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# CHURCH ORDER AND RULES FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE

2009



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REFORMED  
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The Christian Reformed Church has adopted a Church Order so that all things in the church may be done “in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40). The Church Order Supplements are synodical regulations pertaining to the implementation of Church Order Articles and are included with the Church Order by decision of specific synods.

This booklet is prepared by the Christian Reformed Church and incorporates the revisions adopted by Synod 2009.

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## Church Order and Its Supplements

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# CHURCH ORDER OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

## INTRODUCTION

### *Article 1*

- a. The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles.
- b. The main subjects treated in this Church Order are The Offices of the Church, The Assemblies of the Church, The Task and Activities of the Church, and The Admonition and Discipline of the Church.

## I. THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

### A. General Provisions

### *Article 2*

The church recognizes the offices of minister of the Word, elder, deacon, and ministry associate. These offices differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and honor.

### *Article 3*

- a. All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and ministry associate.
- b. Only those who have been officially called and ordained or installed shall hold and exercise office in the church.

—Cf. Supplement, Articles 3-a, 45, and 48-a

### **Supplement, Article 3-a**

#### Regulations

1. a. All congregations may, but will not be required to, allow women to serve in the office of minister, elder, deacon, or ministry associate.

- b. Classes may, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons, and ministry associates) may not be delegated to classis.
  - c. All duly elected and ordained officebearers may be delegated to synod. Officebearers shall not be asked to participate against their convictions.
2. Synodical deputies shall not be asked to participate against their conviction in any matter relating to ministers of the Word as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.
3. Every classis shall respect the prerogative of its constituent churches to call and ordain officebearers according to their own biblical convictions. No members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in a candidate's examination or in processing ministerial credentials. The examination for ordination of a female candidate may then be conducted by a *classis contracta* consisting of delegates from churches that do not object. In the event that a quorum cannot be found, representatives from churches in a neighboring classis may be invited to achieve the equivalent of a quorum.
4. Women ministers may not be approved for fields of labor outside North America where our partner churches do not permit the ordination of women.
5. In the consideration of applications submitted by qualified women for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word, both the Candidacy Committee and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates will not be forced to participate against their convictions. In the declaration of candidacy delegates may exercise their right to abstain from voting.
6. The executive director shall maintain a list of classes that have declared that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons, and ministry associates) may not be delegated to classis.

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, pp. 610-12)

#### Article 4

a. In calling and electing to an office, the council shall ordinarily present to the congregation a nomination of at least twice the number to be elected. When the council submits a nomination which totals less than twice the number to be elected, it shall give reasons for doing so.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 4-a

b. Prior to making nominations the council may give the congregation an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons.

c. The election by the congregation shall take place under the supervision of the council after prayer and in accordance with the regulations

established by the council. The right to vote shall be limited to confessing members in good standing.

d. After having called the elected persons to their respective offices and having announced their names, the council shall proceed to ordain or install them if no valid impediment has arisen. The ordination or installation shall take place in the public worship services with the use of the prescribed ecclesiastical forms.

### **Supplement, Article 4-a**

*Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa*

In calling to an office, the council shall present to the congregation a nomination of one or more persons for each position to be filled.

*(Acts of Synod 1983, p. 660)*

### *Article 5*

All officebearers, on occasions stipulated by council, classical, and synodical regulations, shall signify their agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Form of Subscription.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 5

### **Supplement, Article 5**

*Form of Subscription\**

We, the undersigned,  
servants of the divine Word  
in the \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Reformed Church  
in Classis \_\_\_\_\_,  
by means of our signatures  
declare truthfully and in good conscience before the Lord  
that we sincerely believe  
that all the articles and points of doctrine  
set forth in the Belgic Confession,  
the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort  
fully agree with the Word of God.

We promise therefore to teach these doctrines diligently,  
to defend them faithfully, and not to contradict them, publicly or  
privately,  
directly or indirectly, in our preaching, teaching, or writing.  
We pledge moreover not only to reject all errors that conflict with  
these doctrines but also to refute them, and to do everything we  
can to keep the church free from them.

We promise further that if in the future we come to have any difficulty with these doctrines or reach views differing from them, we will not propose, defend, preach, or teach such views, either publicly or privately, until we have first disclosed them to the council, classis, or synod for examination.

We are prepared moreover to submit to the judgment of the council, classis, or synod, realizing that the consequence of refusal to do so is suspension from office.

We promise in addition that if, to maintain unity and purity in doctrine, the council, classis, or synod considers it proper at any time—on sufficient grounds of concern—to require a fuller explanation of our views concerning any article in the three confessions mentioned above, we are always willing and ready to comply with such a request, realizing here also that the consequence of refusal to do so is suspension from office. Should we consider ourselves wronged, however, by the judgment of the council or classis, we reserve for ourselves the right of appeal; but until a decision is made on such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already made.

\*To be signed by professors, ministers, ministry associates, elders, and deacons when ordained and/or installed in office.

(*Acts of Synod 1988*, pp. 530-31)

#### *Guidelines and Regulations re Gravamina*

Synod declares that gravamina fall into at least two basic types:

1. A *confessional-difficulty gravamen*: a gravamen in which a subscriber expresses personal difficulty with the confession but does not call for a revision of the confessions, and
2. A *confessional-revision gravamen*: a gravamen in which a subscriber makes a specific recommendation for revision of the confessions.

A. Guidelines as to the meaning of subscription to the confessions by means of the Form of Subscription:

1. The person signing the Form of Subscription subscribes without reservation to all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church, as being doctrines which are taught in the Word of God.
2. The subscriber does not by subscription to the confessions declare that these doctrines are all stated in the best possible manner, or that the standards of our church cover all that the Scriptures teach on the matters confessed. Nor does the subscriber declare that every teaching of the Scriptures is set forth in our confessions, or that every heresy is rejected and refuted by them.

3. A subscriber is only bound by subscription to those doctrines which are confessed, and is not bound to the references, allusions, and remarks that are incidental to the formulation of these doctrines nor to the theological deductions which some may draw from the doctrines set forth in the confessions. However, no one is free to decide for one's self or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the standards. In the event that such a question should arise, the decision of the assemblies of the church shall be sought and acquiesced in.

B. Regulations concerning the procedure to be followed in the submission of a confessional-difficulty gravamen:

1. Ministers (whether missionaries, professors, or others not serving congregations as pastors), elders, or deacons shall submit their "difficulties and different sentiments" to their councils for examination and judgment. Should a council decide that it is not able to judge the gravamen submitted to it, it shall submit the matter to classis for examination and judgment. If the classis, after examination, judges that it is unable to decide the matter, it may submit it to synod, in accordance with the principles of the Church Order, Article 28b.
2. In all instances of confessional-difficulty gravamina, the matter shall not be open for discussion by the whole church since this type of gravamen is a personal request for information and/or clarification of the confession. Hence this type of gravamen should be dealt with pastorally and personally by the assembly addressed.

C. Regulations concerning the procedure to be followed in the submission of a confessional-revision gravamen:

1. The basic assumption of the church in requiring subscription to the Form of Subscription is that "all the articles and points of doctrine" contained in the confessions of the church "do fully agree with the Word of God." The burden of proof, therefore, rests upon the subscriber who calls upon the church to justify or revise her confessions.
2. Ministers (including missionaries, professors, or all others not serving congregations as pastors), elders, or deacons shall submit their gravamina calling for revision of the confessions to their councils for examination and judgment. Should the council decide that it is not able to judge the gravamen submitted to it, it shall submit the matter to classis for examination and judgment. If the classis, after examination, judges that it is unable to decide the matter, classis may submit it to synod, in accordance with the principles of the Church Order, Article 28-b.

3. If the gravamen is adopted by the council and the classis as its own, it becomes an overture to the broader assemblies and therefore it is open for discussion in the whole church.
4. If the gravamen is rejected by the classis it may be appealed to synod; and when the constituted synod declares the matter to be legally before it for action, all the signers of the Form of Subscription shall be free to discuss it together with the whole church until adjudicated by synod.
5. Since the subscriber has the right of appeal from the judgment of a council to classis and from classis to synod, the mere fact that the matter is being appealed shall not be a reason for suspending or otherwise disciplining an officebearer, provided other provisions of the Form of Subscription and the Church Order are observed.
6. A revision of the confessions shall not be adopted by synod until the whole church membership has had adequate opportunity to consider it.

*Grounds:*

- a. The history of the functioning of the Form of Subscription shows that if such guidelines and regulations had been available and followed, considerable delay and confusion might have been avoided.
- b. These guidelines and regulations will make the signing of the Form of Subscription more meaningful and will remove some common misunderstandings that now exist on the part of many officebearers.
- c. These guidelines and regulations will prove helpful to council, classis, and synod in dealing with matters submitted to them for examination in accordance with the Form of Subscription.

*(Acts of Synod 1976, pp. 68-70)*

## B. The Ministers of the Word

### *Article 6*

- a. The completion of a satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word.
- b. Graduates of the theological seminary of the Christian Reformed Church who have been declared candidates for the ministry of the Word by synod shall be eligible for call.
- c. Those who have been trained elsewhere shall not be eligible for call unless they have met the requirements stipulated in the synodical regulations and have been declared by synod to be candidates for the ministry of the Word.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 6

## Supplement, Article 6

A. Students having studied theology at other than Calvin Theological Seminary shall complete the prescribed requirements of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) before they shall be declared eligible for call in our churches.

*(Acts of Synod 1924, p. 38)*

B. Students shall be declared candidates by synod after being interviewed by the Candidacy Committee. Recommendations regarding academic qualifications, doctrinal soundness, spiritual fitness, and personality are to be presented to the Candidacy Committee by the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty.

*(Acts of Synod 1961, p. 55)*

*(Amended Acts of Synod 2004, 619-20)*

C. Regulations for declaring candidacy between the annual synods

1. Applications for candidacy examination may be made by students who
  - a. have completed all core courses, and
  - b. are within twelve hours of completing course work, and
  - c. are within three hours of completing the Formation for Ministry Group requirements, and
  - d. are within two units of completing internship requirements.
2. Synod may declare such students to be candidates contingent upon completion of all remaining requirements.
3. When a student completes all remaining requirements, the Candidacy Committee shall announce the candidate's eligibility for call.
4. Any student who does not complete the remaining requirements by March 1 must reapply for candidacy to the Candidacy Committee.
5. Any such candidate who has not received and accepted a call to one of our churches and desires to continue eligibility for candidacy must make application the Candidacy Committee by May 15.

*(Acts of Synod 1975, p. 111)*

*(Amended Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 619-20)*

*(See also Supplement, Article 10)*

D. When voting to declare candidates for the ministry of the Word, synod shall vote on the candidates as a group.

*(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 639)*

## Article 7

- a. Those who have not received the prescribed theological training but who give evidence that they are singularly gifted as to godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the native ability to preach the Word, may, by way of exception, be admitted to the ministry of the Word.
- b. Those preparing for the ordained ministry under the provisions of this article are required to complete the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC).

—Cf. Supplement, Article 7

### Supplement, Article 7

#### A. Eligibility for Call by Way of Article 7

1. If anyone wishes to be admitted to the ministry of the Word in accordance with Article 7, the procedure described in “The Journey to Ministry: Article 7” available from the Candidacy Committee and online at [www.crcna.org/candidacy](http://www.crcna.org/candidacy) must be carefully followed. The home classis of the applicant will examine the candidate in the presence of synodical deputies when a favorable recommendation from the Candidacy Committee has been received. In addition to meeting the high standards of Church Order Article 7, a person who seeks to be ordained as a minister of the Word by way of Article 7 must also do so in the context of a particular congregation’s desire and commitment to call that person to serve as minister of the Word.
2. The classical exam for an Article 7 applicant shall include the following subjects:
  - a. Exegesis of the Old and New Testaments
  - b. Bible History
  - c. Dogmatics
  - d. General and American Church History
3. If the examination is favorable, the applicant shall be declared eligible for a call.
4. When the candidate receives and accepts a call, a pre-ordination exam shall be administered, in the presence of synodical deputies, by the home classis of the calling church. This exam shall be in accordance with existing regulations, excepting the ancient languages.

(*Agenda 1920*, pp. 26-27; *Acts of Synod 1922*, pp. 72-73)  
(*Amended Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 581)

## B. Declarations re Admittance by Way of Article 7

The Candidacy Committee, in determining the suitability of an applicant for ordination by way of Article 7, shall be guided by the following criteria:

1. The “gifts” mentioned in Article 7 should be possessed by an applicant in a very exceptional measure. No one should be considered unless the applicant has extraordinary qualities.
2. Not only the qualifications mentioned in Article 7 should be considered but such an applicant should also possess exceptional knowledge of the Word, knowledge of spiritual needs, and native ability to apply the Word.
3. This article should never be used as a means to ordain lay workers who may desire such, and whose prestige would be increased by such action. The churches are reminded that the regular door to the ministry is a thorough academic training. This must be maintained in theory and practice.

(Adapted from the *Acts of Synod 1947*, p. 94)

## C. Special Advice for Classis Red Mesa

1. That the following be the method by which the ordination of native workers is to be effected:
  - a. That capable persons, who feel the call to the gospel ministry, be encouraged to pursue the regular course of study for ordination.
  - b. That those who are not able to pursue that course, and who possess exceptional gifts, be advised to seek ordination under the pattern prescribed by Article 7 of the Church Order, and make known their desire to their council, the classis, and the Candidacy Committee.
2. For those seeking ordination by way of Article 7 of the Church Order, the following procedure is recommended:
  - a. The written credentials of the council and the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team concerning the required qualifications stated in Article 7 are to be forwarded to the Candidacy Committee.
  - b. Upon receipt of application, together with the recommendation of the council and the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team, the Candidacy Committee shall determine whether it considers the applicant eligible for further consideration to become ordained under Article 7.
  - c. If the preliminary judgment is favorable, the Candidacy Committee is authorized to issue the applicant a preaching license so that the applicant can preach at several of the churches in the classis.

- d. All other procedures of the Candidacy Committee (as approved by Synod 2006) shall apply.
- e. The examination for ordination follows later according to existing rules, except in the classical languages.

(Adapted from *Acts of Synod 1958*, pp. 87-88)  
(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 663)

### Article 8

- a. Ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are eligible for call, with due observance of the relevant rules.
- b. Ministers of the Reformed Church in America are eligible for call to serve in the Christian Reformed Church, with due observance of the relevant rules.
- c. Ministers of other denominations desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be required to complete the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC).
- d. Ministers of other denominations who have not been declared eligible for a call shall not be called unless all synodical requirements have been met.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 8

### Supplement, Article 8

#### A. *Nominating Ministers Who Have Served Their Present Churches Less Than Two Years*

The synod judges that councils of vacant churches when nominating, should not place in nomination the names of ministers who have served their present churches less than two years, unless there are very special and weighty reasons. And if the counselor deems it necessary, in the name of classis, to approve a nomination bearing the name of a minister having served the present church less than two years, the counselor shall give an account of such action to the classis.

(*Acts of Synod 1916*, p. 29)

#### B. *Calling Same Minister Within a Year*

Calling the same minister twice for the same vacancy may not take place within a year without the advice of classis.

(*Acts of Synod 1906*, p. 16)

#### C. *Calling Ministers for a Specified Term of Service*

1. If the letter of call designates a specific term, the letter shall also include a statement concerning the possibility and method for

reappointment and the financial arrangements which will be made in the event that the appointment is not extended beyond the specified term.

2. The church's counselor, on behalf of classis, shall make sure the termination procedures and arrangements stated in a letter of call are fair and reasonable.
3. When a call is terminated following the procedure agreed to in the letter of call, the minister shall be eligible for a call for a period of two years, after which time the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall declare the minister to be released from the ministerial office. For valid reasons the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, may extend the minister's eligibility for call on a yearly basis.

*(Acts of Synod 1987, p. 575)*

4. When a term call is extended to a candidate, it shall ordinarily include a term of service of not less than two years.

*(Acts of Synod 2000, p. 712)*

#### D. *Calling Ministers from the Reformed Church in America*

1. A church may call a minister of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) with due observance of the relevant rules that govern the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers (Cf. *Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 741). This shall apply only to a church that continues to have a viable ministry.
2. Orderly exchange is intended for ordained ministers of the other denomination to engage in extended service with an indefinite or long-term call in a church (the inviting church) while remaining a member of their own church that holds their ministerial credentials.
3. An ordained minister of the CRC, in good standing, is eligible to engage in extended service (a call) in the RCA and an ordained minister of the RCA, in good standing, is eligible to engage in extended service (a call) in the CRC.
4. Extended service is understood to mean that an ordained minister of the CRC may be invited to serve as a minister of an RCA congregation for an extended period of time while maintaining status as an ordained minister of the CRC, and, vice versa, a minister of the RCA may be invited to serve as a minister of a CRC congregation for an extended period of time while maintaining status as an ordained minister of the RCA. Such a person would preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in a manner consistent with the polity of the inviting church.
5. Orderly exchange allows an ordained minister to express the desire, through appropriate channels, to serve in another

denomination as an ecumenical witness. However, orderly exchange is always at the invitation of the inviting church and subject to that church's polity.

6. To be able to serve in another church, an ordained minister will demonstrate to the appropriate body of the inviting church a knowledge of and appreciation for the theological and liturgical identity, history, polity, and discipline of the church.
7. Approval for extended service must be done in consultation with and with the concurrence of the sending body. (In the CRC, the sending body is the calling church council; in the RCA, it is the classis holding the pastor's membership.) The minister remains accountable to the sending body for continuation of ministerial status.
8. Responsibility for the pastoral care of ordained ministers and their families is to be initiated by the served congregation, which will also inform both the sending and inviting bodies of the CRC and the RCA, which will then share in that pastoral care.
9. The ordained minister is subject to the supervision of the sending body with regard to matters of discipline. The inviting body shall have oversight of the congregation in which the minister serves. Both the inviting and sending bodies shall be in communication and participate as appropriate.
10. Each church will make provision for an ordained minister's being granted participation in the appropriate bodies of the church in which he/she is serving (the inviting church). (Cf. Article 38-g and its Supplement.)
11. All ordained ministers shall continue to participate in the pension and benefits program of the denomination that holds their ministerial credentials (the sending church). The inviting church has the obligation to cover the pension and benefit costs. (Cf. Article 38-g and its Supplement.)

*(Acts of Synod 2005, pp. 741-42)*

#### *E. Calling Ministers from Other Denominations*

1. A church may consider calling a minister of another denomination only if it has put forth a sustained and realistic effort to obtain a minister from within the Christian Reformed Church or the Reformed Church in America. This shall apply only to a church which continues to have a viable ministry.

*(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 742)*

2. A minister of another denomination desiring to be declared eligible for a call to a Christian Reformed church shall make application to the Candidacy Committee. Once the application has been filed, the procedures prescribed by the Candidacy

Committee in the “Journey to Ministry” document shall be followed.

