

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

AGENDA FOR SYNOD



2000

Christian Reformed Church in North America

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

June 10-17, 2000
Fine Arts Center Auditorium
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
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PREFACE

Synod 2000 begins its sessions on Saturday, June 10, at 10:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Marvin J. Vander Vliet, pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan, will serve as president pro tem until Synod 2000 is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected.

A Service of Prayer and Praise will be held Sunday, June 11, 2000, at 4:00 p.m. in the Calvin College Field House. The service will be a combined service with the Multiethnic Conference. Dr. M. Vander Vliet and Dr. John Perkins will be in charge of this service.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 4 and 11. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church into new and challenging areas of ministry. May we together experience the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

David H. Engelhard
General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

I. Note to delegates

A. Delegates who travel by car are urged to carpool if possible, to save on travel costs.

B. Plane travel is the most economical for delegates traveling long distances to synod because it eliminates lodging and meal expenses en route.

C. Synod provides accidental death and dismemberment insurance (up to \$250,000) for delegates to synod. While there are exclusions and restrictions identified in the policy, travel and activities that are reasonably related to your participation in synod are covered from June 8 through June 20, 2000. Synod does not provide health insurance. Canadian delegates may wish to review their policies and purchase additional health insurance for the time they are at synod if their present policies do not provide adequate insurance outside of Canada.

D. Delegates should bring with them to synod their copies of the *Agenda for Synod 2000* and all supplementary materials.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2000 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

Synod 1954 stated that “the very principle of executive sessions, or sessions that are not open to the public, involves the practical implication that reporters may not ‘report’” (*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 15). If reporters are not permitted to report on executive sessions of synod, it is certainly a breach of confidentiality also for delegates to the synodical assembly to report—publicly, privately, orally, or in print—on the discussions held in an executive session of synod (cf. *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 16).

III. Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod as a way to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not taped. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being taped. Synod has designated that the office of the general secretary be responsible for the use and storage of these materials.

The following regulations were adopted by Synod 1989 concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions by media representatives and visitors:

A. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.

B. Visitor privileges

1. Visitors are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided they do so unobtrusively (i.e., in no way inhibiting or disturbing either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).
2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
 - a. Video cameras are permitted only at the entrances, not backstage or in the wings.
 - b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
 - c. Videotaping is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).

(Acts of Synod 1989, p. 445)

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2000

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Cecil Van Niejenhuis John A. Ooms	MinistersHomer G. Samplonius John Pasma
Elders.....	William Wildeboer Jason C. Van Doesburg	Elders.....John Leder John Gouw
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	J. Cameron Fraser Andrew G. Vander Leek	MinistersJohn R. Huizinga Peter C. Stellingwerff
Elders.....	Albert J. Kooy Allen H. Brander	Elders.....Hans Visser Lammert Lyzenga
Arizona		
Ministers	Frederick J. Walhof Frank E. Pott	MinistersJeffrey A. Dykema Rodger J. Buining
Elders.....	Eduardo A. Gonzalez Rodney J. Huguen	Elders.....Harry A. Van Dam Tim Adama
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Alvern Gelder James L. Vande Lune	MinistersStanley J. Vander Klay Ted F. Gray
Elders.....	Kenneth Prol Harold O. Plantinga	Elders.....Sam Visser _____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Simon Wolfert James R. Poelman	MinistersHarvey J. Roosma Everett J. Vander Horst
Elders.....	David A. Hornor Gerry Dykstra	Elders.....Trevor A. Girardin Bill J.W. Wikkerink
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Bert Slofstra Herb G. de Ruyter	MinistersGerrit Veeneman Rudy W. Ouwehand
Elders.....	Fred Gietema Dick Vanden Berg	Elders.....Lex Haagen Peter Yzerman
California South		
Ministers	Bruce T. Ballast Mark D. Vermaire	MinistersCornelius Pool _____
Elders.....	Phil Du Bois Dirk Jasperse	Elders.....Anthony Bons Jim Hannink
Central California		
Ministers	Philip V. De Jonge Kevin J. Adams	MinistersPhilip J. Kok Jack Huttinga
Elders.....	Bruce C. Nikkel Eberhard G. Wiedenmeyer	Elders.....Robert G. den Dulk John V. Prins

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Chatham		
Ministers	Dirk Miedema Paul D. Stadt	Ministers
Elders.....	William De Jong Jerry G. Roukema	Elders..... Daniel R. Tigchelaar Kornelis (Neil) De Koning Thomas C. Kroesbergen Steven Klootra
Chicago South		
Ministers	Duane J. Van Loo John M. Ouwinga	Ministers
Elders.....	Marvin H. De Vries John D. Wassenaar	Elders..... Timothy P. Hoekstra Gerald R. Erffmeyer Andrew Bosma James Hoffman
Columbia		
Ministers	Alvin J. Machiela Jerry D. Lion	Ministers
Elders.....	Ronald M. Leistra James J. Lane	Elders..... D. Vance Hays Jude J. Reardon Simon Ramak Thomas Witlach
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Henry G. Gunnink Nicolaas Cornelisse	Ministers
Elders.....	Ed Vanderveer Jean J. Lauziere	Elders..... Allan C. Groen Norman J. Visser Peter Runia Larry Dietrich
Georgetown		
Ministers	Terry L. Genzink Laryn G. Zoerhof	Ministers
Elders.....	Gordon J. De Kruyter Lawrence Vredevoogd	Elders..... Marvin W. Heyboer Marvin J. Vander Vliet Raymond D. Dennis Richard L. Voetberg
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	Peter M. Jonker Carl L. Kammeraad	Ministers
Elders.....	Henry J. Baron Philip J. Quist	Elders..... Morris N. Greidanus Jack Roeda Melvin De Stigter William K. Blickley
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	Jeffrey M. Meyer Ronald G. Baker	Ministers
Elders.....	Philip E. Van Heest Harry J. Vander Meer	Elders..... Matthew A. Palsrok David S. Huizena Jim Kuipers Harvey Kingma
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Kenneth E. Van Wyk Curtis A. Walters	Ministers
Elders.....	Herman E. Scholten Richard L. Bouma	Elders..... David J. Deters Joseph Vanden Akker Anthony C. Baar John Davies
Grandville		
Ministers	Calvin D. Compagner Arthur L. Van Wyhe	Ministers
Elders.....	Willard Berkenpas Arnie D. Morren	Elders..... Carlos G. Tapanes Hank F. Vlaardingerbroek Nelson T. Herrema Robert L. Van Wieren
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers	Stanley E. Ver Heul Andrew K. Chun	Ministers
Elders.....	Bernard Vander Weide W. Thomas Schipper	Elders..... Jang H. Park David R. Koll Cornelius W. Slegers

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Hackensack		
Ministers	Douglas H. Bratt Ezequiel N. Romero	MinistersRicardo E. Orellana Paul R. De Vries
Elders.....	Kevin H. Miller Denis Calix	Elders.....Edwin Arevalo _____
Hamilton		
Ministers	Erick J. Schuringa Richard E. Grift	MinistersMarvin Van Donselaar H. Raymond Vander Kooij
Elders.....	Mark Vander Vliet Bruce Dykstra	Elders.....Fred Spoelstra Fred Koning
Heartland		
Ministers	Timothy J. Ouwinga John A. Vermeer	MinistersDuane E. Tinklenberg Carl J. Klompien
Elders.....	George De Vries, Jr. Hubert W. Schuller	Elders.....Brad D. Kuiper John Kuiper, Jr.
Holland		
Ministers	James H. Scholten Michael De Vries	MinistersMarvin J. Hofman H. David Schuringa
Elders.....	James L. Strikwerda Gustave J. Van Den Berge	Elders.....William Covert _____
Hudson		
Ministers	Leonard A. Kuyvenhoven Vernon F. Geurkink	MinistersKenneth J. Verhulst John G. Keizer
Elders.....	Peter Hagedoorn Henry F. Bakker	Elders.....John Steen _____
Huron		
Ministers	Shawn R. Brix Jack Westerhof	MinistersDarrell J. Bierman Gerrit J. Bomhof
Elders.....	Hans Nusselder John Zwart	Elders.....Ben Ten Pas Ralph Van Dalen
Iakota		
Ministers	Charles J. DeRidder Bernard J. Haan	MinistersJerry D. Buwalda Roger W. Sparks
Elders.....	Ted Ribbens Martin Dekkenga	Elders.....Abraham H. Bos _____
Illiana		
Ministers	Lester W. Van Essen Calvin R. Hoogendoorn	MinistersThomas J. Kok Richard J. Blauw
Elders.....	Raymond F. Ooms David A. Janke	Elders.....James A. Van Zyl John T. Postema
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Joseph A. Brinks Philip J. Boender	MinistersRobert L. Boersma Gary M. Stevens
Elders.....	Ron L. Sportel Roger L. Klok	Elders.....Nelson J. Gritter David C. Zinn
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Clayton G. Libolt Emmett A. Harrison	MinistersHarvey A. Stob George F. Vander Weit
Elders.....	Eric Svaan Wesley D. Van Houten	Elders....._____ _____

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Superior		
Ministers	Roger D. Kramer William Versteeg	Ministers Steve A. Zwart James T. Petersen
Elders.....	Will G. De Boer James L. Marcus	Elders..... Simon W. Workman Bastian J. De Peuter
Minnkota		
Ministers	David A. Bosch Gerrit Besteman	Ministers LeRoy G. Christoffels Bernard Dykstra
Elders.....	Arnold Gorter Peter H. Vander Lugt	Elders..... Peter Van Drunen _____
Muskegon		
Ministers	Richard J. Hamstra Gerald D. Postema	Ministers Alvin L. Hoksbergen Stephen J. Nauta
Elders.....	Dennis M. Helmus Les D. De Vries	Elders..... Roger A. Westrate _____
Niagara		
Ministers	Jerry J. Hoytema Richard J. de Lange	Ministers Pieter A. Heerema Walter H. Vanderwerf
Elders.....	Ed Koke Henk Teeuwssen	Elders..... Ben Van Hoffen Lowell Witvoet
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Henry Dykema Steven J. Mulder	Ministers Kevin L. Jordan George M. McGuire
Elders.....	Lauris R. Frerichs John C. Dykstra	Elders..... Clarence R. Henze _____
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	Bruce J. Vaandrager John F. Schuurman	Ministers Lambert J. Sikkema Fred A. De Jong
Elders.....	Arnold Hoving Ralph Lubben	Elders..... Hendrik Slikers _____
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Peter R. Byma Keith A. Mannes	Ministers Joseph D. Fox Duane J. Timmermans
Elders.....	Bradley W. Center Gerald A. Talsma	Elders..... Richard A. Westmaas _____
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Chung C. Cho David W. Yang	Ministers In Chul Kim Seung J. Kang
Elders.....	Ji Kwang Chang Young Chun Park	Elders..... Chong Y. Chang Bong J. Chung
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Rodney Vander Ley Kyung S. Jho	Ministers Steven D. Frieswick Harold Veldman
Elders.....	George Klungel Douglas E. Fakkema	Elders..... Marvin G. Vanderpol Robert J. Schripsema
Pella		
Ministers	Thomas R. Dykstra Robert J. Timmer	Ministers Aldon L. Kuiper Peter C. Kelder
Elders.....	Vernon Haagsma Howard E. Groenendyk	Elders..... Leo G. Fynaardt Dave R. Engels

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Christopher J. De Vos Karl J. House	Ministers
Elders.....	Ralph Pypker George J. Vink	Elders.....
		William T. Koopmans Ed W. Visser James H. De Jong John K. Mulder
Red Mesa		
Ministers	Paul H. Redhouse Stanley Jim	Ministers
Elders.....	Roland A. Sandoval Jerry Antonio	Elders.....
		Raymond Slim John W. Dykhuis Bruce Tempest Tom Roskamp
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	Mark D. Timmer Roger Y. Ryu	Ministers
Elders.....	Harold C. Anton Edward J. Schans	Elders.....
		John Terpstra Robert L. Westenbroek Ronald M. Errico David Schaafsma
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Daniel G. Buis Luis A. Pellecer	Ministers
Elders.....	George N. De Boer Robert Molendyk	Elders.....
		Stanley J. Workman Douglas L. Aldrink _____ _____
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Roger D. Bultman Norman L. Meyer	Ministers
Elders.....	Casey C. Jen Ralph H. Veenstra	Elders.....
		Ben J. Ridder William J. Renkema Lawrence D. Kuiper John G. De Vries
Toronto		
Ministers	Hendrik P. Bruinsma H. Richard Nanninga	Ministers
Elders.....	John Kamerman Tom H. Horlings	Elders.....
		Nick C. Overduin Gordon H. Pols Ernie Jongkind Joseph Koole
Wisconsin		
Ministers	Clifford E. Bajema Peter T. Verhulst	Ministers
Elders.....	Donald L. Hughes Donald J. Voogt	Elders.....
		Donald E. Range Edward J. Laarman Peter Bosscher Duane B. Dumez
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Bernard J. Van Ee Jacob C. Weeda	Ministers
Elders.....	Duane R. Korthuis John P. Pos	Elders.....
		John W. Van Der Heide A. William Heersink Andy H. Leep _____
Zeeland		
Ministers	Ronald J. Meyer Calvin D. Vander Meyden	Ministers
Elders.....	Theron Van Rhee Gary De Haan	Elders.....
		James E. De Vries Paul R. Hoekstra Ronald Reiffer Adrian J. Molendyk

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Joint-Ministries Management Committee

Christian Reformed Church in North America-Michigan Corporation
Christian Reformed Church in North America-Ontario Corporation
Christian Reformed Church Synod Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 1999 and Synod 2000.

I. Introduction

A. General

The governing Board of the Christian Reformed Church is organized as two legal entities, one in Michigan and one in Ontario. Together these legal entities form the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC) and are known as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The mandate given by synod to the Board is found in its constitution and bylaws, which received final approval at Synod 1996 (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 620-33).

The Board has met three times since Synod 1999 (September, December, February) and is scheduled to meet again in May. At its meetings the Board divides into two standing committees (Polity Committee and Program and Finance Committee) for consideration of agenda material. The Polity Committee considers matters which formerly were assigned to the Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) as well as the work associated with the office of the general secretary. The Program and Finance Committee deals with matters which arise out of the ministries of the agencies and the work associated with the office of the executive director of ministries.

The Executive Committee of the Board meets as needed. Canadian trustees meet separately to consider Canadian issues. This arrangement complies with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities and provides a helpful way to consider and recommend solutions to issues unique to the Canadian churches.

Though the Board deals with many ecclesiastical matters as well as required corporate issues, a central focus of its work is to enhance the ministries of the whole church, especially those which are carried on through the agencies of the CRC. It is a privilege to see how many wonderful ministries the Lord is pleased to accomplish through the membership and organizations of the CRC. The work of education, relief and development, radio and TV, care and compassion, and missions at home and abroad have been blessed by God.

The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the whole church in these challenging times.

B. Membership

The members of the Michigan Corporation are Rev. Raymond Slim (Far West U.S. I), Dr. Tom Van Groningen (Far West U.S. II), Rev. Aldon L. Kuiper and Mr. Harold Van Maanen (Great Plains), Mr. William Weidenaar (Central U.S. I), Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen (Central U.S. II), Rev. John P. Gorter and Mr. Howard Johnson (Central U.S. III), Mrs. Kathleen Smith and Rev. Duane K. Kelderman (Central U.S. IV), Rev. Stanley J. Workman (Eastern U.S.), Dr. Carol Rottman and Mrs. Mamie Thomas (members-at-large).

The members of the Ontario Corporation are Rev. Ed Den Haan (Eastern Canada I), Rev. Gordon H. Pols and Mr. J. Hans Vander Stoep (Eastern Canada II), Rev. Peter Brouwer and Dr. William H. Vanden Born (Western Canada), Mrs. Sarah Cook (member-at-large).

The general secretary (Dr. David H. Engelhard) and the executive director of ministries (Dr. Peter Borgdorff) serve ex officio as corporate trustees and members of the Board of Trustees.

1. Board officers: Mr. W. Weidenaar, president; Rev. G.H. Pols, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, secretary; Mrs. K. Smith, treasurer.
2. Corporation officers: Mr. W. Weidenaar, president; Rev. G.H. Pols, vice president; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. P. Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; Mrs. K. Smith, treasurer; Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance and administration.
3. Polity Committee: Rev. P. Brouwer, Mrs. S. Cook, Rev. E. Den Haan, Rev. J.P. Gorter, Rev. A.L. Hoksbergen, Rev. A.L. Kuiper, Dr. C. Rottman, Rev. R. Slim, Rev. S.J. Workman, and Dr. D.H. Engelhard (adviser).
4. Program and Finance Committee: Mr. H. Johnson, Rev. D.K. Kelderman, Rev. G.H. Pols, Mrs. K. Smith, Mrs. M. Thomas, Mr. W.H. Vanden Born, Mr. J.H. Vander Stoep, Dr. T. Van Groningen, Mr. H. Van Maanen, Mr. W. Weidenaar, and Dr. P. Borgdorff (adviser).
5. Executive Committee: Mr. W. Weidenaar, Mr. H. Johnson, Rev. G.H. Pols, Mrs. K. Smith, Rev. S.J. Workman. Dr. D.H. Engelhard and Dr. P. Borgdorff serve ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
19	1	3rd quartile
18	2	3rd quartile

Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for the current fiscal year are as follows:

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
2000 SALARY RANGES

Level	U.S. 2000 Range			Canadian 2000 Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$72,103	\$90,129	\$108,154	\$92,878	\$116,008	\$139,317
19	\$65,602	\$82,001	\$98,402	\$80,574	\$100,717	\$120,861
18	\$60,125	\$75,156	\$90,186	\$70,208	\$87,761	\$105,313
17	\$55,504	\$69,381	\$83,256	\$61,465	\$76,831	\$92,198
16	\$51,637	\$64,546	\$77,456	\$54,146	\$67,683	\$81,219
15	\$48,397	\$60,497	\$72,595	\$48,014	\$60,017	\$72,020
14	\$42,482	\$53,102	\$63,723	\$42,831	\$53,538	\$64,246
13	\$37,522	\$46,902	\$56,282	\$38,479	\$48,098	\$57,718

Note: The shaded areas are not currently in use.

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Board appointments

On behalf of synod the Board has ratified the following appointments made by classes:

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Hackensack	Rev. P.R. De Vries	Rev. D.H. Bratt	2002
	Heartland		Rev. D. Tinklenberg	
	Hudson		Rev. K.J. Verhulst	
	Northcentral Iowa		Rev. G.M. Mc Guire	
	Pacific Northwest		Rev. Y.W. Kim	
	Pella		Rev. H.A. Brink	
	Quinte		Rev. C.D. Tuyl	
CRC Publications	Huron	Rev. G.J. Bomhof	Ms. N. Zwart	2002
	Kalamazoo		Rev. K.J. Muyskens	
	Northern Illinois		Ms. B. Brouwer	
Home Missions	Central California	Rev. G.J. Bomhof	Rev. P.H. Vander Klay	2002
	Huron		Rev. G.S. Janke	
	Illiana		Rev. C.J. De Vos	
	Quinte		Mr. J. Westra	
World Missions	Columbia	Mr. J. Leffrink	Mr. D. Koetje	2002
	Holland		Rev. P.D. Winkle	
CRWRC	Hamilton	Rev. J.H. Oh	Mr. P. Zwart	2002
	Illiana		Mr. J. Leffrink	
	Pacific Hanmi		Rev. J.H. Oh	
	Quinte		Mr. F. Westerhof	
	Toronto		Mr. P. Schaafsma	

2. CRC Publications

The Board approved the appointment of Mr. Antonio Romero as a board member-at-large to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Scott Lee, who resigned. Mr. Romero's term will expire on June 30, 2001.

3. Appointment of Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering

Synod 1999 adopted a recommendation to appoint a study Committee to Examine Life Issues Raised by Bioscience and Genetic Engineering (see *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 578). Since Synod 1999 adjourned before the members of the committee were appointed, the Board of Trustees was requested to appoint the committee and was given the list of names suggested by the advisory committee of synod and submitted by various synodical delegates (see *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 625).

Before the committee was appointed, the general secretary sent a letter of inquiry to all those whose names had been suggested by synod to learn of their availability, interest, and expertise in serving on this committee. From the gross list of names nine persons were chosen to serve:

Rev. Mary Hulst Antonides	Dr. Allan Kramer
Mrs. Effie Bierling	Ms. Lesli Van Milligen
Dr. Hessel Bouma III	Dr. Calvin Van Reken, chair
Mrs. Judith Cook	Dr. Wrede Vogel
Dr. Rebecca De Young	

4. Committee to Study Ordination and “Official Acts of Ministry” (Church Order Art. 53-b)

Synod 1999 did not approve the report submitted by the Committee to Study Ordination and “Official Acts of Ministry” and recommitted the report to the study committee with instructions for further study (*Acts of Synod 1999*, pp. 626-27). In addition synod expanded the committee by three persons and asked the Board of Trustees to make the appointments. The following persons have been appointed to this committee:

Dr. Clayton Libolt
Dr. Ricardo Orellana
Mrs. Karen Wilk

5. Classes which have declared the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 1995, the general secretary keeps a list of those classes which declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, the following classes have adopted a decision to declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Alberta North	Kalamazoo
British Columbia South-East	Lake Erie
Chicago South	Muskegon
Florida	Northern Illinois
Grand Rapids East	Pacific Northwest
Greater Los Angeles	Quinte
Hackensack	Red Mesa
Holland	Rocky Mountain
Huron	Toronto

6. Ethnic advisers to synod

The position of ethnic adviser was approved by Synod 1995 and first filled at Synod 1996. Guidelines for the position were approved by Synod 1996 and incorporated into the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

The Board appointed the following persons to serve as ethnic advisers to Synod 2000:

Rev. Pedro Aviles	Chicago, Illinois
Evangelist Bobby Boyd	Tohlokai, New Mexico
Rev. George Boyd	Atlanta, Georgia
Mr. Harold Roscher	Edmonton, Alberta
Rev. Kinfun Wong	San Jose, California
Evangelist Khay Baccam	Sioux Center, Iowa
Mr. Earl James	Grand Rapids, Michigan

Mr. Maurice Williams, Chicago, Illinois, is designated as an alternate.

7. Board nominations

a. Regional members

Whenever a new Board of Trustees member is needed from a region or when a member's first term is completed, each classis in the region is requested to submit or approve names for the position. When a slate has been prepared by the Board, the nominations are returned to the classes for voting when persons are running for first terms; names are submitted to synod for election when persons are running for second terms (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, D, 2).

The following slate of names has been sent to classes for election:

Central U.S. I region (Classes Chicago South, Illiana, Northern Illinois, and Wisconsin)

Dr. James La Grand, pastor of Beacon Light CRC, Gary, Indiana, is a graduate of Calvin College (B.A.), the University of Michigan (M.A.), Yale Divinity School (M.Div.), Calvin Theological Seminary (Th.M.), and Basel University (Th.D.). He served on the World Missions Board and its executive committee for six years and as chair of the Halifax-Dartmouth Council of Churches for three years. He was a CCRCC delegate to the Triennial Assembly of the Canadian Council of Churches in 1985 and has been a delegate to synod. Dr. La Grand received the Calvin Alumni Association Outstanding Service Award in 1986.

Rev. Wayne Leys, pastor of Community Life CRC, Lockport, Illinois, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He served on the World Missions Board and on the Board of Home Missions and its executive committee. Rev. Leys also served on the Helping Hand Mission Board, the board of the Center for Correctional Concerns, Timothy Christian School Education Committee, and on the Chicago Christian Co-Curriculum Committee. He presently serves as regional pastor for Classis Chicago South and on the classical home-missions committee.

Central U.S. III region (Classes Georgetown, Grandville, Holland, and Zeeland)

Mr. Del Huisingsh, a member of Borculo CRC, Borculo, Michigan, is recently retired, having been a business owner for thirty-seven years in financial planning and preservation. He also was a leader of business seminars and a motivational speaker. He previously served as a board member and president of Borculo Christian School and as finance chairman of Holland Christian Schools. He has been a delegate to synod and has served as president of the Holland-Zeeland elders conference. He has served on council and has been active in various church activities.

Mr. Kenneth Kuipers, a member of Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan, is a Christian-school principal. He is a graduate of Calvin College and received his master's degree in education from the University of Michigan. He has served four terms as elder, including two terms as president of council. He has been a delegate to synod. He served as reporter for the synodical study Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod.

Western Canada region (Classes Alberta North, Albert South/Saskatchewan, B.C. North-West, and B.C. South-East)

Rev. James R. Poelman, pastor of Smithers CRC, Smithers, British Columbia, attended Trinity Christian College and is a graduate of Dordt College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the classical student-fund committee and was a 1988 delegate to synod. He presently serves on the Abuse Response Team of Classis B.C. North-West. Rev. Poelman is ministerial vice chairman for the forthcoming Billy Graham Crusade to be held in Smithers in May. He has served as treasurer, vice chairman, and chairman of the local ministerial association.

Rev. Bert Slofstra, pastor of First CRC, Abbotsford, British Columbia, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served as the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada representative for the Aboriginal Rights Coalition and has served on the denominational Judicial Code Committee. He also served on the student-fund committees of Classes Huron and Toronto and as diaconal adviser for Classis Huron. Rev. Slofstra has been a delegate to synod five times, three times as advisory-committee reporter. Rev. Slofstra presently serves as chair of the classical-ministry committee.

The following slate of nominees for second terms are presented to synod for action:

Central U.S. II region (Classes Kalamazoo, Lake Erie, Muskegon, and Northern Michigan)

Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen (incumbent), a retired pastor, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He received a Drs. degree from the Free University of Amsterdam. He is a member of

Ferrysburg CRC, Ferrysburg, Michigan. He has served on the boards of Calvin College and Seminary and CRC Publications. He served on the Liturgical Committee for fourteen years. Rev. Hoksbergen also served on the Judicial Code Committee, the *Reformed Worship* editorial council, and on the search committees to select the last three *Banner* editors (A. Kuyvenhoven, G. Meyer, and J. Suk).

Rev. Scott D. Los (alternate incumbent), pastor of Friendship CRC, Gaylord, Michigan, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the Crisis Pregnancy Center Board of Otsego County and as board chairman of First Call. He presently serves as chair of the classical interim committee.

Western Canada region (Classes Alberta North, Alberta South and Saskatchewan, B.C. North-West, and B.C. South-East)

Dr. William Vanden Born (incumbent), a member of West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta, is professor emeritus of the University of Alberta, where he taught and did research in weed science. He served on the Edmonton Christian School Board, and he served as chair of the Board of Governors of The King's University College. He is serving his first term as a member of the Board of Trustees.

Mr. Jan Lok (alternate incumbent), a member of Terrace CRC, Terrace, British Columbia, is a public accountant. His professional training is in accounting administration. He is designated as a certified management accountant. He has been a delegate to synod three times. Mr. Lok has served several terms as elder, and he presently serves as vice president of council. He has served on the Duncan Christian School Board in Vancouver Island and as president of the Co-op Housing in Burnaby for two years. He has been a member of Toastmasters International for the past ten years.

b. At-large members

At-large members for the Board (total of three) are chosen directly by synod. This year Dr. Carol Rottman completes her second term and is not eligible for reelection. At-large positions exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board. This year the Board presents the following names:

Mrs. Gail Jansen is a member of Bethel CRC, Tucson, Arizona. She is an attorney at law and is a sole practitioner. She graduated from Dordt College in 1974 and from the University of Arizona College of Law with a J.D. degree. She serves as chair of the Dordt College Board of Trustees (term expires this year). She has served on the board of trustees for the Center for Public Justice and on the board of the Christian Conciliation Service of southern Arizona. She also serves as chair of her church's building committee.

Mrs. Theresa Rottschafer, a member of Maranatha Fellowship CRC, Farmington, New Mexico, is a kindergarten teacher at Living Word Christian School. She is a graduate of Calvin College and attended Reformed Bible College for three years. She has a master's degree in special education from Northern Arizona University. She presently serves on the CRC Publications Board (term expires this year). She is

on the National Day of Prayer Committee for the local area and has been involved in several professional projects.

8. Judicial Code Committee nominations

The Judicial Code Committee has not met since Synod 1999 and has no recommendations for Synod 2000's consideration. Three members of the committee, however, are completing their first terms of service and are eligible for reelection: Mrs. Jeanne Engelhard, Mr. Carl Oosterhouse, and Mr. Loren Veldhuizen. We thank these three for the contribution they have made to the life of our churches.

According to the rules of synod, the above three persons are presented for reelection as single nominees for their positions on the committee:

Mrs. Jeanne Engelhard is a member of Shawnee Park CRC, Grand Rapids. She received an R.N. degree from Calvin College-Blodgett Memorial Hospital School of Nursing, a B.S.N. from the University of Detroit/Mercy College, and an M.A. in organizational communication from Western Michigan University. She is employed as a clinical-systems improvement specialist at Spectrum Health. She presently serves on the Ramoth House Board and is past chair of Seymour Christian School Board.

Mr. Carl Oosterhouse is a partner in the law firm of Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and serves as a member of the firm's management committee. He is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC. He received a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. He recently served as a member of the Grand Rapids Christian School Association Board, serving as president for five years. He previously served on the denominational Unordained Employees' Pension Fund Committee and on the local March of Dimes board.

Mr. Loren Veldhuizen is a member of Calvary CRC in Orange City, Iowa. He is a partner in the law firm of Klay, Veldhuizen, Bindner, De Jong & Pals in Orange City. He received a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a J.D. from the University of Iowa. He serves on the Barnabas Foundation Board and is a past member of the Calvin College, Bethany Christian Services, and Bethesda boards. He has also served as a delegate to synod and on the classical home-missions committee and abuse-response committee. He and his wife are licensed foster parents in Iowa and have cared for over forty children.

9. Guide for Conducting Church Visiting proposal

About three years ago the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America formed a task force to explore the practice of church visiting within the CRC. Board members as well as the general secretary had received some encouragement from the classes to examine the practice and provide whatever assistance might be available to strengthen this long-standing practice of Reformed churches.

The task force was composed of Dr. Henry De Moor, Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen, and Rev. Duane A. Visser. They determined that their first task was to obtain some assessment of the problem, and they designed a simple questionnaire that was sent to the

stated clerk of each classis. Thirty-one of the forty-seven classes responded (66%), and a summary of the results was compiled.

Many of the concerns raised about church visiting in the survey cannot be successfully addressed by a board-appointed task force because they reflect changing trends in culture, regional differences in the way our denomination functions, varying reactions to denominational issues, and local personality factors regarding the way a visit is conducted. One factor that surfaced repeatedly and in various contexts is that the Guide for Conducting Church Visiting needs to be reviewed and revised. Even though a new guide cannot by itself pump new life into this old practice, the Board thought it was a step toward improvement. The new Guide for Conducting Church Visiting is presented by the Board to synod for adoption (see Appendix A).

The task force discovered that two classes were experimenting with new ways of conducting church visiting. One classis submitted its proposal to the task force (see Appendix B) and reported that the initial use of this model in the spring of 1999 worked very well. The Board is not recommending this method but prints it here so that classes that think it necessary to consider an alternative method of conducting church visiting will have a model.

The Board of Trustees recommends

- a. That synod adopt the proposed new Guide for Conducting Church Visiting (Appendix A) for a three-year trial period.
 - b. That synod authorize the general secretary to distribute the guide in a booklet format for the use of churches and church visitors.
 - c. That synod request church visitors, stated clerks of classes, and church councils to submit reactions regarding the new guide to the general secretary by November 1, 2002, so that the Board of Trustees can prepare a recommendation regarding the ongoing use of the guide to Synod 2003.
10. Korean-classis report (Appendix C)
- Synod 1996 adopted a recommendation approving “the formation of a classis of Korean-speaking churches out of Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South . . . for a maximum of fifteen years” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 556). A number of stipulations were also put into place. One of those stipulations required a standing committee to monitor and report on “the progress of the new classis and on possible ways to improve its functioning” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 556).
- The monitoring committee was requested to report to synod through the general secretary in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth years of the classis’ existence and to “make recommendations . . . to synod regarding the continuation of the Korean-speaking classis” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 556). The report contained in Appendix C is the fourth-year report.
11. Report on ethnic diversity
- Synod 1996 amended and adopted the principles and guidelines recommended by the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse

Family of God. This report is now commonly referred to by the title of its reprinted form: *God's Diverse and Unified Family*.

Synod 1998 appointed a committee

to study the issues and solutions identified by the 1998 Multiethnic Conference, including the results of the dialogue held between synodical delegates and multiethnic conferees, in order to develop specific strategies which will continue to move us toward becoming a diverse family of God. (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 408)

This committee was to report its findings and conclusions to the Board of Trustees "to enable the Board to fulfill the mandate given to it by Synod 1996 (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 514) regarding multiethnic matters . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 408).

The Board of Trustees has not finalized its report to synod on these matters and will present its report in the supplemental materials sent to synodical delegates in late May.

12. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually by the office of the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, serves as a denominational directory and as a resource for statistical information. In addition to information about classes, congregations, ministers, and agencies, it contains a historical sketch of the life of the church during the previous year and provides obituary information about pastors who died during that year.

Each year the *Yearbook* is published with greater facility than the year before because of technological refinements. The earlier deadline for *Yearbook* information was observed again this year so that the book could be published in January rather than in the spring, as in prior years. Thus the book reflects denominational and local-church information at a given point (August 31) in the calendar year. The change in date of publication continues to meet with favorable response.

The statistics printed beneath the congregational information in the 1999 *Yearbook* in each instance show the total number of souls (baptized and professing members) in a local congregation. By instruction of synod the following membership totals are listed on the Classical Information pages: number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and total number of members.

The Directory of Churches and Ministries in the *Yearbook* includes organized churches, emerging churches, newly planted churches (not yet having statistics), and other ministries, for a total of 972 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was very good this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 857 ministries.

We acknowledge with gratitude the excellent services of Mrs. Nancy Haynes, *Yearbook* manager, and Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse and Mrs. Alice Damsteegt, who assisted in gathering information, entering it into the database, copy reading, editing, and carefully attending to the myriad of details involved in publishing the *Yearbook*. The same hearty gratitude needs to be expressed to our computer staff—Mrs. Shirley De

Vries and Mrs. Jeanne Webster—who diligently provide the necessary support services for this exacting task.

b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was printed, incorporating the changes adopted and ratified by Synod 1999. These booklets are updated by the general secretary and reprinted annually, when necessary, and a copy is sent to each church.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the general secretary. This would not be accomplished by established deadlines without the invaluable assistance of his secretary, Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse, Mrs. Jan Walhout (copy editor), Mrs. Nancy Haynes, and personnel from CRC Product Services.

As in previous years, some decisions needed to be made about which material properly belonged in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seemed more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether the material is properly on its agenda.

d. *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church*

During the past year the Board of Trustees has again sent to all CRC councils updated materials for the *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church: Your Church in Action*. Several councils ordered new notebooks because the old ones had been lost or misplaced. This large blue notebook should be kept available in every council room.

The *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church* contains the following sections:

- 1) Ministry Shares and Offerings—This section of the booklet contains financial data and a description of the programs carried on by all CRC boards and agencies as well as by accredited outside agencies. It gives assistance for scheduling special offerings and suggests announcements to be made prior to receiving such offerings.
- 2) Denominational Insights—After a brief statement on the nature of the church and on some of the principles of Reformed church government, this section provides information about the nature of our assemblies, the function of major assemblies, the agenda for synod, and the denominational program structure.
- 3) Congregational Helps—This section contains helps which are available for councils and congregations; suggested rules of procedure and model agendas for council, consistory, and deacons meetings; suggestions for congregational committees; helpful information on the use of members' gifts; and other useful information.
- 4) Ministers' Compensation Survey—By mandate of synod, a survey of ministers' compensation has been prepared each year for use by our pastors and by finance committees of the church councils. The 1999 survey will be presented to Synod 2000 and later mailed to the churches for inclusion in the *Handbook*. It is intended to be a helpful guide in the setting of salaries and other position-related reimburse-

ments. Because the survey is also used by our pension committees, Synod 1988 passed the following recommendation:

That synod remind the churches that Synod 1982 adopted a recommendation to “require that all ministers complete the salary questionnaire annually to enable the pension committees to accurately calculate the average cash salary as a base for computing ministers’ pensions.”

(Acts of Synod 1982, p. 51; Acts of Synod 1988, p. 574)

- 5) Doctrinal and Ethical Decisions—This section is indispensable for all who wish to know the position of the CRC on various matters of doctrine and ethics. It is in the process of being updated.

e. *Index of Synodical Decisions*

Previous editions of the *Index of Synodical Decisions* have been valuable aids for those who need to research the decisions of synodical assemblies. The most recent edition of the index was published in 1980. The updating of the index was mandated by Synod 1995. Since that time the staff has been working steadily on this project but with limited time and resources to devote to it. The previously published index needed to be redone in a completely different software system; the indexing standards and practices needed rethinking and, in many instances, needed altering; and the *Agenda* and *Acts* of subsequent years needed to be seamlessly inserted into the older index. The index is now scheduled to be published in A.D. 2000 and to include materials through Synod 2000. Those needing access to the index for research purposes may contact the general secretary, who will assist them in obtaining what they need.

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. The manual, originally prepared by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, was revised this year by the general secretary and distributed to those mentioned above. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the general secretary.

B. *Program and finance matters*

The year since Synod 1999 has been filled with activity. To be sure, much of the Board’s work is routine and consists of providing general oversight of the ministries of the denomination. Through the facilitation provided by the denominational staff, the Board is kept abreast of developments as they happen between Board meetings. Agency minutes are reviewed at each meeting of the Board, and specific items that require a Board decision are then dealt with routinely. The program matters that were handled by the Board and now require review or action by synod are identified clearly within the body of this report.

1. Canadian Ministries Board

The Board of Trustees spent considerable time developing a response, in consultation with the Canadian Ministries Board, to the decisions of Synod 1999 that dealt with organizational structure. The complete response that has been developed is contained in Appendix D. The Board recommends synod’s approval of the recommendations contained therein.

While the Board was developing its response, Mr. Raymond Elgersma, Canadian ministries director since July 1, 1998, submitted his resignation, effective January 31, 2000. His decision to resign was primarily caused by Synod 1999's decision not to adopt the recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the United States. The Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees regretfully accepted Mr. Elgersma's resignation. Mr. Elgersma served the CRC with distinction for approximately eight years as the director of CRWRC-Canada (1989-1996) and as the Canadian ministries director (1998-2000). The Board decided to await Synod 2000's decision concerning the future of the Canadian Ministries Board before recruiting for Mr. Elgersma's replacement. When that decision has been made, the Board of Trustees will assess the nature of the Canadian ministries director position within the context of other decisions made.

When Synod 1997 adopted the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada, it approved the establishment of the Canadian Ministries Board. Its mandate included the following:

- To integrate the ministries of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada into the fabric of the denomination.
- To increase collaborative and cooperative ministry thrusts in our agency work in Canada.
- To continue ecumenical initiatives in Canada.
- To develop stronger linkages between our denominational ministries and our local congregations.

As work on this mandate was initiated, the approval for restructuring the entire denominational structure was being anticipated, for decision by Synod 1999. Synod's decision not to accept the recommendations of the U.S. Structure Committee significantly marginalized the role of the Canadian Ministries Board. Synod's decision to leave governance responsibilities with the agency boards placed the Canadian Ministries Board in the position of needing to second-guess its place in directing ministry in Canada.

Despite the structural ambiguities that resulted from synod's decision, the work of ministry activity continues as follows:

- A Cross-Cultural Ministry Forum is being planned for June 2000 to address the challenges that we face in ministering cross-culturally. In this forum particular emphasis will be placed on the challenge of syncretism, asking, for example, Can we "redeem" traditional religious practices and glorify God in those ceremonial activities?
- A Triennial Conference is now planned for 2002. This conference will develop a visionary plan for ministry in Canada. We are planning a number of regional pre-conferences in 2001 that will feed the 2002 conference.
- Two regional ministry teams are in the process of development.

The following ministries presently continue under the direction of the Canadian Ministries Board:

- ServiceLink, a ministry promoting volunteerism for members of the CRC.
- The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), a committee that addresses the Canadian government on social-justice issues.
- The Electronic Media Committee, which cooperates with The Back to God Hour in video production on current affairs and justice issues.
- The three Native Ministry Centres in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton, which minister wholistically to the urban aboriginal community in each of these cities.
- Ecumenical involvement with both the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. The CRC in Canada actively participates in five ecumenical coalitions addressing human rights and justice matters in Canada and abroad.

The Canadian Ministries Board hereby informs Synod 2000 of its endorsement of the governance-change proposals that are being advanced by the Board of Trustees. The reconstitution of the Board of Trustees and the proposed responsibilities assigned to the CRCNA-Canada Corporation are the best options available to us at this time to live and minister binationally as one church in two nations.

2. Report regarding the former Pastoral Ministries departments

Synod 1999 instructed the Board of Trustees “to report to Synod 2000 in order to assure that the integrity of the ministry mandates of the five Pastoral Ministries entities be maintained and their ministries secured” (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 554). The following report and its appendices address the concerns of Synod 1999.

a. The Office of Abuse Prevention

The Office of Abuse Prevention was established by Synod 1994. Initially this ministry was part of Pastoral Ministries, but now it relates directly to the Board of Trustees within the organizational framework of the Denominational Office. As reported to Synod 1999, the Board of Trustees mandated that a needs-assessment survey be conducted to determine the scope and focus of this ministry before the recommendations of the former Pastoral Ministries Board are acted on. The Board of Trustees’ decisions concerning this matter are reported in Appendix E. Abuse Prevention director Ms. Beth Swagman’s report on the activity of the past year is contained in Appendix F.

b. The Office of Chaplaincy Ministries

The discussion about the eventual placement of Chaplaincy Ministries is continuing. This discussion also involves the identification of core values for Chaplaincy Ministries. A task force of chaplains and Home Missions’ personnel are meeting to discuss these matters in an effort to achieve consensus. Rev. Jake Heerema and Rev. Siebert Van Houten report on their current ministry in Appendix G.

c. The Office of Disability Concerns

The Office of Disability Concerns was established by Synod 1984. After five years as part of Pastoral Ministries (1994-1999), this ministry now relates directly to the Board of Trustees within the organizational

framework of the Denominational Office. As reported to Synod 1999, the Board of Trustees mandated that a needs-assessment survey be conducted to determine the scope and focus of this ministry before the recommendations of the former Pastoral Ministries Board are acted on. The Board of Trustees' decisions concerning this matter are reported in Appendix E. Disability Concerns director Dr. James Vanderlaan's report on the activity of the past year is in Appendix H.

d. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations and Ministerial Information Services

The Pastor-Church Relations ministry was initiated by Synod 1982. It was one of the five ministries making up Pastoral Ministries while that agency was in existence. Because this ministry provides advice both to the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church and to the agencies, it has been placed under the administration of the Denominational Office and under the governance of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. The report of Rev. Duane Visser, the director of Pastor-Church Relations, can be found in Appendix I.

e. The Office of Race Relations

The ministry of Race Relations was reorganized during 1999 after the Pastoral Ministries Board was dissolved. It was decided, in consultation with a variety of ethnic-minority representatives, that Race Relations be decentralized and that its staff live and work in various regions of the denomination. Rev. Norberto Wolf was appointed as the director of Race Relations in September 1999. His report is contained in Appendix J. Rev. Wolf continues to live in California and performs his executive responsibilities and his regional activities from his office in Bellflower, California.

3. The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

The ministry of Social Justice and Hunger Action has its origin in the world-hunger reports of 1979 and 1993. The activities of this office have been incorporated into the Denominational Ministries Plan. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, who serves as the coordinator for this ministry, has submitted a comprehensive report in Appendix K.

4. The Denominational Ministries Plan

Synod 1997 approved the mission and vision statement for the ministries of the denomination and endorsed the goals and strategies that are part of the plan. After working with the plan for more than two years, the Ministries Coordinating Council decided that a vision of the goals and strategies would be beneficial to the agencies and educational institutions as increasingly they seek to be supportive of the Denominational Ministries Plan. The vision of the plan will incorporate the synodically approved mandates of all of the agencies and educational institutions. The revision effort is presently underway, and it is expected that copies will be available upon request at the time of synod's meeting.

5. Agency presentations at synod

Synod 1995 adopted a three-year rotation cycle for agency presentations at synod. Synod also decided to recognize at its Prayer and Praise Service the presence of missionaries, chaplains, and all others engaged in ministries

in specialized settings. The following roster for agency presentations is proposed for Synod 2000 on a schedule of synod's choosing:

- Calvin Theological Seminary
- Christian Reformed World Missions
- Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

6. Finance matters

Most of the financial information will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2000—Financial and Business Supplement*. This supplement is distributed to all the delegates at the time of synod. The financial information contained in this printed *Agenda* is the condensed information mandated by Synod 1998. The condensed financial statements (Appendix L of this report) reflect pertinent information for all the agencies and institutions of the CRC. The information provided seeks to strike an appropriate balance between too much and too little information.

As is evident from the financial statements provided to synod, the regular and faithful contributions by the membership of the CRC is astounding. These gifts enable a global ministry that is truly a testimony to the opportunities God has provided.

The consolidated financial services that have been operative since July 1, 1997, continue to be refined. During this past fiscal year a complete software changeover was accomplished through the work of a tremendously dedicated staff. Initially the changeover did cause some delays in reporting, but it is now evident that the denomination will be well served by the new software. In addition to such financial services, the director of finance and administration also oversees, on behalf of the executive director of ministries, Product Services (graphic design, printing, mailing services), Information Services (computer and communication technology), and Building Services.

7. The CRC Foundation

Several years ago synod authorized the formation of a foundation to serve the Christian Reformed Church. The functions of the foundation are the following:

- a. Manage the investments of all the agencies except those of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.
- b. Receive and invest estate gifts and bequests for the benefit of the denomination or one of its entities.
- c. Solicit annual gifts in support of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, especially such gifts that are given to support creative and cooperative ministries as represented and approved in the Denominational Ministries Plan.

The Foundation Trustees meet twice per year to transact the business of the CRC Foundation. The management of the investments is accomplished through an investment committee that works with professional investment advisers. Since the adoption of the denominational investment policy by Synod 1998, this arrangement has worked very well.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Jack De Vos are the directors of the CRC Foundation and represent the Foundation to potential donors. Their services are invaluable to the ministry of the Foundation. The Foundation solicits funds primarily in support of the agencies of the CRC but also in support of the interagency ministries that are part of the Denominational Ministries Plan. All distributions in excess of \$5,000 need the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Finally, the Foundation Trustees are in the process of developing a long-term vision for the Foundation. This vision needs to reflect the values of the Christian Reformed Church in terms of "endowments for ministries." As the trustees see it, one of these values is some degree of financial stability for the future. However, such provision should not be so great that future generations will be denied the privilege and responsibility of supporting the denomination's ministries.

8. Performance review of the executive director of ministries

The Board of Trustees, through a subcommittee, conducted its regular three-year intensive evaluation of Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries. The Board in plenary session received the results of the evaluation with gratitude and now conveys its findings to synod:

A subcommittee of the Board prepared an evaluation instrument and distributed it to over sixty individuals, including trustees, agency executive directors, presidents of educational institutions, other staff and board members, and colleagues in the Denominational Office. Dr. Borgdorff was also asked to submit a self-evaluation.

The evaluation committee received, collated, and analyzed thirty-six completed questionnaires and reviewed Dr. Borgdorff's self-evaluation. Some face-to-face meetings were held with various people.

The feedback on the performance of the EDM was overwhelmingly positive. Even those who had suggestions or criticisms framed them with strong appreciation for the difficult job Dr. Borgdorff has and the effectiveness with which he performs it.

The evaluation committee held an extended meeting with Dr. Borgdorff. The meeting was cordial and intended to be affirming for Dr. Borgdorff. When some of the concerns and criticisms were shared with him, he was open to suggestions on how he might enhance his performance. In conclusion, the evaluation of Dr. Peter Borgdorff, based upon the above process, is positive and enthusiastic. The Christian Reformed Church is blessed to have Dr. Borgdorff as its EDM in a time of ongoing structural change and tension.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. William Weidenaar, chairman of the Board; Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; and Mr. Kenneth Horjus, director of finance and administration, when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency and institution boards (II, A, 1 and 2).

C. That synod adopt the proposed Guide for Conducting Church Visiting (II, A, 9).

D. That synod approve the recommendations contained in Appendix D concerning the reconstitution of the Board of Trustees.

E. That synod receive as information the Board of Trustees' decisions concerning Abuse Prevention and Disability Concerns as detailed in Appendix E.

G. That synod encourage churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 25 to October 1, 2000.

Grounds:

1. The task of eliminating racism is formidable; it is a matter that needs to be put boldly before the congregations at all times but especially as they celebrate Worldwide Communion in October.
2. The financial support that is received when congregations celebrate All Nations Heritage Week dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award grants and scholarships for ethnic-minority leadership and ministry.

H. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements for the agencies and educational institutions (Appendix L).

I. That synod approve a time for presentations by Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Reformed World Missions, and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
David E. Engelhard, general secretary
Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries

Appendix A

Guide for Conducting Church Visiting

I. Brief history of the practice of church visiting

Church visiting has its roots in apostolic tradition. Peter "traveled about the country" and, among others, visited the "saints in Lydda" (Acts 9:32). Paul "went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:41), ascertaining how they were doing (Acts 15:36), and delivering "the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey" (Acts 16:4). His epistles to the Corinthians, Thessalonians, and others are filled with references to previous and future visits designed to upbuild the saints of God (e.g., I Cor. 16:5-9; I Thess. 2:1; 2:17-3:10).

There are very few references to the practice of church visiting in descriptions of life in the early Christian church. It is clear, however, that by the fourth century there was a regular pattern of diocesan visits made by bishops or their representatives in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. In the centuries that followed, especially in the Western church, these visits increasingly assumed the character of hierarchical supervision. Indeed, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, if done at all, the visits had degenerated into judicial inquiries

or occasions for the clergy to heap abuse on the local parish. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Reformers initially saw them as part of a corrupt system desperately in need of renewal.

Despite early misgivings, Martin Luther eventually urged the Elector of Saxony to require church and school visits in every place. As Williston Walker observes in *A History of the Christian Church*, “‘visitors’ were appointed by the Elector to inquire into clerical doctrine and conduct on the basis of articles drawn up by Melancthon in 1527, and enlarged the following year.” The focus in these articles was indeed on “clerical doctrine and conduct,” but the document included areas like confession, discipline, and liturgy. Indeed, this “constitution” also provided for the appointment of “superintendents,” who visited churches on an annual basis not only in Germany but throughout the Lutheran world. An element of hierarchy remained, but the practice was largely restored to its original purpose of strengthening the congregations.

Similar developments took place in other areas where the Reformation flourished. John Calvin introduced annual church visits in Geneva and surrounding areas in 1546. They were made by two city-council members and two elected ministers of the Word. Eventually, the practice found an enduring place in the Genevan Church Order (the *Ordonnances ecclesiastiques*), adopted in 1561. In Scotland, John Knox instituted a temporary office of “superintendents,” who were to visit all the congregations to ensure a healthy development of church life. His idea was that the office should cease as soon as there were a sufficient number of preachers. Largely due to Episcopal influences, the practice took on a more permanent character, and, once again, there were traces of illegitimate hierarchical intrusion into affairs of the local parish.

The attempt to avoid all hierarchy in such a practice was most successful in the Reformed churches of France and the lowlands. The Synod of Emden (1571) adopted the principle still found in Article 85 of the current Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church: “No church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no officebearer shall lord it over another officebearer.” When the Synod of Middleburg was asked a decade later whether it would be beneficial to appoint superintendents to conduct annual church visits, the assembly expressed its fears about such arrangements and decided that they were unnecessary.

But the need remained, apparently, and just five years later the Synod of the Hague (1586) eventually permitted “*visitatores*” appointed by regional bodies (classes), though at the same time the institution of “superintendents” was forbidden. This decision became the model for the practice of church visiting in the Netherlands and, ultimately, what is now Article 42 of the Church Order. It also provided the basic structure for what we know as the Guide for Conducting Church Visiting that has been developed throughout the history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

In this way the churches of the Reformation sought to return to apostolic example by arranging for annual visits of congregations, designed to strengthen the local church and its officebearers. The practice acknowledges that the local church is not an island unto itself. It provides an avenue of accountability—not as if the officebearers must answer to superiors but by acknowledging the accumulated authority of the broader assembly called the “*classis*,” which designates those who conduct church visiting. In addition, those who visit provide a reasonably objective “ear” for members who have

grown disillusioned with their leadership and need the assistance and advice of others. In this way congregations have a constructive way to deal with tensions that may arise.

II. Clear statement of purpose

A. Church Order Article 42-b specifies the practice and purpose of church visiting:

- 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 fraternally 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.

B. Four aspects of church visiting

1. Ascertain—this involves data gathering, conversation, and listening.
2. Admonish—a limited aspect, but occasionally required.
3. Advise—councils have questions that can be dealt with at the official visit or between visits.
4. Accountability—church visitors report their work to classis.

The four aspects above all suggest that the biblical teaching of mutual accountability is foundational to the practice of church visiting. Covenant life together includes a willingness to submit oneself to others and a willingness to live faithfully to agreed-upon commitments.

C. Role of church visitors

The church visitors come as fellow officebearers who are appointed by the broader church to learn about the spiritual health of the congregation, to discuss areas of ministry where the church is experiencing the Lord's blessing and where the church is struggling, and to ascertain whether the council, the minister, the elders, the deacons, and the evangelist (if there is one) are ministering properly and faithfully.

III. Arrangements for visit

A. Proper announcement and preparation for the meeting

1. Council members and congregational members must be informed in advance when and why the visit is occurring.
2. Councils should prepare for the meeting by reviewing the purpose for the meeting and by discussing the questions to be asked.

B. Councils should allow sufficient time for the visit—a minimum of one hour is required.

C. *Official records of the church must be available* for the visitors to review (council minutes, elders' minutes, deacons' minutes, articles of incorporation, audited financial statements, etc.).

D. *Other suggestions*

1. In order for the meeting with the council to be informative and beneficial, the visitors may want to consider having a separate visit with the minister and his/her spouse and/or having dinner with the executive committee or a small leadership group of the council.
2. Visits to churches which are some distance from the core of the classis may afford the visitors an opportunity to spend a weekend with the congregation, to lead worship, and to build closer ties with the churches of classis.

E. *Requests for advice*

If a council knows that it has some issue(s) on which it will seek advice, it should inform the visitors in advance of the visit so that they can give some thought to the advice they want to give.

F. *Members of congregation meeting with church visitors*

Members of the congregation who have a concern about congregational life and/or about the present leadership of the congregation may meet with the church visitors. Any members wishing to meet with the church visitors must inform the council of their intention, identify the substance of their concerns, and receive the council's permission before meeting with the church visitors.

IV. Guidelines for the conversation with church visitors

A. *Role of council*

1. The Church Order gives certain responsibilities to all church councils. Some responsibilities are regular and ongoing, and others are occasional and temporary. The responsibilities assigned to church councils are these:
 - a. Oversee regular replacement of officebearers (Art. 4)
 - b. Ensure the signing of the Form of Subscription (Art. 5)
 - c. Oversee the calling of a minister and ensure that all regulations are followed (Art. 9)
 - d. Supervise doctrine, life, and duties of minister(s) (Art. 13)
 - e. Give consent for the minister to accept another call (Art. 14)
 - f. Provide for the proper support of the minister (Art. 15)
 - g. Approve a leave of absence for the minister (Art. 16)
 - h. Initiate and/or approve the release of a minister from service to the congregation (Art. 17)
 - i. Approve retirement of a minister (Art. 18-a)
 - j. Organize itself in certain ways (Art. 32-a - 32-c)
 - k. Provide for safeguarding property through incorporation (Art. 32-d)
 - l. Composed itself of ministers, elders, deacons (Art. 35-a)
 - m. Meet regularly and conduct mutual censure (Art. 36)
 - n. Call and conduct an annual congregational meeting (Art. 37)
 - o. Delegate a minister and an elder to classis meetings (Art. 40)

- p. Give account of its work to classis at each meeting via answers to questions on the credentials (Art. 41)
- q. Receive the church visitors yearly (Art. 42)
- r. Hold worship services, ordinarily twice on Sunday, and on certain special days (Art. 51)
- s. Provide for an educational ministry to nurture the faith of youth and enhance the faith of adults (Arts. 63-a; 64-a)
- t. Provide pastoral care to congregation (Art. 65)
- u. Maintain a complete record of all membership matters (Art. 68)
- v. Encourage members to establish and maintain Christian schools; urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools (Art. 71)
- w. Promote societies for the study of God's Word and serve the youth with assistance and advice (Art. 72)
- x. Stimulate members to be witnesses for Christ and to support the work of missions (Art. 73-b)
- y. Sponsor and govern the bringing of the gospel to unbelievers in the community (Art. 74-a)

2. Sample questions regarding the work of council

Note: It is assumed that the list of council responsibilities detailed above will be in the possession of each council member and that the conversation will move back and forth from some general questions to some very specific questions.

- a. Which area(s) of council responsibility has proven to be most rewarding this year?
- b. Which area(s) of council responsibility has been most challenging/frustrating this year?
- c. What creative or new ministries have you considered or initiated this year?
- d. What are you doing to equip the congregation for ministry?
- e. What obstacles stand in your way of doing more effective ministry in the congregation? In the community?
- f. How are the distinctives of being a Christian Reformed church fostered in this congregation?
- g. What creative ways have you found to minister to those often forgotten by others such as shut-ins, persons with disabilities, and others?
- h. Is your level of financial support for the minister appropriate and sufficient? Do you discuss this matter with your minister(s) yearly?

B. Role of the minister

1. The Church Order identifies certain aspects of the minister's vocation. The following responsibilities are mentioned:

A minister shall

- a. Sign the Form of Subscription (Art. 5)
- b. Proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture (Art. 11)
- c. Preach, administer sacraments, conduct public worship, teach catechism, train members for service, supervise the doctrine and life of the congregation, exercise admonition and discipline, exercise pastoral care, and engage in and promote evangelism (Art. 12)

- d. Be properly supported by the council (Art. 15-d)
- e. Be a member of the council (Art. 35-a)
- f. Be a member of the consistory (Art. 35-b)
- g. Serve as a delegate to classis (and may be called upon to serve classis in various functions) (Art. 40-a)
- h. Conduct the worship services (Art. 53-a)
- i. Officially explain and apply Holy Scripture in worship services (Art. 54-a)
- j. Ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism at one service each Sunday (Art. 54-b)
- k. Administer the sacraments in public worship (Art. 55)
- l. Be expected to solemnize marriages which are consistent with the Word of God (Art. 69-c)

2. Sample questions concerning the work of the minister(s)

Note: It is assumed that the above list of specific responsibilities of the minister will be available to council members during the visit. Questions about any of these responsibilities may be asked during the visit.

- a. What themes (emphases) in the minister's preaching have been especially beneficial and/or necessary for this congregation?
- b. What challenges has the minister placed before the congregation this year?
- c. How does the minister encourage an appreciation for and an understanding of the Reformed faith and confessions?
- d. How does the minister foster an involvement in and appreciation for the broader church (classis, denomination, ecumenical endeavors)?
- e. What do you understand the minister's calling and duties to be?
- f. How do you evaluate the minister's faithfulness to his/her calling and by what standards?
- g. How do you evaluate the minister's effectiveness in his/her work and by what standards?

3. Associate ministers

It is expected that during each visit the church visitors will inquire regarding the council's care for and supervision of any associate minister who is serving in a specialized ministry (see Church Order Supplement, Art. 12-c, Regulation d).

C. Role of the elder

1. The Church Order identifies those areas of responsibility given to the elders or the consistory. They are as follows:

Elders/consistory shall

- a. Sign the Form of Subscription (Art. 5)
- b. Supervise doctrine, life, and duties of minister(s) (Art. 13-a)
- c. Oversee doctrine and life of members and fellow officebearers (Art. 25-b)
- d. Serve as member of council (Art. 35-a)
- e. Serve as member of the consistory (Art. 35-b)
- f. Be available to serve as delegate to classis (Art. 40-a)
- g. Regulate the worship services including Bible versions used, hymns approved, and liturgical forms employed (Art. 52)

- h. Approve persons leading worship and reading sermons (Art. 53)
- i. Authorize the administration of the sacraments (Art. 55)
- j. Make sure that baptism is requested and administered to covenant infants as soon as feasible (Art. 56)
- k. Have the authority to admit a “baptized member” to “confessing member” status after hearing a profession of faith (Art. 59-a)
- l. Have authority to admit confessing members from other denominations after exploring their doctrine and conduct (Art. 59-d)
- m. Provide for the administration of the Lord’s Supper (Art. 60-d)
- n. Supervise the instruction of the youth (Art. 63-c)
- o. Supervise the instruction of adult members (Art. 64-b)
- p. Extend pastoral care to members (and others). The means and purposes are given in the Church Order Article 65.
- q. Instruct and admonish members to marry only in the Lord (Art. 69-a)
- r. Instruct and remind members of their responsibility to encourage and admonish one another; foster a spirit of love and openness so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation (Art. 79-b)
- s. Exercise the authority of Christ regarding public sins brought according to Matthew 18:15-17 (Art. 80)
- t. Faithfully discipline those who sin in life or doctrine (Art. 81-a)
- u. Inform congregation and encourage its involvement in both the exclusion from and readmission to membership (Art. 81-d)

2. Sample questions concerning the work of elders

Note: It is assumed that the list of specific responsibilities of elders will be available to council members during the visit. Questions about any of these responsibilities may be asked during the visit.

- a. What do you understand the elder’s calling and duties to be?
- b. Are the members being visited and cared for in a timely and beneficial way?
- c. The elders have many supervisory responsibilities. What makes your work satisfying, and what difficulties do you face?
- d. What instruction and training have you had to help you in your ministry, and what training is planned for the next year?
- e. What successes have you seen in your ministry this year?
- f. Leadership is exercised differently in the Reformed tradition than in nondenominational or independent settings. How does your leadership reflect those Reformed emphases?

D. Role of the deacon

1. The Church Order identifies those areas of responsibility given to the deacons or the diaconate. They are as follows:

Deacons/the diaconate shall

- a. Sign Form of Subscription (Art. 4)
- b. Represent and administer the mercy of Christ (Art. 25-c)
- c. Stimulate members to faithful, obedient stewardship (Art. 25-c)
- d. Give biblical encouragement to assure the unity of Word and deed (Art. 25-c)
- e. Serve as members of council (Art. 35-a)

- f. Serve as members of diaconate (Art. 35-c)
- g. Extend pastoral care to members (and others) (Art. 65)
- h. Carry on the church's ministry of mercy—including conferring and cooperating with diaconates of neighboring churches (Art. 74)

2. Sample questions concerning the work of deacons.

Note: It is assumed that the list of specific responsibilities of deacons will be available to council members during the visit. Questions about any of these responsibilities may be asked during the visit.

- a. What do you understand the deacon's calling and duties to be?
- b. Since the diaconal responsibilities are given in broad categories, what have the deacons done to make the broad directives manageable?
- c. What percentage of the membership is practicing faithful stewardship? What is being done/proposed to enhance stewardship in the congregation?
- d. What challenges do you face in trying to carry on the church's ministry of mercy?
- e. What successes have you seen in your ministry this year?
- f. How do you understand the diaconal responsibility of assuring the unity of word and deed (see Church Order Art. 25-c)? What have you done to assure the unity of word and deed ministry?
- g. What kind of training do you need to help you in your ministry?

E. Role of the evangelist

1. Not every congregation will have an ordained evangelist serving within it. If there is an evangelist, then this officebearer's work should also be discussed. An evangelist is "acknowledged as an elder" of the calling church, but the role of an evangelist is much like that of a minister of the Word. The Church Order identifies the areas of responsibility for an evangelist.

An evangelist shall

- a. Be a witness for Christ (Art. 24-a)
- b. Call for comprehensive discipleship (Art. 24-a)
- c. Minister by preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, doing evangelism, educating youth and adults, and providing pastoral care (Art. 24-a)
- d. Equip fellow believers to participate in the work of evangelism (Art. 24-a)

2. Questions concerning the work of an evangelist

Note: It is assumed that the list of specific responsibilities of evangelists will be available to council members during the visit. Questions about any of these responsibilities may be asked during the visit.

- a. What do you understand the evangelist's calling and duties to be?
- b. What ways for doing effective evangelism have you initiated or tried this year?
- c. What within the life of the congregation inhibits the work of evangelism? How are you meeting the challenges?

- d. What within your target community makes your work difficult? What makes your work rewarding?
- e. How do you measure the effectiveness of your work? What criteria do you use?
- f. How are you equipping fellow believers to participate in the work of evangelism?

V. Report of the visit

As was noted above, the church visitors are appointed by the broader church to assess the spiritual health of the congregations they visit. They are expected to prepare a “written report of their work” for classis. The report completes the circle of accountability and allows the classis to provide whatever encouragement, support, or admonition may be necessary.

No standardized church visitors’ report form has been prepared. Some classes may have developed their own form to ensure consistency of reporting and at the same time to protect whatever confidentiality need protecting. A standard format within a classis also ensures that all churches will be treated the same way.

Appendix B

Church Visiting Proposal: An Experimental Model

One Christian Reformed classis has adopted the following proposal for conducting church visiting for its congregations.

- A. That church visitors continue to be appointed by classis and that these visitors be available to councils and congregations when a special need arises and/or a request for their assistance is made.
- B. That the annual practice of church visiting take place at the spring meeting of classis each year, according to the following format:
 1. Delegates from the congregations will be divided into groups of no fewer than three congregations in each group. The groups will be designated by the classical interim committee.
 2. A one-hour time slot will be set aside in the classical agenda for these group meetings. If any group feels that more time is needed, the group should determine when and where its meeting will take place.
 3. One person in each group will be designated by the classical interim committee to serve as facilitator and another to serve as reporter.
 - a. The facilitator will serve as chair of the meeting, leading the group through an orderly discussion of the questions designated by the classical interim committee.
 - b. The reporter will file a written report with the stated clerk of classis no later than one week after classis has met.
 4. The classical interim committee will review the reports, correlate the responses as much as possible, and make a written report to the next meeting of classis.

C. That the classical interim committee designate the questions for each year so that there is a cycle of three sets of questions that would be used for the group meetings.

D. That the classical interim committee send the questions to be used in a given year to the council of each congregation of the classis three months before the spring meeting of classis so that each council has an opportunity to discuss how the questions should be addressed.

Appendix C

Report of Classis Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee

Outline of the report

- I. Introduction
- II. Mandate of Synod 1996
- III. Review of significant actions
- IV. Review of issues that have been faced
- V. Comments on the five criteria suggested by Synod 1996
- VI. Looking to the future
- VII. Recommendations

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church has for many years had the vision of being a multicultural denomination. Out of this vision the Office of Race Relations has been established, a classis for Native American churches was created (Classis Red Mesa), and a biennial Multiethnic Conference is being held. We praise God for these and many other evidences of his affirmation of our multiethnic denominational vision.

Since the late 1970s our denomination has seen significant growth in the number of Korean congregations wishing to affiliate with us. More recently, in 1990 there were twenty-seven Korean congregations, and as 1999 closes, we have sixty-one Korean congregations. Many of these churches are from the Korean Presbyterian tradition, and most are attracted to our denomination because of our Reformed scriptural commitments. These Korean congregations use Korean as their primary means of communication, and a number of them do not yet have English-language ministries.

Because of the language barrier, a number of the Korean pastors and elders have been unable to follow and comprehend the conversations at the regional classis meetings. The frustration often leads to a lack of participation and sometimes even to a lack of attendance. Even with translation help, the ability to participate in the ecclesiastical process is greatly impeded. This frustration led to the formation of a joint committee of Classis California South and Classis Greater Los Angeles, which eventually petitioned Synod 1995 on behalf of these Korean congregations to allow the formation of a Korean-speaking classis.

The rationale for such a classis was that allowing a classis to function in the Korean language would give greater opportunity for a number of the Korean churches to participate in our process and to assimilate into our denomination.

An initial proposal to Synod 1995 was deferred until 1996. A revised proposal was submitted to Synod 1996 and was approved.

II. Mandate of Synod 1996

The *Acts of Synod 1996* records the following :

Approve the Formation of a Korean-Speaking Classis in California

A. *Material*: Overture 56, pp. 302-07

B. *Background*

The substance of this report was before Synod 1995, but synod withheld action. It also encouraged the classes to come back in 1996 with a clearer strategy for implementation. The present overture is a response to that action. It includes much of the original overture and additional material to answer questions and provide a better framework for implementation.

The advisory committee believes that the issues and questions raised by Synod 1995 have been adequately addressed in the present overture, and therefore we can recommend that this experimental classical structure proceed. We emphasize the experimental and temporary nature of a classis of Korean-speaking churches and have therefore strengthened the oversight mechanisms and defined its time limit.

C. *Recommendations* (continued from Art. 71)

2. That synod accede to Overture 56, thereby approving the formation of a Classis of Korean-speaking churches out of Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South, to serve southern California, Nevada, and Hawaii, effective September 1996, for a maximum of fifteen years. The following stipulations for monitoring, training, and relationships with the denomination will apply.
 - a. That the Korean-speaking classis will request advisers from at least two neighboring classes for all its meetings during the first three years of its existence. After this initial period, these advisers will be requested to attend once a year for the next two years.
 - b. That synod monitor the development of the Korean-speaking classis every two years through a standing committee comprised of a person appointed by the Ministries Coordinating Council and two members each from the Korean-speaking classis, Classis Greater Los Angeles, and Classis California South. The members of this committee will report to their respective classes and to synod, through the general secretary, on the progress of the new classis and on possible ways to improve its functioning. In the fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-year reviews the committee shall make recommendations to the classes and to synod regarding the continuation of the Korean-speaking classis. Guidelines for evaluation are (1) adherence to the Church Order, (2) participation in the work of denominational boards and agencies, (3) contribution of classical and synodical ministry shares, (4) relationship with neighboring classes, and (5) seeking to increase the use of student interns trained at Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - c. Pastors and other church officers will receive long-term training on the Church Order and the Rules for Classical Procedure. This training will be under the leadership of the general secretary, who will use qualified persons to assist him in this work.
 - d. Upon its inception the Korean-speaking classis will sponsor an intensive two-day course on ecclesiology, structure, and the Church Order for pastors, elders, and deacons.

- e. During the first five years of existence of this classis, the *Voice of the Reformed* (Korean CRC periodical) will be urged to include in every issue a section dealing with CRC government.
- f. The Korean-speaking classis will send delegates to synod and to the denominational boards as other classes do.
- g. The churches of the Korean-speaking classis will contribute their classical and denominational ministry shares.
- h. The Korean-speaking classis will appoint delegates to the Southern California Race Relations Committee and to other interclassical bodies (CRWRC, California Regional Leaders, etc.) and projects (Multiethnic Celebration, Camp Dunamis, etc.).
- i. The Korean-speaking classis will accept as advisers the regional representatives of CRC agencies.

Grounds:

1. Grounds A through G of Overture 56 (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 303-04).
2. The time limit ensures that this classis is formed explicitly for the purpose of providing training, orientation, and acclimation of these churches to the CRC in preparation for their full participation in regular CRC structures; the Korean-speaking classis is not intended as a permanent structure.
3. The formation of this special classis is supported by the Korean Council in North America and the Korean-ministries director, and the stipulations are agreed to by the petitioning churches.
4. These stipulations answer the issues and questions brought up by Synod 1995.

—Adopted

In the proposal the boundaries of what is now called Classis Pacific Hanmi were described as “southern California, Nevada, and Hawaii,” which are included in the region covered by Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South. At the time of the formation in 1996, eleven of the approximately twenty-four Korean-speaking congregations in Classis Greater Los Angeles and Classis California South desired to participate in the Korean-speaking classis. The other congregations desired to remain in their present English-speaking classis. Thus, at the outset, the formation of the new classis did not represent a desire to separate the Korean congregations from the rest of the denomination. The rationale for the existence of the classis was and is to serve the needs of those who cannot participate comfortably in an English-speaking setting.

The action of Synod 1996 called for the creation of a “monitoring committee” composed of advisers from the two neighboring classes, from the new Korean classis, and the denominational Ministries Coordinating Council. This committee was mandated to work with the newly formed classis so it would progress in learning the CRC system and be encouraged in its development. The committee was asked to report to synod every two years, with a more comprehensive review to be presented every four years. This document is the first four-year review.

III. Review of significant actions

Synod approved the formation of the Korean Classis in June 1996. An organizational team worked from July to September of 1996, and the official

organization of the classis occurred September 28-30, 1996. On that weekend a two-day training event for elders and pastors was conducted, a worship service was held, and the inaugural meeting of classis took place. The name *Pacific Hanmi* was selected, reflecting both the regional and the Korean identity of the classis.

In its first four years Classis Pacific Hanmi has had a number of significant and gratifying events. In July 1997 a special classis meeting was held to welcome three additional churches into the classis and denomination. In September 1997 another training event was held. In the spring of 1998 the classis approved its first overture to synod, regarding its concern for the training of Korean students at Calvin Seminary. By March of 1999 Classis Pacific Hanmi had four individuals functioning on four of the denominational ministry boards. In February 2000 Classis Pacific Hanmi approved a strategic plan for the next five years. Thus, the members of Classis Pacific Hanmi have had an exciting and rewarding first four years.

IV. Review of issues that have been faced

Any new initiative is bound to have both expected and unexpected issues to face. This has certainly been the case for Classis Pacific Hanmi and the monitoring committee. Initially, there was minor confusion over exactly which churches had requested to be in the classis. In the case of one congregation, the new Pacific Hanmi Classical Interim Committee had to work with the Interim Committee of Classis Greater Los Angeles to resolve this matter. In the process the monitoring committee had to learn lessons about when to insert itself and when to let the proper parties handle a matter.

In the spring of 1997 the issue arose as to how Pacific Hanmi, the Korean Council (a national CRC body of Korean leaders), and the CRC denominational bodies interrelate. Interesting discussions were held to the benefit, we believe, of all parties concerned. This discussion led to a deeper recognition of the different polity practices between the Korean Presbyterian tradition and the Christian Reformed Church in North America's tradition.

In 1998 the fact that four of the thirteen churches in Classis Pacific Hanmi were not organized led to a discussion of how the voice of the unorganized churches can be heard at classis meetings. Pastors representing unorganized churches felt left out of the process at classis, and pastors of the organized churches wanted to include them as voting members, yet the CRC polity did not allow for this. The monitoring committee discussed this with Classis Pacific Hanmi leaders and suggested a process of having consensus decisions as often as possible, removing the need to have ballot votes that might exclude some. The practice has been followed, and it seems that the matter of inclusion is no longer as acute.

In 1999 our denominational general secretary, Dr. David Engelhard, sent a communication to all synodical deputies and classical stated clerks. The leaders of Pacific Hanmi took exception to some parts of the communication which dealt with the Korean CRC community and sent a letter of response to Dr. Engelhard and a copy to the monitoring committee. Again, the monitoring committee faced the issue of when to intervene and when to allow interested parties to work on their own. We chose to stand aside as the parties were both capable of articulate and loving discussion.

This brief review gives just a glimpse of the issues that have been faced by the classis and the monitoring committee in the first four years. The monitoring committee has been enthusiastic about working through these matters and has been gratified by the opportunity to guide this young classis.

V. Comments on the five criteria suggested by Synod 1996

In the motion of Synod 1996 to approve the formation of Classis Pacific Hanmi, five guidelines were cited as areas for attention and concern. What follows is a brief statement relative to each guideline:

A. Adherence to the Church Order

The monitoring committee has been impressed and gratified that Classis Pacific Hanmi has sought to follow the CRC Church Order in its discussions and practices. Classis meetings have been attended by representatives of nearly all the churches in classis (although often the representative is only the pastor, not an elder). The classis has developed a church-visiting program and has been faithfully implementing it in the past two years. There are certainly a number of areas where greater understanding of the Church Order is needed, yet the group has been receptive to learning and has been eager to do things "the right way."

B. Participation in the work of denominational boards and agencies

When the classis was first formed, appointments were made by the classis for two of the denominational boards. By the spring of 1999, four classis members were functioning on such boards. The committee is pleased by this development and commends the classis for its participation.

C. Contribution of classical and synodical ministry shares

After the first year of its existence a total of \$3,345 was collected by the churches of Classis Pacific Hanmi for ministry shares. By classis decision, 70 percent of the monies collected goes to denominational ministries, and 30 percent is designated for classical ministries. In 1998 \$10,500 was collected for ministry shares, and \$13,900 was collected in 1999. The projected budget for support of denominational ministries in 2000 is nearly \$29,000. The monitoring committee sees such development as a reason to rejoice, especially since the amount comes from ten to fourteen small congregations that previously gave very little to denominational ministries. It reflects a growing ownership of the denomination and a growing investment in its ministries.

D. Relationship with neighboring classes

One fear in the establishment of Classis Pacific Hanmi was that of creating a body isolated from the rest of the denomination. Through the existence of the monitoring committee and through the commitment of a number of the leaders in Classis Pacific Hanmi, this fear has not been realized. In fact, there has been a pleasing degree of interaction, and there have been no instances of conflict between Pacific Hanmi and the neighboring classes. The churches of Pacific Hanmi participated in a biennial regional Race Relations event in 1997 and 1999, a representative of Pacific Hanmi serves on the Southern California Race Relations Committee, and one of the pastors of the classis (Rev. Seung Jai Kang) is now serving as a synodical deputy and has attended meetings of both Classis Greater Los Angeles and Classis California South.

E. Seeking to increase the use of interns trained at Calvin Theological Seminary

When Classis Pacific Hanmi was formed, none of its ten ordained CRC pastors had been trained at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS). As these churches are small, the number of churches using interns is also small. The real concern of Synod 1996, in the opinion of the monitoring committee, was that there be a growing use of our denomination's seminary for the training of Korean pastors. The unique cultural perspective of the first-generation immigrants, who compose the membership of these particular Korean congregations, makes the use of a recent young graduate as a senior pastor rather difficult. There are reasons, however, to hope that progress is being made toward the use of Calvin Seminary graduates and interns. One of the churches in the classis has recently added a CTS graduate to its staff through a Home Missions Established-Church-Development grant. The classis did show its interest in the seminary by the overture it sent to synod in 1998. Perhaps, as time passes, extension education will make it possible for some of the current pastors to make a connection with our denomination through the ministry of CTS. Also, it may well be that more recent graduates of CTS will be used in ministry to subsequent generations of Korean church members.

VI. Looking to the future

As the monitoring committee looks to the future of Pacific Hanmi and the CRC, we find ourselves enthusiastic and hopeful. The existence and progress of this classis is giving us as a denomination a very practical study in how diversity of cultures influences the way we do church. As one committee member said, "When cultures come together, each culture brings something to the table, and something new is born." We feel privileged to be part of this learning process, and we are convinced that both the Korean congregations and the denomination at large will grow through this experiment.

A. Goals for the coming years

Looking ahead to the future, the committee identifies two specific goals for the coming years:

1. We seek to encourage a greater participation of elders in the classical process. Korean churches, more than traditional Anglo CRCs, tend to be clergy directed, and one of the gifts the CRC can offer to these congregations is the gift of greater lay leadership in the local and regional church.
2. We seek to encourage a greater acquaintance with the CRC Church Order, specifically as it pertains to the practices of clergy supervision and credentialing. Our system is different from the system that these churches and pastors are used to, and there is a need to continue learning and discussing so that the best possible procedure can be followed as churches, pastors, and classes relate to one another.

B. Issues facing Classis Pacific Hanmi

Besides these two goals, the committee identifies two issues facing Classis Pacific Hanmi and the monitoring committee as we continue to move into the future:

1. The reality that the classis is composed of mostly very small congregations raises issues pertaining to participation in our denomination's pension plan and our denomination's insurance plan. Both of these plans are very costly, beyond the practical means of the very small congregation. How will the churches of Pacific Hanmi deal with this area of pastoral support? How will the denomination express its solidarity and commitment to all in this area?
2. Classis Pacific Hanmi was begun in order to assimilate Korean-speaking churches into the CRC denomination, with a projected life of "up to fifteen years." Issues of transition into the future will soon loom on the horizon. Perhaps the classis will grow in its English-speaking capacity, as it plants next-generation churches. Perhaps there will be a growth of English-speaking leaders in the existing congregations. Perhaps there will be an eventual merger of Pacific Hanmi with other classes in the region. Perhaps there will be a more clear definition of geographic boundaries between Pacific Hanmi and the other classes in the region. Time and the leading of the Spirit will answer these questions.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod rejoice in the progress made by Classis Pacific Hanmi in its first four years and encourage the classis and the monitoring committee in its continuing work.

B. That synod endorse the two goals of the monitoring committee, as stated in Part VI, A of this report: (1) that Pacific Hanmi be encouraged to work toward greater participation of elders in its classical processes; (2) that Pacific Hanmi and the monitoring committee continue to work diligently in learning and implementing the guidelines of the CRC Church Order, especially as it pertains to the credentialing and supervision of pastors.

C. That synod accept this report as the first four-year review of the ministry of Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Classis Pacific Hanmi Monitoring Committee
 Dr. John Van Schepen (Classis Greater
 Los Angeles)
 Rev. David Koll (Classis Greater Los Angeles)
 Rev. Peter Shin (Classis California South)
 Rev. Donald Klop (Classis California South)
 Rev. David Yang (Classis Pacific Hanmi)
 Rev. Seung Jai Kang (Classis Pacific Hanmi)
 Dr. Peter Borgdorff (CRC Ministries
 Coordinating Council)
 Rev. Tong Park (translator, Korean ministries
 director)

Appendix D

Governance Proposal

The Christian Reformed Church has been engaged in a discussion about organizational structure since the early 1980s.¹ The discussion began with the work of the World Missions and Relief Commission, which was appointed to resolve the conflict that had developed between Christian Reformed World Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. Even before that conflict was resolved, the discussion expanded to include the relationship of the other denominational agencies and institutions to one another. If we judge by the number of pages devoted to the subject in the synodical *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* from year to year, the church has considered this to be an important issue indeed. All these pages notwithstanding, the issue involved is relatively simple: Organizational structures must be designed to best serve the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. Ministry is what we are about, and organizational structures need to serve that ministry. This present report is about the organizational structure that pertains to the denominational ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in both Canada and the United States, but the fact that the report addresses the structure should not overshadow the core purpose of this discussion. The core purpose of church-related structures is that God calls us to be engaged in faithful and effective ministries. In obedient response to that calling, this report is submitted.

I. Introduction

The executive committees of the Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA met on August 9, 1999, and September 29, 1999, to discuss the implications of the decision made by Synod 1999 relative to the governance structure for the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. Similarly, at the Canadian Ministries Board meeting of October 1-2, 1999, and the Board of Trustees meeting of December 4-5, 1999, in-depth discussions were held to identify an appropriate course of action in the light of synod's decisions on these same matters in 1997 and 1999. As a consequence of these discussions, it was decided to generate a proposal for further consideration, a proposal that seeks to preserve and recognize important parts of the decisions of both Synod 1997 and Synod 1999. Historical context of the proposal that follows below is essential for an understanding of the proposal.

II. History and background

An important issue that brings this discussion to the table involves an understanding of what it means to be a binational denomination. That is what the Christian Reformed Church has become and what it is committed to being. Actually, the Christian Reformed Church has been a binational church since the early part of the twentieth century, when the first CRC congregations were planted in Canada. Binationality did not become a conscious issue until nearly fifty years later (circa 1965), when the CRC in Canada had grown in size and had developed an identity that did not merely mirror its United States sister

¹A more detailed historical overview of the Christian Reformed Church's organizational development was published in the *Agenda for Synod 1999*, pages 353-73.

congregations. Synod did not officially recognize the Christian Reformed Church as binational until it adopted a statement to that effect in 1996 in the Preamble of the Constitution of the Board of Trustees. Adopting such a declaration was a simple but important step. Understanding the meaning of binationality is more difficult.

Before one can appropriately address the meaning of being a binational church, it is important to affirm a more basic conviction about the identity of the Christian Reformed Church as the people of God entering the twenty-first century. That more basic conviction relates to our understanding of the church as God intended it to be. Prior to our thinking of the CRC as being binational, we need to affirm the essential unity of the church as taught in Scripture and affirmed in our confessions. More basic than a national identity, more convincing than political realities, and more important than healthy patriotism is the belief that Christ binds people together in a way that transcends the temporal realities of their existence in time and space. The Christian Reformed Church in North America has intentionally chosen to manifest itself as a church living in two countries. It is that choice that makes the Christian Reformed Church binational, but it is our identity as people of God that marks us as a church.

It is not a simple matter to balance what we believe about the church with the political realities of how we live as a church. Clearly, the former is the principle that guides us. The latter is the practical outworking of life lived in a binational setting. If the principle of what we believe about the church is the organizing principle, then we should have one global Reformed denomination made up of Christian Reformed churches from around the world. But such is not the case. The Reformed churches have generally organized according to national boundaries, without, of course, denying that in principle the church is one.

It is, then, with that conviction about the church universal that the Christian Reformed Church, nevertheless, developed into a binational denomination. Perhaps we have not been very intentional about that reality, but it is the way life has developed for the Christian Reformed Church. Not until the revised Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees were adopted by Synod 1996 did the commitment to binationality enter the official record (Constitution of the Board of Trustees 1996, Preamble, page 3). Even though there is a very clear statement in the constitution, it is likely that the concept of binationality is not well understood. Several definitions and interpretations of the meaning of binationality have been advanced in the course of this discussion in the Christian Reformed Church. The most common definitions and interpretations of binationality are these:

A. A United States-based denomination that also has congregations in Canada

For many years this was the most common understanding of the Christian Reformed Church's reality. Grand Rapids was the perceived head office. West Michigan was perceived to be home base. Congregations located in Canada (and elsewhere in the United States) were mostly perceived to be branch churches of a U.S.-Michigan-based denomination. The Christian Reformed denomination functioned with this understanding for many decades while the Canadian congregations were in a process of cultural adjustment from being an immigrant community to discovering a Canadian identity.

B. Two national churches functioning under one synod and cooperating in some joint activities

As the Canadian membership of the Christian Reformed Church developed a greater national identity, some voices began calling for a stronger Canadian denominational voice and identity as determined by Canadians, for Canadians, and in the Canadian context. The emergence of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada and the subsequent opening of a Canadian denominational office in Burlington in the 1970s gave support to that developing mindset. Those early developments caused significant tensions, especially for agency staff members, and these tensions were further increased by the requirements of Revenue Canada that “direction and control” of Canadian charitable dollars be exercised by Canadians. Under the guidance of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, the Canadian churches also became involved in several Canadian ecumenical relationships and faith-based alliances. In the “two national churches” model of binationality, the focus falls on binationality being an *organic* rather than an *organizational* relationship.

C. One church functioning in two countries

Though on the surface this model of binationality may seem similar to what is described in B above, it is in reality quite different. This model assumes one denomination that functions binationally, making adjustments as needed for national requirements and strategic issues. It is commonly assumed that this is the model under which we currently operate and is, as far as can be determined, the preference of a large majority of churches, classes, and members of the CRC in both Canada and the United States.

D. Two national churches (with separate ecclesiastical structures) in ecclesiastical fellowship

There is a sense in which this model really does not belong in this listing because it has never been seriously considered as an option. The meaning of the model is self-evident, but there are only a few voices that advocate for this model at any given time. Yet the fact that this model may increase in popularity is not outside the realm of possibility. It is safe to assume that, unless we find a mutually acceptable binational functionality, a drift toward separation cannot be ruled out.

It is important to provide a more detailed account of the history of the process of being one church in two nations during the time when there was a growing national identity among members of the CRC in Canada. The first official evidence of this growing national identity surfaced in the 1960s, when the Canadian classes of the CRC, with the permission of synod, formed the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. The council functioned until the mid-1990s, and, besides providing a voice for the Christian Reformed congregations in Canada’s national context, it also became the official sponsor of a variety of gatherings, programs, and ministries unique to Canada. The Canadian classes were assessed a quota to help pay for the activity of the council. This quota was in addition to the quota (now ministry shares) approved by synod for denominational programs and support.

Since the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada didn’t fit very well in the ecclesiastical organization of the Christian Reformed Church, there were from the beginning of the council’s existence attempts by some in

Canada to find a more appropriate ecclesiastical structure to accomplish national ministry objectives. The council provided some opportunity for such expression within Canada, but it proved to be inadequate in the denominational context. The most convincing evidence of the CCRCC's inability to do what the Canadian churches hoped it could do was the repeated overtures from Canadian classes for the organization of regional synods. Synod, also repeatedly, refused to approve the establishment of regional synods, not so much out of principle but because the timing was never quite right. It is hard to measure the depth of feeling among Canadians about these repeated rebuffs by synod, but there is little doubt that these failed attempts have left an imprint on the Canadian church consciousness that surfaces again and again in conversations at classes and in private settings. The CCRCC, however, continued for more than thirty years and developed an extensive program of ministries. Nevertheless, at the same time there was a growing dissatisfaction with the council's lack of appropriate ecclesiastical standing.

When the history of the CCRCC had run its course in the mid-1990s, the discussion turned to more institutional solutions. The report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 373-421) advanced such a solution through the creation of a Canadian Ministries Board. By synodical mandate, the Canadian Ministries Board would "supervise and be responsible for denominational ministries conducted in Canada and for ministries performed internationally on behalf of the CRC in Canada" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 383). The report addressed many other programmatic and organizational details, but essentially Synod 1997 approved a separate governance and administrative structure for the CRC in Canada that, while interfaced with the binational organizational structure, could make independent decisions within the policy framework of the denomination. When Synod 1997 made that decision, concern was immediately expressed about the inherent difficulty of aligning two different governance and administrative structures within the one-church model. The Canadian Ministries Board was officially placed under the umbrella of the Board of Trustees-Canada. However, the function and authority of the Canadian Ministries Board were defined to be quite independent of the Board of Trustees-Canada as well as of the binational agency boards, which were left to manage their own mandates and programs. On the administrative side, the Canadian ministries director was placed in a reporting relationship with the executive director of ministries and in a consultative relationship with the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church. In addition, the Canadian ministries director also had direct accountability to the Canadian Ministries Board. Such multiple lines of accountability caused confusion and frustration. The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada anticipated this misalignment in both governance and administrative relationships and recommended to Synod 1996 that a U.S. committee be appointed to address the U.S. side of these concerns sooner rather than later. Synod 1996 appointed the U.S. Structure Committee, which overlapped the Canadian Structure Committee for one year.

The U.S. Structure Committee soon became aware of the scope of these and other issues as it proceeded with its work from 1996 to 1999. The inherent misalignment in the governance and administrative structures of the denomination, caused by the synodical decision of 1997, led the U.S. Structure

Committee to ask the Board of Trustees to enlarge the committee's mandate to include addressing the adjustments needed to both the Canadian and the United States structures so as to make them compatible in a binational context. The Board of Trustees, on behalf of synod, approved that request.

As the record shows, Synod 1999 did not approve the recommendations of the U.S. Structure Committee because, synod noted,

the mandate regarding governance given to the Board of Trustees and adopted by Synod 1996 (see Art. 60, *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 536) . . . acknowledge[s] that structures are already in place that can be utilized to achieve the goals of the study committee—to bring about compliance, coordination, communication, and joint efforts among the agencies—without having to change the current governance structure.

(*Acts of Synod 1999*, Art. 44, C, 2, p. 596)

Synod 1999 went on to “instruct the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Canadian Ministries Board, to make recommendation(s) to Synod 2000 to achieve effective binational ministry and governance” (*Acts of Synod 1999*, Art. 49, B, 6, p. 617).

In compliance with this instruction from synod, the Board of Trustees now submits the proposal below.

III. The specific context for this proposal

A. Canadian minority status in the CRC

It needs to be acknowledged that Canadians, from a national-identity point of view, have always been in the minority in binational denominational gatherings. Of the forty-seven (47) classes in the Christian Reformed Church, only twelve (12) are in Canada, one of which is officially binational (Classis Lake Superior). This means that thirty-five (35) classes are composed entirely of member churches in the United States. Synod and the boards of the agencies and educational institutions are composed of representatives from classes and/or regions that reflect the U.S./Canadian membership distribution. Therefore, equality in representation has never been part of a functional binationality. One can take the position that such nationalistic partisanship has no place in the church, and indeed that concern is discussed above. It should be noted, however, that when such an opinion is expressed, it is usually expressed by someone who is part of the (U.S.) majority. On the other hand, if national identity and partisanship should not factor significantly into this discussion, then by the same rationale, United States churches should not insist on retaining a majority in a new organizational model.

The underlying presupposition of the proposal that follows is that the Christian Reformed Church is a denominational fellowship bound together by common faith, confessions, polity, values, mission, and organization. Furthermore, the Christian Reformed Church lives its life in two countries (excluding its international mission effort, of course), and that dual-nation reality defines the organizational requirements that are fundamental to the Christian Reformed Church's corporate life as a binational denomination.

It is important to distinguish the corporate organization of the Christian Reformed Church from its ecclesiastical organization. As a church in the Reformed tradition, the CRC functions ecclesiastically with assemblies (councils, classes, and synod), and our broader assemblies reflect the geo-

graphical locations of the congregations and classes. When synodical boards were formed, the Christian Reformed Church chose to make up the membership of the various boards with representatives from each individual classis or, in some cases, from regions in which several classes are located. This decision continues to produce the result that synodical boards reflect the geographical dispersion of the classes located throughout the United States and Canada.

Even though the representative model (classically or regionally) continues to serve the denomination well for ecclesiastical purposes, it is not the best way to achieve the desired experience of binationality. We believe it is incongruous to declare the Christian Reformed Church to be binational but not to allow equal national representation at the corporate governance level. For this reason the following proposal advocates the reorganization of the Board of Trustees so that it would give expression to our binationality in at least one significant organizational context.

B. Decision of Synod 1997

Synod 1997 adopted the report submitted to it by the synodical Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pages 373-421). It is not necessary to summarize the report here, but it is important to recognize the core values and goals that synod approved as part of the report. These values and goals have been guiding the Canadian Ministries Board and were in the process of being implemented when Synod 1999 made its decision against overall agency restructuring. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that such core values and goals have enduring significance beyond the context of a specific report. Therefore, they are repeated here. Adapting these core values and goals for binational use would require only minor editing.

A. Core values and goals

1. Values

The core value of this process of restructuring is to enhance, inspire, and equip the church to carry on its mission (locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally) most effectively.

The Christian Reformed Church has an important mission in a world that is facing significant change and loss of faith. As ambassadors of Christ with his powerful message of reconciliation and healing, the church is called to find the lost and nurture the found. We want to carry out that mission in a wholistic way in order to bring the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear on Canadian society. Our great desire is to increase the effectiveness of this mission at the local and national level.

In the Christian Reformed Church we carry out this mission in a binational setting. As one church in two nations we share one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Our rich Reformed heritage, confessions, and Church Order bind us together. Under the umbrella of shared faith and life our binationality needs to be acknowledged—even celebrated. National differences need not imperil the unity of the CRC. In fact, they should strengthen the denomination. At its best, being a binational church can enrich and deepen the ministries undertaken in both countries and around the world.

2. Goals of restructuring ministry in Canada

The overall goal of these proposals is to create stronger working relationships among ministry partners in order to accomplish our shared mission. Some specific goals follow:

- a. Recognition of the binational character of the church
As a binational church we need to be sensitive to the uniqueness of the ministry in both countries. In the Canadian context the CRC needs to address and/or be involved in social-justice issues, ministry with poor and aboriginal peoples, interchurch relations, and interaction with governments. Further, Canadian law requires that Canadian governing bodies maintain “direction, supervision, and control” over receipted tax-deductible funds gathered in Canada.
- b. Development of a body to coordinate ministry in Canada
Because of the binational character of the CRC, Canadians must have significant ownership of and authority for planning and managing ministry in Canada. This includes a Canadian ministries director.
- c. Nurturing local ownership for the mission of the church
Structures should encourage local ministries to connect with, draw from, and support the total ministry of the church.
- d. Building vital links with classes to keep ministry close to the people
Each classis ought to become increasingly responsive to ministry needs and opportunities in its region and have a key role in promoting ownership and coordination of ministry within its boundaries and, where possible, in its region.
- e. Encouraging a team approach to ministry
Structures should encourage the development of ministry teams among the agencies in order to promote and deliver an enhanced, unified, and stewardly approach to ministry.
- f. Integrating diaconal ministries with the other CRC ministries
Diaconal work is an integral part of the church’s ministry. This fact needs to be fully acknowledged in the decision-making process of the assemblies of the church.
- g. Integrating the ministries of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada into other CRC ministries
The ministries currently undertaken by the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada must be fully integrated into the Canadian structure of our binational church.

(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 378-79)

C. Synodical decision in 1999

Synod 1999 decided not to adopt the recommendations of the U.S. Structure Committee to make substantial changes in the makeup of the Board of Trustees and the function of agency boards. Synod based its decision on its interpretation of the Board of Trustees’ mandate, which gives the Board sufficient authority to “supervise the management of the agencies and committees established by synod. . . .” *Acts of Synod 1999* (p. 599, Art. 44) records the following:

That synod take note of the mandate regarding governance given to the Board of Trustees and adopted by Synod 1996 (see Art. 60, *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 536) and acknowledge that structures are already in place that can be utilized to achieve the goals of the study committee—to bring about compliance, coordination, communication, and joint efforts among the agencies—without having to change the current governance structure:

The purposes of the Board are to transact all matters assigned to it by synod; to supervise the management of the agencies and committees established by synod and designated in the bylaws of the Board, *including the planning*,

coordinating, and integrating of their work; and to cooperate with the educational institutions affiliated with the denomination toward integrating the respective missions of those institutions into the denominational ministry program. To fulfill its purposes, the Board will

- A. Lead in developing and implementing the Denominational Ministries Plan for the agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- B. Assure collaboration among agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- C. Exercise general oversight and authority when necessary in the manner stated in the bylaws of the Board.

(Article II of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, italics added)

The difficulty inherent in the decision of Synod 1999 is that it conflicts with the decision made by Synod 1997 when it adopted the recommendations of the Canadian Structure Committee. Synod 1997 authorized the formation of the Canadian Ministries Board to have authority for all ministries performed by the agencies in Canada and in other parts of the world if such ministries are being supported with Canadian financial gifts. Yet Synod 1999 decided to leave the authority structure for the agencies intact, making agency authority subject only to the defined authority of the Board of Trustees. However, organizational decision-making authority should not reside with more than one board. In effect, Synod 1999 nullified the possibility for a separate and meaningful Canadian Ministries Board. Synod 1999 itself recognized the problem that it was creating when it also decided to

Instruct the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Canadian Ministries Board to make recommendation(s) to Synod 2000 to achieve effective binational ministry and governance.

Ground: There are potential governance issues between the present Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees that need to be identified and resolved. It is beyond the scope of the advisory committee to provide a recommendation for the relationship of the Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees.

(*Acts of Synod 1999*, Art. 49, B, 6, p. 617)

The conflicting decisions of Synod 1997 and Synod 1999 need now to be resolved in order to bring some clarity to the present situation in denominational administration. There is nearly unanimous agreement that the present situation is untenable. At the same time, various solutions have been proposed, ranging across the spectrum of the options listed in III, A, B, and C above. The changes proposed will bring us closer to a workable model of binational cooperation and meaningful relationships.

In summary, this proposal

1. Rectifies the conflict in authority structures between the Canadian Ministries Board and the agency boards.
2. Suggests a resolution that honors the decision of Synod 1999 without undoing the important values embedded in the decision of Synod 1997.
3. Incorporates previous synodical decisions about Board of Trustees and agency organizational matters and provides a clear statement of synod's intent to guide the Board of Trustees in fulfilling its mandate.

IV. The proposal

It is proposed that the mandate and responsibilities of the Canadian Ministries Board be reassigned to a reconstituted and enlarged binational Board of Trustees. To this end, synod would approve the following organizational changes and the amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America:

A. With reference to governance

It is recommended that synod

1. Create a binational Board of Trustees (BOT) composed of thirty-two (32) members, fifteen (15) from Canada and fifteen (15) from the United States; in addition, the general secretary and the executive director of ministries shall serve as ex officio members. Collectively these members of the Board shall be the binational trustees of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and shall be known as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church of North America.
2. Declare that the Canadian members and the ex officio members of the Board of Trustees shall serve as the Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and be responsible for all specific “in Canada” functions that cannot be, or ought not be, the responsibility of a synodical binational Board. The Canadian ministries director shall be an adviser to the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation.
3. Declare that the United States members and the ex officio members of the Board of Trustees shall serve as the Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation and be responsible for all specific “in the United States” functions that cannot be, or ought not be, the responsibility of the synodical binational Board.
4. Approve the following means of electing Board members:
 - a. One (1) member shall be from each of the twelve (12) classes in Canada. One (1) or more member(s) shall be from each of the regions in the United States up to a total of twelve (12) members. In addition, three (3) members-at-large shall be from Canada and three (3) from the United States.
 - b. Each of the twelve (12) Canadian classes will be requested to submit two or more names for the position that needs to be filled from that classis. In addition, Canadian classes may submit names for at-large positions on the Board that need to be filled from time to time.
 - c. Each of the classes in the United States regions will submit names for the position that needs to be filled from among the membership of the classes in a specified region. In addition, United States classes may submit names for at-large positions on the Board that need to be filled from time to time.
 - d. The Board of Trustees will receive the names from the classes and compose a slate of two (2) names for each position that needs to be filled. The Board of Trustees will observe the synodical guidelines for balance

and inclusiveness with respect to geographical distribution, ecclesiastical offices held by nominees, clergy and nonclergy, race, and gender.

- e. If the procedure described above does not produce a sufficient number of nominees who, in the judgment of the Board, are qualified to serve as either regular or alternate members or if the Board makes the judgment that the synodical guidelines for balancing board membership need to be invoked, the Board may then add other names to the list of nominations submitted to synod.
- f. The BOT shall submit a complete slate of names to synod for election of Board members. Consistent with synodical practice, a nominee not elected as a BOT member will be designated by synod as the alternate BOT member.

Ground: This procedure honors three values in the election process for Board of Trustees membership:

- 1) It maintains congregational and classical involvement in suggesting candidates for trusteeship.
- 2) It enables the Board to honor the diversity of the church in its nominating process.
- 3) It permits the assembly that is served by the trustees to elect the trustees.

B. With reference to mandate, purposes, and functions of the binational Board of Trustees, the CRCNA-Canada directors, and the CRCNA-Michigan directors, it is recommended that synod enact the following:

1. Re the binational Board of Trustees

Approve the following amended description of the Board's functions as described in Article III of the Constitution of the Board of Trustees (changes are italicized):

Note: If these proposed constitutional changes are approved, other technical constitutional amendments and amended bylaws will be presented to synod for approval at a later time.

The functions described in this article are carried out by the Board under the authority of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and by virtue of the Board's legal entities, namely the *CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation*, in accordance with applicable laws in Canada and the United States.

To achieve the purposes described in Article II hereof, the Board shall carry out the following functions:

- a. *Implement* all matters committed to it by the specific instruction of synod, carrying out all necessary interim functions on behalf of synod and executing all synodical matters that cannot be postponed until the next synod.
- b. *Lead* in the development and implementation of a Denominational Ministries Plan which reflects the biblical and Reformed mission commitment of the Christian Reformed Church and provides a basis for the Board's management of coordination and integration among the agencies and committees and for the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the *Denominational Ministries Plan*. *The Board will also monitor the activities of the agencies and educational institutions to ensure that coordination and integration occur.*

- c. *Present* to synod a unified report of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions *and present and recommend* a unified budget inclusive of all agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
 - d. *Serve* synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to *ministry priorities as well as* the programs and resources of the denomination. In its discharge of this responsibility, the Board shall require reports from all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
 - e. *Adjudicate* appeals placed before it by the agency boards and committees. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the bylaws of the Board and the provisions of the Church Order. Appeals that deal with an action of the Board may be submitted to synod for adjudication.
 - f. *Discharge* all responsibilities incumbent upon directors of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a Michigan not-for-profit corporation (CRCNA-Michigan), and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a registered charity organized under the laws of *Canada (CRCNA-Canada)*.
 - g. *Serve* as the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC), which is responsible for any joint-venture agreements existing between the CRCNA-Michigan and CRCNA-Canada. Members of the Board also serving as directors of CRCNA-Canada are responsible for joint-venture agreements existing between CRCNA-Canada and the agencies and committees of the denomination which are not registered as Canadian charities.
 - h. *Approve* all joint-ministry agreements existing between or among agencies and committees.
2. Re the Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation, which replaces the CRCNA-Ontario Corporation. (Italics indicate changes from the 1996 constitution material regarding the CRCNA-Ontario Corporation.)
- Approve the following description of functions for the CRCNA-Canada Corporation:
- a. *Be the legal agent for the CRC in Canada as directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation, a federally registered charity and the agent of synod for all matters that pertain to Canadian ministries of the CRC. Included in this overarching responsibility is the exercise of judgment concerning the cultural appropriateness of ministry programs offered in Canada by denominational agencies. Furthermore, while the board will respect the right and responsibility of agencies to propose specific ministry activity in Canada, the board reserves the right to initiate consideration of such ministry programs when the board deems it appropriate to do so.*
 - b. *Be responsible for convening, in cooperation with appropriate denominational agencies, a triennial conference of church members from across Canada for the purpose of developing vision and strategy for ministry in Canada.*
 - c. *Collect, act on, and distribute information from the triennial conference for the enhancement of ministry and assure that this information is considered for inclusion in the Denominational Ministries Plan.*
 - d. *Review and recommend to the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC) the budgets of the agencies operative in Canada as well as budgets for those ministries exclusive to Canada.*
 - e. *Review and endorse all agency-generated ministry plans for Canada.*
 - f. *Assure the collaboration of ministries in Canada and the collaboration of Canadian ministries with appropriate denominational partners in the United States.*
 - g. *Monitor, in consultation with the Interchurch Relations Committee, ecclesiastical relationships within the Canadian context.*

3. Re the Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation (Italics indicate changes from the 1996 constitution.)

Approve the following description of functions for the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation:

- a. *Be the legal agent for the CRC in the United States as directors of the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation, a 501, C, (3) registered charity and the agent of synod for all matters that pertain to the United States ministries of the CRC. Included in this overarching responsibility is the exercise of judgment concerning the cultural appropriateness of ministry programs offered in the United States by denominational agencies. Furthermore, while the board will respect the right and responsibility of agencies to propose specific ministry activity in the United States, the board reserves the right to initiate consideration of such ministry programs when the board deems it appropriate to do so.*
- b. *Be responsible for convening, in cooperation with appropriate denominational agencies, conferences of church members from across the United States for the purpose of developing vision and strategy for ministry in the United States.*
- c. *Collect, act on, and distribute information from these conferences for the enhancement of ministry and assure that this information is considered for inclusion in the Denominational Ministries Plan.*
- d. *Review and recommend to the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC) the budgets of the agencies operative in the United States as well as budgets for those ministries exclusive to the United States.*
- e. *Review and endorse all agency-generated ministry plans for the United States.*
- f. *Assure the collaboration of ministries in the United States and the collaboration of U.S. ministries with appropriate denominational partners in Canada.*
- g. *Monitor, in consultation with the Interchurch Relations Committee, ecclesiastical relationships within the United States context.*

C. *Re organizational structure*

It is recommended that synod approve the following changes and additions to Article VII of the Constitution of the Board of Trustees as follows (italics indicate changes):

1. *The CRCNA-Canada Corporation shall elect its officers from among its members. The CRCNA-Michigan Corporation shall elect its officers from among its members. The officers of the binational Board of Trustees shall be elected from among the officers of the Canadian and Michigan corporations.*
2. *Both the Canadian and the Michigan corporations shall have an identical committee structure to facilitate the oversight of the ministries of the whole church. Such a committee structure shall include an Executive Committee, an Ecclesiastical Life and Practice Committee, a Mission Committee, a Congregational Ministry-Resources Committee, and an Audit Committee. When appropriate, the two corporations may decide to combine committees to form one binational committee.*
3. *The Board of Trustees shall have a committee structure as listed below. It is understood that some of the committees may have Canadian and U.S. subcommittees. The combination of the counterpart subcommittees will constitute binational committees functioning under the binational Board of Trustees. Such committees are assigned the responsibility of oversight for the activities and programs of the agencies. The purpose of such oversight is to assess these activities and programs for their contribution to and compatibility with the Denominational Ministries Plan. Such committees have the right to comment and/or make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees concerning any matter that has been assessed.*

a. *Executive Committee*

The Executive Committee of the binational Board of Trustees shall be composed of the elected officers of the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation and the elected officers of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation. The general secretary and executive director of ministries shall be ex officio members of the Executive Committee. The specific responsibilities of the Executive Committee will include the following:

- 1) Interim responsibilities between the meetings of the Board of Trustees*
- 2) Supervising the general secretary and executive director of ministries*
- 3) Providing general oversight for the activities of the Ministries Coordinating Council and the Ministries Integration Team*
- 4) Preparing recommendations for consideration by the Board of Trustees in plenary session*
- 5) Providing denominational compensation oversight*
- 6) Approving the agenda of upcoming Board of Trustees meetings*
- 7) Serving as the Board of Trustees nominating committee*
- 8) Reviewing the work of all coordinated support services*
- 9) Such functions as the Board of Trustees may assign*

b. *Ecclesiastical Life and Practice Committee [formerly Polity Committee]*

The Ecclesiastical Life and Practice Committee shall be composed of members of the Board of Trustees who have specific knowledge of church polity, practice, and ecclesiastical matters. The general secretary and the Canadian ministries director (as needed for Canadian ecumenical matters) shall serve as advisers. The specific responsibilities of the Ecclesiastical Life and Practice Committee will include the following:

- 1) Advising the general secretary in all matters brought to the committee for consideration*
- 2) Preparing recommendations for consideration by the Board of Trustees in plenary session*
- 3) Reviewing the work of the Interchurch Relations Committee*
- 4) Reviewing the work of the Historical Committee*
- 5) Reviewing the work of the Reading Services Committee*
- 6) Preparing advice for the BOT as requested by synodical study committees or arising out of ecclesiastical-assembly matters referred to the BOT by synod*

c. *Congregational Ministry-Resources Committee*

The Congregational Ministry-Resources Committee will be composed of members of the Board of Trustees with specific knowledge of church-education matters, congregational ministry concerns, and ministries in support of equipping congregations for ministry. The executive director of ministries, Canadian ministries director, the executive director of CRC Publications, the executive director of Home Missions, the presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and directors of various ministry programs shall serve the Congregational Ministry-Resources Committee as advisers. The specific responsibilities of the Congregational Ministry-Resources Committee will include the following:

- 1) *Reviewing the ministry of CRC Publications*
- 2) *Reviewing all matters related to Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary*
- 3) *Reviewing the ministries of Abuse Prevention, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, Race Relations, Social Justice and Hunger Action, and the Youth-Ministry Committee*
- 4) *Reviewing the ministry of Home Missions' Established-Church-Development Department*
- 5) *Preparing recommendations for consideration by the Board of Trustees in plenary session*

d. *Mission Committee*

The Mission Committee shall be composed of members of the Board of Trustees with specific knowledge of the church's mission in any setting. The executive director of ministries, the Canadian ministries director, the director of finance and administration, the director of personnel, the executive directors of the mission agencies, and directors of various ministry programs shall serve the Mission Committee as advisers. The specific responsibilities of the Mission Committee will include the following:

- 1) *Reviewing the ministry of Home Missions (excluding Established-Church-Development Department)*
- 2) *Reviewing the ministry of The Back to God Hour*
- 3) *Reviewing the ministry of CRWRC*
- 4) *Reviewing the ministry of World Missions*
- 5) *Reviewing Chaplaincy Ministries*
- 6) *Preparing recommendations for consideration by the Board of Trustees in plenary session*

e. *Audit Committee*

The Audit Committee shall be composed of members of the Board of Trustees with specific knowledge of finance and auditing. The executive director of ministries and the director of finance and administration shall serve the Audit Committee as advisers. The specific responsibilities of the Audit Committee will include the following:

- 1) *Review the financial management of the denomination*
- 2) *Function as primary liaison with an independent auditor*
- 3) *Advise the director of finance and administration on all matters brought to the committee*
- 4) *Prepare recommendations for consideration by the Board of Trustees in plenary session*

Grounds (for the proposal as a whole):

1. This reconstitution of the Board of Trustees resolves the conflict in authority that now exists between the Canadian Ministries Board and the boards of the agencies.
2. The recommended Board of Trustees structure and composition are in keeping with the spirit of the decisions of Synod 1997 and Synod 1999 and specifically include many of the elements assigned to the Canadian Ministries Board.

3. This proposal makes uniform the structures of authority in both Canada and the United States.
4. The recommended Board structure and composition respect the binational make-up of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the recommendations contained in this Governance Proposal.

Grounds:

1. These recommendations comply with the mandate of Synod 1999 that the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Canadian Ministries Board, develop an effective ministries and governance proposal for binational ministries and report to Synod 2000.
2. These recommendations have been endorsed by the Canadian Ministries Board.

B. That synod approve the amendments and additions to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees. (The specific wording of the changes proposed will be consistent with the recommendations contained in this Governance Proposal and will be made available to synod by way of the supplementary report.)

Ground: The Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees need to be amended to accommodate the specifics of the proposal contained in this report.

Appendix E

Summary of the Board of Trustees' Decision about Abuse Prevention and Disability Concerns

Pursuant to the Board of Trustees' May 1999 decision with regard to the future of the ministries of Abuse Prevention and Disability Concerns, the Calvin College Social Research Center conducted a needs-assessment survey. Questionnaires were sent to each church council and to all parish pastors in the CRC. Though the results are informative, the survey is inconclusive for the purpose of deciding the future, the scope, and the organizational placement of these ministries. The reason that the data can be ruled inconclusive is the low response rate from both the churches and the pastors and the fact that the responses to the questions are quite varied. The data did indicate certain patterns of use and anticipated use of the services offered by these ministry offices. That data can be used for program analysis and design, but the Board of Trustees has had to make its decisions about the future of these ministries without the benefit of conclusions based on clear statistical information.

In addition to the survey data, the Board has, of course, the advice of the directors, Ms. Beth Swagman and Dr. James Vanderlaan. Also available to the Board are the results of focus-group meetings held in various parts of the denomination. The message received from these group meetings is clear: These ministries are important, if not essential, to certain segments of the CRC membership. Admittedly, the number of people attending these groups did

not add up to a great multitude, but their presentations were persuasive and passionate. The advice of these groups is reflected in the decisions of the Board of Trustees, summarized below.

A. Abuse Prevention

It has been decided that the Office of Abuse Prevention be continued with a full-time director and the following provisions:

1. That the mandate of Abuse Prevention and the position description of the Abuse Prevention director be revised to clarify the services that are and the services that are not offered by this denominational office. In this revision it is important to emphasize the decision of Synod 1994 that Abuse Prevention serve the churches and classes with education and training for the *prevention* of abuse.
2. That when specific cases of abuse occur for which denominational advice is sought by a church or classis, such requests for advice shall be referred to the appropriate denominational official equipped to provide such assistance. The Abuse Prevention director may be called upon to serve such denominational advisers in a supportive role. The purpose of this regulation is to make clear that the function of the Office of Abuse Prevention is education and training, not advocacy for either alleged victims or alleged perpetrators.
3. That the Board establish an advisory committee to guide the Abuse Prevention ministry, to serve as a resource to the director of Abuse Prevention, and, when appropriate, to advise the Board of Trustees. This committee shall be a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees.

B. Disability Concerns

It is recommended that the Office of Disability Concerns be continued, subject to the following provisions:

1. That the mandate of Disability Concerns and the position description of the Disability Concerns director be revised and updated to clarify the services that are offered by this denominational office.
2. That the position description and official position title of the Disability Concerns director be expanded to include responsibility for research and evaluation of denominational ministries as directed through the executive director of ministries. The specific purpose of this function is to assure that both biblical and Reformed theological integrity is maintained in the activities undertaken by the agencies and programs of the denomination. The research and evaluation function shall serve as advice to the agencies, the Ministries Integration Team, the Ministries Coordinating Council, and the Board of Trustees.
3. That the Board establish an advisory committee for Disability Concerns to guide this ministry, to serve as a resource to the director of Disability Concerns, and, when appropriate, to advise the Board of Trustees. This committee shall be a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees.

Note: What appears above reflects the essence of the Board decision but is, nevertheless, a summary. Revised mandate and position descriptions are still being developed. Copies of such details will be available to synod upon request.

Appendix F

Abuse Prevention (Ms. Beth Swagman, director)

I. Work accomplished during the past year

- Conducting forty-two seminars, training sessions, and/or conferences in twenty-seven communities as well as at Calvin College and World Missions.
- Training six additional abuse-response teams, one each in Classes Arizona, Northern Illinois, Kalamazoo, Huron, Muskegon, and Lake Superior. This makes a total of sixteen trained abuse-response teams.
- Consulting with pastors, church leaders, classes representatives, principals, school-board members, and parachurch organizations when allegations of abuse or misconduct became known (more than 50 cases in this past year).
- Supporting and advising persons (more than 125 cases in this past year) who experienced abuse, extended family members of persons abused or abusing, and others connected to incidents of abuse or misconduct recently occurring or having occurred in the past.
- Distributing 151 sample abuse-prevention policies to forty-five churches upon request; also, upon request, distributing seventeen packets of resources on such topics as domestic violence, alcoholism and abuse, sexual harassment, violence in schools, and how to help family members of victims or offenders.
- Initiating a child-abuse prevention campaign to reduce the incidence of shaken-baby syndrome by making available brochures and posters in churches and for distribution to parents.
- Convening an advisory group of Christian Reformed members from Classes Pacific Northwest and British Columbia South-East for the purpose of analyzing the needs of children and adolescents who have been victims of abuse. After conducting a survey in fifty-six churches, the advisory group concluded that more services and resources are needed for youth victims and their parents.
- Sponsoring Abuse Awareness Week with materials that included bulletin covers/inserts, sermons, song selections, litanies, liturgies, children's bulletin, book/video resource list, suggestions for responding to survivors and offenders, and meditations on abuse. Nearly 250 churches requested materials, and 45,000 bulletin covers/inserts were distributed.

II. Challenges to the ministry

- Of the sixteen trained abuse-response teams, perhaps four or five are actively involved in serving the churches. The remaining teams are inactive. Greater leadership and recognition of the teams are needed.
- Based on a survey conducted in Classes Pacific North-West and British Columbia South-East, more services and resources are needed for youth victims and their parents. The services and resources are needed to assist victims and parents through the healing process in order to reduce the overwhelming likelihood that youth victims will become offenders later in life.

Appendix G

Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, director; Rev. Siebert Van Houten, Canadian director)

Chaplaincy Ministries is thankful for its expanding family, which now includes eighty-eight full-time and four part-time chaplains serving in hospitals, nursing homes, youth centers, prisons, hospice centers, counseling centers, military installations, veterans' medical centers, and in the workplace. During the past year some of our chaplains moved into other ministries, and some retired, but the Lord led nine others to join us. We gratefully report that our team of chaplains has grown, and they continue to serve with dedication, competence, and compassion around the world.

Staff continues to work with prospective chaplains in reviewing their training, certification, and application for endorsement. We offer pastoral support for chaplains and their families by providing newsletters, regional cluster gatherings, an annual conference, and periodic site visits. Through the generosity of the churches, we were able to provide some salary supplements and training stipends in cases of special need.

Even though three of our chaplains experienced the loss of their jobs because of corporate downsizing and institutional mergers, research continues to underscore the essential role of spiritual and religious issues in promoting wellness and health. We're grateful for the growing support of chaplaincy among leaders in health care, industry, hospice, and corrections.

A. Activities

- Staff is working with the calling churches of our chaplains to implement the plan for joint supervision of all chaplains, as approved by last year's synod.
- Rev. InSoon Gho was endorsed as our denomination's first woman military chaplain in the United States Army.
- Chaplaincy Ministries provided the support for several emerging community-based chaplaincy ministries.
- Chaplaincy Ministries is involved in chaplaincy certification organizations in the United States and Canada, and that involvement is deeply appreciated.

B. Challenges

- It is the prayer of Chaplaincy Ministries that younger persons with appropriate training and credentials will be led to serve as chaplains.
- Chaplaincy Ministries is exploring the support and possible endorsement of laypersons and volunteers for ministry in specialized settings.
- Chaplaincy Ministries' directors seek to strengthen a mentoring program for new chaplains.
- Chaplaincy Ministries is exploring ways to cooperate with other denominational agencies in order to increase its ministry effectiveness.

Appendix H

Disability Concerns (Dr. James Vanderlaan, director)

Synod 1993 adopted the following: "That synod heartily recommend full compliance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act PL 101-336 and its accompanying regulations in all portions of the CRC located in the U. S. and Canada" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, Art. 65, p. 539). Disability Concerns is responsible to synod for monitoring denominational progress in achieving this compliance. The CRC *Yearbook* questionnaires, sent annually by the general secretary to all councils, provide the data. We have no way of verifying the answers given on the questionnaires, but the trends shown by these numbers should be reliable. That is, even if some answers are not accurate, the proportion of inaccurate answers should be fairly constant from year to year. The results this year compared to past years are as follows:

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Barrier-free access	517	394	368	365	318
Partial accessibility	307	435	459	470	417
Signing for deaf	30	32	31	29	35
Providing aids for hearing impaired	428	455	190	185	437
Providing aids for visually impaired	210	305	346	364	284
Providing special programs	218	245	240	244	225
Providing transportation	139	276	292	324	346

What do these figures indicate?

1. The steady decline in the number of churches reporting barrier-free access continues. This decline probably indicates greater care in reporting accurately rather than a steady increase in new barriers. The designation "barrier-free" on the questionnaire is an exacting standard, indicating, for example, that the church building is one with wheelchair access even to the pulpit area.
2. This year's figures may indicate that the churches are more seriously addressing the needs of people with hearing impairments.
3. Provision of aids for those with impaired vision seems to have declined this year.
4. Special church programs for those with disability-related needs remain roughly constant.

5. The churches are giving more attention to the transportation needs of their members and neighbors with disabilities.
6. Overall CRC progress in removing barriers to full participation by people with disabilities is ponderously slow at best.

The final question on the questionnaire asks about participation in church activities. The data generated by the answers to this question are not shown in the CRC *Yearbook* but are helpful to Disability Concerns in tracking denominational progress in bringing people with disabilities more fully into church life. This question was first included on the questionnaire in 1997. The answers are as follows:

Participation (members with disabilities serve in staff or volunteer positions in the congregation)

	1997	1998	1999	2000
Paid staff	14	9	23	20
Officebearer	28	32	26	34
Church-school teacher	24	36	29	42
Usher/greeter	81	102	108	116
Committee member	57	78	94	99
Other	56	66	72	70

If we total these figures for each year, they are 260 (1997), 323 (1998), 352 (1999), and 381 (2000), a slow gain. However, these numbers represent individual members, not churches. They are a minuscule part of the estimated 12 percent to 15 percent of the CRC membership who have disabilities.

Many of those included in this overall estimate do not identify themselves as having a disability, and many of those who do acknowledge their disabilities are not known to others as having a disability. Thus there are many CRC members with disabilities who are actually active in church life and yet are not counted in our figures. Nevertheless, we have a long way to go.

A. *Program activities*

Disability Concerns continues to carry on the programs listed on its sheet of Resources and Services, which is mailed periodically to church councils. Some of these programs are

- Publishing *Breaking Barriers*, the newsletter carrying life stories of Christian Reformed people with disabilities. Circulation presently is expanding as church contacts take responsibility for distributing copies to all the families in their churches.
- Recruiting and supporting volunteer regional disability consultants and their church-contact people to work with Disability Concerns to assist individuals, families, and churches with disability matters (twenty-six classes presently covered).
- Continuing to develop regional committees in areas of CRC concentration to support the regional consultants (four at present).
- Working with the regional consultants to plan and hold regional gatherings.
- Supporting, advising, and advocating for various people with disabilities and their families.

B. Challenges to the ministry

The challenges Disability Concerns faces are as varied as the people with disabilities it seeks to represent. However, the challenges it regards as needing priority attention are the following:

1. Locating, recruiting, and training additional competent and committed regional consultants and church contacts in the classes that do not yet have them.
2. Using the means at our disposal to increase participation of people with disabilities in the leadership of their churches, councils, church-school staff, committees, etc.
3. Caring for the spiritual needs of people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses who live in group homes in CRC neighborhoods. These people no longer have institutional chaplains to care for them and are almost always eager for Christian fellowship. The Friendship program, sponsored by Friendship Ministries and available through CRC Publications, is excellent for this purpose. However, considerably fewer than one in five CRCs is presently hosting Friendship groups, even though nearly every church has such a group home nearby.
4. Seeking ways to impress the agencies and congregations of the CRCNA with their responsibility to help people with disabilities locate the monetary resources many of them, including many elderly, must have for such basic necessities as housing, medical services, and personal-care attendants and helping those who can work to locate jobs, develop the specific skills required, and receive the job coaching they may need to succeed.

