreign Missions, was unable to mediate relationships to the extent that it would allow them to continue in an effective working environment. Fr. Lee's ministry with the BFM began to come to a close when his sending agency shared with the Nelsons that their missionary candidacy would be rescinded due to not meeting necessary requirements. While preparing for its own scheduled one-year review, the Board of Foreign Missions ended its own relationship the following month, in May 2026.

Fr. Lee then submitted a complaint to Bishop Sutton, who received the complaint and appointed a Board of Inquiry. This Board interviewed Fr. Lee in July 2026, completed its work, and recently submitted its report to the Bishop of the Diocese of the Northeast (REC)—since the Bishop and Standing Committee of the Northeast are currently providing ministerial oversight for the German mission. Upon their review of the report, they will determine what actions will be taken next. Their determination will then be submitted to the General Committee of the Reformed Episcopal Church for its ratification. This process should be completed by the end of the year.

Since this is still an open investigation, and to protect the integrity of the process and to safeguard those involved, including Fr Lee, we have chosen not to engage with these matters online. This being said, we do feel compelled to address some of the claims mentioned online, specifically: a) that claims of child pornography and/or pedophilia were ignored; b) that clergy were threatened for expressing concerns, and c) that the Board of Foreign Missions did not provide adequate support for the Nelsons.

First, it has been alleged that claims about individual(s) involved with child pornography and/or pedophilia at the KnüllCamp had been ignored. We also note that some articles and posts have stated this as fact—that there was a "known pedophile residing at the camp."

Not a single person interviewed provided any substantive proof related to these claims, nor were there any victim statements, nor any report that would have necessitated reporting it to the police or calling for a deeper investigation. The initial review committee that Bishop Sutton appointed in 2021 to review these matters had concluded the same. In fact, within six years, two separate reviews, consisting of different members, reached the same conclusion.

Second, it was stated online (November 10) that "when the AKD Reform Report was finalized, there was a meeting between Ray Sutton and the authors. They talked about the possibility of a presentment against Meyer. Sutton's response was that this would be turned against them."

The testimony of those present does not support this narrative. The desired outcome of the Reform Commission itself was the improved management and leadership of the diocese through Bishop Meyer's retirement, not his discipline or removal. Bishop Sutton then assisted the German mission by initiating an independent review committee, which also completed its work, implementing many of the Reform Commission's recommendations.

Third, it has been asserted that the Board of Foreign Missions has failed to care adequately for the Nelson family.

Fr. Lee's original letter of call from the BFM stated he would raise all necessary monies to cover his own salary. Unfortunately, the level of support raised was insufficient to provide for his salary. The REC Board of Foreign Missions ensured that Fr Lee's salary was paid for seven of the ten months ($4,000/month), did not charge rent or utilities for ten months—as would normally have been expected—and provided over $75,000 to help relocate the Nelsons to Germany, to purchase a large passenger van for their nine-member family, and to begin with immediate camp renovation projects. We also note that their sending agency made funds available in the designated account for the Nelson ministry, which included BFM donations, to help the Nelsons in the overall transition via reimbursements. Re-entry care programs were also offered through the sending agency care funds. We hope this demonstrates that the REC and the Board of Foreign Missions acted with care.

It is our prayer that this information brings clarity to anything that may have raised concern in your hearts from online sources. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to speak to your bishop.

In His Name,

The Bishops of the Reformed Episcopal Church