3. A council shall not nominate a minister from another denomination for a call without the approval of its classis and the Candidacy Committee.
4. The need for calling a minister of another denomination shall be acknowledged when:
  - a. The minister to be called has such extraordinary qualifications that the church recognizes that it would be important for the denomination to acquire the minister’s service, or,
  - b. The need of a particular congregation for a pastor is so urgent that it can be met only by calling a minister from another denomination, or,
  - c. The minister is a new-church developer and is being called to start a new church, or
  - d. There is a need for indigenous leadership in a multicultural or ethnic minority church.
5. At the scheduled colloquium doctum, the applicant or nominee shall present a testimonial from the council or classis or presbytery by the Candidacy Committee, concerning the applicant’s or nominee’s purity of doctrine and sanctity of life.  
(It is conceivable that just because the applicant is loyal to the Word and the creeds that the minister is adjudged *persona non grata* by their own ecclesiastical assemblies and that the minister would not be granted such a testimonial. Should such be the case, a careful preliminary investigation must be made by the classis in consultation with the synodical deputies. The report of this investigation, if satisfactory to the classis and synodical deputies, will serve under such circumstances in lieu of the testimonial.)
6. The following criteria shall be applied for approving or disapproving the proposed nominee or applicant:
  - a. soundness of doctrine
  - b. sanctity of life
  - c. knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed practice and usage
7. When ministers from other countries are being proposed for nomination or request an examination to be made eligible for call, the Candidacy Committee shall use the following additional criteria:
  - a. ability to speak, or learn, the English language
  - b. ability to adjust to the American/Canadian situation
  - c. age limit of forty years (as a general rule)

8. The proposed nominee or applicant, having sustained the examination and having received the approbation of the synodical deputies, may now be called or declared eligible for call, as the case may be. No further examination or colloquium doctum will be required.

(Adapted from *Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 642-43)

F. *Determination of Need*

1. Synod directs the Candidacy Committee to take specific and special note of the “need” factor when requested to give their advice to the councils and/or classes in the calling of ministers from other denominations and in declaring ministers from other denominations available for call in the Christian Reformed Church at their own request.
2. Synod requires of the councils and/or classes such written specification of the “need” for approving such ministers and their calling as will satisfy the Candidacy Committee in their decision, which written specification shall then become part of the report of the Candidacy Committee to be submitted for synodical approval.

G. *Joint Ministry of Ministers from Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship*

Ministers of denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for their services must be demonstrated and the pension fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denomination holding the minister’s credentials.

Ministers of denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship who so serve churches in the Christian Reformed Church will be accorded the right of delegation to classis and participation in classical committee work for the duration of their time of service in the Christian Reformed Church. This right of delegation and participation shall not extend beyond the boundaries of the classis.

The Christian Reformed Church will by way of exception allow its ministers to be called by a congregation of a denomination in ecclesiastical fellowship if such a minister jointly serves in a congregation of the denomination in ecclesiastical fellowship and in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Church.

(*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 663)

## Article 9

In nominating and calling a minister, the council shall seek the approval of the counselor who acts on behalf of classis to see that the ecclesiastical regulations have been observed. The council and counselor shall sign the letter of call and the counselor shall render an account of all matters processed to classis.

## Article 10

a. The ordination of a candidate for the ministry of the Word requires the approval of the classis of the calling church and of the synodical deputies. The classis, in the presence of the deputies, shall examine the candidate concerning the candidate's doctrine and life in accordance with synodical regulations. The ordination shall be accompanied by the laying on of hands by the officiating minister.

b. The installation of a minister shall require the approval of the classis of the calling church or its interim committee, to which the minister shall have previously presented good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life which have been provided by the former council and classis.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 10

### Supplement, Article 10

#### *Rules of Procedure Related to Candidates*

1. The letter of call to a candidate must indicate the provisional nature of this call until the classical examination has been sustained.
2. The date of ordination shall be officially announced only after the candidate has passed the examination.
3. The candidate shall preach a sermon on a text assigned by classis, in an official worship service in the presence of classical representatives, preferably on the Sunday preceding the meeting of classis, and in the calling church.
4. A copy of the candidate's sermon shall be provided by classis to the synodical deputies and to the delegates to classis.
5. In addition to the required sermon on an assigned text, the candidate shall submit to each of the sermon critics of classis copies of two other sermons which were preached as a student, one based on a Scripture text and the other on a Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism. The combination of Scripture texts should include both the Old and the New Testament. These sermons shall not include those which have been used in practice preaching, or for academic evaluation, in the seminary.

(*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 90)

6. Synod advises the classes, with reference to the credentials required by classes, that synod's declaration of candidacy may be taken to certify that the candidates have met the academic requirements for candidacy, have been found in good health, and have been recommended by a council. No further inquiry into these matters need ordinarily be made by a classis at the examination for ordination.

*(Acts of Synod 1978, p. 24)*

7. Four classical delegates shall be appointed as the official examiners, two to function as sermon critics and to be present at the worship service in which the total sermon is being preached, and two to conduct the actual examination at the time classis meets.
8. Synod adopted the following schedule for classical examination:
  - a. Introduction: a classical examiner shall introduce the candidate to the classis.
  - b. The examination proper shall consist of inquiry into three main areas as follows:
    - 1) *Practica* (no time limit)
      - a) The classical examiner shall inquire into the candidate's relationship to God and commitment to the ministry, the candidate's understanding of the meaning and relevance of the ministry for our times, loyalty to the church, and related matters.
      - b) The synodical deputies and delegates shall have opportunity to ask additional questions.
      - c) Before proceeding to the next area of inquiry, a motion to proceed shall carry.
    - 2) *Sermon Evaluation*
      - a) In the presence of the candidate, the written sermon shall be evaluated, and attention shall be given to the candidate's manner of conducting a worship service.
      - b) Additional questions with reference to the sermon and its delivery shall be allowed.
      - c) Before proceeding to the next area, a motion to proceed shall carry with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.
    - 3) *Biblical and Theological Position* (minimum, thirty minutes per candidate)
      - a) The examiner shall inquire into the candidate's biblical and theological judgment, competence, and soundness.
      - b) Opportunity shall be provided for additional questions (no specific time limit).

c. Procedure for admitting to the ministry:

- 1) A motion to admit shall be received and given preliminary consideration in executive session.
- 2) Prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit shall be offered.
- 3) The synodical deputies shall leave the floor to prepare their recommendation.
- 4) The classis shall vote by ballot.
- 5) The synodical deputies shall offer their written statement, from which it will become evident whether or not they can concur with the decision of classis.
- 6) In the event they do not concur, the classis and the synodical deputies may try to reach a unified decision.
- 7) In the event that agreement cannot be reached between them, the matter is automatically referred to the synod for final adjudication.

(*Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 44-46)

*Article 11*

The calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the church of Jesus Christ.

*Article 12*

a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship services, catechize the youth, and train members for Christian service. The minister, with the elders, shall supervise the congregation and fellow office-bearers, exercise admonition and discipline, and see to it that everything is done decently and in order. The minister, with the elders, shall exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism.

b. A minister of the Word who (1) enters into the work of missions or chaplaincy, or (2) is appointed directly by synod, or (3) whose appointment is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod.

c. A minister of the Word may also serve the church in other work which relates directly to the calling of a minister, but only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, that said work is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 12-c

## Supplement, Article 12-c

*Regulations for the application of Article 12-c of the Church Order to specific tasks and situations:*

- a. The calling church shall secure the prior approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, for each new ministerial position, by providing classis with the following information:
  - 1) The description of the official position (purposes, duties, qualifications, etc.) as determined by the calling church in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.
  - 2) The evidence that the minister will be directly accountable to the calling church, including an outline of requirements for reporting to the calling church, and supervision by the calling church, in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.
  - 3) The demonstration that the position will be consistent with the calling as a minister of the Word.
  - 4) When any position having been declared by a classis to be "spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling" . . . becomes vacant, this position shall be reviewed in light of Articles 11-14 of the Church Order before another call is issued.
- b. When a new ministry opportunity can be met only by immediate action, the calling church (and the appropriate denominational agency) may obtain provisional approval from the classical committee, subject to subsequent approval by classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. In the event that the provisional approval is not sustained and the minister desires to continue in the position, the minister may be honorably released from office and may be readmitted according to the regulations of the Church Order. (Cf. Article 14-e.)
- c. Prior to calling a minister of the Word to any chaplaincy ministry, the calling church also is required to obtain the endorsement of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 56; amended *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 391).
- d. The church visitors of classis shall inquire annually into the supervision of the calling church toward said minister(s) as well as the reporting of said minister(s) to the calling church. The church visitors shall inform classis of departure from the approved provisions for supervision and reporting.

(*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 47-48)

## Article 13

a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation is directly accountable to the calling church, and therefore shall be supervised in doctrine, life, and duties by that church.

b. A minister of the Word whose work is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, where applicable, shall have primary responsibility for supervision of duties.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 13-b

c. A minister of the Word may be loaned temporarily by the calling church to serve as pastor of a congregation outside of the Christian Reformed Church, but only with the approval of classis, the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with the synodical regulations. Although the specific duties may be regulated in cooperation with the other congregation, the supervision of doctrine and life rests with the calling church.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 13-c

### Supplement, Article 13-b

If any council, agency, or institution of the CRC involved in the cooperative supervision of a minister of the Word learns about significant deviation in doctrine, life, or duties, it shall officially inform in writing its partner(s) in that supervision about such deviation before any action is taken that affects that minister's status and future. A similar communication officially informing its partner(s) in supervision is expected from an agency or institution when a minister's status is altered at a time of downsizing or position elimination.

Provisions for cooperative supervision of ministers of the Word working for agencies and institutions not directly under the authority of the synod of the CRCNA are to be formulated and processed according to the regulations contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c and the provisions regarding chaplains adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 391-92, 457-60).

(*Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 469-70)

### Supplement, Article 13-c

#### *Regulations Pertaining to Article 13-c of the Church Order*

A minister whose service is requested by a congregation outside the Christian Reformed Church may be loaned temporarily to serve such a church while still retaining ministerial status in the Christian Reformed Church in keeping with the following regulations:

- a. The congregation seeking the services of the Christian Reformed minister is desirous of the Reformed faith and seriously contemplates affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church or some other Reformed denomination, or is already in a Reformed denomination and seeks to be strengthened in the Reformed faith.
- b. The minister contemplating service in an undenominational church acknowledges it as a matter of duty to bring such a church into the Christian Reformed Church, or at least into a Reformed denomination similar to the Christian Reformed Church.
- c. The duties of the minister are spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling, and such duties do not conflict with the minister's commitment to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church as required by one's signature to the Form of Subscription.
- d. If the congregation to be served is in close proximity to a Christian Reformed congregation of another classis, the approval of that classis shall be required, in addition to the approval of the classis of the minister's calling church, and the synodical deputies.
- e. The loaning of such ministerial services may be for a period of time not to exceed two years. Extension of not more than two years each may be granted if circumstances warrant, with the approval of classis and the synodical deputies.
- f. Should the minister become subject to discipline, the non-Christian Reformed congregation which is being served shall have the right to suspend the minister from serving that church, but suspension from office and deposition may be applied only by the Christian Reformed Church.
- g. Continuation under the Christian Reformed Church Pension Plan shall require that the minister, or the non-Christian Reformed church which is being served, shall contribute to the ministers' pension fund the amount which is determined annually by the Ministers' Pension Funds committees for ministers serving in extraordinary positions outside of our denomination.

*(Acts of Synod 1976, pp. 33-34)*

#### *Article 14*

- a. A minister of the Word shall not leave the congregation with which the minister is connected for another church without the consent of the council.

b. A minister of the Word who resigns from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church to enter a ministry outside the denomination shall be released from office by the classis with an appropriate declaration reflecting the resigned minister's status and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 14-b

c. A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, may not forsake the office. A minister may, however, be released from office to enter upon a non-ministerial vocation for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 14-c

d. A minister of the Word who has entered upon a vocation which classis judges to be non-ministerial shall be released from office within one year of that judgment. The concurring advice of the synodical deputies shall be obtained at the time of the judgment.

e. A former minister of the Word who was released from office may be declared eligible for call upon approval of the classis by which such action was taken, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. Upon acceptance of a call, the person shall be re-ordained.

### **Supplement, Article 14-b**

#### *Declaration regarding ministers who resign from the CRC*

- a. Synod directed the churches and classes dealing with ministers who depart from the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) in order to seek ordination in the ministry of the Word in another church to take note of the statement made by Synod 1978 that "Synod has instructed all our churches and classes that in all cases of resignation a proper resolution of dismissal must be adopted with the concurring advice of synodical deputies" and to realize that this statement allows for a broad degree of flexibility in responding to such situations (cf. *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 73).
- b. Synod directed the churches and classes to take into account the manner and spirit in which a minister has acted during the time leading up to and including departure from office when determining what action to take. (Some situations may require a deposition; others may require only a simple release from office.)
- c. Synod encouraged the churches and classes
  - 1) To recognize carefully the conditions and circumstances of a particular case that may come to their attention (e.g., whether it be a formal or a de facto resignation) and, having done so,

- 2) To make a declaration reflecting the resigned minister's status that is appropriate to the way and spirit in which the minister acted during the time leading up to and including the minister's resignation from office. Such a declaration could reflect one of the following:
  - a) The resigned minister is honorably released.
  - b) The resigned minister is released.
  - c) The resigned minister is dismissed.
  - d) The resigned minister is in the status of one deposed.

*Note:* In distinction from a minister who retires, any resigned minister no longer retains the honor and title of minister of the Word in, nor has an official connection with, the Christian Reformed Church in North America (cf. Church Order Article 18-b).

- d. Synod encouraged churches and classes to prayerfully consider the following principles in their deliberations:
  - 1) Schismatic activities are to be considered a serious violation of the sacred trust associated with ordination and a dishonoring of God which results in pain and brokenness in the body of Christ.
  - 2) All declarations by churches and classes should clearly evidence hope for the possibility of restoration and mutual reconciliation.

*(Acts of Synod 1993, pp. 581-82)*

#### **Supplement, Article 14-c**

The provisions of Supplement Article 14-b also apply to Article 14-c, especially in those situations when ministers resign under discipline or to avoid discipline.

#### *Article 15*

Each church through its council shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s). By way of exception and with the approval of classis, a church and minister may agree that a minister obtain primary or supplemental income by means of other employment. Ordinarily the foregoing exception shall be limited to churches that cannot obtain assistance adequate to support their minister.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 15

## **Supplement, Article 15**

### *“Proper Support” Defined*

Proper support of a church’s minister is to include an adequate salary, medical insurance, a housing provision, payment to the denomination’s ministers’ pension plan, a continuing education stipend, and other employment-related items.

*(Acts of Synod 2004, p. 611)*

### *Guidelines for Churches Whose Ministers Receive Salary Support from Other Employment*

1. The church is responsible for a total compensation package proportionate to the time spent in ministry to the church (forty-eight hours equals full time). The compensation package shall ordinarily be based on synodically stated minimum salary, fringe benefits, and housing costs.
2. Since the compensation package includes a percentage allowance for health insurance, the minister is expected to secure adequate health insurance for the minister and the minister’s family.
3. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
4. The minister shall receive pension credits in the Ministers’ Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church. Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured if full contribution to the Ministers’ Pension Plan is made.
5. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not exceed sixty hours per week.

*(Acts of Synod 1987, p. 572)*

## *Article 16*

A minister who for valid reasons desires a temporary leave of absence from service to the congregation must have the approval of the council, which shall continue to have supervision over the minister. In all cases of a temporary leave of absence the minister shall return to service in that congregation.

## *Article 17*

a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may for weighty reasons be released from active ministerial service in a congregation through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis,

with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 17-a

b. The council shall provide for the support of a released minister in such a way and for such a time as shall receive the approval of classis.

c. A minister of the Word who has been released from active ministerial service in a congregation shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall declare the minister to be released from the ministerial office. For weighty reasons the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, may extend the eligibility for call on a yearly basis.

d. In some situations, the classis may decide that it cannot declare the released minister eligible for call after the minister has completed the process of evaluation and assistance. The classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall then declare the minister to be released from ministerial office.

### **Supplement, Article 17-a**

#### *Provisions regulating release from ministerial service in a congregation*

- a. If a classis decides a released minister needs evaluation and assistance before accepting another call, it shall specify at the time of release what is required before the minister is declared eligible for call.
  - 1) The classis shall appoint an oversight committee of no fewer than three persons to plan and monitor an evaluation of readiness for the ministry that focuses on professional competence and personal/ emotional status. An evaluator or evaluators mutually agreed upon by the classis and the oversight committee shall conduct the evaluation. (Pastor-Church Relations is able to recommend appropriate evaluators.) Classis shall determine who is responsible for any costs of evaluation or stipulated personal counseling.
    - a) The committee, composed of both laity and clergy, may include one council member of the congregation involved in the separation.
    - b) The committee, in consultation with the interim committee of classis, shall develop specific expectations for the minister and shall monitor progress toward established goals. The issues addressed shall be determined by concerns raised by the council and the classis in collaboration with the minister.
    - c) The committee shall present a progress report at each regularly scheduled classis meeting.

- d) After it has received the report of the evaluator(s), the committee shall make a recommendation to classis regarding the minister's eligibility for call.
- 2) The minister shall participate in the evaluation and assistance process as follows:
  - a) The minister shall consent to the release of a detailed report, with recommendations, from the evaluator(s) to the oversight committee.
  - b) In addition to the evaluation stipulated above, the minister shall engage in any personal counseling required by classis with a therapist mutually agreed upon by the minister and the oversight committee.
- 3) Based upon the recommendation of its oversight committee, the classis shall make the final decision concerning the minister's readiness to be declared eligible for call.
- 4) If the classis does not declare the minister eligible for call, it shall, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, release the minister from office.
- 5) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credentials to a neighboring council within the classis during the evaluation process. If classis declares the minister eligible for call, the council that holds the minister's credentials shall publicize the minister's availability.
- 6) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credentials to a council in another classis after the classis in which the separation occurred declares the minister eligible for call. The council that holds the minister's credentials shall publicize the minister's availability.
- b. If a classis decides a congregation that has been separated from its minister needs a time of evaluation and assistance before extending another call, it shall specify at the time of separation what is required before the congregation calls another minister.
  - 1) The classis shall appoint an oversight committee composed of the council's classical counselor and at least two other persons to plan and monitor the evaluation process.
  - 2) In conjunction with the church council, the committee shall secure interim pastoral leadership, preferably a specialized interim pastor, and set goals. (Pastor-Church Relations is able to assist with securing pastoral leadership.)

- 3) The committee shall present a progress report at each regularly scheduled classis meeting.
- 4) Based upon the recommendation of its oversight committee, the classis shall make the final decision concerning the congregation's readiness to extend a call.

*(Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 623-24)*

*Note:* Councils and classes should take note of the regulations regarding "release from ministerial service" adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96).

### Article 18

- a. A minister who has reached retirement age, or who because of physical or mental disability is incapable of performing the duties of the office, is eligible for retirement. Retirement shall take place with the approval of the council and classis and in accordance with synodical regulations.
- b. A retired minister shall retain the honor and title of a minister of the Word and the official connection with the church last served, and this church shall be responsible for providing honorably for the minister's support and that of qualifying dependents according to synodical regulations.
- c. Should the reasons for retirement no longer exist, the minister emeritus shall request the council and classis which recommended the retirement to declare the minister eligible for call.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 18

### Supplement, Article 18

#### *Retirement*

Ministers shall have the privilege of retiring at the age of fifty-five years, if they so desire.

*(Acts of Synod 1956, p. 19)*

Ministerial professors in the college and seminary shall be granted the privilege of honorable retirement with full retirement benefits at the age of fifty-five, if they so desire.

*(Acts of Synod 1960, p. 35)*

Supervision of an emeritus minister (except when the minister remains as a member in the congregation, or when the emeritation is expected to be of a temporary nature) may be transferred, at the minister's request, to the church where they become a member after emeritation.

This transfer is to be made in the following manner: the council of the church which the emeritus minister served last formally requests the council of the church which the emeritus minister wishes to join, to exercise supervision over the minister.