Appendix I

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Duane Visser, director)

In my recent reading of the early synodical mandate for Pastor-Church Relations, I noted that one of the expectations set for the director is an annual report to synod about the concerns, challenges, and progress of pastors and congregations. Though such a report seems to be a worthy goal, as I become increasingly familiar with CRC pastors and congregations throughout the U.S. and Canada, it seems to me that there is no way to neatly summarize these things. There are differences in needs, approaches, and responses from one congregation and pastor to another. The CRCNA is indeed a more varied group than ever before, and this variety, blessing though it is, makes it very challenging for a denominational ministry like Pastor-Church Relations to clearly define and effectively respond to the needs of all those it serves.

A. Activities

Pastor-Church Relations calls attention to a number of its activities:

1. Regional pastors are the front line of Pastor-Church Relations' response, especially to pastors. There are still sixty-three regional pastors serving colleagues and congregations in the forty-seven classes. We appreciate the efforts they put forth on behalf of PCR even as they serve as pastors in their own congregations. At the biennial conference last September many

regional pastors had opportunity to support one another and receive input about the changing nature of challenges in ministry.

2. Mentors are assigned to each new candidate or pastor entering the CRC ministry.
3. Through the work of Beth Kuiper as program planner, Pastor-Church Relations has continued to explore ways of responding to the needs of unordained staff, a growing part of PCR's ministry. Beth is leaving this position, and we thank her for her efforts toward understanding the needs of the staff of CRC congregations and finding ways in which Pastor-Church Relations can more effectively assist them.
4. Through the Ministerial Information Service, Pastor-Church Relations maintains pastors' profiles and profiles of vacant churches. Though it is a time-consuming task to respond to needs of pastors who are willing to consider calls and congregations looking for pastors, many congregations and pastors find the program very helpful. During this year we have again processed approximately two thousand requests for pastor and congregational profiles.
5. One of PCR's major activities has been planning and recruiting for the trained interim-ministry program approved by Synod 1999. As of January 1, 2000, four persons had been placed as interim pastors in congregations: Rev. Peter Mans, Rev. Larry Slings, Rev. Leonard Troast, and Rev. Robert Walter. Pastor-Church Relations is interviewing pastors for two other positions, which should be filled by the time of Synod 2000. A number of other pastors have expressed interest in serving as interim pastors in the future.
6. Synod 1998 approved the policy that pastors and congregations that have separated via Article 17 of the Church Order be encouraged to seek evaluation before entering another pastorate or calling another pastor. Several pastors and congregations have taken advantage of the evaluation process.
7. Pastor-Church Relations has been part of the new administrative structure resulting from the synodical decision to dissolve Pastoral Ministries. Though our work has continued with little change, there have been some adjustments.

B. Challenges to the ministry

1. Pastor-Church Relations will continue recruitment and program planning for trained interim-ministry specialists in the CRC. We will assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the program with the ministry-share monies approved by synod.
2. Pastor-Church Relations and Calvin Theological Seminary will continue to assist pastors and congregations in planning for helpful continuing-education programs. It is our hope that synod will approve the recommendations presented by the synodical study committee on continuing education for clergy and church staff.

3. Pastor-Church Relations will continue to seek ways of working with Calvin Theological Seminary toward effective placement of candidates.
4. Preventive programs for congregations and clergy continue to be a priority, from effective mentoring of new candidates to exploring ways of dealing with differences.

Appendix J

Race Relations (Rev. Norberto Wolf, director and regional director for southern California; Ms. Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley, regional director, Great Lakes; Mr. Peter Szto, regional director, Michigan and East Coast)

The mandate of Race Relations is “to design, organize, and implement programs which the denomination, churches, and members can effectively use to eliminate racism, both the causes and effects, within the body of believers and throughout the world.”

The Race Relations team was rebuilt in September 1999 with the appointment of Rev. Norberto Wolf as director and Mr. Peter Szto as regional director based in Grand Rapids. They joined Ms. Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley, based in Chicago. Rev. Wolf will continue to serve as regional director for southern California.

Race Relations uses four strategies to dismantle racism, promote reconciliation, and celebrate diversity: (1) raising awareness of personal, cultural, and institutional prejudice and racism through the use of educational resources; (2) leadership development by offering scholarships and mentoring relationships; (3) providing consultation and/or intervention when requested by a church or classis; and (4) advocating on behalf of ethnic-minority members of the CRCNA.

The new team has also incorporated into its work the suggested goals outlined in the consultations on race relations held during the first quarter of 1999: (1) to regionalize Race Relations in both structure and strategy; (2) to intentionally develop a plan to address institutional and personal racism; (3) to recruit, retain, and utilize ethnic-minority leadership gifts throughout the denomination; and (4) to integrate and coordinate agency efforts to develop a multiethnic family of God.

The program for dismantling racism sponsored by the Ministries Coordinating Council and structured by Crossroads Ministries has provided our denomination with a long-range plan against prejudice and systemic racism. Our team is involved in the coordination and promotion of this plan and is committed to its success.

A. Activities of the Race Relations team

- Contacted fourteen classes to promote the formation of classical race-relations committees and the study of the diversity report of Synod 1996.
- Presented twenty-two seminars, conferences, and workshops on cultural diversity, ethnic sensitivity, facility sharing, racial reconciliation, and racial justice.
- Participated in planning the year 2000 Multiethnic Conference and promoting that event through numerous mailings and phone calls.

- Organized the formation of an eight-member Advisory Council for Race Relations.
- Co-chaired twelve meetings of the program to dismantle racism sponsored by the Ministries Coordinating Council, including recruiting new members and coordinating training events.
- Managed the Race Relations' scholarship and grant programs, designating recipients, encouraging them to participate in their institutions' programs to promote diversity, and holding six mentoring meetings with students.
- Designated the dates for the celebration of All Nations Heritage Week and supervised and coordinated the production and distribution of promotional materials.
- Supported the leaders of people of color in our denomination through thirty-five personal visits and twelve mentoring relationships.
- Facilitated the interaction between ethnic-minority and majority church leaders through seven joint celebration and worship events.
- Provided nine consultative services on ethnic-related issues to classes, churches, and other institutions.
- Organized and led two racial-reconciliation camps (Camp Dunamis and Camp Koinonia) for middle-school-age youth and participated in the organization of a new multiethnic-leadership camp (Camp Timothy) for high-school youth.
- Attended twenty-two classical meetings as representative for Race Relations.

B. Leadership development

Race Relations reports that the following twenty-nine scholarships were awarded, for a total of \$28,000.

Recipient	African American	Asian	Native Hispanic	American	Other
Calvin College	0	4	1	1	0
Calvin Seminary	0	4	2	0	0
Dordt College	0	2	2	0	0
Reformed Bible College	1	0	0	1	0
Trinity Christian College	4	4	4	0	0
TOTAL	5	14	8	2	0

The following ministries have received Race Relations' grants, for a total of \$20,000:

- Anaheim CRC – Anaheim, California
- His Place – Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Camp Dunamis – Bellflower, California
- Lao Community CRC – Holland, Michigan
- Community CRC youth project – Los Angeles, California

C. Concerns

1. Although there is a theoretical acceptance of diversity in our churches, illustrated by the report on diversity accepted by Synod 1996, our classes and congregations find it difficult to consider seriously the issues of prejudice and racism. Some of us are reluctant to look the issue in the face

for fear of what we may see, and others have a mistaken notion that the problem of race has been solved. These attitudes keep the door closed to acceptance of and full participation of people of color in the Christian Reformed Church.

2. The diversity of cultural circumstances, economic limitations, and theological training of many of our ethnic-minority leaders cries out for greater flexibility and creative solutions in the areas of theological education and resource availability for ethnic-minority ministries.

Appendix K

Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator)

The 1993 synodical report on world hunger, “Free to Serve: Meeting the Needs of the World,” essentially calls for infusing the entire mission and ministry of the Christian Reformed Church—at all levels—with a deeper and more effective concern for the poor, hungry, and powerless. In so doing, we refresh our denominational commitment to service, to justice, and to meeting the needs of God’s world. Synod’s adoption of the world-hunger report also resulted in the creation of a staff position under the Denominational Office. The coordinator for Social Justice and Hunger Action bears primary staff responsibility for implementation of this report.

I. General areas in which progress has been made

Five years into implementation of the report, there are clear signs that significant progress has been made on several important fronts:

- Working smarter – coordinating existing agency work and stimulating new collaborative work
- Working broader – beginning to involve and mobilize people in the pew
- Going deeper – looking at root causes of poverty and hunger

A. Working smarter

Until recently, denominational agencies involved with the poor had no systematic way of sharing information—much less of strategizing and planning together. They do now. Representatives from all agencies and institutions of the CRC as well as from some closely affiliated agencies (approximately seventeen representatives) meet twice per year for several days in a team called the Coordinating Council for Church in Society.

The creation of such a group was a key suggestion in the 1993 report, and in the past two years this council has come together as an important and vibrant part of the Denominational Ministries Plan and as a creative staff body generating both good discussion and concrete actions. Most of the implementation activity mentioned later in this report is rooted in this group.

B. Working broader

Mobilizing people in the pew to get more involved with the poor is being done in several ways:

1. Following an in-depth survey of present social action/justice activities at the congregational level in almost half of churches, we discovered that

approximately one hundred congregations would like help in either starting or reinvigorating their social-action or social-justice ministry. We have begun two small pilot projects—one in the U.S. and one in Canada—to discover the best ways of doing this.

2. Although denominational assistance for refugee resettlement never stopped in Canada, it had ended in the U.S. Thanks to some innovative collaborative efforts of CRWRC, the coordinator for Social Justice and Hunger Action, and a West Michigan CRC-based group called PARA, our denomination is again assisting congregations to resettle refugees in the U.S. Since December 1998, CRC churches have embraced over 250 refugees. This is an important learning link between local congregations and flesh-and-blood victims of war, racism, and other forms of oppression.
3. Knowing that the magnitude and complexity of the problems of poverty demand that Christians join together, we have broadened our denominational contacts in the U.S. and are deeply involved in Call to Renewal, a national movement of moderate evangelicals and mainline Protestants who desire to see Christians strongly advocating for the poor in the public square. Significant involvement in such a movement rounds out—completes—the evangelistic, service, and Christian community-development ministries already being undertaken by many CRC congregations.

In Canada we continue to be members of significant Christian and interfaith coalitions such as Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (CEJI), Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC), Task Force on Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR), Interchurch Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICHRLA), Interchurch Committee on Refugees (ICR), Church Council on Justice and Corrections (CCJC).

C. Going deeper

The Christian Reformed Church has a strong recent history of work with the poor and powerless. For years our evangelism and church-planting efforts included a large dose of education, medical work, and other service activities. Following the creation of CRWRC in the early 1960s, disaster relief and, later, programs of Christian development (preventive health care, economic development, organizational development, and so on) became important ministries in themselves, although always in the context of wholism as practiced by the Christian Reformed Church.

From this deepening and maturing experience in evangelism, church planting, and relief and development came a growing realization that there was more we had to do if we were truly serious about serving the poor and hungry. Sierra Leone, for example, after twenty years of CRC hunger efforts, is, according to the United Nations, the worst place in the world for human beings to live. It ranks last in quality of life out of all the countries in the world.

But Sierra Leone was not our only lesson in world hunger and social justice. In many other ministry efforts both overseas and at home it became clear that if our ministry to the poor and hungry was to have integrity—if we really believed what we said we believed—we would have to go deeper and deal with ethical, moral, and systemic issues underlying much of the poverty and hunger, the misery and pain, in God's world.

It was for this reason that the 1993 synodical report on world hunger directs us not only to broaden our denominational involvement with the poor and hungry but to go deeper toward the roots of the problems as well.

II. Specific examples of Social Justice and Hunger Action work

A. The coordinator for Social Justice and Hunger Action has, along with World Missions and CRWRC staff, been working effectively with Canadian and U.S. government representatives to ensure that Sierra Leone is treated with both urgency and some equality as an international emergency.

B. Recognizing that prevention is far more effective than relief or intervention, we are partnering with the Reformed Ecumenical Council and Nigerian church groups to support and facilitate peace efforts in the serious and long-standing ethnic conflicts in the Middlebelt region of Nigeria—the historic CRC mission area. These efforts are just beginning but may well take us into very new (for us) program areas of peace, justice, and reconciliation—areas where the roots of poverty and hunger lie deeply embedded.

C. Two years ago the Christian Reformed Church of Cuba asked us to speak to the U.S. government concerning its embargo of Cuba—to tell Washington of the suffering the old and the very young are experiencing because of the difficulties in obtaining medicines and food. The coordinator's office facilitated this communication, and the Board of Trustees wrote a strong letter to the appropriate U.S. officials expressing ethical and moral concern and requesting that the embargo be eased. We continue to follow up this commitment.

D. The Coordinating Council for Church in Society debates and decides to take on one major educational project a year. In 1998/1999 the project was international debt relief, using the Jubilee 2000 campaign as the occasion to speak to our congregations about the need for advocacy concerning issues related to poverty. The worldwide campaign was a major success. Over \$100 billion in Third World debt is scheduled to be canceled. Much work remains to be done. Our CRC campaign generated significant increases in awareness of systemic causes of poverty, some excellent discussion, and approximately 5,000 signatures (over a hundred CRC churches participated in the worldwide petition drive).

E. In Canada the Jubilee 2000 educational project continues during 2000 but expands into child hunger and Canadian poverty issues. In the U.S. a new campaign, led by CRWRC and called Open Hearts, uses a video and new books by Ron Sider, Jay Van Groningen, and Susan Van Lopik to get adult study groups to take a fresh—and deeper—look at the problems of poverty in the U.S. and what we can do about them.

1. Racism lies at the heart of much poverty and suffering. For that reason we have, in partnership with CRC Race Relations, organized a multiagency collaboration in a program of antiracism education and organizing that we hope will result in a more multicultural, antiracist denomination—both in the U.S. and in Canada.

2. The Canadian Committee for Contact with the Government is a critical piece of the deepening effort. This long-standing group not only has spoken to and for the church on matters of great significance to the poor and hungry but also has stimulated the Coordinating Council for Church in Society to grapple with serious questions of faith, practice, and the public square.

F. In addition to these core efforts, the coordinator for Social Justice and Hunger Action has continued his responsibilities for *Our Family Album: Free to Serve*. This highly successful production, written and produced by James Schaap and his Sioux Center, Iowa, partners, was performed at Synod 1999 and again during the fall of 1999 in seven cities. We ended the production after two years with the production of a video that ensures continued access to this heart-tugging presentation and celebration of who we were and where we've been.

III. Plans for 2000

A. During the winter and spring of 2000 the Denominational Ministries Plan is being revised. It is the glue for holding together a rapidly increasing number of multiagency initiatives and projects. Since this is particularly important to the collaborative efforts of the coordinator for Social Justice and Hunger Action, he has been responsible for the Plan Facilitation Team. This team of four individuals assists the Ministries Coordinating Council in implementing the plan.

B. During the next year we expect to concentrate our efforts in the following areas:

1. Helping congregational social justice/hunger-action groups become effective as salt and light.
2. Moving forward with African partners to explore ways of preventing conflict and recovering from war, doing so with the understanding and participation of the North American CRC constituency.
3. Continuing to highlight timely and urgent issues that need Reformed and Christian discussion and action.

Appendix L Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Back to God Hour/CRC-TV

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 2,443	2,464	-	-	4,907	\$ 2,418	2,781	-	-	5,199
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	64	-	-	-	64	118	-	-	-	118
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	71	-	-	-	71	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	1,705	-	-	-	1,705	1,810	-	-	-	1,810
Equities	969	-	-	100	469	535	-	-	100	635
Partnerships	286	-	-	-	286	285	-	-	-	285
Property (non-operating)	6	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	899	-	-	-	899	1,034	-	-	-	1,034
Other	225	-	-	-	225	264	-	-	-	264
Total Assets	6,068	2,464	-	100	8,632	6,464	2,781	-	100	9,345
Accounts Payable	239	-	-	-	239	340	-	-	-	340
Notes/Loans Payable	420	-	-	-	420	473	-	-	-	473
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	1,690	-	-	-	1,690	1,654	-	-	-	1,654
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	2,349	-	-	-	2,349	2,467	-	-	-	2,467
Net Assets	\$ 3,719	2,464	-	100	6,283	\$ 3,997	2,781	-	100	6,878
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. The income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.					Funds relating to annuity contracts are segregated. The income from these funds is used for payments on annuity contracts.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Board Restrictions: \$700,000 Television, \$1,763,577 Estate.					Board Restrictions: \$700,000 Television, \$2,080,993 Estate .				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.					Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

Agency: Back to God Hour/CRC-TV
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 4,420	\$ 4,439	\$ 4,414	\$ 4,449	\$ 4,353
% of Total Income	55.4%	51.2%	49.6%	48.9%	51.5%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 3,259	\$ 3,402	\$ 3,399	\$ 3,301	\$ 2,997
Estate Gifts	\$ 179	\$ 691	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,202	\$ 667
Total Gift Income	3,438	4,093	4,429	4,503	3,664
% of Total Income	43.1%	47.2%	49.8%	49.5%	43.3%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 127	\$ 141	\$ 59	\$ 141	\$ 436
Total Other Income	127	141	59	141	436
% of Total Income	1.6%	1.6%	0.7%	1.6%	5.2%
TOTAL INCOME	7,985	8,673	8,902	9,093	8,453
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
English	\$ 2,579	\$ 2,496	\$ 2,473	\$ 2,481	\$ 2,603
FTEs	5	5	5	5	5
International	\$ 2,847	\$ 2,562	\$ 2,460	\$ 2,592	\$ 2,287
FTEs	13	13	13	13	13
Television	\$ 2,131	\$ 2,049	\$ 2,003	\$ 649	\$ 1,312
FTEs	7	7	6	6	10
Television - Animation	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 437
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 7,557	\$ 7,107	\$ 6,936	\$ 5,722	\$ 6,639
Total Program Service FTEs	25	25	24	24	28
% of Total \$	87.4%	88.5%	87.0%	82.9%	84.5%
% of Total FTEs	75.8%	75.8%	75.0%	75.0%	80.0%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 555	\$ 367	\$ 378	\$ 406	\$ 468
FTEs	4	4	4	4	4
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ 538	\$ 557	\$ 660	\$ 777	\$ 751
FTEs	4	4	4	4	3
Total Support Service \$	1,093	924	1,038	1,183	1,219
Total Support Service FTEs	8	8	8	8	7
% of Total \$	12.6%	11.5%	13.0%	17.1%	15.5%
% of Total FTEs	24.2%	24.2%	25.0%	25.0%	20.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 8,650	\$ 8,031	\$ 7,974	\$ 6,905	\$ 7,858
TOTAL FTEs	33	33	32	32	35
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (665)	\$ 642	\$ 928	\$ 2,188	\$ 595

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Calvin College

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 194	-	-	-	194	\$ 283	-	-	-	283
CDs, Time Deposits	100	-	-	-	100	100	-	-	-	100
Marketable Securities	7,900	-	-	-	7,900	9,769	-	-	-	9,769
Receivables & Advances	13,542	-	404	1,391	15,337	29,682	-	1,738	2,566	33,986
Inventory	586	-	-	-	586	568	-	-	-	568
Prepays & Advances	292	-	-	-	292	679	-	-	-	679
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	28,847	-	-	12,769	41,616	21,284	-	-	14,062	35,346
Equities	10,257	-	-	29,857	40,114	13,199	-	-	29,857	43,056
Partnerships	-	-	-	1,727	1,727	-	-	-	2,706	2,706
Property (non-operating)	13	-	-	68	81	13	-	-	1,811	1,824
PP & E	68,104	-	-	-	68,104	85,538	-	-	-	85,538
Other	155	-	2,130	1,699	3,984	468	-	3,809	2,229	6,506
Total Assets	129,990	-	2,534	47,511	180,035	161,583	-	5,547	53,231	220,361
Accounts Payable	2,929	-	-	-	2,929	4,798	-	-	-	4,798
Notes/Loans Payable	31,081	-	-	99	31,180	32,386	-	-	106	32,492
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	5,946	-	-	-	5,946	6,490	-	-	-	6,490
Deferred Income	599	-	-	-	599	638	-	-	-	638
Other	18,659	-	-	-	18,659	20,701	-	-	-	20,701
Total Liabilities	59,214	-	-	99	59,313	65,013	-	-	106	65,119
Net Assets	\$ 70,776	-	2,534	47,412	120,722	\$ 96,570	-	5,547	53,125	155,242
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										
	Over 500 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public services and student services funded by outside sources.					Over 500 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public services and student services funded by outside sources.				
	Endowed gifts.					Endowed gifts.				

Agency: Calvin College
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 2,723	\$ 2,796	\$ 2,801	\$ 2,927	\$ 2,931
% of Total Income	5.1%	4.8%	4.4%	4.3%	4.1%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 1,782	\$ 2,253	\$ 2,873	\$ 2,785	\$ 2,845
Estate Gifts	\$ 49	\$ 4	\$ 20	\$ 29	\$ 23
Total Gift Income	1,831	2,257	2,893	2,814	2,868
% of Total Income	3.4%	3.9%	4.6%	4.1%	4.0%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ 47,596	\$ 52,014	\$ 56,505	\$ 61,483	\$ 64,567
Grants	\$ 299	\$ 278	\$ 258	\$ 503	\$ 475
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,357	\$ 1,059	\$ 1,103	\$ 1,133	\$ 1,198
Total Other Income	49,252	53,351	57,866	63,119	66,240
% of Total Income	91.5%	91.3%	91.0%	91.7%	92.0%
TOTAL INCOME	53,806	58,404	63,560	68,860	72,039
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Education	\$ 46,333	\$ 50,701	\$ 56,162	\$ 58,418	\$ 60,916
FTEs	407	432	456	486	471
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 46,333	\$ 50,701	\$ 56,162	\$ 58,418	\$ 60,916
Total Program Service FTEs	407	432	456	486	471
% of Total \$	86.8%	87.6%	87.9%	87.6%	87.4%
% of Total FTEs	78.6%	80.7%	80.4%	81.3%	80.9%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 3,628	\$ 3,749	\$ 4,397	\$ 3,806	\$ 3,863
FTEs	49	44	49	50	49
Plant Operations	\$ 2,550	\$ 2,463	\$ 2,183	\$ 3,363	\$ 3,726
FTEs	48	44	46	46	46
Fund-raising	\$ 887	\$ 952	\$ 1,120	\$ 1,104	\$ 1,222
FTEs	14	16	16	16	16
Total Support Service \$	7,065	7,164	7,700	8,273	8,811
Total Support Service FTEs	111	104	111	112	111
% of Total \$	13.2%	12.4%	12.1%	12.4%	12.6%
% of Total FTEs	21.4%	19.3%	19.6%	18.7%	19.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 53,398	\$ 57,865	\$ 63,862	\$ 66,691	\$ 69,727
TOTAL FTEs	518	536	567	598	582
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 408	\$ 539	\$ (302)	\$ 2,169	\$ 2,312

**Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)**

Calvin Seminary

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,253	-	-	-	1,253	\$ 1,910	-	-	-	1,910
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	9,840	9,840	5	-	-	11,033	11,038
Receivables & Advances	1,501	-	3	2	1,506	1,549	-	3	1	1,553
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	146	146	-	-	-	160	160
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	4,110	-	-	-	4,110	4,019	-	-	-	4,019
Other	293	-	503	33	829	365	-	828	74	1,267
Total Assets	7,157	-	506	10,021	17,684	7,848	-	831	11,268	19,947
Accounts Payable	378	-	-	-	378	372	-	-	-	372
Notes/Loans Payable	263	-	-	-	263	267	-	-	-	267
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuitites Payable	-	-	-	637	637	-	-	-	599	599
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	107	-	-	-	107
Other	791	-	-	38	829	1,267	-	-	-	1,267
Total Liabilities	1,432	-	-	675	2,107	2,013	-	-	599	2,612
Net Assets	\$ 5,725	-	506	9,346	15,577	\$ 5,835	-	831	10,669	17,335
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Scholarships and grants.					Scholarships and grants.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments and annuities.					Endowments and annuities.				

Agency: Calvin Seminary
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 1,762	\$ 1,823	\$ 1,900	\$ 1,995	\$ 2,213
% of Total Income	57.4%	53.0%	52.3%	51.8%	54.3%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 363	\$ 541	\$ 468	\$ 604	\$ 561
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ 71	\$ 145	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	363	612	613	604	561
% of Total Income	11.8%	17.8%	16.9%	15.7%	13.8%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ 691	\$ 761	\$ 878	\$ 988	\$ 983
Grants	\$ 143	\$ 136	\$ 170	\$ 164	\$ 210
Miscellaneous	\$ 110	\$ 108	\$ 74	\$ 101	\$ 108
Total Other Income	944	1,005	1,122	1,253	1,301
% of Total Income	30.8%	29.2%	30.9%	32.5%	31.9%
TOTAL INCOME	3,069	3,440	3,635	3,852	4,075
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Instructional	\$ 1,734	\$ 1,834	\$ 1,820	\$ 1,777	\$ 1,924
FTEs	24	24	24	24	23
Public Service	\$ 75	\$ 94	\$ 58	\$ 68	\$ 96
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Academic Support	\$ 375	\$ 393	\$ 379	\$ 474	\$ 527
FTEs	3	3	3	3	3
Student Services	\$ 235	\$ 221	\$ 230	\$ 260	\$ 330
FTEs	1	1	1	1	1
Student Aid	\$ 111	\$ 148	\$ 168	\$ 258	\$ 289
FTEs	2	2	2	2	2
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	2,530	2,690	2,655	2,837	3,166
Total Program Service FTEs	30	30	30	29	29
% of Total \$	79.9%	77.9%	78.2%	76.6%	76.9%
% of Total FTEs	86.8%	85.6%	84.4%	84.2%	80.6%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 312	\$ 334	\$ 403	\$ 476	\$ 553
FTEs	3	3	4	4	4
Plant Operations	\$ 178	\$ 227	\$ 185	\$ 207	\$ 216
FTEs	-	-	-	-	1
Fund-raising	\$ 145	\$ 201	\$ 154	\$ 182	\$ 184
FTEs	2	2	2	2	2
Total Support Service \$	635	762	742	865	953
Total Support Service FTEs	5	5	6	6	7
% of Total \$	20.1%	22.1%	21.8%	23.4%	23.1%
% of Total FTEs	13.2%	14.4%	15.6%	15.8%	19.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 3,165	\$ 3,452	\$ 3,397	\$ 3,702	\$ 4,119
TOTAL FTEs	34	35	35	35	36
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (96)	\$ (12)	\$ 238	\$ 150	\$ (44)

	December 31, 1998					December 31, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 70	-	-	-	70	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	116	-	-	-	116	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	186	-	-	-	186	-	-	-	-	-
Accounts Payable	70	-	-	-	70	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	70	-	-	-	70	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 116	-	-	-	116	\$ -	-	-	-	-
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

Agency: Canadian Ministries Board Ministries
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 558	\$ 564	\$ 592	\$ 560	\$ 530
% of Total Income	90.4%	90.4%	89.6%	88.7%	88.0%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 4	\$ 8	\$ 16	\$ 17	\$ 11
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	4	8	16	17	11
% of Total Income	0.6%	1.3%	2.4%	2.7%	1.8%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ 50	\$ 47	\$ 48	\$ 51	\$ 52
Miscellaneous	\$ 5	\$ 5	\$ 5	\$ 3	\$ 9
Total Other Income	55	52	53	54	61
% of Total Income	8.9%	8.3%	8.0%	8.6%	10.1%
TOTAL INCOME	617	624	661	631	602
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Govt. Contact/Church in Soc.	\$ 33	\$ 40	\$ 40	\$ 37	\$ 48
FTEs	1	1	1	1	1
Indian Ministries	\$ 338	\$ 321	\$ 319	\$ 328	\$ 305
FTEs	3	3	3	3	3
Electronic Media	\$ 139	\$ 123	\$ 112	\$ 133	\$ 142
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Other	\$ 26	\$ 37	\$ 48	\$ 48	\$ 27
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 536	\$ 521	\$ 519	\$ 546	\$ 522
Total Program Service FTEs	4	4	4	4	4
% of Total \$	79.2%	79.3%	81.6%	87.6%	75.8%
% of Total FTEs	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 141	\$ 136	\$ 117	\$ 77	\$ 167
FTEs	2	2	2	2	2
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	141	136	117	77	167
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	2	2	2
% of Total \$	20.8%	20.7%	18.4%	12.4%	24.2%
% of Total FTEs	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 677	\$ 657	\$ 636	\$ 623	\$ 689
TOTAL FTEs	6	6	6	6	6
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (60)	\$ (33)	\$ 25	\$ 8	\$(87)

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.

	December 31, 1998					December 31, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 195	-	-	-	195	\$ 16	-	-	-	16
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	111	-	-	-	111	265	-	-	-	265
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	1,525	-	-	-	1,525	1,851	-	-	-	1,851
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,831	-	-	-	1,831	2,132	-	-	-	2,132
Accounts Payable	121	-	-	-	121	205	-	-	-	205
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	659	-	-	-	659	459	-	-	-	459
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	780	-	-	-	780	664	-	-	-	664
Net Assets	\$ 1,051	-	-	-	1,051	\$ 1,468	-	-	-	1,468
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

**Agency:
Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.

	1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1999 Actual
ADDITIONS:			
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	-
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Gift Income	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Participant Premiums	\$ 5,427	\$ 5,505	6,545
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	-
Miscellaneous	\$ 357	\$ 148	36
Total Other Income	5,784	5,653	6,581
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	5,784	5,653	6,581
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Claims Expense	\$ 5,131	\$ 5,144	5,252
FTVolunteer(s)	-	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 500	\$ 363	375
FTEs	-	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 274	\$ 314	336
FTEs	-	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -	-
	\$ -	\$ -	-
	\$ -	\$ -	-
	\$ -	\$ -	-
	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 5,905	\$ 5,821	5,963
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-
% of Total \$	97.5%	95.6%	96.7%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 154	\$ 265	201
FTEs	3	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	154	265	201
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3	3
% of Total \$	2.5%	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 6,059	\$ 6,086	6,164
TOTAL FTEs	3	3	3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (275)	\$ (433)	417

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

CRC PUBLICATIONS

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,136	277	124	-	1,537	\$ 924	265	124	-	1,313
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	360	-	-	-	360	367	-	-	-	367
Inventory	2,312	-	-	-	2,312	2,376	-	-	-	2,376
Prepays & Advances	155	-	-	-	155	145	-	-	-	145
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	53	-	-	-	53	185	-	-	-	185
Other	562	-	-	-	562	413	-	-	-	413
Total Assets	4,578	277	124	-	4,979	4,410	265	124	-	4,799
Accounts Payable	537	-	-	-	537	460	-	-	-	460
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	648	-	-	-	648	578	-	-	-	578
Other	232	-	-	-	232	264	-	-	-	264
Total Liabilities	1,417	-	-	-	1,417	1,302	-	-	-	1,302
Net Assets	\$ 3,161	277	124	-	3,562	\$ 3,108	265	124	-	3,497
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.	Proceeds from the sale of Tell property designated for Spanish.					Proceeds from the sale of Tell property designated for Spanish.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Language-use restrictions - primarily Russian.					Language and special-project use - e.g., PH supplement; Russian language.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

Agency: CRC PUBLICATIONS
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
a					
Ministry Share	\$ 204	\$ 219	\$ 249	\$ 243	\$ 246
% of Total Income	3.6%	3.3%	4.0%	3.9%	3.8%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 66	\$ 229	\$ 99	\$ 128	\$ 121
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	66	229	99	128	121
% of Total Income	1.2%	3.5%	1.6%	2.0%	1.8%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ 5,234	\$ 5,888	\$ 5,800	\$ 5,691	\$ 5,792
Grants	\$ 22	\$ 56	\$ 8	\$ 76	\$ 134
Miscellaneous	\$ 155	\$ 234	\$ 134	\$ 152	\$ 252
Total Other Income	5,411	6,178	5,942	5,919	6,178
% of Total Income	95.2%	93.2%	94.5%	94.1%	94.4%
TOTAL INCOME	5,681	6,626	6,290	6,290	6,545
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
<i>Banner</i>	\$ 1,473	\$ 1,569	\$ 1,479	\$ 1,276	\$ 1,360
FTEs	8	8	8	7	7
Education	\$ 3,512	\$ 3,898	\$ 3,577	\$ 3,752	\$ 3,757
FTEs	21	22	22	22	22
World Literature	\$ 378	\$ 536	\$ 502	\$ 632	\$ 884
FTEs	4	4	4	4	4
Agency Printing (PS)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 5,363	\$ 6,003	\$ 5,558	\$ 5,660	\$ 6,001
Total Program Service FTEs	33	34	34	33	33
% of Total \$	89.8%	89.7%	90.8%	91.0%	90.7%
% of Total FTEs	80.5%	81.0%	85.0%	86.8%	86.8%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 609	\$ 688	\$ 566	\$ 561	\$ 612
FTEs	8	8	6	5	5
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	609	688	566	561	612
Total Support Service FTEs	8	8	6	5	5
% of Total \$	10.2%	10.3%	9.2%	9.0%	9.3%
% of Total FTEs	19.5%	19.0%	15.0%	13.2%	13.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 5,972	\$ 6,691	\$ 6,124	\$ 6,221	\$ 6,613
TOTAL FTEs	41	42	40	38	38
NET INCOME (EXPENSE)	\$ (291)	\$ (65)	\$ 166	\$ 69	\$ (68)

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Denominational Services

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 388	319	-	-	707	\$ 670	-	-	-	670
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,191	450	-	-	1,641	698	-	-	-	698
Inventory	534	-	-	-	534	458	-	-	-	458
Prepays & Advances	56	-	-	-	56	46	-	-	-	46
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	7,001	-	-	-	7,001	7,630	-	-	-	7,630
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	177	-	-	-	177	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	5,835	-	-	-	5,835	5,967	-	-	-	5,967
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	15,182	769	-	-	15,951	15,469	-	-	-	15,469
Accounts Payable	667	-	-	-	667	613	-	-	-	613
Notes/Loans Payable	11,278	-	-	-	11,278	10,890	-	-	-	10,890
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	445	-	-	-	445	400	-	-	-	400
Other	74	-	-	-	74	199	-	-	-	199
Total Liabilities	12,464	-	-	-	12,464	12,102	-	-	-	12,102
Net Assets	\$ 2,718	769	-	-	3,487	\$ 3,367	-	-	-	3,367
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Balance of land contract.					Balance of land contract.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Fellowship Fund balance and receivable.					Fellowship Fund balance.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

Agency: Denominational Services
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 1,539	\$ 1,564	\$ 1,523	\$ 1,520	\$ 1,717
% of Total Income	19.6%	19.7%	19.4%	15.6%	16.6%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 7	\$ 22	\$ 8	\$ 1	\$ 2
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	7	22	8	1	2
% of Total Income	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ 6,115	\$ 4,901	\$ 4,847	\$ 4,362	\$ 5,239
Grants	\$ -	\$ 250	\$ 73	\$ 703	\$ 308
Miscellaneous	\$ 176	\$ 1,195	\$ 1,414	\$ 3,156	\$ 3,071
Total Other Income	6,291	6,346	6,334	8,221	8,618
% of Total Income	80.3%	80.0%	80.5%	84.4%	83.4%
TOTAL INCOME	7,837	7,932	7,865	9,742	10,337
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Synodical Services & Grants	\$ 520	\$ 670	\$ 736	\$ 785	\$ 826
FTEs	4	4	5	5	5
Education/FreeToServe	\$ 27	\$ 275	\$ 950	\$ 126	\$ 287
FTEs	1	1	4	1	1
CRCPlan *	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 122
FTEs	-	-	-	-	1
CS/PS Cost of Goods Sold	\$ 5,641	\$ 4,779	\$ 4,715	\$ 4,630	\$ 5,346
FTEs	41	40	39	39	35
Finance/Payroll Services **	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 41	\$ 1,030	\$ 1,160
FTEs	-	-	1	17	17
CSIS	\$ 346	\$ 515	\$ 530	\$ 685	\$ 809
FTEs	4	4	5	5	5
Personnel	\$ -	\$ 99	\$ 96	\$ 107	\$ 126
FTEs	-	2	2	2	2
Total Program Service \$	6,534	6,338	7,068	7,363	8,676
Total Program Service FTEs	50	51	56	69	66
% of Total \$	82.6%	80.5%	84.1%	86.0%	87.4%
% of Total FTEs	84.7%	83.6%	84.8%	90.8%	90.4%
*Amount for 2000-01 is net of \$200m from Found and \$64m from agencies ** Includes audit cost of \$173,000 for 2000-01					
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 504	\$ 628	\$ 549	\$ 411	\$ 434
FTEs	5	6	6	3	3
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$ 853	\$ 833	\$ 752	\$ 752	\$ 771
FTEs	3	3	3	3	3
Fund-raising/Communication	\$ 23	\$ 72	\$ 38	\$ 36	\$ 47
FTEs	1	1	1	1	1
Total Support Service \$	1,380	1,533	1,339	1,199	1,252
Total Support Service FTEs	9	10	10	7	7
% of Total \$	17.4%	19.5%	15.9%	14.0%	12.6%
% of Total FTEs	15.3%	16.4%	15.2%	9.2%	9.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 7,914	\$ 7,871	\$ 8,407	\$ 8,562	\$ 9,928
TOTAL FTEs	59	61	66	76	73
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (77)	\$ 61	\$ (542)	\$ 1,180	\$ 409

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Employees' Retirement Plan - United States

	December 31, 1998				December 31, 1999					
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 850	-	-	-	850	\$ 987	-	-	-	987
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	4	-	-	-	4	5	-	-	-	5
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	2,094	-	-	-	2,094	2,143	-	-	-	2,143
Equities	6,985	-	-	-	6,985	8,048	-	-	-	8,048
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	5,581	-	-	-	5,581	5,237	-	-	-	5,237
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	15,514	-	-	-	15,514	16,420	-	-	-	16,420
Accounts Payable	19	-	-	-	19	26	-	-	-	26
Forfeitures Due Agencies	179	-	-	-	179	187	-	-	-	187
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	198	-	-	-	198	213	-	-	-	213
Net Assets	\$ 15,316	-	-	-	15,316	\$ 16,207	-	-	-	16,207
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

Employees' Retirement Plan - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1999 Actual
ADDITIONS:			
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	-
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Gift Income	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Employer Contributions	\$ 777	\$ 749	\$ 791
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	-
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,758	\$ 1,342	\$ 1,026
Total Other Income	2,535	2,091	1,817
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	2,535	2,091	1,817
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Distributions	\$ 1,744	\$ 1,190	\$ 877
FTEs	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Program-service \$	\$ 1,744	\$ 1,190	\$ 877
Total Program-service FTEs	-	-	-
% of Total \$	97.5%	94.9%	94.8%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 45	\$ 64	\$ 48
FTEs	1	1	1
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-
Total Support-service \$	45	64	48
Total Support-service FTEs	1	1	1
% of Total \$	2.5%	5.1%	5.2%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 1,789	\$ 1,254	\$ 925
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 746	\$ 837	\$ 892

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Fund for Smaller Churches

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1998				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 597	-	-	-	597	\$ 613	-	-	-	613
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	362	-	-	-	362
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	597	-	-	-	597	975	-	-	-	975
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 597	-	-	-	597	\$ 975	-	-	-	975
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

Agency: Fund for Smaller Churches
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 675	\$ 916	\$ 913	\$ 904	788
% of Total Income	99.3%	96.3%	98.9%	98.0%	91.8%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 2	\$ 1	\$ 1	\$ 3	37
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	34
Total Gift Income	2	1	1	3	71
% of Total Income	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	8.2%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Miscellaneous	\$ 3	\$ 34	\$ 9	\$ 15	-
Total Other Income	3	34	9	15	-
% of Total Income	0.4%	3.6%	1.0%	1.6%	0.0%
TOTAL INCOME	680	951	923	922	859
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Subsidy Requests	\$ 677	\$ 750	\$ 718	\$ 594	468
FTVolunteer(s)	1	1	1	1	1
Auto Reimbursements	\$ 50	\$ 54	\$ 58	\$ 47	34
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Moving Expenses	\$ 7	\$ 8	\$ 14	\$ 14	5
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Education	\$ 4	\$ 5	\$ 5	\$ 4	6
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Biennial Conference	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 738	\$ 817	\$ 795	\$ 659	512
Total Program Service FTEs	1	1	1	1	1
% of Total \$	99.2%	98.6%	98.5%	98.2%	97.7%
% of Total FTEs	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 6	\$ 12	\$ 12	\$ 12	12
FTVolunteer(s)	1	1	1	1	1
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	6	12	12	12	12
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	1	1	1
% of Total \$	0.8%	1.4%	1.5%	1.8%	2.3%
% of Total FTEs	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 744	\$ 829	\$ 807	\$ 671	524
TOTAL FTEs	2	2	2	2	2
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (64)	\$ 122	\$ 116	\$ 251	335

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Home Missions

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 3,051	3,098	16	519	6,684	\$ 1,945	3,303	18	542	5,808
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,724	1,329	-	4	3,057	1,816	1,400	-	4	3,220
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	70	-	-	-	70	63	-	-	-	63
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	2,995	-	-	2,995	-	2,995	-	-	2,995
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	1,056	-	-	-	1,056	649	-	-	-	649
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,901	7,424	16	523	13,864	4,473	7,698	18	546	12,735
Accounts Payable	383	-	-	-	383	288	-	-	-	288
Notes/Loans Payable	212	1,071	-	-	1,283	209	656	-	-	865
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	216	-	-	-	216	244	-	-	-	244
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	811	1,071	-	-	1,882	741	656	-	-	1,397
Net Assets	\$ 5,090	6,353	16	523	11,982	\$ 3,732	7,042	18	546	11,338
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Virginia Beach, Arlington, Norfolk					Virginia Beach				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Facility grants: \$1,020	Endow: \$1,650	Hawaii: \$1,569	RM: \$44		Fac Grants: \$635	Loan: \$2418	Endow: \$1711		
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Training: \$660	Loans: \$1,410				Trng: \$633	Hawaii: \$1645			
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	NA Training: \$16					NA Training: \$18				
	Loan: \$481; NA Training: \$27; Trust: \$15					Loan: \$504; NA Training: \$27; Trust: \$15				

Agency: Home Missions
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 4,481	\$ 5,310	\$ 5,292	\$ 5,307	\$ 5,264
% of Total Income	60.3%	64.5%	51.0%	65.8%	62.6%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 1,309	\$ 1,474	\$ 1,701	\$ 1,712	\$ 1,480
Estate Gifts	\$ 73	\$ 272	\$ 313	\$ 212	\$ 174
Total Gift Income	1,382	1,746	2,014	1,924	1,654
% of Total Income	18.6%	21.2%	19.4%	23.9%	19.7%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ 981	\$ 214	\$ 1,868	\$ 317	\$ 194
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 592	\$ 960	\$ 1,204	\$ 513	\$ 1,295
Total Other Income	1,573	1,174	3,072	830	1,489
% of Total Income	21.2%	14.3%	29.6%	10.3%	17.7%
TOTAL INCOME	7,436	8,230	10,378	8,061	8,407
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
New-Church Development	\$ 4,934	\$ 4,867	\$ 4,717	\$ 4,888	\$ 5,437
FTEs	10	11	11	11	11
Established-Church Develop.	\$ 1,883	\$ 1,942	\$ 1,887	\$ 2,362	\$ 2,109
FTEs	16	19	19	19	17
Campus/schools	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 74	\$ 109
FTEs	-	-	-	1	1
Total Program Service \$	6,817	6,809	6,604	7,324	7,655
Total Program Service FTEs	27	30	30	31	29
% of Total \$	86.9%	86.4%	85.9%	86.6%	84.9%
% of Total FTEs	73.3%	78.5%	77.1%	82.9%	78.4%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 570	\$ 578	\$ 610	\$ 679	\$ 868
FTEs	5	5	5	2	4
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ 457	\$ 493	\$ 476	\$ 457	\$ 496
FTEs	4	4	4	4	4
Total Support Service \$	1,027	1,071	1,086	1,136	1,364
Total Support Service FTEs	10	8	9	6	8
% of Total \$	13.1%	13.6%	14.1%	13.4%	15.1%
% of Total FTEs	26.7%	21.5%	22.9%	17.1%	21.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	7,844	7,880	7,690	8,460	9,019
TOTAL FTEs	36	39	39	37	37
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	(408)	350	2,688	(399)	(612)

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Loan Fund

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 2,313	-	-	-	2,313	\$ 2,738	-	-	-	2,738
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	10,306	-	-	-	10,306	10,410	-	-	-	10,410
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	16
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	12,619	-	-	-	12,619	13,164	-	-	-	13,164
Accounts Payable	5	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	9,297	-	-	-	9,297	9,630	-	-	-	9,630
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	9,302	-	-	-	9,302	9,630	-	-	-	9,630
Net Assets	\$ 3,317	-	-	-	3,317	\$ 3,534	-	-	-	3,534
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

Agency: Loan Fund
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 750	\$ 857	\$ 925	\$ 970
Total Other Income	750	857	925	970
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME	750	857	925	970
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Loan Interest	\$ 437	\$ 541	\$ 597	\$ 631
FTEs	2	2	2	1
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 437	\$ 541	\$ 597	\$ 631
Total Program Service FTEs	2	2	2	1
% of Total \$	71.2%	70.4%	75.3%	83.8%
% of Total FTEs	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	52.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 177	\$ 227	\$ 196	\$ 122
FTEs	2	2	2	1
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	177	227	196	122
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	2	1
% of Total \$	28.8%	29.6%	24.7%	16.2%
% of Total FTEs	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	47.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 614	\$ 768	\$ 793	\$ 753
TOTAL FTEs	4	4	4	2
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 136	\$ 89	\$ 132	\$ 217

Agency: **Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada**
Balance Sheets (000s) in Canadian \$

	December 31, 1998				December 31, 1999							
	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total		
Cash	\$	(209)	133	-	-	(76)	\$	(298)	152	-	-	(146)
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	156	-	-	-	156	191	4	-	-	-	-	195
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):												
Bonds	11,153	-	-	-	11,153	9,836	-	-	-	-	-	9,836
Equities	11,644	-	-	-	11,644	15,692	-	-	-	-	-	15,692
GICs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	22,744	133	-	-	22,877	25,421	156	-	-	-	-	25,577
Accounts Payable	141	-	-	-	141	282	-	-	-	-	-	282
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	3	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	144	-	-	-	144	285	-	-	-	-	-	285
Net Assets	\$ 22,600	133	-	-	22,733	\$ 25,136	156	-	-	-	-	25,292
Footnotes:	<p>Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.</p> <p>Note 2: List details of designations.</p> <p>Note 3: List details of restrictions.</p> <p>Note 4: List details of restrictions.</p>											

Agency: Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Changes in Net Assets (000s) in Canadian \$

	-----MPF-----			-----SAF-----		
	1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1999 Actual	1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1999 Actual
ADDITIONS:						
Ministry Share	\$ 618	\$ 343	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 37	\$ 31
% of Total Income	13.6%	12.3%	0.0%	0.0%	88.1%	81.6%
Other Gift Income:						
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:						
Participant Assessments	\$ 180	\$ 917	\$ 923	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 3,755	\$ 1,526	\$ 3,094	\$ 4	\$ 5	\$ 7
Total Other Income	\$ 3,935	\$ 2,443	\$ 4,017	\$ 4	\$ 5	\$ 7
% of Total Income	86.4%	87.7%	100.0%	100.0%	11.9%	18.4%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	4,553	2,786	4,017	4	42	38
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):						
Program Services:						
Distributions	\$ 1,088	\$ 1,164	\$ 1,274	\$ 24	\$ 5	\$ 15
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 1,088	\$ 1,164	\$ 1,274	\$ 24	\$ 5	\$ 15
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	89.0%	83.2%	86.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%			
Support Services:						
Management & General	\$ 135	\$ 235	\$ 208	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	1	-	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	135	235	208	-	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	1	-	-	-
% of Total \$	11.0%	16.8%	14.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 1,223	\$ 1,399	\$ 1,482	\$ 24	\$ 5	\$ 15
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	1	-	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 3,330	\$ 1,387	\$ 2,535	\$ (20)	\$ 37	\$ 23

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States

	December 31, 1998				December 31, 1999					
	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Pension	(note 2) S.A.F	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,992	231	-	-	2,223	\$ 3,025	282	-	-	3,307
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	739	-	-	-	739	1,253	2	-	-	1,255
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	31,760	-	-	-	31,760	28,461	-	-	-	28,461
Equities	57,893	-	-	-	57,893	65,424	-	-	-	65,424
GICs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	92,384	231	-	-	92,615	98,163	284	-	-	98,447
Accounts Payable	97	12	-	-	109	125	11	-	-	138
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	97	12	-	-	109	127	11	-	-	138
Net Assets	\$ 92,287	219	-	-	92,506	\$ 98,036	273	-	-	98,309
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.										
Note 2: List details of designations.										
Note 3: List details of restrictions.										
Note 4: List details of restrictions.										

Agency:
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States

	-----MPF-----			-----SAF-----	
	1997 Actual	1998 Actual	1999 Actual	1997 Actual	1998 Actual
ADDITIONS:					
Ministry Share	\$ 1,498	\$ 451	\$ -	\$ -	159
% of Total Income	8.5%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	94.6%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:					
Participant Assessments	\$ 710	\$ 2,509	\$ 2,530	\$ -	-
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Miscellaneous	\$ 15,456	\$ 10,867	\$ 8,379	\$ 8	9
Total Other Income	16,166	13,376	10,909	8	9
% of Total Income	91.5%	96.7%	100.0%	100.0%	5.4%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	17,664	13,827	10,909	8	168
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Distributions	\$ 4,165	\$ 4,190	\$ 4,663	\$ 16	89
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 4,165	\$ 4,190	\$ 4,663	\$ 16	89
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	91.0%	88.7%	90.4%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	-
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 414	\$ 534	\$ 498	\$ -	-
FTEs	2	2	2	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	414	534	498	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	2	-	-
% of Total \$	9.0%	11.3%	9.6%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-	-
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 4,579	\$ 4,724	\$ 5,161	\$ 16	89
TOTAL FTEs	2	2	2	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 13,085	\$ 9,103	\$ 5,748	\$ (8)	79

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

World Missions

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,127	132	89	3	1,351	\$ 1,631	-	76	-	1,707
CDs, Time Deposits	300	821	-	60	1,181	25	296	2	40	363
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	770	49	-	8	827	724	75	1	5	805
Inventory	378	-	-	-	378	372	-	-	-	372
Prepays & Advances	10	-	-	-	10	2	-	-	-	2
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	320	3,947	-	455	4,722	372	4,311	28	579	5,290
Equities	193	2,379	-	349	2,921	175	2,029	13	273	2,490
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	131	-	70	-	201	102	-	70	-	172
PP & E	298	-	-	-	298	292	-	-	-	292
Other	129	-	-	-	129	117	-	-	-	117
Total Assets	3,656	7,328	159	875	12,018	3,812	6,711	190	897	11,610
Accounts Payable	428	100	-	-	528	414	106	-	-	520
Notes/Loans Payable	136	-	-	-	136	129	-	-	-	129
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	444	-	-	-	444	379	-	27	-	406
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	989	-	-	-	989	985	-	-	-	985
Total Liabilities	1,997	100	-	-	2,097	1,907	106	27	-	2,040
Net Assets	\$ 1,659	7,228	159	875	9,921	\$ 1,905	6,605	163	897	9,570
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Land contract given in legacy \$131 - Restricted Land Gift \$70					Land contract given in legacy \$102 - Restricted Land Gift \$70				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Japan Capital Funds \$4,335 - Legacy Fund \$827 - Insurance Reserve Funds \$751 - Endowment/Annuities \$485 - Other \$830					Japan Capital Funds \$4,244 - Legacy Fund \$695 - Insurance Reserve Funds \$598 - Endowment/Annuities \$379 - Other \$690				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Restricted Gifts \$89					Restricted Gifts \$76 & Unitrust				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments					Endowments				

Agency: World Missions
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ 4,916	\$ 5,086	\$ 5,052	\$ 5,070	\$ 5,030
% of Total Income	39.4%	39.2%	38.1%	36.4%	38.8%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 4,332	\$ 4,933	\$ 4,975	\$ 5,168	\$ 5,265
Estate Gifts	\$ 328	\$ 410	\$ 309	\$ 844	\$ 372
Total Gift Income	4,660	5,343	5,284	6,012	5,637
% of Total Income	37.3%	41.2%	39.9%	43.2%	43.5%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ 1,314	\$ 929	\$ 972	\$ 1,060	\$ 1,016
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,599	\$ 1,621	\$ 1,950	\$ 1,774	\$ 1,282
Total Other Income	2,913	2,550	2,922	2,834	2,298
% of Total Income	23.3%	19.6%	22.0%	20.4%	17.7%
TOTAL INCOME	12,489	12,979	13,258	13,916	12,965
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Africa	\$ 3,125	\$ 2,681	\$ 2,919	\$ 2,992	\$ 2,914
FTEs	72	72	73	70	65
Asia	\$ 5,415	\$ 4,426	\$ 4,053	\$ 3,743	\$ 4,296
FTEs	66	67	63	64	66
Latin America	\$ 3,170	\$ 3,251	\$ 3,347	\$ 3,173	\$ 3,500
FTEs	75	70	72	70	69
Europe	\$ 416	\$ 479	\$ 466	\$ 498	\$ 675
FTEs	20	23	23	20	20
Education	\$ 338	\$ 408	\$ 399	\$ 407	\$ 385
FTEs	5	4	4	4	4
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 12,464	\$ 11,245	\$ 11,184	\$ 10,813	\$ 11,770
Total Program Service FTEs	237	235	234	228	224
% of Total \$	89.6%	88.4%	88.3%	87.3%	88.4%
% of Total FTEs	91.5%	91.9%	91.6%	91.9%	92.2%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 768	\$ 813	\$ 851	\$ 929	\$ 919
FTEs	13	12	13	12	11
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ 682	\$ 669	\$ 637	\$ 640	\$ 628
FTEs	9	8	9	8	8
Total Support Service \$	1,450	1,482	1,488	1,569	1,547
Total Support Service FTEs	22	21	21	20	19
% of Total \$	10.4%	11.6%	11.7%	12.7%	11.6%
% of Total FTEs	8.5%	8.1%	8.4%	8.1%	7.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	13,914	12,727	12,672	12,382	13,317
TOTAL FTEs	259	256	255	247	243
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	(1,425)	252	586	1,534	(352)

Agency:
Balance Sheets (000s)

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

	June 30, 1998					June 30, 1999				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 570	1,329	259	-	2,158	\$ 1,206	\$ 3,775	\$ -	\$ -	4,981
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-	-	197	187	23	407
Receivables & Advances	645	-	-	-	645	424	0	-	-	425
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	204	-	-	-	204	642	-	-	-	642
Investments (note 1):										
Bonds	46	364	-	23	433	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Property (non-operating)	-	32	-	-	32	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	129	-	137	-	266	112	-	135	-	247
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,594	1,725	396	23	3,738	2,385	3,972	322	23	6,702
Accounts Payable	252	-	-	-	252	369	-	-	-	369
Notes/Loans Payable	30	-	-	-	30	10	-	-	-	10
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	185	-	-	-	185	245	-	-	-	245
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-	674	-	-	-	674
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	467	-	-	-	467	1,298	-	-	-	1,298
Net Assets	\$ 1,127	1,725	396	23	3,271	\$ 1,088	3,972	322	23	5,405
Footnotes:										
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Lot on Cascade Road-currently for sale					Lot on Cascade Road				
Note 2: List details of designations.	7-year term endowments = \$1,491(Joseph Fund) Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$234					7-year term endowments as stipulated by Board = \$1,667 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$2,305				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home=\$137 Gifts with purpose restr=\$159 Gifts with time restr=\$100					Mission home = \$135 Gift rec'd for 99/00 programs = \$32 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$155				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments					Pure endowments				

Agency: Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Revenue and Expense Reports (000s)

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-97 Actual	Fiscal 97-98 Actual	Fiscal 98-99 Actual
INCOME:					
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:					
Above Ministry Share	\$ 7,364	\$ 7,022	\$ 8,581	\$ 8,185	\$ 11,998
Estate Gifts	\$ 273	\$ 692	\$ 176	\$ 895	\$ 371
Total Gift Income	<u>7,637</u>	<u>7,714</u>	<u>8,757</u>	<u>9,080</u>	<u>12,369</u>
% of Total Income	80.2%	80.5%	79.2%	81.7%	90.9%
Other Income:					
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ 1,791	\$ 1,454	\$ 2,160	\$ 1,926	\$ 1,028
Miscellaneous	\$ 97	\$ 409	\$ 139	\$ 107	\$ 215
Total Other Income	<u>1,888</u>	<u>1,863</u>	<u>2,299</u>	<u>2,033</u>	<u>1,244</u>
% of Total Income	19.8%	19.5%	20.8%	18.3%	9.1%
TOTAL INCOME	<u><u>9,525</u></u>	<u><u>9,577</u></u>	<u><u>11,056</u></u>	<u><u>11,113</u></u>	<u><u>13,613</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full-Time Employee):					
Program Services:					
Overseas programs	\$ 5,906	\$ 5,488	\$ 5,548	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,551
FTEs	46	58	47	36	53
N. America programs	\$ 1,246	\$ 918	\$ 815	\$ 778	\$ 947
FTEs	12	11	11	10	6
Disaster-relief programs	\$ 1,984	\$ 938	\$ 1,674	\$ 1,822	\$ 2,370
FTEs	4	5	5	5	8
Education	\$ -	\$ 243	\$ 190	\$ 94	\$ 196
FTEs	-	1	1	1	1
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	<u>9,136</u>	<u>7,587</u>	<u>8,227</u>	<u>7,694</u>	<u>9,065</u>
Total Program Service FTEs	62	75	64	52	68
% of Total \$	81.6%	80.5%	81.1%	77.5%	79.8%
% of Total FTEs	75.6%	78.9%	75.3%	72.2%	77.3%
Support Services:					
Management & General	\$ 1,058	\$ 968	\$ 932	\$ 1,183	\$ 1,152
FTEs	11	11	11	10	8
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ 998	\$ 875	\$ 983	\$ 1,053	\$ 1,144
FTEs	9	9	10	10	12
Total Support Service \$	<u>2,056</u>	<u>1,843</u>	<u>1,915</u>	<u>2,236</u>	<u>2,296</u>
Total Support Service FTEs	20	20	21	20	20
% of Total \$	18.4%	19.5%	18.9%	22.5%	20.2%
% of Total FTEs	24.4%	21.1%	24.7%	27.8%	22.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	<u><u>11,192</u></u>	<u><u>9,430</u></u>	<u><u>10,142</u></u>	<u><u>9,930</u></u>	<u><u>11,361</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs	82	95	85	72	88
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	<u><u>(1,667)</u></u>	<u><u>147</u></u>	<u><u>914</u></u>	<u><u>1,183</u></u>	<u><u>2,252</u></u>

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REPORTS OF AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

On the pages that follow, you will find the reports of the agencies, educational institutions, and various standing committees of synod. For the convenience of the reader, the reports appear in the alphabetical order of the names that designate the agencies and institutions. Several agencies and institutions may also submit supplementary reports after the May meetings of their boards. The supplementary reports will be mailed at a later time or distributed at the time synod meets.

The reports give a clear picture of important activities in the agencies and institutions of the CRC. Each report will be assigned to a designated advisory committee at synod for detailed consideration. These reports tell a wonderful story about the activities of denominational ministries during the past year. They also tell the story of how the Lord continues to use the Christian Reformed Church at home and around the world. The reports are offered as an expression of accountability and gratitude for the faithful support provided by the membership of the Christian Reformed Church. It is our prayer that, as you read the reports, you will offer thanks to God for all he seeks to accomplish through the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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I. Introduction

For over sixty years The Back to God Hour has served as a voice of the Christian Reformed Church to the world. The board and staff of The Back to God Hour serve the church and the world under the synodical mandate to

give leadership in media missions and to supervise the production of denominational radio, television, and other electronic programs, which express the Reformed faith in response to man's need for conversion, edification, and cultural direction . . . and to give leadership to the denomination as a whole and its congregations in the use of available communication media.

II. Board of trustees

A. Function

The Back to God Hour is governed by a regionally representative board which meets three times a year to set policy and evaluate the work of the staff.

B. Officers of the board

The officers of the board are Mr. Keith Oosthoek, president; Rev. Richard Williams, vice president; Dr. Robert Huizenga, secretary; and Mr. Cornelius Bushoven, treasurer.

C. Nominations for board members

Slates of nominees have been sent to classes for election. The results of these elections will be reported to synod in June.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd quartile
17	1	3rd quartile

III. Back to God Hour ministries

The Back to God Hour proclaims God's Word in nine languages, using radio, television, telephone, and the Internet. Its passion for presenting the gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ is reflected in its programming content and in its commitment to using predominantly secular stations to air its programs whenever possible.

People respond to the presentation of the gospel. Some object to the claims of Jesus; others want to know more about him and how to serve him. Trained volunteers and staff persons answer the telephone, read the mail, and answer the e-mail which comes from listeners. They seek to respond appropriately to each question and suggestion generated by the ministry. Back to God Hour representatives supply literature, help people find church homes, refer people to Christian counselors, and pray with and for people. Prayer requests are sent to a network of partners who covenant to pray regularly.

A. *English-language ministry*

1. "The Back to God Hour" is a weekly half-hour radio program heard on every continent in the world. Rev. David Feddes continues to proclaim the historic Christian faith to contemporary society.
2. A news-magazine-format television program called "Primary Focus" began airing in April 1999. This program is aired on Vision TV throughout Canada and on CTS in Ontario; it has been on the PAX network in the United States. Selected local stations also carry the program. The potential viewing audience is over 60 million persons. The initial response from the target audience of nonbelievers and unchurched has been positive.
3. "Insight," a four-and-one-half-minute radio commentary heard weekdays on approximately eighty stations, is hosted by Dr. Joel Nederhood, who, although retired from The Back to God Hour, has consented to this assignment.
4. The Voice of Life radio station, located on the island of Dominica, covers the eastern Caribbean Islands and carries all of our English programs.
5. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of over 400,000 copies of each issue of *Today* (a bimonthly devotional) and over 35,000 printed copies of *The Radio Pulpit*, as well as printed transcripts of "Insight."
6. An animated television special is scheduled to be aired during the Easter season of 2001. The story and script writing are nearly completed, and the animation process has begun. The intended audience is children and families.

B. *Arabic-language ministry*

The Back to God Hour entered a cooperative ministry agreement with Words of Hope (Reformed Church in America) and Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) for electronic media ministry to Arabic-speaking people. This venture, which pools the resources of three Reformed groups, should provide a more diverse ministry format, greater listener appeal, more negotiating leverage for purchasing airtime, and a better follow-up system than any organization could achieve by itself.

C. *Chinese-language ministry*

Back to God Hour broadcasts in Cantonese and Mandarin cover all twenty-six provinces of China, home to over 1.1 billion people. These broadcasts are aired on seven superpower stations located outside the country.

In China, listener follow-up is difficult because of government-imposed restrictions. Alliance Radio staff in Hong Kong works with The Back to God Hour in follow-up and listener contact. Hong Kong's reversion to rule by China in 1997 has not adversely affected ministry to this point.

As a result of alliances with local congregations, Back to God Hour Chinese programs are heard in major metropolitan areas in both Australia and New Zealand. These congregations take advantage of government regulations, and, as a result, the programs are aired with very limited cost to the agency.

Significant Chinese-language ministry also takes place in some major metropolitan areas in Canada, the United States, and Panama where concentrations of Chinese-speaking persons are found. In some of these areas the programming is bilingual.

Please pray for Rev. Jimmy Lin as he gives direction to this crucial Chinese-language ministry.

D. French-language ministry

The Back to God Hour Board made a decision in 1996 to focus the French-language ministry on Africa. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo and a Ph.D. student at Calvin Seminary, was ordained in July of 1999 to give leadership to this ministry. In August of 1999 Rev. Mpindi and his family moved to Banqui, Central African Republic, in an attempt to set up a Back to God Hour French-language ministry office there. We will be evaluating this decision during the course of this year in light of the logistical requirements for this ministry.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

Indonesia, an island nation and the nation with the world's largest Muslim population, totters near chaos. Instability of the Indonesian currency, economic crisis, political upheaval, and religious animosity all impact our ministry there. Because of the political instability Christians have been persecuted by Muslims. Over five hundred churches have been burned in the last year.

Indonesia is home to Dr. Junus Atmarumeksa, whose media ministry covers that country. This ministry encourages Christians who live under oppression, announces a Savior to those outside Jesus Christ, and proclaims hope to the downcast and oppressed. Dr. Atmarumeksa intends to retire within the next two years. A process is underway, in conjunction with the church in Indonesia, to identify and recruit his successor.

F. Japanese-language ministry

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the electronic-media ministry in the Japanese language. Radio is an excellent ministry medium among a people who have been resistant to the gospel because it allows a person to listen to the gospel in private, without risking the loss of face that a more public listening to the gospel might entail. The recent addition of an Internet site to this ministry has proved a valuable adjunct to the other ministry tools. The Internet enables persons to get information about the Christian faith in a quiet, unobtrusive way. Many Japanese have taken advantage of this opportunity to learn more about Jesus. A program targeting young people has been started in response to recognition of need from within the Japanese Reformed community.

G. Portuguese-language ministry

Radio, television, and telephone are all important parts of the media ministry directed by Rev. Celsino Gama in Brazil. The Presbyterian Church of Brazil sustains a high level of interest and is a significant partner in this ministry. This has been evidenced in the number of local congregations that have leased telephone equipment to assist in the follow-up ministry. The ministry in Brazil has moved toward a more formal relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. The details of this arrangement are still being

finalized. We thank God for the desire of this denomination to become more involved in this ministry.

H. Russian-language ministry

The Back to God Hour ministry in Russia is part of a coordinated effort of Christian Reformed agencies to minister in this area of the world. Mr. Serguei Sossedkine serves as the speaker for the Russian-language broadcast. A native of Moscow, Mr. Sossedkine is a student at Calvin Theological Seminary. He translates sermons written by Rev. David Feddes as well as sermons he has prepared as a licensed seminarian and adapts them for broadcast to Russia.

The effects of the change in Russian law, which has the potential for greatly restricting evangelism, have yet to be felt by The Back to God Hour. We have been able to carry on our ministry through a variety of local stations in selected metropolitan areas. However, we continue to be much in prayer, for we do not know the full impact the change in law will have until an enforcement pattern emerges.

I. Spanish-language ministry

Nearly 250 radio stations and 30 television stations carry Back to God Hour Spanish-language programming. This ministry reaches Central, North, and South America, as well as Spain. In the past year exciting opportunities have been created in conjunction with World Missions' personnel for placement and follow-up to the broadcasts. Back to God Hour radio broadcasts to Mexico City and surrounding environs began in May of 1999. Back to God Hour television began in El Salvador a little later during the year. Work continues on expanding the media ministry, especially the television ministry. The radio ministry features multiple formats to speak to a variety of different kinds of audiences. Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership in this ministry. Back to God Hour Spanish television is being produced in Campinas, Brazil, in conjunction with the Portuguese television ministry.

J. Cooperative organizations

1. The Back to God Hour works closely with AdMark, an advertising agency, and RACOM, the public-relations agency dedicated to support the ministry of The Back to God Hour.
2. The Back to God Hour contracts with CRC Product Services for publication of selected materials.
3. The Back to God Hour and Christian Reformed Home Missions work together in a campaign to raise the visibility of selected developing church plants through use of media.
4. The Back to God Hour was an active partner, along with the World Literature Committee of CRC Publications and others, in the publication of Calvin's *Institutes* in the Russian language. This project was completed at the end of 1999. The Back to God Hour produced twenty-six radio programs using passages from the *Institutes* as the core of the program. These are to be aired in 2000. An evaluation of effectiveness will be made at the conclusion of the twenty-six programs.

5. The Back to God Hour partners with Crossroad Bible Institute, which provides a correspondence program as part of a follow-up ministry.
6. The Back to God Hour cooperated in a joint venture with the Electronic Media Committee of the Canadian Ministries Board and with VISION television to produce a series of programs titled “The Family Crucible.”

IV. Recommendation

That Mr. Keith Oosthoek, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, director of ministries, be given the privilege of the floor when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

The Back to God Hour
John Kuyers, executive director
Calvin Bremer, director of ministries

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from and actions taken at the October 1999 and the February 2000 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

At the time of the October board meeting, the college dedicated two new buildings: The Life Sciences Center and the Engineering Projects and Design Building. The Life Sciences Center incorporates the old Science Building (including North Hall) and the new John "Doc" De Vries Hall of Science, named for Dr. John De Vries, a loved and respected chemistry professor from the 1940s to the 1960s. This facility serves the Biology, Chemistry, and Biochemistry Departments. The Engineering Projects and Design Building includes the Prince Engineering Design Center, named for the Prince family of Holland, Michigan, and the Vermeer Engineering Projects Center, named for the Vermeer family of Pella, Iowa.

The officers elected for 1999-2000 are Mr. Milt Kuyers, chair; Mrs. Janice Veenstra, vice chair; Rev. Edward Blankespoor, secretary; Mrs. Carol Smith, assistant secretary; and Dr. James Kraai, treasurer.

II. General college matters

The board received a report from the team that is coordinating the college's participation in the denomination's antiracism efforts.

III. Faculty

A. Faculty interviews were the highlight of the February meeting. The board interviewed seven faculty members for tenure appointments (see Recommendations) and sixteen for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Dr. Quentin J. Schultze, professor of communication arts and sciences, was presented the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. This award is given to a tenured professor whose Christian commitment is readily apparent in exemplary teaching in the classroom. In addition, a cash award is provided to be used for educational opportunities and life experiences that will enrich the recipient's career.

C. The college made the following administrative appointments:

1. Claudia D. Beversluis, Ph.D., Dean for Instruction, for three years, effective August 1, 2000.
2. Janel Curry, Ph.D., Dean for Research and Scholarship, for three years, effective August 1, 2000.
3. Thomas L. Steenwyk, M.A., Registrar, for two and one-half years, effective January 1, 2000.

IV. Finance

The board approved the preliminary 2000-2001 budget of approximately \$64 million. Tuition was set at \$14,040, room and board at \$4,890. This represents a 4.6 percent increase in both tuition and room and board over 1999-2000.

V. Recommendations

That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure (*italics indicate promotion to that rank*):

- A. Debra L. Bakker, H.S.D., *Professor* of Physical Education
- B. Beryl L. Hugen, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology and Social Work
- C. Hyesook Kim, D.M.A., *Professor* of Music
- D. Henry M. Luttkhuizen, Ph.D., *Professor* of Art
- E. Helen M. Sterk, Ph.D., Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences
- F. Thomas R. Thompson, Ph.D., *Professor* of Religion and Theology
- G. Steven H. Vander Leest, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Engineering

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Rev. Edward Blankspoor, secretary

I. Introduction

The seminary board of trustees gratefully reports to synod that God is blessing our school with another good year. Our enrollment this year is 270, compared to 273 last year. Several key staff transitions have been made and promise to serve our seminary well. Our revenues and expenses are tracking within the budget that was set for this year. Gift revenues were up for the fifth year in a row, although we do remain concerned about funding our annual operating budget from traditional sources. For all these blessings we thank God and give him the honor and the glory.

The board asks that its chairman, Rev. Norman Meyer, and its secretary, Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., represent it at synod and be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented (see Recommendation A).

II. Highlights

We are pleased to report the following matters to synod and the churches:

A. Rev. Donald Byker (director of field education), Rev. Lugene Schemper (theological librarian), Ms. Christine Mulka (controller), and Ms. Marcia Van Drunen have begun full-time service on the seminary staff since the last synod. We are grateful for the service of Rev. Keith Tanis, Dr. Harry Boonstra, Mr. Donald Van Hook, and Ms. Anita Hitchcock, whom these new colleagues replaced.

B. The Association of Theological Schools has approved the revision and renaming of an M.A. program—now known as the M.A. in new-church development. The changes were designed and approved in consultation with Home Missions. The program is in the process of being implemented.

C. We approved the addition of a student center and other structural modifications to the seminary building, now forty years old. These were considered at a special meeting of the board in September. The building plans will be included in a special presentation the seminary has been asked to make to synod this year. Our presentation will also unveil arrangements for the celebration of the seminary's 125th anniversary in March 2001. A special worship service and celebration in Grand Rapids are being planned jointly with Calvin College, and regional services of celebration and praise are envisioned throughout the denomination.

D. The Facing Your Future program for thirty-five high school juniors and seniors of exceptional ability and interest in ministry was more successful than expected. A total of 240 nominations were considered. A video of this one-month program was produced, and our seminary's program was showcased in January at a meeting of thirty seminaries that received Lilly Endowment funding for similar programs for high school youth. Our president has been invited to serve on an advisory panel for several key Lilly-funded programs. Our prayer is that this important new endeavor may bless our church with an increased number of outstanding pastors in the future. In March of 2000, selection of participants for this year's July program was made.

E. The seminary continues to explore offering substantial portions of the M.A. and M.Div. programs via distance learning and is assessing the costs of technology, staffing, and travel that this would entail. The intent is to attract people who for one reason or another cannot at this time relocate geographically. The board reviewed the status of this study and expressed lively interest in reviewing the results.

F. The seminary has embarked on a well-conceived antiracism program that will involve three-fourths of the faculty and staff. The report on a program to enhance ethnic and gender diversity on the teaching faculty, which was solicited by synod 1999, will be presented by way of a supplementary report to synod.

G. Because the faculty has been unable to staff the now fully funded H.J. Kuiper Chair with a permanent candidate, it is considering other options and has extended the search for an appointee.

H. The board has created the Johanna K. and Martin J. Wyngaarden Senior Professorship in Old Testament Studies, an endowed chair for which the administration has procured funding.

I. The seminary has purchased thirty-two additional apartments from Mr. Jack and Mrs. Betty Boerema at a cost substantially below market value and on extremely favorable financial terms. These units are contiguous to the Englewood Apartments, obtained several years ago.

J. Dr. Roger Greenway has indicated his intention to retire after the 2000-2001 academic year. The board has declared a vacancy in his field, world missiology. The seminary will be soliciting suggestions for his replacement.

K. The seminary is grateful for the service of Rev. Daniel Devadatta, who will be leaving this summer after six years as director of recruitment and financial aid.

L. Eighteen part-time appointments were approved for 2000-2001. Four sabbatical leaves and one publication leave were approved.

III. Board of trustees

The board is composed of sixteen regional trustees and three members-at-large. The board met in full session on September 16-17, 1999, and February 10-11, 2000, and is scheduled to meet again on May 18-19. The executive committee of nine persons met in November and January and will meet again in April. The board officers are the following:

- Rev. Norman Meyer, chair
- Mr. Mark B. Muller, vice chair
- Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., secretary
- Mr. Philip Vanden Berge, treasurer (nonvoting)

A complete listing of current trustees and alternates, with the expiration dates of their terms, appears in the *Acts of Synod 1999*. Regular trustees are also listed on page 2 of each issue of *Calvin Seminary in Focus* and in the seminary catalog.

The board prepared and submitted trustee nominations for two regional trustee openings. Both Ms. Nelle Vander Ark and Dr. Carl Zylstra have completed two full terms on the board and are not eligible for reelection. Voting on their replacements will occur before synod, in the classes affected. In addition, five trustees have completed one term of service and are eligible for reappointment for a second term, according to synod's new rules (see Recommendation B).

The board will be augmented again by retired ministers, as needed, to assist with processing candidates. Usually these are people who have served on the board in prior years and who understand the candidacy process.

The board's secretary mailed reports of the May 1999 board meeting to the clerks of all classes and of all congregations. The administration also prepares information to be mailed to classes together with news of all CRC agencies and institutions.

IV. Faculty and staff

The seminary faculty, supplemented by adjuncts and part-time staff, offer six degree programs. They also preach; advise churches, classes, and synod; offer continuing education; process candidates; serve on various interagency and synodical committees; participate in academic societies and professional organizations; and participate in various capacities on not-for-profit and civic boards and organizations. Their writings (books and articles) are numerous. Through their speaking, writing, and advising, the impact of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and of Calvin Seminary is noteworthy.

A display case in the seminary building exhibits recent faculty publications. The faculty's work is reported in detail in the seminary president's May report to the board.

The board has one recommendation for reappointment (see Recommendation C).

The board recommends Dr. Ruth Tucker for synodical interview and for ratification of her appointment as associate professor of domestic missiology. Background materials will be presented to the delegates at synod (see Recommendation D).

Dr. Michael Williams has completed the stipulations attached to his eligibility for a call as minister of the Word, as prescribed by a previous synod. His eligibility was communicated to the appropriate authorities in February. This year the seminary board considered and approved a similar proposal concerning Dr. Lyle Bierma, who joined the faculty last summer. We ask that synod declare him eligible for a call as minister of the Word, contingent on completion of the plan approved in connection with his appointment (see Recommendation E).

V. Other matters

The board approved a provisional budget for next year of \$4,531,870. This is a 6 percent increase over the present year's budget. Processed through the appropriate interagency and board structures, it will be presented via synod's finance committee. It is detailed in the *Agenda for Synod 2000—Financial and Business Supplement*. In connection with the anniversary celebration mentioned above, the board passed a recommendation asking synod to approve a special collection in March 2001 for the building addition, in addition to the

two causes usually approved for above-ministry-share collections (see Recommendation F).

The board presents the following administrative salary report for 2000 (U.S. ranges):

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	4th quartile
16	1	4th quartile
16	2	3rd quartile
14	2	4th quartile
14	1	3rd quartile
14	1	2nd quartile

The seminary has collaborated with Christian Reformed World Missions in administering the resources of CEACA (Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad), which was disbanded by synod several years ago and assigned to the seminary and to World Missions. The seminary is supporting sixteen students for all or part of the year. They come from Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Nigeria, Romania, and Russia. The budget exceeds \$200,000; approximately \$60,000 is raised via ministry shares, and the balance is acquired via endowments and gift revenues raised by the seminary. Recipients of CEACA grants must be sponsored by their home churches, guaranteed a strategic placement upon completion of their degree programs, and committed to returning to serve in their home countries. Several students accepted into the program were unable to attend due to visa or personal reasons.

The seminary recently completed a survey of policies followed by the classical student-fund committees. The results of the study were shared with the classes, and classes were encouraged to support qualifying students at Calvin seminary at a level that minimally meets the cost of tuition and books. If followed by all classes, this policy would introduce greater standardization in the size of awards made to Christian Reformed students.

VI. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Norman Meyer, chairman, and Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., secretary, be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

B. That the following trustees and alternates be reappointed for a second term:

Eastern Canada I:	Mr. Martin Bosveld, trustee Mr. Jack Geschiere, alternate
Far West U.S. I:	Mr. Alfred Lindemulder, trustee Rev. Daniel Brink, alternate
Far West U.S. II:	Rev. Kenneth Koeman, trustee Rev. James R. Kok, alternate
Great Plains U.S. II:	Rev. Roger Kramer, trustee Rev. William Zeilstra, alternate
At-large:	Mr. Mark B. Muller, trustee Mr. Donald Nydam, alternate

C. That Dr. Michael J. Williams be reappointed for two years, 2000-2002, as *Associate Professor of Old Testament* (italics indicate advance in rank).

D. That the appointment of Dr. Ruth Tucker as Associate Professor of Domestic Missiology for three years, 2000-2003, be approved.

E. That Dr. Lyle Bierma be declared eligible for a call as minister of the Word.

Grounds:

1. The expectation and practice have been to appoint seminary professors who have pastoral experience, which presupposes ordination.
2. Our Reformed polity long regarded the theological teacher as a fourth office in the church, with the accountability and vows entailed in ordination. It was only relatively recently that this office was blended with the office of minister of the Word.
3. The faculty and board have approved a plan for Dr. Bierma to gain additional experience in preaching, the only area in which adequate experience could not be documented.
4. Precedent exists in the cases of other recent, regular faculty appointments of nonordained persons.

F. That synod approve above-ministry-share collections for general operations, the Seminary Revolving Loan Fund (as in previous years), and a special one-time 125th anniversary offering for the student-center addition in March 2001.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Sidney Jansma, Jr., secretary

I. Introduction

The mission of CRC Publications, as adopted by the CRC Publications Board in 1998, is

To provide resources that help followers of Jesus Christ to understand, experience, and express the good news of God's kingdom.

The following core values guide the ministry of CRC Publications:

- That CRC Publications resources are biblical, relevant, high quality, and stewardly.
- That CRC Publications resources will faithfully reflect the worldview and interpretation of Scripture that are articulated in the Reformed confessions and expressed in *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.
- That CRC Publications board and staff will treat each other and those we serve with love and respect.

These statements undergird our work as we attempt to develop and distribute resources that serve the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Jesus Christ worldwide.

The ministry of publishing is becoming an ever-greater challenge as we work in a contemporary world that reflects the following trends:

- increasing anti-intellectualism
- decreasing loyalty to denominations and all institutions
- increasing expectations for choice in all areas of life
- increasing diversity in all denominations
- explosion of new technology
- increasing needs for Christian literature throughout the world

As is evident in the following pages, CRC Publications is going through an intense time of research and renewal as it attempts to respond to these trends. Some of its more significant recent developments are

- the completion of the translation of John Calvin's *Institutes* into Russian
- revamping of *The Banner* based on the researched needs of CRC members today
- plans for a new children's curriculum based on the researched needs of churches today

The following report is a summary of the work, governance, and administration of our ministry during the past year. We look to synod for reactions that may help us provide better service to the churches so that their ministries can be enhanced.

II. Board organization, membership, and governance and other administrative matters

A. Organization

A board of fifty delegates, one nominated by each of the forty-seven classes and three at-large delegates elected by synod, governs CRC Publications. The board ordinarily meets annually in February.

Between board meetings a fifteen-member executive committee (elected annually by the board) normally meets three times to supervise the ongoing work of the agency. Each member of the executive committee serves on one of three subcommittees: administrative, education, or periodicals.

B. Officers

The officers of the CRC Publications Board through June 2000 are Mr. Fred Herfst, president; Ms. Winnie Klop, vice president; Dr. Gloria Goris Stronks, secretary; and Mr. Dennis Bergsma, treasurer.

C. Long-range planning

The CRC Publications Board discussed the annual edition of CRC Publications' long-range plan, developed by staff. The board offered suggestions to the staff in the various areas of CRC Publications' ministry and approved the plan in concept. The plan incorporates, where appropriate, strategies necessary to implement the denominational long-range plan.

D. Relationship with the denominational structure and Denominational Ministries Plan

The CRC Publications Board is very supportive of the work of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and its mandate to coordinate the work of the agencies and institutions. Although last year's synod rejected the proposals regarding a new denominational structure, synod made clear that its defeat of the restructuring proposal in no way meant that the attempts to coordinate ministry of the agencies should be reduced. CRC Publications Board and staff will continue to work with the Board of Trustees and the executive director of ministries to work out ambiguities in the roles of the Board of Trustees and the agency boards and in designing administrative structures that enhance coordination among the agencies.

CRC Publications has been a strong supporter of the Denominational Ministries Plan. Staff members from our agency either cochair or chair three of the five cross-agency teams that have been appointed to carry out the plan.

Perhaps more importantly, as Publications' staff does its planning for new resources, it does so with careful attention to the goals and strategies in the Denominational Ministries Plan, particularly, for example, in the Nurture and Worship sections.

Besides working directly toward the realization of the Denominational Ministries Plan, CRC Publications works closely with other CRC agencies and related organizations to assist them in their ministry. For example,

- Our Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department provides all the CRC-developed English publishing resources needed by Home Missions to carry out its ministry. We do the same, although on a smaller scale, for CRWRC.
- The World Literature Ministries arm of CRC Publications works closely with the mission agencies to provide publishing support for their foreign-language literature needs.
- CRC Publications' staff meets regularly with the staff of Youth Unlimited and GEMS to identify resources that we can develop cooperatively.

E. Relationships with other organizations

During the past few years CRC Publications has placed an increased emphasis on developing relationships with other Christian organizations in an

effort to increase the impact of our ministry and to enable us to broaden the range of resources we offer. Many of these relationships have proven to be very helpful. Some of the more significant relationships are these:

- Reformed Church in America – The LiFE curriculum was developed cooperatively with the RCA. We also have an exclusive distribution arrangement with this denomination whereby it carries and promotes virtually all our products to RCA churches.
- The Evangelical Presbyterian Church – We have recently begun significant conversations with this denomination. Our entire catalog was sent to all EPC churches together with an endorsement letter from the CRC general secretary. We are in dialogue with this denomination about the possibility of its partnering in the development of our new church-school curriculum.
- Christian Schools International – We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to share resources, plans, and other pertinent issues.
- W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and Baker Books – We copublish several resources with these Christian publishers each year.
- Laubach Literacy – We are in significant conversation with this organization in an attempt to develop a cooperative church-based literacy program.

F. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting the CRC Publications Board adopted a report of the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment. That report contains several goals regarding CRC Publications' use of recycled paper. Because of reductions in the price difference between recycled and nonrecycled paper, CRC Publications is now essentially achieving the goals of that report. About 98 percent of CRC Publications' materials were printed on recycled paper during 1999, including *The Banner* and the LiFE curriculum.

G. Antiracism

CRC Publications has been an active participant in the effort of the Ministries Coordinating Council to respond to synod's directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC. The CRC Publications Board endorsed an extensive antiracism plan that was developed by staff. This plan resulted from an analysis of the history of our agency and of our current structure and policies with respect to the influence of "white power."

H. Web site

By the time synod meets, CRC Publications' entire English-language catalog should be available on our Web site with full shopping-cart ordering capabilities. This exciting new development came about because of our decision to develop a partnership with Gospelcom, which provided us with software for this project free of charge.

I. New brand name

Last year the CRC Publications Board approved a motion that a new brand name be identified for all the products of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department. During the past year staff has worked through a variety

of steps in an effort to identify this new brand name. By the time synod meets, the new brand name will most likely be identified.

At its February meeting the board approved a motion that, if final legal checks are positive, Faith Alive be adopted as the new brand name for these resources.

J. Salary disclosure

CRC Publications, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd
17	2	2nd
15	1	2nd

III. CRC Publications' ministry

A. Periodicals Department

1. *The Banner*

The synodically adopted mandate for *The Banner* is to “inform readers about what is happening in the CRC, as well as in the church at large, to provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living, and to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and to the culture of which Christians and the CRC are a part.”

For staff, the past year was largely given over to planning for the Y2K *Banner*. In addition to getting significant input from the CRC Publications Board, much other research was also done. Most significantly, staff hired *Christianity Today's* research arm to determine the level of reader satisfaction with *The Banner* and to help decide the changes that should be made to increase reader satisfaction. The survey showed that 88 percent of *Banner* readers were either extremely satisfied or satisfied with the magazine; only 2 percent were dissatisfied. This explains why the “re-up” rate for *The Banner* is near 90 percent—twice as high as *Christianity Today's*.

As we hoped, the survey also uncovered some areas where *The Banner* could better meet reader expectations. There was not much support for the Kidstuff page, for example, so that page was dropped in the redesign. Readers expressed a desire for more material on the Reformed heritage and perspective. Readers were especially, and by a wide margin, appreciative of the news, their favorite section of *The Banner*. Staff plans to continue to make the news a priority.

By the time synod meets, the *Banner* redesign will have been out for six months. Initial reactions are positive. Synodical delegates are encouraged to provide their input to John Suk, editor of *The Banner*, regarding the current content and format of this magazine.

The other development during the past year that will have a long-term, ongoing impact on *The Banner* is the departure of long-time associate editor Malcolm McBryde. We hope that by the time synod meets a replacement for Malcolm will have been found.

Subscription levels for *The Banner* remain stable—for the first time in a number of years. Approximately 30,000 people continue to subscribe. A telemarketing campaign that has just begun shows promise of a substantial increase in the number of subscribers.

In an attempt to cover developments in the entire denomination adequately, *The Banner* has established a network of *Banner* news correspondents. These people play a critical role in helping *The Banner* ensure comprehensive coverage of developments and events throughout the CRC.

As part of his duties, editor John Suk visits CRC churches all over North America in order to learn more about the various segments of the CRC. He also periodically visits areas of the world where the CRC has substantial ministry activity. In addition, he stays in touch with the CRC agencies through Gayla Postma, the *Banner* news correspondent covering the agencies; through various meetings; through his work on *CRC Source*; and, more recently, through his work on the *Ministry Now* magazine.

2. *CRC Source*

January 2000 marks the fifth year of *CRC Source*, a news magazine produced by CRC Publications' Periodicals Department on behalf of the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. This publication's unique selling point is that it is the only publication where members of the CRC can get news about all the CRC agencies in one place. Recognition of and appreciation for this magazine is growing on the part of CRC members.

3. *Ministry Now* magazine

Late in 1999 the Ministries Coordinating Council approved a four-issue pilot test for *Ministry Now*, a news magazine for church leaders. According to its purpose statement, this magazine "will present church members with imaginative ideas and practical instruction about ministries that will inspire them to better love neighbors in word and deed." This magazine will help fill the goal of the Denominational Ministries Plan that calls for the agencies to provide training and resources for church leaders. *Ministry Now* will help local churches share their resources with other churches and will also help agencies to share their expertise with persons in local churches.

Rev. Stan Mast has agreed to serve as editor for the four trial issues. The project editor will be Ms. Karen De Vries. The first issue is scheduled for April 2000.

4. *Voice of the Reformed*

For the past several years synod has helped fund *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the Korean CRC community through a ministry-share allocation to CRC Publications. The purpose of this publication is to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the content of the magazine often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*.

During the past year the Korean Council appointed Timothy Won, a recent graduate of Calvin Seminary, as the new editor for this periodical. The first issue of *Voice of the Reformed* under his leadership showed considerable improvement in design and content.

B. Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department (EWE)

The work of this department is carried out through five offices:

1. Curriculum Office

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, youth groups, adult small groups, and so on) continues to be the major activity of this department.

a. For younger students

Many churches, from both the CRC and from other denominations, continue to use LiFE, our principal curriculum for children, and many of them are passionate about how much they like it. However, a number of churches have stopped using this curriculum. Also, we find that many churches are continuing to use the Bible Way curriculum, even though we have encouraged them to adopt LiFE. Other former curriculum customers have moved on to another curriculum altogether.

In order to find out how we should respond to these developments, staff commissioned a major research study of LiFE and Bible Way users. Among the findings of this study are the following:

- The market is segmenting. Bible Way users tend to be conservative churches favoring what is perceived to be a primarily cognitive approach to church education. LiFE users include a broader spectrum of CRC, RCA, and Presbyterian congregations that favor the more open-ended, modeling approach that LiFE offers.
- Those who have dropped LiFE seem to think that this curriculum is quite demanding on the teachers.

Other developments that the board needed to consider as it examined how to respond to the trends outlined above include the following:

- Bible Way sales continue to drop; it is estimated that they may be down to the break-even point by about 2005.
- LiFE sales have also continued to decline, despite our revisions to the program.
- Demographic realities for the near future are not encouraging. The number of children in the CRC who are in the age group served by core curriculum continues to drop steeply. The Reformed Church in America is experiencing the same trend, although its drop is not as steep.

Based on all these factors, CRC Publications Board approved the following recommendation from staff:

That CRC Publications will introduce a revision of LiFE, or an entirely new curriculum, by projected July 2005. This curriculum may either run side by side with LiFE or replace it, depending on what is decided at that time.

Several other developments in materials for young children are also noteworthy: Staff completed a major revision of *Story Hour*, the program designed for children of Coffee Break attendees. Also, the *Threes* program is being phased out because of the release last year of the *God Loves Me* program.

b. For youth

Staff is beginning to examine the long-standing curriculum for junior high students with a view toward possible major revision in the next few years. In the meantime, *The Church Cares* and *The Church Serves* are being replaced with four new shorter courses: *Discover Your Gifts for Youth*, *Discover Your Church and Why You Need Each Other* (both already published), *Discover Your Faith*, and *Discover How to Grow Spiritually*.

For high school students significant new offerings include *Share Your Faith and Keep Your Friends* and *Battle of the Angels*. Considerable work is being done on revising several long-time favorite courses: *What We Believe*, *Landmarks*, *Decisions*, and *Reasons*.

c. For adults

Among the many courses released during the past year are the following:

- *The Day* by Andrew Kuyvenhoven (selling much above projections)
- *Straight Talk About Spiritual Warfare* by Jeff Stam
- *Miraculous Healing and You* by Henry Wildeboer
- A study guide for Ron Sider's new book *Just Generosity*
- Several new courses in the Revelation Series. This series will soon be replaced by a new series.

d. For people with mental impairments

Staff continues to develop new minicourses to supplement the core three-year Friendship Series curriculum. Based on a decision by the Friendship Ministries Board, we will soon embark on a major revision of the basic three-year curriculum. Plans for translating more years (besides the one already completed) of the curriculum into Spanish have been placed on hold for now.

e. For people with visual impairments

Working with a ministry in Minneapolis, we continue to expand the list of curriculum materials available. The entire LiFE curriculum is now available in Braille. A small ministry share is allocated for this work.

2. General Publications Office

This office deals with those materials that do not fit neatly into the mandates of the other offices. These range from devotionals to leadership-training materials to literacy materials, among other things.

Among the many products released during the past year, the following are of note:

- *Reading and Hearing the Word* (copublished with Calvin Seminary)
- *Guess What, Jesus? My Prayer Diary* (copublished with GEMS)
- *Letters to Myself on Dying* (copublished with Baker Books)
- *Homosexuality and the Church: A Summary of Two Synodical Reports of the Christian Reformed Church* (published in response to a request from Synod 1999)
- Several products in the So You've Been Asked to . . . series (e.g., *Mentor a Young Person*, *Lead a Small Group*, *Chair a Committee*).

Several planned products of note include the following:

- *Creating a Quality Literacy Program*
- *No Such Thing as Over the Hill* (by James Kok)
- *Faith and Finances* (copublished with the Mid-America Leadership Foundation in Chicago)
- *Our Only Comfort: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, Vols. 1-2* (by Fred Klooster; supported financially by a grant from Calvin Seminary)
- *Beyond the Agenda* (a book of suggested worship ideas for starting church meetings)

3. Evangelism Office

Our partnership with Home Missions remains stimulating, lively, productive, and mutually beneficial. CRC Publications staff and Home Missions staff meet regularly to chart our course together in terms of resources Home Missions needs to accomplish its strategies for serving churches.

Much of the publishing work is focused on developing the Bible studies needed to support the Coffee Break and Men's Life programs. In addition, some of the significant products released during the past year as a result of this cooperation are the following:

- *Focus Your Ministry*
- *Welcome and Enfold*
- *Parenting a New Church*

Important planned new products include

- *FAITH Unfolded* (a new, contemporary treatment of the Canons of Dordt)
- *God's Message to You: A Six-Session Guide to the World's Greatest Book*
- *The Praying Church Idea Book*

4. Worship Office

Worship continues to be the focus of much creative energy and challenge on the part of congregations and of our board and staff. One measure of that is the response to a large and detailed survey that CRC Publications sent to all CRC churches. An astounding 72 percent of the churches responded to this survey, more than double the rate of response received to our survey on church education. Some of the more intriguing results of this survey follow:

- 10 percent of the churches have added a weekly worship service in the past five years.
- 35 percent of churches describe their services as traditional, 14 percent as contemporary, 59 percent as blended.
- 72 percent have the 1987 gray *Psalter Hymnal* in their pews; 18 percent have the blue one.

As is true for each of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department offices, much of the work of the Worship Office is done in collaboration with other CRC ministries. Dr. Emily Brink, for example, works closely with Dr. John Witvliet of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in areas such as the following:

- Establishing an arrangement whereby the same “worship experts” advise both organizations
- Copublishing (with the RCA) a course for youth on worship
- Cosponsoring COLAM (Conference on Liturgy and Music).

This office also publishes *Reformed Worship*, a quarterly periodical that continues to gain subscriptions and appreciation. A survey of subscribers during the past year resulted in some fine-tuning that should make this resource even more useful to the churches. Subscriptions may reach five thousand during the coming year.

Another ambitious project of this office is *Sing! A New Creation*. This contemporary hymnal, along with a leaders’ edition, will be completed by July 2001. The project is to be copublished with the RCA.

At its May 1999 meeting the CRC Publications Executive Committee approved the establishment of a Worship Commission (replacing the former Worship Committee). This commission will meet in person at least once per year and more often by correspondence. Staffing for this group will be done in cooperation with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. The members of this commission are

<i>Wayne Brouwer</i>	Pastor of Harderwyk CRC, former member of the Worship Committee, member of <i>Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture</i> team
<i>Vicki Cok</i>	A student at Fuller Seminary (currently studying at Calvin Seminary) in the theology of worship; also a practicing church musician
<i>Lisa De Boer</i>	Member of the art faculty at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California; current member of <i>Reformed Worship</i> council
<i>David Diephouse</i>	Academic dean at Calvin College, where he has also taught a course on worship; former member of Worship Committee; member of the <i>Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture</i> team
<i>Yong-Ju Oh</i>	Pastor of Han-Bit Korean Church in Rochester, Michigan; member of the Calvin Seminary Board of Trustees
<i>Joachim Segger</i>	Professor of music at The King’s University College, Edmonton
<i>Leonard Vander Zee</i>	Pastor of South Bend (IN) CRC; former member of the Worship Committee; member of <i>Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture</i> team

5. Training and Consulting Office

The work of this office is closely related to our LiFE curriculum in that it provides the training and advice of a network of church-education consultants (CECs), who are essential to the use of the LiFE curriculum in the churches. A number of specific workshops are offered.

This office also provides training and consulting support for churches with children's worship programs. This activity is done in cooperation with the RCA.

The office will be going through some administrative changes during the coming year as staff looks at how best to provide the consulting services that churches want. Use of the resources provided by this office continues to be minimal.

C. World Literature Ministries

1. Introduction and overview

World Literature Ministries supports the efforts of the various CRC agencies in publishing and distributing biblical Christian literature in a variety of languages. The literature is intended to introduce its readers to and nurture them in a Reformed view of faith and life.

This department is heavily involved in collaborative planning with other agencies—especially the mission agencies. Much of its work is a response to the Denominational Ministries Plan. John De Jager, the director of the department, works half time as part of a staff team charged with implementing the Denominational Ministries Plan. In that role he is heavily involved in working cooperatively with staff from other agencies.

Increased collaboration among the agencies has brought together many church leaders and has provided opportunity to introduce our materials to new leaders in previously unreached areas. Many of these leaders live and work in areas where they have not had exposure to literature that conveys well the principles of biblical Christianity. As staff seeks to help establish and build biblical communities around the world, it recognizes the challenge of finding the place of World Literature Ministries in the Christian-literature market.

Because most of the sales of the resources published by this department are to developing countries, costs for these resources cannot be covered by sales, so the funding gap needs to be covered by subsidy. Thus, a huge issue for World Literature Ministries and for the CRC continues to be how to respond to the increasing needs with limited resources. The Ministries Coordinating Council, made up of CRC agency heads, spent considerable time during the past year on this matter. This discussion continues.

2. The publishing work of World Literature Ministries

a. Spanish literature

This aspect of the work remains, by far, the most significant. Because of increased marketing staff and emphasis, sales have increased substantially in recent years. This increase was enhanced by a number of "sole" distribution agreements with other Spanish-language publishers as well as by our buyout of Nueva Creacion, the Spanish line of the W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Oversight for this work is provided by the Spanish Literature Management Team, made up of staff members from the CRC mission agencies. Among significant recent releases and new projects are the following:

- *Close Encounters of a Spiritual Kind (Inspirit series)* by Carol Veldman Rudie
- *Empowering Leaders Through Coaching* by Steven L. Ogne and Thomas P. Nebel
- *Dictionary of Theology* by Everett F. Harrison
- *Theology of Paul* by Herman Ridderbos
- *Transforming Missions* by David Bosch
- *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
- *Exclusion and Embrace* by Miroslav Volf
- *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (the Little Kittel)* by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, compiled by G.W. Bromiley
- *Jesus and Israel* by David E. Holwerda

b. Russian literature

Translating Calvin's *Institutes* into the Russian language has been by far the most significant project undertaken by World Literature Ministries in many years. This almost \$400,000 project has, our board believes, the potential for bringing about significant long-term change in the Russian church and society. The third and final volume of this project was completed during the past year. Twenty thousand copies of each volume have been distributed to various libraries and church leaders. The third volume received first-place honors as the best theological book at the 1999 St. Petersburg, Russia, book fair.

Listed below are some of the reactions to this work that illustrate the appreciation of Russian readers for John Calvin's work:

- A reader from the Smolensk region writes: "Thanks so much to you for the book of John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. I read it with great interest. I use the material presented in this book for my sermons."
- Another reader comments: "The *Institutes* were well received in our city. We sold 10 copies in our church, which was followed (at last!) by someone asking, 'Why are they selling John Calvin in our church?' Correctly one brother remarked in response, 'A simple believer better and more purely comprehends the will of God than paid staff of the church.'"

c. Korean literature

For a number of years World Literature Ministries has published translations of Discover Your Bible courses (supporting the Coffee Break ministry). Due to a decline in effectively promoting this program, CRC Publications will likely be phasing out of its support role. A publisher in Korean has expressed interest in this work and will, we hope, be able to stimulate more program activity.

D. Marketing Department

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include customer service, promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads and subscriptions, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting. The executive director has been serving as marketing director for the past several years.

As can be seen from the chart below, the CRC's publishing ministry is much broader than the CRC; more than half of CRC Publications' accounts and sales for English-language products are to non-CRC churches. This fact, we believe, speaks highly of the quality of the products produced by the Christian Reformed Church.

Denomination	Active Customers	%	Sales	%
CRC	902	18	1,446,042	37
Other	3,521	71	1,736,431	44
Bookstores/schools/distributors	550	11	262,650	19
TOTAL	4,973	100	3,933,802	100

Sales for a number of CRC Publications' English-language product lines are down from prior years. The reasons for this development are probably many and complex: demographic changes, changes in needs of churches, declining denominational loyalty. One development that has come to our attention through some of the research we have done is that many churches seem to be placing less emphasis on ensuring that their church-education program reflects the Reformed perspective than was formerly the case. There seems to be greater emphasis on relational programs than on ensuring that the content is valid. As a result, many churches are making increased use of the easy-to-use resources put out by the parachurch publishers.

During the past year staff has significantly increased research regarding its customer base in an attempt to ensure that it develops products that better meet customer needs. Among the research projects carried out are the following:

- Major survey (by outside firm) of *Banner* subscribers
- Major survey (by outside firm) of LiFE and Bible Way users
- Personal visits by staff to the thirty largest CRC churches
- Survey of small churches to find out their needs
- Survey of *Reformed Worship* subscribers
- Survey of CRC churches regarding worship practices
- Telephone surveys of users of several specific products

For most CRC Publications' English-language products, the primary marketing vehicles are the CRC Publications' catalog, direct-mail announcements to the churches regarding new products, minicatalogs based on categories of products, and advertising in *The Banner* and other periodicals. During the past year we have implemented a system for evaluating the results of each promotion attempt. We are using that data to help develop better promotional strategies. We believe there is still a significant problem in getting information about our products into the hands of the right persons in the churches. Among the new strategies we are piloting or considering are the following:

- A system of CRC Publications' representatives in each church (this concept is currently being pilot tested in several regions of our denomination)
- Significantly expand our Web site
- Begin "consultative selling" calls to our strongest customers
- Include sample lessons on our Web site and as attachments to new flyers
- Make telemarketing sales calls to potential *Banner* subscribers.

Sales of our Spanish products have increased substantially in recent years, largely because we have increased our marketing staff in this area and have formed distribution agreements with other Spanish-language publishers. Most of the sales of these products are through distributors to bookstores who expect significant discounts from the retail price. World Literature Ministries is now the largest publisher of Christian Spanish-language materials in the world.

E. Personnel matters

The CRC Publications staff team is made up of forty employees organized into five departments and an administrative office.

The staff council is a management group made up of the executive director—Mr. Gary Mulder; the department heads: Dr. John Suk, Periodicals Department (*The Banner*); Rev. Robert De Moor, EWE Department; Ms. Darlene Serrano, World Literature Ministries; Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services; and two other individuals appointed to provide diversity of input: Rev. Alejandro Pimentel and Ms. Ann Koning.

F. Finances

Two years ago, as part of a significant denominational restructuring, agency financial-staff members were all reassigned to the central denominational office. Mr. Michael Dykema continues to serve CRC Publications in addition to other functions he now performs for the denomination as a whole.

The CRC Publications Board remains firmly committed to the goal that CRC Publications' ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that there may always be projects undertaken that cannot be financially self-supporting (either because our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them). As mentioned earlier, this situation is particularly true for our World Literature Ministries Department.

Last year CRC Publications experienced a negative bottom line. This deficit was due in large part to a greater than anticipated sales decline. Staff has developed a number of strategies to bring the agency into a positive financial situation. Among these are reducing staff and eliminating some planned projects and some marketing strategies. Since a key reason for the deficit was the continued inability of World Literature Ministries to fund itself and since the Ministries Coordinating Council is agreed that literature ministry is important to an effective mission program for the CRC, it is imperative that a solution be found.

Achieving a positive bottom line (and a healthy cash situation) is particularly important if CRC Publications is to fund the development of a new curriculum. It may be that our agency will need additional funding from ministry shares for a few years to pay the development costs of this new curriculum.

CRC Publications submits for synod's information audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1999, and budgets for the fiscal years 2000 and 2001. These reports have been submitted to the denominational office for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2000—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The CRC Publications Board formally requests synod to recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 2000.

IV. Recommendations

A. The CRC Publications Board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board

Mr. Fred Herfst, president

Ms. Winnie Klop, vice president

Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*

Dr. John Suk, editor in chief

For Education, Worship, and Evangelism

Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

B. That synod recommend the Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support for 2001.

CRC Publications

Gary Mulder, executive director

I. Introduction

Gathering God's Growing Family: Seeking the lost and discipling the found . . . all for God's glory expresses the central theme and driving purpose of Christian Reformed Home Missions. *Gathering* encourages Christian Reformed people, churches, and classes to actively participate in the mission of God, evangelizing and making disciples in obedience to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18) and the Great Commandments (Matt. 22:37-39).

A. *The foundations of Gathering*

1. Because God “reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Cor. 5:18), the CRC has mandated the Board of Home Missions “to lead the church in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church.”

This mandate has three parts:

- a. Encourage and assist churches and classes in their work of evangelism.
- b. Initiate, support, and guide new-church development in cooperation with local churches and classes.
- c. Initiate, support, and guide other evangelistic ministries (i.e., campus ministry and Christian-schools ministry in New Mexico) with local churches and classes.

(Home Missions Order, Art. 2)

2. As a church we confess,

It is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, *ought to be announced and declared* without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people. . . .

(Canons of Dordt, II, 5, italics added)

3. The core values of *Gathering*

- a. Care: The church cares passionately for the salvation and discipling of lost people, as God calls us to do.
- b. Prayer: Prayer is essential to fulfilling God's mission to lost people.
- c. The church as God's mission instrument: The local church is the primary agency for carrying out God's mission in the great harvest field of North America.
- d. Growth: The increasing growth and diversity of the Christian Reformed Church are essential to the effectiveness of this mission.
- e. Flow: Wherever and whenever we, God's people, exercise vision and faith, God provides resources for his work.

(Board of Home Missions, 1993)

B. *Goals of Christian Reformed Home Missions*

1. Prayer: Mobilizing the Christian Reformed Church in focused prayers for its ministry of seeking the lost and discipling the found.
2. Established-church development: Encouraging and equipping established churches to seek the lost and disciple the found.

3. New-church development: Initiating, supporting, and guiding the development of new churches for disciple making in cooperation with partner churches and classes.
4. Other disciple-making ministries: Initiating, supporting, and guiding campus ministries and Christian-education ministries in New Mexico in cooperation with partner churches and classes. (In 1999 the Board of Trustees requested and the Board of Home Missions agreed in principle that chaplaincy ministry will become part of Christian Reformed Home Missions. A CRC chaplaincy-ministry task force has begun to identify the mandate and vision of chaplaincy ministry in order to fit chaplaincy ministry under this goal.)
5. Financial resources: Developing partnerships which provide financial resources to support the goals of *Gathering*.

Note: In 1999 Home Missions initiated a process to review and, if necessary, recommend revisions in the mandate, core values, and goals of Home Missions. This work has prayerfully begun for these reasons:

- The *Gathering* theme has been in use for a decade.
- To better articulate the mission of God and the reign of God as the foundation of Home Missions' ministry.
- To better express unity of effort with CRC partners, with the CRCNA Denominational Ministries Plan, and with other agencies.

C. *The CRC denominational vision and goals approved by Synod 1997*

Synod 1997 endorsed the CRC Vision and Mission Statement, along with comprehensive goals and strategies. Home Missions, along with CRWRC, will give leadership to the North American Outreach section of the CRC goals and strategies:

1. Agencies assist congregations so that, by 2002, at least 90 percent of members are able to express Christian faith and 50 percent are involved in an intentional and evangelistic relationship with a person who is not a believer.
2. Agencies assist congregations and classes to start and develop disciple-making new churches at a rate that increases annually from 25 in 1998 to 40 by 2002. All of these are to be sponsored by a parent church, and all of them are to minister wholistically within their diverse cultural context.
3. Agencies assist congregations so that, by 2002, 70 percent of congregations are involved in at least two community ministries to the poor and/or disadvantaged so they can experience the fullness of God's grace.
4. Agencies will assist so that, by 2002, thirty classes will have a visionary outreach ministry plan in place.

(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 58-59, Goal 2 amended 1998)

D. *Evangelizing progress in 1999*

By God's grace, the Christian Reformed Church has grown through evangelism by 31,636 persons since it initiated *Gathering God's Growing Family* in 1988. In the 1999 reporting period, 2,462 persons were added through evangelism (compared to 2,777 persons in 1998). The CRC has been more active in God's harvest in the 1990s with an average of 2,700 persons being added through evangelism each year, compared to an average of 2,000 persons in the 1980s and 1,500 persons annually in the 1970s. Since 1989, new congregations accounted for 7,518 persons added through evangelism. In 1999 at least 700 people were added through evangelism in new and emerging churches.

It is a hopeful sign that, in 1999, total reported CRC membership increased to 276,376 persons, up from 275,466 the year before, an increase of 910 persons. Last year the number of congregations increased from 964 to 982.

II. Board and executive committee

A. Board

The Board of Home Missions is the agent of synod charged with guiding and carrying out the denominational home-missions program. The board has forty-nine members. Forty-seven members are chosen by their respective classes; two are members-at-large who have special expertise. Twelve board members are from Canada and thirty-seven from the United States. The Board of Home Missions holds its annual meeting in late April.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Rev. Mike Reitsma, president; Rev. Rich De Vries, vice president; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (executive director); Rev. Al Gelder, recording secretary; and Mr. Leon De Lange, treasurer.

The officers of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions of Canada are Rev. Mike Reitsma, president; Rev. Karl House, vice president; Rev. Evert Busink, secretary; and Rev. Dan Tigchelaar, assistant treasurer.

C. Executive committee

The executive committee meets in January and September. It is made up of elected delegates from the following regions.

Region	Classes	Delegates
Western Canada	British Columbia NW, British Columbia SE-Alberta North, Alberta South and Saskatchewan	Rev. Michael Reitsma
Central Canada	Chatham, Huron, Niagara	Rev. Dan Tigchelaar
Eastern Canada	Hamilton, Toronto, Quinte, Eastern Canada	Rev. Karl House
Northwest U.S.	Pacific Northwest, Columbia, Central California, Yellowstone	Rev. Virgil Michael
Southwest U.S.	California South, Arizona Greater Los Angeles, Pacific Hanmi, Red Mesa	Rev. Andrew Vanden Akker
Midwest U.S.	Rocky Mountain, Iakota, Minnkota, Heartland	Rev. Rich De Vries
Central U.S.	Lake Superior, Northcentral Iowa, Pella	Rev. Evert Busink
Chicago	Northern Illinois, Chicago South, Illiana, Wisconsin	Rev. Larry Meyer
Eastern U.S.	Atlantic Northeast, Hudson, Hackensack, Southeast U.S.	Rev. Al Gelder
Out-state Michigan	Northern Michigan, Muskegon, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie	Rev. Emmett Harrison
Ottawa County	Holland, Zeeland, Georgetown, Grandville	Mrs. Joyce Sikkema
Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Thornapple Valley	Rev. Maury De Young
Members-at-Large		Mr. Leon De Lange Mr. Harvey Rozema

D. Salary disclosure

Executive persons are being paid within the approved salary ranges.

Job Level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (Includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd quartile
16	1	1st quartile
15	2	3rd quartile
15	1	2nd quartile

III. Home Missions’ ministries

A. Established-church development

1. The ministry of Home Missions directly influences at least seven hundred of our churches and many classes, as Home Missions seeks to make passion for seeking the lost and discipling the found integral to the calling of every member, every church, and every classis.
2. This ministry in support of established churches is accomplished through
 - a. Assisting and encouraging churches in praying (as a foundational element in *Gathering*) that the CRCNA may be increasingly and effectively used by God to reach the lost and to disciple the found.
 - b. Planning and consulting with churches and classes so that they effectively find the lost and disciple the found.
 - c. Developing leadership through networks, conferences, and teaching churches so that pastors and other church leaders grow in their ability to lead *Gathering* churches and classes.
 - d. Training in small-group evangelizing so that local churches are assisted in their work with small-group, life-changing *Gathering* ministries.
 - e. Resourcing churches and classes with partnership grants and materials to help them become mission-shaped churches and classes.
3. The results prayerfully envisioned and worked for in established churches are these:
 - a. A praying church: All the members, churches, and classes mobilized in prayer for the Spirit’s blessing on the witness and efforts of the CRCNA to bring an increasing number of people to faith and to disciple them as fruitful followers of Jesus.
 - b. A focused church: Healthy churches and classes that know their purpose and vision and are growing in all ways—including size—while effectively ministering where God has placed them.
 - c. A committed people: They are part of God’s family, growing daily in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and contributing to and participating in the mission of God and the ministry of the church.
4. The strategies and activities used in working for these results may be summarized as follows:

- a. Mobilizing prayers for the lost: Implementing a plan for congregational and classical prayer coordinators to encourage churches, classes, and denominational agencies to pray for effective *Gathering*. This includes a newsletter to classical and congregational prayer coordinators and the first-ever meeting of classical prayer coordinators in February 2000.
- b. Promoting classical ministry development: Assisting classes through the classical home-missions committees and diaconal conferences in doing ministry planning (through the denominational Classical Renewal Ministry Team).
- c. Promoting ethnic (non-Anglo) ministries: Working with CRHM's New-Church Development Department and four intercultural ministry directors to help the CRCNA grow in its multicultural, multiethnic character and ministry.
- d. Collaborating with (1) Calvin Theological Seminary by participating in teaching courses on church-development subjects; with (2) CRC Publications by doing mutual planning and publishing of evangelistic resources; with (3) Youth Unlimited by providing ninety-six SWIMers for twenty-four new and established churches during the summer; and (4) with other denominational agencies on classical renewal. In addition, representatives from the Established-Church Development Department serve on four cross-agency teams that seek to implement the denominational vision and plan.
- e. Focusing Church Networks: (1) Developing interconnected leadership networks and (2) enabling Focusing Church Networks involving sixty-four churches and twenty-four trained facilitators.
- f. Master Planning: Helping twenty-five churches define their ministries and draw up specific ministry plans by means of several strategic-planning processes, including merger planning and planning during a pastoral vacancy.
- g. Promoting small-group evangelism strategies/ministries and providing resources. Approximately 6,273 persons participated in small groups/Coffee Break/Story Hour workshops and rallies. This includes working with pastors, councils, and ministry-team leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry. Small-group representatives throughout the United States and Canada also offer workshops on witnessing and incorporation of new members. The biennial Coffee Break/Story Hour convention will be held in July 2000 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- h. Sponsoring *Gathering* conferences in connection with Willow Creek Community Church and Saddleback Community Church: 232 leaders, representing forty-eight churches, participated in the Willow Creek conference, and 137 leaders, representing thirty-two churches, participated in the Saddleback conference.
- i. Making Partnership Assistance Grants: Providing financial grants for ninety-six established churches and classes to help them advance their ministries.

5. Assistance for smaller churches

Synod 1999 decided to bring the long-time ministry of the Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC) to an end and to incorporate its activities into Christian Reformed Home Missions. Home Missions has been working with FSC to effect a smooth transfer as of September 1, 2000. The decisions of Synod 1995 for churches currently receiving FSC salary funding will be honored. In addition, Home Missions will initiate a system of assistance for smaller churches (those with 150 members or fewer) that includes program funding, conferences, consultation, and continued education.

6. Summary

All the work Home Missions does with established churches is carried out for the purpose of empowering churches and classes to be effective signs and instruments of God’s kingdom and harvest.

In all of this there is a prayerful expectation that God will continue to add new people to his churches and set them free to minister as members of the new community in keeping with the spiritual gifts the Spirit has given them.

B. New-church development

1. Projected and actual new-church starts, 1988 through 2000

In 1987 Home Missions adopted the goal of helping to start 240 new churches between 1988 and the end of 2000. With the blessing of God, a total of 217 new church starts have resulted from January 1988 through February 2000. It is a miracle and a mystery that God uses every new church start to lead people into closer fellowship with Christ and his church. Although not all soil is good soil, approximately 75 percent of all new starts continue as emerging or established churches today.

Illustration: Projected/Actual Starts – *Gathering* Goal 1988-2000

Year*	Projected Starts	Projected Cumulative	Actual Starts	Actual Cumulative
1988	14	14	13	13
1989	15	29	14	27
1990	17	46	20	47
1991*	17	63	10*	57
1992	18	81	13	70
1993	19	100	20	90
1994	21	121	20	110
1995	21	142	27	137
1996	22	164	19	156
1997	24	188	17	173
1998	25	213	19	192
1999	27	240	17	209
2000	240	240	8**	217

*1991 was calculated as an eight-month year.

**Total starts from 9/1/99 through 2/1/00

2. Goal for church planting in North America in the 2000s

Home Missions’ New-Church Development (NCD) Department is committed to helping implement the denominational goal for church planting in North America, which is summarized as follows:

- Help churches and classes plan and start disciple-making churches.

- Increase the start rate for new churches to forty per year by 2002.
- Train and deploy qualified new-church developers as needed.
- Help established and emerging churches to serve as parent churches.
- Help new churches to minister wholistically within their contexts.

Illustration: Projected Starts – CRCNA Church-Planting Goal 2000-2002

Year	Projected Starts	Projected Cumulative	Actual Starts	Actual Cumulative
2000	30	30	8*	
2001	35	65		
2002	40	105		

*Total actual starts 9/1/99 through 2/1/00

As reflected in the chart for 1988-2000, the annual start rate has continued to hover around twenty new churches annually. The greatest challenge to increasing the rate of annual starts is to recruit more disciple-making leaders. To assist in raising up new leaders, Home Missions is partnering with several local evangelist-training programs, and several more leadership-development networks—central California, Grand Rapids, Red Mesa, Texas—are being planned or are in the launching process. Home Missions also has been assisting Calvin Theological Seminary with a revamping of the Master’s in Missions degree program to help train new-church developers.

Another key strategy is to support the role of parent churches. For the first time, in 1999, Home Missions began offering to reimburse parenting costs up to \$10,000 per church start in the first two years. For 2000 our annual NCD prayer and planning event focused on new-church parenting—hosted by Wooddale Community Church of Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Wooddale and its pastor, Dr. Leith Anderson, graciously served as parent church for Bridgewood Community, a new CRC church in Savage, Minnesota. About fifty congregational and agency leaders heard the Wooddale/Bridgewood story and reflected on outlining and implementing the vision for parenting churches in the CRC.

Increasingly, supporting new-church development is an interagency effort. Home Missions is eager to partner with CRWRC and other diaconal programs to help new churches minister wholistically in communities of especially high need. Collaborative church development and Christian community development are being planned and monitored in various settings, with the joint support of Home Missions and CRWRC personnel. For a second year The Back to God Hour provided special media help (radio and cable TV promotions) to selected new and emerging churches. Twelve churches are being helped during this ministry year, for a total of \$150,000 on a two-to-one matching basis (Home Missions/Back to God Hour respectively).

Please pray that the rate of new-church starts will increase annually and that the effectiveness of new and emerging churches also will continue to increase, for an abundant *Gathering* of God’s harvest.

3. Partnering with new and emerging churches in 2000

Currently Home Missions partners financially with more than 120 new and emerging churches. Another fifteen locations have been approved for opening as soon as missionary pastors are recruited. Home Missions also provides guidance and financial support for approximately twenty in-training positions for church planting—apprenticeships (for persons not ordained in the CRC), internships (for seminary students), and residencies (for candidates and those already ordained). New-church starts and funding conclusions for the stated reporting periods are listed below.

a. New-church starts from September 1998 through August 1999

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Anchorage, AK/Crosspoint	David Kuiper	9/98
Atlanta, GA/Vision One	George Boyd	9/98
Bayonne, NJ/Bayonne Hispanic	Denis Calix	9/98
Cleveland, OH/Urban NCD	Rayfield Benton	9/98
Folsom, CA/River Rock Church	Tim Blackmon	9/98
Garden Grove/Orange Co. Calvary	Byoung Il Le	9/98
Garden Grove/Orange Co.	Choong Hyu/John Y. Kim	9/98
Lisle, IL/Horizon Community	Daniel L. Jongsma	9/98
Long Beach, CA/Nueva Comunidad	Orlando Alfaro	9/98
Los Angeles, CA/The Gracious Ark	Jin Hwan Oh	9/98
Holland, MI/Watershed	Trent Walker	1/99
Sunnyside, WA/Sunnyside NCD	Gerry Muller	2/99
Grand Rapids, MI/City Hope	Dante A. Venegas	2/99
Muskegon, MI/Celebration Community	Donald R. Ridder, Jr.	4/99
Naperville, IL/The Peak Ministries	John Wilczewski	5/99
Longmont, CO/Longmont NCD	Richard J. Ebbers	6/99

b. New-church starts from September 1999 through February 2000

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Ewa Beach, HI/Anuenue Christian Church	Hugo Venegas	9/99
Honolulu, HI/Hope Metro	Hugo Venegas	9/99
Passaic, NJ/NCD	Sonia Estrella	9/99
Portland, OR/Zion Korean	Jim Namkoong	9/99
Sun Valley, CA/Garden Community Church	Greg De Young	9/99
Fort Wayne, IN/Laotian	Phohn Sinbondit	9/99
Orlando, FL/The Journey	John Aukema	9/99
Rockford, MI/NCD	Jon Huizenga	2/00

c. Scheduled funding conclusions September 1998 through August 1999

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Anaheim, CA/Latin American	Francisco Golon	9/69
Camarillo, CA/Hispanic Comm	Ricardo Aragon	1/93
Camarillo, CA/Paseo Comm	Merle H. Bierma	9/91
Gardena, CA/Elim of S. Bay	Sung Ho Nam	9/94
Honolulu, HI/Pyung Kang	William Yang	10/94
Los Angeles, CA/Galilee	David Yang	9/93
Buena Park, CA/Okto Glory	Seonghwan Park	9/94
Marquette, MI/Faith in Christ	Wayne DeYoung	3/93
North Long Beach, CA/New City	Carl G. Kromminga, Jr.	1/93
Northridge, CA/Mission of Love	Hyung-Ju Park	9/93
Orlando, FL/Oasis Hispanic	Guillermo Ortiz	2/95

Ottawa, ON/Calvin-French	Yanick Baudequin	9/89
San Bernardino, CA/Korean	Paul Won	3/97
St John, IN/Crossroads Community	Kris J. Vos	9/93
d. Unscheduled conclusions September 1998 through August 1999		
Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Artesia, CA/Berea Hispanic	Francisco Golon	11/98
Cloverdale, BC/Redwood	Michael R. Dadson	9/94
Indianapolis, IN/Discovery	Robert A. Sizemore	8/94
*Merced, CA/North Stockton	Charles Louvau	11/98
New Westminster/New West	William C. Tuininga	9/97
Pickering, ON/New Life Comm	John Veenstra	2/87
e. Unscheduled funding conclusions September 1999 to February 2000		
Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Vancouver/New West Community	William C. Tuininga	9/99
Cleveland, OH/Urban NCD	Rayfield Benton, Jr.	12/99
<p>The Home Missions New-Church Development team includes department personnel and Home Missions' regional and intercultural directors. Increasingly, the team also includes other agency personnel who are enlisted and welcomed to be involved. God's primary instruments, however, are the new churches themselves, supported by gifted and sacrificial missionary pastors and other local leaders.</p>		
C. Other disciple-making ministries		
1. Partnering with campus ministries		
<p>a. The current vision and development of CRC campus ministry are guided by the comprehensive study report "To Pursue the Mission," developed by the Campus Ministry Association in 1995 and subsequently adopted by Home Missions. Several additional policy documents further articulate the scope of this missional commitment. These documents outline general guidelines for campus ministries, educational standards for campus ministers, and an ideal profile for a campus-ministry candidate. Documents outlining a strategic plan for the ongoing development of CRC campus ministry and measuring ministry effectiveness are being written. Copies of these documents are available from the office of the Campus Ministry Director, c/o Christian Reformed Home Missions.</p>		
<p>b. The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on more than forty campuses in Canada and the United States. The following twenty-two campus ministries are supported by Home Missions' partnership-assistance grants:</p>		
University of Alberta	University of Western Ontario	
University of New Brunswick	William Paterson University	
McMaster University	University of Guelph	
Wilfrid Laurier University	Waterloo University	
Wayne State University	Ferris State College	

Iowa State-Korean
University of Iowa
University of New Mexico
University of Toronto
Eastern Michigan University
Michigan State University

Iowa State University-Anglo
Queen's University
S.W. Indian Polytechnic Institute
Brock University
Fanshawe Community College
Western Michigan University

In addition, Calvin Seminary, Classis Alberta North, and CRHM-Campus Ministry cosponsored a campus-ministry internship at the University of Alberta.