*(Acts of Synod 1968, p. 69)*

#### *Early Retirement Option*

Ministers of the Word shall be granted the privilege of retiring at the age of fifty-five years, with the approval of the classes involved, under the reduced pension scale adopted by the Synod 1978.

*(Acts of Synod 1993, p. 579)*

#### *Article 19*

The churches shall maintain a theological seminary at which persons are trained for the ministry of the Word. The seminary shall be governed by synod through a board of trustees appointed by synod and responsible to it.

#### *Article 20*

The task of the ministers of the Word who are appointed as professors of theology is to train the seminary students for the ministry of the Word, expound the Word of God, and vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

#### *Article 21*

The churches shall encourage young persons to seek to become ministers of the Word and shall grant financial aid to those who are in need of it. Every classis shall maintain a student fund and a Classical Ministerial Leadership Team (CMLT) .

—Cf. Supplement, Articles 6, 7 and 8

#### *Article 22*

Students who have received licensure according to synodical regulations shall be permitted to exhort in the public worship services.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 22

### **Supplement, Article 22**

#### *A. Rules for Licensure*

1. The Candidacy Committee may grant licensure to conduct religious services in our churches only to such as

- a. are approved as students for minister of the Word and enrolled in a seminary program.
- b. have successfully completed the final examinations of one full year of seminary including work in biblical, theological, and preaching courses.
2. The Candidacy Committee shall not grant licensure to such students until it has made sure of the following with respect to such applicants:
  - a. That they are members in good standing in our churches.
  - b. That they have spiritual qualifications necessary for the ministry, and that they consider themselves called of God to prepare themselves for the office of ministering the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - c. That they intend to enter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.
  - d. That they have sufficient knowledge of the Bible, and especially of our Reformed principles, to act as a guide to others.
  - e. That they speak acceptably and to the edification of the churches. It is left to the discretion of the Candidacy Committee, however, whether it will obtain this information by consulting the seminary faculty or by examining the applicant.
3. The Candidacy Committee has the right to extend the licensure of those who want to take post-graduate work, but with the understanding
  - a. that this privilege is to be granted only to such who are taking post-graduate work in theology, and declare that it is their definite intention to enter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.
  - b. that this extension is valid for no more than one year.
  - c. that further extension may be given at the end of the first year in case the applicant makes a request in writing, and at the end of the second year if applicants appear in person and are willing to submit to another examination (the latter part of this *Rule 3, c* does not apply to those who are taking post-graduate work in theology outside of the United States or Canada).
4. The Candidacy Committee is obliged to revoke the licensure
  - a. of those who have completed their theological studies but have failed to take steps to enter into the sacred ministry of the Word.

- b. of those undergraduates who either discontinue their studies or fail to enroll again at the seminary.

(*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 46-48)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 619-20)

B. *Licensure of International Students*

1. The student must be a communicant member of a sound Reformed church and must be a regular or special student at our seminary.
2. The student must have sufficient training at our school so that the faculty can make a recommendation regarding their academic competence and ability to speak fluent English.
3. The student must have completed the course in homiletics required of our students or passed an equivalent course in some other school, and must demonstrate the ability to exhort to the satisfaction of our professor in homiletics.
4. The request for licensure must be sent to the Candidacy Committee.
5. The Candidacy Committee or its designees must interview the applicant.
6. The exhorting of the student must be under the auspices of Calvin Theological Seminary; the student may not make individual arrangements.
7. Licensure will be in force while the student is enrolled as a student at Calvin Theological Seminary. Extension of licensure must be made by special application.

(*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 36)

C. The Ministry Associates

*Article 23*

a. Ministry associates shall be acknowledged as elders of their calling churches with corresponding privileges and responsibilities. Normally, their work as elders shall be limited to the ministries in which they serve as ministry associates.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-a

b. Ordinarily, the office of ministry associates who serve in emerging congregations will terminate when a group of believers becomes an organized church. However, upon organization and with the approval of the newly formed council and the classis, ministry associates may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister of the Word is installed or until they have served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition. Ministry associates who continue to serve a newly organized

congregation beyond this reasonable period of transition must seek the permission of classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

c. Ministry associates may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community. Ministry associates who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-c

d. Ministry associates may be called to serve as solo pastors in organized congregations if the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that such congregations are from a ministry context where the standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently practical.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-d

e. Ministry associates who desire to serve beyond their specific field of labor must secure the approval of their consistories and classes.

### **Supplement, Article 23-a**

#### *General Regulations*

The office of ministry associate is applicable to a variety of ministries, provided that these ministries fit the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001 and that the other Church Order and synodical regulations for the office of ministry associate are observed. These include ministries such as education, evangelism, pastoral care, music, and ministries to children, youth, adults, and others within or outside of the congregation. Before examining a person for the office of ministry associate or granting permission to install a previously ordained ministry associate in a new position, the classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, will determine whether or not the position to which the person is being called fits the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001. In addition, the candidates for the office of ministry associate must have proven ability to function in the ministry to which they are being called.

The candidate shall also sustain a classical examination. The concurrence of synodical deputies is not required for the examination of a candidate for the office of ministry associate. The classical examination shall include the following elements:

- 1) Presentation of the following documents
  - a) A council recommendation from the church in which the appointee holds membership

- b) Evidence (diplomas, transcripts, etc.) of formal general education and of specialized training in the ministry area to which the candidate is being called
  - c) A copy of the letter of appointment from the church that is requesting ordination of the candidate as ministry associate
  - d) A copy of the candidate's letter of acceptance
- 2) Where applicable, presentation of a sermon
- a) In an official worship service, preferably on the Sunday preceding the meeting of classis and in the church to which the candidate for ordination has been called, the ministry associate shall preach a sermon on a text assigned by classis. Two members of classis shall be present to serve as sermon critics.
  - b) A copy of the sermon shall be provided to the classical delegates. In the presence of the ministry associate, the sermon critics shall evaluate the sermon and the ministry associate's manner of conducting the entire worship service.
- 3) Examination in the following areas
- a) Knowledge of Scripture
  - b) Knowledge of Reformed doctrine
  - c) Knowledge of the standards of the church and the Church Order
  - d) Practical matters regarding Christian testimony, walk of life, relationships with others, love for the church, approach to ministry, and promotion of Christ's kingdom

The classis shall ensure that the candidate meets the standards of character, knowledge, and skill adopted by Synod 2004 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 619) and inserted below.

The classis shall also ensure that ministry associates, especially those working at some distance from their calling congregations, will have proper supervision and support for their ministry.

When the ministry associates accept another call, their ordination shall require the approval of the classis to which their calling church belongs, to which the ministry associates shall have presented good ecclesiastical testimonies of doctrine and life given to them by their former council and classis.

A calling church that terminates the service of a person in an approved ministry associate position must seek the concurrence of the classis in which approval was given.

*Standards to be Met by Those Seeking to be Ordained as a Ministry Associate*

An examination for the office of ministry associate will require that all ministry associates meet the church's standards for character

and knowledge, whereas the standards for skill competence will relate specifically to the particular ministry associate's area of calling and expertise.

### **Qualifications for a Ministry Associate**

#### *Character*

The ministry associate is mature in Christ. "Christ-likeness" covers all of what it means to be godly. The following guidelines, which are rooted in Scripture (references are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive), suggest many aspects of godly character:

1. **Devoted to Jesus** - The ministry associate is "in Christ" (John 15:5), filled with his Spirit (Acts 1:8), and exercises personal spiritual disciplines.
2. **Committed to the church and its mission** (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Eph. 4:11-13, 1 Tim. 5:22) - The ministry associate is a person in Christian community. She/he has been tested and proven. She/he has been recognized as prepared for ministry by the community of believers and evidences accountability to it.
3. **Called and gifted** (Matt. 28:16ff, Acts 1:8) - The ministry associate has a calling from God that is confirmed by the church. That calling provides her/him with a mission, with vision, and with intrinsic motivation. She/he ministers out of giftedness (1 Cor. 12, Rom. 12, etc.).
4. **Filled with love** (Matt. 22:37-40) - The ministry associate is characterized by love—love of God, love of self, and love of others, including lost and diverse people.
5. **Possesses the fruit of the spirit** (Gal. 5:22-23) - The ministry associate gives evidence of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.
6. **Possesses the qualities of an officebearer** (1 Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9) - The ministry associate demonstrates such qualities as being: reputable, loyal, self-disciplined, respected, hospitable, mature, honest, sincere, teachable and able to teach, emotionally stable, blameless, lover of God and not money, resilient, responsible, not quick-tempered, not overbearing, not quarrelsome, not abusive (of others or substances), managing her/his own household well (including spousal support of ministry), risk-taking, flexible, adaptable, etc.
7. **Has a servant's heart** (Matt. 20:26) - The ministry associate is a servant-leader.
8. **Possesses wisdom** (Prov. 1:1-7) - The ministry associate lives according to God's design, recognizes Christ as "wisdom

from God" (1 Cor. 1:30, Col. 2:3), and seeks wisdom from above (James 1:5, 3:13).

9. **Manages life well** - The ministry associate practices good stewardship of time, talents, finances, and physical creation (Gen. 1:27-28, Ps. 8:6-8).
10. **Eager to learn** - The ministry associate is a lifelong learner, ever studying God's word and world (Ps. 19) and demonstrates that she/he has been and is currently being mentored.

#### *Biblical Knowledge*

The ministry associate has a working knowledge of the Bible in her/his native language, and:

1. is able to identify Scripture's main themes (covenant, kingdom of God, missio Dei, etc.) and to locate their place in the redemptive history that is centered in Christ;
2. has command of the divisions of Scripture (Law, prophets, gospels, epistles, etc.), the historical and literary contexts of each biblical book, and basic hermeneutical principles required to interpret them;
3. is able to demonstrate knowledge of key Scripture passages, and to apply them appropriately to life and ministry.

Based on the above, the ministry associate is able to prepare and preach/teach meaningful and motivational messages/lessons that are true to Scripture. The ministry associate is able to communicate clearly the gospel to unbelievers and believers.

#### *Theological Knowledge*

1. The ministry associate has knowledge of doctrinal standards and systematic theology at the level of Berkhof's *Manual of Christian Doctrine*. This would include knowledge of Reformed systematic theology, the Ecumenical Creeds, and the three confessional standards of the Christian Reformed Church. Furthermore, the ministry associate is able to differentiate and defend the Reformed faith biblically from other systems of thought, both Christian and non-Christian. She/he is able to reflect from a biblical perspective on the cultures, circumstances, and events of everyday life and ministry.
2. The ministry associate has a basic knowledge of church history (including Christian Reformed Church history and culture) and is able to apply its lessons to present reality and ministry.

#### *Skill - Practice of Ministry*

Ministry associates give evidence of ministry skills. The skills necessary for ministry are many, and not all ministry associates possess them in the same measure. Someone in a ministry position

will be expected to demonstrate skills in relation to the particularity of her/his position. Ministry associates, whether in specialized ministry within an organized congregation or in new church development, use skills to lead the church of Jesus Christ to fulfill the New Testament purposes of outreach, worship, fellowship, discipleship, and service. Some necessary ministry skills are:

1. **Leadership & Administration** - The ministry associate is able to help people and the church move from where they are to where God wants them to be. To do this, ministry associates possess such skills as: casting vision; creating ownership; creating functional organizational systems; resolving conflict; developing gift-based ministries; planning ministry; developing and mentoring leaders; and managing time, money, and people (according to principles of CRC polity).
2. **Outreach** - The ministry associate is able personally to share (witness); to defend (apologetics) the faith; and to lead the church in reaching out to the lost, in receiving them, and in developing new churches.
3. **Worship** - The ministry associate is able to prepare and deliver messages/teach lessons (homiletics), administer the sacraments, and lead in worship and prayer.
4. **Pastoral Care** - The ministry associate possesses relational skills that enable her/him to provide personally and through the church (corporately) pastoral care, visitation, small groups, youth ministry, spiritual counsel, and conduct of weddings and funerals.
5. **Fellowship** - The ministry associate is able to foster a nurturing Christian community.
6. **Discipleship** - The ministry associate is able to raise up, teach, and nurture disciple-making disciples.
7. **Service** - The ministry associate is able to respond to personal and community needs by mobilizing the church for ministry.
8. **Specialized** - The ministry associate has any necessary skills specific to her/his particular calling within the church.

(See *Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 619 and *Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 373-75)  
(Amended *Acts of Synod 2009*, pp. 583-84)

### **Supplement, Article 23-c**

The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define chaplains ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to chaplains ordained under Article 23.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 613)

## Supplement, Article 23-d

### *Guideline for calling a ministry associate to an organized congregation*

The ministry context is ordinarily one in which cultural differences (e.g., ethnic, social, economic, educational, language) between the congregation and its ministry context on the one hand, and the dominant culture of the denomination as expressed in the seminary, other leadership development entities, and broader denominational life on the other hand (a) present significant obstacles to raising up indigenous leadership in ways that are sustainable by the respective congregations and communities, and (b) have resulted in limited- or non-availability of competent indigenous leaders trained for ministry via one of the prescribed routes for ministry of the Word.

*(Acts of Synod 2008, p. 520)*

### Article 24

- a. The task of the ministry associate is to bear witness to Christ through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, church education, pastoral care, evangelism, and other ministries in order that believers may be called to comprehensive discipleship and unbelievers may be called to faith.
- b. Ministry associates shall function under the direct supervision of the council, giving regular reports to it and being present at its meetings, particularly when their work is under consideration.

### D. The Elders and Deacons

### Article 25

- a. The elders and deacons shall serve for a limited time as designated by the council. As a rule a specified number of them shall retire from office each year. The retiring officebearers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the church make immediate eligibility for reelection advisable. Elders and deacons who are thus reelected shall be reinstalled.
- b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith.
- c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers, and shall stimulate the members of Christ's church to faithful, obedient stewardship of their resources on behalf of the needy—all with words of biblical encouragement and testimony which assure the unity of word and deed.

## II. THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH

### A. General Provisions

#### *Article 26*

The assemblies of the church are the council, the classis, and the synod.

#### *Article 27*

- a. Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of councils being original, that of major assemblies being delegated.
- b. The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis.

#### *Article 28*

- a. These assemblies shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner.
- b. A major assembly shall deal only with those matters which concern its churches in common or which could not be finished in the minor assemblies.
- c. Matters referred by minor assemblies to major assemblies shall be presented in harmony with the rules for classical and synodical procedure.

#### *Article 29*

Decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon due consideration. The decisions of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.

#### *Article 30*

- a. Assemblies and church members may appeal to the assembly next in order if they believe that injustice has been done or that a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order. Appellants shall observe all ecclesiastical regulations regarding the manner and time of appeal.
- b. Synod may establish rights for other appeals and adopt rules for processing them.
- c. If invoked, the Judicial Code shall apply to the processing of appeals and written charges.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 30-a through -c

## Supplement, Article 30-a

### PROCEDURAL RULES APPLICABLE TO APPEALS UNDER ARTICLE 30-A OF THE CHURCH ORDER WHEN THE JUDICIAL CODE IS NOT INVOKED

#### A. *Appeal by a Member (Appellant) from a Decision or Action of a Council (Respondent)*

1. *Time Limit.* An appeal must be made within six (6) months of the decision or action appealed from. If, however, the action or decision appealed from creates a continuous or repeating practice, the appeal is timely if filed within six (6) months after the practice is exercised. A classis may accept a late appeal if classis is satisfied that the appellant has reasonable cause for being late.
2. *Oral Presentation.* When classis considers the appeal, both appellant and respondent shall be allowed reasonable time to make an oral presentation with respect to the appeal.
3. *Action by Classis.* The classis shall consider and decide every appeal properly submitted to it. Classis shall decide on the appeal within one (1) year from the date the appeal is received by the stated clerk of classis. If classis has not decided an appeal within the one (1)-year period allowed, either the appellant or the respondent has the right to appeal the matter to synod without waiting for decision of classis.
4. *Appeal to Synod.* Both the appellant and the respondent have the right to appeal the decision of classis to synod.

#### B. *Appeals to Synod by Members or Assemblies (Appellant) from Decision of Classis (Respondent)*

1. *Time Limit.* An appeal must be filed within ninety (90) days after the decision or action appealed.
2. Normally for an appeal to be considered by a synod in any year the appeal must be in the hands of the executive director by March 15 of that year. If an appeal is filed after March 15, it shall not be heard by the synod of the same year; however, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, upon the recommendation of the executive director, may decide to submit the appeal to the synod of the same year.
3. Normally appeals will not be printed in the agenda for synod. However, if the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, upon recommendation of the executive director, decides that an appeal raises an issue the resolution of which by synod will likely have significant application outside of and beyond the classis from which the appeal came, the appeal and any response to it or, at the discretion of the executive director, an

abbreviated version of the appeal and response will be printed in the agenda. If an appeal is filed before March 15 but the deadline for response falls after March 15, the executive director, after conferring with the respondent, may decide to print the appeal and distribute any responses to delegates at the beginning of synod or to hold the appeal over to the next synod.

4. The appellant and the respondent shall have the right to appear before the advisory committee of synod to explain their positions. Requests to be heard shall be directed to the executive director, who shall transmit them to the chairperson of the advisory committee.
5. The appellant and the respondent shall have the right to be present during the presentation of the case at synod, and, upon recommendation of the advisory committee and with the approval of synod, they shall have the privilege of explaining and defending their positions on the floor of synod.
6. The advisory committee shall present a clear and adequate statement of the content of each appeal and response to the entire synod.
7. Copies of the appeals and responses not appearing in the agenda and, if possible, the principal related documents shall be sent to the members of the appointed advisory committee as soon as possible.

#### C. *General Rules*

1. *Filing an appeal.* An appeal must be in writing and filed with the stated clerk or executive director of the assembly appealed to. A copy shall be promptly given to the clerk of the assembly whose action is being appealed and to any other party to the appeal.
2. *Form of Appeal.* No specific form is prescribed. However, an appeal should contain at least the following elements:
  - a. The name of the appellant.
  - b. The name of the body against which the appeal is being made.
  - c. The decision which is being appealed.
  - d. The reasons why the appealed decision is believed to be wrong.
  - e. Background information which will enable the assembly to make a proper decision.
  - f. A statement defining clearly what action the appellant desires the assembly to take.
3. *Respondent's Submission.* The respondent shall be entitled to submit a response to the appeal. Such submission shall be made to the clerk of the assembly appealed to within sixty (60) days

from the date the respondent has received a copy of the appeal. A copy of such submission shall be promptly given to the appellant.

4. In any appearance before an assembly or a committee of an assembly, the appellant and the respondent shall have the right to be represented or counseled by a member of the church.

### **Supplement, Article 30-b**

This supplement deals with two separate matters: synodical review of application for candidacy by persons not recommended by the Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) Board of Trustees and/or the Candidacy Committee and appeals from decisions, acts, or course of conduct of agencies, boards, or committees of the Christian Reformed Church. The separate sets of procedural rules applicable to these two matters are set forth below.

Part A. Synodical review of application for candidacy by persons not recommended by the CTS Board of Trustees and/or the Candidacy Committee.

In the event that an applicant should feel aggrieved by or dissatisfied with a decision of the CTS Board of Trustees and/or Candidacy Committee regarding the processing of the applicant's application for candidacy status, the following procedure will give the applicant recourse to synod. This procedure is not an appropriate avenue by which to ask synod for amendment of the Church Order or change in relevant synodical decisions. Rather, it provides the right for an applicant to have the application for candidacy considered by synod in the light of the then-existing requirements for candidacy, whether those requirements are set out in the Church Order or in other decisions of synod. This procedure is a special kind of appeal: the Judicial Code shall not be invoked, and the rules relating to other appeals shall not apply.

1. If the CTS Board of Trustees and/or Candidacy Committee or its designee declines to process an application for candidacy at any stage or if candidacy is not going to be recommended, the Candidacy Committee shall promptly inform the applicant in writing of such act or decision and the reasons therefore.
2. Notwithstanding such notice, the applicant has the option to have the application processed, including submission to synod. To exercise this option, the applicant must give written notice of such exercise to the Candidacy Committee and the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church within fourteen (14) days after the receipt of the notice from the Candidacy Committee.
3. If the applicant gives the notice described in the foregoing paragraph, the application shall be processed, and the Candidacy

Committee shall submit such application to synod with such recommendations and supporting reasons as the Candidacy Committee shall consider appropriate.

4. At least ten (10) days before synod is scheduled to convene, the applicant shall submit to the executive director, with a copy to the Candidacy Committee, a written statement of facts, argument, and documents in support of the application.
5. Synod shall review the application and documents in support thereof, the decision of the board or the Candidacy Committee, and the reasons for such decision. The applicant and the Candidacy Committee shall have the right to make a presentation to the assigned advisory committee, and, if that committee recommends and synod so decides, the applicant and the Candidacy Committee shall be allowed time to address synod on the matter.
6. Both the applicant and the Candidacy Committee have the right to be represented or counseled by a member of the church at any stage of the review process.

*Part B. Appeals from decisions, acts, or course of conduct of agencies, boards, or committees of the Christian Reformed Church.*

The right to appeal from decisions, acts, or course of conduct of agencies, boards, or committees of the Christian Reformed Church is established. The Judicial Code may be invoked in connection with such appeal, and if it is, the appeal process will be governed by the Judicial Code. If the Judicial Code is not invoked, the provisions and procedures set forth in the following paragraphs shall apply:

1. *Board, agency, or committee* shall mean and include any agent or employee of such board, agency, or committee while such agent or employee is acting within the scope and authority of his or her employment with such agency, board, or committee.
2. Appeals under this part of Supplement 30-b may be filed only by the following:
  - a. A member of the Christian Reformed Church.
  - b. An assembly (council or classis).
  - c. An employee of an agency, board, or committee whose decision, act, or course of conduct is to be challenged by the appeal.
3. The individual or assembly filing the appeal shall be called the *appellant*. The agency, board, or committee whose action is appealed shall be called the *respondent*.
4. No appeal under this part of Supplement 30-b may be filed until the appellant shall first have exhausted all reasonable and direct efforts according to procedures prescribed by such

agency, board, or committee to resolve the appellant's complaint or grievance.

5. The only grounds for an appeal under this part are that the decision, act, or course of conduct of a respondent is contrary to the Church Order, the mandate of the respondent, or a previous decision of the assembly to which the respondent is responsible.
6. In an appeal under this part, an appellant who is other than an assembly or an employee must allege—and the onus remains on him or her to show—that the decision, act, or course of conduct appealed from substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, as an individual apart from other members of the church.
7. In an appeal under this part by an employee, the appellant must allege—and the onus remains on her or him to show—that the decision, act, or course of conduct appealed from substantially affects her or him directly, either materially or personally, in her or his capacity as an employee.
8. An appeal from a decision, act, or course of conduct of an agency, board, or committee shall be filed with the assembly to which the agency, board, or committee is responsible.
9. For an appeal to be timely, it must be filed within ninety (90) days after completion of efforts to resolve the matter under provisions in paragraph "4" above.

Because the completion of internal efforts to resolve the matter may not always indicate a precise date for the commencement of the sixty (60)-day appeal period, the following standards apply for computing the beginning of the appeal period:

- a. If the agency, board, or committee gives the appellant a written communication stating that the internal procedures for resolving the grievance or complaint have now been completed, the sixty (60)-day period begins with the date the appellant receives such letter.
- b. In the absence of a written communication described in paragraph "a" above, the appellant may give written notice to the agency, board, or committee involved that he or she believes that the internal procedures for resolving the grievance or complaint have been exhausted, and, if there is no written response to such notice within thirty (30) days from the date of the receipt of such notice, the sixty (60)-day appeal period begins with the expiration of a thirty (30)-day period beginning with the receipt of such notice. For the purpose of this paragraph, the notice shall be deemed to have been received on the date it was personally delivered to the office of the agency, board, or committee or five days after the mailing by regular mail.

- c. If the notice referred to in paragraph “b” above is given and the agency, board, or committee responds to the appellant within thirty (30) days that there is a further internal procedure, the appellant must pursue the additional procedure specified, and rules “a” and “b” will again apply to determine the commencement of the appeal period when the further step has been completed.
10. If the appeal is to a classis, when classis considers the appeal, both appellant and respondent shall be allowed reasonable time to make an oral presentation with respect to the appeal. The classis shall consider and decide every appeal submitted to it. Classis shall decide on the appeal within one (1) year from the date the appeal is received by the stated clerk of classis. If classis has not decided an appeal within such one (1)-year period, either appellant or respondent has the right to appeal to synod without waiting for the decision of classis.  
Both the appellant and the respondent have the right to appeal the decision of classis to synod.
11. If the appeal is initially to synod, the rules and procedures in Church Order Supplements 30-a, sections B and C apply.
12. Both the appellant and the respondent have the right to be represented or counseled by a member of the church at any stage of the appeal process.

### **Supplement, Article 30-c**

#### **JUDICIAL CODE OF RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES**

##### *Preamble to the Judicial Code*

The Judicial Code is not a document of broad applicability. It is intended to be operative in strictly defined areas and therefore contains limiting language.

The Judicial Code deals with the following matters:

- a. Disputes involving members and/or assemblies of the church and, in some limited instances, nonmembers (see Article 1-a).
- b. Disputes involving agencies, boards, or committees on one side and members or assemblies of the church on the other side, excluding employee termination decisions (see Article 1-b).

With respect to such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only:

- a. when written charges are filed; and
- b. when either party to the dispute requests a judicial hearing or when the assembly first hearing the charges determines to constitute a formal hearing.

The Judicial Code is intended to be a dispute-resolution mechanism of last resort. Brothers and sisters in Christ should make every effort to resolve issues between them amicably, according to the teachings of Scripture. If they require external assistance to reach agreement, they may, where appropriate, seek trained facilitators or mediators to help them reach agreement.

Therefore, even if the above two conditions are met (i.e., written charges and request for formal hearing), the assembly must still make a determination as to whether or not sufficient informal means for resolution have or have not been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing the judicial hearing while further informal efforts are undertaken. Only after the assembly determines that sufficient informal means have been exhausted or that such means do not resolve the matter, should the assembly proceed to conduct a judicial hearing as set forth below.

It should be noted that matters of admonition and discipline do not require a judicial hearing unless there are written charges that either party or the assembly determines require a judicial hearing. The Judicial Code recognizes the fundamental and primary role of informal means in all matters of admonition and discipline; it assumes that these matters are best handled by informal counseling and entreaty; and if sanctions are required, it leaves the determination of them to the church under the Church Order.

The assembly must also decide, under Article 10 of the Judicial Code below, whether or not the charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing.

#### A. Scope

##### *Article 1*

- a. Offenses against Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order
  - 1) These provisions of the Judicial Code apply to judicial hearings before a council, classis, or synod occasioned by the bringing of written charges as described in Article 1-a. Such admonition and discipline of the church as do not involve the hearing of written charges requiring formal adjudication are not governed by these provisions.
  - 2) The provisions of this Article 1-a pertain to the bringing of written charges by
    - a) a member of the Christian Reformed Church (the "church") against another member or against an assembly; or
    - b) an assembly against another assembly or against a member; or
    - c) a person who is not a member of the Christian Reformed Church against a member or assembly of the Christian

Reformed Church, provided such person has been directly affected as an individual by the charged offense.

- 3) A person or an assembly filing a charge shall be called the complainant, and the person or assembly against whom the charge is filed shall be called the respondent.
  - 4) Written charges brought by a complainant against a respondent alleging an offense in profession or practice against the Word of God, the doctrinal standards of the church, or the Church Order shall, upon the request of either the complainant or the respondent for a judicial hearing, be deemed to require formal adjudication unless the assembly, acting under Article 10, determines that the charges are not substantial. When neither the complainant nor the respondent requests a formal judicial hearing, the assembly before whom the charges are first filed shall determine whether or not to constitute a formal hearing.
  - 5) When the assemblies of the Church conduct hearings, they act in a judicial capacity.
- b. Appeals from decisions, acts, or course of conduct of agencies, boards, or committees of the Christian Reformed Church, excluding employee termination decisions.
- 1) In this article, board, agency, or committee shall mean and include any agent or employee of such board, agency, or committee while such agent or employee is acting within the scope and authority of his or her employment with such agency, board, or committee.
  - 2) The provisions of this Article 1-b pertain to the filing of a written appeal by
    - a) a member of the church against an agency, board, or committee; or
    - b) an assembly against an agency, board, or committee; or
    - c) an employee of an agency, board, or committee against an agency, board, or committee.
  - 3) A member of the church, an assembly, or an employee of an agency, board, or committee filing such appeal shall be called the appellant, and the agency, board, or committee shall be called the respondent.
  - 4) No appeal under this Article 1-b may be filed until the appellant shall first have exhausted all reasonable and direct efforts according to procedures prescribed by such agency, board, or committee to resolve the appellant's complaint or grievance internally.
  - 5) The only grounds for an appeal under Article 1-b are that the decision, act, or course of conduct of a respondent is contrary to the Church Order, the mandate of the

respondent, or a previous decision of the assembly to which the respondent is responsible.

- 6) In an appeal under this article, any appellant, other than an assembly or employee, must allege—and the onus remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct appealed from substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, and as an individual apart from other members of the Church.
- 7) In any appeal under this article brought by an employee, the appellant must allege—and the onus remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct appealed from substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, in his or her capacity as an employee.
- 8) For an appeal to be timely, it must be filed within sixty (60) days after completion of efforts to resolve the matter under provisions in paragraph “(4)” above.

Because the completion of internal efforts to resolve the matter may not always indicate a precise date for commencement of the sixty (60)-day appeal period, the following standards apply for computing the beginning of the appeal period:

- a) If the agency, board, or committee gives the appellant a written communication stating that the internal procedures for resolving the grievance or complaint have now been completed, the sixty (60)-day period begins with the date the appellant receives such letter.
- b) In the absence of a written communication described in paragraph “(a)” above, the appellant may give written notice to the agency, board, or committee involved that he or she believes that the internal procedures for resolving the grievance or complaint have been exhausted, and if there is no written response to such notice within thirty (30) days from the date of the receipt of such notice, the sixty (60)-day appeal period begins with the expiration of a thirty (30)-day period beginning with the receipt of such notice. For the purpose of this paragraph, the notice shall be deemed to have been received on the date it was personally delivered to the office of the agency, board, or committee or five days after the mailing by regular mail.
- c) If the notice referred to in paragraph “(b)” above is given and the agency, board, or committee responds to the appellant within thirty (30) days that there is a further internal procedure, the appellant must pursue the additional procedure specified, and rules “(a)” and “(b)” will again apply to determine the commencement

of the appeal period when the further step has been completed.

- c. Procedure regarding the bringing of charges
  - 1) Charges against a member of the Church shall be filed by the complainant with the council of the local church of which the respondent is a member.
  - 2) Charges against an agency, board, or committee, including its agent or employees, shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly to which the agency, board, or committee is responsible.
  - 3) Charges against an assembly shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly next in order (the order being council, classis, and synod).

## B. Judicial Rights

### *Article 2*

Both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be represented or counseled by a member of the church in any judicial hearing.

### *Article 3*

Both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be present at each original hearing and hearing on appeal provided for herein, except when the assembly withdraws to decide the issues raised by the hearing.

### *Article 4*

The respondent and complainant shall have the right to have witnesses examined in their presence, except when the respondent fails to appear after due notice.

### *Article 5*

- a. A complainant or respondent not satisfied with the decision may appeal such decision to the assembly next in order.
- b. The provisions of the Judicial Code shall apply to all appeals from decisions resulting from formal adjudication.

## C. Charges

### *Article 6*

- a. Every charge, in order to receive a judicial hearing, must be filed in writing with the assembly, must set forth the alleged offense, and must specify the facts relied upon to sustain the charge, including, as far as possible, the time and place of the

offense. The complainant shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy of the charge to the respondent at the same time as it is filed with the assembly.

- b. The charge shall not allege more than one offense. However, several charges against the same respondent, whether brought by one or more complainants, may be presented at the same time and may, at the discretion of the assembly, be heard together. When several charges are heard at the same time, a decision on each charge must be made separately.
- c. Time limits
  - 1) There is no time limit for filing a charge of sexual abuse.
  - 2) An allegation of abuse to a minor other than an allegation of sexual abuse may be filed at any time within five years after the date of the alleged offense or at any time before the person who was allegedly abused reaches age 25, whichever allows the longer time.
  - 3) Except for the provisions in 1) and 2) immediately above, no charge may be filed for an alleged offense which occurred more than five years prior to the date on which the charge is filed.

#### *Article 7*

A respondent shall file a written answer to the charge with the assembly and shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy to the complainant within sixty (60) days after the written charge is filed.

#### *Article 8*

- a. A hearing for an alleged offense shall ordinarily begin no later than one year from the time the charge is filed.
- b. The assembly, after consulting with the complainant and the respondent, shall set the time and place for the hearing on the charge and shall notify the parties.
- c. The assembly shall set a time, not less than fifteen (15) days and not more than thirty (30) days, before the hearing by which the parties shall each furnish the other party with a list of witnesses to be called and a copy of each exhibit to be offered at the hearing. A party shall be limited to such witnesses and exhibits unless the party persuades the assembly of good cause for not having the information available by the deadline.
- d. Within the same time period set forth in c above, each party shall furnish the assembly with a list of witnesses that the party plans to call at the hearing and a copy of all documents to be offered at the hearing, in chronological order and indexed.

- e. The assembly may, in its discretion, require further advance disclosures by the parties concerning the witnesses, documents, evidence, and arguments that they intend to present at the hearing.

D. Original Hearing Procedures Before a Council  
Acting in its Judicial Capacity

*Article 9*

All hearings shall be conducted in a consistent and Christian manner. A council composed of the elders and deacons, while acting in its judicial capacity, shall be so constituted as to avoid conflicts of interest. The administration of oaths shall not be required.

*Article 10*

Before the hearing, the assembly shall determine whether the written charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing. This may be done by the assembly on the basis of the written charge, the answer, the proposed exhibits, and, if the assembly so desires, an informal conference with the parties and their representatives. The assembly may delegate the review of information and the informal conference to a committee, but the assembly, after receiving a report from the committee, makes the determination. A decision by a council or a classis that a charge is not substantial may be appealed.

The hearing, if ordered, shall proceed as follows:

- a. Each party may make an opening statement summarizing what that party expects to prove.
- b. The complainant shall proceed first with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits.
- c. The respondent shall then proceed with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits.
- d. A witness must testify at the hearing, and all witnesses may be questioned by both parties unless the parties agree in writing at least fifteen (15) days before the hearing to use a written statement of a person not present at the hearing.
- e. The complainant and the respondent shall, in turn, summarize their cases either orally or in writing.
- f. If either party objects to irregularity in the proceedings, the objection must be entered into the record. The presiding officer may sustain or disallow the objection. If the chair's ruling is challenged, the assembly must vote on the question of sustaining the chair.

*Article 11*

If in any case the respondent, after due notice has been given, shall refuse or neglect to appear at the time and place set forth for the hearing, the investigation or hearing may proceed in the respondent's absence. In all cases sufficient time shall be allowed for the respondent to appear at the given place and time and to prepare for the hearing. The council shall decide what constitutes "sufficient time."

*Article 12*

The final decision on any case shall be by majority vote of the council, excluding those who have recused themselves from the case. Members who have not attended all the sessions and have not heard the case in its entirety shall read or listen to the record before a vote is taken.

*Article 13*

During the hearing, the presiding officer shall not comment on the merits of the case. This restriction does not apply when the council enters its final deliberations. After a decision has been reached, the presiding officer shall certify and announce the findings.

*Article 14*

The testimony shall be recorded verbatim if requested by any party to the proceedings. The record, including all exhibits, papers, evidence, and findings in the case shall be certified by the presiding officer and shall be the basis of any appeal which may be taken. The appellant and the respondent may have reasonable access to the record.

E. Hearing and Appeal Procedures Before a Classis  
Acting in its Judicial Capacity

*Article 15*

If a council or an agency, board, or committee of classis is the respondent, the original hearing shall be before the classis and in accordance with the hearing procedures set forth in Articles 10-14.

*Article 16*

Appeal of the decision of council may be made to classis. Such an appeal must be made within ninety (90) days. When such an appeal is made, a written notice together with a written statement of grounds of appeal shall be sent to the stated clerk of classis and a copy thereof to the council. The clerk of council shall thereupon transmit the decision of council, together with the record referred to

in Article 14, to the stated clerk of classis. The hearing in the classis shall be limited to the grounds set forth in the statement and record.

*Article 17*

An appeal by an involved party shall not be heard in any case when the appellants has without just cause failed or refused to be present at the hearing on appeal.

*Article 18*

The right to appeal shall not be affected by the death of the person entitled to such right. The heirs or representative may continue to act in the appellants's behalf.

*Article 19*

If the appellants, having shown good cause therefore, desires to introduce additional evidence, the classis may remand the case to the council for a rehearing or for such additional hearing as the classis may direct.

*Article 20*

In all cases the classis shall set a time for the hearing on appeal and send a notice as to the time and date of such hearing to all parties. After the statement and any applicable written record have been considered and oral arguments concluded, the classis shall go into strict executive session and shall immediately consider and decide the issues of the case. The final decision on any case shall be by majority vote of the classis. Delegates who have not attended all the sessions and have not heard the case in its entirety shall read the record before a vote is taken. The classis may sustain or reverse in whole or in part the decision of the council, or it may return the case to the council with instructions for a new partial or complete rehearing.

*Article 21*

Appeal of the decision of classis may be made to synod. Such an appeal must be made within ninety (90) days. When such an appeal is made a written notice together with a statement of grounds of appeal shall be sent to the executive director of the CRCNA and a copy thereof to the stated clerk of classis. The stated clerk of such classis shall thereupon transmit the decision of classis together with the record and papers of the case to the executive director of the CRCNA, who will place the appeal on the agenda for synod.

F. Hearing and Appeal Procedures Before the Synod  
Acting in its Judicial Capacity

*Article 22*

If a classis or an agency, board, or committee of synod is the respondent, the original hearing shall be before the Judicial Code Committee in accordance with the procedures set forth in Articles 10-14. Appeals of decisions of assemblies of the church acting in their judicial capacity; appeals from a board, agency, or committee of synod when the Judicial Code has been invoked; and such other matters requiring formal adjudication as synod shall undertake shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee.

*Article 23*

- a. The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of nine members. Each year three persons shall be elected for three-year terms.
- b. Synod shall elect members from nominations presented by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The Judicial Code Committee may recommend nominees to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
- c. The terms of members shall commence July 1 following their election by synod. The committee is to consist of both clergy and laity, and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA shall present nominations to assure the accomplishment of this goal.
- d. In the event of a vacancy on the committee because of resignation or death, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA shall appoint a person to fill the balance of that term.
- e. Members may be reelected but shall not serve more than six consecutive years. A former member who has been off the committee for two or more years shall be eligible for election to the committee as a new member.
- f. The Judicial Code Committee shall select a chairperson and reporter from among its membership.
- g. Any member of the Judicial Code Committee advising a given synod may be, but need not be, a delegate to that synod.