New opportunities for campus ministry are being pursued through staff search or feasibility studies at the following:

University of Calgary
Chicago (downtown schools)
Dalhousie University
University of California-Los Angeles (as an NCD)
Passaic County Community College—Hispanic Ministry
Michigan State University—African American Ministry
York University
University of Northern British Columbia

- c. The campus-ministry director consults with CRC campus ministries across North America, administers partnership-assistance funding, develops ministry standards and evaluation tools for campus ministries, and marshals denominational (and other) resources to further aid our campus ministries. The Calvin Symposium on Worship and the Arts has included a campus-ministry track and intentionally seeks to support campus worship initiatives. Calvin College has partnered with CRHM campus ministry to cosponsor an annual academic/missional lecture tour on major university campuses throughout North America. Calvin Theological Seminary's Mission Institute has partnered with CRHM campus ministry to conduct a two-year consultation on language appropriate for evangelism within the world of higher education in North America. Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, the campus-ministry director's office supports the production of a campus-ministry journal, annual campus-ministry conferences, and other leadership-development activities.

The generous commitment of prayer, persons, and funding support of local congregations, classes, and the denomination for this vital mission is deeply appreciated. The grace and wisdom of God have been poured out on individuals and institutions alike with life-changing results.

2. Partnering with Red Mesa schools and the Rehoboth-Red Mesa Foundation
In 1997 Classis Red Mesa churches and schools officially established the Red Mesa Foundation. The foundation was formed to serve the Red Mesa schools and churches, primarily by developing financial resources—especially through land sales, lease arrangements, and development uses—to complement other sources of support for Red Mesa ministries. With this purpose in mind, already in 1996 Home Missions agreed to transfer title of the 900-acre Rehoboth Christian School campus and surrounding area to the foundation. Home Missions is assisting the foundation as feasible in its development and continues to work toward effecting the transfer of the property, if possible in 2000.

D. Finance and advancement

1. Resources

a. Financial resources

Through strong giving from churches, individuals, and businesses, God provided abundantly in fiscal 1999. Total gift income met the projected 1999 budget, and the ministry was able to fund all programs as planned. The number of first-time direct donors continues to increase by approximately nine hundred per year. Total expenses were managed below budget without curtailment of ministry programs. The 2000 Home Missions ministry-share request was lower than the 1999 request.

b. Personnel resources

Home Missions also gratefully notes that volunteers donating their time and various talents in both the central office and field ministries continue to provide numerous benefits to Home Missions and affiliated ministries.

c. Missionary prayer and financial partnerships

God is blessing the Christian Reformed Church with gifted leaders from various ethnic groups who are leading a wide variety of diverse ministries. This outreach is recognized as an outflow of Christ's love for all God's children. There are more than sixty Korean Christian Reformed congregations as well as numerous Hispanic, Vietnamese, and Laotian congregations. The increased interest in and support of local churches for these ministries is deeply appreciated.

d. Information resources

This year for the fifth time Home Missions celebrated Reformation Sunday. More than 300 churches participated in this observance. Nearly half of them took a special offering for the cause of Home Missions. Home Missions also again offered Easter bulletins and devotional materials. Nearly 600 congregations participated, and more than 250 scheduled an Easter offering for Home Missions.

Home Missions participated with other CRC agencies in several cooperative projects. In the United States these included the Barnabas Foundation and Women's Missionary Union speaking tours. In Canada, Home Missions participated with other agencies on a volunteer project called ServiceLink, a Canadian Christmastime promotion, and Christian Stewardship Services. In both countries we worked jointly on *Prayer Guide*, *Intermission*, and *CRC Source*.

2. Fiscal-year 1999 financial report

A detailed financial report for the twelve-month fiscal year ended June 30, 1999, the 2000 budget, and the proposed 2001 budget will be presented to synod in the *Agenda for Synod 2000—Financial and Business Supplement*. A summary report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1999, is shown on the next page:

Source of Income	Income (1,000s)	Percent of total
Ministry share	\$5,264	62.6
Missionary support	725	8.6
Above-ministry-share gifts	930	11.1
Conferences, consulting	194	2.3
Interest and other	1,294	15.4
Total income	\$8,407	100%

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Michael Reitsma, U.S. and Canada board president, and Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday as a significant opportunity to take offerings for Christian Reformed Home Missions. Home Missions is blessed, privileged, and profoundly challenged in serving the Lord and the church through *Gathering*.

C. That synod take note of the Board of Home Missions' response (Appendix of this report) to the report of the Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC.

Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions
John A. Rozeboom, executive director

Appendix

Home Missions' Response to the Report of the Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC

Because of Christian Reformed Home Missions' (CRHM) interest in identifying and equipping missional leaders for the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, it has carefully read the final report of the Alternative Routes Committee. Several staff members saw an earlier draft and welcomed the invitation to comment on that draft. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the now-completed report.

We have divided our response into three segments: affirmations, concerns, and conclusion.

I. Affirmations

Throughout the report there are numerous statements and perspectives that reflect an attitude of openness to new approaches and sensitivity to ethnic groups and people in special circumstances while maintaining the Reformed faith. Among these are the following:

The committee is submitting a report that . . . expresses confident hope and firm conviction that the Holy Spirit is leading the church to an era of opportunity and challenge. (P. 272)

As we as a church consider the changes and challenges facing the Christian Reformed Church and the diverse ways in which we are educating, equipping, and credentialing persons for ministry, we urge the membership of the CRC in general and the delegates to Synod 2000 in particular to consider all these as

opportunities for renewal and recommitment to gospel ministry and kingdom service in joyful, trusting hope. (P. 272)

The Reformed faith is a world-transforming faith; its vision of the Christian religion is catholic, universal. (P. 273)

... as we face a slowly growing diversity within the membership of the CRC, attempting to provide a "one-size-fits-all" definition of what constitutes "effective" also becomes much more difficult and potentially divisive. It may not be wise for synod to attempt imposing a uniform definition on the entire denomination, a step that could stifle the growth of healthy diversity in the church. (P. 275)

Beyond the important and even fundamental commonalities of the universal church, commonalities that encourage diversity and flexible application to the local circumstance and need, we are covenantally bound together by our common adherence to the Reformed tradition, its doctrine, polity, and ethos. It is therefore essential to our church's confessional integrity and identity to insist that persons who are selected and called to specific ministry tasks in CRC congregations are knowledgeable about the Reformed faith and basic CRC history and polity, personally committed to them, and enthusiastic about defending and promoting them. (P. 276)

We need to ask if old ways still work, what new strategies are called for, and what benefits and challenges the church has embraced by adopting new values, such as the commitment to ethnic diversity. Careful and prayerful reexamination of our tradition, our mission, and our context should lead us imaginatively and with renewed vision to apply the treasures of the Reformed faith to our time. (P. 277)

... the fact that gifted persons are seeking to do ministry within the context of the Christian Reformed Church, particularly cross-cultural ministry, after receiving alternative training in ministry ... is not first of all a problem but an opportunity for which the church ought to give thanks. The Lord of the harvest is answering the prayers of his people for harvesters. Furthermore, it is good for the church and for those who provide leadership in her theological education to be challenged by such developments. A study of alternative forms of ministerial training encourages the church to reevaluate and reconsider whether what is presently being offered in theological education is adequate to new realities in the church and in the world. (Pp. 277-78)

We also note that, in some ethnic-minority communities patterns of leadership and gift development are in effect which differ from those in CRC Anglo communities. Here the importance of a supporting community and the need for greater access to educational opportunities challenge the church to find new ways of partnering with our ethnic-minority communities. Our committee urges the church to make this a priority. (P. 279)

For second-career persons ... being able to stay in their home communities alleviates a major stress factor by providing both a network of support and a suitable and familiar arena to affirm their gifts in ministry. (P. 278)

Speaking of second-career students, the report also says,

... when asked whether they would have chosen an alternative to CTS had one been more readily available, just under one-half of respondents stated yes. ... the preferred options were "CTS programs offered locally" and "full theological education at another (approved) seminary." (P. 283)

A key request from many students was that CTS be more flexible in permitting them to do beginning work in their local areas if possible. A major concern for second-career students is the additional prerequisites many face because their undergraduate programs were tailored in different directions. (P. 283)

At the same time, it also needs to be said that the survey does not indicate that the church's future needs and demands are fully addressed or that certain changes may be appropriate and necessary for CTS's curriculum, particularly for greater flexibility in and accessibility of its educational offerings. (P. 284)

There is also a question of confessional identity and integrity here. . . . What are needed are adequate delivery systems of theological education that are relevant to the diverse ministry contexts of our different communities and have flexible entry points for those who need additional educational preparation. (P. 284)

However, it is clear that the vision of the Reformed faith is not bound to specific locales; it can be and has been caught in places other than Grand Rapids or Amsterdam. It is also possible to conceive of Reformed identity not in institutional ways but more broadly, in terms of confessional and theological *content*. (Pp. 284-85)

In particular, the denomination needs to be sensitive to specific communities where the educational ideal described here is in process and is a goal still to be achieved by a particular person in ministry. (P. 285)

Our committee encourages Calvin Seminary in its commitment to implement forms of distance and extension learning and to provide the flexible scheduling and evaluation of transfer credit that will make a CTS degree more readily available. (P. 290)

In particular, the opportunity for potential candidates for CRC ministry to be active in ministry under guided mentoring programs seems to us a valuable enhancement of ministerial formation. (P. 292)

The committee suggests that a demonstration of relational giftedness (interpersonal skills), a studied knowledge of the Scripture, and a definite commitment to and ability clearly to articulate a Reformed worldview and theology are minimum standards for any leader within the Christian Reformed Church. (P. 292)

These comments and perspectives raise the expectation that the recommendations of the report will come with new and flexible ways to assist the church in meeting the needs of the churches in ways that not only affirm the Reformed faith and confessions but also recognize the missional opportunities that abound in the North American context.

II. Concerns

A. *The report fails to follow through on the visionary statements and promising ideas.*

1. The report affirms diverse ways as opportunities for renewal, but it does not take advantage of these opportunities. Instead, it insists on institutional, academic programs.
2. The report wants to protect and prioritize the growth of healthy diversity but does not provide more accessible routes for the leaders and communities that provide the diversity.
3. The report underscores newly discovered opportunities, yet the recommendations are limiting and do not provide new ways to enter into the opportunities.
4. The report recognizes the unique challenges of second-career people but provides no new or creative ways to address these challenges or help the persons involved.

5. The report acknowledges that the training and supervision of evangelists is a local and classical matter but then introduces what appears to be a more centralized, restrictive way of controlling evangelist ordination.
6. The report advocates adequate delivery systems with flexible entry points relevant to diverse ministry concepts but provides none in the recommendations.
7. The report encourages Calvin Theological Seminary to implement forms of distance and extension learning and to provide flexible scheduling and transfer of credit but neglects any of this in the recommendations.

B. The report does not articulate a biblical/theological framework for routes to ministry.

1. The biblical narrative in both Old and New Testaments is rich in people who were called to office and ministry. These people were equipped for ministry in a variety of ways. Scripture speaks of gifts for ministry and how to use these gifts. Yet the report reflects on little or none of these things. As our society becomes more and more a secular, post-Christian society and the church takes on a more missional stance, reminiscent of the early church, the early church patterns of calling and equipping for ministry also become more relevant.
2. It seems logical that a report that constantly emphasizes formal theological training would come with foundational biblical perspectives for its arguments and recommendations. This report doesn't.
3. Biblical examples of training for ministry include mentoring and in-ministry training—two forms of training that are becoming more common today. But the report places almost exclusive emphasis on formal, academic, classroom-based education before ministry can begin.
4. Routes to ministry should be subservient to what a church is and what it seeks to become. The report, however, does not identify any particular ecclesiology as shaping its content and recommendations.

C. The report neglects the missional context and opportunities of the North American context.

1. Ministry practitioners know that we no longer live in a church society but in a postmodern, highly secular environment. In many places where formal church affiliation is still high, overall attendance is 20 percent of the population or less. In some places in the U.S. and many places in Canada, church attendance is 5 percent or less. In addition, while the church is still called to go to the nations, the nations have also come to the church. This missionary setting demands a variety of ways in which people are prepared for ministry. A lengthy, formal academic education is one way. But other routes should also be opened, not just by way of exception but as a faithful response to the call of the gospel and the given contexts.
2. In today's missional era, the call to ordained ministry frequently comes in the context of volunteer ministry in the local congregation. Instead of

focusing on equipping the local church for this shift, the report maintains that appropriate education is primarily institutional.

3. To those who are not part of the Western European tradition, whose hearts are broken for the lost, and who discern an urgent call to minister to their own people, the emphasis on institutional learning away from the context of indigenous local ministry seems exclusionary and condescending.
4. The report appears to promote that part of the Reformed tradition which prefers that training for ministry takes place before there can be credentialing for ministry. The missional setting in a fast-changing society, however, demands ongoing, lifelong training tailored to fit the needs of particular settings. In some cases this may mean provisional credentialing; in other cases this may mean renewing one's credentials on the basis of certified ongoing training. In spite of its call for new and more flexible ways, the recommendations are silent on these possibilities.
5. To reach an increasingly diverse and unchurched population, the CRC needs the help of Christian leaders from outside as well as from within the CRC. The CRC must develop flexible, attractive, and hospitable ways to serve leaders from other backgrounds who answer God's call to "come over and help us."

D. The report does not adequately address the unique opportunities, needs, and situations of ethnic communities.

1. While the report acknowledges "the slowly growing diversity" in the CRC, it offers no critical insights into the restraining factors inherent in our existing structures and policies and makes no recommendations on how to remove obstacles to growth and promote ethnic diversity by way of alternate routes to ministry.
2. The report seems to imply that ethnic leaders and communities were surveyed and that they affirmed to an extent the current opportunities for ministry preparation at Calvin Seminary. But no data are given on who or how many were surveyed, which from a social-science perspective constitutes inadequate research.
3. While the committee recognizes the need to partner with ethnic communities in the CRC and obtained helpful input from its ethnic members, the report distressingly lacks recommendations that indicate the committee has genuinely heard and understood its ethnic leaders or that it is willing to be more responsive to the unique opportunities, needs, and concerns for leadership development in the ethnic communities.
4. Whereas the study was occasioned in large part by the comparatively large number of ethnic leaders entering the CRC ministry by alternate routes, a centerpiece recommendation of the report is a more flexible Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy option. Unfortunately, however, when that recommendation requires pre-enrollment and at least seven years of CRC membership, ethnic leaders can legitimately ask, "Do they really want us?" or "Do they want us only when we have first adopted their culture?"

5. When the report says we are “covenantally bound together by our common adherence to the Reformed tradition . . . and ethos,” some ask, “Does this sanction the Western European, largely Dutch, white tradition and ethos as the only legitimate one? What happened to the diversity of nations and people groups in the kingdom of God who are more and more part of the CRC today?” (See also the 1996 report on the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.)
6. When the report implies that the best training is formal, academic, on-campus training outside of one’s context by teachers representing a different ethnic group, by default it minimizes the relevance of contextualized training and ignores the critical relationship between indigenous leadership and ministry effectiveness. A possible consequence is reduced effectiveness by the ethnic leaders when they return to their communities.

E. The report restricts existing and new routes for potential candidates by

1. Interpreting the word “training” in Church Order Article 6 largely as formal, academic, classroom-based education.
2. Giving relatively little emphasis to character, spiritual formation, gifts, competence, and call and strong emphasis to formal academic, on-campus education, even to the point of making a college degree the minimum for any ministry staff and expecting two additional years of formal education.
3. Reminding the church that the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy “Option A” may take longer than a year.
4. Mandating a seven-year CRC membership for Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy “Option B.”
5. Not acknowledging in the recommendations the need for guided continued education, mentoring programs, in-ministry training, distance education, and the development of teaching churches.

F. The report’s recommendations diminish congregational/classical responsibility for leadership development and credentialing by

1. Keeping training for ministry largely in the hands of the denominational seminary.
2. Not giving consideration to freeing the seminary faculty from ecclesiastical credentialing responsibilities for candidacy.
3. Outlining a framework and making it the basis for all evangelist-training programs.
4. Implying that current and future leadership-development training in local settings in the denomination needs to be regulated and controlled by a central synodically appointed advisory council. Home Missions would appreciate participation in a truly advisory council, but the report’s language describing the council’s mandate is sometimes oriented toward governance and regulation.
5. Giving responsibility to this advisory council to “assist classes in all matters of ministerial candidacy.”

6. Not acknowledging the value and necessity of indigenous leadership development in local and classical training centers.
7. Not recommending that the seminary adopt an expanded servant role in offering advice, assistance, and consultation to local and classical training centers.

III. Conclusion

Christian Reformed Home Missions recognizes that the committee is dealing with longstanding traditions and a fast-changing societal and church situation. The issues are complex and not easily solved. Home Missions believes, however, that the promises of greater openness, flexibility, and sensitivity were not fulfilled in this report.

Home Missions therefore recommends that a new committee be appointed to build on the current report and to recommend responsible but expanded ways of training and credentialing for ministry in the new millennium, ways that

- A. Follow through on the visionary statements and promising ideas in the report.
- B. Are based on a sound biblical/theological framework.
- C. Take into account the missional context and opportunities in North America.
- D. Address the unique opportunities, needs, and situations of ethnic communities in the CRC.
- E. Do not diminish congregational/classical responsibility for leadership development and credentialing.

Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions
Rev. Alvern Gelder, secretary

I. Introduction

“Bringing salvation to the ends of the earth” is a vision that grips Christian Reformed World Missions. Such an expansive view was Spirit inspired long before the apostle Paul articulated it. The vision still challenges us as world population has now surpassed six billion souls.

As one of the outreach-oriented agencies of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) has sought to fulfill the following mandate (*Missionary Manual*, Section 109):

- A. Proclaim the Gospel of the growing kingdom of God.
- B. Call people of the entire world to repentance, faith in Jesus Christ, and obedience to God in their personal lives and societal relations.
- C. Build the Church of Christ. Develop peoples who are gathered for worship, training their own membership for leadership, and dedicated to service in and beyond the communities in which they live.
- D. Relieve suffering and minister to human needs through programs of Christian education and development, with the help of CRWRC and/or local diaconal organizations wherever possible.
- E. Encourage and enable the congregations of the CRCNA to call and commission missionaries and to provide cooperatively for their support.

The tasks, however, are not being done alone. World Missions joins the other agencies of the church that have likewise been attempting to fulfill their mandates. Many local CRC congregations have found opportunities to reach “to the ends of the earth” through both short- and long-term outreach programs. In many of the far-flung reaches of the earth, World Missions joins company with Christian churches that are growing and developing their own programs of reaching the ends of the earth with the gospel. World Missions has entered an exciting time, when the task of spreading the gospel is best done in partnership with others. As we enter the twenty-first century, World Missions plans and implements its plans to bring salvation to the ends of the earth by working with partners.

II. Report on mission fields and projects

During the past year World Missions gave support to twenty-nine Reformed and Presbyterian churches, which are attended by approximately two million people. It also contributed staff and financial grants to twenty other agencies and leadership-training institutions. World Missions’ activities in specific mission fields are briefly described below.

A. Africa

1. *Sierra Leone*. Rebels have destroyed the entire infrastructure of our ministry among the Kuranko. National staff members have all relocated to Freetown, the capital city, where they have participated in food distribution and evangelism among displaced people. In spite of the difficulties, the nationalization of the mission is moving forward.
2. *Liberia*. Though civil war forced evacuation from Liberia a number of years ago, translation work continues. The Bassa translation of the Scriptures is on target for completion in 2000. Our partner organization in Liberia also

reports that the Theological Education by Extension program has been reestablished.

3. *Nigeria*. Through partnerships with churches in Nigeria, Nigerian evangelists worked with World Missions' church-planting team and extended the witness in the Kambari region. Joint work with CRWRC in urban areas established Christian communities in Jos, Abuja, and Lagos.
4. *Mali*. Work continued among the Fulbe in Mali. Ten missionaries now work with individuals or small groups of believers in village settings and in Bamako, the capital city. The number of Fulbe Christians continues to increase gradually. There are now forty known Fulbe Christians.
5. *Guinea*. Seventy Fulbe attended the Fulbe Christian Conference, and five were baptized. The translation team completed the first draft of the entire New Testament. Team members participated in friendship evangelism and sought opportunities to establish Bible studies. Missionaries also shared the leadership of Pular worship in the towns of Labe and Dalaba.

B. Asia

With its enormous population, wealth of culture, depth of history, and variety of religious heritage and practices, Asia offers a tremendous challenge to and opportunity for the Christian church. Increasingly, Asians are not only "out there" but are fellow CRC members, as significant numbers of Asian immigrants to North America join the CRC. Asia is changing, and we are changing. It is World Missions' great honor to have been given a small role to play in the extension of God's kingdom and his church in Asia in partnership with Asian churches and peoples. The great challenge is to discern the Lord's direction in ministry in such a rapidly changing environment.

World Missions' ministries in Asia have been focused largely in China/Taiwan, Guam/Micronesia, Japan, and the Philippines. World Missions works directly in church planting in Japan and the Philippines. In both of these places World Missions works in partnership with a national church partner.

Training of church leaders either formally or informally is a major focus of World Missions' ministries in Guam/Micronesia, China/Taiwan, and the Philippines. Culturally appropriate training materials are produced and distributed in each of these major ministry areas.

In many of its Asian ministry locations World Missions is also involved in providing day-school teachers, prison chaplains, English-language teachers, administrators, and other such skilled persons through its partner, volunteer, or associate programs.

In almost every ministry task World Missions partners with either a national church or some other agency, including CRC agencies. In Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines World Missions works closely with a specific Reformed denomination. In Guam/Micronesia and China we seek to provide Reformed perspectives through cooperative ministries with people and agencies from a much broader theological and denominational heritage.

C. Europe

1. *France*. Through an agreement with the Evangelical Reformed Church in France, we placed a professor at the church's seminary to teach practical

theology and to administer a training program by extension for African church leaders.

2. *Hungarian ministries.* Leadership training and placement of teachers in church-run schools has been CRWM's strategy in this field. We consider it a privilege to give support to the Hungarian Reformed Church as it continues to rebuild after years of communism.
3. *Russia.* Our work is part of an interagency effort. Much of our ministry is centered in three reading rooms. More than 2,800 people have registered to use these facilities, and more than thirty have made decisions for Christ.

D. *Latin America*

1. *Central America.* Hurricane Mitch caused great destruction in Honduras and Nicaragua. World Missions missionaries cooperated with CRWRC in meeting immediate needs and in rebuilding homes which had been destroyed. Although the internal struggles have not been resolved within the CRC of Honduras, World Missions has made and is implementing plans to give support to both groups of churches to help them continue their evangelism and theological-education programs. In Nicaragua, World Missions supported the efforts of the Christian Reformed Church of Nicaragua to strengthen the new church plants that have recently begun. In El Salvador, CRWM gave support to the Reformed churches' informal training program and to other theological institutions. In Costa Rica, World Missions continued to provide support to the evangelism programs of the churches as an integral part of its educational strategy. At the Evangelical University of the Americas, World Missions provided missionaries for the director position and for course development. With the increasing demand for its educational services throughout Latin America, the Central America Regional Council has approved the position of dean of extension studies. The development of Christian Reformed churches and a Christian-school system in Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua are made possible through grants and the deployment of World Missions staff.
2. *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (I.F.E.S.).* World Missions saw Ruth Eldrenkamp through a difficult period after the murder of her husband. She has now moved from Ecuador to Argentina and has taken on an important ministry of publishing solid Christian books in Latin America as a support to Christian university students. This work includes production of materials and management of Ediciones Certeza (the publishing house of International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Latin America).
3. *Cooperative International Theological Education (CITE).* World Missions provided one missionary to CITE for work in Cuba and Mexico during the past year. In Cuba she helped with the Christian-education programs of the Christian Reformed Church of Cuba and in organizing and giving counsel for the youth camps. In Mexico she gave advice to two Presbyterian Bible institutes in Chiapas which desired to reform their curricula. She also cooperated with CRC World Literature Ministries in the writing and editing of books. Leadership-training workshops, distribution of theological

textbooks, and the editing of Spanish materials were major components of the work of CITE.

4. *Cuba.* The Christian Reformed Church in Cuba experienced such growth that its buildings are no longer big enough. The vitality of the CRC of Cuba was demonstrated as new members joined the churches, capable young leaders sought training, and the number of summer youth camps increased. World Missions provided grants to the Christian Reformed Church of Cuba, organized and gave leadership-training seminars, and facilitated short-term visits to Cuba by missionaries from other countries. World Missions was responsible for channeling a grant from Classis Alberta North to the churches in Cuba and will continue to allocate this money. World Missions anticipates sending an associate missionary for three months to help set up a theological-education program by extension in local churches.
5. *Dominican Republic.* Hurricane Georges struck with full force in areas where members of the CRC of the Dominican Republic live. World Missions cooperated with CRWRC and national leaders in providing immediate relief. The missionaries also used emergency funds and volunteer work groups to rebuild many damaged and destroyed churches. Within six months most of the programs were back in operation. World Missions reports the encouraging way in which the national church leaders are making progress in their diaconal programs and theological-education programs. This has resulted in a significant shift in the deployment of World Missions' personnel and resources. Formal education continues to be provided through the Association of Reformed Christian Schools and the National Evangelical University. The Association of Reformed Christian Schools includes twenty-one active Christian schools; the level of education provided by these schools has increased substantially. The National Evangelical University continues to mature and develop as an organization; World Missions provided its director. Significant advances were achieved over the past year which assure the stability and future growth of this institution.
6. *Haiti.* The World Missions and CRWRC missionaries have formed one ministry team for Haiti, now identified as *Sous Espwa* (meaning "fountain" or "source of hope"). World Missions also worked through national partner organizations to develop educational programs and materials. These in turn helped participants attain a higher level of spiritual, social, and/or professional maturity. Consequently they have been able to be more effective agents in meeting the needs of their society.
7. *Mexico.* World Missions focuses in Mexico on church planting and development with a heavy concentration on church-leadership development. Much of the World Missions' ministry is in cities. The mission plans to expand its ministries to more urban centers in partnership with The Back to God Hour, World Literature Ministries, and Home Missions. The Reformed Theological Seminary of Mexico students do outstanding work in the churches, and San Pablo Seminary students in Merida work well in evangelism. Leadership training and the development of churches for the Reformed Presbyterian Church and National Presbyterian Church of Mexico continued through grants and the deployment of staff. World

Missions continued in its support of a developing Christian school in Belize.

8. *Puerto Rico.* The three newly planted churches are growing well. A regular missionary continues to encourage church growth. When this missionary finishes his service in Puerto Rico in June 2001, World Missions' decreasing grant to that country will also come to an end.

III. Ministry in Canada and in the U.S.A.

Whereas World Missions International's major focus is on the field and project ministries, World Missions-U.S.A. and World Missions-Canada are focused on challenging members of the CRC to respond to the international mission-outreach needs. A positive working relationship exists between the offices in Burlington and Grand Rapids. Through a joint-venture agreement the two offices give administrative support to the church's international outreach. This challenge includes the development of the following:

A. Network of prayer: World Missions recognizes the critical role of prayer. Therefore, through written and oral communications, World Missions challenges the church to be a praying church. Modern technology, such as e-mail and the fax machine, provides exciting opportunities to make prayer requests readily available and therefore more meaningful.

B. Mission vision: There is significant variation in the level of passion for international outreach among the members of our churches. Some, particularly the elderly, are very loyal and very mission minded. Others appear to be more interested in local outreach initiatives. The real challenge facing World Missions is nurturing a sense of passion for the lost and suffering throughout the world in the hearts and minds of younger generations.

C. Partnership: Pilot projects have been developed between World Missions and several classes. Classes Alberta North, Niagara, and Wisconsin have begun to develop a greater sense of passion and support for mission projects.

D. Regional- and local-representative networks: World Missions-U.S.A. and World Missions-Canada work through a network of regional and local-church representatives. Seminars in each of eight regions (soon to expand to ten in keeping with the Board of Trustees' decision) give World Missions opportunities to tell about its ministries and to provide encouragement for outreach. Within the Canadian context such seminars combine the efforts of all CRC mission agencies.

IV. Program report for recruitment and training

Training programs prepared approximately seven long-term, twenty-five short-term, and thirty summer-mission-program participants.

	FY1998-1999 Actual	FY1999-2000 Plan	FY2000-2001 Plan
Long-term missionaries	95	97	99
Missionary spouses	82	81	82
TOTAL:	177	178	181

Partner missionaries	61	67	76
SMP volunteers	34	46	41
Other volunteers	12	20	25
Seminary interns	4	6	3
Associate missionaries	<u>34</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>24</u>
TOTAL:	145	166	169
GRAND TOTAL:	322	344	350

World Missions continues to need just under \$65,000 to send and keep a long-term missionary family overseas for one year. About one-half of this support comes from denominational ministry shares. On average, eleven sending and supporting churches supply most of the other half through faith-promise and other above-ministry-share support. Individuals can also support missionaries directly rather than through their local churches. Short-term partner missionaries, associate missionaries, and summer mission participants usually serve for one to two years and do not receive salaries from World Missions. They raise their own support (travel and living allowance) from churches and friends, support themselves, or, in the case of many partner missionaries, are supported by jobs in the countries to which they go.

All of World Missions' fields and projects and 96 percent of its three hundred missionaries are connected via the Internet to the office and to each other. This connection greatly increases the mission's capacity for communication and distribution of mission news.

The names and addresses of our missionaries and regional representatives can be found on the back pages of the World Missions calendar. They are also listed in the Directory of Agencies and Committees in the CRC *Yearbook*, as are the names of World Missions' administrators.

Each year World Missions pays tribute to missionaries and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In 1999 World Missions honored the following for five to thirty-five years of service to the CRC through World Missions:

- Mrs. Betty Achterhoff (Nigeria) 5 years
- Rev. Dr. Paul and Mrs. Barbara Bergsma (Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica) 30 years
- Miss Jan Camburn (Nigeria) 5 years
- Mr. David and Mrs. Joyce Campbell (Guinea) 10 years
- Mr. Pablo and Mrs. Sheryl Canche (Honduras) 15 years
- Miss Cheryl de Jong (Guinea) 5 years
- Mr. Michael and Mrs. Kimberly Essenburg (Japan) 5 years
- Rev. Albert Hamstra (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Home Office) 20 years
- Mr. Calvin and Mrs. Jamie Hofland (Guinea) 5 years
- Mr. Joel and Mrs. Patricia Hogan (Philippines) 15 years
- Rev. Dr. Harold and Mrs. Elsbeth Kallemeyn (France) 10 years
- Rev. Marquis and Mrs. Ruth Knoper (Philippines, Taiwan) 20 years
- Rev. Paul and Mrs. Mary Kortenhoven (Sierra Leone) 25 years
- Mr. Sidney Norman (Japan, Guam, Home Office) 25 years
- Rev. Dr. Timothy and Mrs. Wilma Palmer (Nigeria) 15 years
- Miss Christine Roos (Nigeria) 30 years
- Mr. Dan and Mrs. Patricia Vanden Hoek (Haiti) 10 years

Mr. Michael and Mrs. Victoria Van Der Dyke (Nigeria) 20 years
Mr. Kenneth and Mrs. Patricia Vanderploeg (Mexico) 15 years
Miss Brenda Vander Schuur (Guinea) 10 years
Mr. Gary and Mrs. Pamela Van Veen (Dominican Republic) 10 years
Mr. John and Mrs. Shirley Wind (Honduras, Mexico) 20 years

V. Collaboration with other agencies

In the international outreach effort World Missions collaborates with The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications/World Literature Ministries, CRWRC, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary. Especially noteworthy have been the research efforts by all these agencies into new outreach in Latin America (Mexico) and southeast Asia. Calvin Seminary made a vital contribution in the orientation of new missionary candidates. All are working together in support of ministries in various parts of eastern Europe.

VI. Governance and administration

World Missions' Joint International Committee will hold its annual meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 1-3, 2000. At that gathering the committees of World Missions-U.S.A. and World Missions-Canada will meet separately to attend to mission matters specific to the Canadian and the U.S.A. contexts. They will meet jointly to attend to the common task of governing and overseeing the mission fields and projects. The executive committees meet jointly and separately in February (in Canada), September, and December. In September 1999 a joint meeting was held with the Board of Trustees of the CRC. Another such meeting is anticipated for September 2000.

VII. Long-range plan and fiscal 2000-2001

Copies of World Missions' Long-Range Plan are available on request. This plan describes our vision, mission, purpose, values, mission task, design of fields and projects, deployment guidelines and plans, strategic issues for effective mission, and the force for mission provided by the CRC. This plan is used to give shape to our three-year as well as to our annual plan and budget. This plan has entered a phase of significant review. Efforts have begun to more closely integrate World Missions' plan with that of the CRCNA. World Missions intends also to make the document more normative for field and project plans.

With the proposed budget for fiscal year 2000-2001, World Missions will support 99 long-term missionaries (82 spouses who volunteer much time to ministry) and 169 short-term missionaries (including spouses) for a total of 350 active missionaries, accompanied by many children. They will be supported by administrative and program staff of twenty-one full-time and three part-time persons based in Grand Rapids and Burlington. Fourteen regional representatives and their spouses, based in North America, offer much support.

The budget from July 1, 2000, through June 30, 2001, will be \$14,314,819. North American administrative and promotion expenses will be 11.5 percent of the budget. Budget details will be provided in the *Agenda for Synod 2000—Financial and Business Supplement*.

VIII. Salary information

World Missions, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd quartile
17	2	2nd and 3rd quartiles
16	3	2nd and 3rd quartiles

IX. Recommendations

World Missions-U.S.A. and World Missions-Canada recommend the following:

A. That the president of World Missions-Canada, Rev. Carel Geleynse; the president of World Missions-U.S.A., Rev. William Renkema; and the World Missions International executive director, Rev. Merle Den Bleyker, be given the privilege of meeting with appropriate advisory committees of synod and represent World Missions to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.

B. That the Board of Trustees and synod continue World Missions on its list of denominational agencies recommended to the churches for one or more offerings.

C. That the Board of Trustees and synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Christian Reformed World Missions
Merle Den Bleyker, international director

I. Introduction

CRWRC celebrates “Building Global Hope” with you in 1999. With thankfulness and joy we are entering the new millennium with a renewed mission and vision, based on the “Bold Hope” campaign begun three years ago with a new organizational structure, a relational strategy, and an eye to the future.

Today CRWRC is a more flexible, more responsive, more inclusive organization than it ever was before. As stated in our vision/mission statement, we envision a world where people experience and extend Christ’s compassion and live together in hope as God’s community. Together with God’s people in the CRCNA, we are working toward redeeming resources and developing gifts through acts of love, mercy, justice, and compassion.

In 1999 CRWRC began to embrace unique opportunities to minister even more broadly to those in need through direct involvement of volunteers in planning, programs, and partnerships. By bringing people together in supportive learning relationships, we are building global hope founded solidly on the Rock, Jesus Christ.

In the area of development, CRWRC, with the help of the people of the CRC, built global hope in the lives of 126,276 people in need in twenty-seven countries during 1999. We celebrate God’s goodness in ministering to people in need through more than 120 Christian partner organizations worldwide. CRWRC’s community-based programs in adult literacy, food production, income generation, primary health care, and spiritual development are building global hope—one relationship at a time.

Never before has CRWRC been involved in so many relief projects in one year as it was in 1999. Hurricanes Mitch and Georges, the crisis in Kosovo, and the Turkish earthquake were high profile, but the Lord also led us to small farmers in the Philippines who were unable to feed their families because their rice crops were wiped away by La Nina.

In education CRWRC aims to work with people in their communities to address the structural barriers causing the poverty they face. This year CRWRC will focus on domestic poverty issues: child poverty in Canada and welfare-to-work in the U.S. Partnering with CRC Publications and evangelical writer Ron Sider, CRWRC prepared a study guide to accompany Dr. Sider’s newest book, *Just Generosity*. CRWRC is working internally to assure justice in our own policies and procedures. Our goal is to glorify God through an antiracist identity and to include the gifts of men and women in leadership.

II. Board matters

The primary function of the board is to provide direction for the wholistic ministry program of the agency and to encourage the vision for the organization as a whole.

The CRWRC governance structure is composed of representatives from each of the classes of the Christian Reformed Church and several members-at-large. The board is organized into two divisions, one for Canada and one for the United States. The officers for the respective boards are listed below:

A. *Officers of CRWRC-Canada*

Mr. Peter Bulthuis, president
Mr. Peter Feddema, vice president
Ms. Anna Feddes, secretary
Mr. Lawrence De Graaf, treasurer
Mr. Jack Feenstra, vice all
Rev. John Koster, pastoral adviser

B. *Officers of CRWRC-U.S.A.*

Mr. Calvin Hulst, president
Ms. Carol Van Ess-Dykema, vice president
Ms. Kay Yoder, secretary
Mr. Paul Wassink, treasurer

III. **CRWRC's programs and ministries**

A. *Development regions*

1. Asia

CRWRC brought help and hope to 33,400 individuals in poverty in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Laos. Community-based programs in health, income generation, adult literacy, and deacon training reached 5,000 more people than planned this year. These programs were coordinated through more than sixteen local partner groups. CRWRC's Cambodia Team is expanding its ministry efforts into Laos, where it is researching potential programs in community and church development. CRWRC's relief efforts also brought immediate emergency aid to 11,286 people in Indonesia and the Philippines. We are thankful that God accomplishes more than we can ask or imagine.

2. Eastern and southern Africa

Through more than twenty Christian partner groups in Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia, CRWRC embraced 49,796 people living in poverty. CRWRC's expatriate and national staff in this region coordinate programs in food production, environmental conservation, health education, income generation, literacy, AIDS prevention, and deacon training. In South Africa CRWRC is working with an international coalition of Reformed churches to strengthen development programs, forge connections between South African organizations, and create employment among the poor through job-skills training.

3. Eastern Europe

CRWRC is active with 1,391 participants in Romania through pregnancy resource centers; orphan, disability, and substance-abuse ministries; and small-business development. CRWRC established two of the first crisis counseling centers in the country, and today there are eleven pregnancy centers. CRWRC has provided some networking to get the centers together for fellowship, encouragement, sharing of information, and education. Many people are being helped. Most of all, people are coming to know the Lord as their personal Savior and Lord of their lives because of the grace offered by involved people.

4. Latin America

In the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua, 14,795 participants improved their lives and livelihoods. They worked toward positive, permanent change in their lives through deacon-training, health-care, income-earning, literacy, and food-production programs. This region was hard hit by Hurricanes Mitch and Georges, which left thousands of survivors devastated and homeless. CRWRC built hope and homes among 18,880 people directly affected by disaster in Honduras and the Dominican Republic alone.

5. North America

Overall, 4,350 people living below the poverty level were helped with diaconal consultation and training, refugee resettlement, grants, language classes, family mentoring, youth education, prison and handicapped ministries, income-generating projects, substance-abuse ministries, tutoring, and education. In the West Michigan area, City Vision is a developing umbrella organization for CRWRC's local partner groups. CRWRC's Disaster Response Services (DRS) worked in more than ten locations in North America in 1999.

6. West Africa

In Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, CRWRC's mission of mercy reached 22,544 people through income-earning, evangelism, health, literacy, food-production, AIDS-prevention, and environmental-protection programs. Though efforts in Sierra Leone were suspended because of civil unrest, we continue to pray and work for peace in this war-torn country. In addition, nearly 1,000 West Africans were helped with emergency disaster assistance.

B. Partners for Christian Development

Partners for Christian Development is an associate organization of CRWRC. CRWRC helped to establish this membership organization, made up of visionary Christian business and professional people. Partners for Christian Development members want to make a serious and lasting impact on our world by bringing the unique skills and experience of business people into partnership with CRWRC in order to build healthy, caring communities in Jesus' name.

Members of Partners for Christian Development envision a world where the love of Jesus is expressed through business and everyone has the opportunity for meaningful, productive employment.

1. Partners for Christian Development works toward this vision by

- a. Promoting, affirming, and celebrating business and entrepreneurship as an outstanding Christian calling, vital for God's kingdom to be fulfilled.
- b. Networking together with our members in order to better develop God's resources and be faithful stewards of them.
- c. Providing opportunities for our members to become personally involved in creating jobs and opportunities for the poor. These partnerships provide access to appropriate technology, competitive capital, mutual learning, mentoring, and support.

2. These three thrusts result in specific programs:

- a. Partners for Christian Development sponsors an annual national business conference and local dinner programs that motivate, encourage, and refresh business people in their calling.
- b. In 1999 Partners for Christian Development supported CRWRC in raising \$3.1 million dollars for community-development programs through its major-gifts development program.
- c. Partners for Christian Development currently has over two hundred dues-paying, active members in seventeen chapters and affinity groups that created just over 3,000 jobs in 1999. Partners for Christian Development builds relationships between business people and the communities in which CRWRC works in twenty countries.

We praise God for the way he is working in and moving among business people for his glory. He is truly bringing rich and poor together in ways that are transforming everyone.

C. Justice education, advocacy, and service learning

CRWRC's justice-education and advocacy program concentrates on three areas: (1) North American education, (2) worldwide service learning, and (3) support of local civil-society development. Meaningful participation is the key to permanent change. With the church around the world, CRWRC is working with individuals and their communities to assure protection of their rights. CRWRC is helping farmers gain title to their land and working with communities to discover what their own governments' constitutions say. CRWRC aims to work with communities to address the poverty-causing structural barriers they face.

Through the active participation of volunteers, work groups, and tour participants, CRWRC is exploring the theme of hope. Giving North American Christians an opportunity to sit face-to-face with a struggling fruit-stand operator in Manila reveals that a relationship across borders and cultures provides lessons and hope for everyone involved.

CRWRC is working internally to assure justice in its own policies and procedures. It intends to glorify God through an antiracist identity and to include the gifts of men and women in leadership.

1. North American education

In partnership with the Reformed Church in America, CRWRC produced a special children's church/school educational package highlighting children's poverty issues in Asia. For adults CRWRC partnered with CRC Publications and evangelical writer Ron Sider to produce a study guide for Dr. Sider's newest book, *Just Generosity*. Denominationally, CRWRC's annual world-hunger materials helped raise awareness and funds (\$667,731 combined U.S. and Canada). CRWRC also provided a comprehensive educational and worship packet on poverty issues in North America. The campaign focused on child poverty in Canada and welfare-to-work in the U.S.

2. Service learning

Through ServiceLink in Canada and the U.S. and CRWRC's robust volunteer partnering program, CRWRC continues to link individuals, churches, and work groups to opportunities for learning through action. The essence of service learning is education through direct experience, whether it is with people in urban North America or rural Mali.

Synod 1997 encouraged CRWRC to respond to the problem of racially motivated church burnings. CRWRC has been active with coalitions addressing this problem as it continues. This year we will partner with the Reformed Church in America through service-learning projects to rebuild four burned churches.

3. Developing civil society

Increasingly CRWRC sees the need to address macro issues that affect the lives of poor people around the world.

a. Land rights

In Nicaragua, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and South Africa, many poor communities do not, for various reasons, register their land. Not understanding the need to do this or caught in powerfully manipulative systems, poor families can easily lose their land. Training communities to understand local laws, how to adhere to them, and how they can act in order to protect themselves from financial loss through abuse of the law by others is part of CRWRC's civil-service development program.

b. Civic education

Good governance comes from informed and active citizens. CRWRC works with partner groups in communities to teach people about their local election laws and to help them register and study the issues that are important to them. Increased voter registration and participation in elections are two of the positive results of this program. CRWRC has been working in civic education in Tanzania, Haiti, Mozambique, Malawi, and on the East Coast of the U.S.

c. Peace building and reconciliation

In Sierra Leone, CRWRC works in trauma healing for child soldiers and traumatized community members. Conflict resolution among Christians is a major emphasis in Nigeria. In Uganda we are working to reintegrate families into their communities after they have fled from cattle raiders. When peace is present, development can move forward.

D. Disaster relief

In North America, CRWRC's Disaster Response Services (DRS) provided emergency relief assistance to North Americans affected by natural disaster in more than ten locations through housing reconstruction, cleanup, and minor repair of 128 homes, major repair and rebuilding of 84 homes, and contact with 24,558 disaster survivors to assess needs. In all, DRS volunteers gave 92,809 hours of their time, talents, and resources in 1999 to comfort, restore, and rebuild the lives of North Americans in crisis and disaster.

Internationally, Hurricanes Mitch and Georges devastated six Latin American countries in less than a month in 1999. CRWRC was already working in long-term development in all of these countries, and our staff has

worked tirelessly to set up and operate relief and rehabilitation programs to distribute high-energy food bars (flown in by the Royal Canadian Air Force), clothing, medicine, food packages, and seeds. In all, more than 3,000 metric tons (150 shipping containers) of food were sent into the areas. Rehabilitation programs in agriculture and small business, as well as construction of 1,200 houses in Honduras and Nicaragua, are ongoing.

In war-torn Kosovo, CRWRC has provided food supplies, housing reconstruction, and agriculture and public-health assistance through an alliance of partners. The Lord has used our efforts there to demonstrate his peace and love. Through our Baptist partner, one home Bible-study grew within six weeks to a church service of more than four hundred.

E. Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Through our participation in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, an association of thirteen church-based relief and development organizations, CRWRC responded with food shipments to twelve countries. CRWRC led programming efforts that distributed 7,000 metric tons of food, valued at \$4.5 million (Can.). Survivors of natural and human disasters in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Kenya, and Ethiopia were among those helped by Food for Work and free distribution programs. CRWRC was also one of the founding members of the U.S. Food Resource Bank, an organization similar to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We are thankful for the support of our church partners. Where brothers and sisters in the Lord come together to do his work, his blessings follow.

CRWRC's Canadian Foodgrains Bank Activity 1999

Location	Metric tons	Project value	CRWRC's Commitment
Ethiopia	1,000	\$577,494	\$56,973
Sierra Leone	1722	\$1,371,068	\$64,357
Liberia	220	\$222,260	\$44,452
Philippines	180	\$103,979	\$5,615
Kenya	186	\$88,021	\$10,755
Dominican Republic	925	\$649,836	\$54,983
Honduras	1101	\$770,531	\$36,433
Guatemala	325	\$260,852	-
El Salvador	398	\$295,235	\$29,523
Nicaragua	401	\$268,454	\$13,423
Tanzania	-	\$63,998	\$7,239
Subtotal (Programmed through CRWRC)	6,458	\$4,671,728	\$323,753
Korea	4,244	\$3,878,080	\$46,537
Total financial contributions by CRWRC	\$370,290		

We thankfully acknowledge the contributions of our Canadian Foodgrains Bank partners: the Presbyterian Church of Canada, World Relief Canada, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Canadian Baptist Ministries, United Church of Canada, Evangelical Missionary Church, Mennonite Central Committee, and the Salvation Army. We also thank the Canadian International Development Agency, Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund, and Dorcas Aid International of Andijk, the Netherlands.

F. Community services

CRWRC-Canada continues to be involved with ServiceLink, a program of the CRC in Canada. This program encourages people to volunteer in ministry. Currently, there are eight regional coordinators of volunteers and a national coordinator (CRWRC staff person), who provide a one-stop information resource to groups and individuals who wish to use their gifts/skills with any CRC agency or their partners.

During the 1998-1999 year, 444 volunteers served, totaling 23,328 hours for agencies including CRWRC, World Missions, The Back to God Hour, Home Missions, Diaconal Ministries, and Youth Unlimited. For the first six months of 1999-2000, 144 volunteers have already served 11,762 hours. Included in these statistics are twenty-eight groups of adults and/or youth from various churches across Canada. The number of volunteers and their total hours have increased by 44 percent per year. The total number of groups has doubled since the last report to synod.

Efforts have been made to develop a similar ServiceLink program in the United States. A pilot program has been started in Michigan. Currently CRWRC is recruiting for a half-time U.S. ServiceLink coordinator to develop a network of regional coordinators and to link U.S. church members with local CRWRC ministry opportunities. This volunteer service program in the U.S. is anticipated to develop into an interagency program.

IV. Finance

A. Financial history

This graph displays CRWRC revenues and expenses from 1992 to 2000 (projected).

(A = 10 months, B = Budget)

	92/93	93/94A	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	90/00B
Revenue	10,577	8,162	9,513	9,290	11,056	11,113	14,121	10,699
Overseas	5,432	4,312	5,977	5,491	5,548	5,000	5,488	6,543
North America	611	917	1,317	1,165	1,005	872	1,144	1,294
Dis. Resp. Serv.	1,457	1,288	1,849	876	1,674	1,822	2,371	724
Resource Devel.	762	743	1,086	1,026	983	1,053	1,206	1,043
Administration	840	751	987	894	932	1,183	1,140	1,012
Total Expenses	9,102	8,011	11,216	9,452	10,142	9,930	11,349	10,616
Net rev./(exp.)	1,475	151	(1,073)	(162)	914	1,183	2,772	83

B. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod’s mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, CRWRC reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd quartile
16	1	1st quartile

C. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2000—Financial and Business Supplement*.

V. Resource development

Support for CRWRC grew phenomenally in 1998-1999 in response to several urgent needs. We are thankful to God for providing us with resources to carry out our ministries on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church.

The support for CRWRC's main program of community development continued to grow despite several appeals for special giving in response to various disasters: Hurricanes Georges and Mitch, the Kosovo refugee crisis, and ten North American sites for disaster-response services. Individual and church partnerships in CRWRC, based on prayer, volunteer work, and financial support, continue to grow. It is our prayer and our request to synod that churches continue to increase their support of CRWRC or at least to maintain the custom of four offerings per year in lieu of ministry shares.

CRWRC continues to receive substantial government and foundation grants. In 1998-1999, CRWRC received \$1,260,500 (Can.) from CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), \$50,450 (U.S.) from USAID (United States Agency for International Development), and \$690,097 (U.S.; \$1,039,929 Can.) from others. As an active partner in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), CRWRC contributed \$370,290 (Can.), which, when matched by CFGB partners and CIDA, amounted to 6,458 metric tons of grain, for a total relief response valued at \$4,671,728 (Can.).

Estate bequests for CRWRC are normally placed in the Joseph Fund and are recognized as revenue over a seven-year period. This fund continues to grow. It was able to make a contribution of \$383,500 (U.S.) to the current year's budget on July 1, 1999.

Many supporters and board delegates of CRWRC have made project visits and have been involved as volunteers through ServiceLink, Disaster Response Services, and Disaster Child Care. The involvement of Partners for Christian Development (PCD) continues to grow in support and in the number of complimentary projects in each of the overseas geographic ministry teams (GMTs).

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Calvin Hulst, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. Peter Bulthuis, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andy Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Mr. Wayne deJong, director of CRWRC-Canada, when CRWRC matters are discussed.

B. That CRWRC missionaries who are presently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

C. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Andy Ryskamp, CRWRC-U.S.A. director
Wayne deJong, CRWRC-Canada director

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was organized by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund operates exclusively in the United States, Canada having its own similar fund. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan-approval process and the determination of interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold, primarily to members, classes, and churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

II. Board of directors

The terms of Mr. Curtis Witte and Mr. Jon Feikens expire on June 30, 2000. Mr. Feikens has served on the board for two terms, and Mr. Witte has served for one term and is thus eligible for reappointment. The board requests synod to elect two board members from the following nominees for terms as stated:

A. Position 1 - select one for a three-year term through June 2003

Mr. Arie Leegwater, a member of Midland Park CRC, Midland Park, New Jersey, has served as an elder and deacon. He is presently chairman of the board of the Atlantic Stewardship Bank and is a member of the Christian Health Care Center Board. He has served on the boards of the Eastern Christian School Association, Elim Christian School, and RACOM. Mr. Leegwater is a graduate of Calvin College and Newark College of Engineering. He is a civil engineer and owner of Arie Leegwater Associates, a construction and consulting firm.

Mr. Albert Visbeen, a member of Cedar Hill CRC, Wykoff, New Jersey, has served as an elder, deacon, and Sunday-school superintendent. He has served on the boards of the Eastern Young Calvinist Association, Eastern Christian School Association, and Eastern Children's Retreat. Mr. Visbeen is a graduate of Eastern Christian High School and attended Calvin College. Having retired in 1995 from his position as CEO of Visbeen Construction Company, he presently serves as a construction consultant for commercial and church construction.

B. Position 2 - ratify second-term appointment for term through June 2003

Mr. Curtis Witte (incumbent), a member of Mayfair CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has served in various capacities in his congregation. He is presently vice president of the Loan Fund Board. Mr. Witte is a partner in the law firm of Damon, Oosterhouse, & Witte L.L.P.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Rev. Gerard Dykstra (2001), Ms. Jany Admiraal-Nykamp (2001), Mr. James Fredricks (2002), and Ms. Arlissa Joseph (2002).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in twenty-eight states and in the District of Columbia: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland,

Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 1999) a total of \$9,630,286 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to ten years, and interest rates vary from 5 percent to 7.5 percent, with a time-weighted average of 6.51 percent. The variances in interest rates reflect market conditions at the time the notes were issued.

C. To date, over three hundred requests for loan information have been received from various Christian Reformed churches in the United States; more than one hundred loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 1999, a total of \$10,410,442 (U.S.) was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and minimal.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data (U.S. and Canada consolidated):

	1997	1998	1999
Cash and equivalents	\$1,501,525	\$2,313,299	\$2,738,069
Loans and accounts receivable	10,310,664	\$10,306,190	\$10,410,442
Deposit on software			\$15,995
Total assets	\$11,812,189	\$12,619,489	\$13,164,506
Notes and accounts payable	\$8,627,416	\$9,302,485	\$9,630,286
Net assets	\$3,184,773	\$3,317,004	\$3,534,220
Total liabilities and net assets	\$11,812,189	\$12,619,489	\$13,164,506

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 1999, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2000—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

A. The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer has been obtained.

B. The gradual liquidation of non-interest-bearing notes of the former Christian Reformed Church Help Committee, which was dissolved December 31, 1983. The balance of these notes as of June 30, 1999, was \$10,297 (U.S.).

C. Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.

D. Bank loans and interagency borrowing so long as these are consistent with the corporation's articles of incorporation and bylaws. The Loan Fund currently does not have any outstanding bank loans or interagency borrowing.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Ethel Schierbeek (80 percent of full time) and Carl Gronsman, who also provides support to CR Home Missions as a member of the CRCNA Financial Services staff.

VI. Recommendations

A. That the Loan Fund's executive director or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

B. That synod elect one board member from the nominees provided and that it ratify a second-term appointment of the incumbent to serve on the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Carl A. Gronsman, executive director

I. Organization

The committee is composed of three lay people and two ministers, in keeping with previous synodical decisions. The present membership is as follows: Mr. Arthur Ruiten, president; Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema, secretary; Mr. Jack Folkerts, treasurer; Mr. Henry F. Eizenga; and Rev. Lester Van Essen. All members of the committee have had their terms extended to the termination date of the committee.

II. Work of the committee

Statistics for the calendar year 1999:

Applications processed	57
Assistance granted	55 (some provisionally)
Educational allowances granted in 1999	11

III. Developments in the ministry of the Fund for Smaller Churches

This report marks the final correspondence this committee will have with the churches. The members of the committee are grateful to God, the denomination, and the local churches for the opportunity afforded them to serve Christ. We hope the ministry of the Fund for Smaller Churches has been a blessing to the body of Christ. We believe it has been, and for that we are most grateful. We also wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone for upholding this ministry in prayer. Thank you for your generous donations and the support and advice you have extended to the committee members throughout the years.

As this ministry winds down, it is understandable that there could be hard feelings and deep concern regarding the future of some of the smaller churches. We ask your forgiveness if we, as members of the committee, have come across as cold-hearted, callous, or indifferent. We have tried to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to our care and to be attentive to the well-being of the church as a whole with each decision we have made.

We have enjoyed this ministry a great deal, and we have learned much about the grace of God at work in the local church. We have heard wonderful testimonies of the faithfulness of God. We have been blessed through our contact with all the clerks, pastors, committee chairmen, treasurers, and members throughout the years. It has been a joy to serve God in this way.

As this form of ministry to the smaller churches in our denomination comes to an end, we would like to take this opportunity to encourage our smallest and our most struggling churches to consider the merit and wisdom of adopting an alternative model of ministry. We truly hope these churches will be able to keep their doors open. We sincerely believe that one or more of the following alternative models of ministry could prove useful to that end.

The following alternative models are being suggested for these churches:

A. Bivocational ministry: The pastor works part-time in the ministry and is permitted to seek other gainful employment for the purpose of meeting family needs.

B. Multipoint parish: The pastor serves two or more congregations at the same time.

C. Shared ministry as an associate pastor: In this model the pastor is on staff of a larger neighboring church and also works part-time for the smaller church.

Each of these alternative models has been much in use throughout the evangelical church over the years. We think these alternative models create a great deal of flexibility regarding the future plans of many of our smaller churches. We recommend them for consideration and invite church visitors to encourage our very smallest churches to consider these models. It is the committee's hope that by these or other approaches the small and struggling churches can continue vibrant and God-glorifying ministry in the communities where they are located.

IV. Recommendations

A. That the FSC secretary and treasurer be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered either by synod or its advisory committee and that they be given the privilege of the floor. In the absence of either, we request the same privilege be granted to other members of the committee.

B. That the minimum salary for ministers serving churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at \$32,750 (\$31,500 in 2000) and that Canadian minimum salary be set at $\$32,750 \times 120\% = \$39,300$ (see K below).

C. That a service increment be paid according to the following scale:

\$100 per year of service for years 1-10

\$150 per year of service for years 11-20

\$200 per year of service for years 21 and up

D. That a child allowance of \$600 (\$720 Canadian) continue to be granted for every unmarried child up to age 19 (age 23 if enrolled full-time at an educational institution in an undergraduate program).

E. That automobile expenses be reimbursed at the rate of \$.31 per mile (\$.31 per kilometer in Canada) times the percentage of ministry-share reduction granted (80 minus # of families = % reimbursement rate).

F. That an allowance of \$4,500 be granted each congregation which provides its minister with health/dental/life insurance. Insurance coverage of the pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

G. That salary allowance for stated supply be set at \$400 per week in the U.S. and \$480 per week in Canada (see K below).

H. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be not less than \$400 per communicant member for 2001 and, if possible, more.

I. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC shall pay a Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastors in the amount of at least \$3,250. Canadian congregations are encouraged to contribute similar amounts toward a pastor's medical expenses by means of a medical allowance for out-of-pocket medical expenses.

J. That FSC churches in the U.S. be assisted in the Social Security/Medicare offset in the amount of \$2,500 in 2001. This shall be granted to Canadian churches provided the amount is designated for similar expenses.

K. That a cost-of-living differential allowance of 20 percent be added to the minimum salary and allowances paid to pastors serving Canadian congregations assisted by FSC. The Canadian churches shall also contribute at a rate of 120 percent of the per communicant member contribution rate established for the U.S. churches for 2001 (\$480).

Grounds:

1. The disparity in the cost of living between the U.S. and Canada makes such an adjustment necessary.
2. Other denominational agencies give a differential to those employed in Canada.
3. The precipitous drop in the value of the Canadian dollar warrants this adjustment.

L. That synod declare the continuing-education allowance for pastors in smaller churches to remain at \$400 for 2001. We note that all pastors of churches with fewer than fifty families are eligible to apply for these funds. This educational allowance is not limited to those pastors serving churches receiving FSC grants.

M. That synod approve a Christian-education allowance of \$800 (\$960 Canadian) per child for each child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, for 2001.

N. That the ministry share for the Fund for Smaller Churches be set at \$5.00 per year per communicant member over age 18.

O. That synod approve the plans to dissolve the FSC Committee as it is currently mandated and managed and shift its mandate and mission to the Established-Church Development Department of Home Missions.

Grounds:

1. Current staffing structures within Home Missions enhance the accountability component of recently implemented funding criteria.
2. The change conforms to recent synodical decisions to encourage consolidation of agencies and programs.
3. The change promotes the objective of strategic application of financial resources to vital and vibrant ministries.
4. The change promotes greater stewardship of ministry-share funds given in good faith by CRC members.
5. The change accommodates the fundamental shift in the funding objectives for the agencies. The denomination will not be subsidizing salary. Rather, it will be assisting with the funding of ministry development in the smaller churches.

Note: Synod 1999 asked the current committee to function until September 2000 and requested that the current secretary serve as a consultant to Home Missions until August 2001. This is agreeable to the members.

Fund for Smaller Churches
Lambert Sikkema, secretary

Pensions and Insurance

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement benefits as well as health, life, and disability insurance for employees of denominational agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

Administration of these programs is handled jointly by the denomination's Office of Personnel and Office of Finance and Administration. The responsibilities of the Office of Personnel include communication, enrollment, and record keeping; the Office of Finance and Administration handles financial administration, accounting, control, and investment management.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirements plans are governed by the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet two to four times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed to address matters unique to the responsibilities of the U.S. or Canadian trustees.

The responsibilities of the boards include long-term planning, benefit-related decision making, and policy definition as well as oversight of fund assets and investment returns. The U.S. board monitors the investment activities of the funds through a subcommittee made up of trustees and additional members recruited for their special expertise in investment-related matters. The Canadian board provides investment oversight within the context of the full committee.

During 1995 the role of the U.S. board was expanded to include governance of the U.S. Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) program. This year the role of the Canadian board was similarly expanded to include governance responsibility of the Canadian CGI plan.

The U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance is a five-member board currently chaired by Mr. William Venema. The Canadian Pension Trustees are a board of five members chaired by Mr. John Woudstra.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers' pension funds

The ministers' pension funds are defined-benefit pension plans designed to provide retirement income and disability benefits to ordained ministers within the Christian Reformed Church. As of December 1998, the date of the most recent actuarial valuation of the plans, there were 1,355 participants in the U.S. plan and 408 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	U.S.	Canada	Total
Active ministers	801	224	1,025
Retired ministers	372	121	493
Spouses and dependents	120	44	164
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	62	19	81
Total	1,355	408	1,763

Ordinarily, every three years independent actuaries are employed to do a complete valuation of the liabilities and assets of the plans. A valuation was made in January 1996, and, because an actuarial valuation was needed in connection with a study of certain proposed changes in the design of the plans, another valuation was performed in December 1998. Actuarial information presented in this report, including valuation and membership statistics, has been taken from the 1998 actuarial reports.

1. Basic assumptions

The calculation of the funded position of the plans, including the actuarial accrued liability, is based on several major assumptions. These assumptions are reviewed and approved regularly by the U.S. and Canadian trustees and are based on historical data and expectations for future trends.

The formula for pension determination is 1.1 percent of the final average salary multiplied by the retiree's years of credited service for service through December 31, 1999, and 1.46 percent of the final average salary multiplied by the retiree's years of credited service for service after December 31, 1999. Because benefit amounts are based on the final average salary in the year of retirement, expectations concerning increases in ministers' salaries enter very significantly into the calculation of the funded position of the plans. The 2000 average salary used for pension determination is \$35,099 (U.S.) and \$36,656 (Canada).

2. Asset balances

Plan assets are invested in balanced portfolios under the active management of well-qualified professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines approved by synod in 1997, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees. Their primary goal, set for them by the pension trustees, is to provide an above-average return and at the same time preserve principal. In significant part, the plans' financial performance and present sound financial condition have made it possible to enrich current and future benefits, as was done when synod approved the trustees' recommendations in June 1999, and should contribute to the cost of possible additional enhancements currently under consideration.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of December 31, 1998, the date of the last actuarial valuation of the plans, the actuarial liability totaled \$76,700,000 for the U.S. plan and \$20,900,000 for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the interests of the nearly 1,760 active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents. By December 31, 1999, the liability to plan participants will have grown as a result of another year of credited service and increases in the compensation base on which benefits are determined.

The actuarial value of the plans' assets on December 31, 1998, totaled \$85,300,000 for the U.S. plan and \$21,400,000 for the Canadian Plan. Actuarial values of plan assets may be more or less than actual portfolio balances at any given valuation date due to actuarial averaging of portfolio gains and losses.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 1999	December 31, 1998
United States (U.S. \$)	\$96,752,000	\$92,168,000
Canada (Can. \$)	\$25,663,000	\$22,588,000

Investment returns are continually monitored by the investment committees of both the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Pension Trustees. Total portfolio performance is summarized as follows:

	1999	3 years	5 years	10 years
Canadian Plan	13.5%	13.8%	15.5%	11.4%
U.S. Plan	10.7%	15.2%	17.1%	13.0%

Investment returns are used to provide the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to its active participants and, in part, to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries. As portfolio performance statistics indicate, investment returns have been good. The trustees are both grateful for these returns and mindful of the long-term nature of the plans' obligation to pay retirement and other benefits to its participants.

3. Plan review

In April 1997 the Canadian Pension Trustees and the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance, meeting in joint session, authorized a complete review of the design of the ministers' pension plans. The trustees wanted to determine whether the plans continue to meet the needs of the participants within existing and anticipated financial resources and constraints.

As a result, in June 1999, synod approved recommendations of the pension trustees to make certain significant changes in the plans. In connection with its consideration of these recommended changes, synod approved the following recommendation from its finance committee:

That synod instruct the pension trustees to review and seriously consider the following two general concerns:

- a. The level of postretirement income is inadequate and must be raised.
- b. The level of survivors' benefits paid to the spouses of participants should be raised.

These two general concerns lead to the following considerations:

- a. That the length of a "normal career" be adjusted downward from thirty-seven years.
- b. That the increase in benefits may require an increase in assessments for the pension funds.

(Acts of Synod 1999, p. 569)

The trustees welcomed this instruction as supportive of their ongoing efforts to improve the plans. They hope to recommend additional improvements that are responsive to synod's instruction and that best suit the interests of the pastors, spouses, widows, and dependents who rely on the plans to furnish a significant portion of their financial needs during periods of retirement, disability, or loss.

Recently, by means of a survey, the trustees asked all plan participants for their views on some basic issues of plan design. It is expected that the responses will significantly influence ongoing efforts to improve the plans. If all goes according to plan, responses will have been summarized and shared with plan participants by the time synod meets in June. The trustees believe that recommendations for additional improvements will be made to synod in 2001.

4. Funding strategy

Through December 31, 1997, the plans were funded by a combination of ministry shares and direct billings. Ministry shares paid for the pension benefits of ministers serving churches (one pastor in cases of churches having multiple-staff ministries). The underlying concept has been that ministers serve several congregations during the course of their careers and in so doing serve the entire CRC. The cost of pension benefits for these ministers has been spread among all the members of the CRC. Regardless of whether one attends a large church or a small church, the pension cost to be paid by each member is the same.

Each ministry that employs a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any capacity other than first or only pastor is required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. Costs are billed quarterly and cover the pension costs of approximately one-fourth of all active participants.

Synod 1997 approved a new method of funding the pension costs of all first/only pastors and chaplains. Under this new method, pension costs associated with these pastors are funded by means of an assessment on each professing member of the denomination age 18 or older. The amount of the assessment for 2000 is \$16.00 per member in Canada and \$14.40 in the U.S. These amounts are collected by means of quarterly billings to each church, based on each church's reported membership statistics. As with ministry shares, this funding method spreads the pension cost evenly among all members of the CRC.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering unordained employees of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. Contributions are paid to the plan on a quarterly basis by participating groups in an amount equal to 9 percent of the compensation of the unordained employees who are participants in the plan. Each quarter participants receive a statement indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the total value of their accounts, and the vested percentage in their accounts.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including a money-market fund, a bond fund, and a pooled-equity fund. Currently the trustees are researching the possibility of expanding the number of equity funds to offer a larger range of investment risk and opportunity. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Bank One, N.A. Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants by Clarica Life Insurance Company.

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers life, health, and dental coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies. Currently there are 1,313 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 640 pastors and employees of local churches, 327 employees of denominational agencies, and 302 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan purchased through a major health-insurance provider. The coverage in Canada is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the U.S. a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan.

In the U.S. the plan has been significantly affected by increasing costs of health care and changes in systems available to self-insured plans for the administration of claims and for obtaining discounts through provider networks. Premiums charged by the plan are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses. Due to constantly increasing costs of health-care services, it has been necessary to increase premiums in each of the last three years.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited financial statements of the plans, and of all of the agencies and institutions, are sent each year to the clerk of each classis and are available to any interested party. In addition, beginning in 1999, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to members of the ministers' pension plans and the employees retirement plans.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and of the United States Board of Pensions and Insurance or to Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus when insurance matters and matters pertaining to pension plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 1999 and 2000 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod elect two members to the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance for three-year terms beginning July 1, 2000.

Mr. Lloyd Bierma and Mr. Wilbert Venema are completing their first terms of office and are eligible to serve a second term. According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure their names are being submitted as single nominees.

1. *Mr. Lloyd Bierma*, of Sioux Center, Iowa, is a member of First CRC of Sioux Center, where he has served as council member and president of council. From 1985 to 1992 he served on the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and its investment advisory committee. A practicing attorney, he has been on the boards of Sioux Center Christian School, Calvin College, and the Dordt College Foundation.

2. *Mr. Wilbert Venema*, of Hudsonville, Michigan, is a member of Twelfth Avenue CRC, Jenison, Michigan, where he has served as elder. He also served six years on the Ministers' Pension Committee in the 1960s and five years subsequently on the World Missions Board. He currently serves as a board member of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services.

D. That synod elect one member to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2000.

1. *Rev. Jake Kuipers* is pastor of First CRC of Sarnia, Ontario. Prior to serving First CRC of Sarnia, he served congregations in Bloomfield and Brampton, Ontario. In 1999 Rev. Kuipers completed six years of service on the CRCNA Board of Trustees. He served on the board of Home Missions for five years in the 1980s and has been a delegate to synod on five occasions.

2. *Rev. Phillip Stel* is pastor of First CRC of Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. He has served on the home-missions committees of classis Hamilton, Chatham, and Alberta North. He is a member of the denominational Home Missions board and has served for six years on the board of Dordt College, including four years as a member of its executive committee. He served as delegate to synod in 1986.

Pensions and Insurance
Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance
and administration

I. Introduction

This report gives an overview of youth ministry in the denomination in 1999 and provides a sampling of how the Youth-Ministry Committee (YMC) is supporting, encouraging, and improving the way the denomination ministers to youth. A major part of our work is to embrace, affirm, and monitor the work of the three ministry divisions of Dynamic Youth Ministries (formerly known as United Calvinist Youth). The committee as a whole has met twice since its report to Synod 1999.

II. Promoting the work of Dynamic Youth Ministries

The mandate of the YMC calls it to “be the denominational conscience continually emphasizing the paramount importance of ministry among our youth.” The YMC takes very seriously the calling to nurture youth. It endorses the work of Dynamic Youth Ministries, the denominationally related youth-ministry organization, and believes that all CRC churches could benefit from participation in Dynamic Youth Ministries’ programs and resources. The committee recommends and encourages participation in these ministries to CRC churches that do not participate.

III. Evaluations

The YMC must provide biennial written reports of the programs of each ministry of Dynamic Youth Ministries. The committee decided to include in its evaluations the publications for youth available through CRC Publications. The YMC has set in process a schedule so that every October two of the four youth publications are evaluated. Our mutual goal is to encourage each other in excellence. The YMC will ask for feedback from Dynamic Youth Ministries and CRC Publications to ensure that the evaluations are accurate.

IV. Nominations for Youth-Ministry Committee

Several committee positions need to be filled. Since Synod 1998 gave permission for committees to present single nominees (an incumbent) for a second term, we are presenting the following names as single nominees:

A. *Member-at-large*

Dr. Syd Hielema is a professor of theology at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. He has been involved in youth ministry for over ten years.

B. *Eastern Canada*

Mr. Pieter Pereboom is presently the youth pastor at First CRC in London, Ontario.

For two positions in which the incumbents are presently completing their second terms, or are not willing to serve again, the committee presents the following pairs of nominees:

C. *Member-at-large*

Mr. John Matias, assistant director for multicultural admissions and community relations at Calvin College, works toward developing strategies to increase the number of multicultural admissions and enhancing the diversity

of the student body. He also works with alumni relations to assist in developing broader support for multicultural admissions. John is involved in a multiethnic church plant in the Grand Rapids area, where he is active in youth ministry.

Rev. Joel Van Dyke, a Christian Reformed pastor, is on loan to Bethel Temple church on the north side of Philadelphia. Joel was initially involved in youth ministry at Bethel Temple and has recently become the pastor of congregational life. He has significant presence with young adults and supervises the youth-ministry director, who developed his commitment to and skill in leadership during Joel's ministry.

D. Eastern United States

Mary De Jager, from Silver Spring, Maryland, has been involved with youth as a volunteer and a professional for over ten years. Ms. De Jager is a graduate of Calvin College and holds an M.A. in Christian education from Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Mark Rip is pastor of youth and education at the Bradenton, Florida, CRC. A graduate of Dordt College, Mark has been involved in youth ministry for four years. He served a church in Visalia, California, before moving to Florida.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Dr. Syd Hielema, and the secretary, Mrs. Glenda Tamming-Tebben.

B. That synod approve the single nominees for member-at-large representative and for Eastern Canada representative for three-year terms on the YMC.

C. That synod elect one of two nominees for the member-at-large position and one of two nominees for Eastern United States representative to three-year terms on the YMC.

D. That the three divisions of Dynamic Youth Ministries—Cadets, GEMS, and Youth Unlimited—be placed on the recommended-causes list.

Youth-Ministry Committee
Syd Hielema, chairperson
Glenda Tamming-Tebben, secretary

Dynamic Youth Ministries: GEMS Girls' Clubs

The Lord continues to use the ministry of GEMS Girls' Clubs as one of the most effective outreach ministries of the church. Thousands of formerly unchurched girls, and in many cases their parents, are being introduced to the Savior through counselors in GEMS clubs. Nearly one third of our more than 20,000 girls come from families that are not members of any church. We are grateful to have the privilege of introducing girls to Christ and of training them for a life of kingdom service.

This past year we have again experienced significant growth. Twenty-eight new clubs have been added, bringing our total number of clubs to 755, and

almost every club has reported an increase in the number of girls attending. What a blessing to be able to minister to more girls than ever before!

This year clubs participated in the theme “Get Tall: Fall on Your Knees.” This theme on prayer was a study of the life of Nehemiah. Girls and counselors were taught how to develop the daily discipline of journaling their prayers.

The thirtieth annual Counselors’ Convention was held in West Lafayette, Indiana, on the campus of Purdue University, where 725 women experienced the joy, inspiration, training, and fellowship that is offered year after year to our leaders.

Across the continent Celebration Gatherings continue to connect girls and counselors with the Savior. These large group events are held regionally; they range in size from five hundred to two thousand girls. They focus on celebrating God’s goodness through exciting praise and worship, creative movement, mime, and drama.

Permanent life change took place for many early teen girls at our first-ever Get Connected! Camp. This seven-day event brought 161 girls to camp, many of whom were first-time campers. The camp was an international experience: 60 percent of the girls and the college-age counselors come from the U.S., and 40 percent from Canada. Throughout the week girls connected with many truths from God’s Word and focused on ways to incorporate those truths into their own lives. Over 100 girls made first-time decisions for Christ or rededicated their lives to Christ. It was a memory-making, life-changing experience for everyone in attendance—campers, counselors, volunteers, and staff alike. We are grateful for the opportunity to have an impact on girls so vulnerable to the lure of today’s culture. The next Get Connected! Camp is scheduled for the summer of 2001 at a camp in Ontario.

GEMS Girls’ Clubs
Jan Boone, director

Dynamic Youth Ministries: Calvinist Cadet Corps

This was the year of our triennial international camporee, and nearly 1,100 men and boys gathered in western Illinois for the week-long event. As always, we had a wonderful time. God blessed us with warm, sunny weather for most of the week, except Saturday, when the entire crowd boarded dozens of buses and rode to Peoria, home of the Caterpillar Corporation. There the Caterpillar people treated us to an awesome demonstration of the power of their equipment. The demonstration was especially effective because it correlated with the camporee theme, “Demonstrating His Power.” The power of the machines was spellbinding, but it is nothing compared to the power of God.

The 1999 camporee generated enough interest to produce invitations for the next two. Plans are to hold the event in the Canadian Rockies of Alberta in 2002 and back in the Midwest in 2005.

For the first time in nearly three decades, there was no counselors’ convention this past year. Our board of directors decided that there would no longer be conventions during international-camporee years. Instead, we will pro-

duce and promote regional conferences for counselors. By doing so, we have been able to reach more than twice as many men as we do at annual conventions. We praise God and thank him for this blessing and for the continued strength of the Cadet ministry. It is a vital part of the churches' ministries, and we deeply appreciate pastors and counselors who recognize that.

Calvinist Cadet Corps
G. Richard Broene, executive director

Dynamic Youth Ministries: Youth Unlimited

With a desire to be both proactive and responsive to the changing face of youth ministry within the CRC, Youth Unlimited has developed an assessment and planning tool called Compass 21. With the assistance of trained facilitators, churches that engage in Compass 21 are empowered to improve their youth ministry within their congregations and communities. Its beginnings have been small but steady as Youth Unlimited seeks to make this available across the entire denomination.

The programs of Youth Unlimited continue to be used and appreciated by the churches. In 1999 there were 3,147 attendees at the "Whisper It Loud" Convention at UCLA. SERVE projects had a record high 1,449 participants, and SWIM and Project Bridge had 104 and 37 respectively. The 2000 "Ready or Not" Convention will be held at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri. SERVE, SWIM, and Project Bridge are set to receive nearly 2,000 youth and adults in 2000.

Youth Unlimited continues to work in cooperation with CRC Publications and other denominational agencies. Youth Unlimited staff and volunteers serve on various denominational committees and task forces. Out of these relationships have grown some joint ventures and cooperative ministry efforts.

This year Youth Unlimited has launched into a new area of ministry by hosting a Western Canadian Convention for the churches in that area. Through the grass-roots leadership of various church leaders, a planning committee and host team were formed that are putting together the program and running the event, which is scheduled for August 18-21 at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia. The board has committed itself to supporting this event for its first year and plans to evaluate it before making any future commitments. Excitement is running high, and we seek the Lord's blessing on this convention.

In light of a dramatic increase in the number of professional youth workers serving in the CRC over the past few years, Youth Unlimited would like to encourage the denomination to recognize and affirm this vital role in the life of the church. More assistance could be provided in both their training and support. Youth Unlimited is looking for more ways to do this through some of its programs, but much more needs to be done.

After ten and a half years of service as the executive director of Youth Unlimited, Rev. Brian Bosscher accepted a call to serve as the pastor of preaching and worship at Sunshine Community CRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

His years of service have been much appreciated. The board is currently engaged in a search process to fill the vacancy.

During this last year the ministry has experienced the Lord's faithfulness in providing for its fiscal needs, though increasingly that support is coming from sources outside the local church. The board and staff of Youth Unlimited wish to thank the churches for their use and support of this ministry.

Youth Unlimited

Brian Bosscher, executive director

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is the standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church that oversees the work of the denominational archives and promotes publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee's members are Dr. Harry Boonstra (chair), Rev. William Buursma, Mrs. Swenna Harger, Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, and Dr. Richard Harms (ex officio, secretary).

II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the archives, which are housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. He also serves as the archivist of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin College. Other staff include office manager Hendrina Van Spronsen; departmental assistants Wendy Blankespoor and Boukje Leegwater; field agent and assistant archivist Dr. Robert Bolt; adjunct field agent Dr. Henry Ippel; volunteers Floyd Antonides, Rev. Henry Baak, Rev. Henry De Mots, Margaret Eshuis, Ed Gerritsen, Fred Greidanus, Hendrick Harms, John Knight, Stephen Lambers, Helen Meulink, Harriet Mostert, Bill Nawyn, Janice Overzet, Ed Start, Rev. Leonard Sweetman, and Cornelius Van Duyn; and student assistants Kristi Den Bleyker, Betsy Verduin, and Katia Wierenga.

III. Archival work during 1999

A. Maintained contact with forty-one of the forty-seven classes via regional representatives, who serve in each classis as contact people for the archives. Six classes (Hackensack, Hamilton, Muskegon, Northern Illinois, Pacific Hanmi, Thornapple) are without a regional representative. In these cases all correspondence is directed to the stated clerk.

B. Acquired archival records from sixty-three CRCNA congregations, thirty-nine classes, and four Christian-school organizations. Eight classes sent no 1999 minutes to the archives.

C. Microfilmed minutes, reports, and other records from fifty-seven CRCNA congregations and other agencies. Received material from organizations or other groups associated with the denomination's ministries, congregations, and agencies.

D. Published the nineteenth newsletter, which was distributed to all regional representatives, stated clerks of classes, the Dutch American Historical Commission, relevant periodical editors, and others in the denomination.

E. Completed compiling historical data on the 2,624 individuals who have served as ordained ministers in the denomination and the 1,294 congregations and missions that are, or have been, part of the CRCNA.

F. Moved all electronic cataloging data from Micro.MARC-AMC to Dynix to be Y2K compatible and to provide cataloging data to archival holdings via the same delivery system used by the Hekman Library.

G. Inaugurated a translation project for early denominational and congregational minutes.

IV. Publications

CRC Publications reports that sales of *Our Family Album* have passed 3,000 and are well ahead of projected sales. The committee continues to work with the author of the Van Raalte manuscript and has received information that a manuscript about the CRC in Canada is well underway, that a manuscript examining the relationship between the denomination and Calvin College has been started, and that the potential now exists for producing a historical directory of ordained ministers and congregations.

V. Historic sites

The committee spent much time advising the congregation at Graafschap, Michigan. This congregation, one of the denomination's founders, with an edifice dating to 1862, asked for the committee's assistance in coming to a decision on how to deal with growth anticipated to surpass the capacity of its sanctuary. Investigation indicated that little of the structure's historic fabric remains except for the frame and support system. After careful consideration the congregation decided to raze the current building, saving those historic elements that remain, and to build a new, larger sanctuary, the design of which will reflect the design of the current edifice.

VI. Recognition

A. On behalf of the denomination, the committee extended appreciation to the family of Rev. Marinus Goote, who died February 27, 1999. After retiring from the active ministry in 1977, Rev. Goote had a second career of nearly twenty years as the processing archivist. As we noted in our 1999 report, Rev. Goote had suffered a stroke in October 1998, and a series of health problems prevented him from returning to the archives. The full scope of his gifts to the archives will never be known.

B. The committee acknowledges six years of service by Rev. William Buursma and thanks him for his many contributions as he retires from the committee.

C. We acknowledge the following individuals who will celebrate significant anniversaries in the ordained ministry:

73 years	Oren Holtrop
70 years	Gareth S. Kok
65 years	Elco H. Oostendorp John O. Schuring
60 years	Gerrit B. Boerfyn Lambert Doezema Repko W. Popma
55 years	Edward G. Boer John C. Derksen George D. Vanderhill William F. Vander Hoven James W. Van Weeldon

50 years Lugene A. Bazuin
 Martin D. Geleyense
 John A. Hoeksema
 Dick C. Los
 Roger D. Posthuma
 Lammert Sloftstra
 Leonard Stockmeier

D. The committee also reports on the following anniversaries of congregational organization:

175 years Clifton, NJ – Richfield (entered denomination, 1890)
 Monsey, NY – New Hope (entered denomination, 1890)

125 years Jenison, MI – First
 Kentwood, MI – Kelloggsville

100 years Kanawha, IA
 Lynden, WA – First

75 years Grand Rapids, MI – East Leonard
 Grand Rapids, MI – Fuller Avenue
 Hull, IA – Hope (entered denomination, 1961)
 Kalamazoo, MI – Grace (entered denomination, 1945)

50 years Abbotsford, BC – First
 Barrhead, AB
 Barrie, ON – First
 Bellflower, CA – Rosewood
 Bouwmanville, ON – Rehoboth
 Brockville, ON – Bethel
 Cochrane, ON
 Cornwall, ON – Immanuel
 Delta, BC – First Ladner
 Des Moines, IA
 Drayton, ON
 Essex, ON
 Hamilton, ON
 Langley, BC – First
 Lethbridge, AB – First
 London, ON – First
 Mississauga, ON – Clarkston
 Orangeville, ON
 Oskaloosa, IA – Bethel
 Rocky Mountain House, AB – First
 Stoney Creek, ON – Fruitland
 Sussex, NJ
 Thunder Bay, ON – First
 Toronto, ON – First
 Wheaton, IL
 Willmar, MN
 Zeeland, MI – Bethel

25 years Chatham, ON – Glory
 Flagstaff, AZ – Hope Community
 Grandville, MI – Fellowship
 Hudsonville, MI – Georgetown
 Lethbridge, ON – Maranatha
 Norfolk, VA – Ocean View

VII. Reminders

- A. The denomination's sesquicentennial is in 2007.
- B. We urge congregations that have observed or soon will observe anniversaries to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, videotapes, photographs, etc.) to the archives. This is a convenient means for keeping a duplicate set of such materials in a secure location.
- C. Of the 832 organized congregations, 658 (79 percent) have sent their minutes to the archives for microfilming. Due to the frequent reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee urges the remaining 174 congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce a backup copy that will be stored in a secure environment with absolute confidentiality.

VIII. Recommendations

- A. That Dr. Harry Boonstra (chair) and Dr. Richard Harms (secretary) be permitted to represent the committee when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.
- B. That one candidate from the following pair be elected to the committee for a three-year term to replace Rev. William Buursma, who has served the maximum of two terms:
- Rev. Michael De Vries*, pastor of Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan. He will retire on July 1, 2000.
- Dr. Roger Van Harn*, recently retired pastor of Grace CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a member of Grace CRC.
- C. That synod urge those classes that have not sent copies of their minutes to the archives to do so by adding the archives to their mailing lists. This action on the part of classes will help to fill the gaps in the archival holdings.
- D. That synod permit the research use of denominational records more than one hundred years old.
- E. That synod (1) authorize the denominational Historical Committee to appoint an ad hoc committee to prepare for commemoration of the denomination's sesquicentennial in 2007 and (2) establish the mandate for this ad hoc committee.

Historical Committee
Harry Boonstra, chair
William D. Buursma
Swenna Harger
Richard Harms, secretary (ex officio)
Henry Zwaanstra

I. Membership

The members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) (with the years in which their terms expire) are Dr. Lyle Bierma (2002); Rev. Peter W. Brouwer (2000); Rev. Jason Chen (2002); Rev. Michiel De Berdt (2002); Ms. Claire Elgersma (2001); Rev. Robert J. Haven (2001); Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary (2000); Ms. Cynthia Roelofs (2000); Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, president (2001); and the general secretary, Dr. David Engelhard (ex officio).

II. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. Fraternal delegates

The IRC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches with which the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines, meeting in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines, April 26-29, 1999, Rev. Stanley Kruis.
2. To the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, June 10-16, 1999, Dr. Stan Scrips.
3. To the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, meeting in Rome, Georgia, June 1999, Rev. Dan Buis.
4. To the Reformed Churches in South Africa, meeting in Potchefstroom, South Africa, January 10-20, 2000, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman and Rev. Jason Chen.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with the mandate of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the IRC appointed representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These appointees report to the IRC.

1. Dr. David H. Engelhard is a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and currently serves as chairman pro tem of its Nominating Committee.
2. Dr. George Vandervelde serves as the IRC observer on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches. He attended the Faith and Order Commission meeting March 12-13, 1999, in Charlotte, North Carolina. Dr. Vandervelde is part of an ecclesiology group that was involved in exploring various issues from the viewpoint of diverse traditions. The Charlotte meeting dealt with two topics: the authority of Scripture and eschatology and mission. The unique contribution that the CRCNA is able to make at these meetings is greatly appreciated.
3. Dr. Henry Zwaanstra serves as the IRC observer to the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

III. Ecumenical organizations

A. *North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)*

The twenty-fifth annual meeting of NAPARC was held at Bonclarken Conference Center in Flat Rock, North Carolina, November 16-17, 1999, hosted by the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The CRCNA delegates were Rev. Peter Brouwer and Dr. David Engelhard. Rev. David Watson, pastor of the Terra Ceia Christian Reformed Church, came to observe the meeting. As a suspended church the CRCNA may send delegates to the meetings, and those delegates are permitted to speak on matters being discussed by the council, but they may not vote. The CRC may not be represented on the Interim Committee of NAPARC and is not expected to pay dues while it is suspended.

Even though the CRCNA is a suspended member denomination, the IRC judged again this year that it was appropriate to send a delegation. It was argued that it is better for us to continue to be part of the dialogue than to absent ourselves from the discussion.

Reports were presented by delegates from each member church, as well as by observers representing nonmember denominations, about the ministry of their churches and significant decisions made at their most recent synods or general assemblies. Prayer was offered for the ministry and needs of each church after its report was received.

Dr. William Evans, a professor at Erskine College and Seminary, delivered an after-dinner address, in which he attempted to identify some of the tensions and polarities that exist both within and between the various member denominations and challenged NAPARC to discuss them openly and constructively.

Two decisions were made by NAPARC regarding the following: (1) the use of remaining funds in the Westminster Commemoration Fund and (2) the role and purpose of NAPARC. With respect to the role and purpose of NAPARC the following proposal of the Interim Committee was adopted by the council:

We are grateful for the bonds of the gospel and the Reformed faith that unite us. In light of the "II. Basis of the Council" (Constitution of NAPARC) and in order that all NAPARC member churches may be more fully aware of the unique characteristics of each member church, we recommend that each member church discern and enumerate those issues of belief, practice, and government that, to the best of their knowledge, distinguish them from other NAPARC churches and submit a report to NAPARC, no later than October 3, 2000, so that NAPARC may evaluate the biblical and confessional bases for such distinctive positions and the degree to which these issues necessitate continued separation.

The CRCNA will need to undertake such a study if it continues its membership in NAPARC, though it seems unlikely that the other member churches would be interested in discussing a closer relationship with the CRCNA at this time.

Our delegates at NAPARC, in keeping with the alphabetical rotation of churches, suggested that the CRCNA host NAPARC 2001. A motion was made to accept the invitation, but by a vote of 9 to 6 the invitation was declined. There was an expressed reluctance to make it appear that the CRCNA is in good favor with NAPARC.

The IRC continues to reflect on whether or not to discontinue membership in NAPARC. Although our delegates are cordially received, they experience feelings of estrangement. They still make valuable contributions to the discussions of the council. The IRC believes that the CRCNA should be a part

of such a Reformed ecumenical council and that for now we should stay the course. The matter of continuing or discontinuing membership in NAPARC has been referred to a committee consisting of Rev. Peter Brouwer, Dr. David Engelhard, Rev. Leonard Hofman, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra.

B. Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)

1. The assembly of the REC is scheduled to meet in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, July 14-28, 2000. The theme chosen for this quadrennial assembly is "Making All Things New." According to the constitution of the REC, each member church may send official delegates to the assembly, classified as voting and nonvoting. The CRCNA is sending six delegates: Rev. Jason Chen, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and Ms. Claire Elgersma as voting delegates, and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, Rev. Ruth M. Hofman, and Rev. Richard E. Williams as nonvoting delegates/ alternates (see *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 576). Dr. Peter Borgdorff will attend the assembly as an adviser. Along with the *Agenda for the Assembly of the REC*, reports of the REC Committee on Religious Pluralism and Committee on Strategies to Combat Racism have been received.
2. The REC has been struggling financially. In its report to Synod 1999, the IRC expressed the hope that it could slightly increase its contribution to the REC from its approved budget (see *Acts of Synod 1999*, pp. 488-89). A request for an increase of 2.5 percent has been included in the denominational budget process for fiscal year 2001-2002.

C. National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)

The NAE board of directors, meeting September 13, 1999, in Arlington, Virginia, adopted the recommendation of its Executive Committee to relocate NAE's home office from Wheaton/ Carol Stream, Illinois, to Azusa, California. The NAE retains its office for governmental affairs in Washington, D.C. The move will provide a bicoastal presence for NAE.

The NAE convention is scheduled to meet March 6-8, 2000, in Arlington, Virginia, under the theme "Know God and Make Him Known." Dr. David Engelhard serves as a member of the NAE board of directors. He and Rev. Norberto Wolf will represent the CRCNA at the NAE Convention 2000.

D. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

As noted in its report to Synod 1999, "the IRC decided to complete its review and revision of the Ecumenical Charter prior to presenting a recommendation relative to membership in WARC" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 190). WARC has elected a new general secretary, the Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, to replace retiring Dr. Milan Opocensky. The IRC receives *UPDATE*, a quarterly publication of WARC. The IRC has recently been encouraged to apply for membership in WARC by representatives of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

E. World Council of Churches (WCC)

As reported in the *Acts of Synod 1999* (p. 490), the WCC is creating a forum to be held September 5-10, 2000, at Fuller Theological Seminary, to which a representation from the CRCNA is invited. The forum will include churches and organizations that for various reasons are not now members of the WCC. Invitees to the forum include a broad spectrum of churches, including Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and a variety of others, who will

come together to discuss concerns that are common to all of them. The forum carries no mandate from any particular agency and is answerable to no particular organization. It will be made up of a group of individuals who are concerned “to explore ways to facilitate greater cooperation between Christian churches and organizations, so that our witness to Jesus Christ will be clear and compelling” (Feb. 7, 2000, letter of invitation). The IRC is considering participation in the consultation.

IV. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN/RCN)

Another week of intensive discussion with a delegation from the Netherlands was held December 7-10, 1999. The delegation included four representatives of the RCN and two from the Hervormde Kerk, one a member of the Reformed Alliance. The delegation also had half-day meetings with several agencies of the CRCNA.

As in previous meetings, questions of structure, polity, theology, and ethics were discussed. Several professors of Calvin Theological Seminary joined the IRC for discussions which related specifically to their areas of expertise. An overview of CRC/RCN discussions and conclusions drawn is attached to this report as Appendix A.

Once again the RCN delegation expressed a strong desire to continue in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. They wish to have the restriction on exchange of fraternal delegates lifted, and they continue to be interested in “joint action in areas of common responsibilities” (see Memorandum of Understanding, *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 370).

The IRC considered the requests of the delegation in the light of the conversations that have previously been held and has decided not to recommend that our present relationship of “restricted ecclesiastical fellowship” be altered at this time. Several observations have bearing on this decision. Representatives of both churches believe that intensive discussions have been carried on as long as necessary. How the RCN deals with Professors den Heyer and Kuitert in light of their writings on atonement and Christology will be of interest to the IRC. The new church formed by the federation of the Samen op Weg churches will require IRC review. In the CRC there is a decreasing familial connectedness with the Dutch “mother church.”

V. Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CGKN/CRCN)

The IRC has sent a letter to the ecumenical committee of the CRCN requesting a face-to-face meeting in the Netherlands with members of their committee to discuss ecumenical possibilities within the framework of our revised Ecumenical Charter. It was explained that the CRCNA continues to experience deep sadness and regret that ecclesiastical ties between the CRCN and the CRCNA have been broken. It is hoped that the provisions of a revised Ecumenical Charter may accommodate a rekindled relationship between our two denominations.

VI. Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA/RCSA)

In August 1999 Professor Koos Vorster of the University of Potchefstroom, while in the United States on a research project, met with members of the IRC in behalf of the RCSA Deputies for Correspondence with Churches in Foreign Countries to correct the erroneous impression given the Reformed Churches of

New Zealand that the RCSA was moving in the direction of severing ties with the CRCNA (see *Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 197). He assured the IRC that the RCSA deputies for ecumenicity resolved not to recommend to their synod to sever ecclesiastical ties with the CRCNA.

A formal invitation was received to send fraternal delegates to the RCSA synod to be held at Potchefstroom January 10-20, 2000. The IRC decided to delegate two of its members to that synod, namely, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman and Rev. Jason Chen.

The delegates were cordially received by the RCSA synod. There was a generous and appreciative response to the fraternal greetings brought by Rev. Hofman. The delegation met with the Commission on Ecumenicity (advisory committee), responding to what seemed to be its most pressing concern: whether the lifting of suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship by the CRCNA in 1996 was a response only to the political change in South Africa. In response the commission was assured that, although the political ending of apartheid was recognized and played a providential role, it was not the only or the primary reason. Rather, the following factors all entered into the CRCNA's decision to lift suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship in 1996: the IRC's review of the 1989 study; documents that had been subsequently exchanged; steps taken by the RCSA in the direction of reconciliation (including the merger of the University of Potchefstroom with Heidelberg and the hiring of a person of color to teach at Potchefstroom); the conversation with Professor du Plooy in May 1996; the awareness that the RCSA triennial synod would meet in January 1997; and the RCSA decision to approve the following resolution:

that the ideology of apartheid, which is a political and social system by which human dignity is adversely affected and whereby one particular group is detrimentally suppressed by another, cannot be accepted on Christian ethical grounds because it contravenes the very essence of reconciliation, neighborly love and righteousness, the unity of the Church and inevitably the human dignity of all involved and is therefore a sin and the biblical justification of it is a heresy. (RCSA *Acts of Synod 1991*, Resolution 7.4)

Although some of the South African delegates expressed concern about the CRCNA, based largely on misinformation, more and balanced voices spoke in favor of continuing ecclesiastical fellowship.

The synod of the RCSA approved the following recommendations of its Commission on Ecumenicity:¹

1. That we continue correspondence with the CRC.
2. That in-depth talks have to be held on our and their hermeneutics.
3. That in the talks primary information of the CRC must be used.
4. That deputies should be delegated to the CRC's next synod.
5. That a letter must be sent to the RCNZ in which the RCSA's decision is communicated.

Motivations:

Because of the misunderstandings between the CRC and the RCSA over the last decade, no correct [concrete] cases came to the fore that should be a stumbling block for continued correspondence.

¹The following is a free translation of the Afrikaans by the person who served as translator for fraternal delegates attending the RCSA synod. Words are inserted in brackets for better understanding of the translation.

From the official decision of the CRC about the lifting of the suspension it can be seen clearly that the decision was not taken due to political reasons only; but that the RCSA's honest search for a larger experience of unity within the denomination played a very important role.

Questions from members of the RCSA on aspects of CRC decisions can be connected to the hermeneutics. Therefore it is important that talks must continue re (using) both denominations' official documents on hermeneutical principles underlying Bible translation [interpretation].

Seeing [In the light of] the principle of ecclesiastical correspondence, as in Matthew 18, it is important that the RCSA do not let themselves be served through secondary information on the CRC, but that firsthand information must be gotten from CRC decisions. In the past it was always the policy of the RCSA in exercising correspondence with those churches with whom the RCSA stands in correspondence.

In order to get talks started, it is important that a deputy must be delegated to the coming synod of the CRC.

The RCNZ is under the impression that the RCSA is going to suspend correspondence with the CRC. To clear misunderstanding it is necessary that the RCNZ must be officially informed of the current situation.

The fraternal delegates expressed appreciation for the decision, and a number of RCSA delegates and officers expressed joy and pleasure.

It is worthy of note that there is evidence of change on the grass-roots level. A minister from Klerkspoort reported that his church is calling a black ministerial candidate to work in the church along with two white pastors. They will rotate preaching responsibilities in this congregation of approximately 400 white and 120 black members. The candidate had served his internship in that congregation.

VII. Uniting Reformed Churches in Southern Africa (URCSA)

Although it was not possible to arrange a meeting with the leadership of URCSA, a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA, the delegation was able to follow up on the meeting that an IRC delegation attended in October 1998, at Bloemfontein. A personal meeting was held with Dr. Daniel Maluleke, moderator of one of URCSA's regional synods, and four other members of URCSA. The delegation also was successful in reaching by telephone the moderator of URCSA, Dr. James Buys, in Capetown. The URCSA representatives were appreciative of the contact. Dr. Buys indicated that he may visit Synod 2000 of the CRCNA. He was encouraged to attend as a fraternal delegate.

When reference was made to establishing an ecclesiastical relationship with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, neither Dr. Maluleke nor Dr. Buys advised the delegation to discontinue talks with the DRC. Rather, they hoped that while honoring the relationship between the CRCNA and URCSA, the CRCNA might be able to assist in the uniting process between URCSA and the DRC.

VIII. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (NGK/DRC)

After the IRC delegation served as observers at the quadrennial synod of the DRC in October 1998, the IRC requested from the DRC documents—in English—that reflect that denomination's position on hermeneutics and the

authority of Scripture; apartheid; such ethical issues as abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia; ecclesiastical office and ordination; the admission of women to ecclesiastical offices; and children at the Lord's Supper. These documents have been received by the IRC.

In January 2000 Rev. Jason Chen and Rev. Leonard Hofman met with three leaders of the DRC: Dr. Willie Botha, Dr. Pieter Meiring, and Dr. Pieter C. Potgieter, moderator. Matters of mutual interest and concern were discussed. The CRC delegation expressed appreciation for the documents that were sent and substantial agreement with their contents. The South African leaders spoke of the stress their denomination is experiencing with respect to the unification process among Reformed churches, charismatics in the church, and pastoral care of pastors. They requested a copy of the CRCNA reports on Neo-Pentecostalism and on pastoral care. They are exploring ways in which their church can offer servant leadership in the changing ecclesiastical and political world in which they find themselves.

Because the DRC has officially and repeatedly requested that the CRCNA enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with that church, it was agreed that the CRCNA would take the next step toward establishing such a relationship. The IRC is doing an in-depth study of the DRC documents and anticipates that the CRCNA will provide the DRC with an official response to its Synod 2002.

IX. Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA)

In 1998 the IRC received from the ecumenical secretary of the RCA materials relating to a gravamen that church had received pertaining to the statement "he descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed. In response to the RCA's request that the CRCNA study the gravamen and, in keeping with the fifth provision of ecclesiastical fellowship, namely, "communication on major issues of joint concern," the IRC appointed a committee to study it.

The report of the committee was submitted to Synod 1999 with the recommendation "that synod review the report, adopt its recommendations, and respond to the RCA" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 193, and Appendix C, pp. 205-18).

Synod 1999 referred to the IRC, for revision and for submission to Synod 2000, its report on the gravamen received by the RCA. The IRC was authorized to relate its study progress to the RCA (*Acts of Synod 1999*, pp. 576-77).

The IRC referred the report to its subcommittee, consisting of Drs. Henry Zwaanstra, Lyle Bierma, Ronald Feenstra, and Richard Muller, requesting them to review and revise the report, taking note of the synodical statement that it "requires correction, refinement, and clarification" (*Acts of Synod 1999*, Art. 34, II, C, p. 577). The committee took the eight suggestions of Synod 1999 seriously and incorporated its response and/or compliance into the report.

Recommendation: That the revised report of the Committee to Study the Materials from the Reformed Churches of Australia re Christ's Descent into Hell be approved as a Christian Reformed Church response to the RCA's request for study and advice. The report appears as Appendix B of this report. The revised report was sent to the RCA as a work in progress. The IRC will also send the report to REC 2000.

X. Delegation to the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ) and churches in Korea

In the fall of 1999 the IRC sent a delegation consisting of Dr. David Engelhard, Rev. Edward Van Baak, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra to the RCJ and several churches in Korea (see *Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 193). Prior to their departure, members of the IRC met with the Korean Ministries Team of the Ministries Coordinating Council in preparation for sending the delegation to Korea. Rev. Edward Van Baak and Rev. Leonard Hofman also met with the Korean Council of Christian Reformed Churches (KCCRC) in May 1999. The report of the delegation to Japan and Korea appears as Appendix C of this report.

In keeping with a prior commitment, the delegation and the IRC administrative secretary met on February 2, 2000, with the officers of the KCCRC and the Korean ministries director. They are pleased with the IRC's efforts and provided guidance in initiating steps toward establishing ecclesial relationships with Korean Presbyterian churches. At its February meeting the IRC decided to invite the HapDong, Koshin, GaeHyuk, DaeShin, and HapDongJeongTong churches to send observers to the CRC Synod 2000.

XI. Dialogue with leadership of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)

(see *Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 194, and *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 492)

The delegation that held intensive discussions with representatives of the RCC has completed its report and is submitting it to those members of the Roman Catholic Church with whom they met to determine whether the report reflects accurately the position of the RCC and the substance of the discussions that were held.

XII. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

The CRCNA maintains ecclesiastical fellowship with four churches in North America. They are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA). Fraternal delegates are exchanged with these churches. Although the CRCNA is in ecclesiastical fellowship with the ARPC and the RPCNA, both churches are among those member denominations of NAPARC that voted to suspend the CRCNA's membership in NAPARC.

From time to time conversations are held with the EPC and the RCA. On December 16, 1999, members of the IRC met with ecumenical representatives of the EPC. The strong and vital ecclesiastical relationship that exists between our two churches is enriched through discussions relating to strengthening ties, possible joint ministry, and mutual interest in theological education. The RCA is hosting a meeting with members of the IRC on February 28, 2000. Our long history of ecclesiastical fellowship and cooperative ministries forms a healthy infrastructure for continuing exploration of ways in which we can advance the gospel of our Lord and his kingdom.

XIII. Ecumenical Charter

Synod 1996 took note of the IRC's intent to review and revise the Ecumenical Charter (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 387, 527-28). The IRC has kept synod informed of the time frame established for this review. The IRC has

been working on the document since the spring of 1998, reviewing it in the light of the changing scene of interchurch relations and drafting a charter that would meet the challenges and opportunities of coming years.

The existing Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA was approved by Synod 1987. At that time the advisory committee on interdenominational matters included the following in its background material:

The need for a charter for the ecumenical relations of the Christian Reformed Church becomes apparent when decisions have to be made about relations with other churches or with ecumenical organizations. Under present circumstances such decisions have to be grounded in documents written as much as forty years ago, when ecumenical relations in the Christian church in general and the Christian Reformed Church in particular were hardly recognizable in terms of what exists today. (*Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 587)

The same argumentation is relevant with respect to reviewing and revising that thirteen-year-old document in the light of the complexities of interchurch relations today.

The IRC is presenting to Synod 2000 a new Ecumenical Charter, one that maintains and builds on the biblical principles and guidelines of the 1987 Ecumenical Charter. The 1987 charter is attached to this report as Appendix D. The proposed new Ecumenical Charter is attached to this report as Appendix E.

Recommendation: That synod approve the new Ecumenical Charter.

XIV. Merger of the Canadian Interchurch Relations Committee and the denominational Interchurch Relations Committee.

The IRC of the CRCNA is made up of nine members and the general secretary ex officio. Two of its members are from Canadian churches. There also has been an Interchurch Relations Committee in Canada, which in the past reported to the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. Changes have taken place in connection with the establishment of the Canadian Ministries Board. From time to time questions arose relative to which committee had the authority and/or responsibility to pursue or process interchurch-relations matters in our binational church.

Attached to this report as Appendix F is a report, including recommendations, on merging the Canadian committee and the denominational IRC. It is the judgment of both committees that this merger would serve the CRCNA well. The Canadian Ministries Board has also given its endorsement to this proposed merger.

The IRC has adopted a motion that specific mandates for the U.S. and Canadian subcommittees will be developed by the restructured IRC of the CRCNA and incorporated into bylaws that are consistent with the provisions of the merger.

XV. Representation at synod

Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (president), Dr. Lyle Bierma (vice president), and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary) have been appointed to represent the IRC at Synod 2000, along with other IRC members as necessary.

XVI. Recommendations

- A. That Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (president), Dr. Lyle Bierma (vice president), and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary), along with other IRC members as necessary, be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the IRC are discussed.
- B. That the revised report of the Committee to Study the Materials from the Reformed Churches of Australia re Christ's Descent into Hell be approved as a Christian Reformed Church response to the request for study and advice from the RCA (see Section IX and Appendix B).
- C. That synod approve the proposed Ecumenical Charter (see Section XIII and Appendices D and E).
- D. That synod approve the recommendations in Appendix F re the merger of the Canadian Interchurch Relations Committee and the denominational IRC (see Section XIV and Appendix F).

Interchurch Relations Committee

Lyle Bierma, vice president
Peter W. Brouwer
Jason Chen
Michiel De Berdt
Claire Elgersma
David Engelhard (ex officio)
Robert J. Haven
Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary
Cynthia Roelofs
Henry Zwaanstra, president

Appendix A

Report on Discussions with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

I. Background

The relationship between the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) has been strained since the early 1980s. Synod 1983 restricted the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship by declaring "that the elements referring to pulpit and table fellowship no longer apply, except at the discretion of the local consistories. . ." (*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 679). This development was precipitated by the RCN's decision to permit "ministers and members to engage in a lifestyle that in our judgment is contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973 [regarding homosexuality]" (*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 679).

The restricted relationship described above was challenged by an overture to Synod 1992. The overture requested that synod terminate the relationship with the RCN. Rather than acting on the overture in 1992, synod referred it to the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) for consideration and recommendation. The IRC was unable to complete its review until 1995. At that time it presented a detailed analysis of the relationship between the two churches and especially of the issues which had troubled the relationship (*Acts of Synod 1995*,

pp. 225-44). Because that report and its conclusions are important for the ongoing discussion about the RCN, delegates to Synod 2000 are encouraged to familiarize themselves with it.

On the basis of the 1995 report, Synod 1995 adopted the following recommendations:

1. That synod not terminate its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN [RCN] as defined by the Ecumenical Charter with the restrictions by Synod 1983 on table and pulpit fellowship.
2. That synod mandate the Interchurch Relations Committee to discuss with the official representative of the GKN the issues and trends in the life and practice of the GKN that are of deep concern to the CRC and trouble our ecclesiastical relations.
3. That synod instruct the IRC to report regularly to synod on its dialogue with the GKN.

(*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 704-05)

It was not easy for Synod 1995 to reach its decisions on this matter. Only a few hours before synod discussed this issue, the fraternal delegate from the RCN had addressed the assembly and had given a frank picture of the situation in the RCN, including favorable words about “homophilial relationships in love and fidelity.” The synodical delegates were shocked and dismayed at what had been said. The fact that the relationship was not terminated that day speaks well for the deliberative process and for synod’s refusing to base a decision on reaction to a single speech.

Nonetheless, the negative reaction within the CRC to an ongoing relationship with the RCN continued. When Synod 1996 met, there were nine overtures on the agenda requesting termination of the relationship. The report of the IRC’s delegation to the RCN synod in April 1996 was presented to Synod 1996 (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 393-410). Synod 1996 did not terminate the relationship but restricted it even further than it had already been restricted in 1983. Even though the relationship was restricted further, the Interchurch Relations Committee was mandated

to intensify its pursuit of the two remaining provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN:

- a. “[C]ommunication on major issues of joint concern.”
- b. “[T]he exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520)

Since 1996 the IRC has diligently carried out the mandate given it and has participated in three week-long intensive discussions with a delegation from the RCN. The RCN delegation also included representation from the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk (NHK), with which the GKN is federating in the Samen op Weg (Together on the Way) process. Brief reports on these conversations were given to Synod 1997 (see *Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 526) and Synod 1999 (see *Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 191-92), and a more extensive report was provided to Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 300-07). It is again time for a more extensive report.

II. Evaluation of the issues concerning our relationship

A. Introduction

Two main issues have troubled the relationship between the CRC and the RCN during the past thirty-five years, namely the RCN position on the authority of Scripture (hermeneutics) and their position on homosexuality. More recently additional issues have surfaced, such as their view of mission to the Jews, the confessional and theological implications of their federating process (*Samen op Weg*), their view on euthanasia, their handling of the positions of Professors den Heyer and Kuitert on Christology and atonement theory, and their view of creedal subscription.

B. The RCN's position on Scripture

1. "God with Us" and its "Sequel"

In 1980 the RCN considered and accepted a report entitled "God met Ons" ("God with Us") as a "good confessional statement about Scripture." The CRC studied that document and raised serious questions about the report's presentation of the "relational nature of truth" and its subjectivistic hermeneutic. The RCN continued its pursuit of hermeneutics in a subsequent document entitled simply "Sequel." Even though the second report clarified and corrected some aspects of "God with Us," many of the same concerns continued. The history and nuances of our discussions and conclusions on this matter can be found in the *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pages 227-32.

The IRC's report in 1995 noted the following regarding the significance of this issue of scriptural authority for our relationship:

- a. To terminate CRC ecclesiastical relations with the GKN because of "God with Us" and the "Sequel" appears unwarranted in the light of the GKN's continued confession of the Bible as the authoritative, infallible Word of God. However imprecise the GKN's discussion of the Scriptures is, however inconsistent their affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Bible as the Word of God may appear, and however unsatisfactory their interpretation, which must be freely acknowledged, discontinuing our fellowship at this time would be difficult to justify.
- b. To ignore the serious questions raised by "God with Us" would be remiss on the part of the CRC. Acknowledging that in the past the CRC has dialogued with the GKN on these issues with some success, the IRC believes a resumption of the discussions between our two churches is necessary. Such an ongoing discussion is essential if our ecclesial relations are to be helpful for the GKN and because the profound issues involved are problems for all Reformed churches, including the CRC. . . .

(Agenda for Synod 1995, p. 232)

2. Hermeneutics and Ethics

The IRC's delegation in 1996 reported that the RCN had adopted the Reformed Ecumenical Council's document entitled *Hermeneutics and Ethics* and that this document supersedes "God with Us" and its "Sequel" (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 405-08). In adopting *Hermeneutics and Ethics* as their new guideline, the RCN have approved a document which affirms and explicates the following:

- a. The Scriptures, as the only rule or *kanon* of Christian faith and life, are to be received and understood in terms of their center: God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ.

- b. The Scriptures, as God's Word of truth, are trustworthy throughout, reflecting both the trustworthiness of God himself and the variety of ways in which he reveals truth.
- c. Although there are difficult passages in the Bible and there is need for responsible exegesis and preaching, the Scriptures are clear on all matters necessary for salvation.
- d. Although tradition and nature are not without value for discerning the will of God, the Scriptures alone are sufficient for knowing the way of salvation.
- e. Though clear and sufficient, the Scriptures are in need of interpretation.
- f. Biblical exegesis and therefore the discriminating use of available exegetical methods are of great value.
- g. All parts of the Bible must be read in the light of the whole, and no aspect of Scripture may be played off against another.
- h. Tradition can play not only a negative but also a positive role in interpreting Scripture.
- i. The interpretation of Scripture is a task that must not be undertaken in an individualistic or sectarian spirit but as an integral part of the worldwide fellowship of believers.
- j. Through preaching and other forms of the administration of the Word, the Scriptures have pervasively shaped the ethos of the Reformed tradition.
- k. It is only by the illumination of the Spirit that the Scriptures can be correctly understood and applied to new situations.
- l. It is to be expected that the unity of faith should come to expression in different life-style decisions in different times and circumstances.
- m. Ethical reflection in the Reformed tradition has emphasized such basic biblical themes as discipleship, self-denial, the image of Christ, new life in Christ, gratitude, the third use of the law, prayer, conscience, the kingdom of God, and many more.
- n. In the Reformed understanding, love does not stand in tension with the commandments but comes to expression in observing them.
- o. Although fulfilled in Christ, the Old Testament laws still have validity as pointers to the will of God and for the Christian life.
- p. The freedom of the Christian life is an honor and entails the recognition and exercise of responsibility in ethical decision making.
- q. In applying scriptural ethical directives to concrete life situations, it is necessary to take into account contextual factors in the believer's situation, such as prevailing customs, institutions, and traditions.
- r. In relating Scripture to these contextual factors, it is necessary to maintain the priority of Scripture, the legitimacy of contextual factors, and the need for spiritual discernment.

(Hermeneutics and Ethics, pp. 26-27)

The adoption of this document and the setting aside of "God with Us" and its "Sequel" are positive signs in the direction being taken by the RCN in their understanding of the authority and interpretation of Scripture. Serious questions remain, however, as to whether they will eventually follow that hermeneutic in their discussions on homophilia and whether *Hermeneutics and Ethics* will be the standard by which they evaluate and judge Professor den Heyer's position on the atonement and Professor Kuitert's position on Christology. Or will the relational and subjectivistic hermeneutic of "God with Us" guide these decisions?

C. The RCN's position on homosexuality and homosexual practice

Synods of the Christian Reformed Church have been thinking about and reacting to the RCN's position on homosexuality since 1980. An overview of the CRC's interaction with the RCN on this issue can be found in a helpful

summary in the *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pages 233-37. That summary concludes with the following observations:

- a. The position of the GKN is clearly at variance with the position of the CRC as adopted in 1973. The CRC report holds that the New Testament explicitly teaches that homosexual practice cannot be condoned. The GKN position does not affirm, however, that the apostle Paul was wrong in his condemnation of homosexuality as he knew it in his times. He knew homosexuality in its licentious, promiscuous, and idolatrous forms, the practice of which is sinful for homosexuals today. But, the GKN holds, the apostle's judgment need not apply to the homosexual who lives in a loving, trusting, monogamous relationship.
- b. From the GKN statement at REC Harare 1992 (see above) we must be aware that to dialogue with the GKN regarding our differences on homosexuality, we must not begin on the premise that our continuing relations are dependent upon their reversing their position. The GKN have a pastoral concern not to submit their homosexual members who live in "love and faithfulness" to the uncertainty and distress of reopening the question of whether the church accepts them. Furthermore, they maintain that any dialogue about their position on homosexuality (into which the GKN are willing to enter) must be in the wider context of the issues of biblical hermeneutics.

(*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 237)

Since 1996 the IRC delegations have discussed with the RCN delegations our differences regarding homosexuality and homosexual practice each time we met (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 404-05). The discussions have been conducted within the context of the REC document *Hermeneutics and Ethics*, and the most recent discussions also included the CRC's document on *Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members*. While it can be said that both churches have a better understanding of the other's position, neither has convinced the other that it is wrong. The open and frank discussions have provided food for thought, strengthened the foundation for future dialogue, and established the relationships which are vital for continuing interaction.

D. The RCN's position on mission to the Jews

Beginning in 1989, the CRC has cast a wary eye toward the changes that the RCN were adopting in their church order regarding the relationship of the church to Jews/Israel. The changes were found in the articles dealing with the task of the minister (Art. 10) and the task of the church (Art. 88-a). A complete analysis of this issue and the text of the above articles of the RCN church order can be found in the *Acts of Synod 1996*, pages 399-404.

The IRC delegation in 1996 identified ten crucial questions about this issue, which guided the discussion with the RCN (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 401-02). The questions were intended to help us discern whether the RCN have altered their theology of mission or their strategy of mission. Discussions with the RCN have revealed that in some ways both their theology and their strategy have been altered.

We quote the following from the 1996 report to provide a more complete overview of this issue:

Dissociating themselves from "mission among the Jews" has occurred gradually, systematically, and intentionally within the GKN. In some ways this paralleled a similar situation in the CRCNA, which since 1971 has worked with the principle that mission to the Jews "does not imply a specific method other than confronting the Jews with a personal and collective witness to the saving grace of God in Christ by the church" (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 59).

We heard repeatedly that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is crucial and necessary for the salvation of the Jews. The gospel, we were told, is good news for all peoples, including the Jews. Jesus' work for humanity is unique and important for Jews and gentiles alike.

The GKN representatives made a distinction between the "faith of Jesus" and "faith in Jesus." Because Jews, as the continuation of the Old Testament people of God, have the Old Testament Scriptures, they can have the "faith of Jesus" but not necessarily "faith in Jesus." Their faith is shaped by the Old Testament, and they look to the same God that Jesus did for their hope and deliverance.

Strategically the GKN are reticent to confront the Jews in Europe with a challenge to believe in Jesus. The Holocaust and Christians' general unwillingness to defend and protect Jews has produced a guilty conscience within the churches of Europe. Confronting Jews with the gospel and expecting them to abandon their Judaism are viewed by Jews, as well as by many Christians, as yet another way to eliminate Jews in Europe.

Social, historical, and psychological factors have made the *church* a stumbling block to Jews. At least for this generation the church needs to find new ways to witness and to build trust between Christians and Jews. The GKN representatives said that the church in Europe was the "soil in which hate to the Jews was bred," and that hate needs to be overcome. Therefore, the deputies for Church and Israel are mostly involved in an *educational* task within the churches to change attitudes toward Jews and to replace misinformation with correct information. In addition, they also participate in some official group discussions with Jewish organizations.

In this historical, social, and psychological context a new theology regarding the relationship between church and Israel has been and is being forged. The GKN continue to wrestle with the question(s) regarding the relationship and task of the church toward the Jews in post-Holocaust Europe. Some GKN representatives admitted that they had more questions than answers, but they still work toward solutions.

In summary, we can categorize the GKN's reasons for not speaking about "mission to the Jews" in the following way:

- a. Historical reason: The church is a stumbling block to post-Holocaust Jews, and requiring conversion is viewed as a way of eliminating Jews.
- b. Theological reasons
 - Engaging in "mission to the Jews" would be treating them like Hindus, Buddhists, or Muslims and not recognizing the covenantal relationship between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament church.
 - An older GKN missiology and theology re the Jews was polemical and supersessionistic, and this view needed to be purged from the church.
 - Uncertainty about the exegesis of Romans 9-11, and especially the statement "so all Israel will be saved," has led the GKN to be cautious about what it requires from Jews.

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 402-03)

The 1996 report on this matter concluded as follows:

We applaud the GKN for their efforts to ameliorate the effects of the Holocaust and to diminish the perception of the church as a stumbling block to the Jews. Even though the gospel itself has been from early times a "stumbling block to the Jews," there is no excuse for the messenger of the gospel to become a cause for offense. Nonetheless, we believe that the GKN have become too cautious in their presentation of the gospel to the Jews, and we pray that they find the necessary courage to present Jesus as the Messiah for all people, especially for those who are sons and daughters of Abraham according to the flesh.

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 403-04)

Since 1996 this issue has not received any new, vigorous attention because no new developments have occurred. It is conceivable, however, that continuing dialogue regarding hermeneutics will require us to return to this matter, especially the hermeneutical principles regarding the relationship between the

Old Testament and New Testament and the relationship of Old Testament Israel to the New Testament church.

E. The RCN position on euthanasia and other end-of-life issues

The euthanasia issue surfaced in the RCN's fraternal delegate's speech at Synod 1995. The churches in the Netherlands had been discussing a committee report entitled "The Choice Between Life and Death." Their delegate remarked that the above study allowed for the conclusion "that in exceptional cases it may not be irresponsible to terminate life." Thus, in the IRC's visit in 1996 this issue was discussed forthrightly (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 398-99, for more information about the history and process followed by the RCN re this document). We made the following two concluding observations in the 1996 report:

- a) That we would not want to endorse a recommendation that declares "In exceptional cases it is responsible to resort to intentional means to end life."
- b) That we find it troublesome that in this discussion we find the same ambiguity we have noted in the approach to other ethical issues, e.g., the issue of homosexuality and homosexual practice.

We learned during our visit this past December that the Samen op Weg churches have recently reacted critically to a proposal by the Dutch Minister of Health Care that would decriminalize euthanasia and assisted suicide. The proposal would require that decisions by medical personnel to euthanize or assist in suicide would be monitored by a commission, but no legal penalties could be imposed for malfeasance. In a public statement, the SoW churches made clear that they have many questions about this course of action and asserted that the proposal requires society-wide reflection and evaluation of what impact the proposal would have on the valuation of life, that the churches intend to participate in this societal discussion of the issue from the vantage point of their confession that life is given us by the Creator, and that therefore the government should not move any further with this proposal at this time. The Dutch delegates at our discussion called the minister's course of action "wrong" and said that the GKN is against the deliberate taking of life.

It was refreshing and encouraging to hear that the churches in the Netherlands are taking such a countercultural stance. Their earlier position, "that in exceptional cases it may not be irresponsible to terminate life," does not seem to have been altered, but now they are facing a secular culture and government which has moved forward on this issue at a pace that was unexpected five years ago. The theological and confessional reflection which they promise to do on this issue may press them to rethink and reformulate their earlier statements.

F. RCN's position on Christology and atonement

The 1998 publication of two books by RCN theologians have raised anew the questions of who Christ is and the meaning of the atonement. Both of these issues are under consideration by the synod of the RCN and will likely find some resolution in April or May 2000. The CRC is vitally interested in the position articulated by the RCN on these two issues because each issue is central to the gospel's message. Furthermore, the position taken by the RCN will clearly reflect the prevailing hermeneutic driving their theologizing and will also reflect their commitment to the church's creeds and confessions.

Therefore, the RCN's response to these challenges to Christianity's central teachings is crucial for an assessment of our continuing relationship.