*(Acts of Synod 1993, p. 499)*

*Article 24*

- a. Matters within the jurisdiction of the Judicial Code Committee shall be referred to it at any time after its members have been appointed.

b. The Judicial Code Committee shall meet between synods as frequently as its business requires, and normally shall convene a week before synod to prepare its recommendations.

c. As to appeals from decisions of consistories and classes, the Judicial Code Committee shall permit complainants and respondents to present arguments.

d. As to applications for hearings brought against an agency, board, or committee of synod and other matters requiring formal adjudication which synod shall undertake, the Judicial Code Committee shall follow the hearing procedures described herein.

#### *Article 25*

a. Recommendations of the Judicial Code Committee shall be presented to synod in writing, shall be accompanied with grounds, and shall be openly discussed in plenary session of synod.

b. Either party to the dispute may request the opportunity to address synod. Such request shall be made through the Judicial Code Committee, which shall make recommendation concerning this request to synod.

c. The Judicial Code Committee shall provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on procedure for handling the matter.

#### *Article 26*

Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:

a. by deciding the matter;

b. by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;

c. by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council; or

d. by conducting its own hearing.

#### *Article 27*

If synod conducts its own hearing it shall follow the hearing procedures set forth herein.

Synod adopted the following grounds for the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures:

a. The Judicial Code will encourage greater uniformity of procedure throughout our denomination when charges must be adjudicated.

b. The Judicial Code will help to insure just treatment of those who are involved in the judgments and decisions of the church.

c. Scripture requires that provisions be made to provide impartial judgments among God's people (cf. Deut. 1:16-17; Deut. 16:18-20; Lev. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19-21).

d. Article 28 of the Church Order requires that the assemblies of the church deal with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner. Without effective procedural guidelines it is often difficult to deal with substantive issues in an appropriate manner.

e. The Judicial Code provides a procedural pattern within which the law of love may be fulfilled (cf. James 2:1, 8-9). "My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors." (RSV)

(*Acts of Synod 1977*, pp. 48-54)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 484-88)

(*Amended Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 688-91)

### Article 31

A request for revision of a decision shall be submitted to the assembly which made the decision. Such a request shall be honored only if sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 31

### Supplement, Article 31

Synod advised the churches that a request for revision of a decision of a major assembly must be processed as far as possible in the minor assemblies before coming to the major assembly.

(*Acts of Synod 1983*, pp. 653-54)

### Article 32

a. The sessions of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

b. In every assembly there shall be a president whose duty it shall be to state and explain the business to be transacted, and to see to it that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed and that everyone observes due order and decorum in speaking. There shall also be a clerk whose task it shall be to keep an accurate record of the proceedings. In major assemblies the above named offices shall cease when the assembly adjourns.

c. Each assembly shall make proper provision for receiving communications, preparing agenda and acts, keeping files and archives, and conducting the financial transactions of the assembly.

d. Each assembly shall provide for the safeguarding of its property through proper incorporation.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 32-d

### **Supplement, Article 32-d**

A. *Model Articles of Incorporation for Churches in the United States*

#### **ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION**

The undersigned, desiring to become incorporated, adopt the following Articles of Incorporation:

##### **ARTICLE I NAME OF CORPORATION**

The name of this corporation (church) is

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

##### **ARTICLE II LOCATION**

The location of the church shall be in the City of \_\_\_\_\_,  
County of \_\_\_\_\_, State of \_\_\_\_\_. The street address  
and mailing address of the registered office of the church shall  
be \_\_\_\_\_/  
\_\_\_\_\_. The name of the resident agent at the registered office is  
\_\_\_\_\_.

##### **ARTICLE III FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES**

This church is a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and recognizes the following as the fundamental principles of doctrine and government: (a) the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God and the only rule for faith and life and (b) the formulas of unity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, namely: The Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, and any amendments or additions as the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (“synod”) may adopt.

##### **ARTICLE IV PURPOSES**

This church is a nonprofit, ecclesiastical corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) (the “Code”).

The church shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Code. This church has not been formed for pecuniary profit or gain. No part of the assets, income, or profit of the church shall inure to the benefit of its members, council members, or officers. However, the church shall be authorized to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this Article IV.

No substantial part of the activities of this church shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. This church shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

## **ARTICLE V CHURCH GOVERNANCE**

The ecclesiastical government of the church shall be conducted in accordance with the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church in North America as Synod shall adopt or revise (the "Church Order").

The council of this church, as defined under the Church Order, shall constitute the Board of Trustees and shall have all powers over the temporalities of this church as the Church Order and relevant state law may prescribe.

Any persons elected to the office of elder or deacon according to the Church Order and the pastor(s), if there be one or more, must be members of the church. The corporate functions related to an office shall cease on the vacating of the office, but a vacancy in the office of the pastor(s) shall in no way affect the church or the Board of Trustees.

## **ARTICLE VI PROPERTY**

### **A. Manner in Which Held**

Except as expressly provided under this Article VI, all real and personal property shall be held exclusively in furtherance of the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and in furtherance of the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation and interpreted by the Classis of which the church is a member (the "Classis"), subject to review on appeal by synod, consistent with the Church Order.

### **B. In the Event of Dissolution**

In the event of the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation, the church's remaining assets, if any, after the payment of its debts and expenses, shall be conveyed as the Board of

Trustees may propose and as the affirmative vote of a majority of the members shall determine, subject to each of the following:

1. The Classis must approve the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation;
2. The Board of Trustees shall receive the advice of the Classis in formulating its proposal for property distribution;
3. The vote of the members shall be in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation; and
4. All remaining assets must be distributed only to one or more organizations which qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Code.

#### **C. In the Event of Consensual Division**

In the event that a majority of the members of this church consensually agree to divide this church, with the consent of the Classis, into two (2) or more member churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, all real and personal property of this corporation shall be distributed as a majority vote of the members determines in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation.

#### **D. In the Event of Irreconcilable Division**

In the event that the Classis (or synod on appeal) determines that an irreconcilable division (schism) has occurred within this church, the confessing members of this church who, according to the exclusive determination of the classis (or synod on appeal), remain true to the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation shall be the lawful congregation of this church and shall have the exclusive right to hold and enjoy the real and personal property of this church. Nothing in this Article VI shall prevent the classis (or synod on appeal) from determining, in keeping with the scriptural injunction of 1 Corinthians 6, that more than one group of confessing members of this church are each a lawful congregation and dividing the real and personal property between the groups of members as classis (or synod on appeal) may determine. Classis (or Synod on appeal) also shall have the exclusive discretion to determine the circumstances which may warrant the division of the real and personal property between a group or groups of former members who choose not to remain in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

**ARTICLE VII  
MEMBERSHIP VOTING REQUIREMENTS  
FOR CERTAIN ACTIONS**

A. Except as provided under paragraphs B through D of this Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation, the Board of Trustees shall have the authority to bargain, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or release any real estate belonging to the church; to erect and repair church buildings, parsonages, schoolhouses and other buildings for the direct and legitimate use of the church; and to fix the salary of anyone in its employment.

B. No purchase, sale or conveyance, mortgage, lease, or fixing of salaries shall occur under paragraph A of this Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation unless the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the church shall be first obtained at a meeting of the members present and entitled to vote. This meeting shall be specially called for that purpose by notice given for two successive Sundays at the usual place of meeting.

C. In the event of schism, the provisions of Article VI, D shall control the disposition of any real or personal property, and this Article VII shall not be effective.

D. No sale, mortgage, or conveyance shall be made of any gift, grant, donation, conveyance, or bequest, which would be inconsistent with the express terms or plain intent of the grant, donation, gift, conveyance, or bequest.

**ARTICLE VIII  
AMENDMENTS**

The Board of Trustees may at any time, by the affirmative vote of two thirds of the Trustees, adopt amendments to these Articles of Incorporation. Notwithstanding the preceding provision, the Board of Trustees shall not adopt any amendments to these Articles of Incorporation which are inconsistent with the provisions of Articles III through VIII unless approved by the Classis (or Synod on appeal).

Before any such amendment shall become effective, the Trustees shall obtain an affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of the church who are present and entitled to vote at a meeting specially called for that purpose, of which notice has first been given as provided for under paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation.

**ARTICLE IX  
LIMITED LIABILITY**

The liability of a volunteer Trustee of the church shall be limited, eliminated, or assumed to the extent as is authorized under the relevant laws of the state in which this church is formed, except to the extent such limitation, elimination, or assumption of liability is

inconsistent with the status of the church as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Code or results in the imposition of tax under Section 4958 of the Code. No amendment or repeal of this Article shall apply to or have any effect on the liability or alleged liability of any member of the Board of Trustees or officer of this church for or with respect to any acts or omissions of such trustee occurring prior to the effective date of any such amendment or repeal.

## ARTICLE X TERM

The term of this corporation is perpetual.

In witness of which, we are signing for the purpose of giving legal effect to these Articles of Incorporation:

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[Signature requirements will vary from state to state]

(*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 596)

*Note 1:* The above Articles of Incorporation can be obtained from the CRC website—[www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) and search “Articles of Incorporation.”

*Note 2:* A form of the above Articles of Incorporation modified for Michigan corporations is available from the office of the executive director or online at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org).

### *B. Model Articles of Incorporation for Churches in Canada*

## APPLICATION FOR INCORPORATION FOR A CORPORATION WITHOUT SHARE CAPITAL UNDER PART II OF THE CANADA CORPORATIONS ACT

### **To the Minister of Industry**

#### I

The undersigned hereby apply to the Ministry of Industry for the grant of a Charter of Letters Patent under the provisions of Part II of the Canada Corporations Act constituting the undersigned and such others as may become members of the Corporation thereby created a body corporate and politic under the name of

[insert corporate name].

The undersigned have satisfied themselves and are assured that the proposed name under which incorporation is sought is not the same or similar to the name under which any other company, society, association, or firm in existence is carrying on business in Canada, or is incorporated under the laws of Canada or any province thereof, or so nearly resembles the same as to be calculated to deceive [include the remaining if applicable] except that of [insert name of church], which,

as the unincorporated church organization for which this Corporation is the successor, has signified its consent to the use of the said name and that it is not a name which is otherwise on public grounds objectionable.

## II

The applicants are individuals of the full age of eighteen years with power under law to contract. The name, the place of residence, and the calling of each of the applicants are as follows:

NAME	ADDRESS
A	
B	
C	

The said A, B, and C will be the first directors of the Corporation [the number of directors cannot be less than 3].

## III

The objects of the Corporation are to advance and teach the religious tenets, doctrines, observances, and culture associated with the Christian faith within the denomination of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

## IV

The operations of the Corporation may be carried on throughout Canada and elsewhere.

## V

The place within Canada where the head office is to be situated is the city/town of [insert city or town name], in the Province of [insert Province].

## VI

It is specifically provided that in the event of liquidation, dissolution, or winding up of the Corporation all of its remaining assets after payments of its liabilities shall be distributed in the following manner:

- to the Classis of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to which the church Corporation belonged, provided that it is a registered charitable organization in Canada; or, failing that,
- to the Christian Reformed Church in North America Canada Corporation that is a registered charitable organization in Canada; or, failing that,
- to one or more registered charitable organizations in Canada and have objects similar to the one herein.

## VII

In accordance with Section 65 of The Canada Corporations Act, it is provided that, when authorized by bylaw, duly passed by the directors and sanctioned by at least two-thirds of the votes cast at a special general meeting of the members duly called for considering the bylaw, the directors of the Corporation may from time to time

- A. borrow money upon the credit of the Corporation;
- B. limit or increase the amount to be borrowed;
- C. issue debentures or other securities of the Corporation;
- D. pledge or sell such debentures or other securities for such sums and at such prices as may be deemed expedient; and
- E. secure any such debentures or other securities or any other present or future borrowing or liability of the Corporation by mortgage, hypothec, charge, or pledge of all or any currently owned or subsequently acquired real and personal, movable and immovable property of the Corporation, and the undertaking and rights of the Corporation

Any such bylaw may provide for the delegation of such powers by the directors to such officers or directors of the Corporation to such extent and in such manner as may be set out in the bylaw.

Nothing herein limits or restricts the borrowing of money by the Corporation on bills of exchange or promissory notes made, drawn, accepted, or endorsed by or on behalf of the Corporation.

## IX

The Corporation is to carry on its operations without pecuniary gain to its members, and any profits or other accretions to the Corporation are to be used in promoting its objects.

DATED at the City of \_\_\_\_\_, in the Province of \_\_\_\_\_, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

A \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF ALL INCORPORATORS

(Acts of Synod 2009, p. 596)

*Note:* The above Articles of Incorporation can be obtained from the CRC website—[www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) and search “Articles of Incorporation.”

### C. *Operating Bylaw re Property for Churches in Canada*

- a. The corporation shall hold all real and personal property exclusively upon the trusts described in the Objects and in furtherance of the Fundamental Principles of the Church

Doctrine and Government of the corporation as outlined in the (Letters Patent or Articles of Incorporation) of this church and as interpreted by the classis of which this church is a member (the “classis”), subject to review on appeal by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

- b. In the event of the disbanding of this church, with the approval of classis, and dissolution of this corporation, its remaining assets, if any, after the payment of its debts and expenses, shall be distributed to, and only to, one or more charities in Canada that are registered with Revenue, Taxation Canada for the purposes of the Income Tax Act of Canada and have objects similar to this corporation, in the manner proposed by the council, upon consultation with classis—and approved by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the church.
- c. In the event of consensual division of this church by vote of its members and with the consent of the classis into two or more Christian Reformed churches, all real and personal property of this corporation shall be distributed between the two or more Christian Reformed churches as agreed to by the members, subject to the review of said distribution by classis (or synod on appeal).
- d. In the event that the classis (or synod on appeal) determines that an irreconcilable division (schism) has occurred within this church, the confessing members of this church who, according to the exclusive determination of classis (or synod on appeal), remain true to the Objects, the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government, as set out in the (Letters Patent or Articles of Incorporation), shall be the lawful congregation of this church and shall constitute the sole membership of this corporation which shall have the exclusive right to hold and continue to hold and enjoy the real and personal property of this church. Nothing in this Article \_\_\_\_, however, shall prevent the classis (or synod on appeal) from determining, in keeping with the scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6, that more than one group of confessing members of this church are each a lawful congregation and from dividing the real and personal property among this church and such other lawful congregation(s) having the same or similar objects and arising from this church in such proportion as classis (or synod on appeal) may determine.

*(Acts of Synod 1997, p. 620)*

**D. Model General Operating Bylaw Number 1 for Churches in Canada**

A model bylaw for churches in Canada has been prepared and approved by synod. A copy may be obtained from the office of the executive director or from the CRC website—[www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) and search Bylaw Canada.

### Article 33

- a. The assemblies may delegate to committees the execution of their decisions or the preparation of reports for future consideration. They shall give every committee a well-defined mandate, and shall require of them regular and complete reports of their work.
- b. Each classis shall appoint a classical interim committee, and synod shall appoint the Board of Trustees, to act for them in matters which cannot await action by the assemblies themselves. Such committees shall be given well-defined mandates and shall submit all their actions to the next meeting of the assembly for approval.

### Article 34

The major assemblies are composed of officebearers who are delegated by their constituent minor assemblies. The minor assemblies shall provide their delegates with proper credentials which authorize them to deliberate and vote on matters brought before the major assemblies. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which the delegate or the church of which the delegate is a member is particularly involved.

## B. The Council

### Article 35

- a. In every church there shall be a council composed of the minister(s), the elders, and the deacons. Those tasks which belong to the common administration of the church, such as the calling of a pastor, the approval of nominations for church office, mutual censure, meeting with church visitors, and other matters of common concern, are the responsibility of the council.  

—Cf. Supplement, Article 35-a
- b. In every church there shall be a consistory composed of the elders and the minister(s) of the Word. Those tasks which belong distinctively to the office of elder are the responsibility of the consistory.
- c. In every church there shall be a diaconate composed of the deacons of the church. Those tasks which belong distinctively to the office of deacon are the responsibility of the diaconate. The diaconate shall give an account of its work to the council.

#### **Supplement, Article 35-a**

The council is responsible for preparing the annual budget of the congregation, including classical and denominational ministry shares for presentation to the congregation for its approval.

*(Acts of Synod 1992, p. 711)*

*Article 36*

- a. The council, consistory, and diaconate shall ordinarily meet at least once a month, at a time and place announced to the congregation. Each body shall select its own president and other officers.
- b. The council, at least four times per year, shall exercise mutual censure, which concerns the performance of the official duties of the officebearers.

*Article 37*

The council, besides seeking the cooperation of the congregation in the election of officebearers, shall also invite its judgment about other major matters, except those which pertain to the supervision and discipline of the congregation. For this purpose the council shall call a meeting at least annually of all members entitled to vote. Such a meeting shall be conducted by the council, and only those matters which it presents shall be considered. Although full consideration shall be given to the judgment expressed by the congregation, the authority for making and carrying out final decisions remains with the council as the governing body of the church.

—Cf. Article 59-b

*Article 38*

- a. Groups of believers among whom no council can as yet be constituted shall be under the care of a neighboring council, designated by classis.
- b. When a council is being constituted for the first time, the approval of classis is required.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-b

- c. When a non-Christian Reformed congregation wishes to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church, including the transfer of its pastor and other ministry staff, the procedure and regulations established by synod shall be followed as described in the Candidacy Committee's "Journey to Ministry" document.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-c

- d. When a council and congregation decide to disband or revert to unorganized status, the approval of classis is required. If any distribution of assets is required, the congregation and council shall consult with classis.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-d

- e. When two or more councils and congregations decide to merge, the approval of classis is required.

- f. When a council decides to disaffiliate from the denomination, the set process for disaffiliation adopted by synod shall be followed.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-f

g. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may unite to form union congregations with one or more particular congregations of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, with the approval of classis.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-g

#### **Supplement, Article 38-b**

- a. Ordinarily the congregation shall have been in existence at least three years.
- b. The congregation shall include a sufficient number of members who meet the biblical requirements for church office and are committed to use their personal and spiritual gifts in providing leadership and support to the congregation and its ministry.
- c. The congregation exercises financial stewardship for the continuing development and effectiveness of its ministry and, prior to organization, provides the classis with financial information that reflects its capacity and commitment toward financial self-support, including personnel expenses and classical and denominational ministry shares.
- d. The community in which the congregation is located offers the potential for continuing ministry, and the congregation gives evidence of its continuing commitment to fulfill the great commission with the resources and opportunities God gives.

*(Acts of Synod 2005, pp. 762-63)*

#### **Supplement, Article 38-c**

Synod 2006 adopted a detailed Affiliation Process and Procedure for congregations that desire to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The process and procedure document for such affiliation is included in the “Manual for Synodical Deputies,” the Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government, and has been provided for every stated clerk of classis.

*(See Agenda for Synod 2006, pp. 64-70 and Acts of Synod 2006, p. 680)*

#### **Supplement, Article 38-d**

If a church has diminished to fewer than forty-five active confessing members or shows that it lacks a sufficient number of members who can provide leadership or it can no longer meet its financial obligations or there is no prospect of continued growth, then a classis should consider that these are sufficient indicators for it to begin discussing with such a congregation whether it is still appropriate for it to retain organized status.

*(Acts of Synod 2005, p. 763)*

### **Supplement, Article 38-f**

A local congregation may disaffiliate from the denomination only according to the following procedure:

- a. A church council which adopts a resolution to disaffiliate from the denomination shall inform its classis of its actions, ordinarily at the next scheduled meeting of classis. The council shall provide written grounds for its intention to withdraw.
- b. Classis shall appoint representatives to meet with the council to attempt to dissuade the council from such action. Representatives of classis shall have the opportunity to meet in person with the council and to present written rebuttal to the council's grounds. Meetings between the council and classical representatives shall continue no longer than two months unless both parties agree to a continuation.
- c. If the council is not dissuaded by the classical representatives and wishes to continue the disaffiliation process, the council shall issue a call for a congregational meeting. It will present together with this call its written grounds for disaffiliation and any written rebuttal presented by the classical representatives.
- d. Representatives of classis shall be informed of the time and location of congregational meetings at which a congregation's withdrawal from the denomination is being considered and shall be given opportunity to persuade the congregation to remain within the denomination.
- e. At the congregational meeting a preliminary vote may be taken following the discussion. If a majority favors withdrawal, a second meeting to confirm this decision shall be scheduled no earlier than one month and no later than one year following.
- f. If the second congregational vote favors disaffiliation and the council follows through on its decision to disaffiliate, classis shall provide for the pastoral care of those members who wish to remain within the denomination.
- g. If the congregation wishes to disaffiliate from the denomination, classis (and synod upon appeal) shall settle any disputes between differing factions within the disaffiliating congregation. The separation will be complete when classis (or synod upon appeal) declares it acquiesces in the decision of the congregation to disaffiliate from the denomination.

*(Acts of Synod 1997, pp. 613-14)*

## Supplement, Article 38-g

### *Provisions for forming union churches*

1. The following plan of union shall be adopted by particular churches forming a union church:
  - a. The following plan of union is adopted by the \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Reformed Church of \_\_\_\_\_, effective as of the date when each of the congregations has approved the plan by a two-thirds majority of those present at a regularly called congregational meeting with such notice and quorum as is required by the constitution of each church and when the classis (presbytery) of each church has approved the particular union and this plan of union.
  - b. The purpose of this union is to provide for the worship of almighty God, instruction in the Christian faith, and outreach and diaconal ministry by a united congregation which will share the property, real and personal, of the uniting churches and provide for the services of a minister or ministers for the united church.
  - c. The united church shall be known as the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. The united church shall be subject to the constitution of each church involved as set forth in subsections *r, s, u,* and *v*.
  - e. The council (session) shall submit its records annually, and whenever requested, to each broader assembly (judicatory).
  - f. The membership of the united church shall consist of those who were members of the uniting churches, plus those received by the council (session) of the united church.
  - g. The council (session) of the united church shall report an equal share of the total membership to each broader assembly (judicatory), and such membership shall be published in the minutes/acts/directory of the synod/general assembly with a note to the effect that the report is that of a union church and with an indication of the total actual membership. A report of additional vital congregational information shall be made by the council (session) and properly noted by each (general) assembly.
  - h. Initially the officers of the united church (elders and deacons) shall be those officers in active service of the uniting churches, who will undertake to perform their responsibilities under the constitution of each church, as indicated in subsections *d* above and *r, s, u,* and *v* below.
  - i. At the first annual meeting subsequent to the effective date of the union, new officers shall be elected by the united congregation to

replace the officers noted in subsection *h* above according to the constitutional procedure in force as a consequence of subsection *v* below.

- j. The pastoral relations of the ministers of the uniting churches shall be dissolved automatically by the action of the classis (presbytery) in approving this plan, but they may be eligible to be ministers (pastors) of the united church according to the election of the united congregation.
- k. The minister /s of the united church shall be full and responsible members of each assembly (judicatory) of immediate jurisdiction and shall be subject to discipline as provided below in subsection *s*.
- l. The united church shall cause a corporation to be formed under the appropriate laws of the state, where permissible. The corporation shall include in its articles or charter the substance of subsections *b*, *c*, and *d* above and the confessional standards of the uniting churches.
- m. All property of the uniting churches, real and personal, shall be transferred to the corporation formed in section *l* above. The new corporation shall be the legal successor of the corporations, if any, of the uniting churches, and it shall be bound to administer any trust property or monies received in accordance with the provisions of the original establishment of the trust. All liabilities of the uniting churches shall be liabilities of the united church. In any state/ province where a church corporation is forbidden, the purposes of this section shall be achieved in harmony with the law of that state.
- n. Trustees of the corporation (or the unincorporated body) shall be elected in harmony with civil law according to the constitutional provisions outlined in subsection *d* above, as interpreted by subsection *v* below.
- o. While recognizing the basic right of any giver to designate the cause or causes to which the gift shall go, the council (session) of the united church shall annually propose to the congregation a general mission or benevolence program which shall be divided equitably among the officially approved causes of each denomination. The proportions shall be as the council (session) shall decide in response to the request of the broader assemblies (judicatories).
- p. Per capita ministry shares (apportionments) shall be paid to each classis (presbytery) and to synod (general assembly) on the basis of the total communicant membership of the union church, equally divided among the denominations involved.
- q. All members of the united church shall be under the discipline of the elders (session) according to rules agreed upon in

harmony with the constitution of each denomination where they coincide, in harmony with the mandatory provisions of the constitution of one denomination where the others are permissive, and at the choice of the elders (session) where they may be contradictory.

- r. Appeals against the actions of the council (session) shall be made to one assembly or judicatory only (presbytery or classis), at the choice of the members, and all subsequent appeals or complaints shall be in the assemblies of the members' original choice, and decisions so finally made shall be binding on the council (session) and on the members.
- s. The minister/s shall be subject to the discipline of the council/classis/presbytery provided that when an assembly begins an action, it shall invite a committee from the others to join in formulating and pressing the charges. In the event of appeal, the case shall be finally decided by the broadest assembly to which the appeal is taken in the church which commenced the action, and that decision shall be equally binding on the council/classis/presbytery.
- t. The minister/s shall participate in the denominational pension plan of one of the churches. If already participating in a plan, the minister/s shall remain in that plan. If there has been no participation in any pension plan, the minister/s may choose which denominational plan to join.
- u. Protests/complaints against the actions of the council (session) may be taken under the constitutional provisions of only one denomination, according to the choice of the complainant; once a complaint is registered with an assembly (judicatory), no other denomination shall accept jurisdiction in the same matter.
- v. Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases when the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions (except as provided in subsection *q* above), the council (session) of the united church shall petition the assemblies (judicatories) of immediate jurisdiction to overture their respective broadest assembly to resolve the conflict either by authoritative interpretations or by constitutional amendment.
- w. A union church may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of two congregational meetings held not less than one year and not more than two years apart, subject to the concurrence of the classes (presbyteries) involved. In case of dissolution of a union church, all property of the united church, real and personal,

shall be divided equally between the classes (the presbytery and the classis) of jurisdiction.

2. No provision in this document shall be construed as modifying or amending the church order/constitution of this church in its application to any but union churches organized under this provision, their members, officers, or ministers.

### C. The Classis

#### *Article 39*

A classis shall consist of a group of neighboring churches. The organizing of a new classis and the redistricting of classes require the approval of synod.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 39

#### **Supplement, Article 39**

The classis, through its treasurer, is responsible for the receipt and disbursement of classical and denominational funds, the more prosperous churches assisting the more needy ones.

*(Acts of Synod 1992, p. 711)*

Any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity; synod is at liberty to consider such grounds in its disposition of the request.

*(Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 561)*

#### *Article 40*

a. The council of each church shall delegate a minister and an elder to the classis. If a church is without a minister, or the minister is prevented from attending, two elders shall be delegated. Officebearers who are not delegated may also attend classis and may be given an advisory voice.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 40-a

b. The classis shall meet at least every four months, unless great distances render this impractical, at such time and place as was determined by the previous classical meeting.

c. The ministers shall preside in rotation, or a president may be elected from among the delegates; however, the same person shall not preside twice in succession.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 40-a and -c

### **Supplement, Article 40-a**

The council of each church shall delegate a deacon in addition to a minister and an elder, provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons to its meetings. Deacons delegated to classis shall be given credentials identical to those given to ministers and elders. The gender of diaconal delegates to a classis shall be consistent with the decisions of that classis concerning the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order. Delegates who believe the seating of women delegates is in violation of the Word of God may record their protest on the appropriate credentials. Their names, along with their protests, shall be included in the official record of each classis meeting. If a classis so desires, it may also invite emerging churches to delegate two officebearers to the meetings of classis.

*(Acts of Synod 1997, p. 621)*

*(Amended Acts of Synod 2007, p. 612)*

*(Amended Acts of Synod 2009, p. 613)*

*Note:* A classis must decide whether the delegation of deacons by the member churches of classis is permissible. If classis has so decided, then each congregation will delegate three delegates (a minister, elder, and deacon) to all the meetings of classis.

### **Supplement, Article 40-a and -c**

#### *Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa*

- a. The council of each church shall delegate a minister and two elders to the classis. If a church is without a minister or the minister is prevented from attending, three elders may be delegated. Officebearers who are not delegated also may attend classis and may be given an advisory voice.
- c. The presiding officers of classis shall be selected from officebearers within the classis. The same presiding officers shall not be chosen twice in succession.

*(Acts of Synod 1981, p. 16)*

### *Article 41*

In order to assist the churches, the classis shall allocate sufficient time at its meetings to respond to requests for advice or help from the churches and, at a minimum of one of its meetings annually, shall allocate sufficient time to discuss at least one ministry issue that the classis considers to be especially important in the life and ministry of member congregations in the denomination.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 41

### **Supplement, Article 41**

Synod revised the Classical Credential Form by adding the following sentence to the top half of the form:

We testify that our council faithfully adheres to the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church and diligently and effectively attends to ministry within our congregation, community, classis, denomination, and the broader kingdom of God.

### *Article 42*

- a. The classis shall appoint at least one committee composed of two of the more experienced and competent officebearers, two ministers, or one minister and one elder, to visit all its churches once a year.
- b. The church visitors shall ascertain whether the officebearers faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and properly promote the edification of the congregation and the extension of God's kingdom. They shall admonish those who have been negligent, and help all with advice and assistance.
- c. The churches are free to call on the church visitors whenever serious problems arise.
- d. The church visitors shall render to classis a written report of their work.

### *Article 43*

The classis may grant the right to exhort within its bounds to persons who are gifted, well-informed, consecrated, and able to edify the churches. When the urgent need for their services has been established, the classis shall examine such persons and license them as exhorters for a limited period of time.

### *Article 44*

- a. A classis may take counsel or joint action with its neighboring classis or classes in matters of mutual concern.
- b. Classes engaging in matters of mutual concern may organize themselves into an ecclesiastical assembly that will function on the level of classis, with freedom to determine the delegation from the constituent classes and the frequency of meetings. Such an assembly's authority, jurisdiction, and mandate shall be approved by synod. It shall have direct access to synod in all matters pertaining to its mandate.

## D. The Synod

### Article 45

The synod is the assembly representing the churches of all the classes. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders to the synod.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 45

### Supplement, Article 45

#### a. Denominational Funding

1. The synod shall annually review the unified denominational budget as proposed by the Board of Trustees and approve a ministry-share assignment to provide the revenue for that budget.
2. Synod shall review the annual budgets of the denominational agencies.
3. Following each annual synod, the executive director shall inform the classical treasurers as to their respective denominational ministry shares.

(Amended from *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 711)

#### b. Regulations pertaining to the choosing of delegates to synod and synodical deputies

1. Delegates who believe the seating of (or election of) women delegates (or synodical deputies) is in violation of the Word of God may record their protest on the appropriate credentials. Their names, along with with protests, shall be recorded in the minutes of synod.
2. Ministry associates serving as a solo pastor of an organized congregation may be sent as a ministerial delegate to synod and nominated to serve in other denominational functions where a person must normally be a minister of the Word.

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, pp. 612, 665)

(Amended *Acts of Synod 2009*, pp. 613-14)

### Article 46

a. Synod shall meet annually, at a time and place determined by the previous synod. Each synod shall designate a church to convene the following synod.

b. The convening church, with the approval of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, may call a special session of synod, but only in very extraordinary circumstances and with the observance of synodical regulations.

c. The officers of synod shall be elected and shall function in accordance with the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

## Article 47

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, of the liturgical forms, of the *Psalter Hymnal*, and of the principles and elements of the order of worship, as well as the designation of the Bible versions to be used in the worship services.

No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 47

### Supplement, Article 47

#### *Regulations Pertaining to Article 47 of the Church Order*

- a. A substantial alteration is any alteration which changes the essential meaning of the creeds or the articles of the Church Order or which changes the church's regulation of its worship through the adopted liturgical forms, *Psalter Hymnal*, principles and elements of worship, or the designated Bible versions to be used in the worship services. A committee recommending any change in these matters shall specify what change is being recommended and shall state whether or not the change is a "substantial alteration."
- b. *Prior opportunity* is understood as sufficient time for churches and classes to be able to respond to a substantial alteration with overtures or other communications to synod before the substantial alteration is adopted. Generally, churches and classes have prior opportunity in the case of study committee reports because such reports are received by November 1 of the year before synod meets. Generally, churches and classes do not have prior opportunity in the case of standing-committee reports and overtures because the printed *Agenda for Synod* is received only two months before synod meets and one month after the majority of the classes have had their last meetings before synod.
- c. If the churches and classes have not had prior opportunity to consider a substantial alteration, it must be submitted to a following synod, which will consider its advisability. The first decision shall be understood as a decision to propose; the action of a following synod shall be understood as a decision to adopt.
- d. A proposed change may not be implemented until it is adopted by a following synod. It has no effect on any other synodical decisions until it is adopted.
- e. A proposed change has the same status as the recommendation of a study committee. The synod proposing the change may designate a person(s) to represent the change at the synod to which it is submitted for adoption. The proposed change and its representatives have all the rights and privileges of the

recommendations and representatives of a synodical study committee.

- f. If a proposed change is rejected by a following synod, that change (or one substantially similar) is not available for adoption by a succeeding synod unless it has been first proposed once again by synod.
- g. Changes to Church Order Supplements are not subject to the above requirements.

*(Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 755-56)*  
*(Amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 500)*

#### *Article 48*

a. Upon the nomination of the classes, synod shall appoint ministers, one from each classis, to serve as synodical deputies for a term designated by synod.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 48-a

b. When the cooperation of the synodical deputies is required as stipulated in the Church Order, the presence of at least three deputies from the nearest classes shall be prescribed.

c. Besides the duties elsewhere stipulated, the deputies shall, upon request, extend help to the classes in the event of difficulties in order that proper unity, order, and sound doctrine may be maintained.

d. The synodical deputies shall submit a complete report of their actions to the next synod.

#### **Supplement, Article 48-a**

A classis may appoint a female minister to serve as a synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

*(Acts of Synod 2007, p. 612)*

#### *Article 49*

a. Synod shall appoint a committee to correspond with other Reformed churches so that the Christian Reformed Church may exercise Christian fellowship with other denominations and may promote the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.

b. Synod shall decide which denominations are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship, and shall establish the rules which govern these relationships.

*Article 50*

- a. Synod shall send delegates to Reformed ecumenical synods in which the Christian Reformed Church cooperates with other denominations which confess and maintain the Reformed faith.
- b. Synod may present to such gatherings matters on which it seeks the judgment of the Reformed churches throughout the world.
- c. Decisions of Reformed ecumenical synods shall be binding upon the Christian Reformed Church only when they have been ratified by its synod.

III. THE TASK AND ACTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH

A. Worship Services

*Article 51*

- a. The congregation shall assemble for worship, ordinarily twice on the Lord's Day, to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 51-a

- b. Worship services shall be held in observance of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost, and ordinarily on Old and New Year's Day, and annual days of prayer and thanksgiving.
- c. Special worship services may be proclaimed in times of great stress or blessing for church, nation, or world.

**Supplement, Article 51-a**

- a. Synod affirms the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day and encourages existing congregations to continue and new congregations to embrace this tradition for the building up of the body of Christ.
- b. Where congregations are exploring alternatives to the second service, synod encourages those congregations to ensure that such alternatives are part of a strategic ministry plan with full accountability to their classis.

*(Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 766-67)*

*Article 52*

- a. The consistory shall regulate the worship services.
- b. The consistory shall see to it that the synodically approved Bible versions, liturgical forms, and songs are used, and that the principles and elements of the order of worship approved by synod are observed.
- c. The consistory shall see to it that if liturgical forms are adapted, these adaptations conform to synodical guidelines and that if choirs or others sing in the worship service, they observe the synodical regulations

governing the content of the hymns and anthems sung. These regulations shall also apply when supplementary hymns are sung by the congregation.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 52

### **Supplement, Article 52**

#### *Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa*

- a. The consistory shall regulate the worship services.
- b. The consistory shall see to it that the Bible versions, liturgical forms, and hymnals used are approved by synod or classis.
- c. The consistory shall see to it that the principles and elements of worship approved by synod or classis are observed.
- d. The consistory shall see to it that all hymns used in the worship services are faithful to the Word of God.

(*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 16)

#### *Article 53*

- a. The ministers of the Word shall conduct the worship services.
- b. Persons licensed to exhort and anyone appointed by the consistory to read a sermon may conduct worship services. They shall, however, refrain from all official acts of the ministry.
- c. Only sermons approved by the consistory shall be read in the worship services.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 53

### **Supplement, Article 53**

#### *Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa*

The minister of the Word or the ministry associate shall conduct the official worship service. In the absence of the minister, the consistory shall appoint a person licensed to exhort or one of the elders to conduct the official worship services.

(*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 17)

#### *Article 54*

- a. In the worship services the minister of the Word shall officially explain and apply Holy Scripture.
- b. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, following its sequence.

*Article 55*

The sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory in the public worship service by a minister of the Word, a ministry associate, or, in the case of need, an ordained person who has received the approval of classis, with the use of the prescribed forms or adaptations of them that conform to synodical guidelines.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 55

**Supplement, Article 55**

- a. Classis approval is required for an ordained person to administer the sacraments.
- b. Ordinarily the ordained person should be an elder.

*(Acts of Synod 2002, p. 537)*

*Article 56*

The covenant of God shall be sealed to children of believers by holy baptism. The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

*Article 57*

Adults who have not been baptized shall receive holy baptism upon public profession of faith. The form for the Baptism of Adults shall be used for such public professions.

*Article 58*

The baptism of one who comes from another Christian denomination shall be held valid if it has been administered in the name of the triune God, by someone authorized by that denomination.

*Article 59*

a. Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of a prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall ensure that there be an appropriate examination concerning their motives, faith and life. Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

b. Confessing members who have reached the age of eighteen and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

c. Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to communicant membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting their soundness in doctrine and life.

d. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to communicant membership upon presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.

#### *Article 60*

a. The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least once every three months.

b. The consistory shall provide for such administrations as it shall judge most conducive to edification. However, the ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word shall not be changed.

#### *Article 61*

a. The public prayers in the worship service shall include adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession for all Christendom and all humanity.

b. In the ministry of prayer the approved liturgical prayers may be used.

#### *Article 62*

Offerings for benevolence shall be received regularly in the worship services. Offerings also shall be received for other ministries of the congregation and the joint ministries of the churches.

### B. Faith Nurture

#### *Article 63*

a. Each church shall minister to its youth—and to the youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.

b. Each church shall instruct the youth in the Scriptures and in the creeds and the confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism. This instruction shall be supervised by the consistory.

*Article 64*

- a. Each church shall minister to its adult members so as to increase their knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to nurture a mature faith in Christ, and to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers.
- b. Each church shall provide opportunities for continued instruction of adult members. This instruction shall be supervised by the consistory.