III. Overview of *Samen op Weg/Together on the Way* and its implications for ecclesiastical fellowship

A. RCN and Samen op Weg/Together on the Way (SoW/ToW)

For over a decade the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (NHK), and the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk have been committed to and working toward the unification of these churches. The end result of this process will be a federated church with a common church order, coordinated ministries, blended/merged congregations, and joint synods. The uniqueness and differences of each denomination are likely to be observable for a generation or two, but the intention is to become one church in the Netherlands.

Within the uniting churches there are differing ways of maintaining interchurch relationships. The RCN have both bilateral and multilateral relationships, but the NHK has only multilateral relations. There is presently some flexibility in how interchurch relationships will be conducted in the new federation, and until the union is finally complete (no one was willing to predict how many years that will take), we will continue to relate primarily to the RCN. Once the federation is complete, the new denomination will hold discussions with all the ecumenical partners of its component churches to determine which ones wish to continue in a relationship with the new church. This is likely to occur within the next five to ten years.

The ministry agencies of the three federating churches have been merged for the purposes of unified work under one administration as if they were one church. In December 1999 a service of dedication was held in Utrecht which celebrated the unifying process already accomplished and committed the churches to greater service in their united relationships. Even though the ministry work is unified, the final stages of ecclesiastical unification are still some years away. The delegation estimates that about four more years will elapse before the finalization of the three-way merger is complete.

B. Implications for ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCN

The visiting delegations and the IRC now have a more complete picture of the implications of *Samen op Weg* for ecclesiastical fellowship, but it is not yet a perfectly clear picture. We are convinced that the RCN are doing everything in their power to maintain a relationship with the CRC as they enter the federation. Again and again we heard it said that our relationship with them is among the most meaningful and important. We have reason to believe from both our visit with the Reformed Alliance in 1998 and from the fact that the NHK had two members on the recent delegation that the NHK too would cherish our continued relationship with the RCN and eventually with the united church.

We are assured that our relationship as churches will come under review when the union is complete. That will give us an opportunity to reassess all matters relevant to our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship and to make a new decision.

In the meantime, we may encounter a few difficulties in relating to the RCN themselves because of the placement of the Ecumenical Department within the

new restructuring. The present RCN ecumenical officer has been appointed to serve in the new structure, so continuing our contact and relationship will be made easier. If responsibility for ecclesiastical fellowship is transferred from the RCN synod to the Three Synods, then our relationship will become more complicated. We have been told that will not happen until the unification is final several years hence.

In summary, the Samen op Weg process may complicate our relationship with the RCN but is not negating it. For the near future our relationship will continue with the same church (RCN) and in much the same way as it has until now.

IV. Where do we go from here?

After four years of intensified discussions with the RCN, it is only fitting that we ask, "Where do we go from here?" The CRC and RCN delegations think that we have thoroughly discussed all the issues on which we have had differences. This report and those that have preceded it have tried to identify where changes have occurred and where positions have remained unaltered. Therefore, we believe that intensified discussions are not necessary during the next three or four years. When the Samen op Weg process is complete, the opportunity and necessity for intensified discussions will be present again.

Following the discussions in 1998, a Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up by the two delegations (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 307). The third point of the Memorandum reads:

The CRC's IRC will consider recommending to synod the reinstatement of the provision of ecclesiastical fellowship relating to "joint action in areas of common responsibilities.

Grounds:

- a. Life and work matters are vital to an ecclesiastical fellowship.
- b. This would allow both churches the opportunity to explore joint action in select places in the world.

Since the CRC's IRC did not recommend that action in 1998, the recent RCN delegation raised it again. They reiterated that the reinstatement of that provision was still important to them, and they requested that the IRC consider the matter again.

In addition to the reinstatement of the joint-action provision, the recent RCN delegation requested that the restriction on exchanging "fraternal delegates to major assemblies" be lifted. The reason they adduce for this request is that they believe it is unwise to carry on intensified discussions in private without being able to talk publicly to each other at the assemblies.

The IRC and the CRC will need to weigh the above requests in the light of all the realities that have surrounded our relationship with the RCN during the past two decades and in the light of the new realities that are developing in the Netherlands through the Samen op Weg process.

Lyle D. Bierma
David H. Engelhard
Leonard J. Hofman
Henry Zwaanstra

Appendix B

Report of the Committee to Study the Materials from the Reformed Churches of Australia re Christ's Descent Into Hell

I. Introduction: background, mandate, and structure of the report

In 1994 the synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) was presented with a gravamen against the statement "he descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed and against the explanation of the clause in Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 44. The substance of the gravamen, as summarized by the ecumenical secretary of the RCA, is as follows:

- The physical descent of the Lord Jesus into hell is not taught in Scripture.
- While the use of the *descensus* still enjoys wide acceptance, this should not deter us from amending a creedal statement if the statement is deemed to be inaccurate or false.
- The explanation given to the statement in Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 44 underscores the fact that the Lord did not physically descend into hell.
- The phrase in question was a later addition to the text of the creed.

The 1994 RCA synod referred the question to a study committee, which reported its findings to the synod of 1997. The majority of the three-member study committee recommended that the text of the Apostles' Creed be changed to "he descended to the dead"; or, failing that, that it be replaced by the phrase "suffered the pangs of hell on the cross," which would be inserted after "crucified"; or, failing that, that the words "he descended into hell" be deleted from the text; or, failing that, that a footnote be added to the text of the Apostles' Creed explaining that "by this we understand that Christ suffered the pangs of hell just prior to and on the cross."

The RCA synod of 1997 sympathized with the gravamen and with some of the findings and recommendations of the study committee but believed it to be somewhat presumptuous to change the text of the creed unilaterally. The synod eventually decided to retain the present wording of the creed, to add an explanatory footnote similar to the one recommended by the study committee, and to submit the gravamen, study-committee report, and 1997 synodical decisions to the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) for consideration at its 2000 assembly. The synod also decided to send these materials to denominations with which the RCA is in ecclesiastical fellowship and to ask that they study the "descent" clause and report their conclusions and advice to the RCA. One of these churches in ecclesiastical fellowship is the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), whose Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) received the materials in February 1998.

At its April 1998 meeting the IRC reviewed the materials from the RCA and decided to appoint a committee with the following mandate (IRC Minutes of 4/24/98, Art. 5:5):

- a. To examine materials received from the Reformed Churches of Australia regarding the gravamen against the "descent into hell" clause in the Apostles' Creed.
- b. To report, with advice, to the IRC at its December 1998 meeting.

Appointed to this committee were Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (convener), Dr. Lyle Bierma (secretary), Dr. Richard Muller, and Dr. Ronald Feenstra.

This study committee met three times over a four-month period in 1998. During these sessions it reviewed (A) the history of the CRC's own treatment of gravamina against the confessions, (B) the three documents from the RCA, and (C) an extensive historical-theological-exegetical study of the question, prepared by Richard Muller. In December 1998 the committee submitted its report to the IRC, which decided to forward it to Synod 1999 for approval. After reviewing the report, however, Synod 1999 referred it back to the IRC for revision and resubmission to Synod 2000, though allowing the IRC to relate its study progress to the RCA during the course of the next year. The IRC in turn decided in October 1999 to return the report to its study committee for revision.

What follows is the revised version of the report, submitted to and approved by the IRC in February 2000. The report is organized in the following way: first, a review of the subscription to and amendment of creeds and confessions in the CRC; second, a summary of some of the committee's own exegetical, historical, and theological study of the "descent" clause; third, a list of the objections to the "descent" clause raised in the RCA materials and elsewhere and the committee's responses to these objections; and, finally, the IRC's response to the official decisions of the 1997 RCA synod in the form of a set of recommendations to Synod 2000.

II. Subscription to and amendment of creeds and confessions in the Christian Reformed Church in North America

A. Subscription

The Christian Reformed Church in North America requires all its professors, ministers, evangelists, elders, and deacons, when ordained and/or installed in office, to sign a form of subscription, thus indicating their agreement with the church's doctrinal standards. Article 5 of the Church Order says, "All officebearers, on occasions stipulated by conciliar, classical, and synodical regulations, shall signify their agreement with the doctrine of the church by signing the Form of Subscription." The form presently in use was adopted by Synod 1988. The supplement to Article 5 also includes a statement of guidelines and regulations for submitting gravamina asking for changes or amendments to the church's creeds and confessions and for understanding the meaning of subscription by signing the form. The following guidelines pertain to subscription (CRC's Church Order Supplement, Article 5):

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 his subscription 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 he 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 his 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 himself or for the church what is and what is not the 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. Amendment of creeds and confessions

1. Belgic Confession Article 36

The CRC has amended only one of its articles of faith, Belgic Confession Article 36. It did so on three occasions. After the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) amended Article 36 at the Synod of Utrecht in 1905, the Christian Reformed Church in 1910 decided to place an asterisk after the word “worship” in Article 36, which deals with the task of the civil magistrate. The sentence read, “. . . and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship*, that the kingdom of the antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted.” The note attached rather extensively explained the relationship of the magistrate to the church after the Constantinian change and under circumstances of ecclesiastical establishment. This note affirmed as a matter of principle the independence of the church alongside of the state. Both the state and the church were institutions of God with mutual rights and obligations. Nevertheless, they had their own territory and must not interfere with each other.

In 1936 the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty sent a communication to synod indicating that in its judgment an inconsistency or conflict existed in the church’s creedal formulation of the proper relationship between the church and the state. Specifically, the faculty said, a conflict existed between Article 36 of the Belgic Confession and the note appended by the synod of 1910. The note officially contradicted part of Article 36. The faculty, moreover, argued that an explanatory note should be added to a creed only if the creed is open to more than one interpretation and it becomes necessary to determine officially which of the various interpretations represents the conviction of the church. The note appended in 1910, the faculty claimed, was in no sense explanatory, but frankly critical, and in fact it contradicted the confession. The note affirmed that religious freedom, the separation of church and state, and the lordship and kingship of Christ over his church were teachings demanded by the New Testament. If these teachings were really the conviction of the church, they should be expressed in the creed itself, since the creed was the formal and official declaration of the church’s faith. The faculty’s concern and communication were occasioned by fear of the rising totalitarian states and the very real possibility of infringements on religious freedom and the independence of the church.

Synod 1938 excinded from Article 36 the following clauses: “and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of antichrist may thus be destroyed.” In order to make the remaining clauses form a grammatically correct sentence, other slight changes were introduced. The complete sentence as amended read, “Their office [the magistrates] is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also to protect the sacred ministry* that the Kingdom of Christ may thus be promoted.” The asterisk after “sacred ministry” signaled an appended note. The note contained the original text of the article and briefly presented the history of the changes made in it by the CRC in 1910 and 1938. The confessional change introduced in 1938 was the same as that adopted by the GKN in 1905.

Not everyone, however, was satisfied with this change in wording. If religious freedom and the separation of church and state were indeed teachings demanded by the New Testament, why was the new wording any less objectionable than the original? Was not the magistrates' promotion of the kingdom of Christ as much a violation of the separation of church and state as the magistrates' removal of idolatry and false worship? After two more decades of wrestling with these questions, Synod 1958 provisionally accepted a second change to Article 36—a reformulation proposed by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Synod did this “with the intention of attaining to a final formulation of the controversial words of Article 36 of the Belgic Confession in united action with the other member churches of the RES which maintain the Belgic Confession.” The substitute statement was placed in a footnote to Article 36 until 1985, when it replaced the 1938 wording of the text in the CRC's new translation of the Belgic Confession. At Synod 1985 a third change to Article 36 was also adopted, the removal of the paragraph referring to the detesting of the Anabaptists. The original paragraph was placed in a footnote.

2. Proposed modifications of other articles of the Belgic Confession

In 1952 Calvin Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids presented an overture to synod asking synod “to study the weight and relevancy” of objections raised by one of its members to certain doctrinal expressions found in the Belgic Confession. These objections had to do with the listing of the books of the Bible, the author of Hebrews, the use of proof texts, and certain statements regarding the sacraments. The appointed study committee submitted majority and minority reports. Both reports recommended redactional modifications in the confession.

Synod 1957 decided not to adopt any changes in the confession without prior consultation with other Reformed churches holding the same confessions. The same synod decided to appoint a new study committee to consider whether the proposed modifications should be made and to invite sister churches to respond to any redactional modifications the committee wished to propose.

In its report to Synod 1961, the study committee indicated that the problem of modifications of the confession could be approached in three different ways. The confession could be thoroughly revised and made up-to-date. Second, it could be reedited and revised only insofar as was necessary to remove misunderstandings caused by the text itself. And, finally, the confession could be retained as it was. If the last option was followed, a reasoned statement indicating why no alterations should be made in the text of the creed would have to be presented.

Most members of the study committee supported the second option. They argued that the need for making some changes was supported by the fact that the present text might contribute to misunderstanding and might even say in some instances what the church did not want it to say. The majority proposed five redactional modifications.

A minority favored the third option and argued for retaining the confession as it was. The minority's basic contention was that whenever a historical-textual approach to the confession offered satisfactory answers to objections raised to it, the confession should not be subjected to redactional

modifications. The minority presented arguments to support its position. The most pertinent are summarized as follows:

- a. The demand for incidental corrections in the confession suggested a too literalistic approach. The confession could be wholeheartedly endorsed without insisting on a rigidly literal reading.
- b. The modification of disputed passages would at best be a patchwork approach to the confession and would not touch the heart of the question: How should the confession be approached to gain a proper understanding of it?
- c. The confession admittedly was intended to speak meaningfully to its readers. In the judgment of the minority, the confession still did this, even though it was four hundred years old.
- d. Most importantly, a historical-textual approach to the confession would provide satisfactory answers to the objections raised. By keeping the Belgic Confession in its proper historical context and by applying sound exegetical methods to it, the difficulties could be greatly alleviated and at least satisfactorily explained.

Synod 1961 followed the judgment of the minority and did not accede to the suggested alterations.

3. The Apostles' Creed

The Christian Reformed Church has never amended an ecumenical creed. Synod 1988 approved a new English translation of the Apostles' Creed. This new translation included four revisions of the older version. The word "creator" replaced "maker"; the word "begotten" was deleted; "died" replaced "was dead"; and the words "I believe" before the confession of the holy catholic church were also deleted. The translation committee argued for these revisions on the basis of the original Latin text (*textus receptus*). Despite overtures asking that the word *universal* be substituted for "catholic" in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding between the church confessed in the creed and the Roman Catholic Church, the committee decided to retain the word "catholic." The committee did so because it could not find a word to replace "catholic" that affirmed both the historical and worldwide character of the church. Synod, however, decided to place an asterisk after the word "catholic" and attached this explanatory note: "that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places."

In summary, the Christian Reformed Church three times amended a single article of its confessions (Belgic Confession, Article 36) because it was deemed to be in conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture. It also once added an explanatory note to one of its ecumenical creeds. Rather than opting for incidental and occasional redactional modifications of its confessions, the Christian Reformed Church has followed a historical-textual approach to understanding them. The guidelines stated in the Church Order Supplement, Article 5 enable the Christian Reformed Church to be a confessional Reformed church with integrity, while at the same time recognizing the historical character of the confessions and the distinctive manner in which they express themselves.

III. Historical, theological, and exegetical considerations re the “descent” clause

In any consideration of what the clause “he descended into hell” means and whether it should be removed from the Apostles’ Creed, several questions must be addressed: (A) What does the Apostles’ Creed mean when it affirms Christ’s descent into hell? (B) Is it a late addition to the Apostles’ Creed, and, if so, does its late appearance count against it? (C) How have Christians (and especially Reformed Christians) understood this clause? (D) Is the clause rooted in Scripture? (E) Would it be preferable to translate the clause in some other way? Answers to questions such as these will help to elucidate the meaning, historical standing, and biblical basis of the creed’s affirmation that Jesus Christ descended into hell.

A. What does the Apostles’ Creed mean when it affirms Christ’s descent into hell?

The first step to answering this question involves a brief study of the creedal language. As is the case with the other creedal articles, the language of the descent clause is not perfectly uniform. The majority of creeds that include the clause read *descendit ad inferna* (Aquileia, Caesarius, Pseudo-Augustine, the Gallican Sacramentary, Idelfonsus, Itherius, Pirminius, Gregory II). Several have *ad infernum* (Venantius Fortunatus, Pseudo-Chrysostom, Pseudo-Augustine); several others offer *ad inferos* (Old Irish, Fourth Council of Toledo, Athanasian Creed). The phrases *ad inferna* and *ad infernum* are nearly identical in meaning: *ad* with the accusative form of a noun is the prepositional form typically used to indicate “the place to which” or the end of motion. The phrase *ad inferna* understands the noun *infernum* as a neuter plural, indicating “to the lower or infernal regions,” whereas the phrase *ad infernum* takes *infernum* as a neuter singular, indicating “to the depth of the earth” or “to the lower or infernal region.” The phrase *ad inferos*, however, is susceptible to two readings: the noun is *inferus*, which can indicate the lower region or regions or, in the plural, the inhabitants of the lower regions, namely, the dead. Thus *ad inferos*, *inferus* here taking the form of a masculine plural, can be rendered either “to the lower regions” or “to the dead,” understood specifically as “the inhabitants of the lower regions.” The last of these options is implied by the use of the masculine form (that is, *inferus* as a reference to persons) rather than the neuter form (that is, *inferum* as a reference to things)—but when this option is taken, the term clearly does not mean “the dead” in the sense of bodies of the deceased but rather the dead specifically as the inhabitants of *infernum* or *inferus*.

There are, in sum, two different words used in the Latin creeds, *infernum* and *inferus* and three distinct creedal forms: *ad inferna* (acc. neuter pl., from the nominative *infernum*); *ad infernum* (acc. neuter sing., from the nominative *infernum*); and *ad inferos* (acc. masc. pl., from the nominative *inferus*). The various Latin forms of the creed say that Christ descended to “the lower or infernal region(s)” or to “the inhabitants of the lower regions.”

It is important to note that the Apostles’ Creed does not teach a *physical* descent of Christ into hell. Christ’s descent into hell was not a bodily descent. Instead, when it speaks of Christ’s descent to the lower regions or to the inhabitants of the lower regions, the creed suggests that Christ in his disembodied state went to the realm of the dead, which was generally thought of as the lower parts of the earth.

Still, confusion can arise because the English translation of the Apostles' Creed uses the word "hell," which can have at least two distinct referents. It can refer either to the realm of the spirits of those who have died or to the realm of eternal punishment. Thus the English language uses one word to refer to realities that Scripture can readily distinguish. Scripture uses the terms *sheol* or *hades* to refer to the world of spirits of people who have died, and it uses the term *gehenna* to refer to the realm of eternal punishment.

The possibility of confusion over the meaning of the term "hell" is compounded because the Christian tradition has made use of both understandings of the term in interpreting the Apostles' Creed's reference to Christ's descent into hell. Some understand Christ's descent into hell as a descent into *hades*—the realm of the dead; but others understand "hell" to refer to the place of eternal punishment and then interpret the descent figuratively rather than literally. Thus the early church, understanding the clause as descent into *hades*, took the Creed to affirm that Christ descended to the place of the dead or the "lower regions" of the earth, not to the place of final punishment. But Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism, understanding the clause as referring to the place of eternal punishment, took the Apostles' Creed to affirm that Christ suffered the pangs of eternal punishment on the cross and earlier.

B. Is the affirmation of Christ's descent into hell a late addition to the Apostles' Creed, and, if so, does its late appearance count against it?

Both parts of this question are important: When did this clause appear in the creed, and when did it become part of the common teaching that was held by leading theologians of the church? Even if the clause was a relatively late entry into the Apostles' Creed, was it held by only a few writers of the early church, or by most of them?

The clause "he descended into hell" was a relative latecomer to the creedal tradition. It first appeared in Christian creeds after the middle of the fourth century. According to J. N. D. Kelly's *Early Christian Creeds*, the clause may have appeared before A.D. 360 in some Eastern creeds. The first documented appearance of the clause in a creed was in the Fourth Formula of Sirmium (the "Dated Creed" of A.D. 359). In the West, the first documented appearance of the clause in a creed is in the Aquileian Creed, which was known to Rufinus (c. A.D. 345-410), an Aquileian priest, around A.D. 390. Around A.D. 404, in a comparison of his own church's creed with the Roman Creed (which was the basis for what became known as the Apostles' Creed), Rufinus observed that this clause did not appear in the Roman Creed or in Eastern creeds known to him. The clause appeared in several other creeds during the next three centuries. Although the text of the Apostles' Creed fluctuated for many years, Kelly argues that it had reached a relatively fixed form by the late sixth or early seventh century. Thus, by the seventh century, "he descended into hell" appeared in a majority of Western creedal formulae.

Although it must be admitted that "he descended into hell" entered the creedal tradition relatively late, this admission must be qualified. The fourth century was not an especially late time for creedal development. The first creedal reference to Christ's descent into hell occurred only a few decades after the Council of Nicaea introduced the word *homoousios* into the creedal tradition. The trinitarian formula that God is one essence and three hypostases (a point that Nicaea had denied) only became a conciliar teaching in the synodi-

cal letter of the Second Council of Constantinople in 382—around the same time that Christ’s descent into hell was included in the Aquileian Creed. It is also important to remember that the first formal “rules of faith” appeared little more than a century and a half before some creeds began to refer to Christ’s descent into hell.

Even if “he descended into hell” was a relatively late entry into the Apostles’ Creed, that fact does not reveal the status of the doctrine itself in the early church. When did it become part of the common teaching that was held by leading theologians of the church? Although the clause does not appear in second-century rules of faith, it does appear in writings by some of the church’s earliest theologians: Irenaeus of Lyons, Hippolytus, Melito of Sardis, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian (all from the second and third centuries). In addition, theologians such as Athanasius and Augustine held to the doctrine of Jesus Christ’s descent into hell (hades) after his death.

John Calvin offers a helpful perspective on the biblical and historical grounding for this clause. In the 1559 edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he argues that even though the clause “he descended into hell” was not part of the earliest creeds, Christians must confess it. He gives two main reasons for keeping the clause: (1) we know that early Christians held to Christ’s descent into hell, since the church fathers, despite having various explanations of the doctrine, all mention it; and (2) like other elements in the Apostles’ Creed, this clause has been derived from God’s Word.

C. In order to come to a proper estimate of the Apostles’ Creed’s affirmation of Christ’s descent into hell, it will be helpful to explore how Christians (and especially Reformed Christians) have understood the clause.

What becomes apparent upon examination is that Reformed Christians have available at least two or three legitimate and helpful understandings of Christ’s descent into hell.

Already in the sixteenth century there were three distinct understandings of the clause among Reformed theologians: (1) Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger understood Christ’s descent as his entering into the presence of departed believers—a descent into hades. In this view, Christ’s descent into hades supports the doctrine of the intermediate state by showing that souls continue to exist even after bodily death. (2) Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism offered a second way of interpreting Christ’s descent into hell. Already in the 1536 edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin offers his interpretation: Christ’s descent into hell “means that he had been afflicted by God, and felt the dread and severity of divine judgment, in order to intercede with God’s wrath and make satisfaction to his justice in our name.” Calvin’s view is reflected in Question and Answer 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism: “Q. Why does the creed add, ‘He descended to hell’? A. To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, especially on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.” Unlike Zwingli, Bullinger, and the main tradition of interpretation before him, Calvin sees Christ’s descent into hell not as a stage between his death and his resurrection but as a way of emphasizing the severity and substitutionary character of Christ’s suffering. (3) Theodore Beza offered a third (and, in our opinion,

less satisfying) understanding of the clause, arguing that the “descent” referred to Christ’s burial.

In the seventeenth century, the *Leiden Synopsis* (1626) identified several permissible Reformed understandings of the clause *descendit ad inferna* or *infernum*: (1) If *infernum* or *inferus* is understood as the realm or state of the dead (*sheol* in Hebrew, *hades* in Greek), Christ descended into death.

Supporting this interpretation is the subsequent creedal statement that on the third day Christ rose again from the dead. (2) The clause refers to Christ’s entire state of humiliation (the position of Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism). (3) The descent refers to Christ’s three days under the power of death. In this view, this clause adds something to the affirmation that Christ was buried, since burial refers to the body alone, whereas the state of death refers to the separation of body and soul that occurs at death. In addition, Petrus van Mastricht argued for a concept of a threefold descent: into suffering, into the grave, and into the power of death.

D. Scriptural warrant for the “descent” clause

Now that the range of possible meanings of the clause has been explored, it is important to see whether Scripture supports the creedal affirmation that Jesus Christ descended into hell. Given that the clause can be understood in two or three ways, we consider whether each interpretation has biblical support.

1. If the descent into hell is understood as Christ’s descent to the realm or state of the dead (the view of the early church and some Reformers), several biblical passages can be appealed to for support:
 - a. Acts 2:27, 31: In its account of Peter’s Pentecost sermon, the book of Acts records Peter’s citation of Psalm 16:10: “For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit” (NRSV). According to Acts 2, Peter mentioned this verse twice, first as part of an extended excerpt from Psalm 16 and then by itself (Acts 2:27, 31). In the context, Peter is arguing that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, was raised up and freed from death by God, since it was impossible for him to be held in death’s power (Acts 2:22-24). Peter contrasts David, who died and was buried, with Jesus the Messiah, of whose resurrection David spoke when he said, “He was not abandoned to hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption” (Acts 2:31, NRSV). Although this passage does not directly say that Jesus descended to hades, it does say that God did not abandon him to hades, but raised him up, thereby suggesting that Jesus occupied hades from his death to his resurrection.
 - b. Matthew 12:40: “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth” (NRSV). The key phrase here, “in the heart of the earth,” indicates the center or interior and thus not merely the grave, but sheol, hades, the realm of the dead. Although the *activity* of Christ in the intermediate state or the theological implication of the “descent” is not referred to directly in the passage, the passage is indeed a reference to Christ’s intermediate state and not merely to his burial in the tomb.

- c. Ephesians 4:9: In the context of a discussion of Christ's gifts to his people, Ephesians quotes Psalm 68:18 regarding the gifts that followed on Christ's ascension and his defeat of "captivity" (Eph. 4:8). After quoting the psalm, Ephesians adds, "When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:9-10, NRSV). For present purposes, the important point is the reference to Christ's descent into the lower parts of the earth. To what does this refer? Although it is possible that the descent referred to here is Christ's descent to earth, it seems more likely that this descent is Christ's journey to hades, the realm of the dead. This latter reading is confirmed when the passage is compared to Acts 2:27, 31 and Romans 10:6-7: "Do not say in your heart, . . . 'who will descend into the abyss' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)" (NRSV).
- d. I Peter 3:18-19; 4:6: In the context of encouraging those who were suffering for doing good, I Peter points out that "Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah" (I Pet. 3:18-20a, NRSV). Several verses later, after encouraging believers to live the rest of their earthly lives not by human desires but by the will of God, the epistle adds, "For this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does" (I Pet. 4:6, NRSV). These passages from I Peter raise many difficult issues. If they are connected, as is being done here, they lead to such questions as whether those who disobeyed God during Noah's day (or perhaps even all who had disobeyed God prior to Christ's death) were given an opportunity to hear the gospel proclaimed by the crucified Christ and whether they then had the opportunity to repent. As a result, these passages have been debated for centuries. They never were the chief support of the doctrine of Christ's descent in the early church. Augustine explicitly indicated that I Peter referred to a spiritual preaching of Christ and not to the intermediate state of Christ's soul. Reformed theologians have followed Augustine in this reading, particularly given their denial of notions of limbo, a waiting place for the righteous but unbaptized dead of the Old Testament. Calvin, however, adds the proviso that I Peter 3 indicates a grace and "power of Christ's death" that "penetrated even to the dead."
2. If the descent into hell is understood as referring to Christ's "having suffered unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, especially on the cross but also earlier" (the view of Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism), the doctrine has biblical support. Reformed exegetes and theologians from Calvin onward have supported this understanding of Christ's descent with such texts as Isaiah 53, Matthew 26:36-46, Matthew 27:45-46, Luke 22:42-44, and Hebrews 5:7-10. When the figurative understanding of hades is

followed, Acts 2:27, 31 also indicate that Christ experienced these profound agonies but was delivered from them by God.

3. The third position identified by the *Leiden Synopsis* understands the descent into hell as Christ's having spent three days under the power of death. This is also the view of British Reformed and Puritan writers and is confessionally attested in the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q. 50). Again, this understanding of the descent-into-hell doctrine can be supported biblically. The texts drawn on here are nearly the same as those used to support the first reading of the descent—as Christ's soul descending to the realm of the dead (although I Pet. 3:18-20 is omitted). The reason for this use of the same texts is that the words *sheol* and *hades* can be understood either as indications of a subterranean realm or, on the assumption that the language of the netherworld is itself figurative, as the state of the soul in death, separated from the body between the moment of death and the resurrection. Specifically, this view of the descent rests on Acts 2:27, 31; Romans 10:7; and Ephesians 4:9.

In sum, the biblical language of *sheol* and *hades*, taken together with the specific passages that indicate either the intense spiritual sufferings of Christ during his entire state of humiliation or his subjection to the power of death between the cross and his resurrection, lead to the doctrine of the descent into hell, or *hades*. This conclusion, moreover, rests on the traditional churchly and Reformed hermeneutic of comparing or “conferring” biblical passages for the purpose of their mutual interpretation.

E. Is there a better translation?

Finally, we must consider whether it would be preferable to translate the clause in some other way. Would a new translation be able to avoid various misunderstandings of the affirmation that Christ descended into hell? It is important to see that the range of acceptable interpretations of the creedal statement would be narrowed by using a word other than “hell” to translate the word *infernum* or *inferus* that appears in the creed. A translation that read, “he descended to the realm of the dead” (or something similar), would avoid certain misunderstandings but would also eliminate the interpretation offered by Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism. Similarly, a translation that read, “he suffered the agony of hell” (or something similar), would avoid some misunderstandings but would also eliminate the interpretation favored by the early church and some Reformers that Christ's soul descended to the realm of the dead. And either of these translations would eliminate the suggestion that Christ's descent into hell refers to his three days under the power of death. So it would be better to retain the translation “he descended into hell” and then to recognize that the Reformed tradition permits several legitimate and helpful understandings of Christ's descent into hell.

Moreover, introducing a new translation of this clause in the creed would raise problems for ecumenical relations. The Apostles' Creed is one of the few statements of faith agreed on by all—or nearly all—Western Christians. Our common confession of this creed provides one of the few evidences of unity in a divided church. To revise this creed by dropping the reference to Christ's descent into hell would further sever any remaining Christian unity. Even revising the translation of the creed would further separate us from other English-speaking Christians. Unless we are willing to work for a generally

recognized revision of the creed or the translation of the creed, we should try to rest content with its current form. If a creedal statement such as the reference to Christ's descent into hell seems confusing, it would be better to offer an explanatory footnote than to change the actual text of the Apostles' Creed.

In sum, the statement that Christ "descended into hell" should be retained in the Apostles' Creed. The creedal statement does not mean that Christ physically or bodily descended into the furnace of hell. In addition, the Reformed tradition has available a variety of acceptable interpretations of Christ's descent into hell. And although there are not a large number of direct biblical references to support the Apostles' Creed's reference to Christ's descent into hell, there is sufficient support for this clause, whether it is understood as referring to Christ's descent to the realm of the dead, his having suffered the pain of hell during his state of humiliation, or his having spent three days under the power of death. Given the variety of acceptable interpretations of the creedal statement and the biblical support for each interpretation, it seems fair to judge that the Apostles' Creed's affirmation of Christ's descent into hell has an adequate biblical basis and ought to be retained. And, finally, any misunderstandings of the creed on this point can better be addressed by clear teaching or even by an explanatory footnote than by changing the text of the creed or the translation of it.

IV. Objections and responses

Given the foregoing, we are now in a position to summarize why we believe the clause "he descended into hell" should not be removed from the Apostles' Creed. What follows are ten of the strongest objections to keeping the clause in the creed and our responses to these objections based on the preceding biblical and historical study.

Objection 1: There is no biblical warrant for the doctrine of a "descent into hell."

Response: The church, throughout its nearly twenty centuries, has consistently offered one or more of the following texts as part of a biblical basis for the *descensus*—Matthew 12:40, Acts 2:27-31, Romans 10:6-7, Ephesians 4:9-10, I Peter 3:18-20, and Revelation 1:17-18. The difficulty in interpreting I Peter 3:18-20 does not, moreover, stand in the way of the Reformed doctrine of Christ's descent.

Objection 2: The creedal reference to "hell" indicates the place of final punishment.

Response: The reference to "hell" is a translation of *infernum* or *inferus* (the Latin equivalents of the Greek word *hades*), namely, the resting place of the dead or "lower regions" of the earth, not the place of final punishment. Moreover, none of the fathers or later commentators understood the creed as indicating a descent of Christ to the place of eternal punishment. The fact that the creedal article is liable to misunderstanding is certainly not an argument for excising it. Rather, it demands careful explanation.

Objection 3: The Apostles' Creed teaches a physical descent of Christ into "hell."

Response: As clearly indicated by the fathers of the church and by later commentators, whether medieval or Reformation era, the *descensus* has almost

invariably been referred to the soul of Christ, given that his body was for three days in the tomb. Thus, the “descent” is to be understood as the departure of Christ’s soul from his body and its existence in the abode of the dead, just as “hell” in the creedal phrase indicates the intermediate state (hades) and not the place of eternal punishment.

Objection 4: The doctrine of the *descensus* conflicts with Jesus’ statement to the thief on the cross, “this day thou shalt be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Response: The issue is resolved exegetically in the recognition that “hades,” understood as the abode of the dead, often functions as a neutral term indicating the place of the souls or spirits of the righteous and the unrighteous dead, whereas “paradise” indicates specifically the place of the souls of the righteous dead. “Paradise,” like “hades,” is to be understood as a reference to the intermediate state. Note that Luke 23:43, understood as a reference to the intermediate state of Christ, has been adduced by theologians as supporting the *descensus*.

Objection 5: Because Christ said “It is finished” as he died, his work of salvation cannot be conceived as continuing beyond his death.

Response: The meaning of Christ’s saying is unclear: he may simply have been indicating that his physical sufferings on the cross were completed. Even if, moreover, the saying is understood as a reference to Christ’s satisfaction for sin, it cannot be taken to mean that the entire work of salvation had been completed, inasmuch as Christ’s victory over death was finalized only in the resurrection. The final resurrection, moreover, signals the conclusion of the “intermediate state” for believers—just as Christ’s resurrection signaled the conclusion of the intermediate state for the incarnate Mediator.

Objection 6: The *descensus* is a late addition to the creed, having no solid precedent prior to circa A.D. 650.

Response: Not only does the Creed of Aquileia (ca. 390) offer a precise precedent, but there is also a series of creeds produced between A.D. 400 and A.D. 650 that follow this pattern of confession. What is more, given the foundation of the creedal article in the church’s understanding of Acts 2:27-31, Ephesians 4:9, and I Peter 3:18-19, there is extensive precedent for the creedal article in the writings of the fathers from the early second century onward. In addition, at least two fathers in whose creeds the article did not appear (viz., Cyril of Jerusalem and Augustine) viewed the doctrine taught by the article as a fundamental element of the apostolic faith.

Objection 7: The sole creedal reference to the *descensus* prior to the Apostles’ Creed (the Creed of Aquileia) does not mean what the Apostles’ Creed indicates by “descended into hell.”

Response: This objection is based solely on the testimony of Rufinus, who clearly did not offer a sound reading of the creedal article at this point in his exposition of the creed. Furthermore, he subsequently offered the typical patristic interpretation, that Christ’s descent into hell was a descent to the realm of the dead.

Objection 8: The *descensus* is contrary to Reformed theology.

Response: The *descensus* is taught by Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism as indicating the suffering of Christ, especially on the cross, and by the Westminster standards and a series of Reformed theologians of the era of orthodoxy as referring to the intermediate state of Christ's soul. Therefore, we conclude that the *descensus* occupies a significant place in Reformed theological tradition. Furthermore, these Reformed theologians, assuming the doctrine to be biblical, worked to explain how a confession of Christ's descent to the realm of the dead can be taught in the context of a theology that denies both purgatory and the *limbus patrum*.

Objection 9: The Heidelberg Catechism's answer to the question on the meaning of the *descensus* simply fails to answer the question.

Response: The catechetical question asks why the words "descended into hell" follow the creedal confession concerning Christ's death and burial; the answer responds, as Calvin did, that the words have been added in order to give believers assurance that by the fullness of Christ's sufferings in soul (as well as in body) they have been "redeemed from the anguish and torments of hell." Syntactically, the words are a precise answer to the question as posed. Theologically, they offer one of several permissible interpretations of the creedal article. As confessional Reformed believers we subscribe to but are not limited to the explanation provided in the Heidelberg Catechism, so long any other explanations are based on Scripture and do not contradict the interpretation in the Heidelberg Catechism.

V. Recommendations

The foregoing revised material from the study committee was submitted to and approved by the Interchurch Relations Committee at its meeting in February 2000. Having reviewed the CRC's subscription to and amendment of creeds and confessions, the biblical and historical materials related to the "descent" clause, and the major objections against the clause raised by the Reformed Churches of Australia and others, the IRC is now in a position to respond to the RCA's actions in 1997. What follows are (A) the four (out of seven) official decisions of the 1997 RCA synod that the IRC felt should be addressed and (B) the IRC's responses to these decisions in the form of six recommendations to the CRC Synod 2000:

A. *The RCA decisions addressed by the IRC*

The following four decisions made by the RCA re the "descent" clause were addressed by the IRC:

2. To add a footnote to the *descensus* in all future printings of the Apostles' Creed, stating, "By this we understand that Christ suffered the God-forsaken agony of hell on the cross," and that this report and our synodical decisions be forwarded to the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship (CEF) with the RCA with the request for study and action with a view to coming to a common agreement for any rewording of the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds.

Grounds:

- a. The footnote would reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding of what is being confessed.
- b. Any change would then be effected by a community of Reformed Churches.

3. To also send the following to the REC and CEF: "To consider changing from 'was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell' to 'was crucified, dead, and buried, having suffered the pains of hell.'"

Grounds:

- a. This is true to the Reformed understanding that the pains of hell came before the death and burial of Christ.
 - b. It gives creedal support to the oft-denied doctrine of hell.
 - c. It fits in with the meter of the original, so that there will be no stumbling if people present follow the old version.
2. To continue to allow freedom, for those whose consciences are bothered, to remain silent whenever this statement is publicly confessed by the church, as previously declared by Synod 1994.
 3. To declare that it [synod] has upheld the concern of the gravamen by (1) forwarding this report and actions of the synod to the REC and CEF, (2) suggesting the alternative wording "having suffered the pain of hell" to the REC, and (3) adding the footnote to the Apostles' Creed.

B. Recommendations re the RCA's synodical decisions listed in A above

1. That synod commend the Reformed Churches of Australia (a) for their pastoral sympathy with the concern of the gravamen, (b) for retaining and not unilaterally changing the traditional wording of the descent clause, and (c) for submitting the gravamen and synodical decisions to the Reformed Ecumenical Council and churches in ecclesiastical fellowship for reaction.
2. That synod communicate to the RCA that, in the judgment of the CRC, there are not adequate grounds for the original gravamen or for the RCA synod's attempt to uphold "the concern of the gravamen."

Grounds:

- a. The gravamen does not pay enough attention to the fact that throughout the last two millennia the Christian church has consistently appealed to several biblical texts as the foundation for the *descensus* doctrine. Patristic, medieval, Reformation, and post-Reformation orthodox theologians debated not *whether Scripture teaches* Christ's descent into hell but *what Scripture means* by this descent.
 - b. Not only is this article rooted in Scripture, but there is also widespread recognition of it in the writings of the fathers from the second century onward and in a series of creeds from the fourth through the seventh centuries.
 - c. The materials submitted by the RCA do not take sufficient account of the fact that in the history of the English language the word *hell* has referred not only to the place of final punishment but also to *sheol* or *hades*, biblical terms for the resting place of the soul in the intermediate state. In fact, it is in this latter sense of hell that a majority of commentators in the past have understood the descent of Christ into "hell."
3. That synod commend the RCA for adding an explanatory footnote to the "descent" clause.

Grounds:

- a. There is indeed considerable ignorance and misunderstanding of the meaning of this clause among those who confess the Apostles' Creed.
- b. To overcome ignorance and misunderstanding, the CRC, too, has upon occasion added footnotes to the creeds and confessions.

4. That synod suggest to the RCA that they alter the wording of the footnote to read something like this: “The Christian church has never understood Christ’s descent into hell as a literal descent into the place of eternal punishment. Some Christians, including some Reformed Christians, have interpreted it as the descent of Christ’s soul into the realm or state of the dead (hades) between his death and resurrection (see the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. and A. 50). Others, including the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism (Q. and A. 44), have understood it as a reference to the hellish agony of eternal punishment that Christ suffered, especially on the cross but also earlier.”

Ground: This proposed alteration of the footnote recognizes that there are, even in the Reformed tradition, other reasonable and responsible interpretations of this clause besides that given in Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 44.

5. That synod suggest to the RCA that they hold to the decision to retain the traditional wording of the “descent” clause and that they withdraw their request that the REC consider changing the wording to “having suffered the pains of hell.”

Grounds:

- a. The materials submitted by the RCA provide no new or compelling evidence for altering the traditional wording of the creed.
 - b. According to the guidelines laid out by the CRC Synod 1961, whenever a historical-textual approach to a creed offers satisfactory answers to objections raised against it, the creed should not be modified. In most situations it is a more suitable solution to respect the difficult language of the original and to explain it with a note than to alter the historical text.
 - c. The proposed change in wording would limit the possible meanings of this clause to that given by the Heidelberg Catechism, which offers just one of several interpretations found in the Reformed tradition. As confessional Reformed believers, we subscribe to but are not limited to the explanation provided in the Heidelberg Catechism.
 - d. The clause reflects or implies a number of important Christian teachings: that Christ passed through the intermediate state between his death and resurrection, that redemption’s wide scope includes even those who have died, and that Christ made satisfaction for sin and its consequences—and did so in our place.
 - e. Contemporary churches should be very reluctant to alter the creeds since, although these creeds lack the authority of Scripture, nevertheless they exercise significant authority in the church and provide valuable service in the teaching and preaching ministry of the church.
 - f. The ecumenical creeds help to hold together a badly fragmented Christian church. Because the Apostles’ Creed has ecumenical status in the Western church, the alteration of the “descent” clause by one or more denominations would in effect place them creedally outside the circle of the worldwide church.
6. That synod advise the RCA to reconsider their decision to “allow freedom, for those whose consciences are bothered, to remain silent whenever this statement is publicly confessed by the church.”

Grounds:

- a. Being a professing member of a confessional Reformed church requires that one believe and confess “the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testaments, and in the articles of the Christian faith . . . to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation . . .” (Form for Public Profession of Faith).
- b. Conscientious objections should disappear once the biblical, historical, and theological bases for this article of the creed are explained. Good catechetical instruction, catechism preaching, theological training, and an explanatory note attached to the creed should help to alleviate misunderstanding of the “descent” clause on the part of those who are called to confess it publicly.

Appendix C

Report of the IRC Delegation to Japan and Korea

I. Introduction

In the spring of 1999 the Interchurch Relations Committee determined that it would be advantageous for relationships in Asia if it would send a three-person delegation to visit with the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) and with several denominations in Korea. The RCJ has been in a close relationship (ecclesiastical fellowship) with the CRC for nearly fifty years, and it has been many years since a delegation of the IRC met with its leaders and assembly in Japan.

IRC’s reasons for sending a delegation were threefold:

- A. To deepen relations with the Reformed Church of Japan.
- B. To learn more about the DaeShin Presbyterian Church of Korea, which has requested a closer relationship with the CRC.
- C. To visit with the leaders of other Presbyterian churches in Korea to assess whether other churches are also interested in a closer relationship with the CRC.

The IRC delegation was made up of the following members:

Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary of the CRCNA
Rev. Edward A. Van Baak, chair of the IRC
Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, vice chair of the IRC

In preparation for the visit, IRC consulted with both the Korean Ministry Team and the Korean Council. The ministry team is made up of representatives of several CRC agencies that work with Korean congregations. The Korean Council includes all the Korean ministers ordained in the CRC. From these consultations we gleaned the following list of churches that we should visit in Korea:

DaeShin Presbyterian Church of Korea
HapDong Presbyterian Church of Korea
HapDongGaeHyuk Presbyterian Church of Korea
HapDongJeongTong Presbyterian Church of Korea

II. Visit Report

A. *Visit with Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ)*

1. We arrived in Japan on Saturday afternoon and were welcomed warmly by Rev. and Mrs. Richard (Sandy) Sytsma. Rev. Sytsma is the team leader of the World Missions staff in Japan. We stayed in the mission guest house and were graciously cared for during our stay.

On Sunday morning we worshiped with two different Japanese congregations and were enthusiastically received as brothers in Christ. On Sunday evening the monthly English service was held for the families of the mission staff, teachers at the Christian Academy of Japan, and CRC members working and living in the Tokyo area. We were delighted to be a part of this service.

2. We visited with representative leaders of the Eastern Presbytery of the RCJ on Monday in the Oncho church in Tokyo. We met with the following pastors: Rev. Mochizuki, chair of the Mission Liaison Committee; Rev. Sawaya, chair of the Evangelism Committee; Rev. Katao Ka, moderator of the Eastern Presbytery; Rev. Kumoda, member of the Evangelism Committee; Rev. Sekiguchi, member of the Mission Liaison Committee; Rev. Kawasugi, assistant clerk of the Eastern Presbytery; and Rev. Ashida, stated clerk of the Eastern Presbytery. In addition to the RCJ leaders, five CRC world missionaries were also present: Rev. Ted Boswell, Rev. Jeong Gho, Rev. Larry Spalink, Rev. Richard Sytsma, and Rev. George Young.

We reviewed with these leaders the purpose of our visit and discussed briefly those matters of interchurch relations that are important to our two churches. Since many of the Eastern Presbytery leaders at the meeting were members of their churches' mission committees, they were vitally interested in our visit to Korea because they have been trying to regularize a relationship of mission cooperation with the Koshin Presbyterian Church of Korea. Although we do not have a relationship with the Koshin church, we were intending to meet with its leaders, and we assured the RCJ leaders that we would do what we could to secure a closer relationship with Koshin which would also benefit the RCJ.

3. On Tuesday we traveled to Kobe and were hosted by Rev. and Mrs. Yasanori Ichikawa at the Kobe Theological Seminary, the ministerial training school of the RCJ. We were lodged in the guest rooms of the seminary, and we were treated to a wonderful Japanese meal in the Ichikawa home. While there, we met with the RCJ Liaison Committee and participated in the Wednesday-evening worship service.

Our meeting with the RCJ Liaison Committee was very informative and beneficial for a better understanding between our churches. Unfortunately, the only Liaison Committee member who was available to meet with us was Rev. Ichikawa. Rev. Makita was absent on a sabbatical study leave, and Rev. Suzuki was unexpectedly absent due to a trip to Korea to visit the general assembly of the Koshin Presbyterian Church.

We spent the evening identifying and discussing those matters which affect our relationship as churches. The role of women in the church, particularly the place of women in the ruling offices, is one issue that affects our relationship. Although the RCJ has also been discussing this issue, it has not yet formulated a final decision. As in the CRC, there are those who oppose women in office and those who defend it. We are pleased that the RCJ understands the CRC struggle and position and that, even though not all agree with the CRC decision, they continue to value our relationship as churches.

Throughout the evening an extended discussion was held about the CRC's relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the RCN's place in the Reformed Ecumenical Council, and the recommendation to the RCJ general assembly to suspend its relationship with the REC. The RCJ is not overtly critical of our bilateral relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, but is very critical of the REC's failure either to rebuke the RCN for its position on homophilia or to remove the RCN from the REC. Lack of action on the part of the REC is understood as a lack of confessional integrity and the loss of Reformed identity. Therefore, the RCJ Liaison Committee is recommending to the general assembly that the RCJ suspend its membership in the REC but send observer representatives to the Indonesia meeting in July 2000. In its fraternal greetings to the RCJ general assembly, the CRC delegation expressed disappointment in this course of action and argued that the RCJ is needed in the REC for its theological acumen, its confessional integrity, and its leadership in Asia. (We were informed after we returned to the U.S.A. that the RCJ assembly defeated the recommendation to suspend its relationship with the REC and will remain an active member.)

We briefly discussed the two confessional issues that had been placed on our IRC agenda, namely, an analysis of the phrase "he descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed and an investigation of Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism. It seems as though the RCJ Liaison Committee did not receive a request from the Reformed Churches of Australia regarding the Apostles' Creed matter. Inasmuch as the RCJ subscribes to the Westminster standards, the Heidelberg Catechism matter is of less concern to them.

4. Following the delegation's trip to Korea (Sept. 30-Oct. 9), two of the REC delegation (Engelhard and Van Baak) returned to Japan to attend the RCJ general assembly meeting in Kawagoe on October 12-15. To accommodate the delegation's travel schedule, they were permitted to bring greetings from the CRC on the evening of the first day of the assembly.

Our representatives were cordially received at the assembly, and the love and respect that the RCJ leaders have for the CRC was evident. About 33 percent of the present congregations of the RCJ have been planted and nurtured by CRC missionaries, and their gratitude for CRC involvement is regularly expressed.

B. Visit with churches and seminaries in Korea

1. Introduction

We arrived in Korea on September 30 and were met by Dr. Young Ook Kim, a CRC minister who is teaching missiology at the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (ACTS). Dr. Kim graciously assisted us throughout our stay by helping with local arrangements and providing transportation. His assistance was vital to the success of our visit.

Our delegation was joined in Korea by Rev. Jeong Gho, who serves as a CRC missionary in Japan. Rev. Gho served as our interpreter, translator, and guide. His affable spirit, excellent translation skills, and sympathetic understanding of the Korean situation were invaluable assets for accomplishing our goals.

2. Visit to Koshin Presbyterian Church of Korea

Our first visit was with some of the leadership of the Koshin Presbyterian Church at the church's seminary (Koshin Theological Seminary) in its new facility in Chunan, about a hundred kilometers south of Seoul. We had been told that we would be invited to bring greetings to the Koshin general assembly, which was meeting in the seminary building. Unfortunately, the assembly was preoccupied with a difficult issue which took more time to resolve than had been expected, and, therefore, it was not possible for us to address the assembly.

Even though contact with the assembly was closed to us, several seminary faculty members, some of whom have studied at Calvin Seminary, graciously hosted us for the day. They gave us a tour of the seminary and helped us to understand the Koshin denomination and some of the tensions which exist within it. Our cordial discussions were continued during a traditional Korean meal at a local restaurant.

The Koshin Presbyterian Church traces its history to a painful period in Korea (1938-1945) when the country was under Japanese domination. There was only one Presbyterian denomination in Korea at that time, and its general assembly voted to permit Shinto shrine worship. The founding leaders of what later became known as the Koshin Presbyterian Church refused to engage in Shinto shrine worship and suffered severely for their convictions. There is a strikingly large and emotionally evocative photograph of these martyrs displayed in the lobby of the seminary's chapel. This history is still fresh in the memories of the Koshin Presbyterian leaders in Korea.

Just as clear in their memories is the action taken by the general assembly not to recognize their presbytery delegates at the assembly meeting in 1951 because the presbytery had continued to support a new seminary for the training of ministers. These officebearers and the presbytery from which they came attempted to remain with the unified denomination, but again in 1952 the general assembly refused to seat delegates from the presbytery that later became the founding assembly of the Koshin Presbyterian Church. A concern for theological faithfulness and moral fidelity have marked this church throughout its history. Presently the Koshin church has 1,400 congregations and about 160,000 confessing members.

The Koshin Presbyterian Church has relationships with churches such as the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland Vrijgemacht, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the Presbyterian Church in America—all of whom are critical of the CRC and may advise Koshin against a closer relationship with the CRC. The Koshin denomination has two categories of interchurch relationships: (a) sister relationships with churches with which it is particularly close and (b) fraternal relations with churches which are compatible theologically but have more differences than sister churches. We received no indication that the Koshin churches would approve a sister relationship with the CRC, but we would hope that eventually a fraternal relationship could be established. Pursuit of this option would require the IRC to approach the Fraternal Committee of the Koshin Presbyterian Church because it is not likely that the Koshin leadership will take initiative to address us.

3. Worship in HapDong and TongHap churches

a. MyungSung Church

Arrangements had been made for our delegation to attend an early morning prayer service at the Myung Sung Presbyterian Church (TongHap). Furthermore, Dr. Engelhard was asked to preach the sermon at this service.

The MyungSung congregation began with a small number of members in 1980. Today the congregation has more than 20,000 members with four or five early morning prayer meetings each day (beginning at 4:00 a.m.) and four worship services every Sunday. Rev. Kim, the senior pastor, has been emphasizing prayer, evangelism, and service to the poor, and God has blessed this ministry with phenomenal growth. Rev. Kim was not available for conversation, but several of his assistants visited with us to explain the church's ministry.

b. WangSung Church

Arrangements had also been made for us to lead worship at the WangSung Presbyterian Church, which is pastored by Rev. Ja Yeon Kiel, the immediate past moderator of the HapDong denomination. This congregation has also experienced amazing growth in recent years and has well over 20,000 members. Worship in this and the MyungSung Church were inspiring and exhilarating experiences.

Rev. Kiel's schedule did not allow him to visit with us on Sunday, but he graciously consented to host us for breakfast on Friday. At that time he told us of the HapDong denomination's need to find new ways to attract young people into the life of the church. He described three generational stages found in Korean society and churches: those raised during the time when life was influenced by Confucianism (65-year-olds and older), those whose outlook is shaped by a post-Korean war mentality (60-year-olds and younger), and those in the computer age. It is Rev. Kiel's judgment that the HapDong church is clinging to the second stage but that it needs to find ways to open doors to the third stage of Korean society. There is a tension between those who want to open doors to the twenty-first century and those who want to hang on to the boundaries.

4. Visit to the two campuses of the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (ACTS)

Although ACTS is not connected to a particular denomination, we wanted to visit the campuses of this school because of its interdenominational faculty and connections and because Christian Reformed World Missions has a nascent relationship with this school through its purchase of space in the new ACTS building in Yang Pyong. Rev. Albert Hamstra of World Missions asked us to include this in our visit.

One ACTS campus is in the city of Seoul (Sudaemon area), and one is in the city of Yang Pyong (about thirty miles from Seoul). We had an informative visit with Dr. Taek-Kwon Lim at the Sudaemon Campus. He has been president of ACTS for about one year, having succeeded Dr. Chul-Ha Han, who was the founding president. Dr. Lim characterizes the school as interdenominational, evangelical, and international. The theological leanings are Reformed, and most of the faculty and students are from churches with Reformed and Presbyterian traditions. Students at the school come from many different countries for study in M.Div., M.A., Th.M., and D.Min. programs. Korean students tend to study in denominational seminaries for their preordination programs rather than at ACTS, but some come to ACTS for additional study.

On both campuses Dr. Zwaanstra was invited to present a lecture. He spoke on the topic "The CRC: Who Are We?" Dr. Engelhard was invited to lead the chapel service on the Yang Pyong campus, where over five hundred students gather every Tuesday for an English-only worship experience.

Synod 1994 gave CR World Missions permission "to establish a partnership with the Asian Center for Theological Studies (ACTS) in Seoul, Korea, through which CRWM will provide cross-cultural training for Korean missionaries to the world" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 453). That partnership entailed a financial contribution from World Missions to ACTS for access to about 1,500 feet of space in the center's new building on the Yang Pyong campus. To date World Missions has not provided a teacher/trainer for this work. Since this partnership affects relationships in Korea but is not the direct responsibility of the Interchurch Relations Committee, the delegation has written a separate report on this matter to be discussed with World Missions staff.

5. Visit with HapDong Presbyterian Church of Korea

a. The following brief historical description of the HapDong Presbyterian Church of Korea comes from the volume *The Reformed Family Worldwide* (edited by Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer and published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, p. 309):

At the 44th Assembly (1959) the Presbyterian Church of Korea divided into two churches of about equal size. While TongHap maintained membership in the WCC and allowed for a relatively wide range of theological positions, HapDong represents the more conservative line. After the break, HapDong, with the help of ICCS, built a seminary. On the basis of its strict doctrinal positions it seemed logical that the church would unite with KoShin. The union decided upon in 1960 did not last. It turned out that their seminaries were too different in their theological approaches. Some 150 KoShin congrs stayed with HapDong. Like

TongHap, HapDong celebrated (in 1962) the 50th Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. In 1965 it started the newspaper *KiDokSinBo* and founded ChongShin Seminary in SaDangDong.

At the 64th Assembly (1979) HapDong suffered a further division. The church divided into mainline and non-mainline groups. The debate centered around two issues. The first was the authorship of the Pentateuch, and the second the relationship of the church to ChongShin Seminary. Rev. Kim Hee-Bo, the president of ChongShin Theological Seminary, advocated biblical criticism by denying Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch. As he was censured, 15 directors of ChongShin Seminary withdrew from the authority of the Assembly, changed the school into a university, and ran it privately. The non-mainline group soon fragmented further and gave birth to several more denominations. HapDong, however, continued to grow and developed in the following years into the largest denomination in Korea. In 1986 an Assembly building was inaugurated, and in 1992 HapDong celebrated the 80th anniversary of the first General Assembly in 1912.

Presently the HapDong church has about 2.5 million members and almost 6,000 congregations.

- b. Our delegation met jointly with the general secretary (Dr. Sung Soo Seo) and the newly elected moderator of the general assembly (Rev. Bin Do Kim) at the HapDong denominational building, which houses the offices of many HapDong ministries.

We had a cordial meeting with these gentlemen and were informed that they have a general knowledge of the CRC and that they respect the CRC. Furthermore, they said that the HapDong church was looking for ways to have closer relationships with other churches internationally. They suggested that they would look favorably on an invitation to attend our synod meeting in 2000 and that we could then expect an invitation to their assembly in September 2000.

When asked if they knew of any obstacles to a closer relationship, they said that they didn't know of any but that a closer examination of our theological positions would need to be done before a relationship could be established. We assured them that that was true from the CRC side as well.

We had a brief meeting with the general director of the HapDong Global Mission Society (Dr. Hwal-Young Kim) and learned that the HapDong church has 936 missionaries (540 family units) in eighty-six countries. Dr. Kim will be visiting the U.S.A. in July 2000 and expects to visit with CR World Missions at that time. We also met the editor of the HapDong weekly newspaper and were given a brief introduction to her work.

- c. The Chongshin Theological Seminary and its leadership are vital factors in the life of the HapDong church. We met with Dr. Aaron Park, who has been serving for the past six months as the interim president of the seminary. Dr. John E. Kim, a former CRC minister, served as the previous president of this seminary. Furthermore, there are several faculty members at this school who have studied at Calvin Theological Seminary. There was a time when four of the leading seminaries in Korea had presidents who were Calvin Seminary graduates and/or were ministers in the CRC.

Since Dr. Park is not directly involved in interchurch relations, our visit with him was to gain an additional perspective on the church and to develop a relationship with a broader spectrum of church leaders. Seminary presidents and theological teachers play a vital role in the life of the churches in Korea.

- d. Our delegation also had a meeting with Dr. John E. Kim, a former CRC minister now serving a congregation of the HapDong church in Seoul. Until April 1999 he served as president of Chongshin Theological Seminary. We were warmly received by Dr. Kim and had an enjoyable visit.

Dr. Kim has been critical of the CRC, especially of its position on women in office and what he perceived to be its laxity in the disciplining of a homosexual minister within the CRC. During our cordial visit we were able to discuss frankly and openly the matters mentioned above. Some factual inaccuracies in Dr. Kim's understanding were corrected. Since he has spoken critically about the CRC regarding these matters, he said he would try to correct the wrong impressions he may have left.

6. Visit with TongHap Presbyterian Church of Korea

- a. The following brief history of the TongHap church comes from the volume *The Reformed Family Worldwide* (pp. 308-09):

After World War II this church was reconstituted. After two Assemblies in 1946 and 1947 the church adopted the name Presbyterian Church of Korea at its 35th Assembly. Despite heavy losses through divisions arising from the controversies over shrine worship, the majority of members continued to adhere to that church. Today it represents the major stream in Korean Presbyterianism.

In the 1950s the issue of participation in the ecumenical movement caused increasing tensions in the church. While one party promoted the idea of membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC), others opted for the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). At the 44th Assembly in 1959 the church broke into two churches of about equal size—TongHap and HapDong. A few years later (1962) TongHap celebrated the 50th Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. In 1984 a commemorative event for the 100th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Korea was organized by the church; at that time an Assembly building was inaugurated. In 1986 PCK adopted its present confession of faith. TongHap is open to the ecumenical movement and allows for a wide range of theological positions. In 1995 it introduced the ordination of women.

Presently the TongHap churches have two million members and about 6,000 congregations.

- b. Our delegation visited Jang Shin Theological Seminary and there met with Dr. Jung Woon Suh, president, and with Dr. Kwang Soon Lee, professor of missiology and director of the Center for World Missions. Dr. Suh is a graduate of Calvin Seminary (Th.M.) and lectured there in the spring of 1999. Our conversation with him was about church life and denominational interconnections in Korea. He surprised us during our talks by informing us that he had introduced a resolution at the recent TongHap general assembly requesting that the TongHap denomination

enter into a sister-church relationship with the CRC. The resolution was referred to the church's ecumenical office for further investigation.

Dr. Kwang Soon Lee is a graduate of Fuller Seminary (Ph.D.) and is a strong evangelical and Reformed voice in the Jang Shin faculty. She has been the director of the Center for World Missions for several years now and is zealous for training and sending missionaries. Dr. Lee expressed some serious criticism of the radical missiology found in mainline ecumenical organizations, which she says diminishes Word evangelism and stresses pluralism and service evangelism.

We were scheduled to meet with the general secretary of the TongHap church (Dr. Sang Hak Kim), but due to the death of his father in Pusan, our meeting was canceled. We did meet, however, with Dr. Hong-Jung Lee, who is director of planning, ecumenical relations, and publicity. His office is responsible for pursuing the proposal mentioned above about entering into a sister-church relationship with the CRC. Our conversation was cordial, and it allowed all of us to learn more about each other's churches. He was encouraged by our visit and spoke positively about pursuing his assignment to learn more about us. He informed us that the TongHap church had received an invitation to send observers to the upcoming REC meeting in July 2000 in Indonesia and that those involved in the decision were favorably disposed to attend.

7. Visit with the GaeHyuk Presbyterian Church of Korea (Reformed)

- a. The following brief history of the founding of the GaeHyuk Presbyterian Church comes from the volume entitled *The Reformed Family Worldwide* (pp. 314-15):

Before HapDong divided in 1979, a neutral group representing about 400 congregations formed a committee of 17 members with the mandate to work for the maintenance of unity. For two years they promoted reconciliation under the slogan "Be one." The effort remained unsuccessful. The neutral group then sided with the directors of HapDong Seminary, who had seceded from the mainline group (Park Yun-Sun, Park Hyung-Ryong, Yoon Yung-Tak and Kim Myung-Hyuk), and planned for the foundation of a new denomination, GaeHyuk.

Meanwhile the non-mainline group had divided into two denominations—JongAm and BangBae. An attempt was made to unite the three groups. In 1980 a united assembly was held (moderator: Kim In-Sung). But soon the three groups separated again since none of them was prepared to give up its seminary. In 1981 the neutral group, strengthened by representatives of Chong-Shin Seminary, constituted GaeHyuk I. JongAm and BangBae also founded separate denominations. Three new denominations had thus come into being: GaeHyuk, HapDongBoSu (BangBae), and HapDongBoSu (ChungDam).

In December 1998 this denomination merged with eight or nine other smaller denominations and now claims a membership of two million and about 5,200 congregations. GaeHyuk held its first joint general-assembly meeting in September. It is in the process of forging a new identity as a merged church and is concentrating its energy on that task. Initiating and engaging in relationships with churches internationally may be difficult at this time.

- b. We met in the GaeHyuk denominational building with Dr. Jin Tae Lee, president of the seminary; Rev. Byung Hak Kauh, moderator of the general assembly; and Rev. Young Sam Park, general secretary. These men emphasized that the GaeHyuk church is attempting to be a confessional church with a Calvinist theology. This church has been influenced by and is appreciative of the teachings of the Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper. They said they have a close affinity with both the Koshin and HapDong denominations. Pulpit exchanges occur among these three denominations.

When asked about what obstacles may exist to a closer relationship with the CRC, they mentioned women in office and the CRC's teaching on homosexuality. We talked freely about these matters and gave them a copy (in Korean) of the report prepared by the committee reviewing our position on women in office. We were also able to clear up some misunderstandings about our position on homosexuality.

8. Visit with the DaeShin Presbyterian Church of Korea

- a. The following brief history of the founding of the DaeShin Presbyterian Church comes from the volume *The Reformed Family Worldwide* (p. 310):

The origin of this church goes back to 1948 when Dr. Kim Chi-Sun, Pastor Kim Sun-Do, and Pastor Yun Phil-Sung started evening courses for the formation of candidates for the ministry. The school later became DaeHan Seminary. The history of the denomination is closely connected with the history of DaeHan Seminary.

In 1960, after the split of TongHap and HapDong, ICCC began to be active in Korea. Under the influence of Dr. Carl McIntire and with the financial support of the ICCC, Dr. Kim Chi-Sun, who belonged to HapDong, founded in 1961 the Bible Presbyterian Church. He became the director of the DaeHan Seminary. Soon tension developed between the Mission Department of the Bible Presbyterian Church and DaeHan Seminary, represented respectively by Dr. Bak Joon-Gul and Dr. Kim Chi-Sun. In 1968 Kim Chi-Sun withdrew from the ICCC. But new problems developed. Kim Chi-Sun was running DaeHan Seminary by himself, and he even tried to get his son Kim Sae-Chang appointed as director of the seminary. The idea was opposed by a professor of the seminary, Choi Soon-Jik, who together with some seminary students founded a new denomination called HapDongJinRi. The movement was joined by several groups. A leading figure of HapDongJinRi was Huh Kwang-Jae. In 1972 Dr. Kim Chi-Sun and his son withdrew from DaeShin I.

Gradually, DaeShin I sought to clarify the position of the church. The constitution was revised (1970) and the name of the church changed to DaeShin (1972). The church adopted the "Declaration of the Church" (1974), amended the new constitution (1976), and joined the Council of Presbyterian Churches in Korea (1980) and WARC (1992). DaeShin has experienced a rapid development and has actively participated in efforts of cooperation among the churches. DaeShin runs a seminary and a school and publishes a weekly church newspaper.

Presently the church has about 300,000 members and 1,400 congregations. It has ninety-seven missionaries in twenty-nine countries. We received a booklet that provides essential information about the teachings and organization of the DaeShin denomination.

- b. We had an evening meeting over dinner with Dr. Jae Kyu Kim, moderator of the general assembly; Dr. Hack In Kim, general secretary; Mr. Soon

Jung Kim, a ruling elder; and Dr. John T. Kim, president of Daehan Theological Seminary. Dr. Jae Kyu Kim, moderator of the assembly, served as primary spokesman for the denomination at our meeting and provided us with a helpful and complete overview of the history of the DaeShin church. It thinks of itself as Reformed in theology and confession, evangelical and passionate about missions, and experiential and expressive in worship. Its vision is to play a major role in the reunifying of the Presbyterian churches in Korea.

The DaeShin representatives classified churches in Korea according to the following categories: (1) radical/liberal, (2) hyper-Calvinistic, (3) eclectic, and (4) confessionally Reformed. They didn't attempt to place particular denominations into these categories, but they clearly see themselves and several other denominations we visited in category 4. It is with those denominations that they are beginning to work toward reunification. They have begun talks about merger with the HapDongJeongTong denomination. If this is successful, the result would be a church of about one million members and 3,500 congregations. DaeShin is a member of WARC and is working to influence a reform of its theology and social policy.

9. Visit with the HapDongJeongTong Presbyterian Church of Korea

- a. The following brief history about the founding of the HapDongJeongTong Presbyterian Church is from a volume entitled *The Reformed Family Worldwide* (p. 320):

Over the past years HapDongJeongTong has developed into a strong denomination. Its origins go back to the beginnings of the mainline and non-mainline division in 1979. In 1980 representatives of the non-mainline churches, together with Gospel Seminary, founded HapDongJinRi. A year later some members of HapDongJinRi joined forces with YunHap. YunHap had started in 1976 as an alliance of independent churches and had integrated in 1982 with the Grace denomination. HapDongJinRi and YunHap united and in 1982 formed a new denomination under the name HapDongJeongTong. In subsequent years the denomination grew rapidly, both through evangelism and through integration with smaller denominations. It runs a theological college and a press.

Presently this church has about 700,000 members, 1,950 congregations, 130 missionaries in sixteen countries, and the Christian Theological University.

- b. We had been scheduled to meet with denominational officials (general secretary and moderator of the general assembly) early in our stay in Korea, but due to a scheduling conflict we were not able to have that meeting.

Nonetheless, we were able to have a very informative meeting with the president of Christian Theological University and several of the faculty. Dr. Young-Min Ko, vice president, was the spokesman for the school. Several faculty members of this school are graduates of Calvin Seminary and therefore fairly well informed about the CRC.

Even though the faculty members were not able to speak on behalf of the whole denomination, they gave us the clear impression that they

were looking for closer relationships with other churches. Obstacles to a closer relationship with the CRC seem to be minimal, even though HapDongJeongTong does not ordain women. It is a member of WARC, but our hosts really knew very little about the depth or extent of their church's involvement. From what we know of this church, its involvement in WARC is probably cautious and critical, like that of DaeShin and some in TongHap.

III. Summary

The purposes for our trip were met: We deepened our relationship in Japan, we gathered data from six denominations in Korea, and we had opportunity to assess the DaeShin church, which has requested closer relations with us. For all this we are grateful.

We were pleased that the CRC is reasonably well known in Korea. The assistance we gave Korean churches in time of need more than forty years ago was recalled on more than one occasion. The fact that there are approximately forty-five Calvin Seminary graduates in Korea serving in several different denominations has also assisted the profile of the CRC. A few of these graduates are quite critical of the CRC, but the majority present a positive picture of us.

The time was right for this trip because the Presbyterian churches in Korea are all looking for contacts beyond the Korean peninsula. As a delegation we spoke of the *kairos* of this trip, that is, being in the right place at the right time. This doesn't mean that the next steps are clear or smooth, but during the next decade the churches in Korea will be creating mergers within the country and seeking stronger alliances internationally. The time is right for the CRC to reach out to Korea.

Not enough can be said for the Christian hospitality we received from all those who were willing to meet with us. Nearly every visit included a fellowship meal. Over those meals friendships were born, and the foundation for future relationships was laid. The delegation believes that an invitation for a closer relationship with the DaeShin, JeongTong, and TongHap denominations would most likely receive a favorable response. We believe a relationship with the HapDong denomination may be possible because its representatives indicated that they would consider favorably an invitation to come as observers to Synod 2000. A relationship at this time with the GaeHyuk and Koshin denominations seems less likely but not beyond possibility.

The delegation is hopeful about future relationships with churches in Korea. The IRC will need to identify the next steps to be taken to build upon what began in this visit.

IRC Delegation to Japan and Korea
David H. Engelhard
Edward A. Van Baak
Henry Zwaanstra

Appendix D

Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Adopted in 1987)

Preamble

1. The charter is based upon broad biblical perspectives and the specific teachings of such passages as John 17, I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and a host of others.
2. The charter maintains consistency and continuity with the teachings of the ancient creeds and the Reformed confessions (e.g., the Apostles' Creed, Article 9; the Nicene Creed, paragraph 5; the Belgic Confession, Articles XXVII and XXIX; the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21) in their vision of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.
3. The charter reflects the formative positions adopted by the Christian Reformed Church (e.g., the Synods of 1944 and 1977) while making such adjustments in emphasis and approach as are suggested by the experience of the church.

I. Biblical principles on ecumenicity

A. Called to unity

From the old and broken humanity God calls and gathers a new humanity—the church. For this purpose God called Abraham and Israel and then spoke in a unique and definitive way in Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection are the foundation of the church. The church is called to testify to what it already is—spiritually one in Christ—but also to what it should become—visibly one in Christ.

B. Unity in time and space

The unity of the church is variously described in Scripture. The description “people of God” emphasizes the historical continuity between Israel and the New Testament church. It pictures the church of all ages as sojourning from Old Testament election through the present to God's future. The description “body of Christ” emphasizes that the one worldwide church is governed by a single Head and that all its members have need of each other. It pictures the union of the church with Christ and the unity of its members among themselves.

C. Unity as gift and goal

Church unity is both a gift and a goal. It has already been given us by God in Christ. In spite of our divisions, we are already one in Christ. Both the local and the worldwide church are to be one body because in Christ they are one body. The given unity is the basis and motivation for all striving for the unity that still escapes us.

D. Diversity in unity

Uniformity is not essential for unity. The various local, regional, and national churches need not, for the sake of unity, deny their origins or their unique situations. Their history, traditions, customs, language, way of life,

and mode of thinking will differ widely. Such differences, however, do not subtract from the unity that is already theirs. The unity of the church allows for diversity in worship, confessional formulas, and church order.

1. Diversity in worship. Though all Christians confess one God, one baptism, and one Lord's Supper, they worship through various languages, liturgies, prayers, and hymns.
2. Diversity in confessional formulas. Though all Christians confess one God, one Lord, one faith, and one hope, they give articulation to this confession out of different circumstances, traditions, and systems of theological reflection.
3. Diversity in church order. Though all Christians confess one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and one body, they order their church affairs in accordance with different cultures, traditions, customs, confessional formulas, and administrative systems.

E. Unity and truth

The unity of the church is a unity in truth. En route to achieving unity, major differences in the perception of biblical truth must be overcome. In seeking to overcome these differences we must not only share with others our perceptions but also be open to theirs. Through such ecumenical dialogue we must trust God to teach all of us, and thereby unite us through a deeper common grasp of his truth. As we struggle for unity in the truth, we do so fully committed to the Reformed faith and the confessions affirmed by the Christian Reformed Church.

F. The unity we seek

The unity of the church must become visibly manifest. The ideal form of such unity is not yet known. We therefore earnestly seek the leading of the Holy Spirit into a unity which is one of mutual renewal and acceptance.

II. Principles for ecumenical practice

A. Interchurch relations (church to church relations)

1. The ecumenical task of a denomination derives from that fragmentation of the body of Christ which is contrary to his will as expressed, for example, in John 17; I Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4.
2. The unity of Christ's body calls us to seek the reunion of churches, but the ecumenical task does not necessarily begin in working for the return of one church to another, nor in the union of one church with another.
3. The unity of the body of Christ demands that we pursue our ecumenical task through all avenues which enhance our witness to Jesus Christ.
4. In our search for unity we may not compromise the biblical message; yet since all perceptions of biblical truth are fallible and incomplete, we must guard against the presumption that we possess the truth in all its fullness, but must through dialogue seek to come to a deeper understanding of God's revelation.

5. The ecumenical task also demands that we reject distorted perceptions of biblical truth that hinder our witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world.
6. Since our perception of the truth is a matter of great importance, our ecumenical task requires that we seek through dialogue to discover those elements in the understanding of the truth which reflect human and societal diversities in ourselves and others. Such elements need not be barriers to our pursuit of visible expression of our given unity in Christ, or to our continuing search for a common grasp of God's truth.
7. The pursuit of visible unity of the church requires that we seek to heal past wounds by overcoming our differences with those who are closest to us in the understanding and practice of the truth.
8. The ecumenical task is the responsibility of the whole church at all levels of its organization and in all areas of its life.

B. Ecumenical organizations

1. The church in today's world must recognize that ecumenicity is being pursued through various types of ecumenical organizations that may enable a member church to carry out some aspects of its ecumenical responsibilities more efficiently than through interchurch relations.
2. Membership in ecumenical organizations requires relationships of diverse kinds consonant with the wide diversity of the member churches within the organizations.
3. Membership in an ecumenical organization, which links its member churches in a variety of ways by its constitution, bases, statements, activities and practices, requires the employment of the same principles as those used in interchurch relations.

III. The ecumenical responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church

A. Guidelines for the ecumenical task of the Christian Reformed Church

1. For the purpose of pursuing its ecumenical calling the Christian Reformed Church may classify the churches of Christ into three groups in ever-widening circles: Reformed churches, non-Reformed Protestant churches, and the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. The interchurch relations of the Christian Reformed Church with churches of these groups will be determined by the degree of our affinity with them.
2. The Christian Reformed Church should seek rapprochement with all churches of Christ but should attach first priority to Reformed churches, particularly those churches which are Reformed as to confession, polity, and liturgy, as determined not only by their formal standards, but also by their actual practice.
 - a. The unity of those churches which are Reformed in confession and practice should come to organizational expression as soon as possible.
 - b. The interim aims of rapprochement should include resolution of doctrinal differences where necessary, joint action in Christian endeavors where possible, and a common Reformed witness to the world.

- c. The shape of this organizational unity should be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.
- 3. The Christian Reformed Church in pursuing its ecumenical calling should also seek rapprochement with churches of Christ in the ever-widening circles of churches as circumstances and opportunities provide, fulfilling its task in keeping with the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice.
- 4. The Christian Reformed Church should seek to pursue its ecumenical task by means of ecumenical organizations that enable it to carry out its ecumenical responsibilities more efficiently than is possible in interchurch relations.
 - a. The propriety of relations in such ecumenical organizations is circumscribed by the biblical principles on ecumenicity and principles for ecumenical practice of the charter as they bear on the nature of the organizations according to their respective constitutions, bases, statements, activities, and practices.
 - b. The complications of membership in ecumenical organizations may require diverse and restricted types of membership and degrees of involvement in keeping with the provisions of the charter.

B. Responsibility for the ecumenical task of the Christian Reformed Church

- 1. The ecumenical task is the responsibility of all members, congregations, councils, classes, and the synod of the Christian Reformed Church.
- 2. On the synodical level Church Order Article 49 provides for the appointment of a standing committee on interchurch relations as follows:
 - 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.
- 3. The basic mandate of the Interchurch Relations Committee is expressed in Church Order Article 49, namely, to serve as the official agency of liaison between the Christian Reformed Church and other Reformed churches throughout the world. The committee, in addition, bears other ecumenical responsibilities as assigned by synod from time to time. As a committee of synod it shall exercise only those powers which are assigned by synod.

C. Scope of the work of the Interchurch Relations Committee

- 1. The Interchurch Relations Committee, in accordance with Church Order Article 49, shall actively seek to promote and maintain relations of the Christian Reformed Church with churches which confess and maintain the Reformed faith:

- a. by establishing relations of ecclesiastical fellowship subject to the following rules adopted by synod which govern these relationships:
 - 1) There shall be one relationship with other Reformed churches designated by synod as “churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.”
 - 2) The receiving of churches into ecclesiastical fellowship implies and, where possible and desirable, involves:
 - a) exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies,
 - b) occasional pulpit fellowship,
 - c) intercommunion (i.e., fellowship at the table of the Lord),
 - d) joint action in areas of common responsibility,
 - e) communication on major issues of joint concern,
 - f) the exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.
 - b. by contacting other churches of Reformed persuasion with a view to closer relations and possibly receiving them into ecclesiastical fellowship.
 - c. by participating in ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church cooperates with other denominations of Reformed faith in accordance with Church Order Article 50.
2. The Interchurch Relations Committee, in conformity with the provisions of its charter and in accordance with synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote an interest in the worldwide church through:
 - a. study and contact with other denominations as opportunity and prudence make possible;
 - b. study and contact with ecumenical organizations that include broader segments of the worldwide church as opportunity and prudence permit.

IV. Specific responsibilities of the Interchurch Relations Committee

- A. The Interchurch Relations Committee shall continue close relationships with the denominations which have been named by synod as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- B. The Interchurch Relations Committee shall remain abreast of current developments within those churches with whom we are in ecclesiastical fellowship to assure that such fellowship continues to be warranted.
- C. The Interchurch Relations Committee shall recommend to synod which additional churches are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship.
- D. The Interchurch Relations Committee shall recommend which specific kinds of fellowship and cooperation shall apply to each church in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- E. The Interchurch Relations Committee shall initiate and/or pursue contact and closer relationships with churches other than those in ecclesiastical fellowship in accordance with the principles and scope of its ecumenical responsibilities.
- F. The Interchurch Relations Committee shall serve as the agency of contact with ecumenical organizations.

1. It shall serve as the agency of liaison of the Christian Reformed Church with those ecumenical organizations with which the denomination is affiliated: the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. It is responsible:
 - a. to study the activities of the above-mentioned ecumenical organizations and present to synod reports on the work of these organizations and such recommendations as may be necessary.
 - b. to present to synod names of nominees as delegates to the Reformed Ecumenical Council and designate those who are to serve as delegates in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council and its various committees.
 2. It shall observe and study various ecumenical organizations and report the results of such observations and studies to synod. These organizations include: World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), National Council of Churches in Christ (NCCC), and the World Council of Churches (WCC).
 3. It shall maintain contact with ecumenical organizations with which the Christian Reformed Church has not affiliated, as circumstances warrant and its ecumenical charter envisions.
- G. The Interchurch Relations Committee shall annually present to synod in the printed agenda a report of its activities which shall include a resume of all the interchurch relations comprehended in its mandate.

Appendix E
Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
(Proposed for 2000)

I. Biblical principles on the unity of the church

A. Made one in Christ

From a fallen and broken humanity God gathers a new humanity—the church. For this purpose God called Abraham and Israel and then acted in a unique and definitive way in Jesus Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection are the foundation of the church. Unity is therefore central to the being and mission of the church. As there can be but one Lord, there can be but one church; one Head, one body; one Husband, one bride; one Shepherd, one flock (Eph. 4:5,15; 5:25-33; John 10:16). The church is as indivisible as Christ is indivisible (I Cor. 1:13; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21).

Focusing on the continuation of his ministry and mission in the world, Christ prays for the unity of the church, a unity as deep and wondrous as that between him and the Father: “that all of them may be one . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). At stake in the unity of the church is the witness in and for the world to the unity of God, the one Father of us all (Eph. 4:6).

B. Our unity with the church of all generations and throughout the world

The Bible speaks of the church as extending through time and place. The description “people of God” emphasizes the historical continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. It pictures the church of all ages, from God’s choosing Israel as his special people to Jesus’ calling the disciples and, by the power of his Spirit, creating the new people of God from all nations, a great multitude which no one can count (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; see also Phil. 2:10-11). This saintly multitude from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation portrays the one church throughout the world (see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

C. Unity as gift and goal

1. The unity of the church is a precious gift. The biblical challenge is to treasure, preserve, deepen, and demonstrate this given unity. The unity of Christ-followers is flesh-and-blood testimony to God’s reconciling work in Christ.
2. For the church in New Testament times, the summons to unity had a different ring than it has today. In the New Testament context it was a call to be more fully what we are—one in Christ. But once the divisions, which Paul could not so much as contemplate (“Is Christ divided?”), fractured the body, the call to unity has taken on new and painful urgency. In the midst of today’s disunity, the call to be one requires that we pray and work to overcome the scandal of division. Divisions among Christians and churches are a stumbling block to our witness to the unity of the being of God. Division contradicts the good news of reconciliation in Christ. The call to unity is a summons to manifest the unity of God himself and the reconciling power of God’s love in Christ.
3. The ecumenical task is the responsibility of the church at all its organizational levels. This task is especially important at the level of the local congregation, for it is there that the witnessing power of visible unity—and the counter-witness of division—are most vivid. Local congregations should seek to worship, witness, and work with neighboring churches which bear the marks of the true church (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29) and unequivocally witness to Jesus Christ.

D. Diversity in unity

Unity does not mean uniformity. Indeed, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made transparent through the church (Eph. 3: 10). It is displayed not in the obliteration but in the reconciliation of diversity. The uniqueness of tribes, tongues, customs, and culture is reflected in a rich diversity of worship, confessional forms and formulations, and church structure. It is this unity in diversity and diversity in unity that we attest when we confess “the holy catholic church” (Apostles’ Creed; see Belgic Confession, Art. 27).

1. Diversity in worship

Though all Christians confess one God, administer one baptism, and celebrate one Lord’s Supper, they worship through various languages, liturgies, prayers, and hymns.

2. Diversity in confessional forms and formulations

Though all Christians confess one God, one faith, and one hope, they express this confession in different ways, in accordance with different cultural contexts, traditions, and modes of theological reflection.

3. Diversity in forms of governance

Though all Christians confess one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and one body, they order their church affairs in different ways, depending on their understanding and application of New Testament models of ministry and in accordance with different cultural forms of social interaction and decision-making processes.

E. Unity and truth

Unity is intrinsic to the truth of the gospel and to our confession. Unity and truth are not alternatives. The unity of the church is a unity in truth, the truth that is Jesus Christ. To confess Christ, therefore, is to confess the unity of his church and to be impelled to pray and to work for its visible unity.

The process of comprehending this truth needs to be done “together with all the saints.” Yet even in the company of all God’s children throughout the ages and throughout the world, we stand in wonder of the truth that is beyond our grasp (Eph. 3:17-19).

Understanding the truth is limited by history, culture, situation, and experience. Moreover, it is distorted by sin. We know only in part and see but a poor reflection (I Cor.13:12). Divisions in the body of Christ also impoverish our understanding of the truth. We are called, therefore, to engage in a dialogue that involves mutual learning and correction in order that, in the words of the apostle, “together with all the saints, [we] grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . .” (Eph. 3:18). As we come to a deeper understanding of God’s revelation, we walk more consistently, more humbly, and more joyfully in its light.

In brief, the biblical witness leads us to draw two complementary conclusions:

Passion for the truth of Christ impels us to reach out to the people of God everywhere, striving for the visible oneness of the church.

Passion for the truth of Christ calls us to reject all forms of unity that compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ (see *Belgic Confession*, Art. 29).

II. Guidelines for ecumenical work

A. The unity we seek

1. In striving for the unity of the church, we celebrate the extent to which unity is already visible in

- a. The one, holy, written Word of God, given for us and our salvation
- b. One baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- c. Common creeds: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed
- d. Common hymns, prayers, and liturgical practices
- e. United witness to the name of Christ in evangelism

- f. Common witness in the name of Christ in public testimony and action on ethical-social issues (such as gambling, abortion, genetic engineering, euthanasia, poverty)
 - g. Common confessions of faith
2. In striving for unity, we seek to make the spiritual and visible communion we already have in Christ more fully visible.
 3. Because the unity of the church is a unity in Christ, it demands an ever deeper conversion to Christ (see Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33). As we draw closer to Christ, we draw closer to each other. Such conversion entails repentance, the reconciliation of churches now separated, and the healing of wounds and memories of the past. Questions of institutional relations and negotiations aiming at organizational merger are important only as they serve this deeper unity.

B. *The path we take*

1. As we draw closer through conversion and renewal, the search for greater visible unity may be pursued along various avenues and take a variety of forms, such as
 - a. Mutual understanding
 - b. Cooperation in ministry
 - c. Common witness - mission and evangelism
 - d. Collaboration in ethical-social testimony
 - e. Fellowship
 - f. Joint worship
 - g. Pulpit fellowship
 - h. Joint celebration of the Lord's Supper
 - i. Regular joint prayer for unity
 - j. Organic union
2. The pursuit of visible unity shall be guided by historical-confessional considerations.
3. The pursuit of visible unity needs to be diverse and flexible, open to surprising manifestations of the working of the Spirit in various communions.

III. The ecumenical responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)

A. *General guidelines for the ecumenical task of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)*

1. The CRC recognizes its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel and insofar as is commensurate with the gospel.
2. For the purpose of pursuing the CRC's ecumenical calling, the churches of Christ may be classified into a number of groups: Reformed churches, other Protestant denominations and independent churches (evangelical), the Roman Catholic Church, and Orthodox churches. The interchurch relations

of the CRC with churches of these groups may vary in depth and intensity of fellowship, determined by the degree of our affinity with them. This is true not only on the denominational level but also on the congregational level.

3. The CRC may enter into bilateral or multilateral relationships with other churches or fellowships. A bilateral relationship is established with a particular denomination or church. A multilateral relationship is established with other denominations or churches through ecumenical organizations, fellowships, or associations.
4. The CRC's ecumenical responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally).
5. Ecumenical relationships on the synodical level are initiated, promoted, and maintained by a standing committee on interchurch relations, as specified in Church Order 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.
6. Ecumenical relationships at the local level can be expressed by joint involvement in areas such as worship, service projects, prayer, and address to social/ethical issues.

B. Bilateral relationships

1. The CRCNA, in accordance with Church Order Article 49, seeks rapprochement (cordial relations) with all churches of Christ, particularly those churches which are Reformed as to confession, polity, and liturgy, as determined not only by their formal standards but also by their actual practice.
 - a. The unity of those churches which are Reformed in confession and practice should come to organizational expression.
 - b. The interim aims of rapprochement include resolution of doctrinal differences where necessary, joint action in Christian endeavors where possible, and a common Reformed witness to the world.
 - c. The shape of this organizational unity should be determined in keeping with prudence and such circumstances as language, distance, and nonessential differences in formal standards and practices.
2. As the CRC actively seeks to promote and maintain bilateral relationships with churches which confess and maintain the Reformed faith, it shall enter into the following types of ecclesial relationships:
 - a. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship
The provisions, adopted by synod, that will govern this relationship are as follows:

- 1) This shall be a relationship with other Reformed churches and is designated as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 2) The receiving of churches into ecclesiastical fellowship implies, and where possible and desirable, involves
 - a) Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies
 - b) Occasional pulpit fellowship
 - c) Intercommunion (i.e., fellowship at the table of the Lord)
 - d) Joint action in areas of common responsibility
 - e) Communication on major issues of joint concern
 - f) The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity¹
- 3) Synod shall decide which denominations are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship.²

b. Churches in corresponding fellowship

This category of ecumenical relationships provides for contact with other churches of Reformed persuasion with whom the CRCNA has no formal relationship. The basic requirements to establish the relationship of churches in corresponding fellowship must include

- 1) The mutual recognition of our common basis in the Reformed faith as manifested in creedal standards
- 2) A mutual concern for ecumenical ties³

This category would allow for a relationship with such churches and the possibility of moving toward ecclesiastical fellowship.

3. Churches in dialogue

The CRCNA through its Interchurch Relations Committee also will seek to maintain contact, correspondence, and conversation with a wide range of churches with a view to being informed about their ecclesiastical life and relationships and about their address to current issues, endeavoring to establish closer relationships or restore broken relationships where possible. This category of relationship will be called churches in dialogue. The dialogue may include exploration of areas for cooperation.

4. The CRCNA in pursuing its ecumenical calling shall also seek rapprochement with a wide variety of churches of Christ as circumstances and opportunities provide, fulfilling its task in keeping with the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice.

C. *Multilateral relationships*

1. The CRCNA seeks to pursue its ecumenical task

- a. By participating in ecumenical organizations in which the CRCNA cooperates with other denominations of Reformed faith in accordance with Church Order Article 50

¹*Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 57.

²Church Order Article 49-b.

³*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 408-10.

- b. By participating in ecumenical organizations, fellowships, and associations that enable it to carry out its ecumenical responsibilities broadly, effectively, and efficiently
 - c. By developing relationships with other Christian organizations
2. The propriety of relations with such ecumenical organizations is circumscribed by the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice of this Ecumenical Charter as they bear on the nature of the organizations as articulated and demonstrated in their respective constitutions, bases, statements, activities, and practices.
 3. The varying distinctives of ecumenical organizations may require that the CRC stipulate for itself diverse and restricted types of membership. The degree of the CRC's involvement and the level of intimacy of fellowship will be determined in keeping with the principles for ecumenical practice as spelled out in the Ecumenical Charter.

IV. Specific responsibilities of the Interchurch Relations Committee

The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC), in conformity with the provisions of this charter and in accordance with synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote interest in the worldwide church through the following relationships:

A. Bilateral relationships

1. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

- a. The IRC shall continue close relationships with the denominations which have been named by synod as churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- b. The IRC shall remain abreast of current developments within those churches with whom the CRC is in ecclesiastical fellowship to assure that such fellowship continues to be warranted.
- c. The IRC shall recommend to synod which churches are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship.
- d. The IRC shall recommend which specific kinds of fellowship and cooperation shall apply to each church in ecclesiastical fellowship.

2. Churches in corresponding fellowship

The IRC shall initiate and/or pursue contact and closer relationships with churches other than those in ecclesiastical fellowship. The following elements will give substance to the CRC's relationship with churches in corresponding fellowship:

- a. Invitations will periodically be extended to send delegates to each other's highest assemblies, where delegates would be recognized by the assembly and given opportunity to meet with representatives of the IRC during the sessions of synod. In some instances the IRC could recommend to our synod that a visiting delegate be given the opportunity briefly to bring the greetings of the church the delegate represents.
- b. When ecumenical delegates are not exchanged, the IRC will be expected to communicate periodically with these churches and, when appropriate, to inform synod of such correspondence.

- c. Both the CRCNA and the churches in corresponding fellowship are to be alert to persons who may be available to represent them through personal contact. The IRC will collaborate with our denominational agencies, such as CRWM, CRWRC, The Back to God Hour, military chaplains, and educational institutions, to be alert to personnel that may be traveling in the areas where such churches are located and may be able to further the relationships through personal visits on behalf of the CRCNA.
- d. The IRC shall regularly send the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* (and any other relevant information) to each of these churches to keep them informed about our church and thereby to demonstrate our continuing interest in them. In turn the IRC shall encourage each church in corresponding fellowship to inform us by correspondence about itself and its activities.
- e. The IRC shall continue to explore specific ways in which we may be of service to these churches through our denominational agencies, for example, through opportunities for higher education of pastors and teachers in our educational institutions, availability of teaching and training materials through CRC Publications, and services of our various boards and committees that could assist needy churches. Such services will require the cooperation of these agencies with the IRC. The IRC shall likewise be alert to services and help that these churches may be able to contribute to the CRCNA.⁴

3. Churches in dialogue

The IRC, in conformity with the provisions of its charter, the Church Order, and synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote an interest in the worldwide church through study and contact with other denominations as opportunity and prudence make possible. This may include communication with

- a. Churches that are involved in restructuring and the formation of relationships with other denominations
- b. Churches that desire to establish contact with the CRC because of its Reformed theology, its polity, and its particular emphasis on education, evangelism, and benevolence
- c. Churches that have broken ecclesiastical ties with the CRC or have withdrawn because of certain doctrinal, creedal, church order, or ethical decisions
- d. Churches from differing historical and confessional backgrounds that are willing to address matters of common interest or issues that require clarification

B. *Multilateral relationships*

The IRC shall serve as the agency of contact with ecumenical organizations.

- 1. It shall serve as the agency of liaison of the CRCNA with those ecumenical organizations with which the denomination is affiliated. It is responsible

⁴*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 408-10.

- a. To study the activities of the ecumenical organizations with which the denomination is affiliated and present to synod reports on the work of these organizations and such recommendations as may be necessary.
 - b. To present to synod names of nominees as delegates to the Reformed Ecumenical Council.⁵
 - c. To designate those who are to serve as delegates or observers to other ecumenical organizations with which the denomination is affiliated and to their various committees.
2. It shall observe and study various ecumenical organizations with which the CRC is not affiliated, as circumstances warrant and the Ecumenical Charter envisions, and report the results of such observations and studies to synod. It shall appoint persons to attend such ecumenical organizations and their theological commissions as observers. These observers shall provide the IRC with reports on their observations and participation.

C. Annual report to synod

The IRC shall annually present to synod in the printed *Agenda for Synod* a report of its activities, including a summary of all the interchurch relations comprehended in its mandate.

Appendix F

Report on the Merger of the Canadian Interchurch Relations Committee and the Denominational Interchurch Relations Committee

I. Background

In the fall of 1999 the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Canadian Ministries Board and the denominational Interchurch Relations Committee met in Sarnia, Ontario, to discuss matters of joint concern and to review the revised draft of the Ecumenical Charter. At that meeting the idea of merging the two committees was first discussed. The idea fell on receptive ears, and the proposal contained in this report was conceived. During the ensuing months the proposal was refined and clarified, and eventually it was approved by each committee separately. Now we present it to Synod 2000 for approval.

The denominational IRC has historically been charged with oversight of all ecumenical activity of the CRC and with reporting directly to each year's synod. Ecumenical activity in Canada was begun under the aegis of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) in the 1970s. When the CCRCC was disbanded and the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB) was established in 1997, synod gave the CMB and its Interchurch Relations Committee some authority to initiate ecumenical relationships in Canada. The decision of Synod 1997 reads as follows:

4. That the CRC in Canada be allowed to enter into ecumenical relationships within Canada as recommended by the Canadian Ministries Board, approved by the Board of Trustees—Canada, and ratified by synod. Such relationships should honor the conditions adopted by synod for interchurch and ecumeni-

⁵Church Order Article 50-a.

cal relationships. It will be synod's jurisdiction to deal with possible appeals against any relationship into which the Canadian churches might enter. Binational or international relationships with other churches or organizations (e.g., Reformed Church in America or Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) would be entered into by synod upon recommendation of its denominational Interchurch Relations Committee, composed of both U.S. and Canadian members.

Ground: This provision honors the responsibility of the Canadian Ministries Board to supervise and hold accountable the ministries of the CRC in Canada, while at the same time recognizing the accountability of the CMB to the BOTC and synod.

(*Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 641-42)

Under the mandate and specification of CCRCC's ecumenical document, the Christian Reformed churches in Canada have actively pursued contact and relationships with other Christian churches. They have become members of two ecumenical organizations: the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The former organization is an ecumenical forum that allows dialogue and cooperation in ecumenical activity but permits member churches to opt out of initiatives they cannot support. The EFC provides the CRC a partnership with a number of evangelical churches united in a shared understanding of the importance of Scripture and the nature of Christ's call to be a missionary people. The leadership provided by members of the CRC is recognized and valued in both of these ecumenical bodies.

II. Recommendations

The two interchurch-relations committees are now coming to Synod 2000 to request the following:

1. That synod approve the merger of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Canadian Ministries Board with the denominational Interchurch Relations Committee and endorse the concept of a single denominational Interchurch Relations Committee that exercises overall responsibility for the denomination's ecumenical activity and that has equal representation from the CRC churches in the U.S.A. and Canada.
2. That synod approve the following specifics for the composition, mandate, and reporting procedure for the proposed IRC:

- a. **Composition**

The Interchurch Relations Committee shall be composed of twelve members, with equal representation from Canada and the U.S.A. In addition, the general secretary of the CRCNA and the Canadian ministries director shall serve as ex officio members with voice and vote.

- b. **Mandate**

The Interchurch Relations Committee, in conformity with the provisions of the CRCNA's Church Order and Ecumenical Charter and in accordance with synodical decisions, shall maintain and promote contact with the worldwide church through bilateral and multilateral relationships. Furthermore, the IRC shall recommend to synod any proposed changes in ecumenical policy or practice. Any new bilateral or multilateral relationships need to be approved by synod.

- 1) The Canadian members shall constitute a Canadian subcommittee of the IRC and shall be responsible for maintaining the ecumenical activity in Canada delegated to it by the IRC and for recommending to the IRC the establishment of new bilateral or multilateral relationships within Canada.
 - 2) The United States members shall constitute a United States subcommittee of the IRC and shall be responsible for maintaining the ecumenical activity in the U.S.A. delegated to it by the IRC and for recommending to the IRC the establishment of new bilateral or multilateral relationships in the U.S.A.
- c. Reporting
- 1) The IRC shall annually present to synod in the printed *Agenda for Synod* a report of its activities which includes a summary of all the interchurch relations comprehended in its charter and mandate and whatever recommendations it deems necessary.
 - 2) The Canadian ministries director shall report regularly to the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB) regarding all ecumenical activity within Canada.
3. A third recommendation regarding members and members' terms for the committee will be submitted in a supplementary report.

I. Brief overview

In 1999 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee published twenty-seven sermons in three booklets of nine each. In addition to subscription sales, a number of vacant churches bought a one-time supply of sermons. The committee continues to investigate making the sermons available via electronic means. The subscription cost for the year 2000 remains at \$65.00 (U.S.) and \$90.00 (Can.). Back copies are available at half price.

The committee asks synod to reappoint Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg as secretary-treasurer for a period of three years. Mr. Vander Ploeg, a retired Christian-school principal from Woodstock, Ontario, has already served the committee in this capacity for seven years. The committee appreciates his faithful work and seeks to retain him in this role. He has expressed his willingness to continue.

The committee is made up of Rev. Harry Vander Windt (2000), chairman, who is not eligible for reelection; Rev. Paul Stadt (2002); Rev. Gerrit Bomhof (2002); Rev. Hendrik Bruinsma (2001), alternate; and Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg (2000), secretary-treasurer.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 2001 to provide sermons for reading services for the church.

B. That synod encourage the churches to subscribe to this service for the benefit of churches and individuals.

C. That synod approve the reappointment of Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg as secretary-treasurer for a period of three years.

D. That synod elect from the following nominations one regular committee member to fill the position of Rev. Harry Vander Windt, who is retiring from the committee.

Rev. Richard J. de Lange, pastor of Trinity Christian Reformed Church, St. Catharines, Ontario.

Rev. Jack Westerhof, pastor of Palmerston Christian Reformed Church, Palmerston, Ontario.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Gerrit J. Bomhof
Hendrik P. Bruinsma, alternate
Paul D. Stadt
Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary-treasurer
Harry A. Vander Windt, chairman

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

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Dordt College experienced God's faithfulness this year in continued progress on a number of fronts and in the planning of activities that we trust will further advance the college in the future.

I. Building blocks of current strength

Dordt again benefited from a strong enrollment. At 1,430, the fall 1999 enrollment was a modest increase over last year's 1,420, but it marks the fourth year in a row of record enrollment and the eighth consecutive year of enrollment increases. About 70 percent of this year's students are members of the Christian Reformed Church.

The college also successfully completed its largest-ever fund-raising project, the Dordt 2000 Campaign, a six-year effort to raise funds for campus construction, annual operational expenses, and the endowment. Ending officially on June 30, 1999, the campaign finished more than \$1.2 million over the \$16 million campaign goal.

Dordt's growth, along with faculty retirements, has brought many new faces to the faculty in the last few years. In the 1999-2000 academic year we welcomed nine new faculty members. The Business Department added three members to its ranks; the Education Department, two; and Art, Mathematics, Philosophy, and Theology, one each. Three of the nine new faculty members occupy temporary, replacement positions for faculty on leave, but all bring solid credentials and background in academia or industry and share a firm commitment to Dordt's mission and educational philosophy.

Another development on the academic front is the adoption of a new feature in the college's general-education program, a cross-cultural component designed to better prepare students to live and work in a multicultural society. Students can meet the requirement by participating in an off-campus program in another culture, by taking courses that include a cross-cultural focus, or by entering college with at least three years of foreign-language study and a significant cross-cultural experience.

Students continue to be heavily involved in the wide array of campus activities in addition to their classroom work. Especially notable this year was the large number of students who chose to give their vacation time to volunteer service. More than two hundred students traveled to one of fifteen mission sites across the U.S. as part of PLIA (Putting Love into Action), the annual Spring Break service project, now in its nineteenth year. Another twenty students traveled abroad during Spring Break to work at mission sites in Nicaragua and Haiti in a project coordinated by AMOR, a longstanding Dordt volunteer service organization that traditionally schedules its Latin America projects between semesters. Although curtailed this year as a Y2K cautionary measure, AMOR still sent a dozen students to Tijuana, Mexico, in early January.

II. Foundations for future progress

The past year included activities designed to prepare Dordt College for the coming year and beyond. College officials spent the winter and spring seeking Reformed scholars to replace five retiring faculty members, who

represent a combined 145 years of service at Dordt College. New faculty also were needed because of new and expanded administrative assignments given to several veteran faculty members.

Another significant reassignment is the move of Curtis Taylor, formerly vice president for student services. Taylor, who spent last year on leave to do doctoral work at Iowa State University, will return in the fall as director of planning and special assistant to the president. The search for his replacement in student services was still ongoing at the time of this writing.

A central focus of planning throughout the year was new academic programs. A task force spent much of the year considering a score of new program possibilities. The institutional planning committee will carry forward the study, hoping to identify one or two programs that Dordt College can add to its curriculum in response to the needs of students and the college's constituency.

Additional research on distance learning and collaborative efforts with other institutions also occupied considerable attention and energy throughout the year. It is Dordt's goal to continue to expand its service to the Christian community, both through additional offerings on its own campus and in conjunction with institutions in other locations.

College officials also spent time this past year planning a new student-life center that will replace the existing student-union building, built in the early 1970s to serve a significantly smaller student community. The new student-life center will house an enlarged bookstore and the student-services, admissions, and academic offices, as well as a game room, lounge and food-service areas, a visitors' center, and a large, open performance area. The new facility will adjoin the college library, which will also see some remodeling during the eighteen-month project, scheduled to begin in the spring of 2000. It is hoped that this integrated life and learning facility will embody Dordt College's commitment to providing a wholistic, Christian educational experience shaped by a comprehensive biblical perspective on every part of life.

The Dordt College trustees continue to reaffirm Dordt's close connection with the Christian Reformed Church, which provides the foundation for our organizational membership and is the ecclesiastical center that nurtures the Reformed perspective we seek to carry out in higher education. We are grateful for the privilege of serving the increasing numbers of young people who are seeking an educational setting in which the Word of the sovereign Lord provides the guiding light.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

I. New directions

As a Christian graduate school, the Institute for Christian Studies celebrates God's gift of learning. Through solid research and creative teaching, it serves students, the academy, and the Christian community. In 1999 the ICS Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and students committed to the following:

For the next ten years we will

- Forge enduring partnerships with academic and nonacademic organizations.
- Globalize our programming by
 1. Offering innovative distance-learning courses for credit and continuing education.
 2. Producing and distributing scholarly resources by electronic and other means.
- Provide resources for reflective Christians by bringing biblical insights to bear on issues of cultural significance.
- Strengthen research by appointing outstanding new faculty and enhancing our program of faculty development.
- Attract greater numbers of exceptional students.
- Upgrade computer resources and renew physical space.
- Secure needed financial resources.

In all its activities ICS will demonstrate biblical faithfulness, sound cultural engagement, and respect for diversity.

In May 1999 ICS signed an agreement with the Toronto School of Theology (TST) at the University of Toronto to cross appoint faculty and cross list courses. This new direction has the potential to greatly increase the reach of Reformed philosophy within ecumenical academic circles. TST officials have expressed their eagerness to have ICS add to the university's ecumenical diversity, citing ICS's philosophical strength as key to its being included.

Plans for our new Faith and Learning Network project are also at a formative stage. This project involves the creation of a comprehensive bibliography of materials that deal with the role of faith in learning in a wide variety of fields of study. Eventually material listed in the bibliography will be made available to students and professors worldwide on the Internet or by regular mail distribution. The first phase of this multiyear project will be operational by 2001.

II. CRC support for Christian graduate education

Members of the Christian Reformed Church have been supporters of ICS throughout its more than thirty years of service. Its history within the CRC was highlighted in a March 2000 issue of *The Banner*. We at ICS continue to reap the fruit of a Reformed worldview, and we share this fruit through our witness in ecumenical and secular academic circles, thanks to the generous support of predominantly Christian Reformed people. ICS continues to depend on your prayers and generous financial support as we work out our new directions—to the glory of God alone.

Institute for Christian Studies
Harry Fernhout, president

The King's University College has begun the new academic year with high enthusiasm. Enrollment is up over last year, and we have many plans in the works for the development of new initiatives and programs.

This past fall, the King's Strategic Plan for 1999-2004, called *YES!*, was officially approved. The plan focuses on several main objectives. The first is that King's will reaffirm and further develop its identity as a Christian university in the Reformed tradition. This pledge implies continuing reflection by faculty and staff on what this kind of education means to us in order to create a unity of mission and purpose that will permeate our educational task. A second objective is to strengthen our services to students and in the context of our Christian educational mission to develop a more student-centered institutional culture. This means that the development of students in all areas of their lives will be central in our institution and that we will institute new services and programs to that end. Other objectives include targeted growth in programs and enrollment and the development of a stronger public presence through effective communication and service.

To implement various aspects of the plan, the college has embarked on significant new program development. No fewer than five new four-year degree programs are in process. The government of Alberta recently approved funding of a new Bachelor of Science program in computing science, to start in September 2000. This is a tremendous boost for King's, since thus far no programs in computing science have been offered at the college. The college is currently also applying for accreditation of new four-year degree programs in chemistry and music. A four-year degree program in biology is in preparation. Finally, The King's University College Foundation has agreed to financially support a new Bachelor of Commerce program. These new programs will provide significantly enhanced opportunities for students to study at King's.

In accordance with our *YES!* plan, we are also working on the improvement of student services. Additional student-life staff has been hired, and renovations are being planned to develop a central student-services area, which will eliminate the need for students to go to various locations on campus for the services they need.

Campus life is vibrant with many opportunities for students to develop and grow in all areas of their lives. Many students participate in chapels, discipleship groups, service clubs, volunteer opportunities, and other student activities outside the classroom. We are grateful for capable leadership given in this area by our campus minister, Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, and other student-life staff.

Last fall, King's received a special \$100,000 performance award from the provincial government for scoring in the top category of the performance indicators annually collected by the government. Our high score was partially the result of some of the highest student-satisfaction scores in the province. This award will be added to our annual government-funding allocation. In addition, we received a negotiated \$200,000 increase in annual funding last year. The increased funding helps the college launch the new programs described above.

The King's University College community is very grateful for the financial support we continue to receive from CRC congregations in the form of ministry shares. This past fiscal year we received about \$328,000 from CRC congregations through this program. We count on this support to keep tuition affordable for our students.

We ask for the continued prayers of synod and the constituency and for ongoing financial support as we continue to serve hundreds of students from CRC congregations with quality Christian university education.

The King's University College
Henk van Andel, president

The mission statement of Redeemer College includes among its objectives the following: equipping students for lives of leadership and service; advancing knowledge; fostering the intellectual, social, and spiritual development of faculty, staff, and students; and being of academic service to society. This report provides an opportunity to share with synod some of the important ways in which these objectives are being realized.

I. Equipping students

Equipping students is our primary task. This year Redeemer's student enrollment reached 605 for an FTE of 575, an increase of almost 25 percent from the previous year. We attribute this growth to a real hunger for Christian higher education, coupled with the official recognition of Redeemer's status as a university. These students come from seventeen different countries and from every province in Canada. Thirty-four different denominations are represented, and approximately 65 percent of Redeemer's students come from the Reformed denominations.

For many of these students a Christian university education is possible only through the financial assistance provided through church support. Last year we were blessed to receive over \$500,000 in gifts from the churches. Next year we anticipate another increase in enrollment, and preparations are being made now to accommodate these students. This spring a new residence unit will be built—a three-story building that will house seventy-eight students. All the funds for this project have been raised through the Building on the Promise capital campaign, which has been met with a very positive response.

II. Advancing knowledge

The growth of Redeemer College has also made it possible for Redeemer to develop new programs. Several recent additions—including an environmental-studies program with both B.A. and B.Sc. options, a sociology/social-work major, and a human-resources-development program—have been introduced to offer opportunities for study in areas important to our society. Additionally, our faculty continue to be active in research projects and publications which impact the academic community from our unique Christian perspective.

III. Intellectual, social, and spiritual development

We praise God for the sense of community evident on the Redeemer campus. A long list of activities—chapel, mission and service projects, prayer groups, varsity and intramural sports, theater, and choir—contribute to the intellectual, social, and spiritual development of Redeemer's students. Since all of this occurs through each year of study toward a full four-year degree program, the cumulative result will be a graduate who has been enabled to grow and develop as a whole person who can effectively exercise Christian leadership in whatever path the Lord may lead him or her.

IV. Academic service to society

Beyond the daily instruction of our students, Redeemer endeavors to extend the gift of scholarship to the Christian community which supports us.

In 1999 Redeemer hosted a hermeneutics conference titled “Christian Scholarship in the Light of Scripture.” The conference was well received, and a second, complementary hermeneutical conference, “The Open Book and Scholarship,” will be held during the summer of 2000. Redeemer also hosts an annual ministers’ conference, which this year welcomed Dr. Richard Mouw as speaker, and the popular Milk and Honey Summer Festival, which has now expanded to two one-week sessions in May and June.

Redeemer’s mission statement concludes with the college’s most important objective: “. . . all these things to glorify God.” It is our hope that with the Lord’s guidance we have been able to achieve something of this. We thank synod and the churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for their prayers and financial support for our mission in Christian higher education.

Redeemer College
Justin D. Cooper, president

Dynamic tension might well describe the year we've experienced at RBC. We are very thankful that the challenges we faced were mostly from significant areas of growth—growth in numbers and growth in diversity. The gratitude we feel to the Lord for his blessings and guidance accompanies the gratitude we have for the people, churches, and institutions of the CRC. Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and financial support as we serve together for the sake of God's name and kingdom.

A list of highlights and examples of the dynamic tension mentioned above are presented below. You are encouraged to be in contact with us if you would like more details on any of these.

An enrollment increase of 62 percent over the last three years. This has allowed us to expand programs where the church has told us help is needed (youth work, worship leaders, pre-sem, etc.), but it is decidedly more expensive for us to be serving more students: about half the actual cost of education is subsidized by gift income in order to keep tuition low for ministry-bound students. It is hard to get a 62 percent increase in annual gift income.

An increase from 2 percent to 7 percent in minority students over the last two years. What a blessing we are experiencing as we try to connect better with the needs of urban churches. This effort is a two-way street: these students are teaching us as much as we are teaching them about bringing God's Word to the inner city. Our Urban Mission Program is an opportunity to express reconciliation and to provide unifying partnerships with inner-city churches and agencies.

Reaccreditation from the North Central Association. Our ability to provide quality education at RBC and to form cooperative relationships with other colleges is enhanced through NCA accreditation—the highest level of general accreditation an educational institution can have. The self-study required in preparation for our evaluation is providing a springboard for curriculum study and refinement of our method of operating. The NCA evaluation team has recommended RBC for reaccreditation with no conditions attached.

Bachelor of Social Work degree. RBC has had a social-work major and is now enhancing the program in an effort to receive accreditation to grant a B.S.W. (we already have approval from the State of Michigan to do so). Combining this course of study with our Bible major (required of all bachelor-degree students) provides the appropriate integration of spirit and professional skills that service agencies have been asking us to emphasize.

Growing pains. We are trying to be proactive in planning for growth and provision of adequate space for students, faculty, and staff. A campus master plan is under development should additional building be needed. The purchase of neighboring properties is also under negotiation. Flexibility will be a key concern as we make the effort to be good stewards and at the same time to provide the very best education, motivation, and service we can.

Thank you for being in prayer for us.

Reformed Bible College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

The most tangible evidence of God's blessings to Trinity Christian College in the year 2000 is the construction of the new Martin and Janet Ozinga chapel/fine arts building, to be completed in the fall of this year. The steel and brick superstructure is just now emerging from the ground, promising a beautiful edifice to come. The 1,200-seat auditorium will provide a common meeting place not only for the student body but for the Christian community of the Chicago area as well. The music and chapel programs will find a much needed home there and will make sorely needed room for other growing programs in the facilities they vacate. We are also optimistic that we will be able to break ground for a new science and technology building within the next year, a much-needed facility for which funds are currently being raised. We praise God that, through the generous support of his people, Trinity has experienced growth in students, in programs, in facilities, and in the quality of education. And we are grateful for synod's continued recognition of Trinity's contributions to the life and development of the greater Reformed community.

The mission of Trinity is to graduate students who combine excellence in academic preparation with a commitment to practice Christ-like service toward others in their personal and professional lives. In the current academic year we are serving 643 traditional-age students, over 95 percent of whom are full-time students. Two-thirds of these reside on campus. Nearly 60 percent come from families that are members of Reformed churches, 43 percent from the CRC. Currently the largest major program is education, followed by business and nursing. Last year a new program was implemented that is specifically aimed at working adults (Trinity Adult Education Completion Studies Program, or TRACS). This program currently has 63 students enrolled. They meet one evening per week to earn a degree in organizational management. Another 30 to 40 students from across North America attend the Trinity Semester in Spain program in Seville. A total of 723 students are enrolled in all programs for the current year.

Recently implemented programs for honors students and increased endowment for scholarships to students with talents in leadership as well as academics have brought a renewed spirit of academic excellence to the campus. The new Cooper Career Center fills an important role in serving the vocational-counseling needs of students, providing career counseling, internship placement, and alumni networks, with the goal of helping students match their talents with the vocations that best serve their needs. Research shows that the process of "finding their place" is one of the most difficult struggles for young people today. Trinity is fortunate to have the Cooper Center available to guide students in making these important decisions.

The rising cost of higher education is one of the most pressing concerns for middle-class families today, especially for those who wish their children to attend excellent Christian colleges in the Reformed tradition. Therefore, our fiscal stewardship must include avenues that provide increased assistance directly to families with financial need. As we work to build our campus facilities, we also strive to raise money for endowed scholarships and faculty chairs. Trinity's commitment to providing quality education at a reasonable price goes hand in hand with its efforts to reduce indebtedness, increase

endowment, promote controlled growth in student enrollments, and partner with friends to provide gifts in support of its mission.

Churches are an essential element of support to provide the faculty, facilities, programs, and services necessary to equip our students for lives of meaningful service. During our last fiscal year, churches gave \$182,784 in unrestricted gifts, nearly 15 percent of total annual unrestricted giving. We respectfully request that synod continue to recommend that area classes faithfully support the work of their regional colleges.

Trinity Christian College is blessed to serve young people of Christian faith and charged to nourish them spiritually, intellectually, and physically to the glory of God. The campus community gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Christian Reformed Church and its members in sustaining us through prayers and gifts. We pray that our partnership may continue to flourish for the benefit of the kingdom of God.

Trinity Christian College
A.J. Anglin, president

STUDY COMMITTEES

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Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC

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Part I: Report

I. Introduction

Appointed by Synod 1996, the Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry was mandated to report to Synod 1999. It may be symbolically appropriate that the committee was not ready to report to the last CRC synod of the twentieth century and instead submits its report to the first synod of the third millennium. The committee is submitting a report that does not reflect a spirit of apocalyptic anxiety about perceived threats to a collapsing old order; instead, it expresses confident hope and firm conviction that the Holy Spirit is leading the church to an era of opportunity and challenge. We begin our report, therefore, with the reaffirmation of the thematic opening note in *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*:

As followers of Jesus Christ
 living in this world—
 which some seek to control,
 but others view with despair—
 we declare with joy and trust:
 Our world belongs to God!

As we as a church consider the changes and challenges facing the Christian Reformed Church and the diverse ways in which we are educating, equipping, and credentialing persons for ministry, we urge the membership of the CRC in general and the delegates to Synod 2000 in particular to consider all these as opportunities for renewal and recommitment to gospel ministry and kingdom service in joyful, trusting hope. "Our world belongs to God!" "Jesus is Lord!"

In the spirit of that hope we also reaffirm the CRC denominational mission statement, adopted by Synod 1997 (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630):

As people called by God,
We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.
We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.
We love and care for one another as God's people.
We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.
We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.
(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 45)

The goal of ministry—which should shape the way we train for ministry—is equipping the people of God for lives of committed, mature discipleship in all areas of life (Eph. 4:11-13). The foundation of such service is a living faith fashioned by listening to the Word of God and responding in corporate and personal worship. Christian discipleship is nurtured and sustained in a listening, obedient, loving, caring community that reaches out to the lost, the lonely, the needy. Among the key perennial elements of Christian ministry, therefore, are proclamation, teaching, shepherding, evangelistic outreach (locally, nationally, and internationally), discipling, and compassionate diaconal service. The Reformed faith is a world-transforming faith; its vision of the Christian religion is catholic, universal (see Herman Bavinck, “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 [1992]: 220-51). The ministry of the institutional church, gathered by the Holy Spirit and nurtured by the Word and sacraments, is to create a people who are set apart from the dominion of darkness and who have a sense of calling and mission to glorify God by being a light in a world of darkness. This light-bearing witness is as wide as creation itself, extending to all spheres of human life and bridging present time with eternity. The Reformation confessions state this well, in familiar words. The opening question and answer of the Westminster Catechism remind us that it is the “chief end of man to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” Lord’s Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism describes the Christian’s vocation in terms of Christ’s threefold office and our sharing in his anointing:

to confess his name,
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,
to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life,
and afterward to reign with Christ
over all creation
for all eternity.

II. The committee’s mandate, its work, and the structure of this report

Synod 1996 appointed our committee to examine and evaluate “alternative routes into [CRC] ministry used today that were not envisioned when the present Church Order articles and related policies were adopted.” It also asked us to “define standards for effective ministry in the CRC, and to propose any changes in present policy judged to be necessary” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 529-31). For a more extensive review of our mandate, see Part II, Supplement A.

Over the three-year period from the fall of 1996 through the summer of 1999, the committee met eleven times. We spent considerable time reflecting on our contemporary church and world context, gathered extensive data on

the patterns of entry to CRC ordination, and solicited evaluations of current policy from seminary students, CRC ministers, classes, and denominational agencies. We examined the policy and practice of Calvin Seminary's efforts to provide alternative routes into ministry as well as those of other denominations and seminaries similar to ours. We also engaged in a review of the history and legacy of ordination theology and practice in the CRC, especially since the landmark 1973 study-committee report "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination." Finally, we submitted a number of proposals for alternative policies to interested parties (seminary students, CRC ministers, classes, denominational agencies) for reaction and response. The large amount of material gathered presented the committee with a dilemma on how to present a report. When we included all the material we had gathered and considered into a single narrative, the result was an extremely long and difficult report. The argument of the report was lost in the mass of detail, and we were concerned that such a report might not serve the church well. At the same time, we judged it imperative for the church and synodical delegates to be fully aware of key historical and Church Order matters as well as important data about programs and patterns of ordination in the CRC. Without this information it would be difficult for synod to come to an informed judgment about a complex and important matter that will have a long-term impact on the church.

We have attempted to resolve this dilemma by presenting one report in two distinct parts. Part I is an exposition of the basic argument, summarizing the key data and concluding with specific recommendations. Part II is a series of nine supplements that support key sections of the report with expanded history, raw data, summaries of questionnaires, documentation of policies of other churches and schools, and so forth. At key points, therefore, the report refers to the appropriate supplement, where more complete documentation is provided for the point being made. The first part of the report could be read on its own, apart from the supplements, but it should not be; the supplements serve the exposition as essential corroboration. This form of presentation does have the minor drawback that there is some repetition and duplication between the two parts.

The committee spent considerable time discussing the threefold mandate given by Synod 1996:

- (1) to examine routes presently being used to ordained ministry in the CRC and related denominations, (2) to define standards for effective ministry (ordained and unordained staff ministry) in the CRC, and (3) to propose any changes in present policy that it judges to be necessary.

(Acts of Synod 1996, p. 530)

We believe that we understand fairly well what is expected of us in the first and the third parts of the mandate, but it was difficult for the committee to get a good handle on the second part, which asks us "to define standards for effective ministry (ordained and nonordained staff ministry) in the CRC."

Our first difficulty concerns the range of persons and tasks included under this umbrella. "Nonordained staff" in CRC churches includes full- or part-time youth ministers, ministers of music, directors of church education, a variety of diaconal and service personnel, and administrative persons. Faced with such an expansive list, our committee wrestled with the need to delimit its mandate more specifically. We debated whether synod really expected full and expan-

sive definitions of the entire range of positions in a church that could be included here under “staff,” including standards for effective music ministry, specific youth ministries, or any of the other multiple variants possible. Though we judge this latter task not to be at the heart of our mandate, we do come with some general observations about nonordained ministry staff and provide some broad recommendations about what we judge to be *minimal* standards to guide CRC congregations in their hiring of nonordained staff. (At this point we note that the committee takes no position on the question of ordaining ministry personnel beyond those serving in the office of minister of the Word or in the office of evangelist. We are, of course, aware of the work done by the synodically appointed committee on this question and have consulted its report, submitted to Synod 1999. However, for the purposes of our study-committee report, we are using only the language and formulas given in our own mandate. By “nonordained” we simply mean those persons who have full-time positions in congregations but are neither ordained ministers of the Word nor ordained evangelists.)

In the course of our report, we suggest as a guideline for our churches a “principle of proportionality.” This refers to an expectation that the knowledge, skills, and educational upgrading that congregations should expect from ministry-staff persons ought to increase as they are given greater ministry responsibilities. A fuller discussion of this principle follows in Section V.

There is, however, an additional difficulty with the second part of the mandate, specifically the term “standards for effective ministry.” Even if we restrict our attention to ordained ministers of the Word and evangelists, the range and diversity of ministry responsibilities and tasks is enormous. In addition, as we face a slowly growing diversity within the membership of the CRC, attempting to provide a “one-size-fits-all” definition of what constitutes “effective” also becomes much more difficult and potentially divisive. It may not be wise for synod to attempt imposing a uniform definition on the entire denomination, a step that could stifle the growth of healthy diversity in the church. The definition of “effective ministry” will likely not be the same in a small rural church as in a large suburban one. Similarly, one definition is unlikely to satisfy all the various ethnic and minority communities within the CRC.

As we surveyed the variety of means by which the Holy Spirit is calling, equipping, training, and using God’s people to do the work of ministry, we were impressed with the need for the Christian Reformed Church to honor such diversity while maintaining its confessional integrity and commitment to a theologically well-educated clergy. In addition, wherever a church is placed and whatever the identity of its membership, there are some basic commonalities of Christian ministry rooted in the New Testament witness about and by the early church. The apostle Paul’s several lists of gifts for ministry (Rom. 12; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4) point to ongoing tasks and perennial responsibilities for those who serve and lead in the body of Christ. The various persons in ministry (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) have the common goal of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph. 4:11-13). The various tasks of ministry, including evangelizing the lost, leadership in worship, catechetical instruction, pastoral care, and teaching sound doctrine, are all to be shaped by the one supreme goal of

glorifying God by drawing us to and conforming us to Christ. As we consider effective standards for ministry, therefore, we shall begin with the fundamental and common vision already summarized above and then specify in some greater detail the *character* of the person suited for ministry, the *knowledge* expected of persons in ministry, and, finally, the *skills* that are required of persons in ministry.

We observe here that all persons involved in the ministry of the church must be of godly character (see, e.g., the qualifications given in I Tim. 3 and II Tim. 2, 3), committed to Christ and to the Word of God, and submissive to the discipline and universal tradition of the church. The personal conduct of all persons in ministry should be exemplary; they must be people of prayer, people who show compassion to the lost and needy, people who are disciplined, and people who have a good reputation within and outside the Christian community. The requisite knowledge and skill of all who engage in Christian ministry will vary according to the specific duties and responsibilities assigned to them, but minimally the church expects from everyone who functions in ministry (A) a good knowledge of Scripture and its key integrating themes, such as kingdom of God and covenant; (B) a basic grasp of the distinctive vision, worldview, and theology articulated in the Reformed confessions and catechisms; and (C) possession of essential people skills such as listening, caring, and the ability to share the message of the gospel.

Finally, in this introductory section, we remind synod and the church that the ministry of which we are speaking is a ministry that takes place within the Christian Reformed Church and is supported and formed by its confessions, traditions, and polity. Beyond the important and even fundamental commonalities of the universal church, commonalities that encourage diversity and flexible application to local circumstance and need, we are covenantally bound together by our common adherence to the Reformed tradition, its doctrine, polity, and ethos. It is therefore essential to our church's confessional integrity and identity to insist that persons who are selected and called to specific ministry tasks in CRC congregations are knowledgeable about the Reformed faith and basic CRC history and polity, personally committed to them, and enthusiastic about defending and promoting them.

We now go on to consider the contemporary context within which CRC ministry takes place and the challenges and opportunities to which this context gives rise. This will be followed by a review of existing alternative routes to ministry in the CRC (Section IV), a consideration of the practices of other churches and seminaries (Section V), a general formulation of standards for CRC ministry (Section VI), and, finally, three specific proposals: (A) denominational guidelines for hiring and training of nonordained ministry staff (Section VII), (B) denominational guidelines for a consistent approach to evangelist training in the various classes of the CRC (Section VIII), and (C) a revision of the denomination's SPMC programs (Section IX).

III. Background: opportunities and challenges of a new context

The mandate for our committee calls us to examine the church's requirements for and traditional routes into ordained CRC ministry of the Word because "alternative routes into ministry are being used today that were not envisioned when the present Church Order articles and related policies were adopted." A number of issues need to be noted here. The concern that gave

rise to this committee did not materialize out of thin air but out of real ministry contexts in the church. In the CRC people increasingly are being called to and are serving in ministry in what can be considered, historically, to be exceptional and unprecedented ways. The traditional route for entry into CRC ordained ministry, as spelled out by Article 6 of the CRC Church Order, is synodically approved candidacy upon completion of the requisite theological education at “the theological seminary of the Christian Reformed Church.” Exceptions to this route are spelled out in Church Order Article 7 (“evidence of singular gifts”) and Church Order Article 8 (ministers from other denominations). The need for our committee arose from the concern of the faculty and board of Calvin Theological Seminary that the CRC as a denomination ought to reflect seriously on the impact and implications of the increased number of “exceptional” entrants into CRC ordained ministry. The number of new entrants into CRC ministry who are *not* M.Div. graduates of Calvin Seminary increased from 8.5 percent in the 1970s to 25.3 percent in the 1980s to 44.4 percent in the 1990s. The actual numbers are even more striking: from 33 in the 1970s to 112 in the 1980s to 202 in the 1990s—an increase of some 100 in each decade. (For a detailed overview of the data see Part II, Supplement D.)

These numbers reflect, among other things, the fact that in the last three decades the complexity of ministry in North America has increased, not decreased. The world in which we live and do ministry has changed; the CRC has changed. We need to ask if old ways still work, what new strategies are called for, and what benefits and challenges the church has embraced by adopting new values, such as the commitment to ethnic diversity. Careful and prayerful reexamination of our tradition, our mission, and our context should lead us imaginatively and with renewed vision to apply the treasures of the Reformed faith to our time. Here we alert the church to the potentially prejudicial use of the term “alternative routes.” Our committee takes its task to be an open and honest inquiry into and reflection on the growing use of alternative routes in the CRC in view of the new realities of our present context. It is not our desire to ignore potential problems, but at the same time we wish to underscore newly discovered opportunities and newly awakened enthusiasm for diverse ministries.

Here then is our understanding of the spirit in which we believe the church should do this reflection. The CRC is being challenged to consider whether its traditional route into ministry is adequate as the *only* route into ministry. The call for such reconsideration arises from contexts in which exciting new kinds of ministry are being done, contexts which have encouraged the increasing use of alternative routes. At the same time, the mere fact of growing numbers of alternative-route entrants into ordained CRC ministry has also given rise to concerns about maintaining denominational unity and confessional integrity in the CRC. The very fact can be construed as a church problem that needs to be solved. The expanded rationale for the present committee, provided by an advisory committee of Synod 1996, spells out in great detail some concerns about exceptional entry into CRC ministry (see Part II, Supplement A). Our committee judges that matters of denominational unity and the confessional integrity of the CRC as a *Reformed* church are significant issues not to be taken lightly or brushed aside. At the same time, the fact that gifted persons are seeking to do ministry within the context of the Christian Reformed Church, particularly cross-cultural ministry, after receiving alternative training in

ministry (see, for example, the news item on the Hispanic evangelist-training program *iAdelante!* in the July 20, 1998, issue of *The Banner*) is not first of all a problem but an opportunity, for which the church ought to give thanks. The Lord of the harvest is answering the prayers of his people for harvesters. Furthermore, it is good for the church and for those who provide leadership in her theological education to be challenged by such developments. A study of alternative forms of ministerial training encourages the church to reevaluate and reconsider whether what is presently being offered in theological education is adequate to new realities in the church and in the world. It asks what important lessons can be learned from alternative forms of training for ministry and whether there are changes that need to be considered in order to prepare persons for a more effective ordained ministry in the CRC. That is the framework of understanding and hope-filled anticipation within which our committee attempted to be faithful to its mandate.

Two specific groups of persons going into ministry have highlighted the call for alternative routes into ordained CRC ministry of the Word: second-career students and ethnic-minority students.

A. Second-career students

Second-career students often have an academic background without the full liberal arts requirements of philosophy and languages, particularly Greek, that have been the prerequisites for entrance into and for taking courses at Calvin Seminary. Frequently these students also face additional significant obstacles to the traditional route into ministry—moving established families, geographical distance, and uprooting spouses with careers of their own and children who are in established educational programs. As importantly, a move to Grand Rapids may remove the student from the support community in which he or she is already serving effectively. For second-career persons contemplating a major career move into denominationally certified ordained ministry of the Word, being able to stay in their home communities alleviates a major stress factor by providing both a network of support and a suitable and familiar arena to affirm their gifts in ministry. The committee here notes with thanksgiving the removal of an additional obstacle formerly facing Canadian second-career students. Prior to the 1999-2000 academic year, it was problematic for Canadian students and their spouses to accept employment in the United States. However, CTS is now authorized to issue the J-1 visa, which makes employment possible for these people. The issue of geographical distance as well as some cultural differences between the American and Canadian CR churches, however, does remain for many Canadian students.

B. Ethnic-minority students

Another challenge comes from the ethnic-minority communities, each of which, we must emphasize, has its own distinct challenges and distinct needs. (Here we call attention to Part II, Supplement B, of our report and encourage the reading of two “vision statements” written by ethnic-minority members of the committee.) In some situations persons who are already serving effectively in a ministry situation may lack the requisite broad-based, liberal arts, baccalaureate undergraduate training. In such instances neither the committee nor members of ethnic-minority communities who provided it with advice recommend that we drop this educational ideal. However, we did receive strong encouragement that the church become more flexible in assisting such

persons (with both financial and education-resource support) to enter the training track leading ultimately to full seminary completion at various levels. Such efforts should be done through cooperation between the denominational mission agencies and its theological-education agency, Calvin Seminary. We also note that, in some ethnic-minority communities patterns of leadership and gift development are in effect which differ from those in CRC Anglo communities. Here the importance of a supporting community and the need for greater access to educational opportunities challenge the church to find new ways of partnering with our ethnic-minority communities. Our committee urges the church to make this a priority.

The committee also takes note at this point of an important observation made by the 1996 synodical Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God:

A disproportionate number of the ethnic-minority pastors receive their training in nontraditional ways, such as through Bible colleges, local training programs, and other seminaries. Credentialing also tends to follow nontraditional paths—admission to ministry on the basis of special needs and gifts, or by way of doctrinal conversations, or by ordination as evangelists. (The point is not that nontraditional routes should be discouraged but rather that traditional routes should be reexamined in light of the changing needs of a changing church.)

(*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 218)

Our committee thus takes seriously our synodical mandate that we consider “the special needs of various ethnic communities” (part b of mandate) and asks the church to do the same. We note particularly that the disproportionality referred to by the study committee needs serious consideration by the church lest it create a two-tier system of candidacy and ordination, a development that could lead to a “first-class” and “second-rate” categorization of ordained ministers in the CRC. The committee judges that this would be a tragic setback for the CRC’s goal of developing a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.

C. Ecclesiastical changes re the perception and practice of ordination

Alongside the concrete changes described in the two previous sections, a full recognition of our ecclesiastical context must also take into account the CRC’s extensive discussion about and changing attitudes toward ministerial ordination itself. An important element of the change that has taken place—a more functional and democratic understanding of office—is symbolized by a practice in some churches of listing “all members of the congregation” under the category of “ministers” on their church bulletins. The word *minister* increasingly is no longer restricted to persons specifically ordained to the ministry of Word but is now applied to all staff positions in the church. So we have ministers of music, youth and education, administration, counseling, and so forth. This trend does reflect an important aspect of New Testament teaching, accenting the important truth of Ephesians 4:11-16, for example, that the ultimate goal of all ministry is to equip the people of God *for* ministry. In other words, what we see here is an extension of the important Reformation principle “the priesthood (or ‘office’) of all believers.” This is described succinctly in Lord’s Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

Q. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so share in his anointing. I am anointed to confess his name, to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks, to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation.

According to Church Order commentators Dr. Richard R. De Ridder and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, there have been some developments in the CRC Church Order in recent years that reflect this growing emphasis on the office of all believers:

Although the structure of the Church Order has historically been oriented toward official functions performed by ordained office holders and ecclesiastical assemblies, some recent modifications have been in the direction of the responsibilities of the believers.

(*Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* [1994], p. 13)

When and how did this change in perception and practice come to expression in the Christian Reformed Church?

Though the discussion of the key issues predates it, the synodical study-committee report “Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination” (finally received by Synod 1973) serves as a helpful starting point for our consideration since it set the terms for the CRC’s reflections up to the present. (What follows is a summary; a more complete discussion of this report and the subsequent debate in the CRC can be found in Part II, Supplement C.) The initial drafts of the 1973 report emphasized the universal, comprehensive ministry of all believers as *diakonia* (“service”). The general office of all believers was set forth as the necessary foundation for any specially designated office, and “special offices” were understood primarily in terms of task or function. Noteworthy was the report’s differentiation between office understood in terms of task and service and office understood in terms of status and authority. This particular framing of the issue did not satisfy the delegates of Synod 1972, and synod returned the report to the study committee for clarification, particularly with respect to the issue of the authority associated with a special office.

When it considered the rewritten report in 1973, synod submitted it to the churches with a “framework” within which the report was to be understood. In particular, Synod 1973 highlighted the need for the CRC and its churches *not* to set the *authority* of an office over against *service*, and it insisted that officebearers must be recognized as those who *represent* Christ when they *officially exercise* their gifts. Synod’s revision of a key committee statement reads as follows (the revised sentence is in italics):

The particular ministries are characterized by service, rather than by status, dominance or privilege. *These ministries function with Christ’s power and authority, a power and authority rooted in obedience to his Word and expressed in loving service. In turn, those who are served are to respond with obedience and respect.*

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63)

In spite of Synod 1973’s deliberate and significant correction here, it is an open question whether the CRC did indeed begin to perceive ecclesiastical office and the practice of ordination in terms of authority-versus-service and status-(or rule)-versus-function. Such a reading of the last twenty-five or more years of CRC history, it is worth noting, is shared by the members of the study committee on ordination and “official acts of ministry,” which reported to Synod 1999, leading them, in reaction to the 1973 report’s pejorative use of the

term *status*, to express this important clarification of the meaning of office and status:

A person placed in office is no longer merely a private citizen or a participant in the universal office of believer. Becoming an officebearer is an objective change in status which enables a person to exercise the authority of an office and to carry out its duties. Ecclesiastical office is established by Christ. He did this by appointing apostles to represent him, and they in turn appointed others to more effectively carry out and to provide guidance and order for the ongoing work of Christ. Throughout its history the church has continued to appoint officebearers, and the shape and function of their offices have been affected by time and circumstance. Nevertheless, an office exists objectively—beyond and outside the subjective capabilities and giftedness of individuals—because it is established by Christ and belongs to him. It is Christ’s office because it is his authority and belongs to him. It is Christ’s office because it is his authority and ministry that are administered and exercised by the person who enters that office.

(*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 285)

The chief application of the ordination debate that took place in the CRC after 1973 was to the task—and eventually the office—of evangelist. The church’s subsequent decision reflects one of the key guidelines adopted by Synod 1973:

Because the Scriptures do not present a definitive, exhaustive description of the particular ministries of the church, and because these particular ministries as described in Scripture are functional in character, the Bible leaves room for the church to adapt or modify its particular ministries in order to carry out effectively its service to Christ and for Christ in all circumstances.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 64)

Though Synod 1978 concluded that ordained evangelists were to be treated as elders in the framework of traditional CRC polity, it also invested the office of evangelist “with authority to administer the Word and sacraments in the work of evangelism of his calling church” (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 76). The key difference between the office of minister of the Word on the one hand and the office of evangelist on the other—offices that are now virtually equivalent *functionally*—is the source and extent of credentialing. An ordained minister of the Word is credentialed by the CRC denomination through synod and its agents (Calvin Theological Seminary faculty and board of trustees), is eligible for service anywhere that a denominationally placed call might originate, and is ordained for life. An ordained evangelist, by contrast, is called to a specific field for a specific period and credentialed by a particular classis rather than by synod (see Church Order Arts. 23-24). In addition, entrance into the office of evangelist does not require the same theological training that the CRC Church Order demands of ordained ministers of the Word. The educational standards, the training, and the supervision for evangelists are to the present day matters entirely decided by the local classes.

Synods 1973 and 1978 did not settle the many questions regarding ordination and the paths to ministry in the CRC. As the church moves toward the new millennium, the question has also been raised by a number of sources, including some CRC pastors themselves, whether the pattern of classical theological training is adequate to meet the needs of the church in the twenty-first century.

IV. Review of existing alternative routes; data and surveys

In the course of its work the committee conducted a number of surveys and discussed its mandate with a number of resource people. We surveyed second-career students concerning their specific needs and difficulties with the denominational requirement to attend CTS, and we did the same for students who participate in the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC). The latter is the synodically prescribed program that requires theological students who receive their theological education from a seminary other than CTS to spend one year in residency at the denominational school. This program is designed to orient the student to the CRC, its traditions, its confessions, its polity, and its culture. It also affords the seminary faculty and board of trustees the needed exposure to the student so that an informed and reliable candidacy recommendation can be made to synod.

The committee observes here that at one level the matter of alternative routes is relatively unproblematic. The structural and strategic policies of the CRC and CTS have created and still make available genuine opportunities for alternative routes to CRC ordination as minister of the Word other than the straightforward route to candidacy through a Calvin Seminary M.Div. degree. Part II, Supplement E, gives an extensive overview of the numerous ways in which Calvin Seminary has provided structural alternatives such as the SPMC, SPMC (Adjusted), and EMPMC (Ethnic Minority Program for Ministerial Candidacy) programs, as well as alternatives through extension teaching in specific locations such as Classis Red Mesa, T.A.S.U.M., International Theological Seminary, and the CTS-Redeemer College programs. In addition, it is very apparent from the data provided in Supplement C that Articles 7 and 8 are being used. From this it can be inferred fairly that presently there do exist structures and policies in the CRC that are able to deal with alternative routes. If this is so, why was our committee mandated to examine this issue? What is the problem? What is it that's "broke" and needs fixing?

There are several considerations that led to the request for a denominational study on alternative routes into ordained ministry. While the SPMC and EMPMC programs do formally provide alternatives, neither the seminary faculty and board nor the students who participate in the programs are fully satisfied with them (a fuller review is given in Part II, Supplement E). Our committee surveyed SPMC students, asking them why they had attended other seminaries. We also tracked the success rate of SPMC students in terms of their staying in CRC ministry. When we consider the time and expense involved for students and seminary faculty alike and measure success in terms of bringing these students from pre-enrollment to ordination as CRC ministers of the Word and retention in the CRC ministry, the program seems less than a rousing success. The success rate varies with choice of alternative seminary and undoubtedly with the motivation for choosing not to come to Calvin Seminary.

The precise data are not fully illuminating. Roughly half of SPMC students surveyed were still serving in CRC ministry; the other half were not. There was great variety among the reasons given for attending another seminary. Significantly repeated reasons for not attending CTS included preference for the program or theological orientation of the chosen school and concern about the theological direction of both the CRC and CTS. A high percentage of SPMC students stated that they would make the same decision to attend elsewhere if

they had to do it again. Participation in the SPMC program was accepted “as something I had to do,” though students did complain about duplication of work and about being under pressure, even suspicion, at times because of this status. Nonetheless, the SPMC experience was still judged by most to be a valuable one in terms of getting to know the CRC better, gaining confidence in CTS, and alleviating some fears. Among the suggestions offered by respondents were the following: involving the congregations and classes more in the process of candidacy and accepting fully and without reservation work done at compatible Reformed seminaries. Significantly, the requirement of the SPMC year itself was not called into question. What SPMC students did stress was greater flexibility and openness in the program’s administration.

The committee also did an extensive survey of CTS second-career students over the last fifteen years. Students were asked about the obstacles to coming to study at CTS. About one-half mentioned family dislocation and cost to be significant factors; about one-third noted geographic distance as significant. However, when asked whether they would have chosen an alternative to CTS had one been more readily available, just under one-half of respondents stated yes, 40 percent said no, and about 10 percent said maybe. Among the reasons given by those who said no, the following four led equally: denominational loyalty, living in the area, community/collegiality, quality of CTS education. For those who answered yes, the preferred options were “CTS programs offered locally” and “full theological education at another (approved) seminary.”

Most of the second-career students who responded to the survey stated that they felt they had received an excellent theological education at CTS. Many commented that the basics received have proven to be an essential foundation in their ministry. Several even commented that, in spite of the challenges and hardships faced, they considered their time at CTS “worth it.” There was also a strong line of response that reflected concerns about CTS’s adequacy to prepare persons for the more practical aspects of parish ministry, though others judged that CTS’s general philosophy (as they see it) of thoroughly grounding students in the Word provided the necessary foundation for the more practical “application” aspects of their ministry. A key request from many students was that CTS be more flexible in permitting them to do beginning work in their local areas if possible. A major concern for second-career students is the additional prerequisites many face because their undergraduate programs were tailored in different directions.

A final survey that we wish to mention in this report is a 1997 denomination-wide profile of CRC members conducted by Calvin College’s Social Research Center (see Part II, Supplement G, for more complete data; the summary that follows is based on one prepared for the CRCNA Board of Trustees and the Ministries Coordinating Council [MCC]). The survey targeted three areas: views of CTS, priority of tasks for seminary faculty, and characteristics of a successful pastor. Of the respondents, 96 percent (87%—very important; 9%—somewhat important) affirmed that training candidates for ordained ministry of the Word in the CRC is a key responsibility of CTS faculty. Nine out of ten respondents agreed that CTS provides an essential service to the churches of the denomination and that they would encourage young people to enter gospel ministry today. In a listing of what the respondents judged to be most important characteristics of a successful pastor, four

were seen as *very important* by a significant majority: dynamic preacher who delivers biblical, relevant sermons (87%); caring pastor who responds quickly to needs of members (86%); careful student of Scripture who reads widely and thinks clearly (86%); personable individual who mixes easily with church members (73%). A majority (52%) also listed evangelism as very important; by contrast, leadership (41%), administration (23%), and denominational involvement (11%) scored lower. From this survey there is no indication that there is denominational-membership dissatisfaction with the liberal arts-based, classic theological education that is offered at Calvin Seminary. In fact, the items that are listed as most important characteristics for a pastor are precisely those that follow from the profile of a good CTS M.Div. graduate. At the same time, it also needs to be said that the survey does not indicate that the church's future needs and demands are fully addressed or that certain changes may be appropriate and necessary for CTS's curriculum, particularly for greater flexibility in and accessibility of its educational offerings.

The data regarding actual use of alternative routes into CRC ministry also raises additional issues. To begin with, the increase in the number of persons choosing alternative routes (as noted earlier, see Section III, par. 1) requires reflection. Why are the so-called conventional or traditional routes seemingly not providing enough laborers for the Lord's harvest? How do the evangelist-training programs conducted by various classes compare and relate to the denominationally prescribed pattern of training for ordination of ministers of the Word (Church Order Art. 6)? How do we apply the principle of proportionality (level of training should be proportionate to the level of responsibilities) to the two offices of evangelist and minister of the Word? If someone who has served well in the office of evangelist at the classis level would seek denominational ordination as minister of the Word, what additional education and training should the church require of such a person?

There is also a question of confessional identity and integrity here. The worst fears of some in the church are that a significant disparity in the quality of training might lead to a loss of cohesiveness and confessional identity in the CRC. The concern about adequate theological training is also strong from our ethnic-minority brothers and sisters in the CRC. Our Hispanic, African American, and native-peoples communities worry that Calvin Theological Seminary is not preparing enough persons to meet all their ministry needs. What are needed are adequate delivery systems of theological education that are relevant to the diverse ministry contexts of our different communities and have flexible entry points for those who need additional educational preparation.

The committee's mandate assumes that a denominational, confessional-theological identity within the Reformed tradition is important and should be maintained. It is possible to think of this primarily in sociological, institutional, structural terms by insisting that all CRC ministers attend and graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary. For much of the CRC's history, Calvin Seminary served as the *institutional* centering point for CRC ministers of the Word. A common educational experience created a familiar ecclesiastical space and thus significantly shaped a common commitment to Reformed confessions, theology, and polity. However, it is clear that the vision of the Reformed faith is not bound to specific locales; it can be and has been caught in places other than Grand Rapids or Amsterdam. It is also possible to conceive of Reformed

identity not in institutional ways but more broadly, in terms of confessional and theological *content*. CRC denominational standards for ministerial formation could then be linked more closely to synodical and classical structures, permitting greater institutional flexibility as to where a student gets the required theological education. Whatever the choice of path, our committee does agree that the basic educational standards of CRC Church Order Article 6 are not up for debate.

Concretely, this means that the CRC maintain and reaffirm the value of “a satisfactory theological training” as a requirement “for admission to the ministry of the Word” (Church Order Art. 6-a). We also note that in our world, with its increasingly complex systems and means of communication, the expectation of a liberal arts education as a prerequisite for theological training seems to us to be even more imperative than previously. All CRC pastors need as much preparation as possible in the skills of speaking and writing effectively and relevantly. The Christian religion is a text-based religion; we are “people of the book.” A minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ must be able to do two things supremely well: (A) test the authenticity of a message being given by warranting it from the biblical text and (B) apply the message to the specific context of an audience. The minister must be an expert in the book and an expert in people and their context. The basic educational ideal of a college baccalaureate degree, appropriate to the task for which any person is hired to a *full-time ministry-staff position* in a CRC congregation, thus seems to us to be a fairly evident given. We realize, of course, that the principle of proportionality described earlier is also applicable to part-time staff positions, not to mention volunteers. The level of formal education, knowledge, and skills required as criteria for hiring must be proportional to the level of responsibility assigned in a given position. Our committee also emphasizes that we are describing an ideal here; individual congregations will need to be flexible about applying the standard in their own contexts. In particular, the denomination needs to be sensitive to specific communities where the educational ideal described here is in process and is a goal still to be achieved by a particular person in ministry. In addition to flexible administration of this ideal, the church needs to allocate financial resources and other forms of support to assist needy churches and individuals in attaining these educational goals.

The committee also alerts the church and synod to certain academic constraints faced by CTS as a member of the Association of Theological Schools. Significant changes in the established patterns of theological education leading to candidacy for denominational ordination are thus a communal matter between the church and the academy. We judge that it is not likely that synod had in mind a wholesale restructuring of theological education traditionally expected of those preparing for ordained ministry of the Word in the CRC. Our mandate requires that we attempt to come to terms with the reality that congregations within the CRC today are becoming increasingly independent in their approach to filling ministry-staff positions, including positions held by ordained ministers of the Word.

Finally, we call synod and the church’s attention to an issue that has been raised to committee members by current students at CTS, particularly second-career students: the matter of justice. These students observe that alternative routes into ordained CRC ministry that bypass the educational requirements

and personal sacrifices that they have made are an injustice to those who conscientiously and sacrificially strive to meet the full requirements.

V. Practices of other churches and seminaries

A. Other churches

The committee solicited information from ten Presbyterian and Reformed denominations as to their requirements for ordination of ministers of the Word. Among those that responded, the prescribed routes vary. Smaller and more conservative denominations with their own seminaries expect, almost without exception, that ministerial preparation will happen at their own seminaries. Several denominations without their own seminaries direct students to acceptable schools. Larger denominations in the mainline tradition allow theological preparation at seminaries other than their own but with careful monitoring and supervision by classes or presbyteries and special boards or commissions that assure comparable training to that given in their seminaries. The M.Div. degree is expected as the norm or standard. Some churches allow for petition or appeal from defined requirements, as indicated in some of the specific sections that follow. Like the Christian Reformed Church, the others often include in their polity a provision for admitting to ordained ministry ministers who have been ordained in other denominations. The general guidelines are established by the general assembly or synod, but implementation is left to the presbytery or classis.

1. Reformed Church in America

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) requires that an active, confessing member of the RCA who wishes to pursue ordained ministry apply to his or her consistory and that the consistory recommend the individual to classis. Classis interviews the person, assessing a broad range of considerations, and, if satisfied, receives the applicant under its care and approves enrollment in a seminary program. Classis petitions the general synod to issue the student a provisional “certificate of fitness for ministry.” Classis examines the student at the end of each year of the seminary program and at the conclusion of seminary studies, when licensure and ordination are granted. Classis issues provisional licensure for the student to conduct worship while he or she is a seminary student. The program of study and the gifts or competencies required are specified in some detail. The M.Div. degree is stipulated as the fundamental requirement for all those preparing for ordained ministry. Deviations from standard criteria must be for good cause and must be requested by classis from the general synod of the denomination. The boards of the church’s two seminaries and “the theological education agency” (TEA), a mechanism established to deal with students at other seminaries and with other issues, function as synod’s advisory bodies concerning ministerial applicants.

At the RCA’s 1999 synod, TEA, which had been formed in 1984, was abandoned and replaced with the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency. MFCA is an agency formed to oversee the RCA program prescribed for people pursuing alternate routes into ordained ministry of the Word and sacraments. It has a full-time administrator. Presently about eighty students are in the program, which has averaged sixty-five to a hundred students per year since the inception of TEA. Students at other

seminaries than the two RCA seminaries are charged a substantial administrative fee. About five persons per year enter RCA ministry as pastors after having been ordained in other denominations.

People who for one reason or another find it too problematic to follow the prescribed M.Div. program may apply for a “dispensation.” In the past, dispensations had to be considered and requested by classis, with heavy documentation, and approved by synod. In the recent past the RCA considered approximately one such request every two years. They were always intensely debated at synod. The synod of 1999 eliminated these “section 2 dispensations,” and now the MFCA has been designated to handle exceptions to the usual requirements for ordination, again with heavy documentation and at the initiative of a consistory and a classis. The MFCA administrator is in the process of developing an extensive manual for the program. A TEA periodical has existed for about ten years. The RCA has expended considerable time and money to develop a detailed set of standards and processes to deal with students at other seminaries and with those seeking dispensations.

2. Orthodox Presbyterian Church

This denomination requires that aspiring ministers apply to the presbytery through their session, or church council. Both the session (council) and the presbytery (classis) must assure themselves that the applicant meets a broad range of biblical gifts and a level of spiritual maturity to warrant their approval. Students come under continuous guidance and supervision of presbytery throughout their preparation. Minimum academic requirements for licensure to preach are a B.A. degree and at least one and a half years of approved seminary preparation. The presbytery conducts an extensive licensure examination of students which covers specified theological subjects and must be reinforced by solicited testimonials. Exercises in sermon preparation, exegesis of Hebrew and Greek, and an essay on an assigned theological subject are prerequisites for the presbytery examination. No exceptions to requirements for licensure are allowed without a three-quarters vote of the church’s general assembly, based on a complete case presented by a presbytery. Throughout the licensure period the person is fully and regularly accountable to presbytery, which can withdraw licensure for cause. Detailed regulations exist for the church, the session, and the presbytery in calling a licentiate, including a three-quarters approval vote by the presbytery. The general assembly has approved a comprehensive “recommended curriculum” of theological preparation, which is appended to its polity. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church specifies that ministers coming from other denominations must meet all the tests and expectations applied to those who have been trained under care of presbytery.

3. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

Qualifications for ordained ministers in this denomination are specified in its Form of Government. These include spiritual, personal, and academic standards. The latter include a B.A. degree from an accredited college or university and three full years at the denominational seminary or one approved by presbytery. From the commencement of theological studies, students are under the care and direction of presbytery. Licensure to preach

“as a rule” follows three years of theological preparation, though students are encouraged to preach occasionally under direction of presbytery. Upon licensure, a candidate enters a probationary status, interacts with presbytery, and, when judged ready, is approved to receive a call to ministry. Probationers are not allowed to administer sacraments, pronounce the benediction, officiate in marriages, ordain officebearers, or moderate or vote in the church’s assemblies. The polity of this denomination contains an “extra-ordinary clause,” by which presbytery may waive some of the regular requirements for ordination, although no one under 50 years of age qualifies; the general assembly has been of the opinion that people under 50 should follow the normal course of college and seminary preparation. Officials report that seven pastors serving in the ARP have entered ordained ministry under the “extra-ordinary clause”; four of the church’s eight presbyteries have exercised this clause. It is much more common that theological students of different denominational backgrounds who are attending another seminary will serve as lay pastors or stated supply in smaller ARP congregations. This brings them under care of presbytery, and by the time of candidacy they apply for ordination in the ARP.

4. Protestant Reformed Churches in America

Unlike churches in the Presbyterian denominations, this denomination follows the church order of Dort. Rev. Donald Doezema, stated clerk, writes, “Ordinarily, . . . ordination follows receipt of a call from a congregation, after a man . . . has sustained his oral examination before synod, upon completion of four years of study in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.” Protestant Reformed church order allows for ordaining those with exceptional gifts without the required theological preparation, but Rev. Doezema reports that he cannot recall that the Protestant Reformed churches have ever had occasion to use this exception. It has only recently (1993 and 1994) adopted a policy for admitting ministers ordained in other denominations; this policy is close to that defined in our own Church Order.

5. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A person wishing to pursue ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) must petition the presbytery, which enters a two-stage relationship with applicants. Through a series of defined processes, the inquiry phase explores in depth the person’s call and suitability. Movement to the candidacy phase is based on extensive supporting materials from others and on six prepared statements by the applicant. These submissions are evaluated by a committee of presbytery. The candidate’s session reviews these materials and submits recommendations as well. An examination by presbytery follows. During the candidacy phase the person works toward achieving a wide range of specified ministry competencies and toward producing evidence of suitedness. The presbytery covenants to review and to supervise progress toward these goals, including guidance on theological and field education. The candidate must have presbytery approval for ministry activities and must refrain from official acts of ministry. Annual written reports are required by presbytery, and annual consultations with candidates are mandatory. A review at the end of the second year of theological preparation culminates in taking “ordination exams” administered by presbytery. If these exams are sustained and if

such services are approved by a three-quarters vote of presbytery, a candidate may then negotiate with churches for ministerial services. During the final year of theological preparation and following a final assessment, the candidate may interact with churches concerning a call; approval for ordination is given when all requirements have been met. Ordination proceeds upon satisfactory examination.

A section on “exceptions” in PCUSA polity is rigorous and detailed; exceptions require a three-quarters vote of presbytery. There are three types of exceptions. The oldest and most widely used is a waiver of requirements but not of the time lines for the inquirer or candidacy phases of preparation. Presbyteries are widely inconsistent on the rigor and frequency with which they employ the exceptional-circumstances clause. The second avenue of alternate routes has been used since the 1970s; it is the “commissioning” of a lay pastor by presbytery. This commissioning allows the person to carry out all the functions of an ordained pastor, but it is valid only in the presbytery by which it is granted. Dubuque Theological Seminary has been active in providing encouragement and some training for such people. At its 1999 general assembly the PCUSA considered a “new immigrant” route to ministry for pastoral leaders of emerging immigrant or refugee churches. This alternative requires review and approval by presbytery as it endeavors to serve and enfold churches among recent arrivals to the U.S.A.

6. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

While the PCA does not require its prospective ministers to attend Covenant Seminary, its only denominational seminary, an increasing number of its students are choosing to enroll there. In other cases, presbytery must approve attendance at an acceptable, accredited alternative seminary. Ordained ministers transferring into the PCA from other denominations must have met the same educational requirements as PCA candidates. If such ministers do not possess the M.Div. degree, they must return to seminary to acquire the degree unless an exception is granted because of age. Like other Presbyterian denominations, the PCA has an “extra-ordinary clause” in its polity. If by two-thirds vote of presbytery an applicant is recommended for ordination under this clause, the presbytery must determine that the person has a solid grasp of Reformed theology and must specify a number of things in presbytery minutes: what requirements have been deleted, an explanation of why in this case the requirements have been deleted, registration of a minimum vote of two-thirds of the presbytery. Those granted admission to ordination under the “extra-ordinary clause” must then be approved for ordination by the general assembly. Officials of the PCA indicated to the committee that an estimated one person per year has been admitted to ministry by this route. In the last several years the PCA has been using this route to encourage pastors for the Hispanic, Portuguese, and African American congregations it is endeavoring to establish, since these ethnic leaders often have little or no college or seminary training and in many instances their bivocational and family obligations make it difficult for them to receive the formal education ordinarily required for ordination.

B. Other seminaries

The committee assigned one of its members the responsibility of carefully examining the extension programs and core curricula of seminaries that could in some sense be regarded as alternatives to Calvin Seminary for CRC students, seminaries within the broader evangelical and/or more narrow Reformed/Presbyterian orbit. We briefly summarize the important findings here:

1. All seminaries place limits on the number of courses/credits that students may take as correspondence or independent studies and that students may take at other schools and transfer in toward the institution's own degree. The academic integrity of a school such as Calvin Seminary is not only an ecclesiastical matter but also an academic one, regulated by accrediting bodies such as the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Similar requirements and conditions apply to all other seminaries. This means that, while it may be possible for CTS to offer some of the course work for the M. Div. program via distance learning, extension courses, and independent studies, all degree work (at Calvin and at any accredited seminary) will continue to require a significant residency component. Residency is also universally seen as an essential part of any educational experience. Good education is significantly communal in nature, and in the case of theological education, active participation in the specific ecclesiastical community for which a student is seeking candidacy is an integral part of the formation of a minister. Maintaining denominational schools as the primary vehicles for ministerial training is thus warranted from an educational as well as an ecclesiastical/confessional point of view.
2. In the seminaries surveyed, though the exact requirements vary, Hebrew and Greek remain necessary requirements for ordained ministry.
3. Some seminaries do have well-developed extension programs involving their own faculty. If Calvin Seminary is to compete successfully for students on a North America-wide basis, some form of extension-course program and/or distance learning must be considered. In this regard it is also worth noting that the large evangelical seminaries (e.g., Fuller) have denominational personnel on campus to facilitate the process of candidacy for their students.

The committee notes that, if the denomination chooses to move in the direction of providing more flexible alternatives for theological students by, among other things, encouraging CTS to provide more opportunities for distance learning, then the CRC will also have to provide additional resources to meet these needs. They will significantly increase faculty and administrative work loads. Our committee encourages Calvin Seminary in its commitment to implement forms of distance and extension learning and to provide the flexible scheduling and evaluation of transfer credit that will make a CTS degree more readily available.

VI. Standards for effective ministry: a preliminary statement; proportionality

The Christian Reformed Church, in concert with Christian churches around the globe and down through the ages, places a high value on an educated clergy. The CRC Church Order (Art. 6-a) stipulates that "the completion of a

satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word.” The Church Order guards its understanding of “satisfactory” very closely. In Article 6-c, it stipulates that persons not trained at a seminary of the Christian Reformed Church must still meet equivalent requirements established for candidacy to ordained CRC ministry.

There are exceptions to this policy, however, and the same Church Order article spells out legitimate exceptions to this rule. As Church Order commentators Van Dellen and Monsma observe, “Our churches do not mean to say that all who look forward to the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church must necessarily and under all circumstances attend Calvin Seminary” (*The Revised Church Order Commentary* [1972], p. 44). While Van Dellen and Monsma indicate their conviction that “under ordinary circumstances we believe that it is highly advisable that our young men prepare themselves for the ministry at our own Calvin Seminary” (p. 44), they insist that the church must “allow for justifiable exceptions” (p. 44.). Monsma and Van Dellen even refer in this instance to “an element of truth” in a “principle” they call “choice of preparation” (in Dutch, “*vrije studie*,” lit. “free study”). It is important to note, however, that the exceptions referred to in Article 6 of the Church Order do not undermine the value of or the church’s commitment to an educated clergy, nor, for that matter, to Reformed orthodoxy. The exceptions Monsma and Van Dellen have in mind here are students who choose to study at “theological schools which are true to the Reformed faith” (p. 45).

There is, however, one further exception even to the general requirement of “a satisfactory theological education.” Article 7 of the Church Order points to the church’s recognition that persons may be “singularly gifted” and may possess “native ability” for ministry without having received formal theological training. The wording of Article 7, nonetheless, also circumscribes this exception rather carefully. To be considered for entry to ministry via Article 7, the person must be “singularly gifted as to godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the ability to preach the Word.” In addition, the need must be “urgent.” As Monsma and Van Dellen note, having gifts for ministry is a necessary but not sufficient reason for making an exception to the expectation of theological training (p. 46). The criterion of “need” is also an important part of the justification for the practice covered by Church Order Article 8-b and -c, namely, calling a minister from another denomination. De Ridder and Hofman cite a synodical decision from 1984:

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 CRC. This shall apply only to a church which continues to have a viable ministry.

(*Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 88)

A. *The principle of proportionality*

In recent times, as the statistics noted above in Section IV suggest, the increasing numbers of these exceptional cases are stretching the traditional understanding of Articles 7 and 8 of the Church Order and indirectly challenge the standard of a theologically educated minister trained in the church’s seminary. Our study committee believes that it is important to reaffirm the value of an educated clergy, though we do acknowledge that it may be a good thing to increase the number and kind of educational options available for attaining the appropriate educational credentials. We judge that the most

constructive approach is to permit and encourage greater flexibility at entry points of the ministerial training process while keeping the same final goal in sight. In particular, the opportunity for potential candidates for CRC ministry to be active in ministry under guided mentoring programs seems to us a valuable enhancement of ministerial formation. What we would underscore, however, is the importance of seeing this practice as an entry point into a larger process of ministerial formation that would finally lead to obtaining a full seminary education and credentialing and *not* as a *substitute* for seminary training. Earlier in this report we referred to this process of enhanced education while in the service of ministry as the “principle of proportionality.” What we mean by this is that educational and skill expectations for specific ministry tasks in a congregation should correlate directly to the level of responsibilities and duties assigned to a person.

The committee suggests that a demonstration of relational giftedness (interpersonal skills), a studied knowledge of the Scriptures, and a definite commitment to and ability clearly to articulate a Reformed worldview and theology are minimum standards for any leader within the Christian Reformed Church. Then, as a person’s sphere of service is broadened—as the scope of leadership is increased—increasingly formal and more extensive guidelines for what counts as meeting these criteria should be in effect. Thus, a local Sunday-school teacher should meet these requirements in a general way, an ordained evangelist should be held to a more formal educational standard, and an ordained minister of the Word—who is credentialed to offer a full range of ministry activity anywhere in the denomination—should be held to the highest standards of education, ordinarily a M.Div. degree from a seminary.

Before we develop these standards in greater detail, we wish to spell out implications of the principle of proportionality we have just enunciated. The synodical advisory committee that formulated an expanded rationale for our committee to Synod 1996 called attention to two concerns that the committee ought to address, especially with respect to the office of evangelist:

1. There are no denomination-wide standards or expectations for the training of evangelists, and the number of those ordained to this office is on the rise.
2. Some have expressed the concern that ordination to the office of evangelist could by deliberate design be used as “stepping stone” to denominational ordination as minister of the Word and thus circumvent the CRC’s required educational standards as found in Church Order Article 6.

(Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 529-30)

Our committee agrees that these are legitimate concerns, which, when taken in combination, indirectly challenge the church’s requirement of a “satisfactory theological education” for its ordained ministers of the Word. Since there are no denominational standards for evangelist-training programs and the CRC does not have clearly defined criteria or a process by which a person ordained to one office (e.g., evangelist) can take appropriate steps to qualify for another (i.e., minister of the Word), it is conceivable that we begin to treat certain offices as virtually equivalent and interchangeable. Thus, an evangelist (or youth pastor or director of education) could by virtue of a successful ministry of a specific sort and without additional training be judged eligible for the office of minister of the Word. Our committee is not suggesting that such moves from one office to another must never be made (see Section VIII, B

below). We simply wish to point out that the church should recognize the distinctiveness of various ministries (whether certain ministries such as youth ministry should be acknowledged as ordained offices or not is beside our concern here) and not consider them as easily convertible. (Parenthetically, in this regard we do not find the language of “stepping stone” to be very helpful. We wish to highlight the different qualifications and requirements for different offices and ministry tasks.) If a nonordained person has been successful as a youth pastor and then seeks ordination as a minister of the Word in the CRC, the denomination should indicate clearly the steps, procedures, additional educational requirements, and so forth that are expected. Our committee thus concludes that we need as a denomination to establish two different sets of criteria:

- We need to establish certain basic standards for all ministry positions and specify the appropriate training/education that is required for each position.
- We need to distinguish clearly the various ministry tasks (or offices) from each other and indicate the additional training/education that is expected before someone could be considered a candidate for another ministry position.

We will specify in greater detail in Section VIII what this means for the office of evangelist, though the same principles apply to other ministry-staff positions in the church. The principle of proportionality leads us to recognize that there is a distinctiveness of various ministry tasks and that the requisite gifts and training for these diverse ministries are not simply convertible.

Bearing in mind that the goal of ministry is to equip God’s people for a life of Christian discipleship and service in God’s kingdom, we now return to the basic standards that our committee judges are common to all ministry positions in any Christian Reformed congregation. We divide these standards into three main categories: character, knowledge, and skills.

B. Basic standards for all ministry positions

1. Character

The committee observes here that listing personal qualifications for ministry in the CRC is not an innovation. In fact, our Church Order refers us in Article 3-a to “the biblical requirements for office,” and Article 7 specifies the requirement of being “singularly gifted as to godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the native ability to preach the Word” as prerequisites for exceptional entrance into ordained ministry of the Word. Since it is virtually impossible to develop an exhaustive, all-inclusive list of characteristics that describe the sort of person anyone aspiring to any form of Christian ministry ought to be, we ask synod here to remind the churches of the Scripture’s own declarations concerning this matter, request that synod refer a valuable statement from Calvin Seminary to the churches for their use, and then develop our own summary list of essential character qualities for all persons called to ministry tasks in the church.

We recommend

- a. That synod remind the churches seeking guidance in setting “standards for effective ministry,” as they make their decisions concerning ministry

staff, of the general scriptural teaching concerning personal qualification for ministry as it is found in passages such as Matthew 18; 20:20-28; 28:18-20; Acts 6; II Corinthians 4; 5; Ephesians 4; I and II Timothy.

- b. That synod affirm and refer to the churches the Calvin Theological Seminary statement “Personal Qualifications for the Ministry” (Part II, Supplement I) as guidelines for the hiring and spiritual development of all ministry-staff persons.
- c. That synod affirm and refer to the churches the following basic *character* standards for all ministry positions and personnel, recognizing that they must be adapted to specific circumstances and situations:
 - Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed church ministry position should be
 - 1) Publicly committed to Christ and his church, submitting to its discipline.
 - 2) Exemplary in piety and holy conduct of life, a humble person of prayer who trusts in God’s providence.
 - 3) Of good reputation, emotionally mature, honest, trustworthy, reliable.
 - 4) Caring and compassionate for the lost and the weak.
 - 5) Eager to learn and grow in faith, knowledge, and love.
 - 6) Joyful, affirming the goodness of God’s creation and communicating to others a delight in its beauty.

2. Knowledge

Here too we need to accent the principle of proportionality. All persons who function in ministry situations in the church, from Sunday-school teachers to elders, must possess a basic knowledge of Scripture and Reformed doctrine. But there are varying degrees of knowledge expected and required of different persons, depending on the task to which they are called. Those whose work includes regular proclamation of the Word must have facility in the Bible’s original languages, an expectation we do not have for a volunteer third-grade Sunday-school teacher. An elder who teaches ninth-grade catechism cannot do so without a good grounding in Reformed doctrine, but he does not need a track record of publication on complex theological matters in refereed journals. For all ministry-staff persons in a Christian Reformed congregation, it seems to us that the following basics in biblical and theological foundations are essential:

We recommend that synod affirm and refer the following guidelines to the churches as the basic standards of the biblical-theological knowledge expected of all persons hired for ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church:

a. Biblical foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed Church ministry position should

- 1) Know the content of the Old and New Testaments.
- 2) Know and be able to explain the basic structure and flow of biblical-redemptive, covenantal history centered in Christ (promise and fulfillment).

- 3) Be able to identify main themes (covenant, kingdom of God, holiness) of Scripture as well as the large divisions (law, prophets, writings) and specific types of biblical literature.
- 4) Be able to articulate the relevance of the various sections, books, or types of biblical literature to contemporary issues and questions.

b. Theological foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed Church ministry position should

- 1) Know and be able to explain the basic teachings of the Christian tradition concerning God, humanity, the person and work of Christ, salvation, the church, the last things.
- 2) Know, be able to explain, be ready and willing to defend the Reformed confessional stance on key doctrines such as predestination, unity of the covenant, infant baptism, millennialism, the cosmic scope of the Reformed worldview.
- 3) Have a rudimentary knowledge of and ability to respond to the key challenges posed to the Christian and Reformed faith in North America by the major world religions, the major cults, and the various forms of New Age spirituality.
- 4) Know the key components of CRC church polity.

3. Skills

Ministry skills in the church also must be considered in terms of the principle of proportionality. Every Christian believer should be expected to be able to give a simple though informed testimony of personal faith. This is foundationally necessary for someone being considered a candidate for the office of evangelist, but of such a person a far more sophisticated ability to communicate the faith meaningfully is essential. Similarly, to be able to listen carefully to a person in pain, to empathize, and to offer comfort and encouragement are basic human and Christian personal skills that require no formal training or credentialing from a world-class institute of counseling. However, Christians who volunteer for more specific diaconal ministries of service to poor people, to victims of famine, floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes, for example, will require additional skills and training, whereas someone who is called to the particular ministry of pastoral counseling should have the professional degree appropriate to that call. The skill standards we suggest below are a significant level beyond those expected from every mature Christian believer but still less than the church expects from someone who is ordained to the office of evangelist or minister of the Word.

We recommend that synod affirm the following guidelines and refer them to the churches as the basic standards of the skills that are expected of all persons hired for ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church.

Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed Church ministry position should

- a. Be able and prepared “to give an answer to everyone who asks [you] to give the reason for the hope that [you] have” (I Pet. 3:15).
- b. Be able to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ.

- c. Be able to teach and disciple persons to deeper faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ.
- d. Be able to prepare and deliver short biblically based messages for public occasions (nursing homes, prisons, civic occasions).
- e. Be capable of effectively leading a group in various tasks, including Bible studies, task completion, resolving conflict.

The preceding set of standards is foundational and will be assumed in the following more detailed discussion of specific ministry tasks.

VII. CRC denominational standards for full-time nonordained ministry-staff positions

The mandate given our committee included setting standards for nonordained full-time staff ministers. In our era of increasing church-staff size, specialization, gifts, and diversity, the guiding principle must be that a staff member have the spiritual maturity, professional competence, and personal qualities needed to serve effectively in the ministry assigned. Only then will that ministry be a blessing to the congregation in which the person serves. The guidelines set forth above, together with those developed by Calvin Seminary on Personal Qualifications for Ministry for ordained persons (Part II, Supplement I), serve as a helpful general guide. Churches can make appropriate adaptations as needed for specific nonordained full-time staff persons.

The specific professional standards required will of course vary with the situation and particular ministry task to which someone is called. But in our age of increased education in all sectors of society, Christian Reformed people expect and deserve competence that blesses. Although a formal degree is no guarantee of success in church service and the life experiences of older and more mature Christians often provide some equivalencies to what a B.A. in liberal arts is designed to provide, the committee believes a B.A. degree or its rigorously demonstrated equivalent in the field of service is the threshold of professional competence for full-time nonordained specialized ministry staff. We are blessed that a number of our colleges are offering B.A. degrees in such fields as church music, youth ministry, evangelism, church administration, and so on. This is a welcome development, affirming the diversity of gifts granted by the Spirit in bringing the church to greater maturity. But full-time nonordained specialized staff workers and the churches hiring them ought not to consider a B.A. or its equivalent to be a final and sufficient professional credential for serving the church. Specialized ministries will be most effective when they are integrated with Reformed theological insight and formation that is compatible with the preaching ministry in the congregation. The goal of a two-year theological degree or certificate beyond the B.A. is an ideal to which we encourage churches to aspire, either in hiring nonordained staff or in making provision for attainment of such professional accomplishment through concurrent continuing education. We recommend

A. That synod affirm as a minimal professional standard for full-time nonordained ministry-staff persons a B.A. degree in the field in which these persons serve.

B. That synod affirm as the ideal professional standard for full-time nonordained ministry-staff persons a two-year theological degree or certificate beyond the B.A. and that synod encourage our churches either to hire persons at this level or to make provision for the attainment of such professional accomplishment through concurrent continuing education.

Our committee observes that competence in a specialized ministry is not an automatic indication of competence for serving as a minister of the Word. Nor is a specialized ministry an office as we have traditionally defined offices in our church polity. Staff persons who through the affirmation of the congregation or their own experience and aspiration feel called to ordained ministry of the Word should seek and receive the required professional training that the office deserves and requires. The well-being of our churches is served when we recognize nonordained full-time specialized staff ministries as positions of integrity and importance in their own right.

This implies that we should not consider the qualifications of respective ministries and offices as transferable. If someone already serving the church in a specialized ministry seeks to enter the office of minister of the Word, such a change ought to be made only after years of faithful and proven service in the specialized ministry, a clear demonstration of need for such a change in the church the person is serving, and an orderly, denominationally approved process for additional training. One of the challenges facing the CRC in its ministry among diverse communities, a challenge that led to our committee's mandate, is the need to find appropriate ways to use existing Church Order procedures, such as those that are laid out in Article 7, to facilitate orderly change of office, particularly for evangelists seeking to be denominationally certified as ordained ministers of the Word. In our present circumstances Article 7 often seems to be stretched beyond its originally intended limits. In the next section of this report we will propose a procedure and several criteria that address this issue, a proposal we trust will be clear and inviting as well as fair and just.

VIII. CRC denominational standards for evangelist-training programs

When the Christian Reformed Church in 1978 created what was then a new office, the office of evangelist, it opened up new opportunities for witness and service. With gratitude to God our committee takes note of the growing number of opportunities for evangelist training in the CRC. Christian Reformed Home Missions has for several years supported an evangelist-training program for Hispanics. Through that ministry we have multiplied the leadership available for planting and growing Spanish-speaking churches. The classical home-missions committees in Southern California have also developed a program for evangelist training of Anglos. Since they began training the nine people involved in that program (in 1995), other places in the denomination have expressed an interest in similar programs. This blessing of opportunity has also raised the concerns mentioned in Section VI of our report, namely, the lack of denominational standards for evangelist training and the lack of criteria and process by which someone in the office of evangelist can appropriately become a candidate for the office of minister of the Word. This issue is also relevant to persons in other ministries (e.g., in youth ministry or education) but is felt most acutely in evangelist training because

the offices of evangelist and minister of the Word are practically and functionally very close. In a church climate where office is often popularly seen primarily in functional terms (see our committee's discussion of this in Part II, Supplement C), it is imperative for the church to establish clear guidelines and criteria here. This is one of the concerns that led to the call for our committee and provided us with our mandate.

A. Recommendations for evangelist-training programs

Our committee recommends the following principles as guidelines when classes are considering the training and ordination of evangelists:

1. That synod require a period of training, education, and mentoring before a person is ordained as an evangelist.

As noted above, there are no denomination-wide standards for training to the office of evangelist. Therefore, we recommend that the following serve as a framework for all evangelist-training programs.

 - a. The character of the evangelist: Discussion and training in issues that relate to a love for the lost, a commitment to purity, demonstrating a servant's heart, being a person of prayer, and consideration of the evangelist and his family.
 - b. Biblical foundations: The evangelist should have read through the Bible carefully with the following goals in mind:
 - 1) Knowing the historical, literary, and canonical context of each biblical book.
 - 2) Being able to identify Scripture's main themes and locating their place in the biblical redemptive history that is centered in Christ.
 - 3) Being able to identify the larger divisions of Scripture (law, prophets, writings) and the hermeneutic principles required to interpret them.
 - 4) Being able to apply the message of a book or section of Scripture in a manner relevant to contemporary society and current issues.
 - c. Theological foundations: The evangelist should know Reformed systematic theology with the following particular concerns in focus:
 - 1) Being able to identify the major loci of Reformed theology and the key issues in each one.
 - 2) Being able to identify the differences between the Reformed faith and other Christian traditions as well as non-Christian faith traditions present in North America.
 - 3) Being able to defend the Reformed Christian faith biblically.
 - 4) Having a working knowledge of general church history and North American church history, including CRC history.
 - d. Practice of ministry: The evangelist should be
 - 1) Acquainted with basic theories and types of preaching.
 - 2) Conversant with techniques of assimilation and pastoral care.
 - 3) Trained in different approaches to outreach and gospel communication to unbelievers in our contemporary context.
 - 4) Trained in the basic skills of pastoral care.
 - 5) Trained in church education.
 - 6) Trained in CRC Church Order.

We recognize the need for flexibility and culturally specific training and therefore do not advocate a strict standardizing of the process. One program might be mentor driven; another person's training might be more classroom oriented; still another might recognize the significant experience that an evangelist candidate already has. The interview of the candidate by classis, though, should include a thorough examination in the areas mentioned above.

2. That synod appoint a standing denominational committee, the Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council (MLAC), composed of the general secretary, the directors of the CRC Pastor-Church Relations office and the Race Relations office, and representatives from Home Missions and Calvin Theological Seminary. The mandate of this committee should include
 - Preparing denominational guidelines and providing information, resources, and counsel to classes concerning evangelist-training programs.
 - Preparing a denominational set of guidelines, policies, and procedures to guide classes and synodical deputies in processing prospective CRC Church Order Article 7 and Article 8 candidates for ministry in the CRC.
 - Assisting classes in all matters of ministerial candidacy, including SPMC issues (see Section IX below), to help clarify standards and maintain consistency, fairness, and justice in applying the denomination's requirements for ordination to ministry of the Word.

Grounds:

- a. This proposal addresses a major concern indicated in our expanded mandate (see Part II, Supplement A) and helps ensure that some kind of denomination-wide standard is developed for and applied consistently to classical evangelist-training programs.
- b. The present system of checks and balances does not seem to be providing a uniform and fair treatment of prospective candidates for CRC ordained ministry. This structure encourages greater cooperation among CRC congregations, CTS, and the mission agencies of the church without stifling local initiative and diversity.

Elaboration:

Our committee envisions that the entire process for the training of evangelists will function as follows. The process begins when a church or classis expresses an interest in evangelist training. The classical ministerial-candidacy committee (see Section IX, B, 2 and Section X, Recommendation K) develops a plan of training and preparation, conferring with the denominational Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council for counsel and advice. Evangelists are trained and then called to serve in new church plants or emerging-church contexts (see Church Order Arts. 23 and 24).

A similar procedure, now also involving the synodical deputies, is envisioned for prospective Article 7 and Article 8 candidates for CRC ministry. (This will be discussed in greater detail in Section VIII, B below.)

The following matters should be included in the Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council's agenda:

- Gather resources used in the various evangelist-training programs that presently exist in the denomination, making them available through the general secretary's office to interested classes.
- Oversee further theological training of evangelists should they seek denominational ordination as ministers of the Word (see Section VIII, B below).

B. Changing offices (from evangelist to minister of the Word)

In the past ten years eight ordained evangelists were examined via the procedures of Church Order Article 7 with a view to denominational ordination as ministers of the Word in the CRC. Our committee observes that this may become a growing pattern as the number of ordained evangelists increases and the church's understanding of office continues to be seen in strongly functional terms. The same issue arises in the case of other specialized ministries such as youth and education, which are also on the increase in our denomination. Our committee observes again that competence in one specialized ministry or office is not in itself an indication of competence for serving in the office of minister of the Word. Persons in staff ministry positions who through the affirmation of the congregation or their own experience and aspiration sense God's call to ordained ministry of the Word should, in consultation with their church and classis, seek to determine how best to receive the required professional training that office deserves and requires. The important principle of proportionality that we have discussed earlier in this report applies here as well, but our committee notes that the church also needs to be clear about the distinct character of different offices and specialized ministries, each of which has its own integrity and importance and deserves the respect of church members.

For this reason the committee judges that the church should clearly distinguish various offices and specialized ministries and not treat the qualifications for them as transferable. Specifically, this takes place when Church Order Article 7 is used as the route for someone in another ministry task to rather routinely become a candidate for ordination as minister of the Word. The committee judges that it would be a mistake for the church to quench the Holy Spirit's equipping of persons for ministry by categorically forbidding the practice of changing office, for example, from evangelist to ordained minister of the Word. The future well-being of specific communities might be jeopardized by such a restrictive policy in certain instances, for example, where the need for continuity of ministry would best be served if an evangelist who began a successful new church plant could become an ordained minister of the Word as the church became organized. At the same time, we judge that it is not wise for such a practice to become routine or automatic in the church. Criteria of integrity and justice, as well as the principle of maintaining a theologically educated clergy, suggest that the Christian Reformed Church is better served by adopting explicit formal procedures that are clear, consistent, and denominationally accepted. The committee believes that any person who is serving the church as an ordained evangelist or in any full-time nonordained ministry position should be asked to satisfactorily complete additional formal education before being considered a candidate for denominational ordination as minister of the Word. Here we propose that the denominationally appointed Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council be the appropriate agent for process-

ing applications for this further step of ordination. We judge this to be appropriate because being credentialed as an ordained minister of the Word is not exclusively a classical responsibility but also a denominational and synodical matter. We envision that this proceeding, in the case of an ordained evangelist, will occur as follows, in keeping with Church Order Articles 7, 23, and 24 and their respective supplements:

1. An evangelist who is already serving in a full-time ministry position in a CRC church indicates a desire to become a candidate for certification as minister of the Word in the CRC denomination and makes application to the denominational Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council.

Elaboration:

According to Church Order Article 23-b, an evangelist is called to a specific group of believers, and his work “ordinarily . . . will terminate when a group of believers is formed into an organized church.” This same Church Order article, however, adds this important qualification:

However, upon organization and with the approval of the newly formed council and the classis, the ordained evangelist may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister is installed or until he has served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition.

It is here that the conditions set for the work of an evangelist (“minister only to that emerging congregation in which he is appointed to labor”—Church Order Art. 24) neatly coincide with the historic understanding of the criterion of “need” in Church Order Article 7. Need is not a general but a specific matter, tied to a concrete community of believers who *need* a particular person’s gifts and experience for ministry in their place. This brings us to what we envision as the second step:

2. The classis in which the evangelist is ministering shall follow the synodically approved procedures for Article 7 ordination and shall, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies,
 - a. Examine the candidate’s qualifications for ordination to the office of minister of the Word.
 - b. Determine whether a need exists; this determination should follow from the clear desire of the specific group among which the evangelist is ministering to extend a call to the evangelist as minister of the Word.
3. The classis communicates to the MLAC that it is satisfied with respect to 2, a and b above and thus approves the evangelist’s entering a training program leading to candidacy for ordained minister of the Word. In consultation with the candidate and classis, the MLAC develops a program of study and monitors it as an agent of synod.
4. After successfully completing the program, the candidate is examined by the MLAC. If this examination is sustained, the candidate must then be approved by synod, receive a call, and sustain the required classical examination before ordination takes place.

Elaboration:

The committee does not believe that it is constructive at this stage to specify the details of the additional required training for an evangelist to become a candidate for ordination as minister of the Word. However, we do believe that the training and final evaluation should be designed to ensure that the candidate has appropriate preparation in these areas:

Church history (general)
Christian Reformed church history
Christian Reformed Church Order
Theological reflection on ministry
Counseling: theory and practice
Leadership
Preaching: theory and practice
Pastoral care
Hermeneutics
Missions
Apologetics

Finally, we note here that the process we envision and describe for evangelists to become candidates for ordination to the ministry of the Word could serve as a model for the guidelines and policies that synod will be mandating the MLAC to develop for other Article 7 and Article 8 candidates.

IX. Proposal for revisions in the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy

Our committee judges that the reasons for establishing SPMC (and related programs) remain valid. The rule posited in Church Order Article 6-c—that students who have studied at seminaries other than Calvin shall take at least one year of study in residence at the denominational seminary—goes back to 1924 (*Acts of Synod 1924*, p. 38). The CRC synod has considered this regulation many times, as recently as 1987. Synod 1987 did not accede to a request that the rule be revoked and gave the following grounds:

- a. The CRC is committed to a denominational seminary because through it the church has a significant role in preparing and evaluating prospective candidates for CRC ministry.
- b. The one-year Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC) has proven to be an effective alternative for those choosing to receive part of their education at another seminary.
- c. The evaluation by the faculty and Board of Trustees provides the denomination with a uniform standard of evaluation.

(Acts of Synod 1987, p. 609)

SPMC and the reasons for its existence have been the source of much discussion in the church for years, as it was in the committee's deliberations. We agree that the denomination is best served by a uniform standard of evaluation. Yet, from the experiences related to us by SPMC students as well as the Calvin Seminary faculty and board of trustees, we are less confident that the church and its prospective candidates are best served by the program in its present form. Furthermore, not all the committee members are equally convinced that the goal of a denominationally uniform standard is best achieved by the insistence that prospective candidates for CRC ministry

should face significant obstacles and disincentives to studying elsewhere. Even the venerable Church Order commentators Van Dellen and Monsma observe that “the big question when one applies for candidacy should ultimately and ideally not be ‘To which school did he go?’ but, ‘Is the applicant a true believer, sincere, able and devout? Is he well-trained, a fully-informed Reformed theologian, an altogether biblical, Reformed scholar?’” (*The Revised Church Order Commentary* [1972], p. 44). The committee, therefore, does not propose revoking Church Order Article 6-c and the requirements of SPMC. At the same time, the committee has repeatedly and from many different quarters heard the call for flexibility in administering the high educational and ecclesiastical standards for ordination. Accordingly, we propose some changes to the SPMC program and set forth here the basic principles that support our proposed changes:

A. Basic principles for proposed changes to SPMC

1. Theological education of those in training for ordination to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church is a denominational matter, and synod should not relinquish this responsibility. (At the same time, enhancing local involvement is desirable.) This suggests that some *synodically* mandated denominational recommendation process/structure for all candidates to ordained CRC ministry of the Word should be maintained. Currently this is done through the CTS faculty and the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.
2. Because the identification and encouragement of potential candidates for ministry in the CRC takes place primarily at the congregational and classical levels of church life, classical initiative and involvement in the total process leading to candidacy should be enhanced.
3. The church should be sensitive to special circumstances that might lead students to attend seminaries other than Calvin, and therefore some form of the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy should be maintained. This allows the church the necessary flexibility in theological training so that gifted persons who receive training elsewhere need not be discouraged from considering ministerial vocations and ordination in the CRC. At the same time, all training for ministry, including alternative paths, is a matter of corporate church judgment rather than a purely personal decision. Here, too, increased congregational and classical involvement in the process of decision making as well as evaluation is desirable.

B. Proposed changes for SPMC

The committee recommends

1. That synod instruct the faculty and board of trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to develop two distinct options by which prospective candidates for ordained CRC ministry can fulfill the residency and course requirements of the SPMC:
 - a. *Option A:* Maintain the current full one-year residency program at CTS after completion of an M.Div. degree at another accredited seminary. This one-year program is the preferred route for all students. It shall be

required of all students who are members of the CRC fewer than seven years.

Ground: For students who have no significant history of involvement in the CRC this is a minimum amount of time for both the students and those responsible for evaluating them with a view to recommendation for CRC candidacy. The student must become fully acquainted with the CRC, and the CTS faculty must get to know the students well.

Note: The expected pattern here normally consists of one year in residency devoted to course work. The synodical requirement that the full package of theological education be equivalent to that of a CTS graduate may result in additional course work as well as a year of field work in an internship. Potential SPMC students should be aware that it may not be possible to complete all the synodical requirements in one year.

- b. *Option B:* Develop a flexible program whereby a *pre-enrolled* student who has been a member of the Christian Reformed Church for at least seven years could complete the SPMC residency and course requirements through a combination of distance-education courses, summer courses, and a final full-time residency for one quarter at CTS. For a student to be eligible to pursue Option B, recommendation would be needed from the student's own congregation (council) and approval from the classical ministerial-candidacy committee (to be established; see 2 below) in consultation with the denominational Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council (see recommendation in Section VIII, A above). Both the alternative seminary and the overall program of the student's theological education would have to be approved.

Ground: This option provides the flexibility that has been sought by many for this program while maintaining final denominational jurisdiction over denominational ordination.

Note: The committee did not think it appropriate for synod to spell out all the details of this second option but requests instead that synod instruct CTS to do so in accordance with its educational mandate and awareness of both ecclesiastical and academic considerations.

2. That synod request all classes in the CRC to expand the mandate of their current student-fund committees and create in their place classical ministerial-candidacy committees. This change entails revising Article 21 of the CRC Church Order to read, "Every classis shall establish a standing ministerial-candidacy committee."

Elaboration:

These committees would serve the churches of each classis by encouraging church members to consider pastoral ministry as a vocation, thus promoting and providing a vehicle for recruitment of potential candidates for ministry. They would have the responsibility for the support, supervision, and pastoral nurture of all candidates for CRC ordination that come from churches within their jurisdictions. This supervision would be in partnership with the faculty and board of trustees of CTS, the synodically mandated agents for all candidacy evaluation. These committees would

serve as the classical approval mechanism for students who choose to enter the SPMC program via Option B (above) and for all Article 7 and Article 8 matters. Along with SPMC students, all students who study at CTS would be required to present to their respective classical ministerial-candidacy committees annual reports detailing their progress in ministerial formation, including grade transcripts and supervisors' reports of their field-education work.

Ground: The local church is the place where ministry takes place, where alternative ministry positions and tasks as well as alternative routes to ordination are born and nurtured, where the real vocational recruitment takes place. This committee's mandate arose from the changes in ministry staffing and training that are already taking place in some local congregations and classes. It is thus fitting that classes develop the appropriate structures by which these alternatives can be encouraged and regulated within the framework of denominational standards. What the committee is calling for is greater partnership between the churches and Calvin Seminary, the denominational agency mandated to carry out the church's task of theological education. This partnership would help eliminate the potential of an adversarial relationship between the SPMC students who desire to study elsewhere and those who have been mandated by synod to be their evaluators for candidacy recommendation.

X. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Robert Den Dulk (chair), John Bolt (reporter), and Willis Van Groningen as representatives of the study committee when this report is considered.

B. That synod publicly express its gratitude to God for the diverse ways in which the Holy Spirit has called and equipped people for CRC ministry through alternative as well as traditional routes (see Part II, Supplement B).

C. That, in response to the committee's mandate to clarify "standards for effective ministry in the CRC," synod adopt and refer to the churches the following guiding principles:

1. The Reformed confessional heritage is the basic foundation for all ministry-staff job descriptions. A "principle of proportionality" should be thoughtfully applied to all persons hired to fill staff positions in any Christian Reformed church. The degree of understanding and skill required to apply the confessional tradition is proportional to the level of ministry responsibility assigned. As one's sphere of authorized service extends, so should one's capability for understanding, articulating, and discipling others in the Christian faith and Reformed confessional tradition.
2. The CRC is committed to a theologically well-trained ministry and to maintaining the expectation that "the completion of a satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word" (Church Order Art. 6-a).

D. That synod remind the churches that are seeking guidance in setting standards for effective ministry of the general scriptural teaching concerning

personal qualifications for ministry as it is found in passages such as Matthew 18; 20:20-28; 28:18-20; Acts 6; II Corinthians 4; 5; Ephesians 4; I and II Timothy.

E. That synod affirm and refer to the churches Calvin Theological Seminary's Personal Qualifications for Ministry (Part II, Supplement I) to serve as guidelines for the hiring and spiritual development of all full-time ministry-staff persons.

F. That synod affirm and refer to the churches the following basic **character** standards for all ministry positions and personnel, recognizing that they must be adapted to specific circumstances and situations:

Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed Church ministry position should be

1. Publicly committed to Christ and his church, submitting to its discipline.
2. Exemplary in piety and holy conduct of life, a humble person of prayer who trusts in God's providence.
3. Of good reputation, emotionally mature, honest, trustworthy, reliable.
4. Caring and compassionate for the lost and the weak.
5. Eager to learn and grow in faith, knowledge, and love.
6. Joyful in affirming the goodness of God's creation and communicating to others a delight in its beauty.

G. That synod affirm and refer the following guidelines to the churches as the basic standards of the biblical-theological **knowledge** expected of all persons hired in ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church:

1. Biblical foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

- a. Know the content of the Old and New Testaments.
- b. Know and be able to explain the basic structure and flow of biblical redemptive covenantal history centered in Christ (promise and fulfillment).
- c. Be able to identify main themes (covenant, kingdom of God, holiness) of Scripture as well as the large divisions (law, prophets, writings) and specific types of biblical literature.
- d. Be able to articulate the significance of the various sections, books, or types of biblical literature to contemporary issues and questions.

2. Theological foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

- a. Know and be able to explain the basic teachings of the universal Christian tradition concerning God, humanity, the person and work of Christ, salvation, the church, the last things.
- b. Know, be able to explain, be ready and willing to defend the Reformed confessional stance on key doctrines such as predestination, unity of the

covenant, infant baptism, millennialism, the cosmic scope of the Reformed worldview.

- c. Have a rudimentary knowledge of and ability to respond to the key challenges posed to the Christian and Reformed faith in North America by the major world religions, the major cults, and the various forms of New Age spirituality.
- d. Know the key components of CRC church polity.

H. That synod affirm and refer the following guidelines to the churches as the basic standards of the **skills** expected of all persons hired in ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church:

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

1. Be prepared “to give an answer to everyone who asks [you] to give the reason for the hope that [you] have” (I Pet. 3:15).
2. Be able to lead someone to faith in Jesus Christ.
3. Be able to teach and disciple persons to deeper faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ.
4. Be able to prepare and deliver short biblically based messages for public occasions (nursing homes, prisons, civic occasions).
5. Be capable of effectively leading a group in various tasks, including Bible studies, task completion, resolving conflict.

I. That synod affirm and refer to the churches the following guidelines as standards for all full-time nonordained ministry-staff positions in the CRC:

1. A minimal professional standard of a B.A. degree in the field in which a person serves.
2. Ideally, a two-year theological degree or a certificate in the field in which a person serves. The churches are urged either to hire persons at this level or to make provision for the attainment of such professional accomplishment through concurrent continuing education.

J. That synod establish as policy, through an amendment of Church Order Article 23, that before ordination as an evangelist, a person should go through a period of training, education, and mentoring. The following framework should serve as the basis for all evangelist-training programs in the CRC and should be added to Church Order Supplement, Article 23:

1. *Character of the evangelist:* Discussion of and training in love for the lost, a commitment to purity, demonstrating a servant’s heart, being a person of prayer, and consideration of the evangelist and his family.
2. *Biblical foundations:* The evangelist should have read through the Bible carefully with these goals in mind:
 - a. Knowing the historical, literary, and canonical context of each biblical book.

- b. Being able to identify Scripture's main themes and to locate their place in the redemptive history that is centered in Christ.
 - c. Being able to identify the larger divisions of Scripture (law, prophets, writings) and the hermeneutic principles required to interpret them.
 - d. Being able to apply the message of a book or section of Scripture in a manner relevant to contemporary society and current issues.
3. *Theological foundations:* The evangelist should know Reformed systematic theology with the following particular concerns in focus:
- a. Being able to identify the major loci of Reformed theology and the key issues in each one.
 - b. Being able to identify the differences between the Reformed faith and other Christian traditions as well as non-Christian faith traditions present in North America.
 - c. Being able to defend the Reformed Christian faith biblically.
 - d. Having a working knowledge of general church history and North American church history, including CRC history.
4. *Practice of ministry:* The evangelist should be
- a. Acquainted with basic theories and types of preaching.
 - b. Conversant with techniques of assimilation and pastoral care.
 - c. Trained in different approaches to outreach and gospel communication to unbelievers in the contemporary context.
 - d. Trained in the basic skills of pastoral care.
 - e. Trained in church education.
 - f. Trained in CRC Church Order.

K. That synod request all classes in the CRC to expand the mandate of their current student-fund committees, creating in their place classical ministerial-candidacy committees. This entails changing Article 21 of the Church Order to read, "Every classis shall establish a standing ministerial-candidacy committee."

Ground: The local church is the place where ministry takes place, where alternative ministry positions and tasks as well as alternative routes to ordination are born and nurtured, where the real vocational recruitment takes place. It is thus appropriate that classes develop the appropriate structures where these alternatives can be encouraged and regulated within the framework of denominational standards. The formation of classical ministry committees will facilitate greater partnership between the churches and Calvin Seminary, the denominational agency mandated to carry out the church's task of theological education.

L. That synod appoint a standing denominational committee, the Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council (MLAC), composed of the general secretary, the directors of the CRC Pastor-Church Relations office and the Race Relations

office, and representatives from Home Missions and Calvin Theological Seminary. The mandate of this committee is to include the following:

1. Preparing denominational guidelines and providing information, resources, and counsel to classes concerning training programs for evangelists.
2. Preparing a set of denominational guidelines, policies, and procedures to guide classes and synodical deputies in processing prospective Church Order Article 7 and Article 8 candidates for ministry in the CRC. These guidelines are to be submitted to synod for final approval.
3. Assisting classes in all matters of ministerial candidacy, including SPMC issues (see Section IX below), by helping to clarify standards and maintain consistency, fairness, and justice in applying the denomination's requirements for ordination to ministry of the Word.

Grounds:

- a. This proposal addresses a major concern indicated in our expanded mandate (see Part II, Supplement A) and helps ensure that some kind of denomination-wide standard is developed for and applied consistently to classical training programs for evangelists.
- b. The present system of checks and balances does not seem to be providing a uniform and fair treatment of prospective candidates for CRC ordained ministry. The proposed structure encourages greater cooperation between CRC congregations, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the mission agencies of the church, without stifling local initiative and diversity.

M. That synod reaffirm the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC) as the synodically approved means of meeting the requirement of Church Order Article 6-a and 6-c and instruct the faculty and Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to develop two distinct options by which prospective candidates for ordained CRC ministry can fulfill the residency and course requirements of SPMC:

1. *Option A:* Students who have completed the M.Div. degree at another accredited seminary may become candidates for ministry in the CRC after a one-year residency program at CTS. This one-year program is the preferred route for all students from alternative seminaries. It is the required route for all students who have been members of the CRC fewer than seven years.

Ground: For students who have no significant history of involvement in the CRC, this is a minimum amount of time for both the students and those responsible for evaluating them with a view to recommendation for CRC candidacy. The students must become fully acquainted with the CRC, and the CTS faculty must get to know the students well.

2. *Option B:* Students who have been members of the Christian Reformed Church for at least seven years and who have pre-enrolled in CTS could complete the SPMC residency and course requirements through a combination of distance-education courses, summer courses, and a final one-quarter full-time residency at CTS. For a student to be eligible to pursue Option B,

recommendation is needed from the student's own congregation (council), and approval is required from the classical ministerial-candidacy committee (see Recommendation K above), in consultation with the denominational Ministerial Leadership Advisory Council (see Recommendation L above). Both the alternative seminary and the overall program of the student's theological education would have to be approved.

Ground: This option provides the flexibility that has been sought by many for this program while maintaining final denominational jurisdiction over denominational ordination.

N. That synod thank and dismiss the committee.

Bruce T. Ballast

Ernest Benally

John Bolt, reporter

Robert den Dulk, chair

Edna Greenway

Emmett A. Harrison

Ricardo E. Orellana

E. Joyce Scholten-Suh

Willis Van Groningen*

James A. De Jong, ex officio

David H. Engelhard, ex officio

Note: Committee appointees Alan Breems and Patricia Tigchelaar were unable to serve. The Board of Trustees appointed Bruce Ballast and Joyce Scholten-Suh in their place. Dr. John T. Kim served on the committee until his return to Korea in 1998.

* Committee member W. Van Groningen was granted permission to attach the following note to this report:

I support the diligent hard work of our committee and am grateful for the progress we have made on this very complex issue. However, I feel that in the years ahead the church needs to address the following:

1. We need to engage the church's imagination with a biblically inspired vision for how best to take hold of the missional opportunities opening up in front of us.
2. Do centralized educational structures best guard confessional integrity? Is Calvin Theological Seminary singularly suited to provide the diverse theological/missional leadership required by the Christian Reformed Church?
3. Doesn't the pressing need to substantially enhance indigeneity—specifically, ethnic and/or local leadership and vision—require far more initiative and risk than this report provides?

Part II: Supplements

Supplement A: Expanded Mandate and Rationale for Study Committee

At the request of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, Synod 1996 adopted the following recommendation:

That synod appoint a study committee (1) to examine routes presently being used to ordained ministry in the CRC and related denominations, (2) to define standards for effective ministry (ordained and unordained staff ministry) in the CRC, and (3) to propose any changes in present policy that it judges to be necessary. This study is to include but not be limited to

- a. Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8, their supplements, and related policies.
- b. The special needs of various ethnic communities.
- c. The concerns related to the standards for the work of synodical deputies.

This study committee will report to Synod 1999.

Ground: Alternative roots into ministry are being used today that were not envisioned when the present Church Order articles and related policies were adopted.

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 530-31)

Our committee's mandate is rather broad, and therefore we add here the framework of understanding that Synod 1996 itself implicitly endorsed when it adopted the recommendation of its advisory committee to appoint our committee. Here are the observations provided to Synod 1996 by its advisory committee:

This recommendation is brought after considerable reflection and discussion by both the faculty and the seminary board of trustees. A major issue was whether the seminary and its board should undertake this study or whether it is an issue of such denominational significance that it warrants a synodical study committee. The latter opinion prevailed. The question involves the relationship of the denominational seminary to the training and calling of ministerial leaders. It seems to need review in the light of a number of practices and attitudes.

1. Alternative seminary education

Originally and through most of its history Calvin Seminary was universally accepted as the place for training Christian Reformed ministers. Denominational identity and loyalty compelled this denominational value. Today, more students than previously, opt, for a variety of reasons, to attend other seminaries with the intention of entering ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Is this denominationally desirable? Why or why not? What is the impact of this pattern on the denomination? What do graduates of other seminaries bring to ministry in the CRCNA that is constructive or that may be problematic? What is the success rate of the SPMC program? Is it being used as intended? And, in that light, what should be its future? What are the reasons students choose other seminaries, and what should be done to address these reasons? Answers to all these and other questions related to ministerial students attending other seminaries will enable the denomination to shape its future more intentionally and responsibly than at present.

2. Exceptional cases

Various exceptions to denominational policy are claimed today. They deserve review, clarification, and common policy. Some graduates of other seminaries avoid the SPMC program entirely, are called and ordained by classes as evangelists, and openly express their intention to apply under Article 7 of the Church Order for ordination as pastors in several years. Some have already followed this approach. How is this circumvention of synod's policy to be evaluated and handled? Some congregations, claiming need, employ seminarians or graduates of other seminaries who have not been in the SPMC program, using them as stated supply and sometimes even expressing a desire or intent to call them. Some churches readily look outside the denomination for pastors, claiming need or unavailability of suitable CRC pastors. Some congregations are employing as staff persons on their ministry teams people with little or no background in the Reformed faith, some with church and theological backgrounds in significant contrast with the Reformed faith. What is the impact of these attitudes and approaches to ministry on the local congregation and on the denomination theologically, confessionally, in terms of church polity or ministerial practices? Is there actually need? Do the statistics bear out this claim? Are other considerations operative in these claims? If so, have they been properly established and addressed? And do our synodical deputies uniformly understand and apply denominational policy when called upon? What has been the history of using Church Order Article 7, and is it being applied as it was intended in a way beneficial for our churches and denomination?

3. Agency and classical programs

Several of our colleges have instituted and advertised programs for unordained church leaders or staff persons. Christian Reformed Home Missions has supported training programs for ethnic-minority pastors and for church planters and evangelists that are independent of synodically defined and approved routes into Christian Reformed ministry. One of our classes is experimenting with its own such training program. Expectations are that in time the most successful of these people will be ordained as pastors. How does this approach relate to the denomination's stated value of a theologically [educated], seminary-trained ministry built on the base of a liberal-arts education? If this becomes a sanctioned route to ordination, are there standards and expectations that should be defined and met by such people? If so, what are they? And what role should continuing education play in the continuing development of these and all spiritual leaders of the church? What are the long-range implications of these new strategies of agency, college, and classical training for denominational cohesiveness, a unified understanding and application of our confessional vision for the church of Christ, and the spiritual growth of our people? Should all programs of pastoral training be assigned to the seminary rather than to agencies and classes? What uniform standards and training should apply to non-ordained church staff, if any? These are new questions arising from new, untested models of ministerial formation.

The advisory committee agrees with the board of trustees and seminary faculty that answers to these questions are crucial to the unity and the vitality of the CRC. In addition, items raised by the number of cases involving Church Order Articles 7 and 8 and the involvement of synodical deputies in them require reflection. A responsible report—examined by the churches, debated in its assemblies, and yielding constructive recommendations in tune with our times—would serve our churches well.

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 529-30)

These observations can be summarized in three main points:

1. Historically, the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination has maintained the following as a stated value for its ordained ministry of the Word and sacraments: a theologically educated, seminary-trained minister who possesses a liberal arts baccalaureate degree that serves as a foundation for this theological training.
2. Since 1876 the Christian Reformed Church has maintained its own preparatory college (now Calvin College) and theological graduate school, Calvin Theological Seminary. The CRC synod, through its designated Board of Trustees, supervises the faculty appointments, curriculum, and teaching content of the theological education given at Calvin Seminary. For this reason, "originally and through most of its history Calvin Seminary was universally accepted as the place for training Christian Reformed ministers" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 529).
3. Today a growing number of exceptions to this understanding are claimed from various quarters.

The two principles stated in 1 and 2 above are presently reflected in the Christian Reformed Church Order and supplemental synodical regulations. The relevant articles are Articles 6 and 7 of the Church Order.

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 the churches 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 the churches to be candidates for the ministry of the Word.

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, *especially when the need is urgent* [italics added].
- b. The classis, in the presence of the synodical deputies, shall examine these men concerning the required exceptional gifts. With the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, classis shall proceed as circumstances may warrant and in accordance with synodical regulations.

The ecclesiastical principle of maintaining a *denominationally* unified standard for theological education is highlighted by synodical decisions that carefully circumscribe the conditions by which an exception to studying at the church's own school may occur:

- A. Students having studied theology at other seminaries shall at least take the senior year at our seminary before they shall be declared eligible for call in our churches.

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

- B. Nonregular students shall be declared candidates by synod after being interviewed by the board. Recommendations regarding academic qualifications, doctrinal soundness, spiritual fitness, and personality are to be presented to the board by the Calvin Seminary faculty and by the faculties of such schools where the applicant has studied.

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

In addition, the value of maintaining a high standard of theological education for ordained ministers is underscored by supplemental synodical decisions that set significant *academic* standards—through the instrument of an examination by the classis—also for persons who enter CRC ministry via Article 7. The only exemption from this examination is the requirement of the “ancient languages” (see 4 immediately below).

2. At the close of [a] period of probation, the classis, together with the . . . synodical deputies, shall take a final decision regarding the petitioner's “exceptional gifts.” If the decision is in the affirmative, the classis shall subject the petitioner to a preparatory examination in 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 to the petitioner, he shall be declared eligible for a call.
4. The final classical (peremptoir) examination follows later in accordance with existing regulations, excepting the ancient languages.

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

The committee also calls the church's and synod's attention to an important synodical declaration about Article 7 made by Synod 1947, particularly the italicized passage in 4 below.

1. Synod reminds the churches that Article 7 of the Church Order was adopted in a time when there was a dire need for ministers of the Word. This article should function only in case of great need.
2. The "gifts" mentioned in Article 7 should be possessed by a candidate in a very exceptional measure. No one should be considered unless he has extraordinary qualities.
3. Not only the qualifications mentioned in Article 7 should be considered but such a candidate should also possess exceptional knowledge of the Word, knowledge of spiritual needs, and native ability to apply the Word.
4. This article should never be used as a means to ordain all 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.*

(Acts of Synod 1947, p. 94)

Supplement B: Visions from CRC Ethnic-Minority Communities

The ethnic-minority members of our committee were requested to draft "dream statements" of their communities' visions for leadership development in the CRC. The two statements that follow in this supplement were supplied to the committee as discussion starters, and we judged that the broader church would be served well by them too. The first statement, sketching a plan for Classis Red Mesa, was written by committee member Ernest Benally; the second, for the Hispanic community, was written by Ricardo Orellana.

1. A ministry vision for Classis Red Mesa

Among the numerous minority ethnic groups still in missionary partnership with CR Home Missions are the churches of Classis Red Mesa. Members in these churches are predominantly the Navajos, Zunis, and other Native Americans in the Southwest. Although in the early years of CRC denominational ministry many models of leadership development were tried, we still seem to be unsuccessful in motivating young people to go into professional church leadership. For several decades leadership was provided by Anglo missionaries, and to us this was the only appropriate thing to do because they were the experts in the religion they were trying to establish among us.

The Navajos and Zunis had their own well-established religion in their own land, with sacred boundaries. In the early days there was strong teaching among the Navajo against mixed marriages and adoption of strange and foreign religions. In fact, there were cleansing rituals available for that. Christianity was considered strange and foreign, and it was associated with the white people who killed, stole, cheated, and placed no value on life. Because of this type of orientation, Navajo and Zuni peoples' response to Christianity was very slow. At the wider social level, tension between native/traditional religion and Christianity remains a major issue.

Another factor is the lingering effect of the paternalism of the federal government and the missionaries in past generations. Our Christian leaders have demonstrated their effectiveness in secular jobs and community functions, but when it comes to assuming responsibility for their church and its ministries, they show reluctance. The message seems to be that it's

more comfortable to just play church. More than ever before, the Red Mesa region now suffers from a shortage of trained native leaders; Christian leaders show interest but are not coming forward to be trained. Among the twenty churches in our classis, currently there are two ordained native ministers, one retired minister, one evangelist, and one apprentice. Our classis is beginning to give more attention to visioning in this area of need.

The Theological Education and Ministry Skills (TEAMS) Committee of classis did a Red Mesa-wide survey of special training needs of the CRC churches. The results indicated a strong need for a formalized training program for potential bivocational pastors, but there were only a few committed to preparing themselves for ministry. There are certainly enough Christian leaders who are capable, but they seem to look upon ministry as a risky endeavor because it means low pay status and lack of security. One avenue that the TEAMS Committee is exploring is the possibility of our churches' use of a local theological school, the Native American Bible College in Gallup, New Mexico. Such a local institution will not only provide the much-needed training, but it will also give pastors a reputable college education. The TEAMS Committee is now in the talking stage with NABC to start a satellite campus in Farmington at Maranatha Fellowship CRC. This development, the committee feels, may attract Christian leaders without requiring them to abandon their original jobs and professions to attend schools in other states.

Other components of the emerging Classis Red Mesa leadership-development model, which could work hand in hand with NABC and its satellite campus, are the Leadership Development Network program (LDN) and assessment tools to help students discover their potential and talents. These resources are available to us immediately from Christian Reformed Home Missions. Their training specialists have offered to help us develop our own assessment center and to give us guidance as we develop our own LDN program. This LDN will design a training-program package for a student which could include course work, apprenticeship, and internship in ministry. The training-program package would prepare the student to become ordained as an evangelist.

At one of the committee's meetings with Christian Reformed Home Missions training specialists, the following values for designing a leadership-development network were discussed:

- a. An LDN in Classis Red Mesa will be church based. The candidates will carry out ministry in the context of local churches under the supervision of their pastors.
- b. An LDN in Classis Red Mesa will be mentor driven. All students in the LDN will have their own mentors.
- c. An LDN in Classis Red Mesa will be under local ownership. This will not be a program imposed from outside of classis. It must be something owned by the classis and the local churches and pastors.
- d. An LDN in Classis Red Mesa will be wholistic. The training to be offered needs to deal not only with knowledge but also with character (spiritual) development and ministry skills.

- e. An LDN in Classis Red Mesa will be flexible, designed to meet the needs of the various participants.

The training in the LDN will be done formally and informally. This means that the program could incorporate formal study accredited by outside institutions. This also means that courses could be designed for congregational training for those on track to become ordained evangelists or as ongoing education of those already ministering as pastors.

In our growth and cooperation with NABC, I see an opportunity for us to design a leadership-development process in which learning to be effective for God does not first of all require surviving a rigorous academic exercise. It is to be an enjoyable experience to begin where you are, discover your gifts and talents, and become an effective tool for God. This process begins with realistic assessment and course work with NABC, either in preparation for apprenticeship and internship programs or in conjunction with them. Some can pursue formal training to become ordained as evangelists or to be ordained as ministers of the Word via Article 7. There is nothing new about this process except that it is down-to-earth and non-threatening.

2. A ministry vision for the CRC Hispanic community

Dear brothers and sisters,

In consultation with other Hispanic ministers I set forth some ideas for an alternative route for CRC ordination for my Hispanic community.

- a. They should be taught in their own communities; money, distance, and family ties hinder them from going to Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids. Calvin is expensive for most Hispanics. It is also far away and takes our people away from their roots. Because most of them are not professional people, it is not easy for them to leave a job and find another in a different place.
- b. They should be taught in their own language; many lack skills in English for advanced study in that language. Spanish is the language still used at home and at church. Hispanic theologians write in Spanish, and the important texts used for an M.Div have been translated into Spanish. To let us teach and be taught in our own language is a matter of respect and important for missions since we minister to Hispanic Americans and not to Anglo Americans.
- c. They should be taught by Hispanic professors, pastors who know the Hispanic world well and what ministry needs to be done there. Exposure to Anglo Spanish-speaking professors and/or English-speaking professors is also good, but Hispanics identify better with and learn more from professors from their own background.
- d. The curriculum should be mostly the same as it is in Calvin Seminary or other seminaries in Latin America and could be done with or without the Greek or Hebrew languages. Most of the curricula of the Latin American seminaries have been adapted from North American seminaries, though revised and taught by Latins. There are numerous Latin

American scholars in the CRC and in other Reformed churches in North America.

- e. Calvin Seminary could supervise the teaching and the professors. The local classis, which knows its own ministers, could appoint the professors, and the seminary could assist in supervising the teaching. There are many qualified Hispanic professors in this country that could be used in this kind of program.
- f. There are three areas where we could begin such a program: California, Florida, and Northern New Jersey. However, the plan could be expanded to other areas as needed. These places could be considered extensions of Calvin Theological Seminary or of other institutions of our denomination.
- g. To get a start on this program, it is possible to have students do some of their work at institutions that already have Hispanic instruction. Recognizing that these schools may not be fully Reformed, students should come to the Hispanic centers for their Reformed teaching.
- h. It is important to go ahead with this Hispanic theological education because most Hispanic pastors who are already working in ordained CRC ministry were received by way of a colloquium doctum. They studied in their own countries under Hispanic professors and with curricula designed for Latin Americans. Many of these ministers have served the CRC well. Many in our community now believe that we should produce our own pastors rather than importing them from abroad, and so we need to seek ways of preparing qualified ministers for our specific community and needs. Our understanding is that supervision for this training would belong primarily to the local classis, secondarily to Calvin Seminary, and thirdly to the CRC synod.
- i. The current Evangelist Training Program (ETP) can be used to get potential students, but we can also recruit other students with the help of the classes and the churches. The training for ordination as minister of the Word in the CRC would have to be more demanding than that of ETP and, of course, extended to those areas that ETP does not cover.
- j. A Hispanic candidate for ordination might not need the same requirements that an Anglo needs to be ordained, because the community context is different. Prospective Hispanic candidates are not looking to be pastors in the Anglo churches but to minister to Hispanic people.
- k. A Hispanic who can attend and has the background requirements to attend Calvin Seminary should go there for training if he desires. There will be some who will want to go to Calvin Seminary.

Supplement C: Recent Views and Practices of Ordination in the CRC

Our study committee was asked by Synod 1996 to examine “alternative routes” in Christian Reformed ministry, alternatives “not envisioned when the present Church Order was adopted.” The relevant Church Order article reads as follows:

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 the churches 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 the churches to be candidates for the ministry of the Word.

That the request indicated in our mandate was initiated by the denomination's seminary is, therefore, not surprising, since the "alternatives" under consideration are of course alternatives to the long-standing expectation given in Church Order Article 6-b that candidates for Christian Reformed ministry ordinarily receive their required theological training at Calvin Theological Seminary. The Christian Reformed Church's "ordinary" policies and procedures for licensure and candidacy directly and intensely involve both the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty and the seminary's board of trustees as agents of synod. While the third section of Church Order Article 6 hints at the possibility of alternative routes and the two articles immediately following spell out the ecclesiastical parameters of these alternatives, these are indicated as *exceptions*. Most pertinent here is Church Order Article 7:

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, *especially when the need is urgent* [italics added for emphasis].
- b. The classis, in the presence of the synodical deputies, shall examine these men concerning the required exceptional gifts. With the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, classis shall proceed as circumstances may warrant and in accordance with synodical regulations.

The request by the CTS Board of Trustees that synod appoint a study committee to examine closely such alternative routes is occasioned by the increasing number, in recent years, of exceptions to the traditional Article 6-b pattern of candidacy eligibility, which is contingent upon theological training at Calvin Seminary. (Documentation of this increase is found in Supplements C and E). In this section, however, we address some of the possible reasons for the increase in such exceptions, particularly, changing views within the CRC on the subject of ordination, changes that may arise in part from certain misunderstandings and misapplications of the 1973 study-committee report "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination." In what follows we briefly review the important elements in and consequences of two additional synodically adopted study-committee reports: "Layworkers in Evangelism" (1978) and "Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God" (1996). Finally, we briefly take note of important overlaps in our analysis and that of the study-committee report "Ordination and 'Official Acts of Ministry,'" which was submitted to Synod 1999 (see Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry" in the

Agenda for Synod 1999, pp. 284-303) and returned to the committee for further clarification and reporting to Synod 2001.

1. The 1973 report on ecclesiastical office and ordination (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 61-64, 635-716)

The history of the CRC's wrestling with the issue of office and ordination in many respects reflects important ecclesiological tensions within Protestantism itself since the time of the Reformation. On the one hand, Protestantism exalts the universal office of all believers. This is clearly confessed by the Christian Reformed Church in its most beloved confession, the Heidelberg Catechism:

Q. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so share in his anointing. I am anointed to confess his name, to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks, to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity.

(Lord's Day 12)

On the other hand, Protestant churches, including Reformed churches, also maintain special offices of ministry (see Belgic Confession, Arts. 30-32). As a recent author making an appeal for ordained ministry has observed, "Attention to the Christian vocation of all Christians does not lessen the importance of ordained leadership. For the sake of the church and the world, there is a special need for the vocation to Word, sacraments, and order" (Dennis Campbell, *Who Will Go for Us? An Invitation to Ordained Ministry*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1994, p. 17). That is why, he adds, "from the earliest days of the church, some Christians have been set aside for what came to be known as ordained ministry" (Campbell, p. 25).

How is this ordained ministry distinguished from the general calling of all Christians, and what is the relationship between the general office of believer and the particular offices of ordained ministry? Is there a tension between the democratic impulse behind the universal priesthood of all believers and any particular, hierarchical authority residing in special offices? How does one avoid both the Scylla of democratic ecclesiastical anarchy on the one hand and the Charybdis of domineering, authoritarian officialdom on the other? Where is the locus of (human) authority in the church? Is the very notion of human authority contrary to our Lord's insistence that "it shall not be so among you"? (Luke 22:24-27). That is the constellation of questions we have been vigorously discussing in the Christian Reformed Church in recent years. (For a helpful overview and analysis of these debates in the CRC, see Henry De Moor, *Equipping the Saints: A Church Political Study of the Controversies Surrounding Ecclesiastical Office in the Christian Reformed Church in North America 1857-1982* [Th.D. dissertation, Theologische Hogeschool, Kampen, 1986].)

The foundational framework for this report is the claim that, since "the term for office in the Greek New Testament is DIAKONIA, meaning 'service' or 'ministry,' . . . ecclesiastical office is one and indivisible, for it embraces the total ministry of the church, a ministry that is rooted in Christ" (Recommendation 1, *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 713-14). Furthermore, "this comprehensive ministry (office) is universal, committed to the whole

church, not to a select group of individuals within the church. The task of ministry is shared by all and is not limited to a special professional class. The ministry of the church is Christ's ministry, shared by all who are in Christ" (Recommendation 2, *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 713-14). Thus, all believers have an office, and this general office of all believers both precedes and serves as a foundation for any specially designated office.

What's the point of ordained ministry then? If all believers are officebearers, then it is reasonable to conclude, as the 1973 report did, that

The special ministries of some believers are to be distinguished not in essence but in function from the comprehensive ministry shared by all believers, and distinctions among the special ministries themselves are also functional. There is therefore no essential distinction but only a functional one between ministers, elders, deacons, and all other members of the church. There is a difference in manner of service, but all are commissioned to serve.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 713)

This conclusion of the study committee—that church office is only a matter of function—did not satisfy the church or its synod when the report was first submitted in 1972.

When Synod 1972 received the report on office and ordination, it resubmitted it to the committee for further work because the matter of authority for the special offices was "inadequately dealt with." The committee was specifically requested to address, among other things, the following issues and questions:

1) To whom does the exalted Christ delegate his authority (Matt. 28:19f.), to the church as a whole, to special offices within the church, or to both?

2) What is the nature of the authority involved in the special office in its relation to what is known as "the office of all believers?"

(*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 95)

In his analysis of this report's history, Henry De Moor observes that though "the committee returned [to synod] in 1973 with material that reflected a more balanced view of office, . . . this more balanced view was not integrated into the conclusions presented to the Synod of 1973. They were resubmitted with commentary, no more." Synod chose to deal with the report by adopting "a 'framework' within which the conclusions must function as a 'guideline' for the churches" (*Equipping the Saints*, 151-52). This framework particularly addressed the tendency in the report to pit "service" against "status" or "function" against "authority." Synod's full statement reads as follows:

2. Nowhere in the New Testament is there a conflict between authority and service, or between ruling and love. Christian authority involves service in the name of the authoritative Christ, and Christian service involves authority in the name of the serving Christ. Both before and after his ascension as our victorious Lord, Jesus is the authoritative Son of God who serves the Father and those whom the Father has given him.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 62)

Synod even, though ever so gently, put in a good word for appropriate recognition and status for gifted "leaders" or officebearers in the church:

4. Because God is a God of order, and because the people of God are subject to many weaknesses and errors and in need of spiritual leadership in the face of

a hostile world, Christ grants, by his Holy Spirit, gifts of ruling service and serving authority (service and authority) to particular people *whom the church must recognize*, in order that their gifts may be *officially exercised* for the benefit of all.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 62, italics added)

This recognition is more than mere acknowledgment, as the next article in the “framework” makes clear; holding office in the church carries with it a representative role (with appropriate “honor”) on behalf of the Lord of the church:

5. The office bearers, i.e., certain people appointed to particular tasks, are not appointed without the call and approbation of the church. When so appointed, however, they are recognized by the church to be representatives of Christ in the special functions for which they have been appointed. As such they serve both Christ and the church, and are worthy of honor, especially if they serve and rule well.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 62)

The most interesting specific change made by Synod 1973 in the recommended guidelines to the churches was the fifth one. The original study-committee recommendation is in the left column; the synodically approved version is in the right column; the new material added by synod is in italics.

Original Report:

The special ministries are primarily characterized by service, rather than by status, dominance, or privilege. The authority which is associated with the special ministries is an authority defined in terms of love and service.

Synod's Revised Version:

The particular ministries are characterized by service, rather than by status, dominance or privilege. *These ministries function with Christ's power and authority, a power and authority rooted in obedience to his Word and expressed in loving service. In turn, those who are served are to respond with obedience and respect.*

Notwithstanding this significant change in the framework, the fact that the original recommendations of the study committee were simply reprinted as presented in the *Acts of Synod 1973* (pp. 713-16) left an impression for many in the CRC that, contrary to the synod's own framework, “authority” was pitted against “service” and “office” was reduced to “function.” What the recent study committee on official acts of ministry, in its report to Synod 1999, referred to as the 1973 report's tendency toward “democratizing, anti-authoritarianism, anticlericalism, and anti-officiousness” is particularly reflected in its pejorative use of the term “status.” The 1973 report associates status with dominance and privilege and fails to take into account a more basic *legal* sense of the term, indicating a change in condition.

A person placed in office is no longer merely a private citizen or a participant in the universal office of believer. Becoming an officebearer is an objective change in status which enables a person to exercise the authority of an office and to carry out its duties. . . . [Thus] an office exists objectively—beyond and outside the subjective capabilities and giftedness of individuals—because it is established by Christ and belongs to him.

(*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 285)

This important point is not denied by the 1973 report, but that report hardly does full justice to it. “The authority of special office-bearers in the church,” it insists, “does not exist in the abstract. The way authority functions in the church is never to be abstracted from the life and example of the person who bears the authority. The godly example of those chosen to special office in the church is an essential aspect of the office.” But this raises the question whether official authority then flows directly from the subjective qualities of the person holding the office. According to the 1973 report, not exactly, but almost: “The right of a special office-bearer to be heard and heeded by his fellow church-members *does not lie just in the fact that he has been appointed to an office* but rests to a very significant extent in his ‘godliness’ and Christian character” (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 705; italics added).

A heated and polarizing debate in the CRC between those who pursue a democratizing emphasis on the office of all believers on the one hand and those who would defend the distinctive dignity and authority of the special offices on the other has not always been edifying. One could wish that the balanced voice of the CRC’s venerable theologian Louis Berkhof had carried the day instead:

There is another view, however, representing a mean between these two extremes, which would seem to deserve preference. According to it ecclesiastical power is committed by Christ to the Church as a whole, that is to the ordinary members and the officers alike; but in addition to that the officers receive such an additional measure of power as is required for the performance of their respective duties in the Church of Christ. They share in the original power bestowed upon the Church, and receive their authority and power as officers directly from Christ. They are representatives, but not mere deputies or delegates of the people.

(*Systematic Theology*, p. 583)

From his extensive survey of the debate in the CRC, Henry De Moor comes to this one “inescapable conclusion”: “The term ‘general office of all believers’ has caused a great deal of confusion. . . . The history of the CRC has illustrated vividly how the disadvantages of its use have far outweighed the advantages” (*Equipping the Saints*, p. 242).

Synod 1973 may itself have dropped a hint that the delegates were not fully satisfied with the recommendations they had adopted. At the very least, acknowledging that “the guidelines do not re-define the basic types of service currently assigned to deacons, elders and ministers; nor do the guidelines now authorize anyone other than ministers to administer the sacraments along with the preaching of the Word,” Synod 1973 appointed yet another committee “to study the implications of the guidelines . . . especially as they relate to ‘layworkers in evangelism’” (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 64). It is to that report that we now turn.

2. The 1978 report on lay workers in evangelism (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 74-78, 534-55)

For more than three decades the CRC wrestled with the question of how to recognize “layworkers in evangelism” and how to locate their appropriate place in the church’s structure (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 74, 534). In the words of the 1978 majority report,

[The evangelist's] presence and work within the body of the church has been recognized. His ministry has been widely regarded as necessary and legitimate. But his official status or position within the church has never been satisfactorily defined. While many study committees were appointed by various synods and a variety of solutions were offered by way of well-reasoned recommendations, none was accepted as the appropriate biblically Reformed answer.

(*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 534)

Between 1946 and 1976 no fewer than eleven synodically appointed study committees tried to find a solution and failed to obtain the approval of the church. One issue in particular proved to be nettlesome. As the advisory committee to Synod 1978 observed, "Throughout years of study one thing has been brought into focus repeatedly: the desirability and even necessity of giving authority to the one who is doing the work of evangelism not only to be able to bring the Word, but also to administer the sacraments" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 74). Two important recommendations of the 1973 report on office and ordination, recommendations that were adopted by Synod 1973, finally forced the church's hand on this issue:

7. The tasks of the preaching of the Word and of the administration of the sacraments have been given by Christ to the church. Although in the Scriptures these tasks are not explicitly limited to special office-holders, historically they have been assigned to and carried out by those whom the church has appointed on Christ's authority.
8. There is no valid biblical or doctrinal reason why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also be appointed to administer the sacraments.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 539)

The issue was now clear before the church: evangelists had always been appointed to bring the Word; if there was "no valid biblical or doctrinal reason" not to, they should now also administer the sacraments. The only matter to be decided was how their function was to be defined and regulated within the bounds of CRC polity, that is "determining the best way in which the evangelist shall be ordained in order to administer the sacraments" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 75).

The study committee that reported to Synod 1978 complicated matters by coming with a majority and a minority report, a problem deftly solved by synod's advisory committee, which rejected both as complete packages and instead presented to synod "a series of recommendations which are neither wholly those of the majority nor those of the minority but a blending of the two." The advisory committee continued, "... we offer nothing essentially new in our recommendations. Rather we combine the strengths of both positions into a series of recommendations which will answer the need the church has sought to meet for so many years" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 75). Synod 1978 adopted four recommendations of its advisory committee (given below), the primary effect of which was to establish the new and distinct office of evangelist (see especially 4 below). To understand the language of these four recommendations, it needs to be noted that a primary concern of these recommendations was to bring the CRC's polity in line with Guideline 8 and Guideline 12 for understanding office and ordination as these were adopted by Synod 1973. Guideline 12 reads as follows:

12. Because the Scriptures do not present a definitive, exhaustive description of the particular ministries of the church, and because these particular ministries as described in Scripture are functional in character, the Bible leaves room for the church to adapt or modify its particular ministries in order to carry out effectively its service to Christ and for Christ in all circumstances.

Below are the four recommendations adopted by Synod 1978 with respect to the office of evangelist:

2. That synod declare that the office of minister of the Word with the prescribed requirements for admission to that office is the ordinary and usual way in which the church fulfills Guideline 8 of the synodical Guidelines for Understanding the Nature of Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination (see *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).

Grounds:

- a. The ministry of the Word and sacraments has been reserved for the office of the minister of the Word in universal Christian practice.
 - b. The theology of Guideline 8 is such as to require a complete ministry of Word and sacraments for those who are admitted to the office of minister of the Word, but does not compel the church to grant the same privilege to those who may be permitted to exhort.
3. That synod declare that while evangelism is mandated to the church and is, therefore, an essential aspect of the task committed to her ordained ministers, nevertheless the church may make use of other members who have the necessary gifts for the task.

.....

4. That synod establish the office of evangelist with authority to administer the Word and sacraments in the work of evangelism of his calling church.

.....

5. That synod declare that the evangelist be acknowledged as an elder of his calling church with corresponding privileges and responsibilities.

Ground: This acknowledgement is also accorded the minister of the Word in his relationship to the consistory with whom he labors.

(*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 76-77)

Synod 1978 also established specific regulations for the work of an evangelist:

6. That synod declare that the evangelist shall function under the following regulations:
 - a. His ordination to the office of evangelist shall not take place until he has proven his ability to function adequately in the work of evangelism, and he has sustained the classical examination for evangelists.
 - b. His term of ordination shall correspond to his term of appointment by the local church.
 - c. His work as elder shall normally be limited to that which pertains to his function as evangelist.
 - d. He shall function under the direct supervision of the consistory. . . .
 - e. His work as evangelist shall be limited to that emerging congregation in which he is appointed to labor only until the congregation is organized.

.....

- g. When he accepts an appointment to another field, he shall submit to such examination as is considered appropriate by the classis to which his calling church belongs, and he shall be ordained in his new field of labor.
(*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 77-78)

Thus, the key difference between two offices otherwise *functionally equivalent* is that credentialing for fully ordained ministers of the Word and sacraments is a denominational matter and is for life, whereas evangelists are called only to specific fields of labor by local congregations (with classical approval) and for a specific period.

The CRC has much for which to be thankful in the fact that there has been a significant rise in the number of “officially called” evangelists, particularly among the Hispanic CRC communities. In response to this need, CR Home Missions, along with certain classes, has initiated a number of training programs for evangelists. All this is cause for rejoicing. Yet, even though the decision to establish a new office of evangelist in the CRC was a solution to the long-standing question of placing evangelists within the structure of traditional Reformed polity, the church’s experience in the past twenty years suggests that there are still two significant, unresolved issues with respect to the office of evangelist. Because the training, calling, examination, and supervision of evangelists is a local and classical rather than a denominational (synodical) matter, legitimate concerns about the consistency of expectations and standards for evangelist training have arisen. At issue is consistency in the *quality* of the training as well as *justice* for people in training. It is only fair to require of one that which is asked of another. Related to the absence of a denominational standard is the potential practice of using the office of evangelist as a stepping stone (via Art. 7 of the Church Order) to regular, denominationally credentialed ordination as a minister of the Word and sacraments in the CRC. This is not an unreasonable move on the basis of an increasingly *functional* understanding of ministry. Since evangelists and ordained ministers both preach the Word and administer the sacraments, there is little that *functionally* distinguishes the evangelist credentialed by a classis to a specific task, place, and time from the denominationally credentialed, ordained-for-life, eligible-for-call-anywhere-in-the-denomination minister of the Word and sacraments. The only difference between the two, then, is the fact that a theological/seminary education is required of one but not the other. The question of justice was expressed to our committee especially by second-career students at Calvin Seminary. It seems unfair to them that the many sacrifices they made (willingly!) to obtain a seminary education in preparation for ordination to CRC ministry are cavalierly bypassed when evangelists move toward full ordination without further theological education.

It is thus apparent that an increasingly functional and democratic understanding of ordination has had an important impact on the CRC. On the one hand, it has produced positive results—a rise in the number of evangelists in training and in ministry and greater lay participation in outreach. But the perception of ordination as primarily functional also has the unintended consequence of creating a significant challenge to the church’s traditional requirement of an educated clergy, a theologically trained clergy. If evangelists who have received alternative training (i.e., alternative to seminary training) can nevertheless *function* effectively in certain ministry settings, is

this not a good development? The question is a reasonable one, can be asked in good faith, and deserves an honest, good-faith answer. Such questions should not be regarded as founded in ill will toward the church and its schools, nor should they be automatically regarded with suspicion by CRC denominational leadership. Why should someone who is gifted for and feels called to CRC ministry be required to attend seminary? Is the expectation that such a person attend Calvin Seminary, the denominational school of the CRC, still compelling? These are fair and honest questions that arise naturally from key ecclesiastical developments since the 1973 ordination report, even though the synodically approved guidelines of 1973 themselves warned against such developments.

3. The 1996 report on development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 215-38)

Among the deliberate ecclesiastical changes made by the Christian Reformed Church in the last three decades is the self-conscious effort to increase the church's racial and ethnic diversity, to become an all-nations church. During most of its history—with the exception of the few German-American congregations—the CRC was almost exclusively an ethnically Dutch church. This is not to say that the CRC was completely indifferent to its mission obligations beyond the confines of the Dutch communities. The CRC did send “its sons and daughters as missionaries to people of other races and cultures,” but they went to “other lands.” By contrast, “for the most part, the task of its ‘home missionaries’ was to gather the sheep of Dutch descent who had scattered beyond the reach of already-established congregations in Canada and the United States” (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 215-16). The one notable exception was “the denomination’s mission efforts to Native Americans, especially to the Navajo and Zuni nations in Arizona and New Mexico . . . which began in 1896” (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 216).

More systemic and sustained efforts were initiated in 1971, when synod established the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR) to mobilize the CRC toward improved efforts in racial reconciliation, to promote diversity, and to develop ethnic-minority leadership in the CRC. Here we link up with our preceding overview of ecclesiastical developments in the CRC, particularly the growth of alternative training for ministry. In the words of the 1996 report,

Much of this growing diversity has been facilitated by Christian Reformed Home Missions—in partnership with growth-oriented churches, classes, and other agencies. By means of locally based *leadership training programs* and *apprenticeship positions* (formerly called Multiethnic Recruitment), scores of ethnic-minority persons are being further trained for ministry leadership in the CRC. Of all the 150 new and emerging churches receiving CRHM funding annually, more than half are predominantly ethnic-minority or multiethnic, most of which are also led by ethnic-minority pastors.

(*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 217)

The 1996 report on developing a racially and ethnically diverse family of God also called attention to potential areas of tension between certain ethnic-minority patterns of leadership and the traditional CRC requirement of an educated clergy. In some communities the requisite broad-based liberal arts baccalaureate undergraduate training is inadequate and needs either to be supplemented or in some cases to be undertaken full scale. In

many of these communities, patterns of leadership and gift development are in effect which are different from those in the traditional CRC communities. The report also takes note of a pattern of alternative routes to ministerial leadership in some communities:

A disproportionate number of the ethnic-minority pastors receive their training in nontraditional ways such as through Bible colleges, local training programs, and other seminaries. Credentialing also tends to follow nontraditional paths—admission to ministry on the basis of special needs and gifts, or by way of doctrinal conversations, or by ordination as evangelists. (The point is not that nontraditional roots should be discouraged but rather that traditional routes should be reexamined in light of the changing needs of a changing church.)

(*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 218)

The phenomenon referred to in the preceding quotation has the potential for exacerbating a significant problem that ethnic minorities experience in majority cultures: a sense of not belonging.

At all levels of denominational life persons of color struggle with a sense of *belonging*. Ethnic-minority members from multiethnic or predominantly Anglo congregations often are expected to stretch their comfort zones far more than their ethnic-majority brothers and sisters are expected to do so. Leaders of ethnic-minority congregations wonder who made the rules, and they tend to occupy the back seats in many denominational settings. Too many persons from ethnic-minority groups have left the CRC—not because of its Reformed world and life view but because of the lack of full acceptance at the family table.

(*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 218)

An increasingly ethnically diverse CRC is something for which we give thanks. Serious effort is required to develop strategies that will incorporate ethnic-minority ministry leadership into full, first-class citizenship within the CRC. Openness to alternative patterns of recognizing and nurturing ethnic-minority leadership must never be susceptible to the perception (on any side) that they are second-rate tracks leading to second-rate credentialing and thus to permanent second-class status.

A number of important and sensitive issues arise here. The committee received significant communication from leaders in our ethnic-minority communities insisting that the CRC not create a second-class track for ethnic-minority pastors by “dumbing down” educational and confessional expectations. At the same time, we were urged to be imaginative in creating flexible alternatives that honor high expectations but deliver education in new and diverse ways and, very importantly, open opportunities for ethnic-minority pastors to *progress* toward the ideal. Since moving to Grand Rapids to attend Calvin Seminary creates an acute problem of dislocation for many in our ethnic-minority communities because of distance and removal from root communities, where ministry is being done, the committee was encouraged to consider creative ways in which Calvin Seminary faculty could be involved in supervising local theological education. As an example, for our Hispanic community, it was suggested that training centers could be established in places such as California, Florida, and Northern New Jersey, with instruction conducted primarily in Spanish by Hispanic pastor-theologian teachers. The goal is to retain the quality of excellence and confessional integrity that is expected of all candidates for

CRC ministry but also to be willing as a denomination to be stretched in new ways to provide such training.

4. The 1999 report on ordination and “official acts of ministry” (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 281-303)

In keeping with our concern in this section of our report to take note of significant developments in CRC understanding and practice of ordination, we shall only highlight the mandate of the Committee to Study Ordination and “Official Acts of Ministry,” given to it by Synod 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 744). This study committee was appointed to study “matters of ordination and ‘official acts of ministry’ . . . as these apply to youth pastors and to persons in other specialized ministries who attain their positions by pathways other than the M.Div. degree. . . .” In its grounds, synod referred to the 1973 report on office and ordination and to the increasing practice of calling gifted persons for specialized ministries. Synod also observed that, should such calls lead to ordination, it would be important for the denomination to develop a set of “appropriate guidelines . . . to increase the effectiveness of those whose career is to serve the churches in that capacity.” We observe that the concern reflected here about alternative routes, the meaning of ordination, and denominational regard for appropriate training is not restricted to Calvin Seminary and its board of trustees but in this case arose from congregations and classes themselves (Classis Alberta North, Overture 3, in *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 324; Overture 7 from Classis Red Mesa, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 330). The concern expressed in overtures and in one communication (from the Youth-Ministry Committee, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 209) that gave rise to that study committee thus came from the church itself and significantly overlaps with the issues that gave rise to the mandate of our own committee.

In conclusion, the material in this section points to shifts in understanding and in the practices of employment and ordination in the CRC since the hallmark report “Office and Ordination,” accepted by Synod 1973. This shift is characterized by an increase in specialization of ministry tasks and by a democratized and more functional understanding of ordination.

Supplement D: Data re Alternative Routes to Ordained CRC Ministry

The question of alternative routes into CRC ministry is not a brand-new issue in the 1990s. In this section we shall consider the actual numbers of people who have entered CRC ministry via these alternative routes in the last three decades. It is clear from this data that the available alternatives to ordination are being used in the CRC—in increasing number. Our first chart (Table 1) provides a general overview of entrants into CRC ministry and permits us to compare the numbers who entered via alternative routes with the numbers of those who entered as traditional candidates. This chart also tracks a trend. It demonstrates that the percentage has increased markedly of entrants into Christian Reformed ministry who have *not* followed the traditional or ordinary route (regular admission to and full-time residency at Calvin Seminary, graduating with a CTS M.Div. degree).

1. General overview of CRC ministry entrants, 1970-1998: candidacy and other admissions

Key: Column A—Candidates for ordained ministry

Column B—Candidates who are graduates of Calvin Seminary

Column C—Candidates who are graduates of other seminaries (SPMC)

Column D—Candidates who are graduates of other seminaries (EMPMC)

Column E—Admissions according to Article 7 of the Church Order

Column F—Admissions according to Article 8 of the Church Order

Column G—Total eligible for entering ministry of the Word

Column H—Percentage eligible for ministry who are Calvin Seminary graduates

Table 1
Overview of CRC Ministry Entrants: 1970-1998

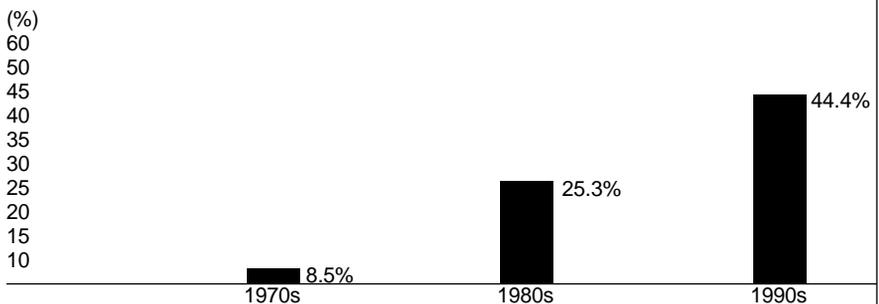
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1970	43	43	0		0	1	44	97.7
1971	45	45	0		0	2	47	95.7
1972	40	39	1		1	1	42	92.9
1973	44	44	0		0	0	44	100
1974	22	22	0		0	1	23	95.7
1975	33	33	0		0	1	34	97.1
1976	29	29	0		0	3	32	90.6
1977	37	35	2		0	4	41	85.4
1978	37	31	6		0	3	40	77.5
1979	36	33	3		0	4	40	82.5
1980	35	29	6		1	0	36	80.6
1981	38	34	4		0	0	38	89.5
1982	25	24	1		1	8	34	70.6
1983	23	21	2		4	8	35	60
1984	34	30	4		3	9	46	65.2
1985	40	36	4		3	4	47	76.6
1986	36	33	3		1	8	45	73.3
1987	48	46	2		2	10	60	76.7
1988	37	36	1		3	6	46	78.3
1989	46	41	5		1	8	55	74.5
1990	40	30	8	2	1	10	51	58.8
1991	36	30	4	2	2	12	50	60
1992	37	29	6	2	2	7	46	63
1993	29	23	5	1	1	12	42	54.8
1994	25	21	4	0	3	21	49	42.9
1995	23	21	1	1	5	20	48	43.8
1996	29	25	4	0	2	4	35	71.4
1997	24	21	2	1	4	14	42	50
1998	29	27	2	0	3	16	48	56.2
1999	32	26	3	3	3*		44	59.1
<i>Totals</i>	1032	937	83	12	46	206	1284	73

- Notes:*
1. Not all candidates receive/accept calls and are ordained.
 2. Occasionally a candidate's name appears in more than one year; in such cases the person has been counted only in the first year the name appears.
 3. Prior to 1989-1990 EMPMC did not exist; hence no numbers are entered in Column D prior to that date.
 4. Some Article 7 people have had some seminary training, at either Calvin Seminary or another seminary.
 5. Several Article 8 people have received all or part of their training at Calvin Seminary and then have served in another denomination as ordained pastors before being examined and approved for call via a colloquium doctum.
 6. In 1998-1999, for the first time, classes, with approval of synodical deputies, declared people "candidates for ministry" under Article 7 rather than designating them for a specific congregation. Two such cases occurred, which earned the asterisk in 1999, Column E.

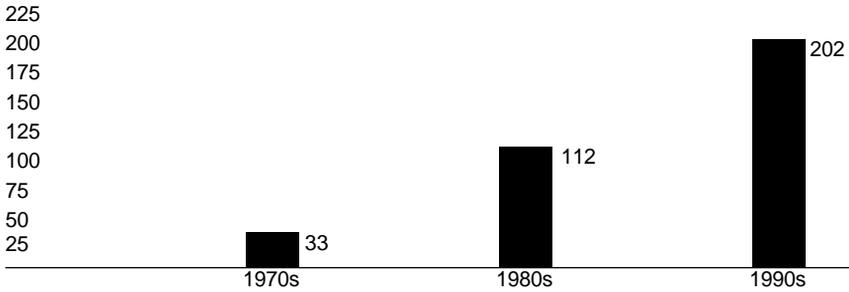
This chart clearly shows the pattern of growth in alternate routes to CRC ministry in recent years. During the decade of the 1970s, the average percentage of entrants into CRC ministry who were trained in the normal route at CTS stood at 91.5 percent (354 out of 387), with a high of 100 percent (1973) and a low of 77.5 percent (1978); during the 1980s the figure is 74.7 percent (330/442), with a high of 89.5 percent (1981) and a low of 60 percent (1983); for the decade of the 1990s the figure stands at 55.6 percent (253/455), with a high of 71.4 percent (1996) and a low of 42.9 percent (1994). In terms of raw numbers of candidates/entrants into CRC ministry who were other than ordinary CTS graduates, there were 33 in the 1970s, 112 in the 1980s, and 202 in the 1990s.