C. Pastoral Care

*Article 65*

The officebearers of the church shall extend pastoral care to all members of the congregation and to others whenever possible by calling and encouraging them to live by faith, conducting annual home visitation, seeking to restore those who err in doctrine or life, and comforting and giving assistance in adversity.

*Article 66*

a. Confessing members who move to another Christian Reformed church are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 66-a

b. Members by baptism who move to another Christian Reformed church shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall as a rule be mailed to the church of their new residence.

c. Ecclesiastical certificates shall be signed by the president and clerk of the council.

**Supplement, Article 66-a**

When a church council transfers memberships, it should note for the receiving church whether the confessing members have assented to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership.

*(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 721)*

*Article 67*

Members who move to localities where there is no Christian Reformed church may, upon their request, either retain their membership in the church of their former residence, or have their certificates sent to the nearest Christian Reformed church.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 67

## Supplement, Article 67

### *Rules for Lapsed Membership*

1. Synod declares that baptized or confessing members who move away from the area of their church so that a meaningful church relationship is no longer possible, may retain their membership in their home church at their request and with the consent of the consistory. If they fail to make such a request, and do not transfer to a church near them, the consistory, having made serious attempts to rectify the situation, may declare their membership lapsed after a period of two years from the date of their departure. The member concerned shall be notified by the consistory of its action if at all possible. This rule shall not apply to those whose absence from their home is temporary.
2. This regulation shall supersede the rules of 1881 and 1910.

*(Acts of Synod 1974, pp. 81-82)*

### *Rules for Lapsing of Nonattending and Nonsupporting Members*

Synod decided that with respect to a baptized or confessing member who, for a period of at least two years, has not moved but fails to attend and support the congregation that holds the person's membership, the consistory may declare that person's membership has lapsed. This may be done when all the following conditions are present:

- a. The person claims to be still committed to the Christian faith.
- b. The person claims to be worshipping elsewhere.
- c. The consistory is not aware of any public sin requiring discipline.

Appropriate announcements shall be made by the consistory to the congregation regarding such lapsed memberships and the person involved shall be notified.

*(Acts of Synod 1976, p. 25)*

### *Article 68*

Each church shall keep a complete record of all births, deaths, baptisms, professions of faith, receptions and dismissals of members, and excommunications and other terminations of membership.

### *Article 69*

- a. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care to marry only in the Lord.
- b. Christian marriages should be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises, and prayers, as provided for in the official form.

Marriages may be solemnized either in a worship service, or in private gatherings of relatives and friends.

c. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages which would be in conflict with the Word of God.

*Article 70*

Funerals are not ecclesiastical but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.

*Article 71*

The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools in which the biblical, Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall also urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant.

*Article 72*

The council shall promote societies within the congregation for the study of God's Word and shall serve especially the youth organizations with counsel and assistance. All such societies are under the supervision of the council.

D. Missions

*Article 73*

a. In obedience to Christ's Great Commission, the churches must bring the gospel to all people at home and abroad, in order to lead them into fellowship with Christ and his church.

b. In fulfilling this mandate, each council shall stimulate the members of the congregation to be witnesses for Christ in word and deed and to support the work of home and world missions by their interest, prayers, and gifts.

*Article 74*

a. Each church shall bring the gospel to unbelievers in its own community. This task shall be sponsored and governed by the council. This task may be executed, when conditions warrant, in cooperation with one or more neighboring churches.

b. Each church shall carry on a ministry of mercy. The deacons shall enable the needy under their care to make use of Christian institutions of mercy. They shall confer and cooperate with diaconates of neighboring churches when this is desirable for the proper performance of their task. They may also seek mutual understandings with agencies in their community which are caring for the needy, so that the gifts may be distributed properly.

## Article 75

- a. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs. The classes themselves may perform this work of evangelism when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer these tasks, each classis shall have a classical home missions committee.
- b. The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their ministry of mercy. The classes themselves may perform this ministry when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer this task, each classis shall have a classical diaconal committee.

## Article 76

- a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism, and shall also carry on such home missions activities as are beyond their scope and resources. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational home missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 76-a

- b. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their ministry of mercy, and shall carry on such work as is beyond their scope and resources. Synod shall appoint a diaconal committee to administer the denominational ministry of mercy. The work of this committee shall be governed by synodical regulations.

### **Supplement, Article 76-a**

The synodical regulations referred to in Article 76 may be found in the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions.

## Article 77

- a. Synod shall determine the field in which the joint world mission work of the churches is to be carried on, regulate the manner in which this task is to be performed, provide for its cooperative support, and encourage the congregations to call and support missionaries. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational world missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 77-a

- b. The denominational diaconal committee shall extend the ministry of mercy of the congregations and classes worldwide.

### **Supplement, Article 77-a**

The synodical regulations referred to in Article 77 may be found in the Mission Order of the Board for Christian Reformed World Missions.

## IV. THE ADMONITION AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

### A. General Provisions

#### *Article 78*

The purpose of admonition and discipline is to restore those who err to faithful obedience to God and full fellowship with the congregation, to maintain the holiness of the church, and thus to uphold God's honor.

#### *Article 79*

- a. The members of the church are accountable to one another in their doctrine and life and have the responsibility to encourage and admonish one another in love.
- b. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.

#### *Article 80*

The consistory shall exercise the authority which Christ has given to his church regarding sins of a public nature or those brought to its attention according to the rule of Matthew 18:15-17.

### B. The Admonition and Discipline of Members

#### *Article 81*

- a. Members who have sinned in life or doctrine shall be faithfully disciplined by the consistory and, if they persist in their sin, shall be excluded from membership in the church of Christ.
- b. Members by baptism who have been excluded from membership in the church and who later repent of their sin shall be received again into its fellowship upon public profession of faith.
- c. Confessing members who have been excluded from membership in the church shall be received again into its fellowship upon repentance of their sin.
- d. The consistory shall inform the congregation and encourage its involvement in both the exclusion from and the readmission to membership.

—Cf. Supplement, Articles 78-81

#### **Supplement, Articles 78-81**

- a. Discipline shall be applied by the consistory only after an adequate investigation has been made and the member has had ample opportunity to present his/her case.

- b. A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of communicant membership.<sup>1</sup>
- c. A person may be excluded from membership only after the consistory has secured the approval of the classis.
- d. The role of the classis in giving approval is
  - 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed.
  - 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person.
  - 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline.
- e. The approval of classis does not obligate a consistory to exclude a person from membership since repentance and restoration to the full fellowship of the church are always possible.
- f. The liturgical forms and announcements for admonition and discipline may be used if the consistory judges that these will further the purposes of discipline and will serve the welfare of the congregation.

*(Acts of Synod 1991, p. 718)*

*Note:* See *Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 720-23, for revised announcements and forms for exclusion from membership and for readmission.

### C. The Admonition and Discipline of Officebearers

#### *Article 82*

All officebearers, in addition to being subject to general discipline, are subject to special discipline, which consists of suspension and deposition from office.

#### *Article 83*

Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Form of Subscription, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.

#### *Article 84*

Persons who have been suspended or deposed from office may be reinstated if they give sufficient evidence of repentance and if the church judges that they are able to serve effectively. Requests for reinstatement to

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<sup>1</sup>“The privileges of communicant membership” include but are not limited to participation in the sacraments, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office.

*(Acts of Synod 1991, p. 718)*

office by those deposed for acts of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct shall be dealt with according to guidelines adopted by synod.

—Cf. Supplement, Articles 78-84

—Cf. Supplement, Articles 82-84

—Cf. Supplement, Article 84

## **Supplement, Articles 78-84**

### *Guidelines for Confidentiality*

Synod affirmed the necessity for strict confidentiality on the part of councils and consistories in all matters relating to admonition and discipline by recommending the following guidelines to the churches:

- a. Every church should state its membership commitments very clearly, including the expectation that all members are to participate in and be subject to the admonition and discipline of the church.
- b. Officebearers should scrupulously observe confidentiality with respect to persons who come under their counsel and discipline.
- c. Careful and confidential records should be kept whenever a discipline case reaches the level of action by the elders and/or announcements are made to the congregation.
- d. Special care should be observed in the wording of public announcements. The sin of the person should not be mentioned, but only that he/she is unrepentant.
- e. Established policies with respect to procedures and public announcements should be consistently followed by the elders of the church.

*(Acts of Synod 1991, pp. 723, 769)*

## **Supplement, Articles 82-84**

### *The Admonition and Discipline of Officebearers*

- a. General discipline shall not be applied to an officebearer unless he/she has first been suspended from office.
- b. The appropriate assembly shall determine whether, in a given instance, deposition from office shall take place immediately, without previous suspension.
- c. Suspension/deposition of elders, deacons, and ministry associates
  - 1) The suspension or deposition of an elder, deacon, or ministry associate shall be imposed by the council with the concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.

- 2) If the neighboring council fails to concur in the position of the council of the elder, deacon, or ministry associate involved, the latter council shall either alter its original judgment or present the case to classis.
- d. Suspension/deposition of ministers
- 1) The suspension of a minister of the Word shall be imposed by the council of the minister's church with the concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.
  - 2) If the neighboring council fails to concur in the position of the council of the minister involved, the latter council shall either alter its original judgment or present the case to classis.
  - 3) The deposition of a minister shall not be effected without the approval of classis together with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.
- e. Ministers subject to two councils
- 1) A minister of the Word whose membership resides with a congregation other than the calling church is subject to the admonition and discipline of the councils of both churches. Either council may initiate disciplinary action, but neither shall act without conferring with the other.
  - 2) If the councils disagree, the case shall be submitted to the classis of the calling church for disposition.
- f. The lifting of suspension is the prerogative of the assembly which imposed suspension.
- g. The council of the church which deposed the minister shall declare the deposed minister eligible to receive a call upon the affirmative judgment of the classis which approved the deposition, together with the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Upon acceptance of a call, the previously deposed minister shall be reordained.

(*Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 719-20)

*Note:* Councils and classes should take note of the regulations regarding suspension and/or deposition from ministerial office adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 396-99).

## Supplement, Article 84

### *Regulations for Reinstatement of Office Bearers Guilty of Sexual Misconduct*

When reinstatement is requested by a former officebearer who confessed to or was determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct leading up to suspension and deposition from office:

1. Reinstatement to office shall be denied to individuals who:
  - a. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct against a minor.
  - b. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct against more than one victim in a single church or community.
  - c. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct in more than one community or church.
  - d. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct and other related ungodly conduct.

Examples of related ungodly conduct include but are not limited to engaging in adult or child pornography, engaging a prostitute for sexual contact, exhibitionistic or voyeuristic behavior, attending a nudist camp, sexual addiction, and so forth.

2. Councils and classes shall not reinstate a former officebearer suspended or deposed for sexual misconduct or ungodly conduct not covered in items 1, a-d without receiving the advice of legal counsel concerning the church's liability and the advice of a Christian licensed psychologist concerning the likelihood of an officebearer's reoffending.

*Note:* In Church Order Article 84 and its Supplement, the expression *sexual misconduct* is defined as: The sexual exploitation of a parishioner, minor or adult, regardless of age or consent, for the purposes of sexual gratification and maintaining control over the person. The expression *determined abuser* is defined as: An officebearer who either confesses to or is adjudicated to be guilty of sexual misconduct by a court of competent jurisdiction or an ecclesiastical assembly.

*(Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 611-12)*

## CONCLUSION

### *Article 85*

No church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no officebearer shall lord it over another officebearer.

### *Article 86*

This Church Order, having been adopted by common consent, shall be faithfully observed, and any revision thereof shall be made only by synod.

# RULES FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

## I. CONVENING AND CONSTITUTING SYNOD

A. Synod shall convene and be constituted as prescribed by the Church Order, Articles 45 and 46, and the decisions of Synod 2000.

B. Each synod shall designate a convening church whose duty it shall be to announce the next succeeding synod in the official publications of the church, three months before the date of meeting. The Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise shall be conducted under the auspices of the convening church in consultation with the executive director. The minister of the convening church shall preach an appropriate sermon and lead in prayer. All members of synod are expected to attend this worship service.

C. The minister of the convening church (or in the event of a vacancy, its counselor) shall officiate as president pro tem. The duties shall be:

1. On the appointed day, and at the appointed time and place, the president pro tem shall call synod to order, and conduct the opening devotions.
2. Thereafter the president pro tem shall call for the prescribed credentials of the delegates. Provided that a quorum, i.e., two-thirds of the membership, is present, the synodical assembly shall be declared to have opened.
3. The officers of synod shall be chosen from a slate of nominees by the delegates from their own number, by ballot, in the following order: president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected.

At each step in the election process the number of votes shall be read, and synod shall decide which numbers shall be included on the next ballot. After that decision has been made, the names corresponding to the numbers shall be read in alphabetical order.

4. The president pro tem shall thereupon request the elected officers to take their places upon the platform and introduce the president and the other officers to the assembly.

D. While synod is in session its members may not leave the assembly without permission from the chair; neither is it permissible for any member to withdraw from the assembly and return home without the consent of the assembly.

## II. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

### A. The President

1. The president shall request the delegates and the advisory members of synod to arise, read the "Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity" and request them to express their agreement in unison. A delegate who assumes a seat at a later time shall be requested to express individual agreement at the time of seating.
2. The president shall call the meeting to order at the appointed time, and shall see that each session is properly opened and closed.
3. The president shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum.
4. The president shall welcome fraternal delegates, or other guests of synod, respond to greetings received, or appoint members of synod for this purpose.
5. The president shall place before synod every motion that is made and seconded. Every question shall be clearly stated before a vote is taken.
6. When the president feels compelled to express an opinion on a pending question, the chair shall be relinquished and given to the vice president for the duration of the president's remarks. The president may speak, while holding the chair, to state matters of fact or to inform synod regarding points of order.
7. The president shall have, and duly receive, the prerogative of declaring a motion or person out of order. When such a ruling is disputed, synod shall sustain or reject the ruling of the chair by majority vote.
8. When a vote is tie, the president may cast the deciding vote, if the president has not already voted.
9. The president shall not preside in any matter that involves the president personally.
10. The president rules on all points of order. A ruling may be reversed by a majority of synod if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and makes an appeal to the floor.
11. The president shall close the synodical assembly with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

### B. The Vice President

1. In the absence of the president the vice president shall assume all the duties and privileges of the president.
2. The vice president shall render all possible assistance to the president as circumstances may require.

### C. The First Clerk and Second Clerk

1. The first clerk shall each day call the roll immediately after the opening devotionals.

2. The clerk shall keep an exact record of the synodical proceedings. This record shall contain:
  - a. Opening and closing of sessions and roll call;
  - b. All main motions whether carried or defeated; all appeals whether sustained or not sustained;
  - c. All reports of advisory committees and all decisions of synod;
  - d. The names of fraternal delegates and others who address synod;
  - e. Any document, any phase of discussion on the floor of synod, or any address that synod by a majority vote decides to insert into the minutes.
3. The record shall not contain:
  - a. Any rejected motion except when it is a main motion;
  - b. Any motion that is withdrawn.
4. The minutes of each day will be examined and proofread by a small committee appointed by the officers of synod. The edited and proofread minutes will be posted in a public place where they can be read by delegates, and copies will be made available to delegates upon request.
5. The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk. The second clerk shall also render all possible assistance to the first clerk as circumstances may require.

### III. DUTIES OF NONDELEGATED SYNODICAL FUNCTIONARIES

#### A. Executive Director

The executive director shall:

1. Make the physical arrangements for synod and function as the operations officer during the meetings of synod.
2. Serve synod with information and advice as requested regarding matters that come to the floor of synod.
3. Edit and have printed such official publications the synod or the Board of Trustees shall authorize.
4. Have the privilege of the floor at synodical meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of this office and be present during all executive sessions of synod.

#### B. Seminary Professors

1. At each synod selected members of the seminary faculty shall be required to attend synod in an advisory capacity, with the exception of the president who shall be present at every synod.
2. The seminary advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod.
3. The seminary advisers shall be present at synod where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of synod, may request their advice.

C. The Presidents of Calvin Seminary and of Calvin College

1. The president of Calvin Seminary shall advise synod in matters pertaining to the seminary.
2. The president of Calvin College shall advise synod in matters pertaining to Calvin College.

D. Ethnic Advisers

1. *General considerations*

- a. At each synod up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod. By the decision of Synod 2005, the position of ethnic adviser is continued as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which it shall be discontinued. The Board of Trustees shall appoint as many ethnic advisers as are needed to reach twenty-five, except that no more than seven (and no fewer than two) shall be appointed.
- b. An attempt will be made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.
- c. Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
- d. In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (at a rate set by the executive director from time to time) will be available for an ethnic adviser who is financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

2. *Qualification*

Ethnic advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

3. *Responsibilities*

- a. Ethnic advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
- b. Ethnic advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
- c. Ethnic advisers shall be present at the public plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

4. *Appointments*

- a. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the ethnic advisers each year at its February meeting. Nominations for the ethnic adviser positions shall be gathered by the executive director from suggestions offered by the churches and the director of Race Relations.

- b. Ethnic advisers will be assigned their committee assignments by the Program Committee of synod.

#### IV. FRATERNAL DELEGATES AND REPORTERS OF CHURCH PERIODICALS

A. Fraternal delegates from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be given the privilege of the floor, with the right to speak on matters before synod, and shall also be given the privilege of visiting meetings of advisory committees with the consent of the chairman of the committee.

*(Acts of Synod 1975, p. 39)*

B. The task of the synodical news office is to prepare reports of synodical activities and decisions for the benefit of the churches and members of the Christian Reformed Church.

#### V. MATTERS LEGALLY BEFORE SYNOD

##### A. Definitions

###### 1. Appeal

An appeal is a procedure by which a decision or action of an assembly, board, agency, or committee is brought to the appropriate assembly for review in the light of existing policies and standards of the church.

###### 2. Communication

A communication is a document presenting information, ideas, thoughts, opinions, complaints, or objections for consideration of the assemblies. A communication is distinguished from an overture in that an overture proposes specific action, and a communication does not. One type of communication is a protest, which expresses a complaint or objection to a decision or course of action followed by an assembly. An assembly is not required to take any action with respect to a communication.

###### 3. Overture

An overture is a formal written proposal sent to an assembly requesting adoption or amendment of a policy or other legislative action by the assembly.

###### 4. Report

A report is a document of a board, committee, or agency of an assembly indicating the work performed in response to assembly mandates and presenting recommendations for assembly action.

B. Following is a list of matters legally before synod.

###### 1. Gravamina

(For guidelines and regulations see Supplement, Article 5.)

###### 2. Reports

Reports of committees, including boards, appointed by previous synods.

### 3. Overtures and Communications to Synod

- a. Overtures and communications from a classis (whether originated by or adopted by a classis) or from an assembly organized according to Article 44-b of the Church Order.

*(Acts of Synod 1993, p. 574)*

- b. Overtures and communications which have failed to gain adoption of a council and/or classis but which an individual or council desire to submit for synod's consideration:

- 1) Overtures and communications from a council (whether originated by or adopted by council) which have been submitted to classis but not adopted by classis as its own.
- 2) Overtures and communications of an individual which have been submitted to council and classis but which have not been adopted by either council or classis.
- 3) Overtures and communications of an individual which were submitted to council, adopted by council as its own, and submitted to classis by council, but which classis has not adopted as its own, which council has not submitted to synod, and which the initiating individual submits to synod.

- c. Assemblies and members should refrain from overtures, appeals, or communications which are repetitious or mere expressions of agreement or disagreement with matters already on the agenda of synod.