This data can be shown in graph form as follows:

Graph 1
Percentage of Entrants into CRC Ministry
Who Are Not CTS Graduates (by Decade)



Graph 2
Numbers of Entrants into CRC Ministry
Who Are Not CTS Graduates (by Decade)



These figures underscore the reality of alternative routes into CRC ministry. The pattern of increase is also clear on a decade-by-decade overview, though it is not a straightforward *yearly* increase (there are significant annual anomalies) that can be projected into the future with any degree of certainty. Nonetheless, the concerns that gave rise to our committee's mandate are demonstrable. We now go on to examine in more detail the data about the Article 7 and Article 8 entrants into CRC ministry.

2. Church Order Article 7 and Article 8 entrants into CRC ministry

The general pattern of increased use of alternative routes is also reflected, though less dramatically, in the data restricted to Article 7 and 8 entrants into CRC ministry. From Table 1 in the preceding section we can summarize the decade-by-decade pattern as follows in Table 2:

- Key: B—Article 7 Entrants
 C—Article 8 Entrants
 D—Total of Article 7 and Article 8 Entrants

Table 2
Article 7 and Article 8 Entrants into CRC Ministry, 1970-1998

A	B	C	D
1970s	1	20	21
1980s	20	62	82
1990s	33	135	168

Once again the numbers here are significant in showing a marked decade-by-decade increase in entrants to CRC ministry by means of Church Order Articles 7 and 8. The committee was also able to consider the data in terms of ethnic composition. These results can be found in Table 3.

Table 3
Ethnic Background of Ministers of the Word
Admitted via Article 7 and Article 8, 1970-1998

	1970s	1980s	1990s	Totals
Caucasian	11	26	63	100
Korean	5	36	63	104
Hispanic	4	7	20	31
African				
American	1	5	10	16
S.E. Asian	0	4	6	10
Chinese	1	4	2	6
Native American	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	4	5
Totals	23	82	168	272

It is worth noting here that the increasing use of Articles 7 and 8 as alternate routes to ordained ministry in the CRC is not strictly an ethnic-minority issue. The general pattern essentially holds across the board for all groups in the CRC, including Caucasians. We do, however, at this point refer back to our earlier citation of the 1996 study-committee report on ethnic diversity, which pointed out that there are a disproportionate number of ethnic-minority persons who enter CRC ministry via alternate routes. Like that committee, we do not wish to single out this fact as a problem unique to ethnic CRC members. To the degree that alternate routes is a problem in the CRC, it must be perceived as a problem of the whole denomination and of all groups within it, not simply as an ethnic-minority problem.

Supplement E: Previous and Existing Alternatives to CRC ministry

The issue of alternative routes into CRC ministry is not new. Not only does the CRC Church Order provide such alternatives; the denomination, through synod, CTS, and the agencies (CRCHM), has historically provided significant structured alternatives. In this section of our report we provide detailed description of the requirements and procedures that need to be followed in the various alternative routes that have been and still are available in the CRC. We shall first examine those provided through Calvin Seminary and second those provided through CR Home Missions.

1. Calvin Theological Seminary alternative programs

- a. Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC) and Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (Adjusted)

Calvin Theological Seminary presently conducts the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC) as mandated by Article 6-c of the Church Order and the decision of Synod 1924, noted above in this report. This program requires a year (three academic quarters, with a minimum of thirty-six credit hours) of residency at Calvin Seminary for students who have earned M.Div. degrees from other theological seminaries. SPMC students are required to have a complete educational package that constitutes “an acceptable equivalent to the entire preseminary and seminary program required of Calvin Seminary graduates as prepara-

tion for Christian Reformed ministry” (1996-1998 *Calvin Theological Seminary Catalog*, p. 84). As described in the seminary catalog, the SPMC program usually involves at least the following:

A. . . . courses in a suitable range of departments, those core courses which are unavailable at other seminaries, the completion of certain field-education requirements, the sustaining of the standard comprehensive examinations in Bible knowledge and in biblical Hebrew and Greek, and a successful interview by the entire faculty leading to its recommendation for candidacy.

Furthermore, SPMC students are required to *pre-enroll* in the program if they wish to exhort in CRC churches:

B. All students enrolled at seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary who desire licensure to exhort in Christian Reformed congregations and who intend to seek candidacy in the Christian Reformed Church must be pre-enrolled in the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy. Pre-enrollment is contingent on fulfillment of all admission requirements and satisfactory interviews. A continuing relationship to Calvin Seminary must be maintained through annual submission of transcripts, continuing status as a theological student with proper academic standing, satisfactory evaluations, and annual licensure renewals.

(*Calvin Theological Seminary Catalog*, p. 85)

In 1996 the faculty and Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary requested, and synod approved, for a three-year trial period, an adjusted SPMC for students who are at least 40 years of age at the time of residency at the seminary (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 469-70). The following are the criteria for eligibility to enter this program, along with its course-work requirements:

a) Eligibility

- 1) Students who are able to demonstrate considerable knowledge of and varied experience in the CRC and ordinarily have been members of the CRC for at least five years at the time of residency at the seminary;
- 2) And who have demonstrated their gifts for ministry in effective service in the church and kingdom, including significant Christian Reformed ministry experience;
- 3) And whose family, geographical, and/or ministry circumstances are such that a year at Calvin Theological Seminary poses an unreasonable hardship for the students’ families and/or their local congregation.

b) Course work

The adjusted program maintains the requirement of residency at CTS but reduces it to one quarter. The following course work, most of which can be completed in a fall quarter and in which students must ordinarily have a cumulative GPA of 2.85, must be completed:

Christian Reformed Church History (332)	3 hours
Church Polity (603)	4 hours
Confessional Preaching (653)	1 hour
Senior Preaching (655)	1 hour
Old Testament exegetical elective	3 hours
New Testament exegetical elective	3 hours
Theological Division elective or core course	3 hours
Church and Ministry Division elective or core course	3 hours
	Total 21 hours

c) Other requirements or adjustments

- 1) One fall quarter in residence at Calvin Theological Seminary is required for all students.
- 2) Matters concerning admission requirements, psychological evaluations, licensure procedures, field education, and comprehensive examinations are not adjusted, but since the course work is less specified and significantly reduced, the interview with the faculty will be more comprehensive.
- 3) Students who are at least 50 years of age at the time of residency at the seminary may apply for a waiver of the language comprehensive examinations (competence in Hebrew and Greek must be demonstrated by successful completion of the Old Testament and New Testament exegetical electives). They will also usually not be required to do additional college work to meet admission requirements if they have an acceptable B.A. degree or its equivalent.
- 4) During their programs, students will be mentored and evaluated by a three-person classical committee appointed by the seminary.

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 770)

(*Note:* For some students the faculty may specify certain courses in the elective or core category; the student may take two of these courses in a nontraditional way [e.g., by correspondence].)

Comment: The SPMC requirement generates both resentment and appreciation in students. Students may feel that the required extra year devalues the education they have received elsewhere. Some students come to CTS from other seminaries bringing with them different levels of concern about the CRC and its school. Others come with few preconceptions but some resentment about the process itself. SPMC students sometimes feel like second-class citizens at CTS during their one year of residency. This is true for various reasons, one of which is that they have not developed bonds with classmates who have been at CTS for the full three years. According to the survey our committee took of SPMC students, most of those who do enter CRC ministry, their initial suspicions and resentments notwithstanding, do find the year at CTS helpful because it provides time for additional study and orientation to the CRC. For these students the SPMC remains an important part of their training for ordained ministry in the CRC. Many students, however, do feel that the cost and time are an extra burden that could be avoided.

At this point it is worth taking stock of the data concerning the program's success in placing effective and loyal ministers in CRC congregations. Out of the 105 students who were to some degree or other involved in the SPMC program since 1982, 43 are now in CRC ministry; 28 are not in CRC ministry but serving other denominations. In addition, 26 of the 105 did not complete the program, and another 3 did complete the program but were not recommended for candidacy in the CRC. At this time 13 students remain in process at various stages of the program.

b. Ethnic Minority Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EMPMC)

Calvin Seminary also offers an Ethnic Minority Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EMPMC), which is described as follows:

The purpose of this program is to provide orientation to the history, theology, and practice of the Christian Reformed Church for ethnic minority non-ordained

spiritual leaders who have received a theological degree, who have served in a ministry position, and who seek ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

To qualify for admission, applicants must have at least three years of experience in the church group as a recognized spiritual leader, be recommended by the governing body of their congregation, and be endorsed by the Christian Reformed classis in which they are seeking affiliation.

The program consists of participation in the Calvin Seminary summer orientation program, at least ten weeks of residence during the fall quarter, the successful completion of eight courses, the Bible knowledge comprehensive examination, and a satisfactory interview with the faculty. Those who complete the program, have been recommended and approved for candidacy, have sustained their classical examination, and have been ordained shall, within five years after ordination, take three additional courses on campus at Calvin Seminary.

(*Calvin Theological Seminary Catalog*, pp. 86-87)

Note 1: Prior to the EMPMC, Calvin Seminary offered an M.Min. certificate, which did not meet with the full approval of the national accrediting agency, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). For the ten-year period from 1987 to 1996, seven (7) minority students completed the EMPMC program, eleven (11) minority students the M.Min. program, and twenty-eight (28) minority students completed the regular M.Div. degree program.

Note 2: The committee calls the church's and synod's attention to a statement of Synod 1985 concerning the use of Article 7 of the Church Order as an alternative route to ministry: "By declaring the M.Min. Program acceptable under Article 6, synod will supervise the requirements of this program, the length, time, and conditions under which it shall be acceptable, and will not establish Article 7 as another standard way to ordination" (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 456).

c. Korean Th.M program

In 1996 Calvin Theological Seminary inaugurated a degree program to provide master-of-theology-level education for Korean pastors ministering in North America. When the limit of thirty-five students was reached, the program was closed. Those who successfully completed the program graduated in May 1998. The program was directed by Dr. John Taek Kim, former adjunct professor of missiology at Calvin Seminary. Students came from churches throughout North America and from several denominational backgrounds.

d. Classis Red Mesa program

For many years Calvin Seminary faculty members have taught courses in New Mexico targeted especially for Native Americans in Classis Red Mesa. These courses can be taken for seminary credit. The initiative for offering the courses is left with Classis Red Mesa. At the present time the program is somewhat dormant.

e. Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (S.C.U.P.E.)

For many years Calvin Seminary was a member of the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (S.C.U.P.E), which provided opportunities for inner-city ministry internships in Chicago, Illinois.

Though CTS is no longer a member of S.C.U.P.E., it should be noted that this program was really a part of the CTS M.Div. degree program and therefore not an alternative route to ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. At the same time, it should not be overlooked as a serious effort to provide enriched cross-cultural educational opportunities for CTS students.

f. The Apprenticeship School for Urban Ministry (TASUM)

The TASUM program was a special arrangement between CTS and Spirit and Truth Fellowship of Chicago. CTS faculty traveled to Chicago to teach classes. The program ceased when Rev. Manuel Ortiz left for Philadelphia.

g. International Theological Seminary (ITS) program

Thanks to the pioneering leadership of former CTS president Dr. John Kromminga, for ten years Calvin Seminary had a special relationship with the International Theological Seminary of Pasadena, California, that enabled Korean students on the West Coast to attend ITS for two years before coming to CTS for another two years of study. Calvin Seminary faculty regularly taught courses at ITS. This program is no longer officially in place; today Korean students prefer to come directly to Calvin Seminary.

h. CTS-Redeemer College cooperative program

Canadian students at CTS have always faced the additional financial difficulty of immigration laws that make it virtually impossible for them or their spouses to work in the U.S. To help address that problem, for two years (1988-1989, 1989-1990) Calvin Seminary and Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario, engaged in a cooperative first-year seminary program for students who qualified for admission to the M.Div. degree program. The program included the range of biblical-language courses and was taught by Redeemer College faculty (including present CTS professor John Bolt, who was under appointment to Calvin Seminary during his last year of teaching at Redeemer) and several CTS faculty, who commuted to Ancaster. Some twenty students participated in this venture, and at least twelve entered and remain in CRC ministry today. The program died after two years because of lack of students.

2. CR Home Missions' initiatives: evangelist-training programs

There are a number of ministry-training initiatives under the direction of a classis or a CRC agency such as Home Missions that are conducted apart from CTS. Christian Reformed Home Missions conducts its own training program for church planters and evangelists. In addition, under the direction of Rev. Alan Breems, Classis California South is conducting its own three-year training program for evangelists. Finally, there is a training program for Spanish-speaking evangelists and lay leaders called *iAdelante!* This program has three centers (New Jersey, California, and Florida), does not have ordained ministry as its goal, and does not seek to replace the formal theological education that is required for ordained ministry. At the same time that the need for ministers is great in the Hispanic community of the CRC, Calvin Seminary is not producing enough Hispanic leaders, and Article 7 entry into ministry appears to many in the Hispanic community to

be the only way into CRC ministry, primarily because of inadequate educational preparation for CTS. Distance from Grand Rapids is an additional problem, especially for those who are married and have children. As many Hispanic CRC churches move into their second generation, a seminary-trained ordained ministry is going to become even more important. The present period is a time of transition that requires creative flexibility on the part of the CRC and CTS to encourage the kind of theologically trained leadership that the Hispanic churches will need.

The committee took note of these alternative training programs and judged that they reflect real needs of a variety of communities and churches within the CRC. The risk facing the CRC seems to us to be found less in the *fact* that there are several alternative routes, as briefly summarized here, than it is in the *lack* of coordination and denominational supervision of them. It is to provide this denominational standard, reflecting the principles for theological education that have been and remain important to the CRC, that we drafted the statement found earlier in Part I, Section VI, of this report. We set forth there a broad outline of core expectations for evangelist training to guide agencies and classes. Since we recognize that some of the persons who demonstrate ministry gifts in the role of evangelist may be encouraged by the church to enter a broader arena of ministry service to the CRC, we also set forth standards for a process that should be followed for an evangelist to move to full ordination as minister of the Word and sacraments. Evangelists are locally called to specific ministries, whereas ordained ministers are denominationally credentialed. The step into that broader arena entails additional responsibility (and giftedness) and requires additional theological training.

Supplement F: Review of the SPMC and Related Programs, 1970-1999

In Supplement D we provided a description of the synodically required standards and curricula offered at CTS in the SPMC and EMPMC programs. In this section we provide a summary description of the programs, followed by data on their success rates. Our concern in this section is to consider whether or not the denomination is well served by its most important alternatives to full residency at CTS.

The SPMC (Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy) describes the final year of academic work at Calvin Seminary required by the Church Order for students who have studied at other seminaries but wish to become ordained in the Christian Reformed Church. Since field education, including preaching (or exhorting), is required for the M.Div. degree at any seminary, students at other seminaries need to be licensed to preach. The Calvin Seminary Board of Trustees is the agent designated by synod to license theological students. In order to be licensed to exhort, students at other seminaries are interviewed by the board and administration, and they are assigned and monitored in their field work by the Calvin Seminary field-education office. The licensure and field-education phase of their training that happens while they are still at another seminary is known as the “pre-enrollment” phase of the SPMC. After graduation from another seminary, students transfer to Calvin Seminary for a year of course work before candidacy. This year is important for two reasons. It orients them to the Christian Reformed Church through course work and other experiences. Equally important, and possibly more important, it pro-

vides the Calvin Seminary faculty and board the necessary exposure to these students in order to make an informed and reliable candidacy recommendation to synod.

In assessing the SPMC as an alternative route to ordained ministry of the Word, the committee compiled and assessed the data contained in the following table. Some noteworthy conclusions were reached. Most important is that this program, in light of the time and expense entailed for both students and for the Calvin Seminary faculty and board, is less than a rousing success if success is defined in terms of the number of people who come from another seminary, spend a final year at Calvin Seminary, are ordained in CRC ministry, and continue as CRC pastors today. The success of the program is far higher in the case of students from some seminaries than it is in the case of students from other seminaries. This is no doubt related to motives students have in attending seminaries other than Calvin Seminary. CRC students who opt for other seminaries because of their mistrust of or disaffection from the denomination because of changes in the CRC are less likely to complete the SPMC or, if they do, are less likely to remain in CRC ministry. It should be noted that some who have begun the program have gone to other denominations because completing the program and thereby becoming eligible for CRC ministry would require two additional years beyond their seminary years. For financial and family reasons they were not able to do that.

Students at other seminaries who have not been members of the CRC and who become so appreciative of the Reformed faith that they desire to serve in CRC ministry have a much higher success rate in the SPMC program. In cases where Christian Reformed students choose an alternative seminary for reasons other than a high degree of mistrust or disaffection with respect to the CRC and Calvin Seminary, the success rate of the program is also higher. This analysis is not intended to suggest that no Calvin Seminary students or graduates have not also exhibited disappointment and mistrust with the denomination and Calvin Seminary over recent issues in the church. As can be seen from the demission chart (see Supplement H below), of the total demissions from CRC ministry in the decade from 1990 to 1999 (total 201), 138 (68.6%) have been CTS graduates, 26 (12.9%) have been SPMC or EMPMC candidates, and 37 (18.4%) have been Article 7 or Article 8 entrants into CRC ministry. An important statistic to take into consideration here (and not gathered by our committee) would be the relative length of service of ministers in each of these categories.

What is suggested by the data below is that the CRC as a whole has a vital stake in where a student receives the theological education required for ministry and what the reasons are for a student's choice. One of the significant indicators of suitedness for ministry is a willingness to submit to the discipline of the church's requirements. For that reason we will be suggesting an earlier and more significant role for the local church and classis in assessing and guiding prospective seminarians. This includes assessing the character and attitude of potential candidates on their understanding of ministry, motivations for entering ministry, attitude toward the Reformed faith and the CRC, and, finally, in relation to all these, the choice of a seminary. The following table charts the number of SPMC students from pre-enrollment through retention in ministry on a seminary-by-seminary basis.

**Success of the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC)
1970-1999**

Key: Column A—seminary
 Column B—pre-enrolled in the program
 Column C—engaged in field education
 Column D—did residency year at Calvin Seminary
 Column E—approved for CRC candidacy
 Column F—ordained to CRC ministry
 Column G—demitted from CRC ministry
 Column H—net remaining in CRC ministry, August 1999
 Column I—percent of those pre-enrolled remaining in CRC ministry, August 1999
 Column J—percent of those ordained remaining in CRC ministry, August 1999

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
French Ref. Sem., Aix-en-Provence, France	1	1	1	1	1		1	100%	100%
Bethel Theol. Sem., St. Paul, MN	2 (1)	3	3	2	2		2	100%	100%
Theol. College of Canadian Ref. Churches, Hamilton, ON	1	1	1	1	1	1		0%	0%
Chicago Theol. Sem., Chicago, IL	(1)	1	1					—	—
Chinese Univ., Hong Kong	1	1						0%	0%
Christian Witness Theol. Sem., CA	1							0%	0%
Dallas Theol. Sem., Dallas, TX	(1)	1	1					—	—
Fuller Theol. Sem. Pasadena, CA	13 (2)	13	12	10	10	1	9	69.2	90%
Golden Gate Bapt. Theol. Sem., Mill Valley, CA	1	1	1	1	1		1	100%	100%
Gordon-Conwell Theol. Sem., South Hamilton, MA	5 (1)	4	5	4	4	1	3	60%	75%
International Theol. Sem., Los Angeles, CA.	1 (1)	2	2					0%	0%
Johnson Smith Theol. Sem., TN	1	1	1	1	1		1	100%	100%
Theologische Universiteit, Kampen (GKN), The Netherlands	2	2	2	2	2		2	100%	100%
Knox College, Toronto, ON	1	1	1	1	1		1	100%	100%
McMaster Div. Coll., Hamilton, ON	(1)							—	—
McCormick Theol. Sem., Chicago, IL	2	2	2	1	1		1	50%	50%
Mid-America Ref. Sem., Dyer, IN	20	19	10	5	5	2	3	15%	60%

Northern Baptist Theol. Sem., Lombard, IL	1	1	1					0%	0%
Presby. Theol. Sem. (Korean), U.S.A. Synod, CA	1	1	1					0%	0%
Princeton Theol. Sem., Princeton, NJ	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	50%	50%
Ref. Episcopal Sem., Pittsburgh, PA	1	1	1					0%	0%
Ref. Theol. Sem., Jackson, MS	18 (2)	20	19	15	15	2	13	72.2	86.7
Ref. Presby. Theol. Sem., Pittsburgh, PA	1	1	1					0%	0%
Regent College, Vancouver, BC	2 (2)	4	4	2	2		2	100%	100%
Talbot School of Theol. of Biola Univ., La Mirada, CA	1	1	1	1	1	1		0%	0%
Trinity Evang. Div. School, Deerfield, IL	1 (1)	1	1	1				0%	0%
Trinity Western Univ., Langley, BC	1	1						0%	0%
Tyndale Sem., Toronto, ON	1	1	1	1	1		1	100%	100%
Western Theol. Sem., Holland, MI	3	1	1	1	1		1	33.3	33.3
Westminster Theol. Sem., Escondido, CA	23 (3)	26	17	14	14	4	10	43.5	71.4
Westminster Theol. Sem., Philadelphia, PA	26	25	25	25	24	11	13	50%	54.2
TOTALS	135 (16)	140	119	91	88	24	65	48.1	73.9

- Notes:*
1. A number of people in the SPMC program attended more than one other seminary. In such cases only the school from which they received a degree is counted.
 2. In Column B the numbers in parentheses indicate people currently in some stage of the program. They are tabulated in the following columns to the level of their advancement through the program but are not computed in the percentages shown in the last column.
 3. Because so many students from several seminaries were pre-enrolling and being licensed without taking up residency in the mid-1990s, the seminary board required students to do their year of residency before completing their internship year. This adjustment has curtailed the disruptive influence some of the SPMC students had in CRC congregations during their field work in the 1980s and early 1990s.

A Review of the Adjusted SPMC Program—1996-1999

In 1996 the seminary board proposed and synod approved an adjusted SPMC program for persons 40 years of age or older who met a number of requirements. Essentially the program reduces the required year of work at Calvin Seminary to one quarter and offers the possibility of waiving certain language requirements for those who are 50 or older. This program was

approved on a three-year trial basis, and it was extended for one year by Synod 1999 so that a review of its success would coincide with the presentation of this study-committee report to Synod 2000. Delegates are referred to the Calvin Theological Seminary report in the *Agenda for Synod 2000* for a detailed evaluation of the adjusted SPMC program

A Review of the Ethnic Minority Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EMPMC)—1990-1999

Synod 1990 approved the EMPMC, or Ethnic Minority Program for Ministerial Candidacy, as a modification of the SPMC program. It was proposed and implemented because ethnic-minority students who had graduated from other seminaries were being recruited by local churches and Home Missions in the interest of expanding ethnic diversity in the denomination, but for a variety of reasons they found it difficult to spend an entire year at Calvin Seminary. The program called for completing eight courses (including one quarter [ten weeks] of residency at Calvin Seminary), candidacy and ordination, and the completion of three additional courses in residence within five years. A number of eligibility criteria were established for this program.

Sixteen students have enrolled in the program and have completed the residency. Eleven have become candidates. Five have received and accepted calls and have been ordained. Two of these five have since demitted from ministry. Three remain as ordained ministers in the CRC. One of these three has completed the three courses in residence required after ordination. One is in his last year of the five-year period for completing these courses and has completed one course. The last was ordained in 1997 and has four years remaining in which to take the three courses.

The committee notes that this program has not been heavily subscribed and during its eight-year history has yielded only three pastors who remain in ministry.

Supplement G: 1997 CRC Denominational Profile: Calvin Seminary

The following material regarding Calvin Theological Seminary is taken from *Foundations for the Future: The 1997 Survey of the Christian Reformed Church*, pages 69-72. The survey was conducted by the Calvin Social Research Center.

Views about Calvin Seminary. Question 35 listed five statements about Calvin Theological Seminary and asked respondents how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each. Table 52 shows that between 55% and 95% of all respondents strongly agreed or agreed with each of the statements. Rows of the table are ordered by the percent strongly agreeing. Strongest agreement is with the statement that it is important that the Christian Reformed denomination provide training and evaluation of its candidates for ministry (95%). Well over half (57%) strongly agreed with this statement.

Nine of ten respondents agreed that Calvin Seminary provides an essential service to churches of the denomination (91%) and that they would encourage a capable young person to enter the gospel ministry today (92%). And, as Table 52 shows, over three fourths (77%) thought Seminary professors should have two to three years of pastoral experience in a local congregation, although 13% were not sure. Finally, over half (55%) felt they did not receive as much communication about the Seminary as they needed to respond to questions about it reliably.

Table 52
Views about Calvin Seminary and Training for the Ministry (Q35): Percent

Statements about Calvin Seminary	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree ^a	Don't Know	Total
It is important that the Christian Reformed denomination provide training and evaluation of its candidates for ministry.	57	38	3	2	100%
Calvin Seminary provides an essential service to churches of the denomination.	45	46	4	5	100%
I would encourage a capable young person to enter the gospel ministry today.	38	54	2	6	100%
Professors at Calvin Seminary should have pastoral experience of at least two or three years in a local congregation.	34	43	10	13	100%
I do not receive as much communication about the Seminary as I need to respond to questions about it reliably.	8	47	34	11	100%

^a *Strongly Disagree and Disagree are combined.*

Tasks for seminary faculty. How important is it that Calvin Seminary faculty perform each of 14 tasks? Table 53 lists the tasks from the questionnaire, as well as the percentage of respondents saying very, somewhat, not important, or don't know to each statement.

Four of the tasks were seen as very important by a majority of respondents: training ministers for CRC ordination (87%), evaluating candidates for ministry in the CRC (60%), offering continuing education programs for pastors and church staff (53%), and training graduate students for teaching and leadership positions (52%).

Table 53
Importance of Tasks for Calvin Seminary Faculty (Q36a-n): Percent

Tasks for Calvin Seminary faculty	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Don't know	Total
Training ministers for CRC ordination	87	9	2	2	100%
Evaluating candidates for ministry in the CRC	60	32	4	4	100%
Offering continuing education programs for pastors and church staff	53	39	4	4	100%
Training graduate students for teaching and leadership positions	52	41	3	4	100%
Explaining and defending the faith in speeches, articles, and books	49	40	8	3	100%
Training students for ministry in other churches at home and abroad	43	47	5	5	100%
Being available to CRC churches and agencies for advice	42	46	8	4	100%
Training non-ordained staff persons for CRC churches	34	54	7	5	100%
Serving as theological advisers at the synod of the CRC	33	47	13	7	100%

Preaching at CRC churches	30	50	16	4	100%
Teaching at CRC conferences	29	58	8	5	100%
Writing theological works and speaking at academic conferences	29	49	15	7	100%
Serving as theological experts on denominational committees	29	49	14	8	100%
Offering training seminars for elders and deacons	23	57	15	5	100%

From 78% to 96% of respondents felt all 14 tasks were somewhat to very important. However, at least one in eight respondents said five of the tasks were *not* important: preaching at CRC churches (16%), writing theological works and speaking at academic conferences (15%), offering training seminars for elders and deacons (15%), serving as theological experts on denominational committees (14%), and serving as theological advisers at the synod of the CRC (13%).

Characteristics of a successful pastor. Table 54 examines the degree of importance respondents gave each of ten possible characteristics of a successful pastor. The first five in the table were seen as very important by more than half: dynamic preacher who delivers biblical, relevant sermons (87%); caring pastor who responds quickly to needs of members (86%); careful student of Scripture who reads widely and thinks clearly (86%); personable individual who mixes easily with church members (73%); and eager evangelist who regularly presents gospel to non-Christians (52%).

Table 54
Importance of Ten Characteristics of a Successful Pastor (Q37a-j): Percent

Characteristics of a successful pastor	Very important	Some-what important	Not important	Don't know	Total
Dynamic preacher who delivers biblical, relevant sermons	87	13	0	*	100%
Caring pastor who responds quickly to needs of members	86	14	*	0	100%
Careful student of Scripture who reads widely and thinks clearly	86	14	*	0	100%
Personable individual who mixes easily with church members	73	26	1	0	100%
Eager evangelist who regularly presents gospel to non-Christians	52	46	2	*	100%
Leader who opens up opportunities and new options	41	52	5	2	100%
Accepting person who frequently interacts with non-CRC pastors	36	55	7	2	100%
Efficient administrator who keeps the church running smoothly	23	49	28	0	100%
Effective teacher who always leads several church-school classes	18	55	26	1	100%
Denominational leader who serves on boards and committees	11	53	34	2	100%

From 64% to 100% of all respondents rated all 10 characteristics in Table 54 from somewhat to very important. However, in the case of the bottom three characteristics, more than one in four said each was *not* important: denominational leader who serves on boards and committees (34%), efficient administrator who keeps

the church running smoothly (28%), and effective teacher who always leads several church-school classes (26%).

Supplement H: Demissions from CRC ministry

- Key: Column A1—Calvin Seminary graduates - Article 14
- Column A2—Calvin Seminary graduates - Article 16
- Column A3—Calvin Seminary graduates - Article 17
- Column A4—Calvin Seminary graduates - Article 83 (formerly 90)
- Column B1—SPMC and EMPMC graduates - Article 14
- Column B2—SPMC and EMPMC graduates - Article 16
- Column B3—SPMC and EMPMC graduates - Article 17
- Column B4—SPMC and EMPMC graduates - Article 83 (formerly 90)
- Column C1—Articles 7 and 8 admissions - Article 14
- Column C2—Articles 7 and 8 admissions - Article 16
- Column C3—Articles 7 and 8 admissions - Article 17
- Column C4—Articles 7 and 8 admissions - Article 83 (formerly 90)

Year	A1	A2	A3	A4	B1	B2	B3	B4	C1	C2	C3	C4
1970	4	2		1								
1971	3	2		2		1						
1972	7	1	1									
1973	4	2		1								
1974	3		2	3								
1975	3		1	1								
1976	3	1										
1977	1		4	1								
1978				1								
1979	6		2									
1980	7											
1981	2		4	1				1				
1982	3	2	2									
1983	3		3	5				1				
1984	4		4	1			1					
1985	2		2						2			
1986	3			1					1			1
1987	2		2						2	1	1	
1988	1		4									
1989	1		1	3								
1990	5		3									
1991	3		1								1	
1992	11	10		6	3	1		2	1		1	1
1993	3	7	1	6	1			6	2	1		7
1994	12	2		2					7			
1995	10	2	2	5	3				1			
1996	7				2	1			1			
1997	8	4	3	2	2		1				2	
1998	12	3	2	1	3				3		1	
1999	5				1				7		1	
TOTAL	138	38	44	43	15	3	2	10	27	2	7	9

- Notes:*
1. Church Order changes in numbering and content as well as variations in applying demission procedures over three decades affect the distribution of numbers among the four categories identified.
 2. A number of demissions, particularly of Calvin Seminary graduates, have been temporary (for nonministerial vocations, disciplinary reasons, advanced study, etc.), and people have later reentered CRC ministry.
 3. Ministers released from their ministry under Article 17 have not been tabulated as demissions unless and until they have been released from the office of minister of the Word.
 4. As the number of ordained ministers of the Word entering CRC ministry by routes other than graduation from Calvin Seminary and candidacy has increased, so has the number of demissions in Columns B-1 through C-4.

Supplement I: CTS Statement: Personal Qualifications for Ministry

The following set of Personal Qualifications for Ministry was prepared many years ago for use at Calvin Seminary in its task of preparing persons for ministry and in its role of evaluating those who presented themselves for ministry for our churches. They are included here as a helpful guide for those who need to evaluate potential ministry staff for the denomination or for local congregations. (The outline has been reworked to fit this document.)

1. Religious Commitment

Ministers must be persons who show in their lives a deep commitment to Christ and to the Word of God which reveals Him.

a. Substantiating Behaviors

- 1) Engage in regular Bible study and prayer.
- 2) Communicate God's will as those who together with all the people of God stand under the Word.
- 3) Humbly acknowledge their own shortcomings, failures, and struggles.
- 4) Confidently express their assurance of God's grace in the face of failures and God's strength in the face of struggles.
- 5) Engage in their work with a sense of freedom from panic or despair because they know God is working out His will in history.

b. Incompatible Behaviors

- 1) Communicate God's Word from an elevated, superior attitude.
- 2) Give the appearance in public that they have arrived in the Christian faith, and in the Christian life.

2. Discipline and Self-control

Ministers are self-controlled people who lead a disciplined life. Their efforts must be steady instead of sporadic. Their style of labor must be faithful to their varied responsibilities. They must use their time in a way which best serves God and the church.

a. Substantiating Behaviors

- 1) Are faithful in carrying out the ministry conferred upon them by the church, even in those tasks which they might not enjoy (calling on shut-ins or those under discipline, for example).
- 2) Finish what they start; are able to complete a program even though there be declining results; do not lose interest as soon as a program is on its feet.

- 3) Establish priorities of ministry and use their time accordingly; put more effort into more important responsibilities; take time to determine in which areas they are most effective.
- 4) Are punctual in keeping appointments; have themselves and their material ready at appropriate times; begin their sermon preparation early and complete them before Sunday morning.
- 5) Possess self-motivation for both the routine and the unusual; are able to work without outside supervision; want to do what has to be done.
- 6) Engage in personal devotions regularly and participate faithfully in corporate worship and the celebration of the sacraments.

b. Incompatible Behaviors

- 1) Devote excessive amount of time to personal hobbies and recreation.
- 2) Are preoccupied with appearances and superficial detail, such as well-appointed church facilities, well-printed bulletins, lighting, etc.
- 3) Enthusiastically initiate and promote many new projects in the church, without giving the proper time to implement and maintain the project.
- 4) Have a pattern of procrastination with unpleasant tasks until they can no longer accomplish them.
- 5) Neglect their spouse and family and fail to honor commitments which they have made to them.
- 6) Give evidence of workaholism.
- 7) Find it difficult to say “No” to another responsibility when they know that they don’t have the time to give it proper attention.
- 8) Engage in undisciplined and self-indulgent actions which irritate, shock, or offend.

3. Affirming of Others

Ministers must be people who have respect for the feelings, viewpoints, and abilities of others. They must not treat them as puppets or pawns to accomplish their aims but as fellow workers with them. Instead of conveying the impression that they are the only ones who count, they affirm other people by making them feel that they count as well.

a. Substantiating Behaviors

- 1) Listen to and take seriously the viewpoints of others.
- 2) Accept group decisions and work to implement them even though they may be contrary to their own judgment.
- 3) Are willing to delegate responsibility to other people.
- 4) Seek opportunities for Christian service for those with few gifts and those who are minimally involved in the life of the church.
- 5) Encourage other people to express their opinions even though they may disagree with their own.
- 6) Accept criticism graciously.
- 7) Rejoice in the achievements of others even if those achievements go beyond their own.

b. Incompatible Behaviors

- 1) Dominate group discussions.
- 2) Intimidate others by conveying the impression that they have the last word.
- 3) Belittle people for saying “stupid” things or making “dumb” suggestions.
- 4) Try to be in charge of everything because they don’t trust others to do a good job.

4. Loving toward Others

Ministers must be people who demonstrate love, patience, and kindness in all their relationships, not as determined primarily by the qualities in the person toward whom they are directed, but by their own person. They must be sensitive to the hurts and struggles of others, value those who are not valued by society, and deny themselves for their sake.

- a. Substantiating Behaviors
 - 1) Listen with concentration and openness, seeking to understand before making judgments or giving advice.
 - 2) Speak kindly and generously to and about those who have not been kind or generous to them or to their families.
 - 3) Concentrate on remembering names and facts about people they meet.
 - 4) Are hospitable in their homes and studies to divorced persons, widows, rebellious young adults, boisterous children, and dyspeptic elderly persons.
 - 5) Show the same love, kindness, and attention to their families as they do toward others.
 - 6) Shed tears or give other expressions of sorrow when they share the grief of others.
 - 7) Make generous financial contributions to the church and to social service agencies which are not part of the church.
- b. Incompatible Behaviors
 - 1) Express irritation and resentment to those who disrupt their schedules.
 - 2) Give no expression to appropriate affection, pain, anger, excitement, or joy but hide behind a cold professionalism.
 - 3) Talk excessively about themselves, their accomplishments, and their abilities.
 - 4) Avoid or demean those who oppose their ideas or are critical of their preaching or other parts of their ministry.
 - 5) Make demeaning or cutting comments about their spouses or children in public.
 - 6) Always refer those in need to the deacons even when they are able to help immediately and directly.
 - 7) Make unreasonable demands of a secretary or custodian, giving the impression that others must always work around their schedules.

5. Honesty

Ministers must show integrity in their relationships both in their private and in their professional lives. They must honor commitments despite pressure to compromise, and evidence a critical affirmation of the church, its mission, policies, and programs.

- a. Substantiating Behaviors
 - 1) Are scrupulous in maintaining confidentiality in their pastoral work.
 - 2) Manage their personal finances responsibly, pay their bills promptly, and do not leave a parish with large outstanding debts.
 - 3) Are emotionally as well as sexually faithful to their spouses; do not establish deep, emotional relationships which are appropriate only in courtship or marriage.
 - 4) Make pastoral calls according to their commitments. If they are unexpectedly detained, they inform the people and set up another appointment.
 - 5) Support and implement the policies and programs of the denomination as well as those of the local congregation. If they disagree with these policies and programs, they seek to change them in the proper way, time, and place.
 - 6) Say willingly, "I don't know," regarding subjects beyond their knowledge or competence.
 - 7) Demonstrate behavior in their lives that is consistent with their preaching.
 - 8) Admit that a program which they began is not living up to expectations and are willing to discontinue it.
- b. Incompatible Behaviors
 - 1) Call in sick repeatedly when they are unprepared or when they find their leadership role distasteful in a particular group.

- 2) Alibi for their failure to honor commitments or plead ignorance of commitments openly made.
 - 3) Unfairly attribute motives or ideas to their opponents so that they become vulnerable to criticism.
 - 4) Give a partial account of events or decisions when a full account would put them in a bad light.
 - 5) Publicly criticize their consistories or denominational agencies without making their views known to that body.
6. Service without Regard for Gain
- Ministers must possess and exhibit a willingness to give themselves to the service of God and the church, and a devotion that is not conditioned by a concern for their own personal gain or advantage.
- a. Substantiating Behaviors
 - 1) Pursue professional excellence enthusiastically without regard for the degree of recognition or remuneration that they receive.
 - 2) Embody in their ministry the truth and love that they proclaim.
 - 3) Command respect for their office without expecting favored treatment of their person.
 - 4) Minister to and associate with people in all stations regardless of status.
 - 5) Show concern for the interests of others as well as for their own interest.
 - 6) Readily acknowledge the accomplishments and gifts of their fellow ministers.
 - 7) Publicly give credit to those around them for their important functions in the life of the church.
 - 8) Readily acknowledge their limitations and areas of need for growth, and accept advice.
 - 9) Refuse to join in chronic complaints about ministers' salaries, but instead candidly present to the finance committee their case for an adequate salary.
 - b. Incompatible Behaviors
 - 1) Fret openly about what others think of them.
 - 2) Function half-heartedly in the ministry when they see no gain in it for themselves.
 - 3) Concentrate their time and energy on those parts of the ministry which bring them acclaim and public approval.
 - 4) Expect preferential treatment (special privileges, discounts, considerations) because they are ministers.
 - 5) Ignore or neglect in their ministry those who are unable to bring them any recognition or prestige.
 - 6) View growth in their profession primarily in terms of promotion to larger parishes and more prestigious positions.
 - 7) Act and relate competitively toward fellow ministers.
 - 8) Brag about their own real or imagined accomplishments.
 - 9) Grumble about sacrifices they make as part of their life in the ministry.
 - 10) Frequently bewail the salary scale for ministers.
 - 11) Gear their efforts and performance to their salary scale or other perceived signs of appreciation.
 - 12) Complain about the parsonage to members of the congregation not on the building committee.
7. Leadership Qualities
- In view of the responsible and highly visible nature of pastoral leadership, ministers must possess and exhibit qualities such as confidence, initiative, flexibility, independence, courage, persistence, decisiveness and creativity that will equip them to give leadership in the church as a corporate entity, and in large and small groups within the church and its community.

- a. Substantiating Behaviors
 - 1) Assess the dynamics of a group problem from a vantage point that enables them to make judgments about what is needed.
 - 2) Continue to guide a group boldly during moments or sessions that are marked by confusion or conflict.
 - 3) Stick to valid positions even when the group shows disapproval or opposes it.
 - 4) Dare to move ahead of a group in articulating a vision for the future or formulating a plan for action.
 - 5) Offer suggestions and ideas that run the risk of being unpopular.
 - 6) Lead celebrations with freedom and spontaneity.
 - 7) Allow a group to struggle to arrive at decisions.
 - 8) Encourage and accept novel suggestions.
 - 9) Tolerate conflict in a group and work with it toward resolution.
- b. Incompatible Behaviors
 - 1) Squelch expressions of group conflict as quickly as possible.
 - 2) Scold the congregation angrily about irregular attendance or sleeping in church.
 - 3) Minimize differences in the group in order to avoid confrontations.
 - 4) Retract statements or apologize for sermons at the first sign of disapproval or opposition.
 - 5) Wait to discover which way the wind is blowing before venturing an opinion.
 - 6) Coerce or manipulate a group into deciding their way.
 - 7) Hesitate to make judgments when the group needs their leadership to break through an impasse.
 - 8) React inappropriately to group actions that are contrary to their wishes.

8. Wisdom

Ministers are people who show good judgment and common sense. Their behavior is rational, not foolish. Their counsel is built on realistic possibilities, and not around unattainable ideals. Ministers integrate their knowledge to suggest policies which have both short-term and long-range beneficial results.

- a. Substantiating Behaviors
 - 1) Show good judgment in personal, familial, and pastoral concerns.
 - 2) Distinguish between issues of major and minor consequence.
 - 3) Use tact in social gatherings and in situations of conflict.
 - 4) Possess the ability to determine what should remain confidential.
 - 5) Show a greater than average degree of common sense.
 - 6) Use foresight to predict which people will function best in which tasks.
 - 7) Attempt to understand an individual's situation accurately.
 - 8) Think before they act.
 - 9) Offer spontaneous solutions when necessary that prove valid after careful reflection and close scrutiny.
- b. Incompatible Behaviors
 - 1) Enjoy making or have a compulsion to make a "mountain out of a molehill," e.g., condemning every innovation as an attack on our Reformed heritage.
 - 2) Ignore or fail to perceive the initial stages of a significant future problem.
 - 3) Say what they feel without concern for possible outcomes; often forcing themselves to regret past actions.
 - 4) Get caught up into conflict without being able to use conflict as a growth tool.
 - 5) Make inappropriate use of incidents from counseling situations as sermon illustrations.

- 6) Decline to make judgments before they have done extensive research in a situation where an instantaneous common-sense reaction would have been more appropriate.
- 7) Give people responsibilities or assignments without proper knowledge of their capacities or talents.
- 8) Make quick moral judgments or theological pronouncements without attempting to fully understand an individual's unique circumstances or feelings.
- 9) Make judgments which seldom reflect the obvious consensus.

9. Emotional Health

Ministers must have demonstrated their emotional well-being and shown that they are not hampered by unresolved traumatic episodes from their past. They should be generally happy and sincere, patient and persistent, and able to laugh at themselves. They ought not to be impulsive or to experience extreme mood swings.

a. Substantiating Behaviors

- 1) Show signs of growth and development.
- 2) Are open and adaptable and accept differences.
- 3) Know when to apologize without being told.
- 4) Accept their own limitations without negating their own self-worth.
- 5) Can laugh with those who laugh and cry with those who cry.
- 6) Are calm under stress.

b. Incompatible Behaviors

- 1) Complain, find fault, and criticize in a way that demeans others.
- 2) Perform with an air of superiority.
- 3) Are either confrontational or defensive in their relations with others.
- 4) Act out feelings with tantrums, hysteria, or pouting.
- 5) Exaggerate the magnificence of the ministerial office.
- 6) Frequently seek to escape responsibility when there is pressure or conflict.
- 7) Consciously or unconsciously program their own failures repeatedly.
- 8) Repeatedly reopen the question of their own calling.
- 9) Repeatedly raise and belabor their own problems and do not distinguish between things that are major and those that are minor.
- 10) Take on excessive amounts of work to compensate for their lack of self-worth.
- 11) Give the impression that they are capable of being very successful in the future even though they are not able to function satisfactorily in the present; offer alibis for their present lack of success and relate failure to circumstances.
- 12) Are overly eager and precipitous in proposing solutions to the problems of others.
- 13) Express their discomfort with awkward overt mannerisms.
- 14) Fail to apply the healing truth and wisdom of the gospel to their own personal problems.
- 15) Take large amounts of time from many other people and apparently think they have it coming.
- 16) Fail to observe the limitations of intimacy and the propriety of distance.
- 17) Revel in hearing and passing unfavorable gossip.

Outline of the report

- I. Background and mandate
- II. The survey
- III. Two perspectives: biblical-theological argumentation for each of the two CRC perspectives on women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist
- IV. Differences and ecclesiastical unity
- V. The use of women's gifts
- VI. Concluding comments
- VII. Recommendations
- VIII. Minority report re Regulation 1
- IX. Appendix

I. Background and mandate

A. Background

The issue of women in ruling offices, which has been debated in the Christian Reformed Church for nearly three decades, is one with which many Bible-honoring churches struggle. Synod 1995 made a decision to allow women to be ordained, under certain conditions, as pastors, elders, and evangelists. It did not do so because a broad-based consensus had been achieved on this emotionally draining issue. It did so to give the church some peace and to allow it to attend to the denomination's many-sided, excellent ministries, which were increasingly overshadowed by the debate. Its decision was an interim decision to be reviewed after five years.

The first report on women in office, which came to synod in 1973, advised synod that "the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot be conclusively defended on biblical grounds." With that declaration began the long and arduous journey toward resolving the question. If the synods dealing with this issue had been less concerned with listening to Scripture, a decision could have been reached early on. Because synod and the churches wanted to honor the biblical givens, the journey toward resolution continues to this day.

After the third report, in 1978, synod approved opening the office of deacon to women, a decision repealed a year later but reinstated in 1984. Women serving as elders, evangelists, and pastors was approved in 1990, subject to ratification by a later synod. Synod 1992, instead of ratifying the decision to provide women full access to all offices, decided to "encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God, and

provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders.” The following synod gave councils and churches “the option to nominate, elect, call, and ordain qualified women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.” Synod 1994 reversed that decision, giving as a key reason the belief that “the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.”

This seesaw of decisions, made in the midst of growing turmoil and estrangement, prepared the way for the action taken by Synod 1995. Its decision was to “recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 75, pp. 731-32). It then decided that

a classis may, in response to local needs and circumstances, declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative and may authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

- a. The previous synodical assemblies have failed to provide satisfactory leadership on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office. Placing the responsibility for decisions on this matter at the classical level will allow local circumstances and differing views to be dealt with more effectively.
- b. The current compromise of giving women the function but not the office, used in a number of local situations, though expedient in some ways, is theologically problematic, inconsistent with a Reformed view of office and ordination, and insufficiently regulated.
- c. This declaration provides in effect a “regional” option, which requires classical approval. While providing an opportunity to respond to local needs and circumstances, it avoids the danger of congregationalism, which would accompany the adoption of “congregational” option.
- d. There is precedent for declaring parts of the Church Order inoperative. From 1914 to 1965 the articles on particular and regional synods (47-49) were placed in parentheses. The churches were agreed that these would be inoperative, i.e., not implemented until such time as it might be appropriate to implement them.

(*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733)

A set of guidelines setting out certain conditions and restrictions were also adopted, and synod thought it wise to

declare that this arrangement will be in effect until the year 2000, at which time it will be reviewed.

Grounds:

- a. This course of action will effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries.
- b. It will also allow the denomination to determine the effect of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue.
- c. A period during which the issue is not hotly and bitterly debated will allow the denomination to prayerfully reflect on the issue without the pressure of an imminent decision.

(*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735)

B. Mandate

Synod 1998 appointed the present committee with the mandate to

- a. Solicit responses from congregations and classes to determine the effects of the 1995 decision in various regions of the denomination.
- b. Summarize all responses received and prepare a report for Synod 2000.
- c. Prepare recommendations for Synod 2000, including a biblical-theological argument to undergird the position(s) recommended.
- d. Make the report available to the churches by November 1, 1999.

C. Interpretation of the mandate

Broadly speaking, the committee was asked to serve synod and the churches with advice about how to come to a biblically based and pastorally constructive decision about the issue. Solicited responses from the churches in various regions were intended to help provide answers to a number of practical questions. Can the churches and their individual members live with the differences and at the same time maintain trust and solid fellowship? Can they work together in harmony in the various ministries which we hold dear and which are a very important part of our life together as churches and members? Are the guidelines and procedures adopted in 1995 necessary, fair, workable, and wise? In the meantime, have other promising options emerged?

Synod 1995 was criticized in part for not providing biblical-theological argumentation for its decision. That a later synod has requested the present committee to provide such argumentation for the positions held and the direction chosen demonstrates the denomination's desire to adhere to Scripture and at the same time honor the differences of understanding about the ordination of women. The committee has assumed that Synod 1998 did not desire a new and detailed study of the issue but rather a summary of argumentation based on several previous reports and decisions.

In response to this mandate the committee has conducted a survey which sought responses from each council and classis. A summary of the results, together with some reflection on the adequacy and use of the survey, is included in this report. The committee has reviewed and debated the issue itself and examined the biblical-theological argumentation for the two main positions regarding the issue. A fair and balanced, though not exhaustive, case for each position is included in the report.

In light of the issue's history in the denomination and certain repercussions in ecumenical relations, the committee also felt the need to address the pastoral issue, paying particular attention to the matter of unity. Here, too, the committee has sought to let Scripture speak. In addition, since the question of women's ordination is directly related to that of spiritual gifts, the committee felt compelled to raise again earlier synods' decisions about the full use of women's gifts. Where appropriate, corresponding proposals have been formulated.

The committee has been able to carry out its work in a spirit of love, honesty, and unity of purpose. It is not of one mind on the main issue—whether the Bible permits qualified women to serve in all offices of the church. Support for both positions has been eloquently expressed in the committee. It is therefore with special thankfulness that we agree on all recommendations except one and can offer a unified report.

II. The survey

Part of this committee's mandate is to gather information on the experience of the churches since 1995, when synod gave the classical-local option of ordaining women as elders, pastors, and evangelists. The purpose of such a survey was not to get answers to the question whether or not to ordain women to all offices or to conduct an opinion poll on that issue and determine what this committee's recommendations ought to be. The survey helped to take the pulse of the denomination and provided the opportunity for the committee to learn from the insights that have been gained by the churches and classes as they have studied the teaching of the Bible while wrestling with the issue on the local level. The survey results were helpful to the committee.

The committee conducted the survey through two approaches: one survey to each church council and another to each classis. The Calvin College Social Research Center (SRC) helped to design the questionnaires and tabulated the results. The survey was also translated into Spanish and Korean. Of the 965 churches that received the questionnaire, 743 councils (77 percent) responded, including five Spanish-, 22 Korean-, and 716 English-speaking councils.

The committee acknowledges the limitations of the survey. The input received came from church councils and classes, not from individual members of congregations. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of respondents were male. Synod 1998 instructed the committee to solicit "responses from congregations and classes," and the natural contact point for the congregations is the local church council. Because no special provisions for contacting cross sections of congregations were made, responses regarding the experiences of women since the 1995 decision are underrepresented.

Because of the complete survey's bulk and the corresponding cost of reproducing it, a limited number of copies have been made and are available for synod and its advisory committee. The survey's primary questions and the responses they elicited are reproduced in the charts and graphs in the appendix to this report.

A. *Survey of the councils*

Over half of the councils responding to the survey reported no divisiveness or no effect from this issue, even before 1995 (see Table 6, Chart C). Whether the issue was not divisive because most in the congregation were either for or against ordaining women was not indicated. Some councils reported contentment with the local situation but discontent with, even opposition to, the denomination's allowing women in office. Other councils noted that there would be far more divisiveness if the congregation did not have women in ordained offices.

Three-quarters of the churches reported no division or no effects because of this issue since 1995 (see Table 7, Chart D). Nearly half of the church councils that added comments favor tolerance for diverging views or state that it "simply isn't an issue." "We have plenty of better things to do than to get hung up on this," wrote one church. Even in those churches where differences are somewhat divisive, church unity comes first, according to the respondents.

The comments on the survey indicate that, even though the women-in-office issue is not resolved, a large majority of the churches are much more interested in unity and continuing the work of the church than in the differences caused by the women-in-office issue. Of the councils that commented,

25 percent reported being very unhappy with synod's allowing women to be ordained, 18 percent favored the 1995 decision, either short- or long-term, and 8 percent are unhappy with Synod 1995's stance because of its perceived lack of decisiveness.

In congregations where there is disagreement about women's ordination, continued debate does not seem to be the solution of choice. Eighty-eight respondents indicated that there isn't much discussion about it; twenty-one approached the issue through church education, bringing in guest speakers and keeping the congregation informed about current decisions of classis and synod.

The questionnaire asked church councils to estimate the probable effect on their congregations of three different scenarios: if synod (1) kept women's ordination as a classical-local option; (2) allowed women's ordination across the denomination, and (3) decided that women may not be ordained as elders, ministers, and evangelists. The responses indicate that in three-quarters of the churches, continuing the classical-local option would have mixed or no effect (see Table 14, Chart G). One-third said that opening the offices across the denomination would affect their churches negatively (see Table 15, Chart H). Nearly a third said that closing the offices to women would affect their churches negatively (see Table 16, Chart I).

Eighteen (18) percent of the respondents said that synod should return to the 1994 decision of synod and disallow women's ordination as elders, ministers, or evangelists. Sixteen (16) percent favored opening all the offices to women across the denomination. In between these positions, sixty-six (66) percent called for maintaining the options defined in 1995 and possibly moving ahead slowly as the best way to maintain the unity of the church.

B. Survey of the classes

Thirty-seven of forty-seven classes returned completed surveys. Of the responding classes, 68 percent said that prior to 1995 women in office was a somewhat or very divisive issue (see Table 19, Chart K). After 1995 that percentage dropped by half (see Table 20, Chart L). When asked to estimate the effect of keeping women's ordination as a classical-local option, 6 percent of the respondents said that it would be negative, 9 that it would be positive, and 86 that it would have mixed or no effect (see Table 21, Chart M). If women's ordination would be allowed across the denomination, 6 percent of the respondents would consider that positive (see Table 22, Chart N). If women's ordination would be discontinued, 18 percent would consider that positive (see Table 23, Chart O).

III. Two perspectives: biblical-theological argumentation for each of the two CRC perspectives on women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist

Synod 1995 approved the recommendation "that synod recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod* 1995, p. 727). Important in this connection is the first ground for the above decision: "The numerous overtures to this synod on this issue, as well as

decisions and reports of previous synods, adduce good biblical grounds for both positions.”

The present study committee judged it important for Synod 2000 to have before it a formulation of the biblical warrants in support of both positions, that of closing and of opening to women the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. In the summary of the evidence for closing the offices, the following have been used: the majority report of the Committee on Headship in the Bible (*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 282-336); “The Case in Favor of the 1984 Synodical Decisions about Headship,” presented by the Committee on Headship to Synod 1990 (*Acts of Synod 1990*, pp. 315-22); and other materials in various reports and overtures. In the summary of evidence in favor of opening the offices, the following have been used: *Acts of Synod 1984*, Minority Report 2 (*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 341-76); “The Case Against the 1984 Synodical Decisions about Headship” (*Acts of Synod 1990*, 322-29); and various other reports and overtures, especially the overture from Classis Grand Rapids East in 1995 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 480-90).

A. *A case for closing to women the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist*

1. The Old Testament evidence

a. Genesis 1

Genesis 1:26-27 affirms that humankind, both male and female, was created in the image of God. It says nothing about defining the relationship of male and female except that they mutually are to image God and that they are equally to be involved in being fruitful and multiplying, in subduing the earth, and in having dominion.

b. Genesis 2

The account of creation in Genesis 2 supplements the account given in Genesis 1. Here the man has a certain priority, a “firstness,” in that Adam was created before Eve (vv. 21-22) and he gave the “woman” her name (v. 23). It is clear that this priority is applied to marriage (v. 24). Some, however, affirm that the priority of the male in marriage is the application to marriage (v. 25) of a more general description of the male-female relationship (vv. 21-24). Since Genesis 2 is meant to supplement and not overturn what is said about the mutual equality of male and female in Genesis 1, the male priority in marriage in Genesis 2 is not meant to suggest the subjugation of the wife to the husband. In fact, this mutuality is suggested by the fact that the woman is a “helper suitable” for man (v. 18). This phrase can best be understood as a “companion” and certainly not simply as an “assistant.” It is also significant that Genesis 2:24 is quoted in Ephesians 5:31, in a passage that is generally considered to be the Bible’s most complete description of headship in marriage.

c. Genesis 3

Genesis 3 recounts the story of the fall. The curse pronounced upon the woman states not only that the pain of bearing children will increase but also that “he will rule over you” (v. 16), a reference to the husband’s position in the marriage relationship.

There seem to be both continuity and discontinuity between what is established in creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and what is stated in the curse

in Genesis 3. In Genesis 2, man is given the responsibility to work and take care of the garden (v. 15). In Genesis 3 it is assumed that his work continues but that now, after the fall, he will work a land that is cursed, and he will toil with pain and sweat (vv. 17-19). In like manner, after the fall the woman will continue to bear children and be under her husband's leadership, but, in the context of sin, her child-bearing will be painful, and her relationship to her husband will be disrupted, since "he will rule over you" (v. 16). In the setting of the curse, this statement is to be understood as an oppressive or sinful kind of rule.

In summary, Genesis 1 clearly speaks of an equality of male and female in exercising dominion over the earth. Genesis 2 speaks of the man's priority and implied leadership within the marriage. Genesis 3 does not invalidate the pronouncement of Genesis 2 but affirms that in the context of sin the man's priority and leadership will be distorted, i.e., his rule will be oppressive.

d. The rest of the Old Testament

The male's priority and leadership function in marriage, as established in Genesis 2, is extended in the rest of the Old Testament to male leadership within the religious community. That is true in the case of the patriarchs as well as later in the organization of Israel. In the latter, the leadership roles of prophets, judges, kings, and priests were filled by men. The roles of Miriam and Huldah as prophets (Exod. 15:20-21; II Kings 22:14-20; II Chron. 34:22-28) are exceptions that highlight the fact that from the time of Moses on, all of the prophets, with only these two exceptions, were men. Deborah's leadership as prophetess and judge is specifically characterized as an exception designed to humiliate the males who seem to have abdicated their proper leadership roles (Judg. 4:4-10). In the accounts of the priesthood in Israel, there is no exception at all: only males functioned as priests.

Thus male leadership in marriage, as established in Genesis 2 and carried over into the religious community in the rest of the Old Testament, seems to have God's approval and might be expected to be carried on in the new-covenant community.

2. The New Testament evidence

a. Male headship in marriage

Male leadership in marriage is clearly continued under the new covenant. The husband is called "the head of the wife" (Eph. 5:23), and in many places the wife is instructed to "submit" to her husband (Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; I Pet. 3:1). Of course, it is important to remember that Paul, in Ephesians 5:25-33, emphasizes that the husband, in showing his priority in marriage, must do so out of love, as exemplified in Christ's own self-giving love for the church. Here the male priority in marriage that was established in creation (Gen. 2:24, quoted in Eph. 5:31) is continued in the new covenant, though modified and enlarged through the work of Jesus.

b. Male headship in the church: I Corinthians 11:2-16

The main issue before us is whether the male leadership in the religious community as exhibited under the old covenant continues in

the leadership roles within the religious community of the new covenant. Consideration will be given later to specific texts that are the keystone of this position. Here it is simply noted that Jesus chose only male apostles even though he showed great love and respect for women and women of means were patrons of the ministry of Jesus and the twelve (Luke 8:3; see also Rom. 16:2). Likewise, Paul, though he had many female helpers of various kinds in his ministry, seems to have appointed or recommended only males for the office of elder (Acts 14:23; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Thus the Old Testament pattern seems to have continued into the New, though of course here male leadership has been modified and defined by what God has done in Christ (Acts 20:28).

In dealing with the problem of how men and women should pray and prophesy in the church, Paul states, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (I Cor. 11:3).¹ In what sense is man the "head" of the woman? That can best be determined by asking how Christ is the "head" of every man, since Paul speaks of that headship more often than the other. There are some passages in which Christ's headship over the church seems to combine both the idea of "source" and the idea of "authority over." For example, in Colossians 1:18 Christ is affirmed to be "head of his body, the church." Paul then goes on to say that Christ is "the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy." Here, "beginning" and "firstborn" suggest "source," but "have supremacy" suggests rulership or "have authority over." In Ephesians 5:24 the church is said to "submit" to Christ as head, but at the same time Christ gives himself up for the church (Eph. 5:25-27). Thus, when I Corinthians 11:3 says that "the head of every man is Christ," it is likely that it refers both to source and rulership. Furthermore, when the text states that "the head of Christ is God," it likely combines the same two notions in that, as to his human nature, God is Christ's creator and at the same time the one to whom our Lord submits. It seems likely, therefore, that, when the text affirms that "the head of woman is the man," the same two notions of "source" and "authority over" are present.

The passage then goes on to affirm that, during praying and prophesying in the church, a distinction between man and woman must be maintained: the woman must pray and prophesy with her head covered, and the man with his head uncovered. Paul specifically wants women to

¹Here two major problems of interpretation must be noted. Admittedly, when Christ is spoken of as "head" in other passages, the term "head" (*kephalē*) can have two senses: one which implies "authority over" (as in Eph. 1:22, Christ as "head over everything for the church"; probably also in Col. 2:10); the other implies the meaning "source" (as in Col. 2:19, Christ is the "head, from whom the whole body . . . grows as God causes it to grow"; also in Eph. 4:15-16). The issue is how Paul is using the term here. (A subsidiary problem here is that when applied to either man or woman, the term "head" can mean either his or her own physical "head" or be used in a metaphorical way to mean "Christ" or "man" [I Cor. 11:4-7a]). The second major problem is to determine what relationship between "man" and "woman" is being referred to in this passage. Paul uses the term for the male (*anēr*) that can mean either "man" or "husband" and the term for the female (*gynē*) than can mean either "woman" or "wife." In what sense are they intended here?

maintain a visible expression of male priority in the church because “man did not come from woman but woman from man; neither was man created for woman but woman for man” (I Cor. 11:8-9).

This passage does not, however, argue for distinctive roles for man and woman in the church but only for the manner in which the roles are carried out. Indeed, Paul seems to want to undercut any chauvinistic feelings of superiority on the part of the man when he adds, “In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God” (I Cor. 11:11-12). Nonetheless, the passage indicates that male priority is to be recognized in the churches.

c. Women to be silent in the church: I Corinthians 14:33b-36

Paul says in I Corinthians 14, “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches.” In distinction from I Corinthians 11, which primarily addresses the manner in which the same roles are to be carried out by men and women, in I Corinthians 14 the apostle explicitly speaks of some role distinction between man and woman: women should remain silent in the churches.

Why should women remain silent? Because, as Paul goes on to say in verse 34, “they are not permitted to speak but must be in submission, even as the Law says.” Although there is no passage in the Old Testament that says explicitly what Paul here states, by the word “Law,” Paul likely refers to the principle of headship of the man enunciated in Genesis 2, since he alludes to that passage in I Corinthians 11:9.

At the same time, this passage should not be read as calling for closed-lipped worship by women, as if they should not even sing, read Scripture, or offer prayers. Such a reading would contradict I Corinthians 11. The intent here seems instead to rule against disruptive, authoritative teaching in the worship service. Instead of offering such authoritative instruction, the women are advised in verse 35, “If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home.” The principle of male priority in church worship restricts a woman’s participation in the area of authoritative instruction. Paul indicates that this is not only so in the churches of Corinth but also (I Cor. 14:33) “in all the congregations of the saints.”

d. Women not permitted to teach authoritatively: I Timothy 2:9-15

Perhaps the clearest and most forthright text in which male priority limits the function of women in the church is I Timothy 2:9-15. Paul says (vv. 9-10) that women should pray and that they should be dressed a certain way when they pray (“modestly,” etc.). He adds (v. 11) *that* women should learn and *how* they should learn (“in quietness and full submission”). Importantly, he also explicitly states (v. 12), “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” The arena to which Paul refers seems to be the church, since chapters 2 and 3 of I Timothy seem to be of one piece and Paul says (I Tim. 3:15) that these instructions are given so that “you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God.”

The meaning of verse 12 is crucial, though there are three disputable issues.² It seems likely but not absolutely certain, given what Paul states in I Corinthians 14, that he refers here to one of the disputable issues, “authoritative instruction.” As to the precise meaning of the word *authentēin*, there are some studies by evangelical scholars that support the meaning “to have authority over.” Although the word had a variety of meanings, in contexts such as the one given here the word most likely means “to have authority over” without any notion of domineering authority. And though the reference to childbearing in verse 15 indicates that he has married women in mind, it seems better not to limit the reference to the marriage relationship, since the reference here is to the church as a whole and there may well have been single women present. Male priority in the church thus forbids women to engage in authoritative teaching, and this fits with what Paul says in I Timothy 3. Though in I Timothy 3:11 Paul may permit women to serve as deacons, in I Timothy 3:2-7 he limits the office of elder (who must be “able to teach”) to men.

While Paul may be addressing a specific problem in Ephesus (see I Tim. 1:3-7), he specifically grounds his prohibition in the biblical accounts of creation and the fall. The reference in I Timothy 2:13 (“For Adam was formed first, then Eve”) is a clear reference to Genesis 2:4-25. In I Timothy 2:14 Paul alludes to what Eve says in Genesis 3:13: “The serpent deceived me and I ate.” Paul does not here exonerate Adam (see Rom. 5:12-19) but indicates what happened when the proper roles of men and women were reversed. Since he grounds in creation and the fall his injunction against women engaging in authoritative teaching in the church, there is good reason to conclude that this injunction is also applicable today.

I Timothy 2:15 is difficult to interpret. One plausible way to interpret the text is to understand the word *sōthēsetai* to mean “will be kept safe,” as in the NIV text. Then the text may appropriately be seen in terms of covenant curse and blessing. The curse had been pronounced in Genesis 3:16: pain in childbearing. But Paul now assures Christian mothers not only that they will be spared from suffering too much pain but also that they will receive the covenant blessing—“if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.”

- e. Passages which seem to disagree with this part of the biblical witness
The case for closing the office of elder, minister, and evangelist to women thus rests on the rather consistent teaching of Scripture which

²First, it is not clear whether Paul is addressing two issues—women are not permitted to teach men and women are not permitted to have authority over men—or only one issue—women are not permitted to teach with authority over men. In many ways the impact for the church is the same with either meaning. Given what Paul states in I Corinthians 14, it seems more likely that he is referring to “authoritative instruction.” Second, the precise meaning of the word *authentēin* (often translated “have authority over”) is disputed. The word occurs only here in the New Testament. The old King James Version translates it as “to usurp authority over,” which suggests a domineering kind of authority. But many modern translations, including the NIV, render it simply as “to have authority over.” Third, as in I Corinthians 11, the words for male and female can have the more general meaning of “man” and “woman” or the meaning specific to the marriage relationship, “husband” and “wife.”

has its root in the very creation of men and women, is exhibited in both old and new covenants, and seems to be taught explicitly in some New Testament passages. To overturn it, there would have to be other clear and compelling New Testament evidence against this teaching. Such evidence, however, does not seem to be present, though there are some passages in the New Testament that are thought to provide it. These passages will be briefly considered here. It will become apparent that they may be properly interpreted in keeping with the traditional position.

1) Galatians 3:28

When Paul speaks in Galatians 3:27 of new-covenant believers having become sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, he grounds this in the fact that those who were baptized into Christ have become clothed with Christ. He then goes on to say, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The primary meaning here is the truth that, regarding salvation by faith in Christ, there is no difference between male and female (or between Jew and gentile or between a slave and a free person). The text, to be sure, does have social implications, as Paul’s controversy with Peter in Galatians 2:11-14 indicates, in that no longer may Jews and gentiles separate themselves in table fellowship. But this text does not speak directly to the issue of ecclesiastical office.

2) Acts 2:14-21

In his Pentecost sermon Peter indicates that the Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit fulfills “in the last days” the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32. God, speaking through Joel, promised, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.” There are indeed new leadership roles for women under the new covenant—daughters of Philip had the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9), and the women at Corinth prophesied (I Cor. 11:5). But Acts 2:14-21 does not prove that all who have the Spirit are qualified for ecclesiastical office.

3) Women associated with Paul’s work

In Romans 16:1 Phoebe is called “a *diakonos* of the church in Cenchrea.” The term can mean “servant” or “minister” or “deacon” (in this case usually translated “deaconess”). She probably engaged in the ministry of hospitality that is suggested also by the word “helper” (*prostatis*) in Romans 16:2.

In Romans 16:5 and 12 several women are characterized as “workers” in the Lord. This is significant because Paul sometimes uses the word to describe those who have a leadership role in the church (I Thess. 5:12), including the work of preaching and teaching (I Tim. 5:17). Yet, since the Greek word in the original is a general word for “work,” it may not be assumed that these female workers held roles of primary leadership. In the same vein, some women are referred to as “fellow-workers” with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3; Rom. 16:3). We know of Priscilla (and Aquila—mentioned in Rom. 16:3) that she and

her husband ministered to Apollos, teaching him “the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). But this private ministry seems to fall short of what we today call the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

3. Equality and differentiation of roles

The exclusion of women from the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist should not be interpreted as supporting the inequality of male and female. As coheirs of salvation, men and women are also called to be coworkers in the kingdom of Christ. The positive differentiation between the roles of male and female leadership within the church reflects the will of God, expressed originally in creation and affirmed in the new creation of the body of Christ. The existence of different roles for male and female imagebearers of God predates the fall into sin (Gen. 1:27; 2:18). Even though the entrance of sin into the world brought with it a disruption of the original harmony between male and female, the presence of sin is not the ultimate cause or reason for the assignment of different roles to men and women in the structure of God’s kingdom work.

In the context of the Christian church, the disunifying and disruptive effects of sin on the harmonious relationship of male and female (Gen. 2:23) are not reversed by the removal of role differentiation between men and women but by a renewed attitude of mutual love and submission, first of all in the home (Eph. 5:22-33) and also in the congregation (I Cor. 11:3-16).

Biblical differentiation between ecclesiastical roles of men and women ought in no way to be interpreted as a matter of inequality between male and female. God, in his wisdom, assigned to men and women differing roles of leadership and authority in the church without implying superior or inferior value. In the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity, the Bible itself provides a preeminent example of functional submission without the implication of inequality. Christ in his kingdom work on earth demonstrated subordination and obedience to the heavenly Father. And it was also a significant characteristic of Jesus that, while maturing in wisdom (Luke 2:40), he was subordinate to his earthly parents (Luke 2:51). Christ’s submission on earth promoted the mission of the three persons of the Trinity. So, too, in the New Testament church the ultimate assignment of spiritual leadership to men does not imply a difference of worth or value between male and female.

Consider two other New Testament examples in which submission does not imply inequality or inferiority. In I Peter 5:5 young men in the church are instructed to submit to those who are older. Their submission, however, does not mark them as inferior; rather, it reflects the means by which God transmits wisdom from one generation to the next. In Romans 13:1 Paul commands everyone to submit to governing authorities because they belong to the structure that God has established. Yet those who are governed are not inferior to those who govern. Here, too, there is an acquiescence to a divinely willed order.

4. Summary and conclusions

Although male and female were equally created in God’s image (Gen. 1), male priority was established by the man’s being the one from whom and for whom woman was created, a truth immediately applied in marriage

(Gen. 2). Although sin has corrupted what was originally intended (Gen. 3), throughout the Old Testament male priority is exhibited in positions of primary leadership within the religious community, positions such as prophet, priest, and king. The few exceptions only prove the rule.

In the New Testament the same picture continues. Male headship in marriage is continued, Jesus appointed only male apostles, and Paul appointed and recommended only male elders. In addition to these practices, there are three very important passages which restrict the role of women within the church: I Corinthians 11:2-16, I Corinthians 14:33b-36, and I Timothy 2:9-15. To be sure, leadership roles for women are greatly expanded under the new covenant, but evidence is not sufficient to overturn the scriptural data that recommend only males for positions of primary leadership.

Furthermore, from New Testament times until recently, it has been the consistent historic Christian tradition that the above-mentioned texts (I Cor. 11; I Cor. 14; I Tim. 2) prohibit Christian women from serving in certain primary leadership roles. Even though women are seen to have important gifts for service in the church, they are to be excluded from those offices that involve governing authority. To be sure, the church down through the centuries has not always adequately stressed the equality of male and female. Nevertheless, the church has consistently seen that Christian women do participate fully in salvation even though they are excluded from certain leadership roles in the church. Thus the most obvious teaching of Scripture for today is that only qualified male members of the church should serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

B. A case for opening to women the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist

1. Old Testament evidence

a. Genesis 1

Genesis 1:16-27 affirms that both male and female were created equally in the image of God. It says nothing about defining the relationship of male and female but does indicate that they mutually are to image God and are to be equally involved in being fruitful and multiplying, in subduing the earth, and in having dominion.

b. Genesis 2

The account of creation in Genesis 2 complements the account given in Genesis 1. Although the male has a certain priority in that Adam was created before Eve (vv. 21-22), woman is created as a “helper suitable” for man (v. 18). From other Old Testament uses of the word “helper” where it is applied to God, the word can probably best be understood not in any sense of subjugation but as “companion.” It is also true that Adam, in a fashion somewhat similar to how he named the animals, gave the “woman” her name (v. 23). This fact is immediately linked with marriage: verse 24 says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:6; Eph. 5:31) to show the intimate union between husband and wife, and the last part of the verse is quoted once (I Cor. 6:16) to show the disas-

trous results of the act of prostitution. There is nothing in Genesis 2 to suggest that male priority goes beyond the institution of marriage.

c. Genesis 3

Genesis 3 recounts the story of the fall. Because of man's sin, a curse falls on the serpent, on the ground, on the woman, and on the man. The pronouncement upon the woman is not only that there will be an increase in the pain of bearing children but also that, specifically with reference to the husband in the relationship in marriage, "he will rule over you" (v. 16). That this rule will be domineering and oppressive is suggested by the context. Man's responsibility to work and take care of the garden (Gen. 2) is continued, but now, after the fall, he will work a land that is cursed, and he will toil with pain and sweat (Gen. 3: 17-19).

In its own way Genesis 3 seems to affirm that the only male leadership referred to in Genesis 2 was that in marriage and that now, after the fall, the male's leadership has become distorted and oppressive.

d. The rest of the Old Testament

- 1) It is clear that in the rest of the Old Testament males are more prominent than females. It is also clear that man is in charge, filling the prominent leadership roles both in the patriarchal period and in the later organization of Israel. In the latter, the leadership roles of prophets, judges, kings, and priests were exercised by men. Yet the exceptions are important. Hannah speaks prophetically in her prayer/song (I Sam. 2:1-10), pointing to the new era of leadership of Israel under a king. Her song is echoed in the "Magnificat," or song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55), and the "Benedictus," or song of Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79). In one sense the appearances of Miriam as prophetess (Exod. 15:20-21), Deborah as prophetess and judge (Judg. 4:4-10), and Huldah as prophetess (II Kings 22:14-20; II Chron. 34:22-28) are exceptions that prove the rule. But "rule" here cannot mean an exclusive God-ordained ordinance. It is a striking fact that when these exceptions occur, Scripture offers no apologies for the religious leadership provided by these women and only a natural and willing acceptance by the people of these women's activities. Yet, in the main, leadership roles in the religious community were exercised by men, and there is no recorded exception to men serving as priests.
- 2) In fact, there are aspects of life in the old covenant that clearly show the diminished status of women. For example, circumcision, the sign of admission to the covenant, was administered only to males (Gen 17:9-14). Another striking example is the fact that a woman, after giving birth to a daughter, was considered ceremonially unclean for a period of time that is twice that (two weeks and sixty-six days) required after giving birth to a son (one week and thirty-three days). And it appears that the right to divorce was given to the husband but not to his wife (Deut. 24:1-4).
- 3) Even though the old covenant was made by God, there are many aspects to it that seem not to be his final will for his people. Already from the old-covenant prophets we repeatedly hear the word that God is going to do a "new" thing in and for his people that will transcend what he has done in the past. God, speaking through

Jeremiah (31:31-34), even proclaims that he will make a new covenant with the house of Israel that will not be like the covenant that he made when he brought them up out of the land of Egypt. Speaking through Joel (2:28-32), God states that in that new day he will pour out his Spirit equally upon men and women, upon sons and daughters, so that both will prophesy. Ezekiel (11:19-20; 36:26-27) speaks of the time of renewal when God will make his people more obedient to him by giving them “hearts of flesh” rather than “hearts of stone.” Isaiah also speaks clearly of that coming day of renewal. The new time will be more inclusive because God’s “servant” (Isa. 49:6) will be light and will bring salvation to gentiles as well as Jews. God’s coming salvation will include eunuchs and foreigners (Isa. 56:1-8), who under the law had been excluded (Lev. 21:17-23; Deut. 23:1-9).

From the manner in which New Testament authors use these Old Testament prophecies (see Heb. 8:7-13; Acts 2:16-21; II Cor. 3:1-3; Acts 13:47), it is apparent that they clearly understand that these prophecies will be fulfilled when the new-covenant gospel is proclaimed.

2. New Testament evidence

- a. Male leadership in marriage is clearly continued under the new covenant. The husband is called “the head of the wife” (Eph. 5:23), and in many places the wife is instructed to “submit” to her husband (Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; I Pet. 3:1). But there are two ways in which the marriage relationship is modified in the New Testament. First, within marriage, the husband’s headship is to be exercised in love, a love now further defined and exemplified in the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. Second, marriage itself is less closely tied to the coming kingdom of God: Paul commends the *unmarried* state to those who have the gift of self-control (I Cor. 7:1, 8), marriage is shown not to have eternal validity when Jesus states that in the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage (Matt. 22:30), and Paul affirms that marriage belongs to “the scheme of this world which is passing away” (I Cor. 7:29-31). In spite of these modifications, marriage is an important focus of New Testament teaching. Paul and others seek to shield it against all kinds of threats.

But the main issue before us is whether the male leadership in the religious community as exhibited under the old covenant continued in the leadership roles within the new-covenant religious community. It must be admitted that Jesus chose only male apostles and that Paul appointed or recommended only males for the office of elder (Acts 14:23; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). But is such a practice expected to continue? Does it ultimately fit with what the New Testament has to say about the new status and role of women in the new covenant? Such does not seem to be the case.

- b. Galatians 3:28

Galatians 3 is an important passage for our purposes. It picks up some of the themes of the blessings promised by the prophets that are now being realized in the new age of redemption. Galatians is among the earliest writings of the New Testament. Galatians 3 contrasts the life

realized in Christ with the previous life “under the law.” Galatians 3:26-29 may be translated as follows:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ: there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free person, neither male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Indeed if you belong to Christ, then you are the seed of Abraham and you are heirs according to the promise.

Everyone agrees that this text, among other things, declares that male and female share equally in salvation in Christ. But there are reasons to see broader implications in the text.

- 1) It is remarkable that here in Galatians Paul should include the pairs slave-free and male-female. The two issues implied by these pairs are not discussed elsewhere in the letter, which is primarily about the Jew-gentile agenda. The fact that he includes them suggests that this trio of paired opposites had become part of an early confession that announced the universality and inclusiveness of the new covenant. It is likely that the confession was meant to counter the chauvinistic statements found in the Jewish cycle of morning prayers, in which the (male) believer thanked God that he had not been made a gentile, or a slave, or a woman. This early baptismal confession would thus announce the church’s belief that in Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed.
- 2) As noted in the translation of Galatians 3:26-29 above, the grammatical construction of the pair “neither male and female” is different from that of the other two pairs, which read “neither . . . nor.” It has been rightly discerned that this was done deliberately to pick up the language of Genesis 1:27 (“male and female created he them”), thereby indicating that in Christ male and female are restored to their original equal participation in the image of God and the concomitant call to jointly exercise dominion over creation.
- 3) From the reference to the first pair (Jew-Greek) it can be seen that the “oneness in Christ” proclaimed in Galatians 3:28 is relevant not only to the equal standing they all enjoy in salvation but also to some “societal” implications. Part of Paul’s reason for writing was to clear up the problem of Peter’s refusal to eat with gentiles at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14). The oneness of Jew and gentile in Christ required equal treatment in table fellowship. Presumably that equal treatment in table fellowship would apply not only to the Jew-Greek pair but just as well to slave-free and male-female pairs. Indeed, so the church has understood it.
- 4) Although Galatians 3:28 does not explicitly speak of the social equality of male and female, it does seem to imply it. As noted above, the confession seems to pick up the theme of equality from Genesis 1:27. The force of the implied equality in this passage can be seen as follows. Just as it would be inappropriate to say, “Theophilus may not be an elder because he’s a Greek,” or “Onesimus may not be an elder because he’s a slave,” so too it is inappropriate to say, “Apphia may not be an elder because she is a woman.”
- 5) Finally, one of the many blessings that all the believers in Galatia received through Christ and through baptism into him was their

adoption: “you all are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” All the privileges that go with sonship were now equally theirs, whether they were Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female. Women who are in Christ are “God’s sons” and thus on a par with men. Therefore, they deserve the status that accompanies sonship.

c. Baptism as the sign and seal of the new covenant

As noted earlier, circumcision, the sign of the old covenant, was administered only to males. There is no text in the Old Testament that prophesied that in the new covenant the church would baptize both male and female. And there is no New Testament pronouncement that females as well as males should receive the initiatory rite of the new covenant. The church seemed simply to know that the great day of renewal, the day of universality and inclusiveness, called for the equal treatment of male and female. In the old covenant the women were not circumcised, but they were a part of the covenant. They were equal to men regarding salvation but unequal in other dimensions of their religion. Thus, in the new covenant the baptism of female along with male suggests a more profound equality than the simple equality of salvation under the old covenant.

d. The gifts of the Spirit and the right to exercise those gifts

In keeping with the prophecy of Joel 2:28 and its recognized fulfillment in these last days (Acts 2:17-18), Paul often refers to Christians’ receiving the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:7-11; 27-30; Eph. 4:7-13). These gifts include many leadership functions, such as those necessary for “apostles,” “prophets,” “evangelists,” “pastors and teachers,” and the gifts include such activities as “prophesying,” “teaching,” and “leadership.” Furthermore, these gifts seem to be given indiscriminately to all members, whether male or female. For example, Paul says, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (I Cor. 12:7; see also I Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:3; Eph. 5:7). In addition, along with the gift there goes the right and duty to exercise that gift. If women who have been given leadership gifts are to function appropriately in the church, opening the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to them seems to be necessary.

e. Women and men as prophets, priests, and kings in the new covenant

- 1) As Joel 2:28 had promised, both men and women received the Spirit to enable them to prophesy (Acts 2:17-18). Women (wives) as well as men (husbands) did prophesy in Corinth (I Cor. 11:5), and the daughters of Philip had the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9).
- 2) Unlike the women under the old covenant, under the new covenant, women as well as men are priests and kings. In Exodus 19:5-7, God promised Israel that, if she was obedient to his covenant, she would become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” In the New Testament this promise is applied to the church, sometimes with emphasis on the priestly aspect (I Pet. 2:4-10) and sometimes with emphasis on the kingly aspect (Rev. 5:10; see Rev. 1:6).
- 3) Citing a series of Old Testament texts in II Corinthians 6:16-18, Paul stresses first that all Corinthian believers, male and female, are

priests. Then, modifying II Samuel 7:14 to his purpose, he applies God's promise to David's offspring so that it applies to both sons and daughters. Thus, under the new covenant, kingship is conferred upon women as well as men.

In harmony with such texts, the Heidelberg Catechism makes no distinction between male and female believers who share in Christ's anointing and who confess his name. It calls each of them to be "a living sacrifice of thanks . . . and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation and for all eternity" (Q. and A. 32). Thus women share equally with men in all aspects of the "office of believer." Since this is so, it would seem that there would have to be clear and indisputable evidence to the contrary to keep women also from functioning in the office of elder, minister, evangelist, and deacon.

f. Women as witnesses and agents of special revelation in the new covenant

Women were the first to see the risen Christ and were thus the first witnesses of the resurrection (Matt. 28:1-10). The prophetic utterances of Mary and Elizabeth are recorded (Luke 1:39-56), and through them God continues to instruct the church. The Samaritan woman to whom Jesus ministered (John 4:7-42) led many to believe in him as a result of her testimony.

g. Women as fellow workers in Christ for the gospel

In ways that far outstrip the ministry of women in the old covenant, women under the new covenant are described as carrying out many leadership roles in the church. Phoebe is a "deacon" and a "helper" (Rom. 16:1-2). Priscilla and Aquila are both called "my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3); they are also noted for instructing the mighty Apollos more fully in the gospel (Acts 18:24-26). Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis are called "hard workers" in the Lord (Rom. 16:6, 12). These examples are important not simply because they exhibited commendable zeal but particularly because Paul sometimes uses these words ("hard worker") to describe those who have a leadership role in the church (I Thess. 5:12), including the work of preaching and teaching (I Tim. 5:17). Even more surprisingly, Paul refers to Andronicus and Junia (many translations have the masculine "Junias," but that masculine form of the name has never been found), who are said to be "outstanding among the apostles." Thus it is almost certain that this woman (wife) was among the foundational apostles of the church. And finally there were Apphia, who, along with Archippus, was a leader in the church that met in Philemon's house (Philem. 2), and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2), who were true "fellow workers" and who labored "side by side" with Paul in the cause of the gospel.

These specific cases of women in leadership roles in the new covenant support the notion that the baptismal confession of Galatians 3:28 functioned powerfully in the church. Women not only equally shared in salvation but were amazingly and to a surprising degree involved in essential leadership roles in the early church.

h. Passages which seem to disagree with this part of the biblical witness

The case for opening the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to qualified women rests upon the general analogy of Scripture, that is, on the “obvious scope and import of its teachings as a whole.” There would have to be explicit and universally binding scriptural arguments against this teaching in order to overturn it. Some think that such evidence exists in I Corinthians 11:2-16, I Corinthians 14:33b-35, and I Timothy 2:9-15. These texts may not be dismissed; they are to be dealt with according to Reformed hermeneutics, and their teaching must be honored. Rightly interpreted, these passages, too, can properly be understood to be in harmony with the general analogy of Scripture that has just been presented.

1) I Corinthians 11:2-16

In Corinth the believing women were exercising their new-found freedom in Christ and were participating in the worship service by praying and prophesying. Paul in no way discouraged the women from praying and prophesying, but he did insist that they show proper decorum in doing so, probably by wearing long hair and an appropriate head covering. To support his concern, he states in I Corinthians 11:3, “I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

How is the term “head” (*kephalê*) used here?³ There are two reasons to suggest that here Paul is using “head” to mean “source.” First, in Greek the term “head” (*kephalê*), when used in a metaphorical way, did not mean “have authority over.” It wasn’t until later in Ephesians and Colossians, that Paul used it that way when he referred to Christ, so the Corinthians most likely would have understood *kephalê* as “source.” Second, when Paul elaborates later on the man-woman relationship (I Cor. 11:8-9), he elaborates on the idea of “source” (“for man did not come from woman but woman from man. . .”). In the context, then, *kephalê* (“head”) probably has that same meaning in verse 3.

It is also uncertain whether the references are to “man” or “husband” and to “woman” or “wife,” since the Greek words used here can mean either. Elsewhere in his letters Paul often takes pains to protect the relationship between husbands and wives, and that may also be his most important concern in I Corinthians 11. But there are some more inclusive statements here (such as “every man prophesying” and “every woman prophesying”) that make it difficult to limit what Paul says here only to the marriage relationship. Even though acknowledging that man and woman have equality in praying and prophesying and mutual dependence in the Lord (I Cor. 11:11-12), he insists that women have their heads covered while praying and prophesying, because of man’s being the source of woman (vv. 3, 8-9), because of the angels (v. 10), because of what “nature itself” teaches

³For an accounting of the major problems here, see footnote 1.

(v.14), and because of the widespread practices in the churches at that time (v. 16).

But the church over time has judged that the wearing of head coverings by women is an application of a principle rather than the principle itself, and therefore it has not usually required women in other cultures to cover their heads. In fact, this passage clearly permits a woman to pray and prophesy in the worship services as long as she does so with proper decorum. So this passage supports rather than opposes what the Bible as a whole teaches, namely, that women and men share equally not only in salvation in Christ but also in the responsibility of working for—and even prophetically proclaiming—the gospel.

2) I Corinthians 14:33b-35

The context of I Corinthians 14:33b-35 (see I Cor. 14:26-33a) speaks of the proper decorum during worship gatherings involving those who speak in tongues and those who prophesy. Participants—including prophets—must know when to keep silent (I Cor. 14:28-30). Wives also should be silent; they are not permitted to speak, and they must be in submission. If they wish to inquire about something, they are urged to ask their own husbands at home, since to do otherwise is disgraceful (I Cor. 14:33b-35).

Two things are to be noted about I Corinthians 14: (a) Paul here applies his instruction to the marriage relationship, since he says that the women should “ask their own husbands at home”; (b) the injunction to be silent was obviously not meant to be absolute, for that would contradict I Corinthians 11. So Paul must in this context be referring to the kind of disruptive speech that would be inappropriate in the marriage relationship and dishonoring to the God of peace who had called them. God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

To hear the enduring message of this passage, we must again distinguish between a principle and the application of a principle. Two principles seem to be at work here: (a) male headship in marriage must be honored, and (b) in worship everything must be done in an orderly and edifying way. As principles, these are valid for all times and places. The application of these principles in Paul’s day, in the rather free-flowing worship services at Corinth, required forbidding wives to speak in a disorderly way. Today, compliance with these principles means that wives (or women) may participate in the worship service as long as their participation does not violate headship in marriage and is not disruptive or unedifying.

3) I Timothy 2:9-15

Four features of I Timothy 2:9-15 deserve mention: (a) in the church women should pray and dress modestly and adorn themselves with good deeds rather than external finery (2:9-10); (b) women are to learn but must do so in quietness and full submission (2:11); (c) Paul does not permit a wife (or woman) to teach or usurp authority over a husband (man) (2:12); (d) he bases this restriction on creation and the fall (2:13-14) but concludes with a message of hope for the woman (2:15).

Timothy was left in Ephesus to combat false teachers (I Tim. 1:3-7) who were promoting speculative theories and wrong ideas about the law, leading many astray. They seem to have had considerable influence among some women, especially younger widows (5:11-15). It seems that some of the younger widows (5:13) were even propagating this false teaching and some (5:15) had already capitulated to Satan. The false teachers seemed to be forbidding marriage and advocating other ascetic practices (4:3). The injunctions in I Timothy 2:11-15 can best be understood against this polemical background.

The meaning of verse 12 is crucial, though it raises three disputable issues.⁴ It seems likely that here again Paul is addressing the marriage relationship. The word “submission” is the same one used in Ephesians 5:22 and I Corinthians 14:34, where marriage is being discussed. And since I Timothy 2:15 refers to women being saved through childbearing, Paul seems to have the marriage relationship in mind—as he does in I Corinthians 14:33b-35.

Although the word *authentēin* in I Timothy 2:12 can mean “to have authority over,” it seems likely that here it has the more pejorative force of “to usurp authority over,” as in the King James translation. One point in favor of the latter is that Paul uses a different word in I Corinthians 7:4 when he affirms that in marriage a woman has authority over the body of her husband just as the husband has authority over the body of his wife. Given the context of teaching in I Timothy 2:12, what is probably being prohibited is the exercise of the wrong kind of authority within marriage, the domineering kind of usurping authority.

Paul’s injunctions in I Timothy 2:11-12 are rooted in an appeal first of all to the creation story: Adam was first formed, then Eve (2:13). (Paul made the same appeal in I Corinthians 11:8-10 in grounding his injunction for women to wear head coverings in worship.) This affirmation is best understood here as countering the false teachers who were forbidding marriage and advocating other ascetic practices by not adequately recognizing the good creation order (I Tim. 4:1-5).

The meaning of I Timothy 2:14-15 is notoriously difficult to interpret. These verses carry the argument about women in the church beyond anything we have elsewhere in Paul. Yet this very fact supports the suggestion that the entire passage has in mind a very specific problem in Ephesus, specifically, the one pictured in I Timothy 5:11-15. Gordon Fee (*Gospel and Spirit*, pp. 57-59) interprets verses 14 and 15 in a way that seems right:

Based on words of Eve in Genesis 3:13 (“the serpent deceived me, and I ate”), Paul states that Adam was not deceived (by the snake, that is), but rather it was the woman (note the change from Eve to “the woman”), who having been deceived (by Satan is implied) fell into transgression. That is exactly the point of 5:15—such deception of woman by “Satan” has already been repeated in the church at Ephesus. But, Paul says in verse 15, there is still hope she can be saved (eschatological salvation is ultimately in view, but in the context she

⁴For a description of these points, see footnote 2.

shall be saved from her deception with its ultimate transgressions), provided she is first of all a woman of faith, love, and holiness.

In summary, Paul in I Timothy 2:11-15 is seeking to preserve the integrity of marriage by forbidding women to teach their husbands in a domineering way. The reason for these injunctions can best be seen over against the false teachings that were troubling the church at Ephesus. Paul is here spelling out the application of the principle of male headship in marriage because of the kind of feminism that was present in Ephesus. Paul's injunction against teaching done in a domineering way is similar to his insistence in I Corinthians 11 on head coverings for women when they are praying and prophesying. Such a reading of what Paul teaches here regarding marriage and piety suggests that if women teach and exercise the authority of leadership without domineering, then there is no objection to their using these gifts for the upbuilding of the church.

3. Summary and conclusions

Male and female were equally created in God's image (Gen. 1); male priority in marriage was established with the first couple, Adam and Eve (Gen. 2). Sin corrupted what was originally intended, with dire consequences (Gen. 3). Throughout the Old Testament, leadership in the religious community was dominantly male. In addition, some aspects of the old covenant indicated the diminished status of the female. Through the prophets, God promised that a day of renewal was coming in which he would make a new covenant that would go far beyond the old covenant and its practices.

Part of the newness of the new covenant is that the equality of male and female was reestablished (Gal. 3). To be sure, male priority in marriage as depicted in Genesis 2 continues, but it is now revitalized by the sacrificial love of Christ (Eph. 5). The renewed status of women meant that they held leadership roles within the New Testament church that went far beyond those of the old covenant. For reasons of decorum and to protect the marriage relationship, Paul found it necessary to restrict the manner of functioning (I Cor. 11) and sometimes the role of married women (I Cor. 14; I Tim. 2). But this evidence is not sufficient to overturn the general analogy of Scripture that all the rights and privileges of the office of believer belong to women as well as to men.

To be sure, throughout the history of the church, some of these passages—especially I Timothy 2—have been understood as prohibiting (a) women from voting in civil elections, (b) women from voting in congregational meetings of the church, (c) women from serving in any of the church offices, and (d) women from serving in the office of elder, minister, and evangelist. On several of these issues there has already been progress in the understanding of these texts. There may be a parallel in this situation to in the church's progress in its understanding of Scripture's teaching on human slavery. For many centuries certain regulations in the Old and New Testaments were understood as permitting, if not encouraging, human slavery. More recently, the church has progressed in understanding that at its core the Scriptures teach the kind of human equality that prohibits slavery. So, too, the church may be progressing in understanding that the

oneness and equality of male and female are more basic than the temporary regulations regarding the functions of wives/women. Thus the most obvious teaching of Scripture is that both qualified male and female members of the church should serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

IV. Differences and ecclesiastical unity

A. Introduction

The issue of women's ordination is one of the most vexing theological dilemmas in the history of the Christian Reformed Church. Whether this is due to our stubbornness and sinfulness or to inadequacies in our hermeneutic, we have failed to reach a consensus. As a result, we are now faced with issues that go far beyond the ordination of women. One of them is ecclesiastical unity.

When Synod 1995 stated that on this issue "there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scripture as the infallible Word of God," it implied that we cannot realistically expect to convince each other of one position or the other solely on the grounds of biblical argumentation. Some members welcomed this statement as giving biblical and theological integrity to both positions. Others saw it as an impossible attempt to validate two irreconcilable positions.

This serious difference raises urgent questions. How does a church deal responsibly with an issue about which there is fundamental and long-standing disagreement? How long may a church allow such an issue to consume the time and energy of her members? At what point is it justifiable to take or retain a position that deeply unsettles others? What differences are allowable under our common submission to God's Word? When do we have the biblical authorization to go separate ways?

Faced with questions like these, this study committee senses a need to ask for light from the Bible that can show us the way. Living in biblical times would have made the answer relatively easy. When God first called Israel to be his covenant nation, he made provisions by which his will could be known. In addition to his "word disclosure" to Moses, God provided the Urim and Thummim for use when the will of God on a matter of national significance was unclear (cf. Num. 27:21). Later in Old Testament history, the Urim and Thummim gave way to the prophetic word. When they were uncertain about the will of God, the leaders could consult a prophet, who would mediate God's intentions. Eventually, prophetism as a form of additional revelation ended, and the corpus of the closed canon remained as the primary means by which God's will was to be determined.

At times the church may look back with longing to the previous stages when God's revelation was supplemented by physical signs (the Urim and Thummim) or by additional verbal explanation (the word of the prophet). The reality is that today we must attempt to determine God's will as correctly as possible by the only means available to us, his written Word. But that Word is subject to interpretation, and even when our confession about the Bible is the same, we do not always agree on the meaning of individual texts.

Since we as a denomination have failed to come to a consensus in interpreting God's Word about women in office even though we have sought the

guidance of the Spirit, what choices are open to us? One choice is to perpetuate the study and debate of this matter in the patterns we have been following, a course of action that does not look fruitful. Another option is to accent our differences and to draw the conclusion that we cannot live together in one denomination, a course of action that creates problems far beyond the issue at hand. A third choice is to acknowledge our differences and yet maintain unity because the present divergences of opinion, though significant, are not of such an essential nature that they warrant division of the church.

In the section that follows, a case will be made for the third option. The call for unity in no way implies that our pursuit of unity may supplant the need for diligent listening to ascertain the truth of God's Word in every aspect of its message. A plea for unity may never be a substitute for pursuing a correct interpretation of the Bible. However, when faced with serious differences, we need to be reminded from Scripture that the Lord of the church hardly views unity as a mere accessory.

B. Characterizing the issue

The present polarization in the denomination is directly tied in with how we categorize the issue of women in office and the church's stand on that issue. Some view the church's stand as a reflection of fundamental and confessional principles of Scripture. Others suggest that the issue may be viewed as *adiaphora*, like eating meat versus eating only vegetables (see Rom. 14).

Is women's ordination confessional in the sense that the main articles of the Apostles' Creed are confessional? Does it merit classification along with essential doctrines of salvation or the nature of God? Does it undermine the teachings about Jesus, his birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and present reign? Does it detract from the Bible's teaching about the Holy Spirit and the way of salvation? In a case of serious doctrinal error we know what needs to be done. If this ordination issue were an essential confessional issue, our salvation would depend on it. That is not the case.

Is women's leadership among God's people a moral issue, like committing adultery, killing, stealing, or any other violation of God's covenant code? If it were, the Lord himself would hardly have used Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah in positions of authority. If it were such a moral issue, it would test whether our faith is real or fake.

Does the issue then belong to the *adiaphora*, the disputable matters? We judge that such a designation is not really satisfactory either. In I Corinthians 11:16 Paul concludes his discourse on the relationship between men and women in the church with this rather blunt statement: "If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God." His stance here is different from the tolerance about the *adiaphora* he expresses in Romans 14.

Then what kind of issue is it? Perhaps a more helpful approach can be made from the wisdom literature of the Bible. The Bible's wisdom literature is intended to help God's people to model their conduct, individually and communally, after the principles that reflect God's will for living beneficial and productive lives.

In the Old Testament, especially in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is personified as emanating from God. In Proverbs 1, for example, wisdom is presented

as a person calling to be heard and to be heeded. Proverbs stresses that, by hearing the voice of wisdom, God's people can learn how to live in a manner pleasing to God and advantageous to the well-being of themselves and society. Wisdom literature in the Old Testament is a clearly identifiable type of writing, or genre. In the New Testament, however, wisdom is more an integration of principles rather than a personification or a separate genre.

Within the New Testament Christian community, God's people are called to embody wisdom in new ways, in keeping with the fuller revelation that has come in Jesus Christ. Here wisdom is first of all the revealed means of salvation through the redemptive work of Christ (I Cor. 2:7; Rom. 11:33). To be truly wise is to know and believe the mysterious will of God leading to salvation. Second, those who have been transformed by this wisdom of God are called to live as personifications of God's wisdom for life (Eph. 4:17-6:9, note especially 5:15-16). The personification of wisdom within the body of Christ is to be visible in the conduct of individual members as well as in their various relationships, e.g., spousal, parent-child, and even slave-master relationships. Within the church there is the expectation that the members of God's family will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the wisdom of God. Accordingly, the church was given wisdom principles to guide her in the regulation of worship and in the appointment of officebearers (I Tim. 2:3; I Cor. 11:2-16).

Wisdom principles help people pull together insights and truths from a number of spheres: the nature of the created order, observable societal principles and circumstances, and, in particular, the nature of humankind as illuminated by God's special revelation. Wisdom teachings provide boundaries and goals for human life in the presence of God.

Couldn't the women-in-office issue be approached from a similar perspective? How can the church act wisely today? How can it discern the nature of God's created order, God's intention for the relationship between male and female within the body of Christ, and the ministry of the church in the world today? The debated New Testament passages about women's roles in the church are embedded in passages where Paul addresses the organizational life of God's people, and great wisdom is required to discern their meaning.

Characterizing the issue as a wisdom issue seems more accurate than categorizing it as a doctrinal, moral, or disputable matter, as summarized above. Characterizing an issue as a wisdom matter in no way lessens the authority of any passage of Scripture from which the teaching is drawn. But attempting to characterize an issue properly is of genuine help in discerning the area and the extent of our differences on the issue. It also helps us to know how to respond appropriately when we reach differing conclusions.

What a blessing that the issue is neither doctrinal nor moral! That means that our differences in understanding the passages from Paul separate us neither from Christ nor from the one new humanity he is creating. Therefore, we don't have to walk away from each other, reject each other, excommunicate each other. Instead, we can address the issue out of our common tie to Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

This conclusion also helps us on the matter of conscience, which has been raised by representatives on both sides of the issue. It has been argued that when synod makes a decision that some judge to be contrary to their interpretation of Scripture and therefore wrong—whether for or against women in all

offices—conscience should play a major role in one’s response. However, when the difference can be characterized as pertaining to neither an essential doctrine nor a moral standard but as belonging to the area of biblical wisdom principles, responding with a “conscientious objection” may not be as appropriate as recognizing and conceding a “serious difference of judgment” which needs to be resolved within the unity of Christ’s church. Then, in spite of sharp differences on the issue, we are freed up to recognize and celebrate our continuing unity in him who is our peace (Eph. 2:14-18).

C. Biblical directives on unity

1. Passages demonstrating the ideal of unity

Of the numerous New Testament passages which call for unity among Jesus’ followers, perhaps the most moving of all is John 17:20-23. In what has become known as the high-priestly prayer, Jesus shows deep compassion for the well-being of his church. He points to threats which will come from external forces, from the devil’s manifestation of power (John 17:11-19). He also addresses the internal threat of disunity (John 17:20-23). Most noteworthy is his deep desire and abiding will, captured in the repetition of verses 21 and 23, that unity within his church is to be a witness to the world: “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (v. 23). The Lord’s goals for the church are furthered through unity. Disunity is a negative witness, both to the outside world and to the church’s own members, especially to the young, new Christians, and the weak in faith.

Christ’s emphasis in John 17 is expanded in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. The members of the church, i.e., “those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” (I Cor. 1:2), have an urgent responsibility to work for unity (I Cor. 1:10-13). Quarrels and divisions within the body are in direct opposition to what the church fellowship ought to be like. Paul understood that his mandate as an apostle was so to proclaim the gospel that all eyes would be fixed on the central figure of Christ. Partisan allegiances which divide the body detract from that essential goal of the gospel ministry.

2. Passages giving guidance on how to handle difference and error

In Ephesians 4:3 the apostle Paul commands, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Significantly, he doesn’t simply command the keeping of the unity in Christ; he provides practical guidance on how that unity is to be maintained. In verses 4-6 he lists what all believers have in common—one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. In other words, when faced with disunity, the church must appeal to the essential core of the Christian faith.

In some respects, the presence of differences can actually enhance the life of the body of Christ. For example, in I Corinthians 12 Paul shows that diversity within the body is a necessary and healthy characteristic of the church (see also Rom. 12:4). To be sure, the diversity he mentions here refers to a variety of spiritual gifts, not differing or conflicting interpretations of Scripture. Nevertheless, his emphasis on recognizing and accepting diversity without quickly judging each other as inferior or superior is instructive about the attitude that ought to prevail within the body of

Christ. This attitude is supremely characterized in that wonderful thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians, in which the call for faith, hope, and love culminates in the declaration that “the greatest of these is love.”

Love, in the biblical fullness of that word, is not a substitute for Christian obedience to God’s Word. Rather, as I John repeatedly stresses, obedience and love are inseparable. Love is the essential uniting factor which enables the Christian community to remain focused upon its goal of glorifying God through building his kingdom. For that reason Paul also prays that “love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Phil.1:9-10). When the church is divided by differences, it is tragically impoverished both with respect to its mission to proclaim the gospel and its ability to disciple its own members into a fuller expression of sanctified obedience.

Since all of Jesus’ disciples are one in him, the abiding goal is to bring this unity to visible expression, though there will always be forces to divide the church. Philippians 4:2-3 provides a personal call to each believer to make every effort to agree with the others in the Lord. The qualifying phrase “in the Lord” is essential for understanding the dynamics of Paul’s appeal. Our unity is in Christ, and it is only as we focus on him as Savior and as Lord of the church that we can express and maintain this unity. In Philippians 4, as in I Corinthians 1:10-13, Paul’s overwhelming concern is the damage that visible disunity does to the mission of the church.

The Bible also teaches that God’s people ought to walk together in humility and a spirit of mutual service. Humility requires that “we consider others better” than ourselves (Phil. 2:3) and that we “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21). The false gospel of our secular society doesn’t make it easy to do so today. It tells us to put our individual selves first and to stress the rights to which we are entitled. That attitude easily translates into a mindset which assumes that we have a God-given right to have a congregation and/or denomination in which all think the same about matters far beyond the central doctrines and morals which mark us as Christians. When this happens, it is no longer the Lord who determines the parameters of his church; we do.

How Christians must treat each other when facing significant but nonessential differences is highlighted by Paul’s instruction on how to approach those who are guilty of basic error. The early church encountered false teachers who held that the resurrection had already taken place. Paul tells Timothy that in preaching and defending the truth he must not be quarrelsome, irritable, and resentful so that he, as the Lord’s servant, would not be an obstacle to the repentance of these false teachers. Instead, he must “be kind to everyone,” including his opponents, and instruct them “gently,” with “the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” (II Tim. 2:24-26). Even in the face of such error, the approach of the gospel bearer has to be such that positive contact is maintained. How much more true that should be among those who confess Christ as Lord, according to the Scriptures!

3. Voices of past leaders

It is instructive to note how diversity of opinion was dealt with in the time of the Reformation. The Reformers appealed first of all to the Word of God as the foundation for all doctrinal truth. However, in the presence of doctrinal diversity, the doctrine of the church also became vitally important. We see this truth illustrated in two different but comparable ways in the writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Martin Luther, as is well known, abhorred the thought of leaving the church. For him, what provided the essence of the church on earth was the real presence of Christ in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. In his opinion, as long as the gospel was preached and the sacraments observed, one was not to separate from that church. In fact, Luther was always ready to advocate reform within the church rather than separation or division. It was not until 1537-1538 that he came to a definitive acceptance of the division that existed in the church. But even later, in his treatise *On the Councils and the Church*, written in 1539, he recognized that even if ecclesiastical councils make errant proclamations and decisions on important theological matters, those errors don't necessarily provide reason enough for individuals to reject the authority of the council or to separate from the church. In Luther's view, as long as the gospel is being preached in the church, thereby demonstrating the real presence of Christ, it is necessary to work toward reformation from within.

For John Calvin, too, a doctrinal understanding of the church was crucial when it came to the issue of how to deal with diversity of opinion and interpretation. The fourth book of the *Institutes* is devoted to his study of the church. In Chapter 1, Sections 10-20, he argues strenuously that, as long as the marks of the true church are present, it is unwarranted to separate from the church or to participate in schisms on the grounds of error or falsehood within the body. The following lengthy quotation demonstrates Calvin's approach:

The pure ministry of the Word and pure mode of celebrating the sacraments are, as we say, sufficient pledge and guarantee that we may safely embrace as church any society in which both these marks exist. The principle extends to the point that we must not reject it so long as it retains them, even if it otherwise swarms with many faults.

What is more, some faults may creep into the administration of either doctrine or sacraments, but this ought not to estrange us from communion with the church. For not all the articles of doctrine are of the same sort. Some are so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion. Such are: God is one; Christ is God and the Son of God; our salvation rests in God's mercy; and the like. Among the churches there are other articles of doctrine disputed which still do not break the unity of faith. Suppose that one church believes—short of unbridled contention and opinionated stubbornness—that souls upon leaving bodies fly to heaven; while another, not daring to define the place, is convinced nevertheless that they live to the Lord. What churches would disagree on this one point? Here are the apostle's words: "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be of the same mind; and if you be differently minded in anything, God shall reveal this also to you" [Phil. 3:15]. Does this not sufficiently indicate that a difference of opinion over these nonessential matters should in no wise be the basis of schism among Christians? First and foremost, we should agree on all points. But since all men are somewhat beclouded with ignorance, either we must leave no church remaining, or we must condone

delusion in those matters which can go unknown without harm to the sum of religion and without loss of salvation.

(*Institutes* IV. 1. 12)

According to the criteria presented by both Luther and Calvin, dividing the church over an issue such as women in office is justified only if it can be clearly demonstrated that the church has lost the marks of the true church and has, in fact, lost the real presence of Christ in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. When members are unable or unwilling to make such a claim, in the Reformers' opinion, the onus rests upon members to remain within the church, working where necessary toward reform and a clearer understanding of the Word of God.

The voice of Reformers such as Luther and Calvin is echoed in more recent periods of our Reformed church history. Another instructive voice is that of the respected leader Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), who echoes their stance on church unity every bit as forcefully. In his *Treatise on the Reformation of the Churches*, Kuyper pictures two scenarios:

One: You see and know that your church has become a synagogue of Satan. If that is the case, you must leave her without delay and shake off the dust of your feet against her. But if you see and know that she has not become a synagogue of Satan as yet, you may not send her the certificate of divorce. On the contrary, it is your duty to remain. (P. 162)

Following Calvin's footsteps, we would want to admonish everyone most earnestly to see if the church, which he wishes to leave, has indeed been abandoned by God to the extent that she has not only lost her well-being but even the essence of a church. You may not withhold your love from your church because she is sick or mutilated. Rather, on account of this sickness she may claim even greater compassion on your part. (P. 176)

4. Synodical studies: implications and conclusions about unity

As the discussion of women in office unfolded in the Christian Reformed Church and significant differences of understanding came sharply to the fore, the issue of church unity necessarily received more and more attention. The following summary may prove helpful.

In 1978, synod's advisory committee pointed to the discussion in the 1950s on women's suffrage in the church. It observed,

... from that page of history we can learn. There was unity in the church. . . . Yet, at the same time that there was unity, there was also diversity. . . . The church must respect its diversity within its unity. . . . The advisory committee believes that on this sensitive issue . . . our love for Christ and his church must compel us to put our personal preferences aside, and to believe that the Spirit of truth will lead us into the truth and will enable us to "lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

(*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 103-04)

In 1981 the advisory committee of synod approached the issue from a different angle. It stated, "To preserve and nurture the unity with which we begin, the following are biblical and confessional teachings we want to hold before ourselves as common ground from which our differing interpretations proceed." It went on to list (a) that both man and woman are fully made in the image of God, (b) both are recipients of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, (c) they share spiritual equality in Christ, (d) women are gifted

by the Holy Spirit no less than men, (e) both participate in the anointing from the Holy Spirit with its consequent knowledge of the truth, and (f) both share equally in the office of believers.

The study committee on women in office that reported in 1984 offered an extensive note entitled “A Preliminary Caution,” which pleaded, among other things, for mutual understanding:

We urge everyone who is considering the question of the ordination of women to do so with charity and humility. We ask everyone to acknowledge that the matter is not crystal-clear. If it were, it would have been solved long ago. Some of the most gifted theological minds and pastoral hearts in our denomination have wrestled with this matter and have come to different conclusions. This alone should suffice to eliminate stridency from our discussions. *(Acts of Synod 1984, p. 286)*

This caution was echoed by Synod 1984’s advisory committee on women in office:

The advisory committee observes that gifted and devout students of the Bible do not agree on what the main passages say. . . . Humility, openness, and mutual respect are therefore appropriate attitudes as we seek, by the leading of God’s Spirit, a decision that will at the same time build us up and hold us together. . . . In some cases we have yielded to the temptation of doubting each other’s faithfulness. As the study committee wisely observes, we must now go beyond this, resolving to treat each other with strong love and to reach with respectful compassion to those who feel hurt or disappointment by synod’s decision. *(Acts of Synod 1984, p. 621)*

Several synods went out of their way to stress our unity by stating that the issue of women in office is not on a par with what we need to believe for our salvation. Synod 1989 stated, “Decisions made by synod at least since 1978 indicate that the ‘women in office’ issue has not been regarded as a creedal matter, but as a church order matter” *(Acts of Synod 1989, Art. 15, B, Ground 2, p. 433; see also Acts of Synod 1990, Art. 92, p. 654, Ground b)*. The most forceful expression comes from Synod 1995, which adopted the recommendation to

urge the churches to recognize that this issue is not one of salvation and that even in our differences we remain sisters and brothers in Christ.

Ground: Unity in the church will come only when we focus on him who unites us, Christ Jesus our Lord, instead of on those issues on which we differ. *(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 736)*

5. Conclusion

The firmly held differences regarding the women-in-office issue have placed a severe strain on the unity we have in Christ. Some are not sure that the Christian Reformed Church still desires to remain true to the Word of God. Others have definitely interpreted the actions of Synod 1995 as a sign that the church has forsaken its loyalty to Scripture and has capitulated to trends in society contrary to God’s Word. On the basis of that interpretation some members and congregations have even left our fellowship, and some denominations with which we had long-standing relations have cut these ties. This is a sad development for everyone involved.

To this point in the history of the women-in-office debate within the Christian Reformed Church, the diversity of opinion has in some ways been

like a strong centrifugal force, tearing apart those who belong together. In the preceding sections we have demonstrated how other doctrines and conclusions with regard to the unity of the body of Christ may provide a strong enough centripetal force to withstand and overcome the forces which divide. In light of the biblical demand for unity, few developments could create greater joy in the present situation than the nurturing of mutual trust, the exercising of patience where there is a lack of clarity, and the healing of the ties that have been broken, both within the denomination and within the broader church community.

V. The use of women's gifts

Directly connected to the issue of women's ordination to all offices in the church but overshadowed by the thirty-year debate is the use of women's gifts. How important is this issue? It has to do with the use of the gifts of the majority of the church's members! Women have received the Holy Spirit and his gifts in the same measure as men have. What happens with respect to the exercise of women's gifts has a huge bearing on the life and ministry of the church. When the use of women's gifts gets overshadowed by a debate about women in ecclesiastical offices, the consequences are serious.

How can the debate about women in office overshadow the full use of all women's gifts? One way is through benign neglect. Since the debate creates discomfort, an easy reaction is to shy away entirely from all ways to use women's gifts. Another way is to conclude in instances where the church has opened up one or more of the offices to women that the use of women's gifts need no longer be pursued with full vigor. On the other hand, when a council takes the position that women ought not to serve in official positions of leadership, it may view the full use of women's gifts as a luxury the church can survive without. Male council members may even come to an unspoken conclusion that a fuller use of women's gifts could undermine their stance on women in office, and therefore, intentionally, they may avoid attempts to correct this unsatisfactory situation. The very synod that appointed this committee failed to strike an appropriate balance between male and female members—an example of how, consciously or unconsciously, we as a denomination can be negligent about the use of women's gifts.

Already in 1975, when synod had before it a recommendation to permit women to serve in all offices of the church, it addressed the use of women's gifts. Within the context of saying no to opening the offices to women, it decided to "urge the churches to make all possible use . . . of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church." It added two strong reasons. First, the "many gifts and talents" which the Holy Spirit has given to women "can and should be used for the edification of the church." Second, "some of the gifts and talents given to women are presently not being fully used." Synod then proceeded to appoint a committee of women and men "to help the churches implement" this recommendation (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78).

In 1992 synod once again strongly encouraged the churches "to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches," specifying such uses as passing on the Word of God and providing pastoral care. It cited these compelling reasons: "Any failure of the church to use women's gifts results in serious impoverishment of the church's life and inhibits women's joyful service in the church" (I Cor. 12). And synod observed,

“Women already minister in these capacities on mission fields with great blessing” (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700).

These synodical appeals for the use of women’s gifts are still valid. The reason is simple. The appeal is fully biblical and needs to be heeded, whether or not the local council favors or opposes the opening of all offices to qualified women. Structuring the life and ministry of the churches for full use of the Spirit-given gifts of women is the only obedient response to the Lord of the church. Some churches, though opposed to the use of women’s gifts in ordained offices, have developed valuable programs for their use in ministries of discipleship, worship, administration, and pastoral support.

The committee believes that there is more than adequate reason for synod to challenge all the churches to make biblically appropriate use of the spiritual gifts of women wherever Scripture instructs and/or allows. One result will be that the church’s ministry will increase in range, richness, and effectiveness. Another will be that its women members will gain a stronger sense of place in the church and of the role the Lord of the church wants them to have.

VI. Concluding comments

In the process of its deliberations the committee reviewed the following options. One is to reverse the decision of Synod 1995 and to return to the position of Synod 1994, closing all ruling offices to women. A second option is to retain the 1995 decision as is, with its regional approach. If we retain the decision of 1995, there is the possibility of modifying it, either by restricting it further or opening it up further. Lastly, there is the option of simply removing all references to gender in Church Order Article 3-a, thereby eliminating all impediments to women serving in any of the offices of the church. Which way should synod go?

At first the most attractive options are the two that settle the issue permanently. Should synod turn the clock back to the no vote of 1994? There are a number of reasons why that is not advisable. First, although the case presented at that synod for excluding women from all authority-exercising offices of the church was argued as strongly as has been done in the entire history of the debate, it was not convincing to a large segment of the denomination. What awakened the strongest reaction was the assertion that Scripture’s teaching on the issue is clear. At the following synod even the minority of the advisory committee, though rejecting the opening of ruling offices to women, recommended that synod declare “that Synod 1994, in stating that ‘Scripture was clear’ failed to recognize that both sides had faithfully sought to interpret Scripture on this issue.” Returning to the no vote of Synod 1994 is not a viable option unless much greater clarity has been achieved. Furthermore, there is the practical problem of what to do in those instances where women have been ordained to ruling offices and are serving with good effect and much appreciation. To reverse the present permission would take very convincing reasons.

What about the other decisive option, that of simply deleting the word “male” from Church Order Article 3-a? In light of the number of councils and classes that have already declared the word “male” “inoperative,” that is an attractive option for some. It leaves each local church free to ordain and install women in all offices and to delegate them without restriction. It also means that, apart from a second vote of approval by a subsequent synod, the issue would not have to be raised again.

A key question at this point is this: Has insight into the issue grown to the point where synod can settle the issue one way or the other? If not, has the turmoil subsided to the point where it is pastorally wise to do so?

The committee is of the opinion that, since 1995, greater clarity on the issue has, unfortunately, not been achieved. In fact, the degree of public discussion about the issue has been quite limited, probably for a variety of reasons. After twenty-five years or more of debate, one reason is, simply, weariness. Discussion of the issue is, furthermore, a poignant reminder of pain and loss, and not enough healing has taken place for renewed and vigorous discussion. Some have interpreted synod's decision to leave the issue alone for five years as a moratorium on discussion of the issue. Whatever the reasons, greater clarity on the issue eludes us at the present time.

Besides the need for additional clarity, there are additional needs in the churches that must be kept in mind. One is the need to lower the passion level people experience because of the differences of opinion. Another is the need for growth in insight that enables people to keep the differences on the issue in perspective. There is also the need to learn how to approach our differences from out of the unity we have in Christ as well as the need to honor the mutual desire to listen to Scripture as the wholly reliable Word of God. This process requires time. It is greatly helped by our working together side by side in the ministries for which we pray and sacrifice.

Having evaluated the options and considered the absence of a growing consensus about what the Bible says on the issue of women's ordination, the committee judges that the closing of all offices to women (except the office of deacon) is not a viable option. For the same reason—the absence of a growing consensus—together with the need for time for healing and growth, the removal of all restrictions by changing Article 3-a of the Church Order is problematic as well. The committee also notes that in their responses to the committee's survey many churches stated that the present arrangement is probably the best that can be attained under the circumstances.

The committee concludes, therefore, that synod would do well to retain, with modifications, the arrangement begun in 1995. The modifications presented in the guidelines below seek to balance, as much as is feasible, the two stances allowed by Scripture on the issue of women in ruling offices. On the issue of delegating women to synod the committee members are not of one mind. The majority judge, for reasons submitted in the grounds of Recommendation 4, that such delegation should not take place for the next few years. The minority think there are good reasons that such delegation should not be postponed indefinitely. The full use of women's gifts is a major concern of all members of the committee, regardless of their stand on the women-in-office issue. The committee judges that a strong appeal to councils to promote full use of all the Spirit's gifts to women will not only benefit the church's ministry but also make its own contribution to the discussion of the women-in-office issue.

Synod 1995, by calling for a review of its decision in five years, in effect placed a moratorium on discussing this issue on the floor of synod. The committee believes that this hiatus has been beneficial for the denomination. The status of the issue itself, however, is not a happy one. A target date needs to be set by which the church will come to a clearer resolution. In dealing with emotionally charged issues, it is often pastorally wise to provide substantial

time for people to see the differences more clearly than they presently do and to evaluate them with greater balance. For that reason another review in five years seems desirable. Should synod opt for a review in 2005, there is good reason for it not to entertain overtures on the issue until 2003 and for assigning all overtures submitted in 2003 and later to the review committee to be appointed in 2003.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to John Van Ryn (chair), William Koopmans, Gayla Postma, and Jack Vos (reporter) for the discussion of this report.

B. That, although there are within the denomination firmly held differences on the issue of ordaining women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, synod declare that these differences do not separate us either from Christ or from his church and that therefore it is our responsibility to seek earnestly to live together in unity and to minister together for the glory of God.

Grounds:

1. The Lord of the church and his apostles call us to live in unity (John 17; Eph. 4:1-3).
2. In spite of different conclusions they have drawn from Scripture, proponents of both sides have made their cases from Scripture, and they are together in desiring to honor Christ as head of the Church.
3. As a denomination we have a rich heritage together and have been led into many important ministries.
4. Living and serving together in love will be a blessing to us and our children, a witness to other churches and the world, and God glorifying.

C. That synod again urge the church councils and classes to nurture and make appropriate provision for the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to all their members, both women and men.

Grounds:

1. Such use of gifts is an essential part of honoring Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church.
2. Neglect in the use of these gifts impoverishes the church's ministry, witness, and fellowship.
3. Full use of women's gifts is mandatory, regardless of the stance taken on the women-in-office issue.

D. That synod retain the classical-local option approved in 1995 and approve the following regulations as Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a. (The left column contains the committee's proposed regulations; the right column quotes the present Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, derived from the regulations adopted by Synod 1995 [*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735]. Counterpart regulations have been placed opposite each other.)

Proposed supplement

A. In keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, a classis may make an exception to Article 3-a and authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

B. Regulations

1. A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist shall not, out of consideration for the conviction of other classes, delegate women officebearers to synod.

Grounds:

- a. The 1995 decision of synod allows classical-local option in the ordination of women as ministers, elders, and evangelists. Since the majority of classes have not exercised that option, the classes which have taken that decision ought to refrain from delegating women to synod.
- b. For the unity of the church it seems wise at this time to retain this regulation.
- c. The classical-local option adopted by synod allows members to transfer from one congregation to another and congregations to transfer from one classis to another, but a comparable transfer for conviction's sake is not possible at the synodical level.

Note: A minority of the committee has prepared an alternative regulation for Regulation 1. Please refer to the end of this report for the minority's version.

2. A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.
3. 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.

Supplement adopted by Synod 1995

A. A classis may, in response to local needs and circumstances, declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative, and authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

B. Regulations

1. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to delegate women officebearers to synod.

2. A class which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to appoint a woman minister to serve as synodical deputy.
7. Synodical deputies shall not be asked to participate against the dictates of their consciences in any matter relating to ministers of the Word as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.

4. If a local congregation, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, desires to call and ordain a female pastor or evangelist but its classis has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, the classis may declare an exception to Article 3-a and allow the church to proceed, but it may also make an additional ruling that the female pastor may not be delegated to classis until classis extends an invitation. No members of classis shall be required to participate against their convictions in processing ministerial credentials or taking part in a candidate's examination.

Grounds:

- a. This arrangement would allow local congregations to call the personnel they deem necessary while remaining in covenant with their classes and respecting the convictions of neighboring churches that may not approve of women in ordained offices.
 - b. It provides a more viable alternative for such congregations than switching to classes that do permit the ordination of women to all offices.
 - c. This has already proved to be a workable solution in Classis Kalamazoo and Classis Pacific Northwest.
5. A classis that has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist shall nevertheless acknowledge a church's right, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, to take exception to the decision of classis as it applies to the office of elder, provided that the role of women elders is restricted to the local church in which they hold office.
3. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a will remain operative for its constituent churches shall nevertheless acknowledge a church's right, in response to local needs and circumstances, to take exception to the decision of classis as it applies to the office of elder. In such a case, the classis shall not exercise its disciplinary authority to enforce compliance, provided that the role of women elders is restricted to the local church in which they hold office.

Proposed supplement

6. Synodical agencies may appoint or approve the appointment of women as ministers of the Word for fields of labor within classes where women are permitted to hold office. Women ministers may not be approved for fields of labor outside North America where our partner churches do not permit the ordination of women.
7. In the consideration of applications submitted by qualified women for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary 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, but no delegate should vote against a female candidate on the basis of gender alone.
8. The general secretary shall maintain a list of classes that have authorized their constituent churches to ordain and install women and shall publish the list annually in the *Agenda for Synod* and in the *Yearbook*.

Supplement adopted by Synod 1995

6. Synodical agencies shall not appoint women as ministers of the Word to any field of labor within their jurisdiction nor seek to have them installed by a local church.
4. In the consideration of applications for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word submitted by qualified women, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates will not be forced to participate against the dictates of their consciences. In the declaration of candidacy, delegates will exercise their right to abstain from voting without pressure or reprisal.
5. The general secretary shall maintain a list of classes which have decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for their constituent churches, and publish that list annually along with the presentation of candidates for the ministry in *The Banner*.

E. That Synod 2003 appoint a committee consisting of an appropriate balance of men and women to review the classical-local option with respect to women serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and to report its findings to Synod 2005.

Grounds:

1. Since 1995 little public discussion has taken place to bring the church to unified insight into the issue.
2. This time line provides opportunity for continuing discussion.

F. That until the review in 2005, synod make provision to have up to seven women from various regions in the CRC serve as advisers to synod.

Grounds:

1. Women can make a valuable contribution to the work of synod.
2. The presence and input of ethnic advisers have been beneficial to synod and the churches.

G. That synod invite those who have become estranged from the Christian Reformed Church over the issue of women in office to study this report, read it for the further clarity it may provide, and receive it as a warm invitation for the restoration of fellowship; and that synod instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to use this report in suitable ways to promote understanding

among churches with which the denomination has or had ecumenical ties and to seek restoration where these ties have been broken.

H. That synod declare the work of the committee completed.

Committee to Review the Decision re
Women in Office for Synod 2000

Andrew J. Bandstra

Sander de Haan

David H. Engelhard, ex officio

Roger S. Greenway

William T. Koopmans

Gayla Postma

Jai-Sung Shim

John G. Van Ryn

Jack B. Vos

VIII. Minority report re Regulation 1

A minority of the committee recommends the following alternative for Regulation 1:

A classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist shall be allowed to delegate women officebearers to synod, starting in the year 2002.

Grounds:

- a. Synod permits the difference in understanding of the relevant biblical material on the women-in-office issue to be expressed by allowing ordination at the classical-local level.
- b. Permitting women to be delegated to synod flows from the logic of this report.
- c. In determining who should represent classes at synod, congregations and classes, for the well-being of the denomination, should not be restricted more than is absolutely essential.
- d. The starting date allows the classes time for the transition.

Minority Committee for Regulation 1

Sander de Haan

Gayla Postma

Jack B. Vos

Appendix

I. Survey of church councils

Question 1: Are women currently serving in any ordained offices in your congregation?

Chart A. Are women currently serving in any ordained offices in your congregation?

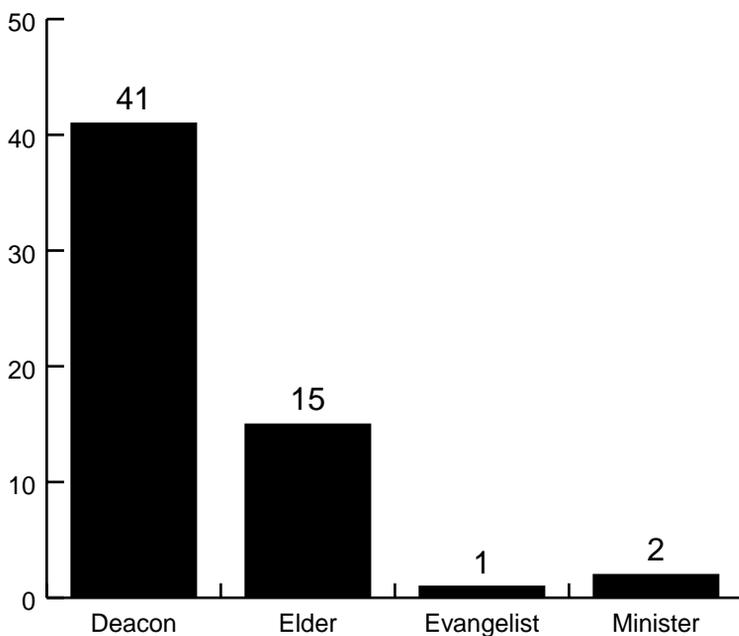


Table 1. Are women currently serving in any ordained offices in your congregation?

Ordained office	% of councils saying yes	(n)
Deacon	41	(730)
Elder	15	(699)
Evangelist	1	(652)
Minister	2	(663)

Question 2: In what ordained offices are women allowed to serve in your congregation?

Table 2. In what ordained offices are women allowed to serve in your congregation?

Ordained office	% of councils saying:			(n)
	allowed	not allowed	don't know	
Deacon	60	39	*	(712)
Elder	28	71	1	(679)
Evangelist	21	78	1	(603)
Minister	18	81	1	(627)

**less than 0.5%*

Question 3: Of council/consistories saying women are allowed to serve in an ordained office, was this by formal decision of the consistory/council?

Table 3. Of councils/consistories saying women are allowed to serve in an ordained office, was this by formal decision of the consistory/council?

Ordained office	% saying by formal decision	(n)
Deacon	83	(409)
Elder	81	(180)
Evangelist	54	(114)
Minister	58	(104)

Question 4: Of councils saying women are not allowed to serve in an ordained office, was this by formal decision of the consistory/council?

Table 4. Of councils/consistories saying women are not allowed to serve in an ordained office, was this by formal decision of the consistory/council?

Ordained office	% saying by formal decision	(n)
Deacon	63	(270)
Elder	54	(462)
Evangelist	48	(443)
Minister	49	(481)

Question 5: Has your classis declared the word “male” inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a?

Chart B. Has your classis declared the word “male” inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a?

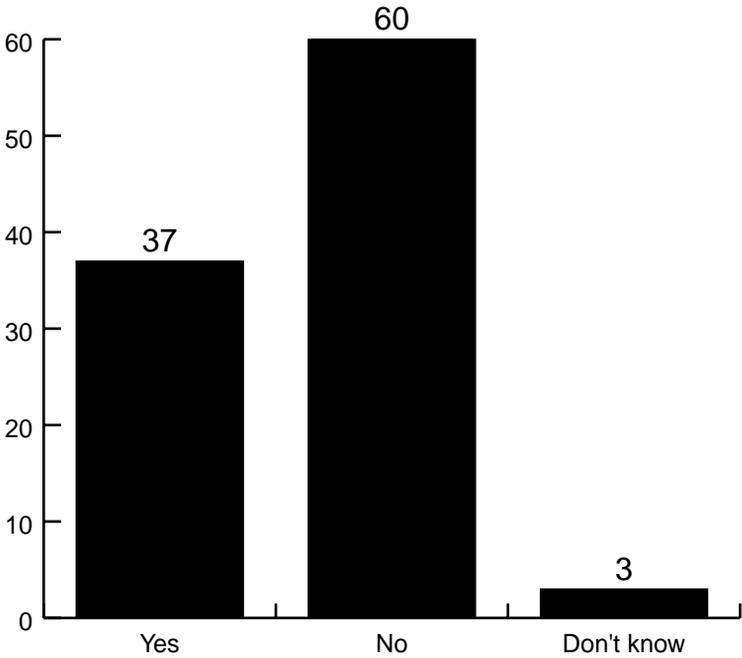


Table 5. Has your classis declared the word “male” inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a?

Response	% of councils saying
Yes	37
No	60
Don't know	3
(n)	(702)

Question 6: Has this issue been divisive in your congregation?

Chart C. Has this issue been divisive in your congregation?

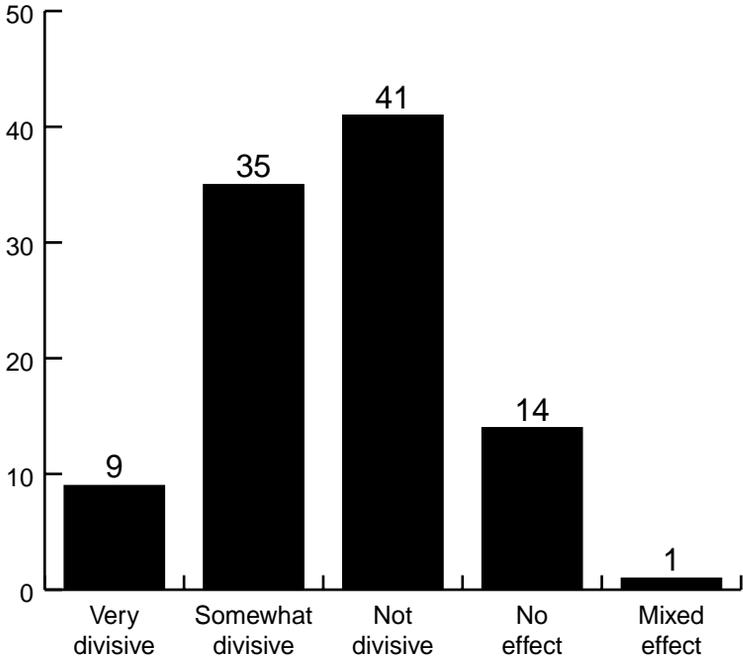


Table 6. Has this issue been divisive in your congregation?

Perceived divisiveness	% of councils
Very divisive	9
Somewhat divisive	35
Not divisive	41
No effect	14
Mixed effect	1
(n)	(738)

Question 7: Is this currently a divisive issue in your congregation?

Chart D. Is this currently a divisive issue in your congregation?

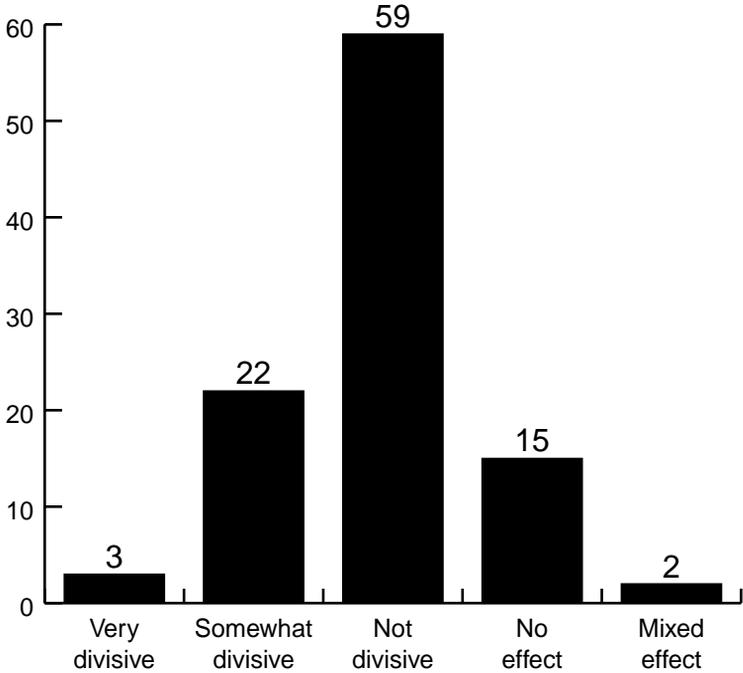


Table 7. Is this currently a divisive issue in your congregation?

Perceived divisiveness	% of councils
Very divisive	3
Somewhat divisive	22
Not divisive	59
No effect	15
Mixed effect	2
(n)	(731)

Question 8: Has the level of divisiveness in your congregation changed since Synod's 1995 decision?

Chart E. Has the level of divisiveness in your congregation changed since Synod's 1995 decision?

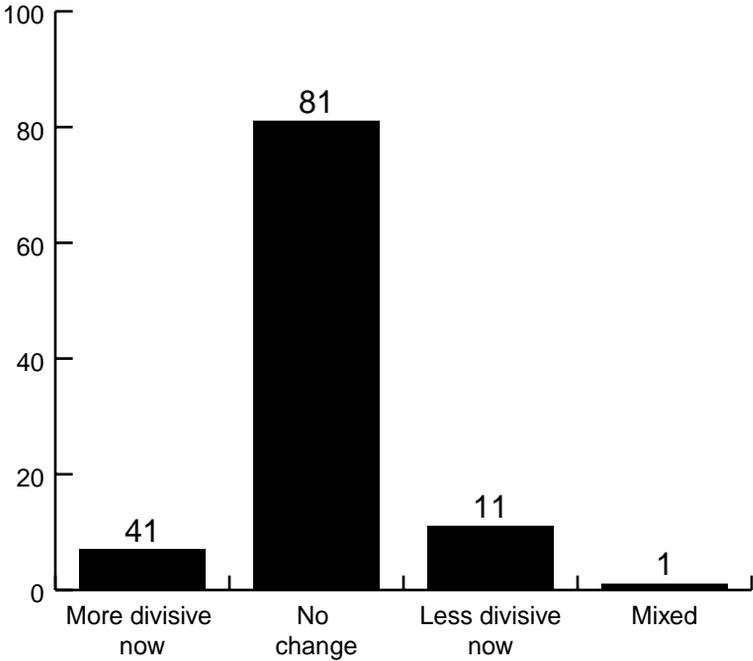


Table 8. Has the level of divisiveness in your congregation changed since Synod's 1995 decision?

Change in level of divisiveness	% of councils saying:
More divisive now	7
No change	81
Less divisive now	11
Mixed	1
(n)	(734)

Question 9: How was Synod 1995's decision perceived in your congregation?

Chart F. How was Synod 1995's decision perceived in your congregation?

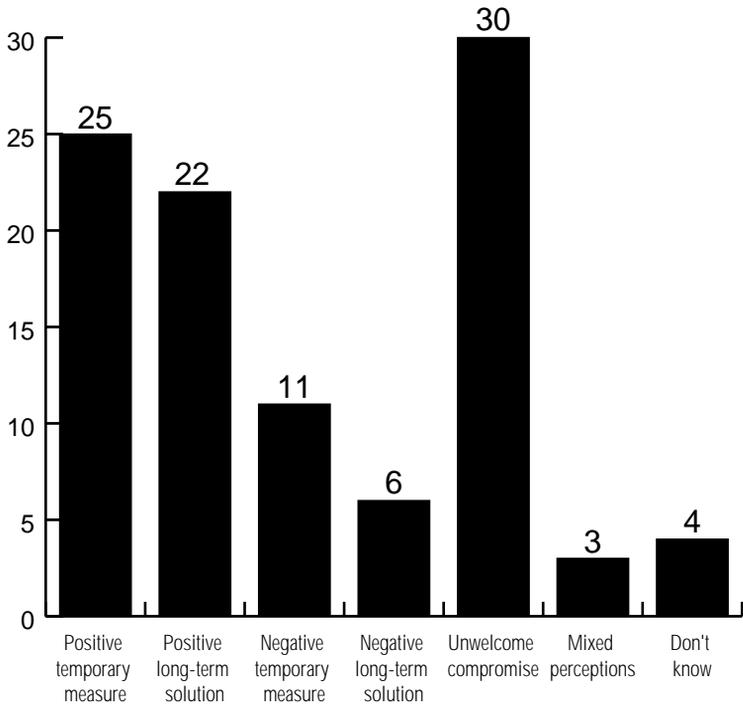


Table 9. How was Synod 1995's decision perceived in your congregation?

Perception of synod's decision:	% of councils saying:
Positive temporary measure	25
Positive long-term solution	22
Negative temporary measure	11
Negative long-term solution	6
Unwelcome compromise	30
Mixed perceptions	3
Don't know	4
(n)	(638)

Question 10: Approximately how many members (baptized and professing) have left your congregation because of this issue?

Table 10. Approximately how many members (baptized and professing) have left your congregation because of this issue?

Number who <u>left</u>	% of councils saying
None	57
1-5	16
6-10	11
11-20	6
21-30	3
31-50	3
51-100	2
101-200	2
201 or more	1
(n)	(716)
Mean	10.1
Standard dev.	33.2

Question 11: How many members have joined your congregation because of your church's position on this issue?

Table 11. How many members have joined your congregation because of your church's position on this issue?

Number who <u>joined</u>	% of councils saying
None	86
1-5	7
6-10	5
11-20	2
21-30	1
31-50	0
51-100	*
101-200	*
201 or more	0
(n)	(665)
Mean	1.5
Standard dev.	9.4

**less than 0.5%*

Question 12: How has Synod 1995's decision affected the general attitude of your congregation toward the CRC as a denomination?

Table 12. How has Synod 1995's decision affected the general attitude of your congregation toward the CRC as a denomination?

Congregation's attitude toward CRC	% of councils saying:
Much more positive now	3
Somewhat more positive now	13
Has had no effect	49
Somewhat more negative now	30
Much more negative now	4
Mixed effect	1
Don't know	*
(n)	(726)

**less than 0.5%*

Question 13: How has Synod 1995's decision affected the general attitude of your church toward your classis?

Table 13. How has Synod 1995's decision affected the general attitude of your church toward your classis?

Congregation's attitude toward classis	% of councils saying:
Much more positive now	2
Somewhat more positive now	10
Has had no effect	77
Somewhat more negative now	9
Much more negative now	2
Mixed effect	1
Don't know	1
(n)	(708)

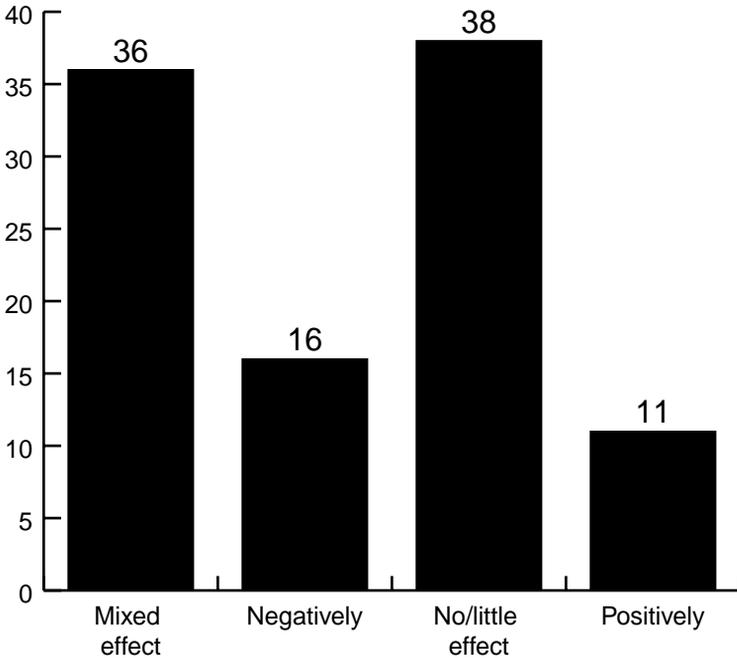
Question 14: If synod were to decide to continue to allow ordination of women in all offices only as a local/classical option, how would this affect your church?

Table 14. If synod were to decide to continue to allow ordination of women in all offices only as a local/classical option, how would this affect your church?

Church would be affected	% of councils saying:
Positively	11
No/little effect	38
Negatively	16
Mixed effect	36
Don't know	*
(n)	(724)

**less than 0.5%*

Chart G. If synod decided to continue to allow ordination of women in all offices only as a local/classical option, how would this affect your church?



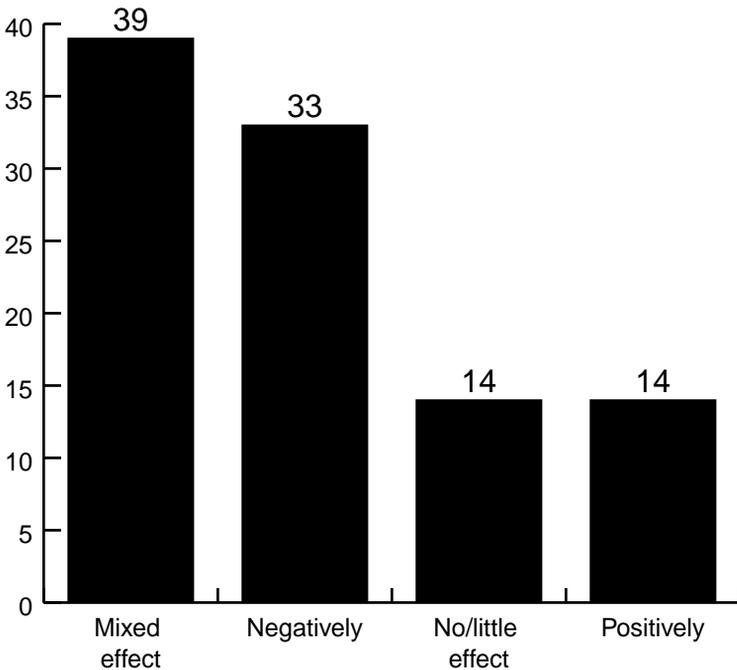
Question 15: If synod were to continue to allow ordination of women as elders, evangelists, and ministers across the denomination (allowing them to be delegates to synod and any classis), how would this affect your church?

Table 15. If synod decided to continue to allow ordination of women across the denomination, how would this affect your church?

Church would be affected	% of councils saying:
Positively	14
No effect	14
Negatively	33
Mixed effect	39
Don't know	*
(n)	(726)

**less than 0.5%*

Chart H. If synod decided to continue to allow ordination of women across the denomination, how would this affect your church?



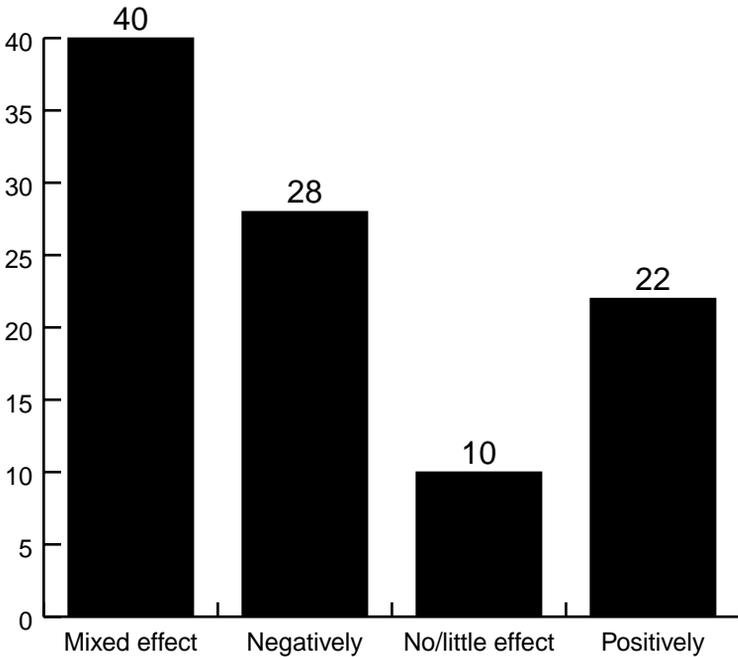
Question 16: If synod decided that women may not be ordained as elders, evangelists, and ministers, locally or otherwise, how would this affect your church?

Table 16. If synod decided that women may not be ordained as elders, evangelists, and ministers, locally or otherwise, how would this affect your church?

Church would be affected	% of councils saying:
Positively	22
No effect	10
Negatively	28
Mixed effect	40
Don't know	*
(n)	(726)

**less than 0.5%*

Chart I. If synod decided that women may not be ordained as elders, evangelists, and ministers, locally or otherwise, how would this affect your church?



II. Survey of classes

Question 1: Has your classis declared the word “male” inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a?

Table 17. Has your classis declared the word “male” inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a?

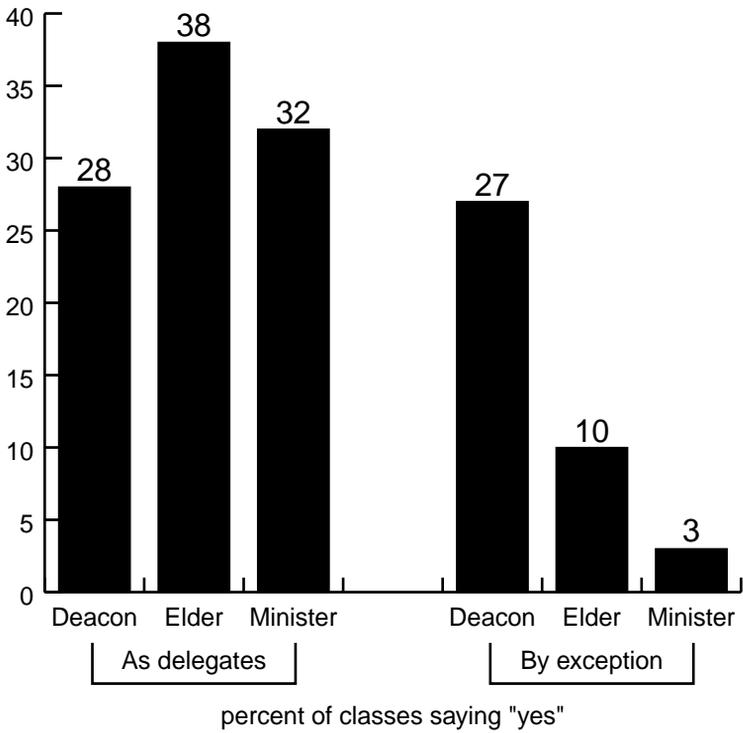
Response	% of classes saying
Yes	41
No	60
(n)	(37)

Question 2: In your classis, are women allowed to be seated as deacon, elder, or minister delegates?

Table 18. In your classis, are women allowed to be seated as deacon, elder, or minister delegates?

Allowed to be seated in classis as:	% of classes saying yes	(n)
Deacon delegates	28	(32)
Deacon delegates only by exception	27	(30)
Elder delegates	38	(37)
Elder delegates only by exception	10	(30)
Minister delegates	32	(34)
Minister delegates only by exception	3	(30)

Chart J. In your classis, are women allowed to be seated as deacon, elder, or minister delegates?

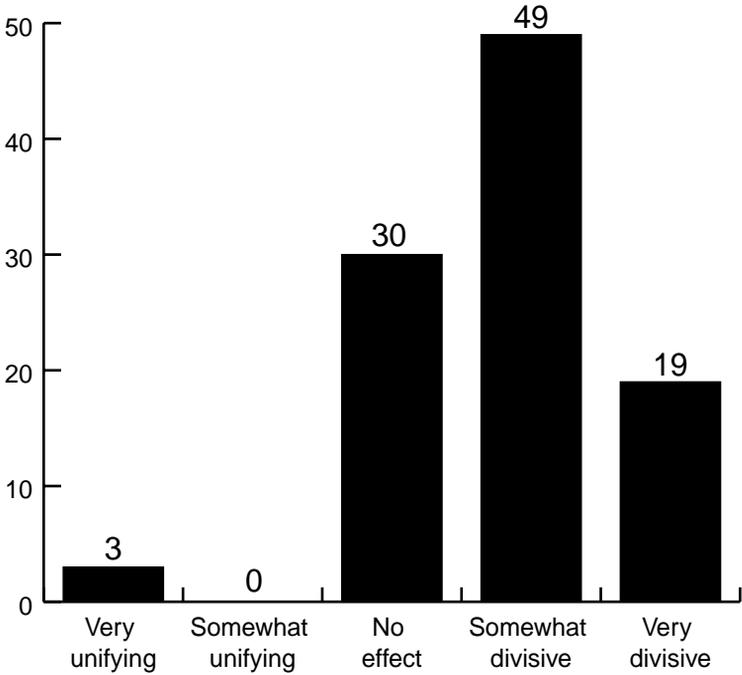


Question 3: Has this been a divisive or unifying issue in your classis?

Table 19. Has this been a divisive or unifying issue in your classis?

Perceived divisiveness	% of classes
Very divisive	19
Somewhat divisive	49
No effect one way or the other	30
Somewhat unifying	0
Very unifying	3
(n)	(37)

Chart K. Has this been a divisive or unifying issue in your classis?

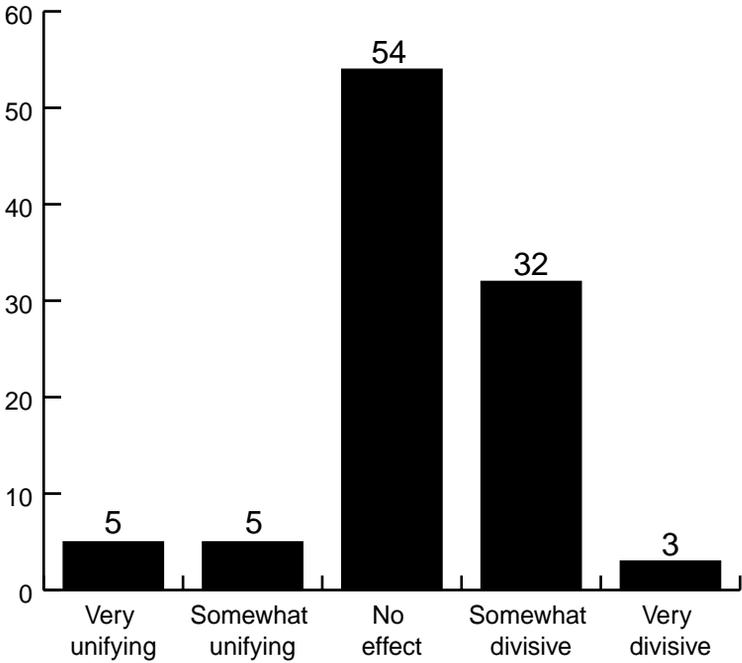


Question 4: Is this currently a divisive or unifying issue in your classis?

Table 20. Is this currently a divisive or unifying issue in your classis?

Perceived divisiveness	% of classes
Very divisive	3
Somewhat divisive	32
No effect one way or the other	54
Somewhat unifying	5
Very unifying	5
(n)	(37)

Chart L. Is this currently a divisive or unifying issue in your classis?

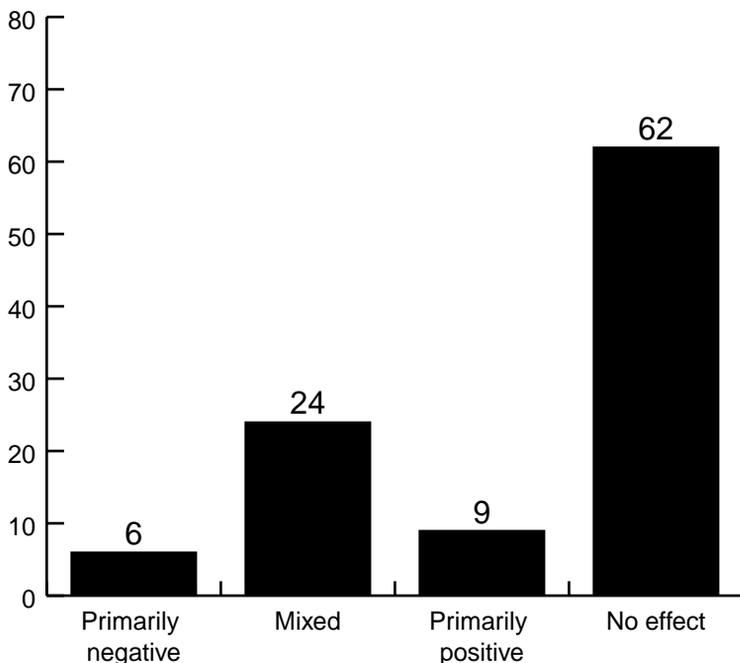


Question 5: If synod were to decide to continue to allow ordination of women in all offices only as a local/classical option, how would this affect your classis?

Table 21. If synod were to decide to continue to allow ordination of women in all offices only as a local/classical option, how would this affect your classis?

How classis would be affected	% of classes saying
No effect	62
Primarily positively	9
Mixed	24
Primarily negatively	6
(n)	(34)

Chart M. If synod decided to continue to allow ordination of women in all offices only as a classical/local option, how would this affect your classis?

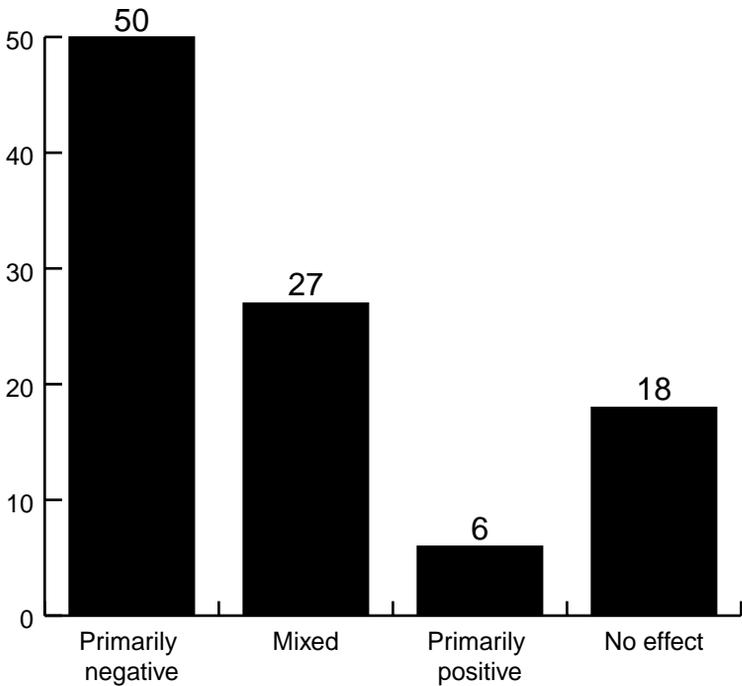


Question 6: If synod were to decide to allow the ordination of women as elders, evangelists, and ministers across the denomination (allowing them to be delegates to synod and to any classis), how would this affect your classis?

Table 22. If Synod were to decide to to allow the ordination of women as elders, evangelists, and ministers across the denomination (allowing them to be delegates to synod and to any classis), how would this affect your classis?

How classis would be affected	% of classes saying
No effect	18
Primarily positively	6
Mixed	27
Primarily negatively	50
(n)	(34)

Chart N. If synod decided to continue to allow ordination of women across the denomination, how would this affect your classis?

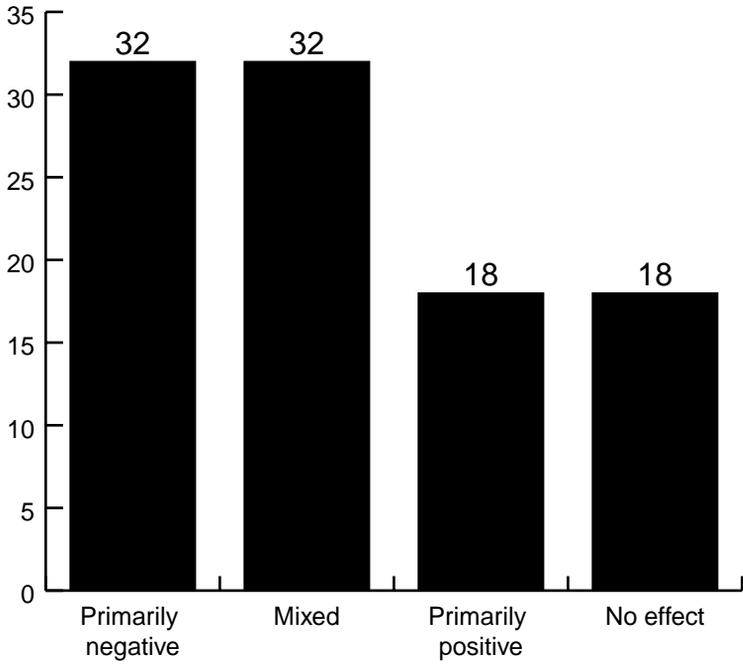


Question 7: If synod were to decide that women may not be ordained as elders, evangelists, and ministers, locally or otherwise, how would this affect your classis?

Table 23. If synod were to decide that women may not be ordained as elders, evangelists, and ministers, locally or otherwise, how would this affect your classis?

How classis would be affected	% of classes saying
No effect	18
Primarily positively	18
Mixed	32
Primarily negatively	32
(n)	(34)

Chart O. If synod were to decide that women may not be ordained as elders, evangelists, and ministers, locally or otherwise, how would this affect your classis?



Page 408 blank

I. Background

Synod 1995 appointed “a planning committee to design a one-calendar-week meeting plan for synod (i.e., Sunday through Saturday) to be considered by Synod 1996.” Three grounds were given for this action:

- a. An assembly of only one week’s duration would make it possible for a greater number of elders to be available as nominees to attend synod.
- b. Most North American denominations are able to conduct their business in one week.
- c. To move from our current schedule to a one-week synod will require some careful planning.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 696)

That committee’s report and recommendations were adopted by Synod 1996 (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 532-35), including the provision that “these arrangements be . . . implemented for the synods of 1997 through 2000” and that “Synod 1999 should appoint a committee to review these guidelines and recommend its findings to Synod 2000.” Synod 1999 appointed the present one-week-synod review committee from among the officers of Synods 1997, 1998, and 1999.

II. Research and reflections

In its review of the discussions leading to the initial change from a two-week to a one-week synod, the committee found three primary considerations at work:

- A one-week synod might make it possible for more elders to consider serving as synodical delegates.
- A one-week synod should increase the efficiency of synodical work.
- A one-week synod should reduce the cost of synodical meetings.

As it reviewed the past three synods, the committee was able to gather the following data:

A. *With regard to elder availability for synodical service*

1. Although there is no extensive data on this matter, members of the committee heard various comments from elder delegates to the effect that it would have been difficult if not impossible for some to attend a two-week synod. Several similar comments appeared on the evaluation forms filled out each year by synodical delegates.
2. The number of unfilled elder delegate and alternate positions at the time of the printing of each year’s *Agenda*, however, suggests that it is still difficult

to attract elder delegates. In fact, the number of unfilled elder positions has increased over the years:

- 1995 – 8 unfilled elder positions at the time the *Agenda* went to press
- 1996 – 18 unfilled elder positions
- 1997 – 17 unfilled elder positions (first one-week synod)
- 1998 – 20 unfilled elder positions
- 1999 – 24 unfilled elder positions

3. The average age of elders at synod has changed very little over the past four years:

- 1996 – 57.7 is average age for elder delegates
- 1997 – 57.4 average age
- 1998 – 58.2 average age
- 1999 – 56.9 average age

4. Similarly, the number of first-time elder delegates to synod does not show any appreciable change over these years:

- 1995 – 66 first-time elder delegates
- 1996 – 53
- 1997 – 65
- 1998 – 53
- 1999 – 69

5. Thus there is no clear evidence that the availability of elder delegates has increased with the one-week-synod format.

B. With regard to the desire for greater synodical efficiency

1. If by efficiency we mean doing basically the same amount of work in a shorter period of time, the past three synods would have to be declared more efficient than their predecessors. Some have suggested that the agendas for Synods 1997-1999 were unusually light, but the committee's reflections indicate that matters of great substance and weight were discussed each year (e.g., IRM, Canadian restructuring, U.S. restructuring, inclusive language for God, "Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture").
2. None of the three one-week synods used all the time allotted to it. Each completed its work with at least one full day of meeting time still available. The review committee concludes that one-week synods were able to function more efficiently than the earlier, longer synods.
3. The rescheduling of fraternal-delegate addresses and agency presentations clearly has shortened the amount of time these matters occupy in synod's deliberations.

C. With regard to cost savings

1. Because bookkeeping methods have changed during the past four years, it is difficult to provide a graph with clear cost comparisons. Nevertheless, we do know that because synodical delegates are lodged fewer nights and fed fewer meals during a one-week synod than during longer synods, these direct costs are lower than those for the longer synods.

2. Holding synod at Redeemer College in 1999 appears to have increased travel costs compared to travel costs for synods meeting in Grand Rapids. At the same time, lodging and meal costs were lower in Canada because of the currency exchange rate, so the net cost for Synod 1999 was nearly the same as the cost of other one-week synods.

D. Other considerations that enter this discussion

1. Social interaction and fellowship among the delegates, as well as interaction between the delegates and agency personnel, are reduced in the one-week-synod schedule.
2. Longer days of meeting time with less opportunity for rest, reading, and reflection may produce increased fatigue among delegates to the one-week synods. Similarly, the aggressive daily schedule in the one-week synod allows delegates less time to read and digest reports from advisory committees.
3. The number of absences among delegates on the first day of synod increased sharply with the change to a Saturday beginning:

1995 – 1 delegate absent on the first day of synod

1996 – 1 absent

1997 – 10 absent (first one-week synod)

1998 – 16 absent

1999 – more than 25 absent

The increased absences may be due primarily to the start of synod on Saturday and some perception that the real work of synod did not begin until Monday.

4. Some respondents suggested on the evaluation questionnaires that the time for discussion and debate was diminished in the one-week synod and that they prefer the more leisurely pace of a longer synod.
5. Other delegates have indicated some anxiety about whether the shorter synod can do justice to future discussions of major or controversial issues. At the same time, there were virtually no indications that any of the discussions at Synods 1997, 1998, and 1999 were truncated because of time constraints. The fact that Synod 1997 ended its sessions on Thursday evening, Synod 1998 ended at noon on Friday, and Synod 1999 concluded its deliberations at 3 p.m. on Thursday indicates that each synodical gathering could easily have chosen to spend more time in discussion and debate if it had so desired.
6. The guidelines for one-week synods adopted in 1996 allow for the creation, if necessary, of up to fifteen advisory committees rather than the usual ten committees to give adequate attention to the materials before synod. None of the one-week synods used more than ten advisory committees, an indication that the full capacity of the one-week schedule has not yet been tested.
7. Several respondents wondered whether the one-week schedule allows adequate time for advisory committees to struggle through weighty

matters. This time problem may be particularly acute if an advisory committee needs to reorganize when some members desire to present a minority report.

III. Options

There are three available options regarding future synodical scheduling. First, if the trial period of one-week synods proved such arrangements unworkable or ill advised, synod could return to the previous two-week meeting schedule. Second, if the one-week synods showed exceptional promise during the trial period, the schedule proposed in 1996 could be adopted as synod's permanent schedule. Third, if the trial one-week-synod schedule seemed for the most part workable though not entirely satisfactory, a modified one-week-synod schedule could be adopted to address problems that surfaced in the trial years of the one-week synod.

A few respondents believe synod ought to return to a two-week schedule since there appears to be more leisure in the deliberating process of a two-week synod and advisory committees have more time to prepare reports (especially in the event of an impasse in discussions and the need for minority reports). Still, the fact remains that none of the one-week synods made use of the option to create up to fifteen advisory committees nor extended the length of deliberations to the full week allotted.

IV. General alterations needed for continuing the one-week synod

The apparent success of the trial period of one-week synods and the feedback from most respondents support a continuation of the shorter synod. This the committee therefore recommends. At the same time, we believe that some aspects of the one-week synod should be altered to make the one-week schedule more effective. We recommend that synod

A. Shorten the hours of meeting time each day to provide more opportunity for reading and rest.

B. Start earlier on the first Saturday to allow more time for substantial advisory-committee work before Monday.

C. Provide greater emphasis on synodical worship on Sunday, making it possible for delegates to spend more time worshipping and meeting together.

D. Create a Ministry Fair for agencies to interact more meaningfully with delegates.

E. Stipulate in the regulations for travel reimbursement that synod will pay for travel only if delegates participate fully in synodical activities.

F. Make provision for the vice president of one year's synod to become president of the following synod and for the second clerk of one year's synod to become first clerk of the following synod, in order to facilitate better leadership preparation and to decrease the number of advisory-committee leaders who might be removed to serve as officers of synod.

V. Specific alterations for enhancing the one-week synod

A. Advisory-committee chairpersons, reporters, and alternates should meet for lunch (11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) on the first Saturday of synod to review procedures for advisory committees.

B. Synodical meetings should begin at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday; all opening matters should be concluded by 3:00 p.m. Saturday afternoon.

C. After a break (3:00-3:30 p.m.), advisory committees should meet until 5:30 p.m. Advisory committees should be encouraged to eat supper together in order to develop deeper relationships.

D. Advisory committees should meet again from 7:00-10:00 p.m. on Saturday evening.

E. The delegates should gather for an on-site worship service at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. This would provide opportunity for delegates to further mingle. We would encourage synod to use delegates as worship leaders for prayers and other elements of worship and to celebrate communion together. The focus of worship should be to seek God's guidance and blessing on synod's delegates, deliberations, and decisions.

F. After lunch on Sunday, from 1:00-2:30 p.m., denominational agencies should present their ministries in a Ministry Fair. Agency personnel should be available for conversations about ministry reports and activities.

G. Delegates should gather for a time of praise and celebration of ministry from 3:00-5:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon. This service would be a time of singing and celebration, including two agency ministry presentations (twenty to thirty minutes each), short addresses from fraternal delegates, and the presentation of those being recommended as candidates for ministry.

H. A longer worship time should be scheduled for each morning, Monday through Saturday, beginning at 8:15 a.m. and concluding by 8:45 a.m. These worship services would be organized by a committee of delegates appointed by the officers and would enhance the spiritual character of the synodical gathering. The rest of the devotional times normally held at synod should remain as they have been.

I. Synod should begin Monday morning with worship and a brief plenary session to decide matters of a routine nature. The rest of Monday should be spent in advisory-committee meetings.

J. Synod should adopt a daily meeting schedule of 8:15-11:45 a.m., 1:15-5:00 p.m., and 7:00-9:30 p.m. This schedule decreases the meeting time per day by one hour from the current one-week-synod meeting schedule.

K. Synod should conclude by noon of the second Saturday.

The committee believes these changes in the current one-week-synod schedule would address most of the concerns raised regarding the time constraints and preparation needs of the delegates to the annual meetings.

VI. Proposed daily schedule

Opening Saturday

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch and orientation of committee chairpersons and reporters
1:00 p.m.	Opening session of synod —Election of officers —Finalization of committee assignments
3:00 – 3:30 p.m.	Coffee break
3:30 – 5:30 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
5:30 – 7:00 p.m.	Dinner (advisory-committee members eat together to get to know each other better)
7:00 – 9:30 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings

Sunday

10:00 a.m.	Synodical worship service on campus
12:00 noon	Lunch
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Ministry Fair
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.	Service of Celebration and Praise
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
Evening	Free time for fellowship

Monday

8:15 – 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 – 9:15 a.m.	Brief plenary session
9:15 – 11:45 a.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 – 5:00 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 – 9:30 p.m.	Advisory-committee meetings

Tuesday – Friday

8:15 – 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 – 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 – 5:00 p.m.	Plenary session
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 – 9:30 p.m.	Plenary session

Saturday

8:15 – 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 – 11:45 a.m.	Plenary session (Final adjournment by 11:45 a.m.)

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chairman and reporter of the committee, Rev. Howard Vanderwell and Rev. Wayne Brouwer, when this report is considered.

B. That synod continue its practice of one-week annual meetings.

Grounds:

1. The designated trial period has shown that the business of synod can be well handled in a week or less.
2. The concerns expressed about fatigue and the need for more preparation time can be addressed through alterations of the one-week schedule and do not warrant a return to a two-week event.

C. That synod adopt the changes to the one-week synod schedule as detailed in Section V above.

D. That synod alter the Rules for Synodical Procedure so that the vice president of one synod becomes the president of synod the following year.

Grounds:

1. This change would facilitate better leadership preparation.
2. This change would decrease the number of advisory-committee leaders who may be removed to serve as officers of synod.

E. That synod alter the Rules for Synodical Procedure so that the second clerk of one synod becomes the first clerk of synod the following year.

Grounds:

1. This change would facilitate better leadership preparations.
2. This change would decrease the number of advisory-committee leaders who may be removed to serve as officers of synod.

F. That synod stipulate in its travel policies that travel costs for synodical delegates will be reimbursed only when delegates attend all sessions of synod from start to finish except when excused for reasons deemed appropriate by the officers of synod.

G. That synod authorize the general secretary to revise the Rules for Synodical Procedure in accordance with changes adopted in any or all of these recommendations.

H. That synod dismiss the committee.

Committee to Review the One-Week Synod

Wayne A. Brouwer, reporter

David H. Engelhard, adviser

Stanley J. Koster

Henry P. Kranenburg

George Vandervelde

Howard D. Vanderwell, chairperson

Note: Jack Vos was unable to meet with the committee because of the illness and death of his wife, Mirth.

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I. Background

Synod 1997 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America approved a mission and vision statement for the denomination. Appended to the vision statement is a table of goals, agency strategies, and agents for achieving the vision and realizing the mission. Those endorsed by Synod 1997 “under the heading Continuing Professional Education” are described below:

Goal

By 2002, all ordained ministers and other ministry staff serving congregations in the CRC will receive continuing training in effective ministry. A curriculum and a strategy will be developed to provide such leadership training on the congregational level.

Agency Strategies

Calvin Theological Seminary, in consultation with the other agencies, will develop and propose a plan for evaluating, approving, offering, monitoring, and certifying required continuing and professional development experiences annually for all CRC ministers and full-time ministry-staff personnel. This plan will be presented via the board of trustees to Synod 1998 for approval. (Continuing education/training opportunities will be provided on a regional basis at least once per year within each region.)

Agents

Pastoral Ministries, Calvin Seminary

(Agenda for Synod 1997, p. 55)

Synod 1998 received a proposal from Calvin Theological Seminary outlining steps toward implementing the goal for continuing education for pastors and full-time ministry staff. Synod withheld action on the proposal and approved the following recommendations:

1. That Synod 1998 affirm the value of continuing education for CRC ministry staff, a value raised by the Denominational Strategic Plan and addressed by the 1998 Calvin Seminary supplementary report:

By 2002, all ordained ministers and other ministry staff serving congregations in the CRC will receive continuing training in effective ministry. A curriculum and a strategy will be developed to provide such leadership on the congregational level.

2. That synod ask its officers to appoint a broad-based committee of laity and clergy to study the issues of ministry standards and continuing education, with the mandate of preparing a continuing-education proposal to Synod 1999. Such a committee will take into account
 - a. The discussions of Synod 1998 on this issue.
 - b. The issues of local ownership and accountability.
 - c. The means and simplicity of administration.
 - d. Input from church councils and congregations throughout the denomination.

(Acts of Synod 1998, p. 428)

The committee appointed by synod to present a report to Synod 1999 was unable to complete its work by that time. It now presents the following report and proposal. The procedure followed by the committee was to consider the issues raised by Synod 1998 and to contract with the Social Research Center of Calvin College to get input from ministers. In the following sections, the committee presents the results of its study and recommendations to be considered by the churches.

II. Rationale for continuing education

In the world in which we live, there is scarcely a vocation that is not requiring continuing education in some form to meet the demands of changing technology and complex demands of the current workplace. In industry, business, farming, schools, and other settings, staff are expected and encouraged to stay current by means of continued opportunities for training. Ministry is no exception. Synod 1998 of the CRC supported this concept by mandating study of continuing education for pastors and ministry staff.

The Christian Reformed Church has always recognized the importance of an educated clergy and leadership. We have required and provided for the theological education of our leaders. Beyond initial education of seminary and other training, it is important that the church expect leaders to develop and renew their gifts of ministry through a disciplined program of lifelong learning for growth and renewal in meeting the demands of ministry in a complex cultural environment.

Ministers, congregations, and the denomination will grow as the result of a consistent program of continuing professional education. In the survey of ministers conducted by the Calvin College Social Research Center, it was significant to note that 98 percent of them agreed that annual continuing professional education is necessary for themselves and that it benefits their congregations.

By means of continuing education, the pastor can develop gifts of ministry. Personal renewal, professional skill development, careful thought about ideas and beliefs, and penetrating analysis of cultural trends require time set apart from the regular demands of ministry. Ministers gain a broader perspective about the role and work of their own churches when they step back and think about ministry with others who share similar responsibilities.

Congregations also benefit from continuing education. Sometimes their ministers preach better sermons. Sometimes their ministers have a better idea for organizing youth ministry or the church council. Sometimes ministers learn to be more sensitive to the needs of members and more caring in their responses. Often ministers return from a training session with renewed enthusiasm for their work and for their congregations. Continuing education does not promise all of the above in one quick fix. Consistent and persistent pursuit of learning over many years, however, will provide all of the above and even more.

Finally, the denomination benefits from pastors and ministry staff who are continually being educated. Not only will a pastor's current congregation benefit, but eventually others will benefit, too. Ministers and staff who are personally enriched and professionally prepared through continuing education have a healthier perspective on ministry and provide more effective leadership than ministers who are not engaged in continuing education.

Furthermore, their understanding of the “one, holy, catholic church” is usually deepened through their study with leaders from other denominations. The perspective of the broader church will enrich a pastor’s preaching, teaching, and prayers.

Recommendation: That synod urge all councils to establish a policy for continuing education and to establish the expectation that their pastor(s) and full-time ministry staff annually engage in an appropriate program of continuing education for ministry.

III. Opportunities for and obstacles to continuing education

A. Opportunities

In both the United States and Canada, opportunities abound for pastors and other ministry professionals to engage in continuing education. Such opportunities are available in at least three categories. They may range in time required from a single seminar to an extended sabbatical:

1. By topic or area of interest

Advanced biblical and theological study
Personal spiritual growth
Social issues
Assessment and development of skills needed for ministry

2. By format

Lectures: For example, the special lecture series at Calvin Theological Seminary. Call 1-800-388-6034 or check <http://www.calvin.edu/seminary/events.htm>.

Conferences: For example, those sponsored by Saddleback church, continuing education sponsored by the Korean Council, special training for Laotian or Hispanic pastors, the biennial Multiethnic Conference.

Degree programs: For example, the Doctor of Ministry programs offered by many seminaries.

Courses taken on an ad hoc basis: Offered at all schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

For Web sites of accredited schools see <http://www.ats.edu/sets/membfst.htm>.

Retreats: For example, the Brown Bag Sabbatical at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Study centers: For example, Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies in Jerusalem.

Various courses and discussion groups offered by synchronous and asynchronous distance education.

Sabbaticals: Two- to six-month study leaves.

3. By provider

Almost all schools affiliated with the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada offer courses, seminars, and conferences appropriate for the continuing education of ministers of the Word and other ministry professionals. For Web sites of accredited schools see <http://www.ats.edu/sets/membfst.htm>.

Colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada
Provincial and state agencies
Churches
Parachurch agencies

B. Obstacles

Although the remote location of some Christian Reformed churches may make it difficult for some persons seeking continuing education to access a site easily, such situations are very rare. Distance programs make organized continuing education available to all Christian Reformed ministers of the Word and ministry professionals.

The survey of ministers noted that the primary obstacles to obtaining continuing professional education were time and money. The survey also indicated that some pastors are granted time for continuing education by their congregations, the average time granted being 7.8 days per year. Ministers believe that the optimal time necessary is approximately 10 days per year. Another time concern, however, is that it is not always possible to leave the congregation for the amount of time needed for taking a course. This is especially true for sole pastors in smaller congregations.

Sufficient funding to finance continuing education is the other serious concern. In the survey, 57 percent of the pastors said that they had sufficient funding, but 41 percent said they did not. The current average annual amount budgeted by congregations for continuing education is \$789. Pastors consider \$1,200 to be the amount sufficient to cover the costs.

Because not all churches are able to afford such funding, a number of pastors recommended that there be a scholarship fund for continuing professional education.

The following recommendations suggest such external funding at the local, classical, and synodical levels.

Recommendations:

1. That synod urge church councils to grant pastors and ministry staff adequate time (up to ten days per year) for annual continuing education and that they budget sufficient funds (approximately \$1,200) to cover this education.
2. That synod urge all classes to create a scholarship fund (perhaps under the student fund committees) to which pastors and staff can apply with the endorsement of the church council.
3. That synod establish a denominational continuing-education fund to assist classes that are unable to fund all continuing education in their regions. Such a fund would provide more equitable funding throughout the denomination. Not all congregations and/or classes have equal resources, and small and less financially established congregations and their pastors are as much in need of continuing education as larger more financially stable congregations.
4. That synod
 - a. Set a ministry share of \$.50 for this fund. This seems adequate for the initial years of this fund.

- b. Request Pastor-Church Relations to appoint a three-person committee to receive and respond to applications from classes requesting assistance for continuing education in their regions. The committee will be approved by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.
 - c. Ask Pastor-Church Relations and the new committee to provide Synod 2001 with a written policy and procedure for granting funds to those classes that seek assistance.
5. That synod encourage the CRC Foundation to consider assisting the denominational continuing-education fund by providing start-up funding so that there will be resources available during 2000-2001, before ministry shares are received.

IV. Implementation of continuing education

A viable program of continuing education will require the consideration of various factors such as topics to be studied, time of and location of opportunities that are available, and procedures for establishing a policy:

A. Topics to be studied (These would not all be part of each year's continuing education but would serve as guidelines for planning over a number of years.)

1. Biblical and theological studies: Growth in knowledge and articulation of the Christian faith and of the Reformed heritage.
Examples: Old Testament, New Testament, Reformed confessions, ethics, theology, and worship.
2. Personal and spiritual growth: Growth in personal and spiritual maturity.
Examples: Interpersonal relationships, marriage, sexuality, communication, prayer, spiritual discipline, and devotional literature.
3. Skills for ministry: Growth in leadership and function in ministry.
Examples: Administration, organizing/time management, conflict management, planning, preaching, teaching, counseling, visiting, leading worship, clinical pastoral education, and caregiving.
4. Issues in church and society: Growth in reflection and action for ministry in today's world and in relating to other religious traditions.
Examples: A study of small congregations, urban and rural ministry, abortion, AIDS, human rights, racism, world hunger, and ecumenical relationships.
5. Development and assessment of ministry: Growth in planning for and dealing with changes within life and career.
Examples: Evaluation of ministry, review of strengths and weaknesses, personal goal setting, mobility, and transitions.

B. Opportunities for continuing education

The following Web sites will provide possible opportunities for continuing education:

<http://www.calvin.edu/seminary/events.htm>

<http://www.ats.edu/sets/membfst.htm>

C. A sample procedure

Each council is free to establish its own procedure, but the following suggestions provide some basic elements for any procedure:

1. Each September the council requires its minister(s) to submit a detailed statement of continuing-education goals for the coming year.
2. To ensure that a well-rounded and balanced educational program is being followed, a committee of council reviews the plan(s) and considers the following:
 - a. The needs of the congregation
 - b. The gifts and needs of the pastor(s)
 - c. The denominational guidelines for continuing education
 - d. The minister's previous continuing education
3. A plan is adopted by council, and the congregation is informed.
4. Monies are provided for continuing education in the annual budget (grants from classical/denominational continuing-education funds may be available to assist).

Note: Councils are encouraged to include \$1,200 in the budget. If the congregation is unable to fund that amount, it should establish a policy as to what percentage of continuing-education costs will be paid by the congregation, the minister, or the classis (if requested).

5. The minister(s) present an annual report to the council about their continuing-education activities, and the congregation is appropriately informed.

V. Accountability

Within Reformed church polity ministers of the Word are responsible to the church council. Therefore, accountability for this educational aspect of their ministry should logically rest there too. Identifying this locus of accountability is consistent with one of the primary concerns voiced by the delegates to Synod 1999. The concern was not whether there should be accountability but to whom the minister should be accountable regarding continuing education. It is thus significant that, in the Social Research Center survey, 71 percent of the respondents agreed that the council should require them to participate in continuing education.

In order to fulfill its responsibility, a church council will need to define clear criteria for continuing education. Criteria are never set in a vacuum, and councils will have differing criteria at different stages of their existence. Even though the present report does not spell out specific criteria, it does suggest throughout some of the essential components of and reasons for continuing professional education. When these are considered in the light of the needs of the congregation and the needs of the minister, a set of criteria by which to evaluate a continuing-education proposal can be developed. Both Pastor-Church Relations and the academic office of Calvin Theological Seminary are available to assist church councils in their work of encouraging continuing education and in their work of developing clear criteria for that education.

Recommendation: That councils hold ministers and other full-time ministry staff accountable both for obtaining continuing education and for the content of the programs. This accountability is to be based on clear criteria adopted by the council in consultation with the minister(s) and ministry staff.

VI. Summary of recommendations

In this report the committee has emphasized the importance of continuing professional education for pastors and ministry staff and has presented guidelines for content, process, and funding for these programs. This report is based on studies done by the committee and on results of a survey of pastors conducted by the Calvin Social Research Center (copies of this report are available for the synodical advisory committee).

Following is a listing of the recommendations made in the body of this report:

A. That synod urge all councils to establish a policy for continuing education and to establish the expectation that their pastor(s) and full-time ministry staff annually engage in an appropriate program of continuing education for ministry.

B. That synod urge church councils to grant pastors and ministry staff adequate time (up to ten days per year) for annual continuing education and that they budget sufficient funds (approximately \$1,200) to cover this education.

C. That synod urge all classes to create a scholarship fund (perhaps under the student-fund committees) to which pastors and staff may apply with the endorsement of the church council.

D. That synod establish a denominational continuing-education fund to assist congregations and classes that are unable to fund all continuing education in their regions. Such a fund would provide more equitable funding throughout the denomination. Not all congregations and/or classes have equal resources, and small, less financially established congregations and their pastors are as much in need of continuing education as larger, more financially stable congregations.

E. That synod

1. Set a ministry share of \$.50 for this fund. This seems adequate for the initial years of this fund.
2. Request Pastor-Church Relations to appoint a three-person committee to receive and respond to applications from classes requesting assistance for continuing education in their regions. The committee will be approved by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.
3. Ask Pastor-Church Relations and the new committee to provide Synod 2001 with a written policy and procedure for granting funds to those congregations and classes that seek assistance.

F. That synod request the CRC Foundation to consider assisting the denominational continuing-education fund by providing start-up funding so that there will be resources available during 2000-2001, before ministry shares are received.

G. That councils hold ministers and other full-time ministry staff accountable both for obtaining continuing education and for the content of the programs. This accountability is to be based on clear criteria adopted by the council in consultation with the minister(s) and ministry staff.

Committee to Study Continuing
Professional Education for Pastors and
Ministry Staff in the Christian Reformed
Church in North America

Gary Bekker

David Engelhard

Stanley Koster

Peter Nicolai

Yong Ju Oh

Russ Palsrok

Carlos Tapanes

Mary Vander Vennen

Duane Visser

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
Galatians 6:2

I. Introduction

At the request of Synod 1997, this report was prepared by the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), a standing social-justice advocacy committee of the Canadian Ministries Board. The CCG became involved in end-of-life issues early in 1990, when the Canadian Parliament, deliberating on whether or not to legalize euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, formed the Senate Special Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. The mandate of this committee was to prepare a report, with recommendations, based on a broad consensus of informed public opinion. The government hoped to use the report to draft new legislation aimed at regulating medical practices related to end-of-life situations. The Senate committee held public hearings across the land, inviting Canadians to express their views through the submission of briefs and oral presentations. In response to this invitation, the CCG submitted a brief of its own (*Medical Decisions and Public Policy Pertaining to the End of Life*, April 1995) and sent a copy to all Canadian Christian Reformed churches. One classis brought the matter before Synod 1997 by way of an overture, to which synod responded by asking the CCG to broaden its study to

include exegetical material and the practical application of biblical principles for persons making decisions about death and dying and . . . [to] make available future drafts of these materials to churches in the United States as well as Canada for evaluation and discussion.

(*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 608)

This report is the CCG’s response to that request. In it we as a committee seek to address the necessity for public understanding of end-of-life issues and of the need for legislation to govern medical practice at that stage of life where medical attention may shift from curative to palliative care. Our primary focus, however, is not on legislative technicalities or medical technologies but on helping the church approach and deal with these issues in a pastorally sensitive way.

At the very outset we as a committee affirm our commitment to the life God has granted us. We know that sorrow or pain, indignity or frustration may make that life a heavy burden for some. Yet we believe that suicide and mercy killing are not appropriate responses to the anguish and despair which life sometimes brings. And so the challenge before the committee was to develop and propose responses—both personal and communal—that are appropriate when Christians are confronted with end-of-life questions and situations. This

report attempts to help Christians make biblically informed decisions pertaining to the end of life; play an active and positive role, as members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in the ongoing public discussions on the subject; and ensure that our church will become an effective and compassionate community of care for persons in the dying stage of life.

This report is essentially about life. Our desire as a committee, arising out of a biblically and confessionally based respect for the gift of life, is to help Christians face the challenges that accompany the approaching end of life, though we could not specifically address every aspect of the many and complicated issues surrounding the process of dying and of medical treatment in the final stages of life.

II. Recent cases involving end-of-life decisions

A few recent events point to the significance that end-of-life matters have assumed in both the United States and Canada.

A. Oregon, 1997

In April 1997 two Oregon patients legally took their own lives with the aid of medical doctors. These were the first physician-assisted suicides (PAS) in the U.S. after the Oregon state legislature enacted a law permitting doctors to prescribe lethal drugs for the purpose of ending a person's life. It is a law that in effect condones assisted suicide.

B. Michigan

No other state has followed Oregon's example, not even Michigan, where pathologist Dr. Jack Kevorkian has, by his own admission, assisted in over 130 similar deaths. As a matter of fact, Michigan simply had no legislation on the matter until recently, although a 1994 Michigan State Supreme Court ruling held that common law prohibited the practice. That ruling was later upheld by a federal court, a fact that makes it even more remarkable that until the spring of 1999 no jury would convict Dr. Kevorkian. (He was convicted of murder in the spring of 1999.)

In September 1998 a new law (SB200), intended to "amend the Michigan penal code to prohibit and provide penalties for assisting in a suicide or attempted suicide," took effect. This bill was introduced and sponsored by state Senator William Van Regenmorter, a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

The role played by ordinary citizens in Oregon and Michigan is instructive. In both states the issue was considered so fraught with complex moral and ethical dimensions that elected officials chose to leave the matter up to the people. Both state legislatures chose to settle the question of physician-assisted suicide by referendum. The results were strikingly different. In Oregon the people voted to support the end-of-life referendum, Measure 51, by a 60 percent to 40 percent vote (Nov. 1997). Oregon thus became the first jurisdiction in the United States to permit doctors actively and intentionally to help dying persons end their own lives. The people of Michigan, however, defeated Proposition B—a proposal that would have made physician-assisted suicide legal in their state—by nearly 70 percent after a pro-choice group succeeded in getting the issue on the ballot in November 1998.

These developments are both relevant and important. They are important because in two U.S. states ordinary citizens played a vitally important role in

the decision-making process on a highly controversial practice. They are also relevant because they show that the existing political processes allow and often challenge Christians to bring their convictions to bear on the pressing social issues of the day.

C. British Columbia, 1993

In British Columbia Sue Rodriguez, a woman characterized as terminally ill, died by what informed observers now believe was euthanasia. There is no doubt that she underwent the process willingly, for she died shortly after the Supreme Court of Canada had narrowly defeated her appeal for the legal right to an assisted death. Svend Robinson, Member of Parliament from British Columbia who introduced a private member's bill to make assisted suicide legal, was with her when she died. Private member's bills rarely succeed in Canada, but they do succeed in getting the government's attention.

D. Saskatchewan, 1995

In Saskatchewan Robert Latimer received a two-year jail sentence for killing his severely disabled daughter Tracy. His sentence was confirmed on appeal. However, a year later, a panel of three judges ruled that the original trial judge had erred and that the Canadian Constitution left the courts no alternative but to sentence Latimer to life imprisonment with no chance of parole for at least ten years. This sentence is now being appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada; the case is scheduled to be heard in the fall of 1999.

E. Ontario, 1995

Toronto doctor Maurice Genereux received a two-year jail term for assisting two patients in suicide attempts. One attempt failed, and the patient subsequently sued the doctor.

F. Nova Scotia, 1995

In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Dr. Nancy Morrison was charged with first-degree murder in the death of a patient with terminal cancer. The case was eventually thrown out of court for lack of evidence that lethal injection was the actual cause of the patient's death.

G. Manitoba, 1998

In Manitoba a judge reversed a local hospital's do-not-resuscitate (DNR) order in the case of a seriously ill patient who had suffered several strokes and was expected to have more. The medical team looking after him considered his quality of life to be so questionable that any effort at resuscitation following another stroke would be pointless. His wife, however, fought the medical determination in court and won a temporary restraining order.

H. Ontario, 1999

The *Toronto Star*, Canada's largest newspaper, carried a lead article on the suicide of Marilynne Seguin, a 61-year-old nurse who had been in failing health. The bold headline proclaimed, "Death with Dignity," a reference to the Death with Dignity Association Ms. Seguin had founded. Written by noted columnist Tom Harpur, an ordained priest in the Anglican church, the article exuded admiration for this "advocate" of the dying who was reported to have feared "being alive but not living." The greatly admired nurse is said to have counseled more than two thousand patients in their dying.

III. Social factors influencing the discussion

A. *A century of abundant death*

It is remarkable that end-of-life matters have become prominent at the close of this century. Near its beginning, the twentieth century saw the outbreak of war that for the first time encompassed most of the world. Another world war followed, and since then the world has been beset by a long series of regional conflicts. Even today, as a new century dawns, many parts of the world still suffer from ethnic, religious, economic, and political wars that undermine and destroy countless lives with unimaginable horror. Starvation stalks much of the developing world, and abortion slaughters millions of unborn children in North America and elsewhere. Our present discussion is taking place at the end of what is perhaps the most deadly century in the history of the world.

B. *A century of increased life expectancy*

Paradoxically, this century has also been one of unprecedented breakthroughs in agriculture, medicine, science, technology, and other fields. As a result, there has been a tremendous advance in life-enhancing and life-preserving capabilities. On average, people live longer today than in any previous time. Ironically, enhanced longevity is posing new challenges of its own.

According to Canadian demographers David Baxter and Andrew Ramlo of Vancouver's Urban Futures Institute, the average life expectancy for both men and women in North America has gone from 49 years in 1901 to 68.5 in 1951 and to 78.4 in 1996. By the year 2021 that number is expected to increase to a life expectancy of around 83 years. Living longer and longer results in very serious consequences. "Baby boomers," the demographers write, "can expect to live long enough to be a problem not only for their children, but their grandchildren and great-grandchildren too" (*Toronto Star* 12 Aug. 1998).

The quality of so long a life and the burgeoning cost of health care—at home and in institutions—is beginning to worry many people. As one person said, "Seventy is fine. Ninety sucks. Nobody wants to live that long. You're senile, you're sick, you're in a home. You'd have to be a millionaire to live at a comfortable level that long."

C. *A major shift in thinking*

These new realities, coupled with the advances in pharmacology that enable doctors to put patients "to sleep" permanently and without pain, have brought about a marked increase in public receptivity to euthanasia and assisted suicide. That increased receptivity marks a major shift in the way we have traditionally thought about these issues. A number of factors help explain the shift:

1. Erosion of community

Our urban centers have long been experiencing the breakdown of neighborhoods as we once knew them. Often we do not even know our neighbors' names, and we certainly couldn't count on them to look after us when we become frail. Moreover, cultural factors such as consumerism, individualism, careerism, urbanization, and the transient nature of our workforce have greatly contributed to the erosion of a sense of community.

There is evidence in society today that our sense of the value of persons is diminishing and that we may be reaching a point where the elderly, the severely handicapped, and the unborn could be deemed expendable

nuisances. Many people cannot even count on their children taking care of them as they age because the children often live too far away.

2. Desire for personal autonomy

Another factor contributing to the end-of-life discussion is that all over the world there is an increased demand for self-determination, personal autonomy, and individual rights. Until recently, physicians made the key medical decisions for their patients. Doctors expected to do so, and patients assumed they would do so. Today, however, many patients reject medical paternalism. Instead, they embrace the values of informed consent, patients' rights, and death with dignity. A doctor no longer has the final say.

Historically, in North American culture people tended to defer not only to their doctors but also to God. Life was considered a gift from God, a sacred trust. That perception, too, is shifting. The conviction now is that it's *my* life and therefore it's *my* right to decide the how and when of my death, particularly if dying threatens to involve a great deal of suffering and pain.

3. Fear of incremental death

But often suffering and pain are an inevitable part of the dying process, despite all the care available in our Western world. Many diseases, such as smallpox and diphtheria, that used to kill randomly across the age groups no longer do so. But the diseases associated with long life still do—degenerative diseases like cancer, heart disease, strokes, and dementia. To be sure, the advanced medical skills and technologies of our day are major blessings. They allow us to live better and longer. As the Committee on Medical Ethics of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington puts it, "Today we can draw out a dying process that would have been fairly quick in the past. We have made it possible to die in pieces." "Dying in pieces"—this is the prospect we dread. This is what fuels our fears: we see ourselves trapped in a prolonged, painful dependency, unable to maintain either dignity or control. The widespread awareness of the possibility of having to experience incremental dying is sufficiently repulsive and terrifying enough for many to consider alternatives.

4. Increasing institutionalization of death

In our culture the traditional caregivers—mainly women—are now a part of the out-of-home workforce, and so the trend is for people to die in institutions, away from all that's familiar at home. Competent and caring people staff hospitals, nursing homes, and care facilities, and most of them look after their charges very well. But the fact remains that the patients in these institutions find themselves cared for by strangers in environments that are usually much too public. The vital emotional and spiritual needs of these persons at the end of their lives may not be met.

5. High cost of dying

Medical and technological resources today have a greater capacity than ever before to prolong lives, but these advances are enormously expensive. It is widely known and frequently reported that approximately half of a person's lifelong health-care cost is spent in the final year of life. In Canada the reductions in federal transfer payments to the provinces have resulted in substantial decreases in many provincial health-care budgets. Those mostly affected by the cutbacks are usually the sick, the old, and the

dying—those who have the weakest voice and the least political clout. When personal finances are depleted and other resources dwindle, patients sometimes come to believe that the *ability* to die turns into the *obligation* to die.

6. More charitable attitude toward compassionate homicide

All the factors mentioned above combine to establish a mood that prompts some to look upon suicide as a possible end-of-life choice. High-profile cases favored by the media make it seem heartless not to grant those suffering people the right to die. And the growing conviction that patients do indeed have rights regarding their own deaths increasingly removes the moral taboos that used to serve as barriers. Together all of these conditions lend force to the demand for legal recognition and social acceptance of compassionate homicide.

IV. Biblical foundations for how Christians should regard end-of-life issues

A. God's gift of life

"I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ." This confession encapsulates the core belief of members of the Christian Reformed Church. The way we view life and, consequently, how we approach death should reflect our absolute trust in our faithful Lord and Savior. We must look to God's Word for our understanding of the meaning of life and death.

From the very beginning that Word makes clear that life is a special and unique gift. Both humankind and animals are referred to in Genesis as "living beings," but only of humankind is it said that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). There is something warmly personal and intimate in this picture. God did not just give life; he gave something of himself—as Jesus did when he "breathed on" his disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

As a part of creation reflecting the very image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), each person has inestimable worth as an individual and as a member of a community. Recognizing God's image in self and others means respecting and cherishing the creativity, compassion, love for life, and longing for community with which we are created.

God's intention for human life is well expressed by the Westminster Catechism: "What is the chief purpose of man? To know God and enjoy Him forever" (Q. and A. 1). We can broaden the scope of this confession to include the enjoyment of God, others, self, and the creation.

Yet, though life is clearly God's gift to us, it is a gift more of stewardship than of ownership. We are called to be caretakers of all that has been given to us. We are free to live our lives as fully as we can, but our freedom remains limited by our responsibility to be faithful to God. And there are values beyond that of life. Our love for God and others sometimes should take precedence over our own lives. This is the kind of love Jesus demonstrated in his willingness to lay down his life for us.

With the gift of life comes the responsibility to use it wisely. God commands us to protect life and not to take it into our own hands. He will require an accounting for every human life, "for in the image of God has God made man"

(Gen. 9: 5-6). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reaffirmed the commandment not to kill, replacing the desire to hurt with the requirement to love and care for one's neighbor and even one's enemy (Matt. 5:21-22, 43-44). Then he went on to instruct his followers in the law that fulfills and replaces the prohibition against murder, the positive command to love and be reconciled to one another. Paul summarizes that teaching of our Lord in Romans 13:9-10: "The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

Jesus affirmed the value of life by participating fully in our life on earth. Yet he did not hesitate to sacrifice himself and to make his life an offering to the Father: "Here I am, I have come to do your will" (Heb. 10:9). He teaches that the real value of life lies not in how much we cling to it but rather under what circumstances we are willing to lay it down. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35).

B. The Bible and suicide

In view of the growing demand for the legalization of assisted suicide, an examination of biblical givens may be helpful. The call to be willing to lose one's life in order to save it is mentioned six times in the four gospels (Matt. 10:39; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 14:26-27; 17:33; John 12:25). These words of our Lord have prompted many acts of courage and compassion in which individuals were willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to serve others in his name. But such selfless acts of sacrificial love and compassion are not to be confused with the conditions that lead a person to attempt suicide.

The Bible is strangely silent when it comes to condemning suicide. In the Old Testament story (Judg. 16:28-31), for example, Samson's self-inflicted death is a willing sacrifice made to benefit God's people. The suicide of Saul upon the field of battle, while greatly lamented ("O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul. . . . How the mighty have fallen in battle!" - II Sam. 1:24-25), is not condemned. Indeed, the men of Jabesh Gilead treat Saul's body with respect, for which David highly commends them (II Sam. 2:4-7). Even in I Chronicles 10:13, where Saul's suicide is followed by harsh words of judgment condemning his evil deeds and his unfaithfulness to God, there is no judgment made on his suicide.

Other examples of suicide in the Bible were desperate escapes from a life of disobedience. Abimelech (Judg. 9:52-54) had massacred his own brothers. Ahithophel (II Sam. 17:23) had betrayed his king and longtime friend, David. Of Zimri we read that when he killed himself, "he died because of the sins he had committed" (I Kings 16:18-19). In the New Testament the death of Judas (Matt. 27:5; Acts 1:18), while clearly a suicide, was a consequence of his betrayal of Jesus. Although these scriptural narratives do not explicitly condemn those who killed themselves, their actions are associated with lives of disobedience. Yet these examples of suicide in the Bible must not be taken to suggest that every depressed or suicidal person has intentionally chosen to pursue the way of evil.

C. *The church's attitude toward suicide*

In the early church, Christians (such as Paul) viewed their own acceptance of suffering and death as a sharing in or even a completion of Christ's suffering (Col. 1: 24; II Cor.1: 5). The early church honored martyrdom but stressed doing all one could—short of betraying one's faith—to avoid it.

Saint Augustine in *The City of God* (fourth century A.D.) offered a systematic argument against suicide, a position based on the beliefs and attitudes of his predecessors. His arguments were based on the classical virtues and on common sense rather than on biblical evidence. His goal was to oppose those who encouraged suicide as an ultimate act of piety.

Augustine's argument led to a strong condemnation of suicide in the medieval church. In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas argued that shortening one's life is wrong not only because it violates the commandment against murder but also because it is a sin against the God who is the Giver of life. Moreover, he felt that suicide cut short the time for a person to repent. The medieval church took a strong stand against this sin. It condemned all those who had taken their own lives, even in the name of piety, and denied them a Christian burial.

Increasingly, in the twentieth century many Christians have tempered their attitude on this issue. They recognize that persons caught up in despair are often so burdened by life that suicide seems the only solution. Today the church seeks to offer hope to suicidal persons and to bring comfort to those who are left behind in grief after a suicide.

D. *When the gift becomes a burden*

The gift of life can indeed become a burden. Our most appropriate response to suffering is compassion, reaching out in love to individuals in a time of need. Our compassion signals that we want to help and to do all that is possible to alleviate their distress. Compassion compels us to ease pain and suffering. Not to do so is wrong.

As Christians we have as our most fundamental obligation to do all we can—short of acting with the intention to kill—to relieve pain and suffering. We therefore cannot simply dismiss the pain of others because it may have a redemptive aspect. And we certainly may not impose suffering on others. God does not desire his people to suffer. For all who do suffer, he promises, "I will turn their mourning into gladness. I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow" (Jer. 31:13).

Nevertheless, God's Word teaches us that some aspects of suffering *can be* redemptive. In writing to the Colossians, Paul indicates his willingness to share in the suffering of the saints, seeing in it a sharing in the living sacrifice offered on our behalf by our Lord (Col.1:24). The apostle Peter affirms a faith that is proved genuine through "grief in all kinds of trials" (I Pet. 1:6). And the psalmist says, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Ps.119:71).

But suffering is not always redemptive in Scripture. The despair of Job in the depths of his suffering requires a better response than his wordy friends offer him. Their compassionate silence as they sit with him for seven days and seven nights to "sympathize with him and comfort him" (Job 2:11) may have been more valuable than all their words. David cried out to God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1), words that our Lord himself

cried from the cross. Christ's prayer to let the cup pass from him in the Garden of Gethsemane reflects his own struggle in accepting the hell he faced in his death.

E. Carrying each other's burdens

Motivated by God's own compassion for hurting people, we must not allow those who suffer to bear the burden alone. We must take seriously our unity in the body of Christ. The Christian moral values we affirm in family, church, and community do not apply only in personal attitudes and intentions; they also have a social dimension. The church community is a community that shares burdens and that links hands with the suffering and the dying.

On the other hand, a sense of being forsaken by one's fellow believers adds enormously to suffering. The feeling of loneliness becomes especially acute at this point in our lives. Here we face a great challenge today because most of us are reluctant to take on end-of-life care for others. As Dr. Hessel Bouma III put it in a speech at Calvin College (15 Jan. 1997), "Ask people where they would prefer to die, and 80 percent indicate they would prefer to die at home, surrounded by family and friends. Ask these same people whether they'd be willing to care for someone who is dying in his or her home, and a similar majority responds, No. What we desire for ourselves, we're reluctant to offer to others."

Paul urges the Galatians to care for one another: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). But he also recognizes that "each one should carry his own load" (Gal. 6:5). In southern India, where many women still traditionally carry heavy loads on their heads, shoulder-high stone platforms are placed at regular intervals along the roadways. These platforms are called "burden bearers." When the women come to one of these stone shelves, they can set their load down and rest under the shade of a nearby tree. They are not relieved of their load, but, after a period of rest, they have been energized enough to take up their burden again. Ultimately our brothers and sisters who struggle with the burden of a hard and painful death must deal with that burden themselves. However, when the Christian community surrounds them in love, that burden is temporarily lifted. They experience rest and renewed strength so that they can again "carry their own load," as Paul said.

V. When the gift of life becomes a burden: four vignettes

We turn now to vignettes of how people and their communities responded when the gift of life had become a burden.

A. The Latimer case

The story of Tracy Latimer has held the attention of the Canadian public for over six years. Although this is not a story of a person nearing the end of her life, it does illustrate a number of issues relevant to the thrust of this report. Specifically, the case is included because it involves the dilemmas faced by judicial law, the significance of public opinion in determining the application of the law, the importance of a pain-management plan, and the issue of mercy killing.

On Sunday, October 24, 1993, Robert Latimer of Battleford, Saskatchewan, quietly picked up his twelve-year old daughter, Tracy, carried her into his pickup truck, and ran the engine until his daughter fell into a carbon-monox-

ide-induced sleep. His wife and other children returned from a church service to find Tracy lying dead in her bed. Soon after, Mr. Latimer called the local police to report that Tracy had died in her sleep. An autopsy revealed high levels of carbon monoxide, and Mr. Latimer was subsequently taken into custody and charged with second-degree murder.

Tracy Latimer had had a severe case of cerebral palsy since birth, when she was deprived of oxygen. She had never developed beyond the mental level of a three-year-old, could not talk or walk, and was incontinent. She was virtually immobile, could move only her head and one arm, and was bedridden. Differing opinions exist as to whether or not her pain was bearable. Experts at Mr. Latimer's trial testified that her pain could have been relieved through medication and surgery. But surgeons and some caregivers testified that she was in constant pain. Yet her mother's journal cites days when Tracy was happy, alert, and cheerful.

Tracy had endured a series of painful operations. She was unable to take painkillers while recovering from surgery because these drugs would worsen her eating, breathing, and digestive problems. An orthopedic surgeon testified that Tracy was in extreme pain in the days before her death and that her future would have involved incredible suffering from further operations. Just days before her death, her family had been informed that yet another surgery would be required to remove a thighbone that was causing intense pain.

The public discussion that surrounded court judgments and appeals showed a surprising amount of sympathy for Mr. Latimer. The court itself seesawed back and forth about his sentence—from a slap on the wrist (two years on parole) to ten years without parole. Justice Noble, who presided over one of the appeals, granted Latimer a constitutional exemption (which was successfully appealed in 1998) from the minimum ten-year sentence on the basis that this sentence would constitute “cruel and unusual punishment,” forbidden in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. “Latimer is not a threat to society,” he explained. He further commented that this act of homicide was “committed for caring and altruistic reasons.”

There was no suggestion by any witness that Latimer killed his daughter because she was disabled, only that he did so to end the pain that accompanied her illness. Evidence showed that Latimer was motivated solely by his love and compassion for his daughter, by the desire to end her suffering. As Justice Noble stated,

It is admittedly a difficult task to prove what motivated a person to carry out such a grave act as murder that was not somehow related to self-interest, malevolence, hate or violence. But in my view of the evidence presented in this case, which is for the most part clear and uncontradicted [*sic*], we have that rare act of homicide that was committed for caring and altruistic reasons. That is why it is for want of a better term sometimes called compassionate homicide.

In sentencing Latimer, the judge said,

... while you wrongly took her life you appeared to do so for compassionate and not malevolent or selfish reasons. . . . But having said that, I must say to you that murder, no matter what the circumstances that bring it about, will never be as a matter of law a forgivable offense. The stigma that attaches to an act of murder is, in the eyes of right-minded people, as grave as it gets under our system of justice. I recognize that you must live with that stigma for the rest of your life. In your case it is clear . . . that you acted altruistically, but you nevertheless took the life of a human being and you did so deliberately.

The general public, with the exception of groups representing the disabled community, appeared to sympathize more strongly with Latimer than with his daughter. Even some church groups supported his action. The public judged Latimer's action in much the same way it would judge putting an animal out of its pain.

Organizations representing the disabled, however, disputed the claim that Latimer ended Tracy's life because of pain and not because she was disabled. They argued that no father would have done this to a healthy, exuberant adolescent without incurring the outrage of the public. The disabled fear that the value of their lives has been placed into question by the lenient sentence of the court as well as by public sentiment condoning this "compassionate act of homicide," an expression that, to them, is a contradiction in terms.

B. Nigel Martin's story

The story of Nigel Martin's place in his church, his family, and his school is included in this report because it shows the significance of a supporting community in coping with tragedy, the essence of Christian compassion, the power of practical assistance in the church community, and the power of the disabled to make us "see."

For Brian and Evelyn Martin it was a robbery in the night. On the night of October 10, 1985, sudden-infant-death syndrome (SIDS) robbed their youngest son, Nigel, of the full and rich life they anticipated for him. Nigel did survive the robbery, but it deprived him of almost all conscious functioning. When two months later the Martins finally took him home from the hospital, he was very different from the robust, bright-eyed boy he had been. It was a time "clouded by fearful anxiety," wrote Brian. "Evelyn and I felt truly alone. Nigel was unresponsive, unsmiling and seemingly unaware of his environment." Responses to family and friends were so subtle that a casual observer would not detect them.

The fourteen years since Nigel's SIDS experience have been filled with hospitalizations, bouts with pneumonia, endless appointments with medical doctors and health-care workers, long and tedious tube feedings, suctioning, ventilator treatments, intense chest physiotherapy, and exercising of limbs. Nevertheless, despite all these efforts, Nigel has had to suffer rigidity; contractions of the hands, feet, spine, and hips; and painful hip surgery to support a progressive spinal curvature.

Today Nigel is a teenager who cannot walk, speak, swallow, hear, or see, and he has no obvious way of communicating with anyone. "When Nigel's symptoms were initially recited," says Brian, "they became a litany of despair that seemed to avoid the central issue—that he was a child."

Over the years the Martins have developed strong connections to other families who have experienced similar circumstances. Gradually their thinking shifted from the trauma they had experienced to an appreciation of this new person their son had become. "The problems Nigel faced had not disappeared," says Brian, "but the perceptions of these problems which were preventing us from seeing our son had."

In networking with people who had similar needs, the Martins experienced the profound meaning of grace and compassion. People at Fellowship Christian Reformed Church (Edmonton, Alberta), where the Martins are members, freely offered practical assistance. They provided child care,

occasionally took the other Martin children to movies or sports events, or drove them to their music lessons. Others prepared and delivered meals. Some people with nursing experience occasionally looked after Nigel for an evening or a few days to give Evelyn and Brian some rest. Some assisted with the vigorous patterning exercises Nigel needed to go through. And people prayed, individually and collectively, for healing and support.

Today Nigel's presence at Edmonton Christian Junior High School is accepted by the students as quite natural. A classmate on the way to gym class will grab his wheelchair. "I'll push him," he volunteers. Friends linger near his wheelchair during his tube feeding and ask, "Is Nigel coming outside?" A too exuberant classmate may jostle him, resulting in Nigel's letting out a sonorous howl and jolting up his arms and stiffening his body. As Nigel relaxes again, another classmate may pick up his cloth from the floor and tenderly place it under Nigel's chin. Other students push him on the skating rink, clamoring for their turn to push his chair. "Even though you can't talk, I still think you are a nice boy," writes one classmate. Another writes, "I think you are cool," and another, "You are fun to play with and to talk to, and you never tell a secret."

In light of the extent of Nigel's disabilities, it is nothing less than astonishing to see how thoroughly his family and his peers have included Nigel in their lives. "We have felt grace in the little things," Evelyn and Brian state. They mention birthday parties that Nigel has been invited to and the way caring parents have attended to details so that Nigel can be a part of the celebrations. They are thankful for the gift of hospitality that God has given. It is just such a gift that they count on to hold the future for Nigel.

The future is something the Martins think about frequently. Long ago they stopped thinking back on the person Nigel was before his SIDS incident. They hope some day their son will have an identity apart from them, will be an independent person in his own right, treated with dignity and respect, with a valued place within the Christian community and the broader society. They testify to the presence of God's grace in their own and Nigel's lives, and they continue to rely on the constancy of God's love to uphold them and Nigel. They believe that God will renew their strength, that God's love and faithfulness are large enough to fill their own and Nigel's needs.

That hope is perhaps most poignantly illustrated in a set of two banners designed by Evelyn entitled *Dreams of Heaven I and II*. In the first panel Nigel in his wheelchair is represented as entering a kind of pathway. As he moves into and along it, he is slowly transformed into a leaping, walking boy. This panel represents the dream that was the prayer of the Martins and their community when Nigel first returned home as a totally changed boy. In the second panel Nigel doesn't change at all; instead, as he enters the pathway, it is the people around him who change. A spiritual revolution takes place as Nigel is totally loved and completely accepted for who he is, surrounded by his community. And he is still in his chair, still the same person.

Nigel's presence in the community makes a difference to those around him. "It is you, Nigel," wrote Brian, "who teach us . . . you have patiently endured our sadness, our mistakes, our giving up and coming back again. You sit peacefully. Like the lily of the field or the birds of the air, neither do you toil or spin. . . ."

C. *A clinical vignette*

Dr. Lawrence Feenstra, a medical practitioner in Grand Rapids, Michigan, contributed the following account. We include this story because it is an example of a physician's caring relationship with an elderly couple over many years, it illustrates the variety of support services that combined to bring this couple spiritual and physical comfort, and it includes a sample of a health-care directive both husband and wife completed in consultation with their family. The words are those of Dr. Feenstra.

"An armed forces chaplain and his wife retired to western Michigan in 1980 and became my patients for the next fifteen years. Both individuals suffered from significant ongoing medical problems that required regular medical care. He had medical mellitus, mild hypertension, and a prior myocardial infarction, which led to cardiac surgery. She had a history of cardiac rhythm disturbance, hypothyroidism, and a lung condition (sarcoidosis) which caused coughing and shortness of breath. Their fifteen years of regular office visits developed into the meaningful patient-physician relationships that are so valued in the field of internal medicine.

"In the mid-1980s the wife developed weakness in her left hand. Over the next three years similar weakness developed insidiously in the right upper extremity and eventually the legs as well. A diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's disease, was made, and over the subsequent seven to eight years gradually increasing disability affected ambulation, the simple tasks of self-care, swallowing, and speech so that she required increasing assistance from her husband and family. This support was always provided and was instrumental in avoiding serious respiratory infections. She remained alert, able to communicate, and without physical discomfort. Activity inside and outside the home was gradually decreased, but it was maintained by an attentive family until it was no longer possible.

"In 1992 the family was devastated when the husband was diagnosed with prostate cancer, which, despite radical surgery, irradiation, hormonal and chemotherapy, proved to be an aggressive form of neoplasm. Within one year it had spread to the spine and pelvis, leading to progressively severe bone pain, which necessitated vigorous and increasingly aggressive pain control.

"Since the husband had always functioned very effectively as the wife's primary caregiver, his own health problems now led to increased family involvement as well as to ongoing care from many friends and their entire church family. During this period a new granddaughter (their first) proved to be a blessing that enriched their lives despite the ongoing pain and disabilities.

"In 1991 both the husband and the wife, after discussion together and with their family, completed a Designation of Patient Advocate Form, a form commonly used in the state of Michigan, which includes directions for health care and durable power of attorney. Specifically, the form states,

I do not want my life to be prolonged by providing or continuing life-sustaining treatment if any of the following medical conditions exist:

1. I am in an irreversible coma or persistent vegetative state.
2. I am terminally ill and life-sustaining procedures would serve only to artificially delay my death.
3. Under any circumstances where my medical condition is such that the burdens of treatment outweigh the benefits, I want my patient advocate to consider the relief of suffering and the quality of my life as well as the extent

of possibly prolonging my life. I understand that this decision could or would allow me to die.

“The final year of life for this couple, in addition to the ongoing caring support of family, friends, and almost their entire church, was characterized also by the outstanding contributions of a local hospice organization, which all together rendered harmonious, caring attention to spiritual and physical comfort.

“The husband died peacefully at home in 1995. His wife remained at home under hospice and family care and also died peacefully, less than six months later.”

D. Beth Mohr's story

This story has been included in our report because it illustrates some difficult choices between the saving of the life of a mother or that of her baby, an example of a person facing death and preparing for it, the necessity of a good hospice program, and a shining example of the communion of the saints.

Beth Lynn (De Bruyne) Mohr, wife of family physician Jeffrey Mohr and mother of David, Jonathan, and Benjamin, died in her Hudsonville, Michigan, home in the early morning hours of June 15, 1998, following a three-year struggle with brain cancer. She was 35 years old.

In September of 1995, when Beth was thirty-four weeks pregnant, she was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. The Mohrs knew about tumors. Beth was a nurse trained in oncology (the study of tumors), and Jeff's own medical training had left him no stranger to the devastation such growths usually cause. When they received the test results, the implications were immediately clear. Left untreated, Beth's cancer would prove fatal within a year.

Since brain cancer does not normally spread to other parts of the body, it posed no immediate danger to the baby. The indicated treatment, however, was a different story. Chemotherapy affects the bloodstream and could harm the baby, and surgical intervention could cause fetal distress.

Beth had always been annoyed with the way people, even medical people, avoided discussion about end-of-life matters. Although death is an inescapable fact of life, it is generally not talked about. But while avoiding this critical issue may be a universal strategy, it was not Beth's way. And so, having explored all the difficult options together and their implications for the baby, Beth decided with Jeff to undergo surgery immediately. Realizing that complications in the surgery could be fatal for Beth, together she and Jeff decided to have the medical team take the baby by C-section if at any time during the operation the fetus should be in danger.

Fortunately, the surgery had no ill effect on the baby. It did, however, reveal a tumor of a kind and size that indicated a maximum survival time of six months for Beth. It was thus a matter of great urgency for the baby to be delivered so that Beth could receive the treatment indicated. Beth started taking steroids to stimulate the baby's lung maturity and advance the time of its external viability. On October 3, 1995, a healthy Benjamin Lynn was delivered by C-section.

Following Ben's birth, Beth initially responded well to extensive radiation and chemotherapy treatments. God gave her and Jeff another year of grace and good times, during which Beth lived a fairly normal life, even driving a car. But her ability to organize things was deteriorating, her short-term

memory was affected, and one of her legs started giving her difficulty in walking.

In the fall of 1997 another scan showed a new tumor and renewed activity of the first one. Beth decided, with Jeff, to forgo further aggressive treatment and to enter a hospice program at home. In retrospect, Jeff felt that once this decision was made, Beth almost looked forward to receiving hospice care. She knew she was dying, and she wanted to die in the trusted surroundings of her home.

Not many people know a great deal about hospice programs. As Jeff put it, “Our culture lags behind the hospice movement. Society feels that accepting hospice care means giving up, that it’s a quitting of the fight to maintain life.” For Beth and Jeff it meant no such thing. For them it meant having comforting space and precious time to prepare for the inevitable end and to do so with the caring support of relatives, friends, and specially trained persons.

Patients entering hospice care are not expected to live longer than six months. A medical doctor has to prepare a certificate to that effect before a patient can be admitted. Hospice care is therefore not appropriate for all terminally ill patients, but it was for Beth, even though, as it turned out, she was in hospice care for two months beyond the normally anticipated duration.

Beth remained at home, surrounded by her family. A hospice nurse helped out up to two hours a day, five days a week. It was especially in the course of those eight months that Beth and Jeff learned how great a comfort the active care and support of family, friends, and the church community can be. They also discovered how complex such care often is and how much careful planning and organizing it involves.

A large room in the house became Beth’s room. Jeff also slept there, and the boys at times took turns looking after their mom at night. Jeff believes that the boys were themselves comforted in being with Beth. But as her nights became more and more restless, Beth provided the type of constant, ongoing attention Jeff and the boys could not provide alone. That is when relatives, friends, and members of their church, Orchard Hill Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, began to sit with her, allowing Jeff the occasional respite he needed. In her last week on earth, Beth’s parents moved into the house. Beth died early in the morning hours of June 15, 1998, surrounded by those who loved her most dearly.

For the better part of a year, up to and even after Beth died, the support the Mohrs received from the community was extraordinary. Essentials such as meals, dishes, laundry, and the many other household chores that form part of the day-to-day living of a family of five were all taken care of. Jeff’s church, for example, prepared meals three times a week. Neighbors and relatives looked after nearly everything the other days.

Beth’s father, a gifted organizer who arranged the sit-ins, managed the sleep-overs, and scheduled the preparation and delivery of all the meals, described some of the reactions of the caregivers. One said, “I wanted to be able to minister to those who had ministered to us in so many ways.” Another observed, “I knew that helping care for Beth in her home allowed her to die with peace and dignity. I could not change the fact that Beth was dying, but I could make her last few months more meaningful to her and her family.”

Beth’s father also reflected on a very special event—the healing service that was held for Beth. Scripture reading, prayers, and the laying on of hands by

the many people present had a profound impact on Beth and all those present. God did not see fit to heal her physically, but, as her father reported, her soul and spirit were touched, as everyone else in that service was.

Often, as individuals were thanked for their help, their response was to thank the family for letting them be involved. As one person put it, “I cannot even begin to explain what I received from this experience. Not only did I do more than I thought possible, but it opened my thoughts to my own future. It created a bond between me and the family that cannot be explained.” Another one said, “These times were so precious. Being able to pray for her and the family in her presence during the night was such a blessing. By morning I felt that I had had a deep spiritual experience.”

Jeff Mohr is hugely thankful for the many ways in which his community was “there” for Beth, for him, and for the boys. No one should underestimate the heavy and multidimensional burden that comes with the dying of a loved one nor the degree to which it can be shared and, in the sharing, be made more bearable through the care that a loving community can provide.

In the spring of 1998 there was an outpouring of love in grief that gave rich meaning to the expression “communion of the saints” in the Michigan town of Hudsonville.

VI. Toward communities of care

What accounts for the very different outcomes of these four cases? No doubt the personal weaknesses, strengths, and resources of the different families. But it was also the network of their caregivers, friends, and church community that made the difference. The resources of a community of care made the difference between capitulation and persistence. Those resources can make the difference in the end-of-life experience.

Taking effective steps toward the practice of community—this is our challenge. Our society’s individualism severely handicaps the practice of community. Far too many people have virtually no network of support. Even within a caring community few of us can provide ideal conditions for chronic or palliative care. But with the help of even imperfect support networks, we can make a blessed difference. All of us can take small steps, and each step helps. After all, if we say that life is so precious that we may not end it, we must give every life a valid—and valued—place in the community. Out of the myriad of ways we can be there for each other, we mention the following:

A. Providing pastoral care

We begin with pastoral care simply because that is what we expect from the church community, and few persons are better equipped to do ministry to the chronically ill and dying and their families than their pastors and fellow believers. Pastors work with the themes of hope and forgiveness, purpose, assurance, and comfort.

The imminence of death has a way of breaking down the walls that often block pastoral ministry. Healthy people sometimes keep their faith separate from their life issues, but when death encroaches, faith and life become inextricably connected.

As death approaches, pastoral workers play various key roles. Approaching death raises theological questions. Even though few of these will be phrased in theological language, sensitive pastors and fellow believers will

recognize and articulate them. At such a time they can help clarify relationships, particularly the all-important ultimate relationships. Sensitive pastors and fellow members also know the power of empathetic listening. They know that entering into the dying person's story validates that person's life, affirms connections with the larger world, and acknowledges that he or she has made a difference. As they lead members to God's throne in prayer, serve them communion, or sing with them, they affirm a bond that's comforting and precious, a bond not merely between friends on earth but also between friends of God. As they move from the bedside of the dying to the working and worshiping community, pastoral workers may, as we shall see, pass on some of their pastoral skills and insights to their parishioners and help mobilize them for ministry.

B. Facing the need for inclusion

Illness is isolating, and the sense of isolation is heightened for those who suffer chronic and terminal illness in institutional settings away from home. This is why we favor the home-care option and hospice care wherever that is desired and can be afforded or arranged. The home, after all, is the place where the patient is surrounded by all that is loved and familiar. It breathes security. True, friends may continue to drop by without realizing that their visits may intrude on badly needed privacy, but their attention shows that they continue to care. Home is also the place where the family has talked and sung and prayed together. That, too, continues. Are there sensitive, even intimate issues to resolve? Dad's anger? Mom's fear of what's ahead? Home is the place to talk about these things, especially in the face of death.

But often it is just not possible to take care of our dying loved ones at home. When hospitals and nursing homes are the only choice, it is even more important that we include the sick and dying in our lives. When they visit, hospital chaplains, pastors, relatives, and fellow believers link the dying person to the body of believers and to God. So does the inclusion of the dying in announcements and in prayers. But we must go beyond a superficial mention that "Julie Best is still at Memorial Hospital." The congregation needs to know how to pray for Julie, what to ask for, and how they can help her and her family in specific ways. Friends who wish to visit may need to be advised to call ahead and keep their visits brief. They may be encouraged to send a card or a note. Some friends may be reluctant to visit, afraid that they won't know what to say. But listening is also a gift, and "90 percent of caring is just showing up." Pastors should encourage members of their congregations to develop their skills of listening and caring.

C. Easing the fear of dying

Though most people fear death, believers can conquer that fear. God's grace is capable of doing so, of giving believers a wonderful assurance of faith. Still, not all believers reach that point, and even those who do, rarely attain it without struggle. We fear death, after all, because it is the end of life as we know it, and we cannot see what's on the other side. Many Christians experience the conflicting elements of the process of dying—depression, denial, anger, bargaining, acceptance, and hope.

Appropriate ministry to the dying offers them the freedom to acknowledge these doubts and fears. Scripture itself, as in Psalm 88, acknowledges these realities. As we identify with fellow believers, we point them to the gospel, to

hope, and to freedom from fear. We remind each other of the fact that nothing, neither life nor death, shall separate us from the love of God. We rest in Christ's atoning work for us, and we take hold of the promise of life everlasting and the resurrection of the dead. We work with the Scriptures, which remind us of these certainties, and we lead each other close to God in prayer. And when fears and doubt linger, we keep on pointing each other to the one who the Scriptures say is "greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (I John 3:20). In this hope we lead each other to the comforting conviction that even though we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death, [we] will fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4).

D. Managing pain and suffering

Earlier we noted that pain and the fear of pain and of death itself play a huge role in creating a climate of sympathy for assisted suicide and euthanasia. Yet, contrary to popular belief, studies show that people who actually experience severe pain are not more likely than others to favor ending their lives. As the Episcopal Diocesan Committee on Medical Ethics explains, "Patients are interested in getting rid of their pain—not in ending their lives" (p. 53).

But there is disagreement on whether patients who have severe pain can get rid of it. Opponents of euthanasia tend to claim that pain can always be managed; proponents are equally adamant that the opposite is true. Despite great new advances to relieve pain and suffering, the actual delivery of that relief is, on the whole, sadly deficient. Doctors are often not well trained in pain control, and many of them tend to treat pain conservatively, both for fear of addicting their patients to analgesics and for fear that providing adequate pain relief may be seen as a form of euthanasia.

On the other hand, there is evidence that currently available measures are able to relieve the pain and suffering of almost every dying person. Adequate pain control is best provided when the patient is treated with an individualized care plan for pain and when an interdisciplinary palliative-care team (consisting of health-care professionals and pastoral counselors) provides support. While such care is increasingly being offered, especially in connection with the hospice movement, the need continues for improved training in pain management on the part of doctors and nurses.

Pain management and defusing the fear of pain and suffering are directly related to suicide and assisted suicide. As Kathleen Foley writes, "We frequently see patients referred to our Pain Clinic who have considered suicide as an option or who request physician-assisted suicide because of uncontrolled pain. We commonly see such ideation and request dissolve with adequate control of pain and other symptoms, using combinations of pharmacologic, neurosurgical, anaesthetic, and psychological approaches" (qtd. in Episcopal Diocese, p. 52).

E. Maintaining dignity and control

Besides fearing the pain and suffering that often accompany dying, most people feel an understandable apprehension about the loss of dignity and control that comes with aging and with dying at any age. It is difficult to accept the loss of physical self-sufficiency and to accept with a measure of grace the indignities associated with the loss of bodily functions and mental faculties. A sense of helplessness and loss of self-esteem can severely aggravate

a dying person's suffering, but the understanding and the loving support of a caring community can make a difference and provide much comfort for the dying person.

F. Giving life-care directives

Few of us want to look death in the face long enough to make decisions about it. But failure to do so usually means that health-care professionals do whatever it takes to keep us alive—very possibly against our wishes and with little purpose. Therefore, we need to prepare clear instructions specifying the type of treatment we wish to receive when we are no longer capable of making such decisions. We need to engage our families in frank conversations about these things, and we need to provide them and potential caregivers with life-care directives, such as living wills and durable power of attorney for health-care decisions. When we assume responsibility for these matters, we take the burden off our loved ones' shoulders—a burden that often leads to confusion, guilt, and conflict and that all too often can leave them in doubt about what to do.

Hospitals and nursing centers respect such instructions and often routinely ask for them. Many long-term-care facilities—Christian institutions among them—stress the need, at the time of admission, for developing a care plan that includes these provisions. It is essential that these instructions are on file for retrieval when needed or are communicated to someone who is trustworthy and that these instructions are kept up-to-date. Up-to-date wills and clear instructions regarding funeral arrangements can further relieve the burden our death places on our families.

G. Caring for the caregivers

Providing care for a dying person is, for family members, a most exhausting task. The wife who lovingly attends her dying husband will eventually feel the strain. And children responsible for providing such care also find it hard to sustain long nights with little sleep. The family needs regular respite care, the care provided by a hospice agency or by trained nurse volunteers from within the church or community. But families who surround their loved ones in hospitals and nursing homes need respite too.

Many churches have instituted a parish-nurse program that matches the church's resources to various needs. Though smaller churches may not be able to achieve this level of coordination, some larger churches, especially those in urban centers, may well consider designating a trained person to coordinate such a ministry.

Respite care takes on many forms. It may take the form of child care, for example. The church members can offer meals, help with shopping, take over laundry, and do home-cleaning chores. If a ramp is required, church members can be mobilized to build it. Deacons may sensitively offer to cover unexpected expenses. Someone might provide a recreational vehicle to allow the family to get away. The district elder walks along on this difficult journey by regularly stopping by to listen and to pray. Someone with links to these services may help connect children to grief-support groups such as Rainbows.

Our churches are filled with many gifted, caring members. They need only to be mobilized, their gifts coordinated. Sometimes the pastor may be the person to take the initiative. In many cases other believers will use this opportunity to share their gifts in this ministry.

H. Supplying hospice care

Palliative care takes many forms. One of the more recent and most commendable is the hospice movement. This movement has precursors as far back in history as the Middle Ages, when pilgrims and crusaders found refuge in hospice shelters. Today the movement stands for a concept of care that helps people with dying—either at home or in a home-like setting away from home—in a way that ensures comfort, aggressively manages pain, and provides emotional and spiritual support. That support extends to the caregivers as well and, when needed, provides grief counseling following a loved one's death. Members of our churches would do well to acquaint themselves with the hospice ministries and to support them wholeheartedly.

I. Developing the educational ministry of the church

End-of-life issues provide their own teachable moments in the life of the church. The ministry of our members to families in crisis spurs us toward communal service and prayer. It can also prompt us to look into educational offerings that bring faith, health, and end-of-life issues together. These matters deserve to be lifted up in the preaching ministry of the church. They can also be emphasized in adult-education programs. Churches can access the local community for information and resources. Health-care agencies will gladly provide the necessary resources.

J. Suspending judgment

We celebrate the lives of those who die at peace, especially when those who grieve the loss also experience acceptance and peace. Then we remember the life God gave and give thanks for the loved one who has died, for the grace of God in his or her life, and for our Christian hope.

But it is difficult to do that when people end their lives through choices that seem to us simply wrong or even tragic. When, for example, a friend stuns us with her suicide. When a Christian brother refuses to take nourishment and starves himself to death. When families choose to keep an aged parent on life support far longer than we would have done or, shunning that support, appear to hasten death. End-of-life decisions are seldom as neat and tidy in practice as in theory. Some situations are difficult far beyond our comprehension. Some situations are so horrendous, so far beyond our comprehension, that we may need to suspend judgment. Especially then we need to point each other to God's grace.

VII. Implications for public policy pertaining to the end of life

As we said at the beginning of this report, we affirm our commitment to life as a gift of God. Life is a trust we are called to cherish and protect both in ourselves and in others. In the Latimer case, that trust was broken when Tracy's father could no longer bear the burden of watching Tracy suffer. We acknowledge that sorrow, pain, indignity, or frustration may make life a heavy burden. But if we are true to our commitment, we must find ways of cherishing and protecting each person's life—even when that calls for a great deal of personal sacrifice, as in the case of Nigel Martin.

Responsible medical practice needs to be guided by a deep respect for the God-given value of human life. This value is not diminished by the physical or mental ravages of old age, disability, disease, accident, or deformity. We may not terminate life on the basis of any of these things, for doing so places us on

the slippery slope of treating a life as a disposable commodity when its apparent usefulness is lost.

Our society must not accept assisted suicide or mercy killing as appropriate responses to the burden life may become. In keeping with this principle, we believe it is incumbent on the church to encourage government initiatives that protect the weak and vulnerable in society, for when private and community resources prove insufficient, as they so often do, especially in the U.S., government must provide adequate health-care funding so that *all* persons can have full access to the necessary resources.

The role of the health-care community is to help people overcome the distress of sickness, disability, and untimely death. But there comes a time at the close of every person's life when it is clear that even the most heroic medical efforts will no longer maintain life. In that dying stage the emphasis in medical care must be on securing the greatest possible level of comfort for the one who is dying rather than on seeking to extend that person's life as long as possible. Especially in this final phase of life, people are to be treated with the utmost respect. Respect for life at this stage does not mean that we deny them further treatment nor that we leave them to suffer excruciating pain. Rather, it means that we, together with health-care professionals, recognize and acknowledge the point at which our best efforts at providing care must shift from a curative emphasis to a palliative one.

Many of us have known people—perhaps in our own families—who suffered from a type of cancer that was accompanied by ferocious pain. We may have witnessed their extreme agony and may even have asked for or approved the administration of the level of morphine needed to control the unrelenting pain. And after that, we probably noticed that with the easing of the fiercest pain the patients' awareness of their surroundings receded until, finally, they slipped away into peaceful and painless death.

At such a time who is to say with any degree of certainty that it was the increasing dosage of morphine that hastened or actually brought on the expected ultimate end? At a time like this, where the management of pain becomes the primary focus of care, the question hardly seems to matter.

But the question *does* matter, and it needs to be addressed.

We acknowledge that varying circumstances allow for a range of medical interventions that no one statute could possibly address. That is why the law must allow a measure of flexibility to accommodate some of the variables that may occur at the end of life. For example, no one would want to permit an accident victim with serious internal injuries simply to be taken off life support when death is not inevitable. In such a case every possible medical effort must be made to ensure survival and eventual recovery. But if a patient suffers from terminal cancer and is clearly in the dying stage, the situation is different. The physician must have the professional and legal freedom to treat the patient in a manner consistent with responsible medical practice.

When the moral and legal aspects of the matter become increasingly difficult, we need to draw on the expertise of the legal and medical professionals in our midst to guide us in our responses to these situations. The emphasis of care must be on providing the dying person with relief from unbearable pain. God's mercy is great enough to encompass this need, and God's people should be advocates of that mercy.

New legislation may be needed to protect both doctors and patients in this final stage of life, for doctors may find themselves in conflict with the law when administering a treatment which, though aimed solely at relief of suffering and distress, may actually hasten the onset of death.

Elderly patients, on the other hand, must be assured that adequate controls are in place to guide and supervise the health-care professionals who are giving treatment at this vulnerable stage of life. Presently there are many places in which there is neither adequate control within the health-care system nor effective scrutiny from the medical community or the government. We fear that this deficiency could lead by default to medical practices that will fall outside of both legislation and the professional standards of medical ethics.

It was out of these concerns that the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), in April 1995, submitted its brief to Canada's Senate Special Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. The brief specifically addressed the question "to what extent the process of dying may be shortened by medical treatment aimed at reducing suffering and ensuring a peaceful end."

In its brief the CCG recommended legislative change that would permit medical intervention *only for the relief of pain and suffering* even if such treatment could shorten life when patients are clearly approaching the end of life. If such treatment would hasten death, the cause of death should be attributed to the originating disease and not to the treatment to relieve pain and suffering. The CCG further recommended legislation that would legally define and recognize a terminal phase of life that would be certified in consultations between the attending medical professionals and the patient or designated representatives.

Because in the United States legal health-care requirements vary from state to state, our committee would suggest that Christian Reformed congregations in the U.S. urge Christian health-care and legal professionals, particularly those who are thoroughly familiar with their own states' health-care systems, to prepare and submit similar recommendations that are appropriate to the jurisdictions within which the congregations are located.

Finally, the most vulnerable among us need protection from those who consider society's weakest members to be expendable. At a time when the skyrocketing cost of health care is straining financial resources to their very limits, it is particularly necessary to regulate medical practices to ensure that the lives of even the poorest and most marginalized among us are treated with the greatest compassion and the utmost respect.

VIII. Recommendations

- A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to designated representatives of the Committee for Contact with the Government.
- B. That synod urge the churches to implement the following guidelines with regard to end-of-life issues:
 1. That with respect to empowering family members, churches
 - a. Encourage families to engage in frank discussions about the issues surrounding death and dying.

- b. Encourage families to prepare advance directives regarding palliative care.
2. That with respect to their local community, churches
 - a. Identify and match community and congregational resources.
 - b. Form partnerships with community-care programs and agencies.
 - c. Encourage members to volunteer in local care programs, e.g., involve youth groups to assist seniors in the community.
 3. That with respect to the health-care community, churches
 - a. Encourage health-care professionals to recognize that dying persons, their families, doctors, chaplains, pastors, and other caregivers constitute a team for management of the dying stage.
 - b. Encourage the medical community to give priority to effective pain management its due attention.
 - c. Encourage the medical community to develop an end-of-life care plan that goes beyond addressing the mere physical needs of the dying.
 4. That with respect to its members, churches
 - a. Preach and teach the hope of the gospel.
 - b. Include in their ministry of prayer the dying, their families, and their caregivers.
 - c. Cherish and embrace in their church lives the disabled, the aged, the suffering, and those near the end of life.
 - d. Ensure accessibility to facilities.
 - e. Match gifts and needs in the congregation.
 - f. Encourage the recognition and development of care-giving skills.
 - g. Provide respite for caregivers.
 - h. Provide financial assistance where required.
 5. That with respect to public policy, churches
 - a. Encourage the allocation of health-care funding for adequate palliative services, home care, and medical support services for all people.
 - b. Encourage government initiatives that will allow medical intervention aimed at pain relief even if that intervention may shorten life.
 - c. Encourage government initiatives that will promote life-affirming legislation and oppose legislation that endorses assisted suicide or mercy killing.
- C. That synod ask the CRC Publications Board to prepare educational materials on end-of-life issues.
- D. That synod accept this report as the CCG's response to synod's request.

Committee for Contact with the
Government

End-of-Life Team

Louisa Bruinsma

Reinder Klein

Rudy Ouwehand

Jack Westerhof

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OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

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OVERTURES

Overture 1: Withdraw 1995 Authorization for Classes to Declare *Male* Inoperative in Article 3-a; Withdraw Permission for Local Churches to Ordain Women Elders

I. Background

The decision of Synod 1995 to permit classes and congregations the local option to declare the word *male* inoperative in Article 3-a of the Church Order stemmed in large measure from the conclusion of synod to “recognize that there were two different perspectives and convictions . . . on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731).

Shortly after that synod, a book was published entitled *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of I Timothy 2:9-15*. Its team of authors thoroughly analyzed that crucial text and came to the conclusion that none of the more recent interpretations of that passage holds up under scrutiny. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that in the intervening five years, despite public challenges by the book’s authors for anyone to refute their findings, there has been no refutation of the factual data the book presents. Unless new discoveries of ancient manuscripts indicate otherwise, the analysis these authors have done appears definitive and beyond refutation. The historical interpretation of this crucial text, which prohibits women in church offices, must stand.

In the Christian Reformed Church the perspective which has held sway over the past few years is that the Bible speaks inconclusively on this matter. Such an argument has moved many in the middle of the debate to be at peace with a sort of dual approach to the topic. The evidence marshaled in *Women in the Church*, however, and the inability of proponents of women in office to refute the book’s analysis of data from antiquity indicate that the denomination cannot go forward on the notion that there are two legitimate, opposing interpretations. The best current analysis of the most crucial text in this debate reaffirms that the passage speaks with a single clear voice prohibiting women from holding the church offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

II. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures synod

A. To withdraw the authorization given to classes in 1995 permitting them to “declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative” and to “authorize the churches under [their] jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733).

B. To withdraw the regulation adopted in 1995 permitting a local church to call and ordain women elders even if its classis does not declare the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a.

Ground: Exhaustive exegetical analysis of I Timothy 2:9-15, unavailable to Synod 1995 and not refuted since its publication in 1995, demonstrates that the premises on which the 1995 decision was based were invalid and that the decision is in conflict with the Word of God.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 2: Delete Word *Male* from Church Order Article 3-a

I. Background

In Classis Grand Rapids East, where women have served as elders and pastors for a number of years, the ministry of women has advanced the mission of God among us and through us. Understanding that Synod 1995 acted as it did to diffuse the divisive issue of women in office, Classis Grand Rapids East believes a decision to now open all offices of the church to women by means of revising the Church Order faithfully adheres to Scripture, responds to the needs of many churches, and at the same time allows individual congregations to refrain from ordaining women should their consciences so dictate.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3-a.

Grounds:

- A. Deleting the word *male* from Article 3-a does not eliminate the possibility of local option for churches that decide not to call and ordain women to the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.
- B. The church of Jesus Christ is served and the kingdom of God is advanced through the offices of the church when spiritual gifts and godliness are the criteria for ordination and no one is disqualified solely on the basis of gender.
- C. Church members as well as members of councils and classes that have ordained women testify that ministry is enhanced by the service of women in all the offices in ways unknown in the past.
- D. Wherever women have been delegated to classes, the work of those classes has proceeded positively, even though some churches within those classes do not support ordination of women. It follows that the work of synod would also proceed positively if there were women delegates, even though some delegates might not be in support of the ordination of women.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Philip R. Lucasse, stated clerk

Overture 3: Declare Synodical Decision re Women in Office (1995) to Be Contrary to the Word of God; Return to the Decision of 1994

The council of Springdale Christian Reformed Church, Bradford, Ontario, overtures synod

A. To declare that the decisions of Synod 1995 concerning the ordination of women to the offices of minister of the Word, elder, and evangelist are against the teaching of God's Word, as was stated and accepted by Synod 1994 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 506-08).

B. To return to the decision of 1994 as the final word on this matter.

Ground: Doing so honors God's Word, as stated and accepted by Synod 1994 concerning the ordination of women as ministers, elders, and evangelists.

Council of Springdale CRC,
Bradford, ON
Harm Hurlings, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Toronto but was not adopted.

Overture 4: Adopt with Alterations the Recommendations of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office

The council of Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, overtures synod to receive the report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office with appreciation for the work done and to accept the recommendations of the committee after making the following changes in the wording of Regulations 1 and 5 of Recommendation D:

A. Regarding Regulation 1

Accept the recommendation of the minority, namely, "that a classis that has authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist shall be allowed to delegate women office-bearers to synod starting in the year 2002."

B. Regarding Regulation 5

Delete from recommended Regulation 5 the phrase "provided that the role of women elders is restricted to the local church in which they hold office" and substitute for it the following: "and to delegate women elders to classis."

The proposed Regulation 5 would then read:

A classis that has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist shall nevertheless acknowledge a church's right, in keeping with its understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office and in response to local needs and circumstances, to take exception to the decision of classis as it applies to the office of elder and to delegate women elders to classis.

Grounds:

1. Support for the report and its recommendations
The report of the committee is admirable in its effort to move the denomination beyond polarization and in proposing a framework within which we can constructively accommodate the differing conclusions drawn from Scripture, which are sincerely held by both sides in this issue. The report's recommendations therefore deserve the prayerful and considered support of synod, of the classes, and of all the churches.
2. Support for the minority recommendation re Regulation 1
We agree with the minority committee's conviction that its proposed change flows from the logic of the report. If both of the contrasting convictions on this issue honor Scripture, as synod earlier declared, then for the congregations and classes which have already permitted the ordination and installation of women as elders, ministers, and evangelists, it is desirable that this barrier be removed so these churches and their classical delegates, regardless of gender, may be able to function at all levels of church assemblies, including synod, in accordance with their convictions. The suggested starting date of Synod 2002 is in keeping with the theme of constructive accommodation, which characterizes the whole report.
3. Support for suggested change B above, i.e., allowing women elders to be delegated to a classis that has not authorized its constituent churches to ordain and install women in the office of elder
A church that has ordained and installed women as elders even though it is in a classis that has not ruled the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a finds itself in a difficult position because of the restriction limiting women elders "to the local church in which they hold office." Such a church may be unable to present a full delegation to classis because of the unavailability of male elders, as has been the case with Fellowship CRC of Ancaster in Classis Hamilton.

The effectiveness of women elders is limited by this restriction because they may not work in their elected official capacity with their male counterparts in the churches of classis. Regulation 3 under B of Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a—"in response to local needs and circumstances"—is also applicable at the classis level. In matters of local church discipline requiring the involvement of classis and in local classical ministry programs, the needs and circumstances of the local classis will necessitate participation by women elders.

Council of Fellowship CRC, Ancaster, ON
Fred Hagen, chairman

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hamilton but was not adopted.