The executive director is authorized to omit such items from the printed *Agenda*. In such cases they shall merely be listed and accepted as communications. The senders shall be notified, and their materials shall be given to one of the advisory committees of synod to be received as information. Matters received as information will not ordinarily be mentioned in advisory committee reports or the *Acts of Synod*.

### 4. Appeals in Which the Judicial Code Has Not Been Invoked

(For procedural rules governing appeals, see Supplement, Article 30-a- 30-b, Part B.)

### 5. Appeals and Other Matters Properly Presented to Synod under the Provisions of the Judicial Code

(See Supplement, Article 30-c for the Judicial Code.)

### 6. Application for Candidacy by Persons Not Recommended by the Candidacy Committee

(For the applicable procedural rules see Supplement, Article 30-b, Part A.)

### 7. Unprocessed Overtures or Communications

Overtures or communications of an individual when such a person has been unable first to present such to council and classis. Such matters shall be received as information, provided that the executive director receives evidence that it was impossible for the communicant to present the matter to council and classis. Synod shall decide whether to act upon such matters received as information.

## 8. Late Reports and Overtures

No study reports or recommendations from boards or standing committees which affect doctrinal or ethical statements or Church Order provisions received by the executive director after September 15 or overtures received after March 15 shall be considered by synod, with the exception of overtures which deal with matters relevant to reports found in the printed *Agenda*. Any other overture or study report shall be considered only by special decision of synod on the basis of most weighty grounds.

## 9. The Printed *Agenda* and Study Committee Reports

Study committee reports shall be filed with the executive director on or before September 15, and the executive director shall distribute them to the churches no later than November 1. The *Agenda* shall be published not later than early April. It shall include reports of standing, study, and special committees; overtures of classes, councils, or individuals; printed appeals; notices of non-printed appeals; a list of communications; the name of the delegates; and pertinent announcements, with the understanding, however, that the Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the executive director, may, for good cause, determine not to print an item or to print an abbreviated version. If an abbreviated version is printed, the entire item shall be forwarded to the appropriate advisory committee of synod. Items not printed shall be listed in the *Agenda*. All such material shall be in the hands of the executive director not later than the following deadlines: September 15 for study committee reports; February 15 for the reports of standing committees and authorized representatives; ten days after conclusion of board meetings for board reports, but not later than March 1; and March 15 for overtures and appeals.

## 10. Supplementary Reports

The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, the Back to God Ministries International Board, the Board of Trustees of Calvin College, the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary, the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions, the Board of Christian Reformed World Missions, the Board of Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Faith Alive Christian Resources Board, the Interchurch Relations Committee, and the Candidacy Committee are permitted to file a supplementary report after March 15. These boards are expected to incorporate as much of their materials as possible in the printed *Agenda*, and matters for the supplementary reports must be kept to a minimum.

## 11. Other Matters

All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable.

## 12. Nondenominational Organizations

Nondenominational organizations receiving denominational support shall not ordinarily send speakers to synod. They may place displays at synod in designated areas.

## VI. SYNODICAL COMMITTEES

### A. Program Committee

1. Members
  - a. The Program Committee shall be composed of the officers of the previous synod and the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church.
  - b. In case of a vacancy on this committee, the Board of Trustees shall appoint another member.
2. The Appointment of Advisory Committees
  - a. The Program Committee shall meet to make tentative appointment of the various advisory committees prior to May 1.
  - b. The Program Committee shall classify all the reports, overtures, and other communications into various groups, and advise which matters shall be laid directly before synod, and which shall be placed in the hands of advisory committees.
  - c. In the event that a given delegate cannot attend synod, the alternate accepts the appointed assignment subject to revision by synod.
3. The Executive Director Shall:
  - a. Receive and tabulate the information sheet on the synodical delegates.
  - b. Inform the delegates of their tentative assignments prior to May 15.
  - c. Suggest to chairmen and delegates sources of background information relative to their assignment.
  - d. Provide committee members with copies of background materials that are not readily available in previous *Acts of Synod*.
4. Information on Delegates
  - a. The stated clerk of every classis shall forward an information sheet on each synodical delegate to the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church before March 15. Synod encourages suggestions, including biographical information, for those delegates qualified and willing to serve as an officer of synod.
  - b. These information sheets shall give answer to the following questions:

For the minister delegates—

    - 1) To which previous synod(s) were you delegated, if any?
    - 2) At such synod(s), on which committee(s) did you serve?
    - 3) Of what denominational boards, standing committees, or study committees are you or have you been a member?
    - 4) Of what classical and/or local committees are you or have you been a member?
    - 5) What are your areas of special interest in the work of synod?
    - 6) What other data do you wish to submit that will aid in being assigned to an advisory committee of synod?

For the elder delegates—

- 1) The same questions as listed for minister delegates.
  - 7) What is your present occupation?
  - 8) What have been your previous occupations, if any?
5. Report of the Program Committee
- a. A written report of the Program Committee shall be mailed to all synodical delegates before May 25.
  - b. This report shall be submitted for possible change and adoption as one of the initial items of synodical business.

*(Acts of Synod 1970, pp. 56-57; 1972, p. 14)*

## B. The Advisory Committees

1. *Status* of these committees. Advisory committees (except for the Judicial Code Committee) serve only for the duration of synod for the purpose of facilitating the work of synod. The advisory committees shall summarize matters before them and formulate recommendations with respect to these matters.
2. *Organization and rules* governing these committees:
  - a. The person first named at the appointment of the committee shall be its chairperson, and the one named second its reporter. An alternate chairperson and an alternate reporter will be appointed for each committee except the Judicial Code Committee.
  - b. The chairperson shall call the committee together, preside at its meetings, and see that it functions properly.
  - c. Any member of synod may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
  - d. Committee reports shall be signed by the chairperson and the reporter of the committee. If there is both a majority and minority report from the committee, each report must be signed by the members who favor it.

(Note: Committee members may not speak publicly against their committee's report unless they have submitted a minority report or have received permission from the chairperson of the committee to voice a minor disagreement.)

- e. The report of the majority shall be considered the report of the committee. After the committee's report has been read and the motion to adopt has been made and seconded, the minority report shall be read and received as information.

*(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 58)*

- f. When the report of a committee has been previously distributed to synod in printed form, and the members of synod have had sufficient time to examine it, the first reading of the report is not required. In such case the reporter, when the president calls for the report, shall state that the report has been placed in the hands of synod in printed form and shall move that the report be accepted for consideration.

g. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily upon the chairperson and the reporter of the committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.

h. Recommendation of a committee may be recommitted whenever the work of synod can be thus expedited.

### 3. *Recess of Synod for Study*

After the advisory committees have been appointed, synod may recess at specified times to enable these committees to perform their work.

## C. Special Committees

Besides the advisory committees, each synod should have:

1. *A Hospitality Committee*, appointed by the president, which shall attend to the proper reception of fraternal delegates. It can advise synod, and synod must decide whether the representatives of various organizations should be received on the floor of synod.
2. Special committees appointed by the president that serve during the synodical sessions.

## D. Rules for Appointments to Boards and Committees

1. All study committees shall be appointed by synod from a nomination made by the advisory committee which drafted the mandate, with the advice of the officers of synod. Delegates to synod will be given opportunity to suggest nominees to the advisory committee, but no new nominees will be accepted from the floor when a committee is recommended. The reporter of the advisory committee shall present the nominations on the floor of synod.

*(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 15; 1980, p. 21; 1997, p. 634)*

2. All board and committee members shall be elected from nominations presented to synod. Boards and committees in which vacancies must be filled shall normally present a slate of multiple nominees for election to membership for a first term, but may present a single nominee (an incumbent) for a second term.

*(Acts of Synod 1976, p. 16; updated in Acts of Synod 1998, p. 406-7)*

3. All standing boards and committees of synod, as well as stated clerks of classes, shall present their nominations to the executive director immediately after the meeting at which nominations are made.

*(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 16)*

4. Nominations of officers, functionaries, synodical deputies, boards, and standing committees shall be compiled through the office of the executive director.

*(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 15)*

5. The president of synod shall call on the executive director to present all ballots, nominations, and other matters pertaining to appointments to the floor of synod, with the exception of the appointments of study committees (cf. point 1 above).

6. Rules for Eligibility and Term of Office

a. A person whose work is regulated by a board shall not be delegated to that particular board.

*(Acts of Synod 1966, p. 87)*

b. Synodical board and committee members who have served two three-year terms shall not be eligible for reelection except when a specific exemption to this rule has been approved by synod.

c. The terms of office for representatives to denominational boards and committees begin and terminate on July 1 of the year of appointment or termination.

*(Acts of Synod 1972, p. 14; amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 536)*

d. Synod requests all classes, when nominating members of denominational boards or committees, to designate the term of the alternate to coincide with the term of the delegate. When an alternate replaces a delegate, or when a new delegate is nominated by a classis, the term of office shall begin the year a delegate assumes the office and shall terminate on July 1 three years later.

*(Acts of Synod 1973, p. 19; amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 536)*

E. Rules for Committees Appointed by Previous Synods

These committees include those appointed to study and to report concerning matters that concern the whole denomination, to carry out certain resolutions of past synods, or to supervise the missionary, educational, journalistic, or benevolent activities of the denomination.

1. These committees have the right of elucidating and defending their reports on the floor of synod. The spokesmen of these committees shall have the same privileges during the discussion as the chairmen and reporters of the advisory committees.

2. With respect to the reports submitted to synod that are given into the hands of advisory committees, the recommendations of these synodical committees shall have precedence if the recommendations of the advisory committee are substantially different.

F. Judicial Code Committee

1. Mandate: Appeals under the Judicial Code and such other matters requiring formal adjudication as synod shall undertake shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee for consideration and advice.

2. Membership: The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of nine members. Some of the members shall be ministers, and some shall be laypersons. Members of this committee may be, but need not be, delegates to the synod which the committee advises. There need be

no regional representation, but a fair denominational representation is desirable.

3. Meetings: The Judicial Code Committee shall meet between synods as frequently as its business requires.
4. Organization and rules governing this committee:
  - a. The Judicial Code Committee shall function as a normal advisory committee of synod with the following exceptions:
    - 1) The committee shall select a chairperson and reporter from its membership.
    - 2) Individual delegates to synod shall not have the privilege of addressing the Judicial Code Committee as is normally permitted with other advisory committees.
    - 3) During synodical discussions, the committee shall be represented by up to two spokespersons who will have the privilege of the floor. These spokespersons shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches.
  - b. Recommendations of the Judicial Code Committee shall be presented to synod in writing, shall be accompanied with grounds, and shall be openly discussed in plenary sessions of synod. An executive or strict executive session of synod can be declared as per normal synodical rules.
5. Synodical disposition of a judicial matter:
  - a. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
    - 1) By deciding the matter;
    - 2) By referring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;
    - 3) By remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or consistory; or
    - 4) By conducting its own hearing.
  - b. If synod conducts its own hearing, it shall follow the hearing procedure described in the Judicial Code.
6. Guidelines for synod's handling of recommendations from the Judicial Code Committee:
  - a. The written report from the Judicial Code Committee to synod must set forth the significant facts as found by the Judicial Code Committee and adequate rationale for the committee's recommendation. This will generally require more than a brief statement of grounds for each recommendation. The Judicial Code Committee must give copies of its report and recommendation to the parties or their representatives as promptly as possible.
  - b. Synod should accept the findings of fact as presented by the Judicial Code Committee unless synod is persuaded that
    - 1) One or more parties were not given the opportunity by the hearing body to present important and relevant evidence, or

- 2) After the Judicial Code Committee hearing new evidence which is important and relevant has been discovered by one or more parties.
- c. If synod is persuaded of b, 1) or 2), it will decide either to
  - 1) Conduct its own Judicial Code hearing pursuant to the code rules, particularly Article 10, or
  - 2) Refer the matter back to the Judicial Code Committee for a rehearing before the initial hearing body.
- d. Procedure for requesting rehearing under Guidelines b and c
  - 1) Any party who seeks to have synod conduct its own hearing or refer the matter back for a rehearing should submit such request in writing to the executive director for distribution to the delegates of synod with a copy to the Judicial Code Committee. The writing should include a summary of the evidence which that party was not allowed to present at the evidentiary hearing and a short statement of how this opportunity was denied, or the statement should include a summary of the newly discovered evidence and an explanation of why it was not discovered earlier.
  - 2) All parties and the Judicial Code Committee representative(s) should be allowed a very brief time to address synod on such request.
- e. When recommendations involve interpretations and applications of governing principles, such as the Church Order, to the facts involved in the matter, synod should allow the parties and representatives of the Judicial Code Committee a reasonable amount of time, set by the president of synod upon recommendation of the Judicial Code Committee, to argue for or against such interpretations and applications.

*(Acts of Synod 1993, pp. 500-1)*

*Note:* For a complete description of Judicial Code of rights and procedures, see Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c.

## VII. PENSION MATTERS AT SYNOD

That synod defer action on overtures, minority reports, and motions from the floor of synod that involve substantive matters concerning the denomination's retirement plans until advised by the U.S. and Canadian pension trustees. The same is requested for actions that may be initiated by synod's advisory committee on finance or by any other of synod's advisory committees that is at variance with recommendations made by the pension trustees or is independent of any action recommended by them. Advice to synod will be in the form of a memorandum or other materials directed to synod's advisory committee on finance, which is the committee normally designated for processing matters related to the denomination's benefit plans.

*(Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 623-24)*

## VIII. RULES OF ORDER

In our ecclesiastical assemblies, "ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted *and that in an ecclesiastical manner,*" as Article 28 of our Church

Order stipulates. Our synods should therefore not be bound to observe detailed parliamentary rules. These may be proper in other gatherings, but they do not fit into the pattern of ecclesiastical assemblies which demand a large measure of freedom in discussion and action. However, a few general rules of order may serve a good purpose.

#### A. Closed Sessions of Synod

1. *Executive Session:* Synod may enter an executive session in unusual or delicate situations. In such sessions, only the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary advisers, and the ethnic advisers shall be present. If delegates from fully recognized churches in ecclesiastical fellowship are at synod, they also may remain in this session.
2. *Strict Executive Session:* Synod may enter a strict executive session in very unusual situations when such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honor or for the welfare of the church. In such sessions, only the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary faculty advisers, and the ethnic advisers shall be present. If any of the above mentioned persons are personally involved in the matter under discussion, they will absent themselves voluntarily or by synodical ruling.

#### B. A Main Motion

This is a motion that presents a matter to synod for its consideration or action.

1. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
  - a. If the mover has been recognized by the president;
  - b. If it is seconded by a member of synod;
  - c. If the motion has been recognized as acceptable by the president;
  - d. If, at the request of the president, the motion has been presented in written form.
2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
  - a. If it conflicts with the Church Order or is contrary to Scripture as interpreted in our forms of unity;
  - b. If another motion is before synod or if it conflicts with any decision already made by synod;
  - c. If it is verbally or substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod or if it interferes with the freedom of action by synod in a matter that was previously introduced but of which no disposal was made.

#### C. A Motion to Amend

This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.

2. A motion to amend an amendment is not a proper motion if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.
3. A motion to amend is permissible and is called a secondary motion. (Only one motion to amend a pending amendment is in order at one time.)

#### D. A Motion to Defer or Withhold Action

1. When synod deems it advisable, it may decide to table a motion temporarily. Tabling a motion implies that the assembly will resume consideration on the motion at a later hour or date.
2. If a matter has been deferred to a definite time and synod is at that time busy with an undecided question, synod need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consideration of postponed matters, if this matter can wait until the question before synod has been disposed of.
3. If synod prefers not to take action regarding a matter, it may adopt a motion to withhold action.

#### E. Objection to a Ruling of the President

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the president, the matter is referred to synod for decision.

#### F. Right of Protest

It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of synod. Protests should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups. Members may, if they feel the need, ask to have their negative vote recorded. Such requests must be made immediately after the vote is taken. The reasons given for recording a negative vote will not normally be printed in the *Acts of Synod* unless otherwise specifically decided by synod.

#### G. Call for a Division of the Question

At the request of one or more members of synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless synod decides that this is not necessary.

#### H. Procedural Inquiry

Any member of synod may request advice of the president as to how to accomplish a purpose for which that delegate does not know the proper means.

#### I. Motions to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod

If any member of synod for weighty reasons desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, the following course may be pursued:

1. A motion may be offered to *reconsider* the matter. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. (The motion must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side when the decision was made.)

2. A motion may be made to rescind a previous decision. The purpose of this motion is to annul or reverse a previous decision. (Rescinding applies to decisions taken by the synod in session; it does not apply to decisions taken by previous synods. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod; it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.)

#### J. Discussion

1. A speaker to obtain the floor must be recognized by the president.
2. If a member having the floor should fail to adhere to the point under discussion or should make unnecessarily lengthy remarks, the president shall call attention to these faults and insist that the main point be made and that brevity be achieved.
3. If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall ordinarily be given priority by the president.
4. The officers of synod may assign a time limit for debate on issues they think will be debated longer than one hour. This time limit will be announced prior to the presentation of the report. The delegates may vote to extend debate for half-hour intervals when the time limit has been reached.
5. When it is believed that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, the president may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of synod sustains this proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken.
6. When any member of synod deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, that delegate may move to close the discussion. Those who call the question shall be recognized in the same manner as others who gain the floor of synod, i.e., by taking their turn on the list of those who have requested the privilege of the floor. The vote on the motion to cease debate shall be taken at once. Should a majority be in favor of ceasing debate, the vote on the matter before synod shall be taken only after those who had previously requested the floor have had the opportunity to address the motion that is being discussed. However, once the motion to cease debate has been adopted by synod no motion to amend the main motion will be permitted.

#### K. Voting

The various methods of voting are:

1. *By voice* (Yes or No). This is a frequent method of voting.
2. *By electronic balloting*.
  - a. Whenever the president is unable to determine from the yes and no votes which opinion has prevailed, or if the president's judgment is questioned by any member of synod, the president shall request the delegates to re-vote electronically. The outcome of the electronic vote shall constitute the official decision of synod on the matter.

- b. This method may be used for any vote and at any time, but it is advisable that electronic voting be used in delicate cases of discipline and other matters that are of a critical nature and of great importance.

L. These Rules for Synodical Procedure may be suspended, amended, revised, or abrogated by a majority vote of synod.

Revised and updated in 2006

#### PUBLIC DECLARATION OF AGREEMENT WITH THE FORMS OF UNITY

Of all the marks by which the true church distinguishes itself from all human societies, the confession of the truth must be mentioned in the first place. The Savior therefore said, John 8:31, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples." And again, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven," Matthew 10:32. In obedience to the Lord and for the instruction of all, the assembly of elders, delegated by the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church, deem it proper that they publicly declare what the confession is of the church here mentioned and of every one of its churches.

All the congregations of this church believe all the books of the Old and of the New Testaments to be the Word of God, and confess as the true expression of their faith the Thirty-Seven Articles of the Confession of the Netherlands, formulated by the Synod of 1618-19, and also the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort against the Remonstrants.

In conformity with the belief of all these congregations, we, as members of their synod, declare that from the heart we feel and believe that all articles and expressions of doctrine, contained in the three above-named confessions, jointly called the three formulas of unity, in all respects agree with the Word of God, whence we reject all doctrines repugnant thereto; that we desire to conform all our actions to them, agreeably to the accepted Church Order, and desire to receive into our church communion everyone that agrees to our confession.

May the King of the church work this faith in the hearts of many and increase it, and may those that have received a like precious faith with us show the grace shown them in fellowship to the glory of him who prayed that all his own be one in him.