Overture 5: Reaffirm Position of Synod 1994 re Women in Office; Remove Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a

I. Background

The issue of women in church office has vexed the Christian Reformed Church for over a quarter of a century. Some voices in the church have urged that this debate has lasted long enough and that synod must now make a decision to open all the offices to women. These church members insist that, if women are gifted, they should be allowed to serve in the offices of the church. Some even contend that the issue is a matter of biblical justice and that women who are gifted are unjustly prohibited from serving in the ruling offices of the church (*The Banner* 25 Oct. 1999). Meanwhile, the synods have taken several conflicting actions, which have not satisfied the members of the church. The most decisive action was taken in 1994, when synod did not ratify proposed changes in the Church Order and recognized that any change in the church's position would have to be based upon the clear teaching of Scripture. Synod 1994 declared that Scripture clearly forbids the ordination of women in the offices of minister and elder. Biblical, confessional, and Church Order grounds were given for this decision (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 505-17). According to Church Order Article 29, this decision should have settled the matter, and unless new information from Scripture or Church Order could be adduced, it should not have been reconsidered. Those holding to the position adopted in 1994 are persuaded that maintaining it would ultimately have resolved the issue for the Christian Reformed Church. However, other voices persuaded Synod 1995 to reverse the decision of 1994 and to permit churches to declare that the word *male* in Church Order Article 3 did not apply. Essentially this action confirmed what some councils had already been doing. Moreover, the church declared that the matter could not be addressed on the synodical level for a period of five years. The perception for many members of the church regarding the action of Synod 1995 was that, now that the shoe was on the other foot, the decision of 1995—unlike the decision of 1994—could not be altered in any way until Synod 2000. Since the action of 1995 was taken, the church has been torn by sorrow of heart and by grievous divisions.

Synod did appoint a committee to review the decision re women in office and to report back to Synod 2000. The churches have now received this committee report. The committee recommends essentially keeping the decision of 1995 intact except for some changes in specific regulations. It proposes that classes which do not recognize women as ministers may permit a congregation to have a woman minister but must not allow that the female pastor to be delegated to classis until classis extends the invitation (proposed Supplement B, 4). The new regulations would also permit female ministers to be appointed by synodical agencies for fields of labor where women are permitted to hold office (proposed Supplement B, 5). A minority of the committee would permit women as delegates to synod beginning in 2002. In effect, these proposals gradually increase the practice of ordaining women into ruling offices of the church. Some of the committee would like to proceed more rapidly than others (see the minority report), but overall it appears that the decision of 1995 was not temporary permission for female ordination but a first step toward permanent permission. These proposals are made despite the

fact that the committee's survey indicates that the effect of permitting women's ordination to expand would be negative. To the question "If synod were to decide to allow ordination of women as elders, evangelists, and ministers *across the denomination* (allowing them to be delegates to synod and any classis), how would this affect your classis?" 50 percent respond "primarily negatively," an additional 27 percent said "mixed," and only 6 percent respond with "primarily positively." Clearly, more councils believe it would be detrimental to continue down the path of women's ordination than believe it would be beneficial or of no effect.

How can this issue be resolved? Synod must return to the historic position that women may not be ordained into the offices of minister, elder and evangelist. Two contradictory interpretations of the biblical teaching cannot both be legitimate.

A majority of classes do not permit the ordination of women in ruling offices in their churches (twenty-nine out of forty-seven). It is obvious that a majority of councils have not permitted ordination of women in ruling offices, and many of these believe the decision of 1995 has been detrimental to the church. Our churches have been required to accept a congregational approach to church government, and a number of councils have been forced to tolerate a position with which they strongly disagree. Though they wish to remain part of the CRC, these councils are grieved at the direction the denomination has taken.

We are convinced that the position adopted by Synod 1994 was the right one and that it is in the best interests of the church to reaffirm that position and to remove the present supplement to Church Order Article 3. Thus, out of concern for the well-being of the Christian Reformed Church, we present the following overture.

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures synod

A. To reaffirm the position of Synod 1994 that clearly does not permit women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1994 based its decision opposing the ordination of women to the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist on a comprehensive summary of biblical teaching, as stated in its Grounds a, b, and c (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 506-08). The following specific items indicate that Scripture explicitly restricts the ruling offices to males.
 - a. In I Timothy 2:12 the apostle Paul shows that he does not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. While some have argued that this restriction was only for a limited time and place, the evidence for such a limitation is lacking. According to verse 13, Paul's teaching is grounded in creation.
 - b. In I Timothy 3 Paul assumes that the elders and deacons will be male ("Now the overseer must be the husband of but one wife. . .").
 - c. I Corinthians 11:2-16 declares that the head of the woman is man and the head of every man is Christ, giving authoritative leadership in the church to men.

- d. I Corinthians 14:33-35 shows that women are not allowed to speak with authority in the church.
2. The implicit teaching of Scripture does not permit female ordination.
 - a. Examples given for both Old Testament and New Testament offices indicate that males were in these offices. All twelve patriarchs were males. Jesus himself selected only males as his apostles. Paul clearly assumes that the officebearers to be appointed would be males.
 - b. In Scripture, office is conferred by God through human means, but the authority which he gives cannot be taken away or given to others without violating his will. For example Miriam and Aaron opposed Moses and claimed they had authority too (Num. 12, especially verse 2). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and 250 others questioned the restriction of authority to Aaron as high priest when they also had the ability. Yet only Aaron's rod budded, since he had been chosen by God (Num. 16-17, especially 17:8).
3. The arguments offered in support of women in church office are invalid (as Synod 1994 also recognized). For example, that women are gifted does not require that they be ordained in order to use their gifts. Certain males are also gifted but never serve in church office. Does this make them less worthy of membership and service in the church? Their gifts can be used in a variety of ways that do not require ordination. First Corinthians 12 describes the spiritual gifts given to the church of Corinth and points to the variety of gifts given. Not all are apostles (v. 29). Others besides the twelve may have been qualified to serve as apostles, yet none were appointed, whether male or female. Paul asks, "Are all prophets?" The answer is no, and not all who prophesy are necessarily called to be ministers of the Word.
4. Although Synod 1995 recognized "two different perspectives and convictions" regarding women in office and said both "honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 727), only one perspective and conviction that accurately interprets the Scriptures can be said to honor the Scriptures as the Word of God. A perspective that erroneously interprets the Scriptures may intend to honor the Scriptures, but in fact it does not do so. Synod 1995's statement that "good biblical grounds" have been adduced for both positions on this issue must also be rejected. Only one position can be the right one. Grounds adduced for an erroneous position are not "good" grounds.
5. Scripture alone must be the determining factor in settling questions of doctrine and practice, including this question of eligibility for ordination.
6. The 1995 decision which declared that an alternate interpretation of Scripture permits women to serve as elders, ministers, and evangelists has caused great harm to the church in the following ways:
 - a. The loss of many church members: The denomination projected 400,000 members by the year 2000. Currently our membership is 275,000. Where are the 125,000? The answer is that many members left our fellowship and others did not join. The loss of many church members has harmed our congregations.
 - b. The loss of interchurch relationships: Many in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church who prized that fellowship

and respected the Christian Reformed Church for its thorough and forthright adherence to the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions have now broken that fellowship. NAPARC has suspended CRC membership. This has taken place because most member churches believe the 1995 decision was based on a manipulation of the divinely given Scriptures.

- c. The loss of peace in our membership: There is increased tension and friction in local situations throughout the denomination because of the 1995 decision.

B. To remove the supplement to Church Order Article 3 that permits classes and councils to declare the word *male* inoperative.

Grounds:

1. This action would logically follow the above decision that declaring the word *male* inoperative is contrary to the teaching of Scripture. Although the Church Order is not specifically based on citations of Scripture texts, the general teachings of Scripture regarding church government are recognized in our Church Order.
2. The Rules for Synodical Procedure were not followed in reaching the decision of Synod 1995 to add a supplement to Article 3.
 - a. The idea of adding a supplement to Church Order Article 3 should have been considered out of order because it did not originate from the churches but only from the advisory committee and did not provide an opportunity for response from the churches. The Rules for Synodical Procedure and the Church Order require that material legitimately before synod must be presented from councils to classes to synod. (Rules for Synodical Procedure V, B, especially 3-a and b [p. 84] and VI, B, 1 [p. 87]). Even though it is the broadest assembly of the church, synod too is bound by the Church Order and the Rules for Synodical Procedure.
 - b. There is no valid precedent for changing the Church Order by the addition of a supplement which permits churches not to follow a Church Order article. The precedent cited in making the decision to add a supplement is not applicable because previous synods recognized the Red Mesa situation as requiring exceptions for cultural reasons, whereas the issue of the ordination of women was not and is not a situation that requires solution as a merely cultural issue.
 - c. Because Church Order Article 3 was virtually *changed* by the addition of a supplement, synod wrongly permitted churches to put its 1995 decision into effect without providing that it first be approved or ratified by a following synod.
3. The policy outlined in the Church Order Supplement, Article 3 is unworkable because
 - a. Pastors cannot move freely from one church to another without considering whether a congregation is for or against women in office. Congregations have difficulty in calling a pastor who will be able to work effectively with them because of divergent practices and views held by ministers on this issue.

- b. Churches in classes that permit women in office may not be able to obtain pastors who can effectively minister to them because some pastors cannot serve in a classis that allows women in office.
- c. Some who have been ordained in the CRC (i.e., women) are not recognized by others as legitimately holding office in Christ's church. How can good order exist within a church body when eligibility for holding office is not uniformly determined?

Classis Minnkota

John Kroon, stated clerk

Overture 6: Affirm Decision of Synod 1994 re Women in Office

I. Introduction

Our current five-year trial of women in all ecclesiastical offices has not gone well. Therefore, we suggest that synod give churches and classes until Synod 2005 to become historically and biblically obedient. This gives adequate time for ordained women elders, evangelists, and pastors to find venues for service that reflect synod's decision that they have "diverse roles and responsibilities" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 80, p. 514).

If we take note of the negative impact of our decisions in 1995 and 1996, if we heed the call to principle, and if we take seriously Christ's call to be one, then we can be confident of God's blessing for a bright future in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

For the following reasons, we place these matters before synod by way of an overture:

A. Desire for true union around the Word: We desire a unity that we have been losing over the last five years. True unity comes only in Christ. Our Reformed understanding of the Word calls us to promote this unity in Christ, who said, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:20-21).

B. Love for the Christian Reformed Church: The confessional heritage of the CRC has been a blessing for many who faithfully serve Christ. Out of love for that heritage and for the people of the CRC, we bring this overture.

C. Desire to voice our conscience: We are people and a classis who have remained in the Christian Reformed denomination in spite of the decision of Synods 1995 and 1996. This overture is intended to be a voice of conscience that can be heard by everyone in the denomination and by many outside our denomination who are genuinely concerned about the welfare of the CRC.

II. Overture

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to affirm the historic, biblical, and creedal position regarding the scope and great importance of women's gifts by upholding the 1994 synodical decision against women in ecclesiastical office and returning to the position that this is a matter of "diverse roles and responsibilities" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 80, p. 514).

Grounds:

A. Practical issues

Synods 1995 and 1996 decided to add a supplement to Article 3 of the Church Order that would allow the word *male* to be declared “inoperative” in individual classes. This decision has resulted in further discord for the Christian Reformed Church, discord that has been in existence ever since this issue, defended as a nonessential matter, was introduced by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1970. Note the following examples:

1. We have lost fellowship with other Reformed churches, even being excluded from the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), which we founded.
2. Over the past five years, few women have been ordained, few women have been called, few CRC churches have requested female ministerial candidates, and few CRC churches are willing to train female students. At the same time, many CRC churches have explicitly requested male candidates, owing in part to the churches’ desire to avoid discord.
3. Calvin Seminary has difficulty finding places where female students can get their practical training. Some churches willing to have a female summer seminarian have experienced a significant loss of membership. Consequently, other churches are even more hesitant to break with the historic position of the church.
4. Local option, which makes acceptance of Supplement, Article 3-a a classical decision, complicates the calling process. A pastor may feel inclined to serve a particular church, but conscience may not allow him or her to serve in the classis of which that church is a member. This is true for ministers on both sides of this issue.
5. Most notably, we have experienced a tragic loss of membership. In 1995 we were a denomination of 294,000. Today we are a denomination of 275,000. Many of these losses are associated with the decision to add a supplement to Article 3 of the Church Order by Synods 1995 and 1996. Upholding the 1994 decision would minimize such losses in the future.

B. Principial issues

We believe that the reason for the losses and problems listed above has to do primarily with principles we have abandoned since 1994:

1. Synod 1995 stated that “there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 75, p. 727). What Synod 1995 said and Synod 1996 confirmed is that the Word of God can teach two equally valid yet contradictory things, which Scripture has declared can never be said of God (e. g., Num. 23:9; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 19:7-11; Rom. 3:4; II Tim. 3:16-17; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:16-18; I John 1:10).
2. Church Order Article 29 states that synodical decisions must be shown to be “in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order” in order for them to be reversed. This was not demonstrated by Synods 1995 and 1996 when they reversed the decision of Synod

1994 that limited ruling offices to men (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 77, pp. 505-08).

3. Church Order Article 31 states that new or sufficient grounds must be presented for reconsideration or revision of a synodical decision. No new or sufficient grounds were presented to either Synod 1995 or Synod 1996.
4. Supplements to the Church Order are intended to clarify or explain the meaning or implementation of a Church Order article. Supplements are not meant to set articles aside, as happened when Synods 1995 and 1996 introduced the supplement to Article 3 of the Church Order.

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M.Gray, stated clerk

Overture 7: Reserve Offices of Elder, Minister, and Evangelist for Men; Allow Women to Be Elders, Ministers, and Evangelists When Men Are Unwilling or Unable; Allow Women Ministers and Elders to Be Delegated to Classes and Synod

I. Background

Synod 1995 legitimized the two main views about women in office by deciding to leave the decision to the classes and congregations, thus causing confusion and tension. It is my contention that synod should make the decision on women in office and let the matter rest once and for all.

II. Overture

I, Bruce Leiter, overture synod to reserve for men the office of elder, minister, and evangelist in the CRC; to permit women to be chosen for the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist when not enough willing and/or capable men are available; and to allow women ministers and elders to be delegates to classis and synod.

Grounds:

- A. Synod 1995's decision has caused tension and division among churches and classes.
- B. The supplement to Church Order Article 3-a was passed without grounds (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733). To modify a Church Order article, even on a temporary basis, with a supplement that allows for substantial changes in that article's meaning requires biblical grounds, since the Church Order is based on biblical principles and since Synod 1994 gave biblical grounds for retaining the word *male* in Article 3-a.
- C. On the one hand, the Bible teaches that the direction-setting leadership role in marriage and in the church is reserved for men (I Cor. 11:3, 8; I Cor. 14:33b-35; I Tim. 2:11-14; Eph. 5:22-34). Therefore, the general rule should be to reserve the direction-setting leadership role for men.
- D. On the other hand, God appointed and empowered Deborah to be a judge (direction-setting leader) in Israel at a time when men were unwilling and/or unqualified to lead God's people (Judg. 4). Therefore,

women should be permitted to be elders in congregations where there are not enough qualified and/or willing men to be elders. Women who become elders under such conditions should be permitted to be delegates to classis and synod.

- E. On the basis of Judges 4, women should be permitted to become ministers when there is a shortage of ministers.
- F. The decision whether or not women should become elders should not be a classical decision, because Church Order matters are synodical, not classical, decisions.
- G. The logic of this overture settles this matter once and for all on biblical grounds so that tension over this issue may cease.

Bruce Leiter
Minister, Bethel CRC, Saskatoon, SK

Note: This overture was submitted to the council of Bethel CRC, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and to Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan but was not adopted.

Overture 8: Reject Report of Committee to Review Women in Office; Delete Supplement to CO Article 3-a; Terminate Services of All Women Ministers, Evangelists, and Elders; Reestablish Ecclesiastical Relationships with Other Churches and with Organizations That Have Severed Relationships with the CRC

I. Background

Whether the Bible permits women to hold the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist is an issue that has divided the Christian Reformed Church for the last twenty-five years. Synod 1994 concluded that the Bible does not permit women to serve in these offices and that allowing women in these offices would be contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. Synod 1995, however, reached a different conclusion, permitting classes to declare the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative. This decision paved the way for churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. Synod 1995 also imposed a five-year moratorium on synodical consideration of this issue.

During this time many changes have occurred. There has been a significant decline in CRC membership and in overall support for denominational causes. Ecumenical relations with our long-time denominational friends in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) have been strained to the breaking point. Yet, after five years, a majority of the classes do not permit women's ordination, and very few churches have called women pastors.

These, however, are secondary matters. The crucial issue is what the Bible says regarding women in office. For the past two millennia, virtually all of Christendom has been united in affirming what had, until 1995, been the Christian Reformed Church's position. In addition, recent scholarship supports the historic position of the church in not permitting the ordination of women. To date, these biblical studies have not been refuted, and they present

compelling new evidence against changing the Christian Reformed Church's practice. Since no support for change can be found in the Reformed confessions, simply put, the case for women in office has not been proved, either biblically or confessionally.

II. An appeal for unity

Synod 1995's five-year moratorium has now expired, and the Christian Reformed Church must decide whether Synod 1994 was right when it concluded that the Bible does not permit women to hold the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist or whether Synod 1995 was right when it took a different position. The division caused by our disagreement is palpable. Many have left the Christian Reformed Church because of it. All can agree that this division has diminished our denomination's service to its undisputed Head, Jesus Christ. The church is called to address his gospel to the culture in which it finds itself. If the church cannot humbly and obediently listen to the Word, how can it use that Word to evangelize the culture it is commanded to address? This is not a subject that can be easily dismissed, classified among the *adiaphora*, or filed away under some other label. We submit this overture in order to help restore our lost unity. As a denomination that has historically derived its unity from striving to follow Jesus' will for his church as revealed in the Bible, we believe that lasting unity in the Christian Reformed Church and the church universal can come only from following the Bible's teaching on all issues, including whether the Bible allows women to use their gifts in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.

III. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures synod

- A. To reject the report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000.
- B. To delete the supplement to Church Order Article 3-a, adopted at Synod 1995, and to retain the language limiting the offices of minister, evangelist, and elder to male professing members.
- C. To terminate the ordination of women ministers and evangelists in the Christian Reformed Church no later than one year from the date this overture is approved and to terminate ordination of women elders when the terms of present women elders expire but no later than three years from their installation.
- D. To seek to reestablish ecclesiastical fellowship with churches and organizations that have severed relations with the Christian Reformed Church because of the decision allowing women to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

- 1. The church's historic practice is mandated by Scripture.
 - a. I Timothy 2:11-3:15: I Timothy 2:11-12 states that women are not to teach or have authority over men. I Timothy 3:1-13 continues with an immediate application of this teaching to the offices of the church. As shown below, scholarship concerning the meaning of the word

translated “authority,” not available to Synod 1995, reaffirms the traditional understanding of this word, namely, the rightful and appropriate exercise of authority, and it does not mean an abuse of authority or “lording it over” another.

As also noted below, Paul’s teaching in I Timothy is grounded in creation (I Tim. 2:13) and is not merely pertinent to the particularized circumstances at Ephesus in the first century A.D. Accordingly, Paul further states that his instructions are to guide “God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15).¹

- b. I Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:33-35: Both of these passages teach that men are to have authoritative leadership in the church. Paul’s teaching in these passages is rooted in creation (I Cor. 11:8-9) and in the law of God (I Cor. 14:34). These teachings are not limited to the Corinthian church but apply to all churches: “we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God” (I Cor. 11:16) and “as in all the congregations of the saints” (I Cor. 14:34).
- c. The general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the office of minister, evangelist, and elder. The general analogy is defined as biblical teaching which “does not rest on the explicit statements of the Bible, but on the obvious scope and import of its teachings as a whole” (Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 164-65). Thus, while Scripture teaches that men and women are equally created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) and equally redeemed by Christ (Gal. 3:28), it also teaches that men and women, both in the original created state and in the present redeemed state, have diverse roles and responsibilities. This diversity is seen in creation. This diversity is also seen in redemption:
 - In general, man is called the head of woman (I Cor. 11:3, 7-9).
 - In the family the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:22-24; I Pet. 3:1, 5-6).
 - In the church male leadership is seen in the New Testament.
 - Jesus chose only male apostles.
 - All pastors and elders in the New Testament are male.
 - In addition to the passages from I Timothy and I Corinthians cited above, Paul teaches male leadership in the church in the teaching and ruling offices (see Titus 1:6).
- d. The biblical texts cited in support of the proposed change in Church Order Article 3-a are not persuasive.
 - 1) Genesis 1:26-28 teaches that men and women equally bear the image of God but does not prove that one may hold ecclesiastical office simply because one bears the image of God.

¹Jesus and Paul defied contemporary social practice and prejudice in many ways, including as they related to women. For example, Jesus talked privately to women; Jesus chose women as the first witnesses to his resurrection; Jesus and Paul encouraged women to learn the faith and work in a variety of ways for the church. Jesus and Paul lived in a broader pagan society where women were religious leaders. Therefore, it was not socially impossible for Jesus or Paul to have appointed women as ministers and elders if they had wanted to do so.

- 2) Acts 2:17-18 describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all God's people but does not prove that all who have the Spirit may hold ecclesiastical office.
- 3) Galatians 3:28 declares that men and women are one in Christ, but that fact does not mean that women may hold ecclesiastical office any more than it means that the Christian husband is not the head of his wife (Eph. 5:23).

2. New scholarship regarding I Timothy confirms the church's historic practice.

Recent studies of I Timothy 2:9-15, one of the biblical texts which has been the basis for the church's historic prohibition of the practice of ordaining women, confirm the biblical case for this prohibition. Neither the decision of Synod 1995 nor the special-committee report to Synod 2000, which affirms the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, adequately considers or answers these studies. Among the findings of these studies are the following:

- a. There is no significant evidence of religious or cultural feminism in first-century Ephesus to which the apostle Paul in I Timothy 2:9-15 may be responding. The argument, therefore, that the apostle's prohibition in this passage is addressed only to a first-century error in Ephesus is without merit (see S. M. Baugh, "A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of I Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Koestenberger et al., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, pp. 13-52).
- b. Moreover, the verb *authenteo* used in the kind of Greek grammatical construction found in I Timothy 2:12 means "to have/exercise authority" in a positive sense. It does not refer to a misuse or abuse of authority on the part of a woman but to the positive exercise of authority in association with the office of teaching in the church. The conjunction (*oude*) joining the verbs "to teach" and "to have authority" is a coordinating correlative conjunction (like the idea of "both . . . and" in English). This conjunction is not used to join two verbs when the one has a positive meaning and the other a negative meaning. The argument, therefore, that the apostle Paul is proscribing only a certain kind of misuse of authority on the part of the woman in the church is incorrect (see H. Scott Baldwin, "A Difficult Word: *Authenteo* in I Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church*, 65-80; H. Scott Baldwin, "*Authenteo* in Ancient Greek Literature," in *Women in the Church*, pp. 269-305; and Andreas Koestenberger, "A Complex Sentence Structure in I Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church*, pp. 81-104).
- c. The grounds adduced by the apostle Paul in I Timothy 2:12-14 refer not to consideration of ancient or contemporary culture but to the creation and the fall into sin. Reading this passage apart from this context unduly allows the dictates of contemporary culture to determine its meaning (see Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of I Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship," in *Women in the Church*, pp. 105-54; Robert W. Yarborough, "The Hermeneutics of I Timothy 2:9-15," in *Women in the Church*, pp. 155-96).

3. The committee's recommended approach is unwise.
 - a. The committee's recommended approach misunderstands the biblical concept of unity.

According to the report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000, retention of the current supplement to Article 3-a is the preferred course because, despite the sharp differences regarding women in office, "the present divergences of opinion, though significant, are not of such an essential nature that they warrant division of the church." The committee judges that women's ordination may not be classified as a confessional issue (though some seem to view it that way), neither is it essential to the doctrine of salvation, nor is it strictly speaking a moral issue or adiaphoron. Rather, the committee urges that we approach the issue after the pattern of Old Testament wisdom literature—that is, we must seek to "act wisely" in the midst of life's ambiguities, weigh and judge what is essential versus what is nonessential, and thereby not unnecessarily and illegitimately split the church and fracture its unity. The committee thus argues that we should in effect "agree to disagree" while we mutually affirm one another and maintain the ostensible unity of the CRC despite significant disagreement. Behind this reasoning there seems to be the working assumption that the current situation adequately reflects biblical unity.

The committee's reasoning, however, even when scrutinized by its own criteria, fails in the way of biblical wisdom and ecclesiastical unity. It has not been biblically wise to follow Synod 1995's path, a path that has brought about the rupturing of the Christian Reformed Church's fellowship both within her own ranks and in relation to churches historically in ecclesiastical fellowship with her. We maintain that it is not wise to stay a course in which, as a denomination, we are excluded from the fellowship of many confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian churches, for in terms of our relationship with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches, the current practice regarding women's ordination has not been blessed by the Lord. Instead, it has led to censure and severed fellowship by churches of similar creedal conviction.

The severance of ecclesiastical relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, as well as the censure by and suspension from NAPARC, has led the Christian Reformed Church to a narrowing rather than a broadening of proper ecumenical relations with other churches. Thus, the effects and results of the decision of Synod 1995 cannot be characterized as wise. Likewise, for the Christian Reformed Church to perpetuate the current situation cannot be characterized as a wise course of action.

The recommendation of the study committee represents a misunderstanding of biblical unity. If adopted, Synod 2000 will have refused to heed the admonitions of sister churches and will have deemed that its compromised stance—allowing both positions—is of more biblical weight than the call to biblical unity with other believers.

We observe that, if it were true, as the committee maintains, that the matter of women in office is not a salvation issue, not a moral issue, not an issue that is either confessional or adiaphorous, then synod may not legitimately insist upon or implement women's ordination, for the

church's unity is of much greater weight and importance than the alleged permissibility of women's ordination. While the call for unity in the church is a clear and indisputable mandate in Scripture, the matter of women's ordination to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist is, according to synod's own decisions as well as the observations of the committee to review women in office, both disputable and assailable.

To perpetuate the current situation and practice is, therefore, not justifiable. To do so is like saying that, while women's ordination is (allegedly) not a confessional matter for the church, nevertheless synod has allowed Christ's church to be split and fractured over this issue. Whereas women's ordination does not have the weight of a salvation issue (or so it is maintained), nonetheless, the CRC has been willing to sacrifice ecclesiastical unity both within its own fellowship of churches and with those who are most compatible in creed and with whom she has historically had the closest ties and associations on North American soil. This does not represent making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

- b. The committee's recommended approach undermines the integrity of the Church Order.

The current supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order grants churches and classes the right to declare *male* in this article "inoperative." Churches and classes are authorized, by means of a supplement, to act in a manner contrary to what is stipulated in Article 3-a. By this use of a supplement to Article 3-a, Synod 1995 was also able to circumvent the requirement of Article 47 of the Church Order—that the "churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes." This procedure—allowing churches to ordain women by means of a supplement, without removing the Church Order prohibition of this practice in Article 3-a—can only undermine the authority of the Church Order in the denomination and erode denominational unity. It confronts the churches with the following contradiction: What the Church Order in Article 3-a forbids on the one hand, it permits by means of a supplement on the other hand. This contradiction should not be permitted to stand.

- c. The committee's recommended approach is guaranteed to perpetuate error.

The study committee report to Synod 2000 incorrectly treats the issue of women's ordination as one of biblical "wisdom" and thus not one of confessional importance or as an adiaphoron (p. 375). However, the government of the church, particularly the selection and election of qualified persons for the offices of elder and minister, has historically among the Reformed churches been based upon biblical teaching and principles, not upon what might be considered wise or prudent at the time (see introduction to the Church Order of the CRC and Belgic Confession, Arts. 29-32). Furthermore, even if this were simply a wisdom matter, the churches would still be obligated to determine from Scripture what God's will is with respect to it (see Eccles. 12:13-14: "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring

every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”).

- d. The committee’s recommended approach violates Article 85 of the Church Order (cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 31).

If it were true that women’s ordination to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist is biblically mandated—which we do not believe to be the case—then it is unfair and immoral to treat women officebearers as second-class officebearers. Nowhere in Scripture is it permissible for persons who hold the same office to possess different rights and privileges. To make such distinctions according to gender is akin to making such distinctions according to race or ethnicity—a wholly untenable and ungodly notion. Thus the current state of affairs violates the biblical requirement to honor duly ordained rulers of the church (1 Tim. 5:17). Again, although we believe women’s ordination to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to be contrary to Scripture, synod must act with consistency and integrity: If women’s ordination is biblically permissible, then it must be biblically implemented. The current practice of the church—limiting the rights and privileges of women officebearers—is half-hearted, double-minded, and noncompliant with respect to Church Order Article 85, which states that “no church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no officebearer shall lord it over another officebearer.”

IV. Conclusion

We therefore call on synod to cease and desist from the perpetuation of the dual position. Let its yes be yes and its no be no (Matt. 5:37). This limping along between two opinions must not continue (see Josh. 24:15). Synod 2000 must choose whether it will serve the Lord in faith or not; whatever is not of faith is sin (see Rom. 14:23). Indeed, this is what describes the current situation and makes it unbearable for so many on both sides of the women-in-office question. Obviously, one side of the debate or the other is wrong and contrary to the Lord’s revealed will in Scripture. We believe that the Bible does not permit women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. Accordingly, we respectfully request that Synod 2000 adopt this overture and move to enact its four requests.

Classis Illiana
Gerald De Vries, stated clerk

Overture 9: Approve Regulations as Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a

I. Background

A. Words and actions

Religious people have always found it easy to speak words but sometimes have found it difficult to engage in actions that demonstrate the validity of those words. Jesus points to the religious leaders of his day and says to his followers, “Do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach” (Matt. 23:3). James illustrates the same when he says, “Suppose a

brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?' (James 2:15-16). And John, the apostle of love, encourages his readers, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (I John 3:18).

Today the church struggles in the same way. Frequently, it makes appropriate and necessary pronouncements. The challenge before it is to take actions that match its pronouncements. This is certainly true in the Christian Reformed denomination regarding the use of women's gifts.

B. Two convictions to be honored

After almost twenty-five years of discussion, our denomination made an important decision. It said that "there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733). Without a doubt, synod intended to put those words into practice by honoring both convictions. However, this decision was made in the context of a number of congregations threatening to withhold ministry shares and/or to separate from the denomination. Not surprisingly, synod immediately adopted a number of regulations that did not honor both convictions as even-handedly as possible and that curtailed the use of women's gifts more than necessary. Fortunately, Synod 1995 also mandated a review of its decision in 2000, believing that such time "would allow the denomination to determine the effects of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).

It is now time to ask if we are honoring both convictions in our denomination as much as we can and ought. Classis Lake Erie believes that some of the recommendations of the review committee call us to actions that more clearly reflect our commitment to honor both convictions. It also believes that further actions are necessary as we strive to achieve a unity that advances the ministry of Christ's church and provides a positive witness to a watching world.

C. Women in the office of elder

As a way of honoring both convictions in the denomination, Synod 1995 declared that any congregation may ordain women to the office of elder. There was some discussion in response to this recommendation. One delegate asserted that synod would be promoting congregationalism if it allowed a congregation in a classis that had not declared the word *male* in Article 3 of the Church Order inoperative to ordain a woman elder. He believed that the practice of the congregation should conform to the practice of the classis in which that congregation is a member. Thus, he made a motion asking synod to delete the recommendation that allowed all congregations to ordain women elders. In response to that motion, another delegate observed that it would be unacceptable to insist that a congregation must conform to the pattern of its classis because this would require churches in classes that had declared the word *male* inoperative in Article 3 of the Church Order to ordain women elders. It would be far better for synod to honor the two convictions in the denomination, not allowing classes to force congregations either way. Wisely, synod did that. It also placed a restriction on congregations that ordain women elders, saying that women elders could be ordained as long as their office was

limited to the local congregation. Women elders could not be delegated to classis meetings unless the classis approved such delegation.

D. Women in the offices of minister and evangelist

(Note: In this section only the word *minister* is used. What is said about ministers is applicable in almost every instance also to evangelists. In the regulations recommended as part of this overture, the words *minister* and *evangelist* are used more precisely.)

Although Synod 1995 honored the convictions of all congregations regarding the office of elder, it did not do the same with the office of minister. Instead, synod allowed classes that held the traditional position on women in office to prohibit member congregations from ordaining a woman minister. During the women-in-office debate, some repeatedly expressed the fear that the day would come in the CRC when congregations would be forced to deny their convictions and be required to ordain women to church office. Yet synod today does precisely what many fear might happen in the future: It gives classes the authority to force a congregation to deny its convictions. If the congregation chooses to remain in the CRC, it has two choices. It may either abandon its desire to call a woman minister, or it may leave the classis in which it is located and transfer to one that honors its convictions.

The Review Committee is recommending that Synod 2000 continue to give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions regarding women ministers. It also suggests that such classes may wish to allow the ordination of women ministers if certain restrictions are put in place. Three strong reasons are given for that option. First, this honors the convictions of the calling church while also honoring the convictions of neighboring congregations. Second, this provides a viable alternative to switching to another classis. Third, this has already proved to be a workable solution in two classes (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 386). In spite of these strong reasons, the committee recommends that synod suggest this only as an option instead of recommending that synod declare, as it did with the office of elder, that no classis may prohibit member congregations from following their convictions regarding women ministers.

Synod 1995 asked that its decision be reviewed in 2000 because this “would allow the denomination to determine the effects of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735). In the past five years the effects of this decision have been very apparent in terms of the ordination of women ministers. Even before the 1995 decision a congregation in one classis hired a female Calvin Seminary graduate as its minister. Because she was not ordained, a male minister was called in to baptize the children and converts of the congregation and to officiate at the Lord’s Supper. The woman minister attended the meetings of classis and was given the privilege of the floor, but she did not vote.

After the decision of Synod 1995, the council of this congregation expressed its desire to remain in the classis in which it was located and with which it had ministered for years. The council requested that its minister be ordained with the restriction that she not be delegated to classis. The classis repeatedly denied such requests, and finally the congregation transferred to a classis that honors its convictions.

As the Review Committee mentions, two other classes, Kalamazoo and Pacific Northwest, faced similar situations. Both classes found a workable solution that honored the convictions of the calling and neighboring congregations and that did not break the unity of common ministry that these congregations had enjoyed for many years. Congregations in these classes were allowed to ordain a woman minister with restrictions. The minister was not to be delegated to classis meetings. Delegates from neighboring congregations who could not participate in the processing of her ministerial credentials or in her examination were not asked to do so.

Through these experiences over the past five years, we already know what effect the 1995 decision has had. It is unnecessary to wait another five years when a workable solution that honors both convictions has resulted from the church's experience with this decision. There is no legitimate reason to continue giving classes the authority to prohibit a congregation from following its convictions. Instead, as it did with the office of elder, synod should declare that any congregation may ordain a woman to the office of minister. And, as it did with the office of elder, synod should place certain restrictions on that ordination in deference to the convictions of neighboring congregations.

The workable solution that is already operative in Classis Kalamazoo and Classis Pacific Northwest is consistent with the way synods have solved similar matters in the past. When questions arose about women voting at congregational meetings, Synod 1957 did not give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions. All congregations were free either to extend the vote to women or to withhold it. When questions arose about women being ordained as deacons, Synod 1984 did not give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions. All congregations were free either to ordain or not to ordain women deacons. When questions arose about women being ordained as elders, Synod 1995 did not give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions, even though this matter was not as local as the other two. All congregations were free either to ordain women elders with restrictions or not to ordain women elders. We are now addressing the matter of women being ordained as ministers. Synod 2000 should not continue to give classes the authority to prohibit member congregations from following their convictions. We encourage synod to follow its past models and to declare that all congregations are free either to ordain women ministers with restrictions or not to ordain women ministers.

E. Women and our denominational agencies

Synod 1995 adopted a regulation that prohibited our denominational agencies from using the gifts of women ministers and evangelists. Gifted women heard God's question "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" and responded, "Here am I. Send me" (Isa. 6:8). Christians who supported the full use of women's gifts contributed money so these women could proclaim the gospel. Yet synod officially declared that our denominational agencies could not use women ministers and evangelists to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The King of the church, moved with compassion, identified the lost as sheep without a shepherd and said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt. 9:37-38). Women offered

themselves as an answer to the prayer of their Lord, but synod prohibited them from entering the harvest field.

We believe the two convictions in our denomination must be honored as our denominational agencies advance the proclamation of the gospel. Thus, we are grateful that the Review Committee is recommending that our denominational agencies no longer be prohibited from using the gifts of women ministers and evangelists. We also believe that an adjustment (in addition to the inclusion of evangelists) needs to be made to the regulation recommended by the Review Committee (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 387) so that “calling” rather than “appointment” terminology is used. Though some agencies make appointments, their primary concern is the ecclesiastical matter of calling. They assist or secure congregations who call ministers and evangelists to various fields of labor. A congregation holds the credentials of those officebearers, and the transfer of credentials or the examination of candidates is done in the classis of which the calling church is a member. The proposed regulation should be revised to indicate that the agencies are servants of the congregations, which do the actual calling.

As we've stated earlier, we believe all congregations should be allowed to follow their convictions regarding the calling of women ministers and evangelists. We believe any congregation should be allowed to call a woman chaplain to serve in the armed forces or in a local hospital or to call a woman missionary to serve in a neighboring city or in a country outside North America. These officebearers will be governed by whatever restrictions are current in the classis of which their calling churches are members.

F. Women as synodical delegates

Recently a number of men declined nominations to serve on their church councils. Others who served on councils declined nominations to serve as delegates to classis or to synod. The reason? Their convictions did not allow them to participate in meetings of church assemblies that exclude women. More widely known are the actions and statements of men whose convictions did not allow them to participate in meetings of church assemblies that include women. Some walked out of classis meetings to which women were delegated, and some said they could not serve as delegates if women were present. This situation is not easily resolved because Church Order Article 40 requires that the pastor of each congregation attend the meetings of classis. The same article requires the attendance of an elder from each congregation, and it is possible that in a particular congregation all elders hold convictions that do not allow them to participate in classis meetings if women are present. In deference to such men, women are excluded from the meetings of classis unless specifically invited by classis to attend. One imagines that in classes where women are invited to attend, ministers whose convictions prevent them from attending ask elders to go in their place, and elders whose convictions prevent them from attending do not take a turn as delegates.

There is no Church Order article that requires a minister or an elder to attend synod. This is very relevant as the denomination discusses the fullest use of women's gifts and as Synod 2000 discusses the report of the Review Committee. A majority recommends that synod continue to exclude women delegates; a minority recommends that synod include women delegates.

The majority gives three grounds for its recommendation (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 385). First, it says that since the majority of classes do not allow the delegation of women to classis, women ought not to be delegated to synod. This ground fails to recognize that attendance at classis is mandatory, whereas attendance at synod is optional.

Second, the majority report says that the use of women's gifts at the synodical level must be prohibited for the sake of the unity of the church. This is contrary to what the committee says elsewhere. The report indicates that the majority of churches are interested in achieving a unity where both convictions are honored. The report declares that neglect in the use of the gifts of women impoverishes the church's ministry, witness, and fellowship. The section on unity uses numerous biblical passages to encourage the church to live together in spite of differences and mentions "the damage that visible disunity does to the mission of the church" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 377). Surely, the absence of women elders and ministers from our broadest assembly is a very visible sign of disunity and a very public proclamation of our unwillingness to put into practice the Scripture verses we quote about unity.

Third, the majority report says that on the synodical level it is not possible to transfer to another assembly for conviction's sake. Again, remarks in the report's section on unity are relevant. The report warns us about the false gospel of our secular society that "tells us to put our individual selves first and to stress the rights to which we are entitled. That attitude easily translates into a mindset which assumes that we have a God-given right to have a congregation and/or denomination in which all think the same about matters far beyond the central doctrines and morals which mark us as Christians. When this happens, it is no longer the Lord who determines the parameters of his church; we do" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 377). In spite of these words, the majority report tells us that we must take action to create an assembly in which all members think the same because there is no other assembly on the synodical level to which certain members can separate. This ground reflects the very mindset that the report itself condemns as the "false gospel of our secular society." The report points us to far healthier action as it calls us to live together in unity in spite of our differences rather than separating from each other. In the past, men whose convictions did not allow them to participate in meetings of synod did not place their names in nomination for election as delegates. In the future, the same avenue is open to those whose convictions will be violated if they serve in an assembly with a woman delegate. Synod 2000 can give concrete expression to our unity in the midst of our differences by declaring that all duly elected elders and ministers may be nominated as synodical delegates since there is no Church Order article that requires any individual to compromise his or her convictions by attending.

G. Another review committee?

The current Review Committee indicates that there has not been much discussion about the use of women's gifts over the past five years and suggests a number of reasons to explain that (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 383). It suggests that the church is weary of discussion, that discussion is avoided because it reminds us of pain and loss, and that the decision of Synod 1995 to review its decision in five years was perceived as a moratorium on discussion of the issue. There may be some truth to these observations. However, instead of

recommending positive ways in which a denomination-wide discussion can take place, the committee recommends that synod not discuss this issue for the next five years. In offering this recommendation, the committee suggests (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 384) that overtures on this subject be prohibited in 2001 and 2002. Overtures submitted in 2003 and 2004 will not be discussed at synod but will be given to a review committee that will report to Synod 2005.

Though appealing, especially when discussion becomes painful and divisive, moratoriums on discussion do not serve the church well. In fact, synod has typically defeated requests for moratoriums. For example, Synod 1985 did not accede to four requests for a variety of moratoriums, stating that “such a procedure is not in harmony with the Church Order or Rules for Synodical Procedure (Matters Legally Before Synod—Rules for Synodical Procedure, Church Order Arts. 28, 30, 31)” (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 774). When a classis recommended essentially the same process that the Review Committee is now recommending, Synod 1996 defeated that recommendation, stating that “the committee proposed by Overture 23 removes the possibility of direct appeal to synod, a right which the churches cannot be denied” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 551). If Synod 2000 places a moratorium on the discussion of this issue, it will violate its own rules of procedure and will violate the Church Order. In addition, this proposal fails to realize that one of the ways the denomination discusses matters is by overtures to synod. There is every reason to believe that curtailing the discussion about the use of women’s gifts for the next five years at the synodical level will also curtail the discussion of it in the church at large.

The most significant reason for the lack of discussion about the use of women’s gifts is not mentioned by the committee, namely, that Synod 1995 honored, at least partially, the convictions of a segment of the denomination that had been prohibited from following its convictions. Thus, much of the reason for additional discussion no longer existed. Congregations that had installed women elders in disobedience to denominational regulations and congregations that wished to install women elders were now allowed to do that. Congregations pastored by unordained women ministers were now able to ordain their pastors, and other congregations could call women ministers if they chose. Synod itself created peace in the denomination because it honored, at least partially, convictions that had not been honored before. It was this reality, more than anything else, that decreased the amount and intensity level of discussion. That has always been the case. When Synod 1957 allowed all congregations to follow their convictions regarding women voting at congregational meetings, the next synod received only one appeal. After that, the issue disappeared from the synodical agenda. When Synod 1984 allowed all congregations to follow their convictions regarding women deacons, the next synod received a flurry of protests and appeals, but the next two synods received only one each. After that, the issue disappeared from the synodical agenda. This happened not because of weariness or pain avoidance or moratoriums on discussion but because the reason for discussion no longer existed since synod honored both convictions present in the denomination.

More recently, Synod 1995 allowed all congregations to follow their convictions regarding women elders. The report of the Review Committee doesn’t even discuss this matter. One could argue that this issue has disappeared from the synodical agenda because of weariness or pain avoidance or a

perceived moratorium. It can be more convincingly argued that this issue disappeared from the synodical agenda because synod honored both convictions present in the denomination. We can expect the same to happen when Synod 2000 declares that all congregations may follow their convictions regarding women ministers and that any elder or minister may be delegated to synod. It is synod that sets the tone for what will happen in the churches and classes. There will be no lasting, painful, and divisive discussion when synod sets the example of honoring both convictions present in the denomination. The last five years plainly illustrate that.

The denomination will not be well served if Synod 2000 violates the Church Order by denying churches and classes access to synod and by prohibiting synodical discussion of the use of women's gifts. The denomination will be further divided if Synod 2000 postpones appropriate decisions and appoints another review committee in the hope that recommendations to honor both convictions will be more acceptable five years from today than they are today. Synod is able to create greater peace and unity than we currently enjoy and is able to continue the healing of divisions by adopting regulations that honor both convictions in the denomination. Again, the last five years plainly illustrate that.

H. The same words—again

In its grounds to Recommendation C, the Review Committee says that the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to women and men is an essential part of honoring Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church. It points out that neglect in the use of these gifts impoverishes the church's ministry, witness, and fellowship and asserts that the full use of women's gifts is mandatory, regardless of the stance taken on the women-in-office issue (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 384).

In light of these statements, one would expect recommendations regarding specific actions that would make fuller use of women's gifts. One would expect, for example, a recommendation that no congregation be prohibited from following its convictions concerning the calling of a woman minister or a recommendation that women elders and ministers be allowed to serve as synodical delegates. The grounds, however, do not support specific actions. Instead, the grounds support the repetition of words that the church has spoken for the past twenty-five years: "That synod again urge the church councils and classes to nurture and make appropriate provision for the full use of the gifts that the Spirit gives to all their members, both women and men" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 384).

Words are important. However, without significant actions, words, no matter how well-intentioned, will be perceived as condescending, patronizing, and self-serving. Synod should be very cautious about repeating these words. First, as the committee itself observes, these words were spoken by Synods 1975 and 1992 "within the context of saying no to opening the offices to women" (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 381). Instead of offering women arenas in which they could use their gifts, both synods offered words. Synod 2000 can do much better than repeating the pattern of offering words within the context of saying no to a fuller use of women's gifts.

Second, synod should be very cautious about repeating these words because it is unwise for synod to urge church councils and classes to do what

past synods intentionally have refused to do, especially since synod itself is noticeably absent from this urging. The recent history of synod on this issue does not provide a good model for councils and classes. In response to an overture from a classis, Synod 1995 encouraged “boards, agencies, and *itself and future synods* [italics added] to include in their committees persons who reflect the ethnic, gender, and racial diversity of our denomination . . .” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656). Six days later the same synod appointed a seven-member male committee to serve the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada in spite of the fact that women deacons had been delegated to the biennial meetings of the council in 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1995 and in spite of the fact that delegates from one classis spoke twice in opposition to this appointment because it included no women (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 767).

In 1996 one classis called the attention of synod to the contradiction between the words and the action of Synod 1995 and asked synod to honor its past decisions to use “the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church” (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 337-38). Synod 1996 responded by declaring that it would take action to ensure that “committees appointed to do the work of the denomination reflect its rich diversity” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 555). Yet only two years later the leadership of synod instructed an advisory committee not to include any women on the committee that would review the 1995 decision on women-in-office for Synod 2000. Only after this recommendation was questioned by some delegates and by a woman initially asked by the advisory committee to serve on the review committee was the recommendation revised. The revision hardly reflected a commitment to previous words, as synod appointed only one woman to this nine-member committee (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 390-92).

The actions of past synods cannot be excused as benign neglect. Neither can they be excused with an assertion that somehow synod did not know what it was doing, because delegates voiced opposition to these actions. Past synods have spoken the right words but intentionally have refused to translate those words into concrete actions.

Third, synod should be very cautious about repeating these words because it is very unwise to urge councils and classes to make appropriate provision for the full use of women’s gifts if Synod 2000 itself does not do what it encourages councils and classes to do. This is not the time for Synod 2000 to repeat the same words that synods have spoken over the past twenty-five years. This is the time for Synod 2000 to take specific actions that demonstrate the sincerity of those words. It is time to declare that all congregations may follow their convictions regarding the calling of women ministers. It is time to declare that all elders and ministers, men and women, may be delegated to synod. If synod takes these actions, the previous words will be unnecessary. Synod’s actions will speak louder than any words it might proclaim. If synod fails to take these actions, the previous words will also be unnecessary. Synod’s lack of action will speak louder than any words it might proclaim. We encourage synod not “to love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (I John 3:18).

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To approve the following regulations as Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a:

1. In keeping with its understanding of biblical teaching on the use of women's gifts in the ecclesiastical offices, any congregation may ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. Such officebearers may be delegated to classis when classis extends an invitation. In accordance with their convictions, members of classis may abstain from processing ministerial credentials or taking part in the examination of a ministerial candidate or an evangelist.

Grounds:

- a. This arrangement allows local congregations to call the personnel they deem necessary while remaining in covenant with their classes and respecting the convictions of neighboring churches that may not approve of women in ordained offices.
 - b. This arrangement provides a more viable alternative for such congregations than switching to classes that permit the ordination of women to all offices.
 - c. This arrangement has already proved to be a workable solution in Classis Kalamazoo and Classis Pacific Northwest.
 - d. To allow a classis to prohibit a congregation from following its convictions regarding women officebearers sets an unhealthy and dangerous precedent.
2. A classis may appoint a female minister to serve as synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.
 3. In accordance with their convictions, synodical deputies may abstain from giving advice on any matter relating to ministers of the Word as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.
 4. Any duly elected elder or minister may serve as a synodical delegate.

Grounds:

- a. Since no elder or minister is required to attend synod, this regulation does not violate the convictions of those who choose not to participate in an assembly because it includes women delegates.
 - b. Using the gifts of women at the synodical level is a visible sign that the denomination is able to work in unity in spite of its differences.
5. Any congregation may call a woman minister or evangelist to a ministry endorsed or supported by our denominational agencies. Before calling a woman minister or evangelist to a field of labor outside North America, the concurrence of the national partner church must be secured.
 6. In accordance with their convictions, Calvin Theological Seminary trustees and synodical delegates may abstain from participation in the processing of applications submitted by qualified women for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word.

Grounds for Regulations 1-6:

- a. The use of women's gifts is an essential part of honoring Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church.
- b. Neglect in the use of women's gifts impoverishes the church's ministry, witness, and fellowship.
- c. The full use of women's gifts is mandatory, regardless of the stance taken on the women-in-office issue.
- d. These regulations honor both convictions present in the denomination.

B. To declare that, although there are within the denomination firmly held differences on the issue of ordaining women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, these differences do not separate us either from Christ or from his church and that therefore it is our responsibility to seek earnestly to live together in unity and to minister together for the glory of God.

Grounds:

1. The Lord of the church and his apostles call us to live in unity (John 17; Eph. 4:1-3).
2. In spite of different conclusions they have drawn from Scripture, proponents of both sides have made their cases from Scripture, and they are together in desiring to honor Christ as head of the church.
3. As a denomination we have a rich heritage together and have been led into many important ministries.
4. Living and serving together in love will be a blessing to us and our children, a witness to other churches and the world, and God glorifying.

C. Not to accede to the requests of the Review Committee (1) to prohibit the discussion of overtures concerning the use of women's gifts for the next four years (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 384) and (2) to appoint another review committee to report to Synod 2005 (*Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 387).

Grounds:

1. Denying congregations and classes access to synod "is not in harmony with the Church Order or Rules for Synodical Procedure (Matters Legally Before Synod—Rules for Synodical Procedure, Church Order Arts. 28, 30, 31)" (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 774).
2. Synod 1996, responding essentially to what is being proposed by the Review Committee, judged that this "removes the possibility of direct appeal to synod, a right which the churches cannot be denied" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 551).
3. Synod 2000 can best advance the unity of the denomination by making decisions that honor both convictions, not by postponing appropriate decisions and appointing another review committee.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 10: Reverse 1995 Decision re Women in Office

Background

The council of Goshen Christian Reformed Church, Goshen, New York, has been familiarized with the recent report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000. In the process we became concerned that the voice of Scripture was being muted by the idea that both sides of the issue have proved their point and that somehow they are both honoring the Word of God.

Our study of the history of reports and study-committee conclusions has led us to understand the issue differently. We are amazed that even this report admits that clarity has not yet been achieved on this matter. That suggests that a decision solidifying recent changes would be out of order and premature at best. We believe the decisions of synod should be reached by biblical deliberation and not by majority opinion or fear of division or desire for self-gratification on the part of those who would benefit from the positions of elder, minister, and evangelist being opened to women.

Thus, we are afraid of the judgments of God against our denomination for its failure to obey God's Word. We fear for what this denomination could become if left unchecked. This fear leads us to send the following overture. Simply acknowledging with Synod 1994 that the Bible clearly says no on this issue can reverse our present direction. The decisions of Synod 1995 did not necessarily nullify the decisions adopted in 1994 on this matter.

II. Overture

The council of Goshen Christian Reformed Church, Goshen, New York, overtures synod to reverse its decisions allowing women to serve in ecclesiastical offices.

Grounds:

A. Scripture clearly teaches that such practices are not acceptable in the church.

1. I Timothy 2 deals with the issue of authority in the body of Christ.
2. I Corinthians 14 teaches the issue of subordination in the body.
3. Isaiah 3:12 suggests that it is not appropriate for women to be in ruling positions.

These Scriptures should provide the theological basis for the practice of the church with regard to women. Paul and Isaiah should not be charged with hating women or denigrating them. The basis of the verses in I Timothy is God's created order and the result of the fall of mankind (and what God did as a result). No indication is given that we may disregard these verses if social or cultural conditions change. On the contrary, even the advent of the new covenant in our Lord was not enough to change how Paul perceived the situation of women in the church (where no women were in authority).

B. Synod 1995 and other synods that have promoted the use of women in ecclesiastical office have made the Word of God subordinate to "the great multitude, councils, decrees, statutes" in their decisions (Belgic Confession, Art. 7). In so doing, synods have made the church unfaithful to the Belgic Confession. Synod expects its decisions to be consid-

ered settled and binding on the churches but in doing so requires the churches to deny their understanding of the Belgic Confession and the Form of Subscription that is part of CRC ordination. This is evident from these facts:

1. Synod 1994 declared the Word of God clear on this matter and said no to women in office.
2. Synod 1995 declared that two different positions (for and against) can result from reading the Scriptures and that both can be honoring to God.

Thereby synod made its own decree of more value than the Word of God.

- C. We cannot in good conscience go along with the previous decisions of synod that have opened all the offices to women. We cannot consider them settled and binding. We believe that our current position has adequately been shown to be in conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order. We are likewise unable to see that the recommendations to be given to Synod 2000 will in any way relieve this tension for us.

Council of Goshen CRC, Goshen, NY
Bouwe Leenstra, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Atlantic Northeast but was not adopted.

Overture 11: Remove Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a; Instruct CRC Agencies to Comply with Church Order Article 3-a; Urge Churches to Do the Same

I. Introduction

On the issue of women in office, the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office correctly observes in Section IV, A of its report that “we must attempt to determine God’s will as correctly as possible by the only means available to us, his written Word.” In this way the Review Committee would have us practice today what the author of the Belgic Confession said many years ago: “We receive all these books [of Scripture] and these only as holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding, and establishing of our faith” (Art. 5).

The Review Committee is also correct in saying that we “do not always agree on the meaning of individual texts” of the Bible and that the CRCNA has not “come to a consensus in interpreting God’s Word about women in office. . . .” In spite of many years of study and many prayers for the Holy Spirit’s guidance, there are at least two different and contradictory ways of understanding what the Bible says about the roles of men and women in church office.

Because of this lack of consensus, the Review Committee cites three possible courses of action: (A) to perpetuate the study of Scripture and debate on this matter, (B) to accent our differences and decide that we cannot live together in one denomination, and (C) to acknowledge our differences and yet maintain denominational unity.

The Review Committee dismisses the first option (further study and discussion of the Scriptures) as being “a course of action that does not look fruitful.” It dismisses the second option (deciding that we can’t live together in the same denomination) because “it creates problems far beyond the issue at hand.” It is the third option that the Review Committee comes closest to embracing: that we acknowledge our differences while seeking to maintain the unity of the CRCNA because the issue of women in office is not of such an essential nature that it warrants the division of the church.

Yet, says the Review Committee, it is best not to characterize the women-in-office debate as a matter of *adiaphora* (i.e., a disputable matter which the Bible neither commands nor forbids). Rather, says the Review Committee, we should approach the matter of women’s ordination as a *wisdom* issue, the likes of which we find in the Bible’s wisdom literature (such as the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). Says the committee, “The Bible’s wisdom literature is intended to help God’s people to model their conduct, individually and communally, after the principles that reflect God’s will for living beneficial and productive lives.”

Why should we see the matter of women in office as a wisdom issue instead of a doctrinal or a moral issue? Because, says the committee, “The debated New Testament passages about women’s roles in the church are embedded in passages where Paul addresses the organizational life of God’s people, and great wisdom is required to discern their meaning.” The issue of women’s ordination isn’t *doctrinal* in that it doesn’t belong to the core beliefs which are the foundation of the church. The issue of women in office isn’t *moral* because it “doesn’t mean we’re walking away from Christ or one another” if we choose to ordain or not to ordain women.

In keeping with its new categorization of the matter of women in office, the Review Committee notes that it may not be appropriate for members of the CRCNA to respond to it with *conscientious objections*. Since the women-in-office issue is neither “an essential doctrine” nor “a moral standard,” it is better that we respond to it by admitting that there is “serious difference of judgment” among us, which needs to be resolved within the unity of Christ’s church. As Ephesians 4:3 commands, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Also in keeping with its new definition of the women-in-office matter as a *wisdom* issue, the Review Committee brings the following recommendation to Synod 2000: that “although there are within the denomination firmly held differences on the issue of ordaining women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, synod declare that these differences do not separate us either from Christ or from his church and that therefore it is our responsibility to seek earnestly to live together in unity and to minister together for the glory of God.”

II. Evaluation

It has been said that the person who defines the terms wins the debate. We should, therefore, take a close look at the Review Committee’s effort to redefine the matter of women’s ordination as a *wisdom* issue. Notice what the new definition does: It takes the issue of women’s ordination out of the sphere of interpreting and applying the Bible’s prescriptions for the church and places it, instead, in the sphere of what the church has the responsibility to decide for

itself, including how best to organize itself in response to local needs and customs.

We must acknowledge that there are some things in our Church Order which are wisdom issues. The administrative structure of our denomination, for example, with its broader assemblies and ministry boards, is nowhere prescribed in Scripture. Our present structure is our best effort so far, with the collective wisdom God has given us, to organize the CRCNA for effective ministry.

But the issue of women's ordination is different. When the Bible reveals the roles of men and women in marriage and in the church, it gives us more than general principles for us (the church) to work out in response to local situations. The Bible teaches the principle of male leadership in marriage and the church *and prescribes such leadership* in the inspired words of I Timothy 2:12: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

We should not, therefore, accept the Review Committee's definition of women's ordination as a wisdom issue. Rather, we should see it as an *obedience* issue. Will we obey (instead of trying to explain away) the rules for church government which God has revealed in his Word?

Another recommendation from the Review Committee is that Synod 2000 should retain the classical-local option approved in 1995. This option does not require but does permit classes to declare that the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a is inoperative. It also permits classes to authorize the churches in their jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. In other words, the Review Committee wants the CRCNA to do for at least another five years what we've been doing since Synod 1995—to permit in our churches something that the inspired apostle said he would not permit.

Contrary to what the Review Committee has dismissed as "a course of action which does not look fruitful," further study of Scripture and debate on the issue of women's ordination is a realistic hope for greater unity in the CRCNA. It is only when we as a denomination rally around what the Bible says about women's ordination that we will find the consensus which we have thus far failed to achieve.

III. More discussion

Although it asks for more discussion of the issue of women's ordination, the overture below does not ask Synod 2000 to appoint another study committee. Rather, this overture encourages the delegates to Synod 2000, together with all members of the CRCNA, to review the decision of Synod 1994 with respect to women's ordination and to embrace it because it demonstrates the Bible's clear and consistent teaching with respect to the roles of men and women in the church. The decision of Synod 1994 shows us that in the Old Testament the Bible establishes the general pattern of male leadership in marriage and the church and that in the New Testament the Bible affirms and applies this general pattern to the organizational life (i.e., offices) of the church.

In the spirit of friendly and open discussion, this overture will highlight some of the many hermeneutical weaknesses in the Review Committee's case for opening the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to women.

A. *Genesis 1-3*

The Review Committee rightly observes that the early chapters of Genesis teach not only the equality of male and female in bearing God's image but also the priority of the male in that Adam was created before Eve and gave Eve her name. Then the Review Committee observes, "There is nothing in Genesis 2 to suggest that male priority goes beyond the institution of marriage." This "argument from silence" assumes that if God wanted male priority to extend beyond marriage, he should have said so in Genesis 2. But the silence of Genesis 2 regarding women's ordination neither proves nor disproves the matter. We must look to other Scriptures, given by God later in the history of revelation, to see whether or not male priority at the creation has implications for male-female relationships in the church.

B. *The rest of the Old Testament*

The Review Committee rightly acknowledges the pattern of the Old Testament, in which men were more prominent than women in corporate leadership roles, including prophets, judges, priests, and kings. There were exceptions to this Old Testament pattern in the persons of Hannah, Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. Still, these are exceptions which "prove the rule" of male leadership beyond the marriage relationship.

The Review Committee characterizes this Old Testament pattern of male leadership as a temporary arrangement which God said he would set aside when making a new covenant. With great anticipation God's prophets predicted great things God would do through the new covenant in Christ's blood (see Jeremiah 31). Among these prophecies is Joel 2, where the Lord said, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."

Yet the Review Committee fails to note that not even one of these Old Testament prophecies declares that male leadership would be restricted to marriage in the new covenant. It should also be noted that the prophecies of the new covenant have been wonderfully fulfilled in churches where only men are appointed as elders and ministers of the Word.

C. *New Testament evidence*

The following overture takes exception to the Review Committee's observation that in the new covenant the marriage relationship has been modified. One modification, says the Review Committee, is that now, in the new covenant, a husband's headship is to be exercised in love. Does the Review Committee really mean to suggest that God didn't want old-covenant husbands to exercise their headship in love? It's true that in Christ God has revealed a great example of love which all husbands should follow. But we should not see the command in Ephesians 5 that husbands should love their wives as a new word from God which changed the essential nature of marriage.

1. The Review Committee acknowledges that Jesus chose only male apostles and that Paul appointed or recommended only males for the office of elder. But the Review Committee suggests that the pattern of Jesus and Paul is less than normative. Indeed, says the Review Committee, the pattern of Jesus and Paul does not seem to fit with what the New Testament has to say

about the new status and role of women in the new covenant. Note this well: In arguing the case for the ordination of women, the Review Committee says that the pattern of Jesus and Paul is incompatible with the new covenant—which Jesus established and Paul proclaimed!

2. Galatians 3:28

The Review Committee correctly observes that this passage, among other things, declares that male and female share equally in salvation in Christ. But the Review Committee wants us to see that this text has broader implications (i.e., that it teaches women's ordination). At this point the Review Committee leans on extra-biblical speculation, not biblical interpretation. Notice in the following quotation from the Review Committee the words "suggests" and "likely," which indicate the speculative nature of what is stated. Notice too how what begins as suggestion is later presented as fact:

The fact that [Paul] includes [the pairs Jew-Greek, slave-free, and male-female] *suggests* that this trio of paired opposites had become part of an early confession that announced the universality and inclusiveness of the new covenant. It is *likely* that the confession was meant to counter the chauvinistic statements found in the Jewish cycle of morning prayers, in which the (male) believer thanked God that he had not been made a gentile, or a slave, or a woman. This early *baptismal confession* would thus announce the church's belief that in Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed [italics added for emphasis].

There is more speculation in this section of the Review Committee's report. Notice here the italicized words "seem," "imply," "seems," and "implied" in the following passage:

Although Galatians 3:28 does not explicitly speak of the social equality of male and female, it does *seem* to *imply* it. As noted above, the confession *seems* to pick up the theme of equality from Genesis 1:27. The force of the *implied* equality in this passage can be seen as follows. Just as it would be inappropriate to say, "Theophilus may not be an elder because he's a Greek," or "Onesimus may not be an elder because he's a slave," so too would it be inappropriate to say, "Apphia may not be an elder because she is a woman" [italics added for emphasis].

The only thing certain in this paragraph is the opening assertion that "Galatians 3:28 does not explicitly speak of the social equality of male and female. . . ."

3. Baptism as the sign and seal of the new covenant

The Review Committee notes that in the era of the old covenant only men received the initiatory rite of circumcision. Under the new covenant, however, the church administered the initiatory rite of baptism to women as well as men. These facts are indisputable. The question is, Why were women excluded from the initiatory rite of circumcision but are now included in the initiatory rite of baptism? The Review Committee concludes that "the baptism of female along with male *suggests* a more profound equality than the simple equality of salvation under the old

covenant. Notice again the word “suggests.” And notice the ambiguous contrast between “profound equality” (new covenant) and “simple equality of salvation” (old covenant). But is it not true that the “equality of salvation” for men and women is “profound” in the most significant of all personal relationships—the sinner and his/her relationship with God?

4. The gifts of the Spirit and the right to exercise those gifts

The Review Committee rightly observes that God, in his grace, gives a variety of spiritual gifts to both male and female Christians. This truth we celebrate. We rejoice in the richness with which God has scattered his gifts among us. But again we note the speculative manner in which this truth is applied to the issue of women’s ordination. Says the Review Committee, “These gifts seem to be given to all members whether male or female. For example, Paul says, ‘Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.’” Should gifted members of the body of Christ use their spiritual gifts for the common good? Yes. But it does not follow that if a woman has been given the gift of administration, she must be ordained as an overseer in the church. There are many opportunities outside the office of elder in which men and women may use such a spiritual gift.

5. Men and women as prophets, priests, and kings in the new covenant

The Review Committee rightly teaches that both male and female Christians share in Christ’s anointing and should serve him by confessing his name, offering themselves as living sacrifices of thanks, and reigning with him. Women share equally with men in the office of believer. But the Review Committee makes a speculative leap when it goes on to say, “It would seem that there would have to be clear and indisputable evidence to the contrary to keep women also from functioning in the office of elder, minister, evangelist, and deacon.” The point which the Review Committee states but fails to prove from Scripture is that everyone who shares in Christ’s anointing is thereby qualified to be an officebearer in Christ’s church.

6. Women as witnesses and agents of special revelation in the new covenant

It is true that women were the first people to see the risen Christ and that they were, before men, witnesses to the resurrection. But the Review Committee fails to show that there is a connection between the sequence of events on Easter morning and the question of women’s ordination. Also, the Review Committee cites the prophetic utterances of Mary and Elizabeth, recorded in Luke 1, and the fact that God continues to instruct the church with them. Again the Review Committee does not demonstrate a connection between these facts and the issue of women’s ordination.

7. Women as fellow workers in Christ for the gospel

The Review Committee lists many women whom the New Testament commends for their hard work in the church and for the spread of the gospel. The apostle Paul even calls women his fellow workers in the cause of the gospel. The issue here is whether or not these women worked hard for Christ in the office of all believers or in the ruling offices of the church. Notice that in none of the texts cited are the women called “elders” in the church. According to the Review Committee’s own statement, cited above,

Jesus chose only male apostles, and Paul appointed or recommended only males for the office of elder.

IV. Where do we go from here?

This background and hermeneutical material is a humble and imperfect attempt to demonstrate that the case for women's ordination as articulated by the Review Committee is marked by significant hermeneutical weaknesses. It is because of these weaknesses that the decision of Synod 1994 should stand as the CRCNA's answer to the issue of women in office. This is also why the CRCNA should jettison the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order and encourage all congregations to abide by Article 3-a—with the word *male* fully operative. The fact that not everyone in the CRCNA is convinced of the rightness of this course of action does not make it wrong. With this and every issue we face, the truth is defined by what God has revealed in his Word, not by what a majority of people surveyed want it to be.

When it entertains the possibility of returning to the decision of Synod 1994, the Review Committee dismisses it, in part because of the question of “what to do with the instances in which women have been ordained to ruling offices and are serving with good effect and much appreciation.” However, we should not let this practical difficulty determine the course of action we take on an exegetical and hermeneutical matter. To do so would be to “let the tail wag the dog.” The CRCNA has at its disposal more than enough financial resources to support ordained female pastors while they look for other employment opportunities.

V. Overture

Classis Iakota overtures synod

A. To remove from the Church Order the supplement to Article 3-a, which was approved by Synod 1995.

Grounds:

1. The supplement to Article 3-a is based on Synod 1995's undocumented assertion that there are “good biblical grounds” both for supporting and opposing women's ordination. As this overture has pointed out, the case for women's ordination (as articulated by the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000) is not based on “good biblical grounds” but on weak hermeneutics and much speculation.
2. The supplement to Article 3-a has failed to achieve what Synod 1995 intended it to do: “to provide satisfactory leadership on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733). The supplement to Article 3-a, together with its rationale and guidelines for implementation, has proven to be most unsatisfactory to literally thousands of individuals and numerous congregations that have left the CRC subsequent to Synod 1995. Though it is not their only grievance against the CRC, the supplement to Article 3-a is prominent among their stated reasons for having left the CRC. The supplement to Article 3-a is also unsatisfactory to many who remain in the CRC.
3. The supplement to Article 3-a has damaged the CRC's ecumenical relationships with several Reformed and Presbyterian denominations. The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Orthodox

Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, and others have terminated ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC in large measure because the supplement to Article 3-a permits women to be ordained as elders, evangelists, and ministers of the Word.

4. The supplement to Article 3-a has been the focus of unrest rather than the agent of harmony in the CRC, so much so that overtures came to Synod 1997 asking it to approve the concept of “theological classes.”

B. To instruct the agencies of the CRC to comply with Article 3-a of the Church Order (without the supplement) and urge the churches to do the same.

Ground: The Church Order is the set of articles by which the Christian Reformed Church regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities (Church Order, Art. 1).

Classis Iakota

C. Eric Fennema, stated clerk

Overture 12: Reject Report of Review Committee on Women in Office

The council of First Christian Reformed Church of Thunder Bay, Ontario, overtures synod not to adopt the majority or minority report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000.

Grounds:

1. I Timothy 2:11-15 has not been and cannot be explained away by the arguments contained in the committee report.
2. Galatians 3:23 cannot be employed as a support for women in office because it says nothing about headship and does not contravene biblical principles concerning office (Eph. 5:23; I Timothy 3:4, 12).
3. The recommendations of the committee are flawed when they purport to be based on two contrary but supposedly valid interpretations of Scripture and yet propose to incrementally implement only one of the two interpretations, the one based primarily on a certain reading of Galatians 3:28.

Council of First CRC, Thunder Bay, ON

Arthur Staal, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Lake Superior but was not adopted.

Overture 13: Abandon Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a; Return to Position of Synod 1994

The council of First Christian Reformed Church of Thunder Bay, Ontario, overtures synod to abandon the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order adopted at Synod 1995 and to effect a return to the 1994 position on women in office, which stated, “The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.”

Grounds:

1. No compelling biblical grounds have been cited for making the word *male* in Article 3 of the Church Order “inoperative.”
2. The 1994 decision should have closed the book on the women-in-office controversy since “new and sufficient” grounds (Church Order Art. 31) were not cited by a subsequent synod.
3. A return to the 1994 decision may quiet the restlessness of those who continue to be greatly disappointed by the present position of the church and may stem the exodus of members and churches.

Council of First CRC, Thunder Bay, ON
Arthur Staal, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Lake Superior but was not adopted.

Overture 14: Appoint a Committee to Study Doctrines of God, Man, and Scripture in Relation to Feminist Issues and Biblical Role for Women

The council of First Christian Reformed Church of Thunder Bay, Ontario, overtures synod to appoint a committee to study the doctrines of God, of man, and of Scripture (theology, anthropology, and revelation) with a view to discerning the implications of feminist issues generally for these doctrines and with a view to discerning especially the implications of the biblical role for women in church and home for these issues.

Grounds:

1. Biblical teachings are not isolated from each other but are woven into a pattern and together make a whole (II Tim. 1:13-14; 2:2; Titus 1:9; Rom. 6:17).
2. Doctrine and practice are intertwined. An in-depth study is needed to gauge the impact of modern freedom motifs upon the “sound doctrine” of Scripture (I Tim. 1:10-11; I Thess. 1:3).
3. The women-in-office issues confronting the church are but a small manifestation of a massive cultural shift which some see as the most powerful and comprehensive social change of the twentieth century. The church should not be unaware of the impact of a changed relationship between men and women and especially of the impact such a change makes on the doctrine taught by Christ’s church (Phil. 1:9-10).
4. With the exception of headship issues and the proper language with which to address God, the broader implications of the women-in-office issue have not been widely discussed. The anthropological implications have been ascertained even less than the other implications.
5. The report of the Committee to Study Gender-Inclusive Language for God, sent to Synod 1997, provides a model for such studies and gives hope that a biblical and Reformed statement can be made on the doctrines affected by feminist teachings.

Council of First CRC, Thunder Bay, ON
Arthur Staal, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Lake Superior but was not adopted.

Overture 15: Receive as Information the Report of the Committee to Examine Alternate Routes to Ministry; Appoint a New Committee to Discover Visionary Solutions to the Problems Raised

I. Introduction

The Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC has submitted for the church's review an extensive eighty-two-page report. It is evident that the report demonstrates a considerable amount of work and a sensitivity to the denominational vision of building a multiethnic church. We are grateful to the committee for its work, and we commend its members for much of the content of their report.

However, we have at least two major concerns:

A. The report is inadequate in its response to the issue that a growing number of entrants into CRC ministry are not CTS graduates.

The statistics on page 60 state that, whereas in the 1970s 8.5 percent of those entering CRC ministry were not CTS graduates, in the 1990s the number had grown to 44.4 percent. The committee does a fine job of observing good reasons for this trend. It acknowledges that on one level this trend is exciting, as it demonstrates a growing diversity in our denomination. However, the response to the trend proposed by the committee appears to be a tightening of the regulations of the SPMC program, with a continuation of the "one year [or longer] residency program at CTS" as the preferred route. It is our belief that the response of the church to the stated trend should be a creative new expression of the SPMC program that does not require a student to relocate to Grand Rapids, Michigan, for a one-year (or longer) period. Isn't there a way to orient ministry students to the CRC in a regional manner? Isn't it possible to use CTS staff expertise to train regional trainers for this task rather than do all the training themselves? Surely some new expressions of the SPMC are possible that can address both the needs of the students and the denominational need for leaders who possess a knowledge of and loyalty to ministry in the context of the Christian Reformed Church.

B. The report is incomplete in that it does not make any recommendations regarding the church's response to the growing number of ministers entering the CRC through Articles 7 and 8.

Table 3 on page 62 describes this as a significant trend, crossing all ethnic and minority lines, resulting in 168 new CRC ministers in the 1990s who have not attended any planned orientation program to the denomination. Yet none of the more than one dozen recommendations of the committee addresses this trend. It has become a significant "alternate route" into CRC ministry and needs to be addressed in a visionary way. It is important that all those who minister in the CRC receive consistent orientation and training, and it is also important that this training be accessible and welcoming and allow concurrent ministry to take place.

II. Overture

Classis Greater Los Angeles overtures synod to receive the report of the Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained

Ministry in the CRC as information and appoint a new committee that will review this report and recommend to Synod 2002 some truly visionary steps that promote distance learning, which would enable an effective orientation to the CRC for all those who desire to minister in the denomination without spending a year in residence in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Grounds:

- A. The report of this committee, though helpful in moving us along in our discussion of this matter, is inadequate in its proposed solution of requiring SPMC students who have been in the CRC for fewer than seven years to reside for a year or longer in Grand Rapids (see Recommendation M of the report).
- B. The report from this committee is incomplete in that it does not at all address the orientation needs of the many persons who are entering the CRC ordained ministry through Church Order Articles 7 and 8.

Note: Other aspects of the report also make us uncomfortable and should be implemented only after more careful consideration of all the dynamics involved. For instance, the creation of a new level of bureaucracy to regulate programs that train evangelists (Recommendation L) makes us wary: Will it aid the church or squelch the spirit of creativity and innovation at the local level?

Classis Greater Los Angeles
Maurice Slegers, stated clerk

Overture 16: Appoint a Study Committee to Study Ways to Increase the Avenues for Entering CRC Ministry

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to appoint a study committee to further reflect on and make additional recommendations regarding the issues raised in this year's report from the Committee to Examine Alternate Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRCNA. Included in the study should be a thorough evaluation of whether the CRC would be better served by continuing the present educational structure for entrance into CRCNA ministry of the Word or by shifting to an ecclesiastical structure. The new committee should report to Synod 2002 on ways to increase the number of avenues qualified people may use to enter CRCNA ministry of the Word. The committee's recommendations could include either an expanded mandate for Calvin Theological Seminary and its board or provide a means of entrance into CRCNA ministry through an approved ecclesiastical procedure. The present committee seems to tilt toward ecclesiastical supervision with its call to expand the mandate of student-fund committees, but the wisdom of fully embracing that model should be more carefully researched.

Grounds:

- A. Practical considerations
 - 1. Since 1995, 199 ministers have retired or been released from ministry in the CRC. During that same period, Calvin Seminary has produced 131 candidates. Obviously, more candidates need to be produced by

Calvin Seminary, or additional streams of candidates need to be tapped.

2. A trend in the CRCNA is to have more than one ordained pastor serving in staff ministries, even in medium-sized congregations. Often the second staff person has a special area of service, for which training is better provided at other Reformed seminaries. Either graduates of those sister seminaries should be permitted direct entry into the CRC ministry of the Word, or the ministry offerings of Calvin Seminary should be expanded.
3. Synod 1997, in its vision statement, planned for Home Missions to plant forty new churches per year (*Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 58, 630). This number of new churches per year exceeds the total number of Calvin candidates per year. Again, if Calvin Seminary cannot supply the needed candidates, then new avenues of candidacy need to be considered.

Summary observation: The current supply of candidates does not equal replacement needs, additional staffing needs, or the church-planting needs of the CRCNA. It does not meet even one of the needs, much less all three. A newly appointed committee should recommend whether the CRCNA is better served by Calvin Theological Seminary, an educational entity, continuing as the only approved gate of entrance into the ministry of the Word in the CRC or whether classes or synod should approve ecclesiastical avenues of ordaining graduates of other seminaries, Bible colleges, liberal arts colleges, or other educational institutions without these avenues being considered *alternate* routes. Though the current committee makes some excellent recommendations, it does not touch the basic question of the wisdom of having an educational institution regulate ecclesiastical entrance into ministry of the Word. Without addressing this basic issue, it is impossible to make changes that will increase the flow of ministerial candidates by the number needed.

B. Precedents

1. The fact that 44.4 percent of ministers entering CRC ministry in the nineties came through other routes than the traditional Calvin Seminary education indicates that the number of alternate- or ecclesiastical-route entrants is close to the number of educational-route entrants. The ecclesiastical route of classes/synod supervision should be done with consistent rules of procedure. Something as crucial as pastoral formation should be done with purpose and uniformity.
2. Synodical deputies face a variety of unique challenges when they attempt to abide by the Church Order and still meet current ministry needs.

Note: The study committee's supporting quotation comes from the *Acts of Synod 1947* (see *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 314). Its mandate was to evaluate "alternative routes into ministry used today that were not envisioned when the present Church Order and policies were adopted." An appeal to 1947 indicates that this committee did not take seriously the changed concept of ministry that has been

adopted by the churches in recent years, i.e., multiple pastors, church planters, and specialized ordained ministry.

3. In two situations Synod 1999 approved the work of synodical deputies who concurred with decisions of classes that had admitted men to the ministry of the Word in the CRCNA who, though they were in western Michigan and able to attend Calvin Seminary, chose not to do so. Synod approved the work of the synodical deputies in spite of the fact that the advisory committee recommended that the SPMC regulations should apply to these men in retrospect. The spirit of Synod 1999 was that a graduate of any Reformed seminary is able to serve in the ministry of the Word in the CRCNA if approved by the synodical deputies on behalf of synod. Synod 1999 favored an ecclesiastical model of admittance for CRC ministries rather than an educational one.

Summary observation: Much of the confusion at last year's synod and the lack of uniformity among the synodical deputies stems from a blurring of whether entrance to ministry of the Word in the CRCNA ought to be solely monitored by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, as is expected and is standard, or whether it would be more prudent to do as last year's synod did when it approved two ministers who had deliberately avoided the standard education route and taken an ecclesiastical route instead.

C. Principles

1. The denomination has worked diligently in every area to advance diversity—except in the requirement for seminary education and candidacy via the CTS Board of Trustees. Though we highly value diversity, the education of our key leaders, our ministers of the Word, is currently an impediment to that cherished diversity. There appears to be a special need among ethnic ministries that should be met either by expanding Calvin Seminary to offer nontraditional education or by certifying routes into ministry that require only ecclesiastical approval. The newly appointed committee should study whether ecclesiastical supervision of entrance into ministry would be preferable to our current educational supervision.
2. Certain Reformed seminaries offer specialized training in specific areas of service. The CRCNA appears to be hobbling itself by not unqualifiedly accepting graduates of these seminaries into the ministry of the Word. Synod should either allow ecclesiastically sanctioned routes into ministry or expand Calvin Seminary's mandate and resources so it can meet the current demand for ministers of the Word.
3. At Synod 1999 there seemed to be some reservation about having the Calvin Seminary Board of Trustees be the sole determining agent for candidacy in the CRCNA. The study report before this year's synod does not address the anomaly that we as a denomination stress diversity in every area except candidacy for ministers of the Word, in which we insist on a very narrow educational track to meet the needs of the denomination. The newly appointed committee should

address the issue that the Calvin Seminary Board of Trustees is able to provide only a small stream of candidates, whereas ecclesiastical structures could significantly improve the flow.

Summary observation: Either the CRC should increase the flow through ecclesiastical supervision of entrants into ministry of the Word, or the Calvin Seminary board should greatly expand and diversify to meet the current and projected needs of the CRCNA. The newly appointed study committee can determine which of these alternatives is better for the Christian Reformed Church

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 17: Reduce the Number of *Agenda for Synods* and *Acts of Synods* Sent to Each Council

Classis Toronto overtures synod to reduce the number of copies of the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* currently being distributed.

Grounds:

- A. Four copies to be circulated throughout the council or to be left in the church's office would be sufficient for most congregations. This would save paper and costs.
- B. Interested parties can also be promised access through the Internet or through special order. Announcements in *The Banner* and in all church bulletins can inform the congregations how to gain access for those interested.
- C. A brief summary of the highlights in the *Agenda* could be printed months prior to synod, just as we currently receive a very helpful synopsis after synod has met.

Classis Toronto
John Tenyenhuis, stated clerk

Overture 18: Appoint Committee to Evaluate Denominational Health-Insurance Plan

Classis Hackensack overtures synod to appoint a committee composed of ministers, denominational employees, and insurance-savvy laypeople to evaluate the effectiveness and viability of the denominational health-insurance plan (Consolidated Group Insurance).

Grounds:

1. CGI's premiums for health, dental, and life insurance for a minister and his family have increased by 64 percent in two years (January 1, 1988: \$5,090 per annum; January 1, 2000: \$8,348 per annum). Churches are becoming reluctant to bear the full cost of this rapid increase, and more ministers are being asked to shoulder a greater portion of their insurance premiums.

2. The Fund for Smaller Churches' suggested guidelines for ministerial compensation give an allowance of only \$4,259 for this insurance (\$4,000 in 1998 and 1999). Many churches not in FSC still use FSC guidelines in calculating ministerial compensation.
3. Is CGI adequately meeting the needs of the ministers/employees and dependents for whom it is designed? Might there be more cost-effective ways of providing the same kind of coverage?

Classis Hackensack

Paul De Vries, stated clerk

Overture 19: Establish and Implement a Special-Assistance Fund for Medical Needs Not Met Through Insurance or State and Federal Programs

I. Background

From the following statements we conclude that there is a need in the Christian Reformed Church in North America for the establishment of a fund that will involve the denomination and the local church. We would envision that a person with a disability or need would apply for assistance from the fund with the support and approval of the deacons and the local church council.

A. In his master's thesis, *Rethinking the Diaconate*, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee representative Mike Menning wrote, "The vast majority of disabled people and their family members within the CRC cry out, 'From where in my church can I expect help and nurture in walking this difficult and rocky road?' It is my hypothesis that the vast majority of disabled people and their families in the church are not receiving the spiritual, physical, and emotional nurturing they need."

B. According to the *Agenda for Synod 1992*,

It is estimated that over 47 million individuals living in the United States and Canada have significant physical, mental, emotional, or sensory limitations. These limitations are ongoing and severe enough to require adjustments or adaptations to carry on one or more of the basic functions of daily living. Since all such individuals have one or more persons who care for them and/or care about them, it becomes evident that a large segment of our society is directly involved in the concerns brought about by disabilities. The Christian Reformed Church, in recognition of this segment of our population, took a historic step forward in its approach to ministry when Synod 1985 adopted "A Resolution on Disabilities"

The *Agenda for Synod 1993* estimated that there are perhaps 50,000 persons within our denomination that are affected by a significant disability.

C. The Committee on Disability Concerns has been given a mandate to educate the churches with regard to a fuller inclusion for those with disabilities in the life of the church. It has addressed a number of issues, including that of physical accessibility to church facilities. However, there has not been funding for a concern that was mentioned in the 1992 *Agenda*:

It [pastoral care] is usually demonstrated liberally at the time a disability is discovered or takes place. But the memory of a crisis soon fades. The majority of

us return to our prior way of life. But disability is ongoing. And it brings with it guilt, or sorrow, or pain, or frustration, or, most frequently, all of these and more. For example, the parents of a child with mental limitations struggle throughout the life of the child and often into their old age with needs for care, programming, therapy, financing, housing—the list goes on. They should not have to deal with all of these matters in isolation. These concerns need to be shared and talked about openly. What better place than the church of Jesus Christ? Yet too often the church fails.

D. One of the ongoing issues that has been raised by Disability Concerns appears again in the 1997 *Agenda*:

A third challenge is securing the monetary assistance many people with disabilities, including many elderly, must have for such basic necessities as housing, medical services, and personal-care attendants. Pending reductions in government assistance means that other sources must be found. The church should be active in forming a just public policy on these matters and in giving diaconal ministry to those in distress. Disability Concerns has the challenge of calling the attention of the churches to these issues.

II. Overture

Classis Iakota overtures synod to mandate the Office of Disability Concerns and/or other agencies to establish and implement a Special-Assistance Fund. This fund would make financial assistance available to members of the denomination who have medical needs that are not met through insurance or state and federal programs. This project could be funded through ministry shares.

Grounds:

- A. This plan would be a practical way to “help carry each other’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2) and would demonstrate a willingness to “share in the suffering of the saints” (Col. 1:24).
- B. Synod has previously addressed the issue of diaconal responsibility in caring for the disabled and their families, including financial support and respite care (*Acts of Synod 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1993*).
- C. Such action would be consistent with vows made by members of the covenant community at baptism and profession of faith.
- D. We must also give serious consideration to the biblical matter of justice for such members of the covenant community, especially in the light of budget cutbacks in state and federal programs (James 2:16; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 25:45).

Classis Iakota

C. Eric Fennema, stated clerk

Overture 20: Study Other Pension Plans and Consider the Option of a Defined-Contribution Plan for U.S. Ministers’ Pension Fund

I. Background

In 1997 Classis Illiana sent an overture to synod “to instruct the denominational U.S. ministers’ pension-fund committee to give all members of the plan the option of choosing either a defined-benefit or a defined-contribution plan” (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 486). The ministers’ pension-fund committees in

their report to Synod 1997 regarding funding strategy, having already considered the change from a defined-benefit to a defined-contribution plan, responded that “this was rejected because it would shift the investment risk from the churches to the ministers and would result in variations in benefits based upon individual salaries of ministers” (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 211). We judge this reasoning to be invalid because (A) variations in benefits already exist, and (B) the action of Synod 1999 exacerbated these, especially with respect to all retirees and those about to retire.

Synod 1997 did not accede to Classis Illiana’s overture on the ground that “the Canadian and U.S. pension-fund trustees have already decided to review the design of the plans, including aspects of defined-benefit and defined-contribution features” (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 706). It thus appears that the ministers’ pension-fund committees had already rejected the substance of our overture, though the *Acts of Synod 1997* indicates that they were to review the design of the plans, including aspects of a defined-contribution feature.

Classis Illiana is burdened by the fact that the benefits pastors now receive are far lower than those of other denominations and other Christian organizations, in spite of the fact that the CRC’s plan is in healthy financial shape. We have studied the plans of Christian Schools International, CRC unordained employees, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Bible Society. The benefits of each of these plans far exceed those of our plan. For example, a CRC pastor who retires from active ministry in the year 2000 after having served thirty-eight years in the ministry will receive an annual payment of \$14,671. This can be compared to the annual amount received by a local pastor retired from the Reformed Church in America who served thirty-eight years, retired at 62, and built up a fund of \$334,000 through contributions from his congregations, which paid 11 percent of his salary into this fund. Last year his money provided him with \$25,200 in interest, which was his retirement benefit. According to government regulations, he must begin to decrease the principal when he reaches 70 years of age. Should he and his wife die, the balance would become part of his estate. This retired pastor has an annual income from pension and government benefits of \$37,750. The average annual payout in 1998 to retired CRC ministers or their surviving spouses was \$8,333. Simply put, our retired ministers and surviving spouses are not being cared for adequately.

The change implemented by Synod 1999 will not improve the current inadequacy. Before 1999, benefits were calculated as follows: the average salary paid to active pastors during the year one retires, multiplied by 1.1 percent, multiplied by the number of years of service. Synod 1999 changed the multiple from 1.1 to 1.46 but only for those years of employment after the year 2000. This decision has very little bearing upon those who have already retired or are about to retire. Synod 1999 did provide a modest increase of 2 percent per years of retirement since 1992, but this does not adequately address what will become an increasing inequity.

We can do better. In 1998, the last year of figures available to us, the U.S. plan provided benefits to 372 retired ministers in the U.S. and 120 widows and dependents. A total of \$4,183,000 was paid out, and an additional \$534,000 was paid for investment services. On the income side, the plan collected \$2,923,000 from assessments and earned \$10,300,000 on investments for a total income of \$13,773,000. There was over \$92,300,000 in the U.S. Ministers’

Pension Fund at the end of 1998, and by December 31, 1999, the portfolio balance had increased to \$96,700,000. It was reported that the U.S. plan is approximately 117 percent fully funded.

II. Concerns

After careful study we have five concerns:

A. *Equal options*

The Christian Reformed denomination offers two different kinds of pension plans. One is the defined-benefit plan described above. This plan covers ministers and limits ministers to certain benefits established by synod. A minister has no equity in the ministers' pension funds.

On the other hand, the CRC has a very different plan for nonministerial denominational employees, a defined-contribution plan. Nine percent of an employee's salary is set aside in the name of the employee. Upon retirement or termination of service, the employee receives the total of these assets, including all the investment income. This plan has proven to be much more beneficial to its participants than the defined-benefit plan. It does not seem fair to us that our denominational employees have a pension plan with benefits that far exceed those provided for its pastors.

It is not surprising that more and more American employees have moved away from defined-benefit plans in favor of defined-contribution plans, which the CRC offers to its nonministerial employees.

B. *Average-salary calculation*

Under the current U.S. plan, a minister's benefit is based on an average salary. For 2000, the average salary has been calculated to be \$35,099. This figure does not include key elements of the typical pastor's compensation package, such as housing allowance, utilities, travel, or car allowance. Yet these are expenses that a pastor will incur when he retires. Most pension plans calculate average salary on the basis of a retiree's last five years of employment, whereas the CRC's average salary includes the average of all active ministers, even those who have just entered the ministry. For the above two reasons, we judge that the figure being used as average salary is grossly understated.

C. *Deficiencies of the 1999 "improvements"*

Synod 1999 (see *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 569, 3, a) received as information "the action of the pension trustees which established the target for a combination of government benefits and the amount provided by the plan as 'full benefit' for a 'normal career' to be approximately 70 percent of the sum of the final average salary and the average housing allowance applicable in the year of retirement." We wish to point out two matters regarding this statement.

1. Synod has stated in the quotation cited above that the target should be 70 percent of the sum of the average salary and the average housing allowance. After requesting clarification from the director of finance and administration, we were informed that progress toward the target will begin in the year 2000 by increasing the multiple to 1.46. At this rate the target will not be reached until 2037 and will apply only to those who serve after the year 2000. There is no target for those already retired or about to

retire. There is no housing allowance figured into the formula for these retirees.

2. Synod 1996 instructed the ministers' pension committees to consider including a housing allowance along with the average salary when calculating pension benefits to retired ministers and to report to Synod 1997 (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 506). Three grounds were cited, including "The housing allowance is an important part of a minister's salary, and excluding it results in an understated base salary for pension purposes." The ministers' pension committees reported to Synod 1997 that they had decided "that a change to include housing allowances not be considered" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 212).

The main reason for this decision was that "it was calculated by the U.S. plan actuary to be over \$12 million just for active participants and estimated at over \$3 million in the Canadian plan" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 212). There are variables in actuarial calculations. They are in many ways very subjective, so these figures are misleading. This is not an annual \$12 million expenditure. If a housing allowance of \$12,000 was included in the calculation of benefits for five hundred (500) households, the cost to the U.S. Ministers' Pension Fund would be about \$2 million. Contrary to the plan actuary, the fund could easily absorb this expenditure. In spite of the fact that Synod 1996 recognized the validity of including a housing allowance in the compensation for its pastors, the pension trustees unilaterally decided against this inclusion.

D. Improper reliance on Canadian law; avoidable conflicts

Canadian law was cited as the basis for several recommendations by the trustees to Synod 1999 regarding the U.S. plan. Canadian laws ought not to govern the Ministers' Pension Plan for U.S. retirees. The two ministers' pension plans are separate legal entities with separate boards.

This problem is compounded by trustees who administer both the U.S. and the Canadian plans. Last year \$480,000 was diverted from the assessments for the U.S. fund to the Canadian fund. Whether this money came from the anticipated revenues or from the assets of the U.S. plan, it will result in a net loss of \$480,000 to the U.S. fund in the year 2000.

The decision to reduce widows' benefits because of an alleged provision of Canadian law seems unwise, ill-advised, and unnecessary.

E. Poorly defined goals

Since the U.S. Ministers' Pension Plan is not under the provisions of ERISA (Employment Retirement and Income Security Act), there should be some official statement by synod that all the revenues and assets of the plan be designated for the exclusive benefit of all participants. As far as we know, no such statement is on record.

III. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures synod

- A. To direct the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance to study other pension plans (e.g., CSI plan, other denominational plans, the United Bible Society plan, etc.) and consider the option of a defined-contribution plan for U.S. Ministers' Pension Plan participants.

Grounds:

1. The ministers' pension-funds committees should constantly be reassessing their investment options and how to provide adequate benefits.
2. Synods 1996 and 1999 have already instructed the pension-funds committees to improve the benefits for their participants.
3. A complete review of the U.S. plan is long overdue.

B. To increase the benefits by 32.7 percent for all those whose benefits were based on a multiple of 1.1 times the average salary. The formula then would be effectively changed to the multiple of 1.46, effective January 2001.

Grounds:

1. This is fair. Obviously there are differences in pension benefits based on years of service and average salary in one's retirement year. These are beyond the funds' control. But the formula is not and should be consistently applied. Synod 1999 approved a 32.7 percent increase in determining pension benefits when the average salary multiple was raised from 1.1 to 1.46 percent. However, this raise is to be phased in over the next thirty-seven years. It will have no impact upon those already retired and little impact upon those who will be retiring in the next ten years.
2. In spite of the fact that initially the U.S. plan assumed a number of unfunded liabilities, it has been richly blessed over the years. It is now 117 percent fully funded. The U.S. plan has over \$96,000,000 in assets. If these were conservatively invested at a modest return of 7 percent, the yield would be \$6,769,000 per year. The benefits payout in 1998 was \$4,183,000. If benefits were increased by 32.7 percent, the payout would be \$5,550,841. In addition, the U.S. fund received almost \$3,000,000 from assessments in 1998, all of which could be added to the assets of the fund for the U.S. plan. At current levels of funding, this plan would be fiscally sound.
3. This would begin to bring some parity for CRC ministers to benefits offered in other denominational plans and in our denominational unordained employees' plan.
4. This would alleviate some of the concerns that the current average salary is underestimated because the allowance for housing is excluded. Synods 1996 and 1999 have already gone on record that payout must be determined by the addition of a housing allowance to the average salary.

C. To revise last year's decision to reduce benefits to surviving spouses from 80 percent to 66% percent.

Grounds:

1. Expenses that widows incur decrease only slightly, if at all, when a spouse dies. Government benefits decrease significantly.
2. Most ministers' wives have worked side-by-side with their husbands during their years of ministry without any remuneration and therefore are entitled to the support of the church.
3. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27).
4. "Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need" (I Tim. 5:3).
5. Canadian laws need not govern ministers that serve in the United States.

D. To direct the ministers' pension-funds committees to review their benefit target, irrespective of government benefits. For example, the target could be 50 percent of the sum of the final average salary and the average housing allowance applicable in the year of retirement.

Classis Illiana
Gerald De Vries, stated clerk

Overture 21: Remove SCUPE from List of Causes Recommended for Financial Support

Classis Illiana overtures synod to remove SCUPE (Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education) from the denominational list of agencies recommended for financial support.

Grounds:

1. One of SCUPE's board members and head of the board's Development Committee is a Mormon.
2. SCUPE's theological perspective, which claims affinity with the Christian tradition, fails to mention the name of Christ.
3. Calvin Theological Seminary has disaffiliated itself from this organization.
4. In the past few years the denomination has developed alternative programs for the education and training of those who are called to witness in the urban setting.

Classis Illiana
Gerald De Vries, stated clerk

Overture 22: Instruct the BOT to Submit Its Proposal re Governance to the Churches in Accordance with Synodical Policy

I. Background

In the latter part of the last decade Classis Lake Erie has repeatedly over-tured synod because synod itself and its Board of Trustees (BOT) has taken actions and formed committees that effectively excluded the churches and classes from the work of the church.

In response to our overtures, synod repeatedly affirmed the following synodical rules and decisions:

Study committee reports shall be filed with the general secretary on or before September 15, and the general secretary shall distribute them to the churches no later than November 1.

(Rules for Synodical Procedure, V, B, 10)

Whenever the Board of Trustees proposes to synod policy changes which would directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes, the Board will follow the schedule for distributing materials that is required of study committees.

(*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 752-53)

In response to our concern about how delegates are elected to the denominational boards, Synod 1996 rejected the nominating procedure proposed by the BOT in its new constitution (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 536). (The BOT had proposed that regional delegates be elected by synod rather than by the regions they represent.) In response to the same concern, Synod 1999 instructed “The Back to God Hour to use the nominating and election procedure used by the other three regionally constituted boards” so that Board members would be elected by the regions they represent and not by synod (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 627).

Over the past few years some in the church have thought that far too much centralization is occurring in the denomination and that far too much power is being given to the BOT. We believe that the defeat of the restructuring proposal at Synod 1999 can be at least partly explained by this perception.

Unfortunately, though synods have consistently supported synodical rules and policies, especially when overtures raised those, they also have taken actions that exclude churches and classes and create more centralization. In addition, the BOT continues to make recommendations that continue to exclude the churches and classes from the work of the denomination.

As a classis we are not interested in putting unnecessary roadblocks in the way of the efficient and effective administration of our denomination. In fact, Classis Lake Erie submitted an overture to Synod 1999 supporting the restructuring proposal while raising the same cautions that we now raise. We are very much interested in the involvement of the churches and classes in denominational decisions.

Synod 2000 will receive a restructuring proposal from the BOT, on which synod will be asked to take immediate action. Synod 2000 will receive this report because Synod 1999 instructed “the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Canadian Ministries Board to make recommendation(s) to Synod 2000 to achieve effective binational ministry and governance” (*Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 617). In this instruction Synod 1999 provides another example of a synod ignoring synodical policies—unless it actually thought that the BOT could get a report to the churches by November 1. We had hoped that, in recognition of the importance of the involvement and support of churches and classes, the BOT itself would ask that its recommendations be sent to the churches and classes before synod acts on them. To that end our classical executive committee made this request of the BOT when the BOT considered this matter at its February 24-25, 2000, meeting. Our regional representative, unable to be present at the meeting, made the same request by e-mail. We are convinced that the involvement of the churches and classes in decisions that affect the life of the denomination is far more important than the need for immediate action on this proposal.

We also note that, in the current restructuring proposal submitted by the BOT, the nomination/election process recommended in 1996 by the BOT and rejected by Synod 1996 is recommended once again. If synod approves the BOT’s Governance Proposal, the classes and the regions will not elect their own representatives. They will only submit nominees to the BOT, which will screen those names and submit a slate to synod for election.

The pattern of excluding the churches and classes has been rather prominent over the past few years. In spite of overtures that raise objection to such procedures and in spite of synod’s reaffirmation of its rules and policies, this

pattern continues. It can only result in increasing distance between the churches and the denominational boards, and it does not bode well for the future health of the denomination.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to instruct the BOT to submit its recommendations to achieve effective binational ministry and governance to the churches in accordance with synodical policies.

Grounds:

- A. Whenever the Board of Trustees proposes to synod policy changes which would directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes, the Board will follow the schedule for distributing materials that is required of study committees.
(Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 752-53)
- B. Study committee reports shall be filed with the general secretary on or before September 15, and the general secretary shall distribute them to the churches no later than November 1.

(Rules for Synodical Procedure, V, B, 10)

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 23: Appoint a Committee to Study Baptism

I. Background

At its October 1999 meeting, Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan considered an overture requesting that our classis overture synod to study the issue of baptism, with which some of our churches are presently struggling. Some of the questions raised in the initial overture were these: What is the difference between the dedication of a child and the baptism of a child? How may a church respond to a request for rebaptism from a person for whom infant baptism failed to have a faith context? Is it permissible for a church member who believes that adult baptism is the only biblical position to hold a position of leadership in a CRC? What about the so-called “local option”?

Even though classis considered this overture to have certain merits, it nevertheless judged that it also had a number of significant weaknesses needing remedy. Subsequently, classis established a study committee to review the issue of infant baptism with a view to submitting an overture to classis at the spring meeting and eventually to Synod 2000.

What follows are some observations about the issues raised, a rationale for why it would be valuable for our denomination to study the matter of baptism, and a formal overture.

II. Observations

A. Although our classis appreciates some of the questions and issues raised by churches struggling with the varieties of practice and belief regarding baptism, we nevertheless do not believe that the denomination should alter its commitment to the sacrament of baptism as outlined and confessed in the various doctrinal statements of the CRC. Our committee believes that baptism of infants as practiced in the Christian Reformed Church flows from a biblical

understanding of the unity of the Old and New Testaments and, intimately related to that, from the notion of covenant, which intricately weaves these Testaments into an integrated whole. Our recommendation for synod to study the issue of baptism arises from a deeply pastoral concern for the welfare of our churches, especially for those pastors and leaders in churches actively involved in the work of evangelism and drawing in God's harvest, whether in emerging, new, or established churches.

B. We recognize that our denominational publications, as well as various synodical reports (some of which are somewhat dated, e.g., 1938), have produced some excellent studies. However, it should be noted that none of these studies (excepting the synodical study of 1938) has had official synodical endorsement.

C. Our committee also observes that many of the questions raised in our classis find an echo in new church plants and in emerging churches that draw their membership from a cluster of churches belonging to the greater evangelical community. We believe the pastors and leaders of these churches, as well as leaders of established churches, need clear, biblically based direction regarding the issue of baptism.

III. Rationale for a synodical study of baptism

A. The need for clarity on the relationship between faith and baptism

It cannot be denied that in the New Testament tradition there is a close relationship between faith and baptism and discipleship (see Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:34-39; 9:17-19; 10:46-48; 16:14-15; 31:34). All these passages either expressly teach or clearly imply that baptism cannot be administered apart from the presence of a living faith in Jesus Christ. A careful study of Lord's Days 25-27 of the Heidelberg Catechism reveals the same teaching. The sacraments (baptism included) are given in order to confirm our faith (Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 65).

Although the biblical teaching of the integral relationship between faith and baptism is clear, neither our confessions nor our Reformed tradition has been able to clearly relate this biblical teaching to the practice of infant baptism. The failure to demonstrate such a clear relationship likely lies at the root of the various questions raised in our classis and cropping up in various pockets of our denomination. If presumptive regeneration is an unbiblical teaching, as we believe it is, then on what scriptural basis do we baptize infants?

B. A renewed emphasis on the sovereignty of God's grace as it pertains to baptism

Reformed Christians have always emphasized the absolute sovereignty of God's grace in the lives of God's people. That is the foundation of our confessions' clear and consistent teaching regarding God's predestination in the salvation of sinners. These confessional teachings have their unique roots in the biblical assertions of the apostle Paul, as expressed in passages such as Romans 8-11 and Ephesians 1-2.

The absolute sovereignty of God's grace is key to understanding what salvation is all about. At the same time, neither in the confessions nor in our Reformed tradition is a clear connection established between the sovereignty of God's grace and the practice of infant baptism. Although Lord's Day 27

clearly establishes a connection between covenant and baptism, it does not make a connection between God's sovereign grace and baptism.

C. The implications for baptism in the unity of the Testaments and God's covenant

We sincerely believe that infant baptism is rooted in the biblical understanding of the unity of Scripture. A Reformed understanding of baptism has always prided itself in understanding the New Testament teaching on baptism against the backdrop of the old covenant, specifically in its teaching on the rite of circumcision. In recent years a growing number of Reformed Baptists (e.g., David Kingdon, *Children of Abraham*) have acknowledged this connection (cf. Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*) but have interpreted its significance more in terms of personal regeneration ("circumcision of the heart") and faith and a "heightened" new-covenant spirituality. This line of argument is like the arguments traditionally advanced to support limiting the Lord's Supper to believing adults or those of sufficient age to "examine" themselves.

Other Reformed scholars (e.g., Meredith Kline, *By Oath Consigned*) have stressed the relationship between circumcision and judgment in the Near Eastern treaty forms, which find a parallel in the structure of the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision. How, then, does a Reformed understanding of covenantal continuity and diversity respond to these concerns in terms of a redemptive-historical approach to the unity of Scripture as articulated, for instance, in the Synod 1972 report on "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority"?

A fresh study of baptism, taking these concerns into consideration, might be of significant help to churches and leaders who search for genuine biblical answers pertaining to baptism in our contemporary context.

D. The current confusion regarding infant baptism

While not having conducted a thorough survey to establish the extent and accuracy of the sentiments in the initial overture to our classis, we cannot deny that these questions represent the struggles that face some of our congregations and church members. Dr. Henry De Moor, professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary, has written about the reality of this struggle, noting that for some in our denomination the struggle has already been resolved in practices that form some concession to a variety of baptismal traditions. Dr. De Moor is not merely warning about the future. He states that, in fact, "we are already there"¹ (see "Erosion at the Font," *Calvin Theological Journal*, Apr. 1994, pp. 168-79). The issue is a current reality, albeit a largely underground one.

¹Dr. De Moor comments on five congregations he was in contact with. Of these five, one offers the option of dedication or baptism, another is soon to follow, a third tolerates membership of those not embracing infant baptism, a fourth has stopped disciplinary procedures for those refusing infant baptism for their children, and a fifth is deliberately admitting to membership those not committed to infant baptism (De Moor, p. 170). He concludes by saying, "The 'sleeper' is awaking."

E. The changing context and the need to equip pastors and church leaders who face issues regarding baptism

The questions raised by the original overture to our classis reflect the changing theological landscape that the members of the CRC inhabit. Denominational enclaves are increasingly giving way to a broader evangelical community. CRC members regularly interact with Christians of other denominations, having access to and being affected by books, sermons, small-group Bible studies, even songs, that come from a wide variety of theological traditions and influences. In this changing context, theological distinctions are being blurred as members of the CRC move in and among a larger Christian community.

Within this new context, these questions regarding baptism warrant examination and answers that have been thoroughly researched, both biblically and historically. Although valuable materials are available for introducing church members to the doctrine of infant baptism and for helping church leaders teach it, there is a need for materials that directly address questions currently being raised.

In its 1973 report on Neo-Pentecostalism, synod did tangentially touch on some of the matters surrounding baptism. However, by its own confession, the synodical report stated that its brief discussion of baptism

should not be construed as a complete statement on this matter. Because of the present turmoil in Protestantism and because our people are increasingly exposed to a wide variety of doctrinal opinions, this may be a good time for the church or its teachers to issue again a thorough presentation of the doctrine of baptism. But we do not consider this our task.

(Acts of Synod 1973, p. 440)

Since no synod has yet taken up that task and since confusion regarding the doctrine and practice of baptism has not abated but has, if anything, increased, we believe that such a study, as requested by the following overture, would provide timely pastoral assistance and guidance to the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church. We trust that synod will act upon the request presented in this overture and so provide clear pastoral guidelines to the churches.

IV. Overture

In light of the above discussion, Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan overtures synod to undertake a study of and issue a thorough report on the doctrine of baptism, including our biblical and historical Reformed covenantal view of baptism and the current struggles in the church regarding the variety of beliefs about baptism and the practices of baptism that are present in the wider contemporary church milieu.

Grounds:

- A. Many questions are being raised by a significant number of members and churches in the denomination regarding the doctrine and practice of baptism.
- B. Some Christian Reformed congregations are already making concessions to the plurality of baptismal traditions.

- C. Synod 1973 discerned the confusion regarding the doctrine and practice of baptism and articulated the need for such a study in the church.
- D. Since baptism is a confessional matter, the church's teaching must be sufficiently clear and biblically transparent.

Classis Alberta South and Saskatchewan
Durk De Jong, stated clerk

Overture 24: Alter the CRC's Position on Homosexuality

I. Background

A report was before Synod 1999 of the Christian Reformed Church that gives our council grave doubts about the direction of our denomination. The recommendations of the report have much merit. However, we find that we have fears for our denomination if we accept the direction in which this report pushes us. One Christian Reformed pastor, Dr. Lewis Smedes, is quoted as being in favor of "faithful monogamous relationships" for those who are homosexual but do not have the gift of self-control. We wonder why an ordained minister who holds such views hasn't been challenged by our synod. We wonder why the prayer asking for forgiveness implies that people can be homosexual (i.e., still in their sin) and yet be "brothers and sisters." The position of the church has always been that homosexual behavior (including desires that are not acted on) is not in any way normal, but sinful and rebellious.

We are afraid for the future of our congregation, our denomination, and the heritage being passed down to our children. We fear that we are becoming more and more like the false church described in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession. We believe we have begun sliding down the slope of disobedience to God's Word. We fear that our denomination as a whole is just a little behind the mainline denominations and that some Christian Reformed congregations have already gone down the slippery slope.

Many of our own leaders have known and ministered to homosexuals effectively, based on the teachings of Scripture that all men must repent. We reject the notion that a person can be received as a brother or sister in Christ without repentance.

II. Overture

The council of Goshen Christian Reformed Church overtures synod to acknowledge that both homosexual desire (orientation) and homosexual behavior are sinful. We ask synod to acknowledge and promote the teaching of Scripture that repentance and faith are the proper response to sin. We ask synod to make clear to the churches that homosexuals may become members of Christ's church only when they can say that they were formerly homosexual, not while they are still claiming to be in their sin.

Grounds:

- A. Scripture clearly teaches that homosexual acts and thoughts (orientation) are sinful, rejected by God, and, therefore, homosexuals are not to be received by the church of Christ.

1. I Corinthians 6:9-11 indicates that homosexual offenders (and male prostitutes) will not inherit the kingdom of God but that there are in the church those who used to be such offenders but who have been saved by the very acknowledgment that one must repent of such behavior.
 2. Genesis 18-19 presents a picture of God's judgment on the homosexual behavior of a community. This is the most straightforward interpretation of the passage. The church must not, then, tolerate unrepentant homosexuals in its midst.
 3. Romans 1:18-27 makes it clear that society is degraded when homosexuality is accepted as normal. Therefore, to recommend that we call homosexuals "brother and sister" is to deny God's judgment against such sins as expressed in this passage.
 4. Matthew 5:27-28 describes sinful (sexually oriented) thoughts to be of equal culpability with outward actions. To suggest, then, that a person can be oriented toward homosexuality without being guilty is unbiblical and misleading. Persons who acknowledge that their desires are sinful will not want to identify themselves as homosexual.
- B. The church of Christ has always accepted sinners of all backgrounds and lifestyles on the basis of their repentance and faith. The church must repent of sinful attitudes, but we must never suggest, as the recommended prayer implies, that we receive people who refuse to acknowledge as sin that which the Bible calls sin. In I Corinthians 5 the church is told to expel an immoral brother rather than rejoice that he was warmly accepted while doing something "that does not occur even among pagans." Again, the prayer recommended by the committee gives the idea to congregations that homosexuals need to be accepted by the church without making it clear that homosexuals must put their past life away. (The person in I Corinthians 5 may have been a believer, but the church was to pass judgment on him by handing him over to Satan [expelling him] and watching him being destroyed [with the possibility that he would be saved]).

Council of Goshen Christian
Reformed Church, Goshen, NY
Bouwe Leenstra, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Atlantic Northeast but was not adopted.

Overture 25: Endorse the Southern Baptists' Resolution on Marriage and Family

I. Southern Baptist Convention's Resolution on Marriage and the Family

In June 1998 the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) adopted the following Resolution on Marriage and the Family:

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

In a marriage lived according to these truths, the love between husband and wife will show itself in listening to each other's viewpoints, valuing each other's gifts, wisdom and desires, honoring one another in public and in private, and always seeking to bring benefit, not harm, to one another.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

II. Overture

Classis Atlantic Northeast overtures synod to endorse the Southern Baptist Convention's Resolution on Marriage and the Family as well as the paragraph beginning with "In a marriage," which was added by Campus Crusade for Christ when it signed a statement of support for the SBC resolution.

Grounds:

- A. The necessity of a firm biblical stance on the constitution of a family in view of almost strident efforts to promote the ungodly lifestyles of cohabitation without marriage and homosexual unions, as well as the promotion of abortion.
- B. The need to stand in unity with other Christians in affirming Christian principles in a world increasingly hostile to Christianity. We need boldness in enunciating what we hold to be true and the strength of aligning with other Christians.

Note: Dr. James Dobson's *Family News* (September 1999) makes the following observations: "More than 100 Christian leaders have now signed a statement of support for the SBC resolution, representing colleges, seminaries, publishers, parachurch organizations, large churches, and other groups. Among them are Promise Keepers, Christian Coalition, Eagle Forum, the Assemblies of God, Presbyterian Church of America, Navigators, National Religious Broadcasters, Prison Fellowship, Crossway Books, Association of Vineyard Churches, Coral Ridge Ministries, and Focus on the Family. Campus Crusade for Christ also endorsed the statement, but in late July 1999, Dennis Rainey, executive director of Family Life (a division of Campus Crusade for Christ), announced that the ministry heads, including Dr. Bill and Vonette Bright, had decided unanimously *to adopt* the SBC statement as their own."

Classis Atlantic Northeast

J. George Aupperlee, stated clerk

Overture 26: Add Another Need Criterion to Church Order Supplement, Article 8

I. Background

Synod 1984 established a study committee to consider the “ordination of pastors from multiracial groups.” The reason for this study was the recognition “that God has given rapid growth in the Christian Reformed Church among worshipers and leaders of a variety of cultures” (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 446). One of the recommendations adopted by Synod 1985 in response to this committee’s report was the following:

For multicultural or ethnic minority churches the need for indigenous leadership shall constitute the criterion for meeting the “need” requirements of Article 8 of the Church Order.

(*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 446)

The reason for this recommendation was the denomination’s stated objective of becoming a multicultural denomination. Since we lacked the indigenous leadership to accomplish that objective, it was decided to facilitate the movement into the ministry of the Word in the CRC of those who could help us accomplish our goal.

Today we are faced with a similar situation, but the challenge now is not multicultural leadership so much as leaders for new-church development. The need is great because Synod 1997 gave concept endorsement to the Denominational Ministries Plan, which includes the goal of doubling the number of new churches begun each year to forty, with two hundred new church starts over five years. This is a lofty goal. One of the challenges to reaching this goal is the availability of qualified church planters.

The reason for such a goal is simple: North America is a huge mission field. It is estimated that in the United States and Canada alone more than 100 million people have no meaningful relationship with Christ and no regular involvement with his church. How do we best reach these people? Experience has shown that new churches are one of the most effective means of bringing in the harvest. In Christian Reformed churches one person is received into membership through evangelism for every one hundred members. In new churches the ratio is significantly lower: One person is being received through evangelism for every ten members in our new churches.

Jesus said it: The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Where do we get workers? To reach our goal, we must find alternative sources for church planters. One of those sources could be people from other denominations who would desire to affiliate with the CRC and become part of this exciting mission.

I. Overture

Classis California South overtures synod to add a new need criterion to Church Order Supplement, Article 8-D, 5, to read as follows:

For starting new churches in the United States and Canada, the shortage of new-church developers within the CRC shall constitute the criterion for meeting the “need” requirement of Church Order Article 8. This provision shall be in force for a period of five years, after which time it is subject to review and renewal.

Grounds:

- A. The need for new-church developers is great at the present time. Many church-development proposals have been approved and funded, but qualified church planters are in short supply.
- B. New-church-development ministries are special faith ventures requiring a unique mix of calling and gift.
- C. We need to recruit people who are indigenous to the various cultures we are trying to reach, and such people are not always available within the CRC.
- D. In spite of intensive praying, recruiting, assessing, and interviewing, we are unable to meet already identified opportunities for new-church developers.
- E. The need for new-church developers is accentuated by the already large number of vacancies in our established churches.
- F. Local church leaders meet and pass by excellent personnel for starting new churches because of anticipated difficulties in meeting the “need” requirement.
- G. This decision would be in line with Synod 1997’s “concept endorsement” of the goal to double the number of new-church starts to forty per year and two hundred in five years.

Classis California South
Randal K. Young, stated clerk

Overture 27: Clarify Decision Permitting Term Calls for Ministers of the Word

I. Background

At the May 12, 1999, meeting of Classis Huron, First CRC of Guelph asked classis to “define its criteria, if different or more detailed than Church Order, of the eligibility of Candidates who have accepted a Term Call, for Ordination as a Minister of the Word.” This was precipitated by a candidate’s acceptance of a ten-month contract “to preach, teach, and provide pastoral care in their congregation, for whom they sought ordination as a Minister of the Word.”

The legitimacy of this term call was based on the decision of Synod 1987 about calling ministers for specified terms of service. That decision has become Church Order Supplement, Article 8-C. The relevant part of that decision is as follows:

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.

At its meeting of May 12, 1999, Classis Huron adopted the recommendation from its Overture Committee “that Classis Huron declare that in the event of a candidate having accepted a term call for ordination as a Minister of the Word in one of its member churches, Classis proceed with an examination for ordination at its earliest date, as detailed in CO Article 10 and its supplements,

provided that the provisions of CO supplement Article 8 paragraph c be followed” (Classical minutes, Art. 25-b).

In the Guelph situation, that would have meant the ordination of a candidate for a term that would have been considerably less than even the short ten-month contract that was offered to him. There was no intention on the part of the Guelph congregation to extend the contract beyond the ten months.

The question is whether we can stretch the application of Church Order Supplement, Article 8-C to this point. The 1987 decision of synod had a totally different context. It sought to answer the concern that churches might be unwilling to call older ministers, for fear that these ministers might be with them until retirement age. Term calls would then offer more control over the length of a pastorate and allow for greater mobility for older ministers. That 1987 decision also recognized that many ministers are involved in specialized ministries, which are often for definite terms (normally for several years). There is no indication whatsoever that synod envisioned ordaining candidates for terminal appointments of short duration in regular pastoral charges without the prospect of a renewal of such appointments.

In light of the above, the council of the Blyth Christian Reformed Church requested that Classis Huron overture synod to clarify its decision with respect to the applicability of that decision to the ordination of candidates for short-term or interim positions in regular congregations.

II. Overture

Classis Huron overtures synod to clarify its 1987 decision to permit the calling of ministers for a specific term of service, specifically with respect to calling and ordaining candidates for term calls to regular pastoral positions that could be for less than a year and are not renewable.

Grounds:

- A. The advice sought in the Guelph case indicated that, although the context of the synodical decision was totally different, it did not specifically state that the decision was not applicable to ordaining candidates for term calls in regular congregations.
- B. The fact that no minimum period is specified to make a term call acceptable leaves open the possibility of ordaining candidates for a term of no more than six months (which could have been the case with Guelph).
- C. The general pattern for candidates who enter the ministry in a regular congregation has always been an “indefinite call.” When a church believes a candidate has the qualifications to be ordained as a minister of the Word and to serve in its midst in that capacity, the church may be expected to make a greater commitment to that candidate than a contract for only a year or less.
- D. Though service in chaplaincies and in home- or world-mission positions tends to be time specific—and candidates may be called to such positions—in all such cases, the term of service is for at least several years and is generally renewable.

Classis Huron
Herman Jonker, stated clerk

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COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 1: Classis Northcentral Iowa

This communication is written to inform Synod 2000 that Classis Northcentral Iowa is not compliant with the synodical requirement that classes be audited annually by a C.P.A. or chartered accountant. This matter was brought to our classis meeting of September 7, 1999, by our classical interim committee. I reproduce below the article from our minutes that describes what took place.

Article 47. REGARDING ANNUAL AUDIT. The classical interim committee makes the following presentation:

1. Currently the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* notes: Synod requires an annual financial statement of all classes audited by a certified public or chartered accountant, one copy of which is to be sent to the denominational financial coordinator. (p. 232)
Note: This requirement has come to CIC's attention, but not by way of communication from the denominational offices.
2. The classical interim committee considers this to be an excessive burden on the finances of our classis. Our current practice is to have a professional audit done every five years with auditing done by competent members of classis during the intervening years. The last time a professional audit was done (1995) the cost was \$400. To do such an audit every year would have a significant impact on our classical expense fund.
3. The classical interim committee recommends no change in our practice of auditing but notes that we are out of compliance with synodical rules.
4. Recommendation: That classis send a letter to synod informing synod of our position regarding this synodical regulation and requesting advice.
Ground: Uncertainty regarding fiduciary/legal ramifications and honesty to synod require that we seek the advice of synod regarding this rule. A motion to adopt this recommendation is made and supported. Motion carries.

(Classis Northcentral Iowa Minutes
September 7, 1999, meeting)

In light of the above action taken by Classis Northcentral Iowa, we hereby request the advice of synod. We are not sure how synod will choose to respond to us, if at all, but we do wish to be forthright about this local policy that is at odds with synod's requirement.

Classis Northcentral Iowa
David A. Zylstra, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Eastern Canada

We have read the report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000 and note with appreciation the reflection and summaries given regarding what has been a difficult and volatile issue within our denomination. We recognize that this committee has the mandate to bring to synod recommendations it feels are appropriate. Our concern in this communication does not lie with the content of the recommendations but rather with the way in which Recommendation D is presented.

Recommendation D states “that synod retain the classical-local option approved in 1995.” Immediately following this statement the recommendation articulates a number of suggested changes to that 1995 decision. The suggested changes to the regulations, particularly those found in B, 2 and B, 6, move in a very specific direction toward allowing more freedom for the use of women’s gifts in all the offices of the church.

We regret that the report neither openly acknowledges a movement in this direction nor provides grounds for the changes reflected in B, 2 and B, 6. We believe synod should take note of this movement, and therefore we submit this communication.

If our denomination is going to take steps in one direction or another, an issue of this weight and significance demands that such action be accompanied by clear grounds so that the concerns will be up-front and the discussion can be specifically about the recommended changes and their grounds and not about the issue as a whole or the general direction of our denomination.

Classis Eastern Canada
James Kooistra, stated clerk

Communication 3: Council of First CRC, Ripon, California

Though we recognize the difficulty of the mandate of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000, we have a number of concerns about its report and its accompanying recommendations.

Although this report contains a fair summary of the basic positions on this issue, it does not reflect the heart of the 1995 report, namely, that “there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scripture as the infallible Word of God.” Rather, it suggests that there is one preferred perspective and conviction and another that, with time, we will outgrow and move beyond. This report implies that proceeding slowly in the direction of the ordination of women represents growth and progress of some sort. The proposed changes to the Church Order supplements reflect this thinking. Every substantive change in these regulations advances the new position and marginalizes those who hold the historic position. Proposed Regulation 7 in particular is an example of this. Regulation 4 of the supplement adopted by Synod 1995 would have been perfectly adequate as its stands. Under the proposed Regulation 7, delegates would now be prohibited from voting in a way that synod itself says is permitted by Scripture. This appears to be just another way of saying, “You may oppose the ordination of women as long as you keep your mouth shut about it.”

Furthermore, if this is in fact an issue of the interpretation of Scripture—and not an issue of justice for women (despite articles in *The Banner* arguing to the contrary)—then Recommendation F is inappropriate, suggesting as it does that this issue is somehow comparable to the issue of racial equality. The inclusion of this recommendation supports our belief that the real conviction underlying this report is that barring women from these offices is akin to barring people from these offices on the basis of race. That argument, which has been rejected by synod, still finds expression in this report.

We find it telling that, despite the large number of members the CRC has lost because of this controversy, a greater consensus has not in fact been achieved. Thousands have left our church, and still the committee majority prefers no change in Synod 1995's decision. We are urged to move ahead "cautiously."

We urge synod to reject this report and continue with the present arrangement without modification.

Council of First CRC, Ripon, CA
Mark Van Groningen, clerk

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