



Christian
Reformed
Church

Deferred Agenda for Synods 2020-2021

Synods 2020 and 2021 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America did not meet, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Matters not addressed by special meetings of the CRCNA Council of Delegates on behalf of synod in June 2020 and June 2021 have been deferred to Synod 2022. The Program Committee of synod (officers of Synod 2019) has identified matters within this agenda (indicated by shading) to be considered as “consent agenda” material and received as information by way of a single recommendation to synod. All other matters in this agenda will be considered by the advisory committees and the assembly of Synod 2022.



Deferred Agenda for Synods 2020-2021



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For the past two consecutive years (2020 and 2021) the annual synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) was not able to meet as planned, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Program Committee for synod (officers of Synod 2019) was tasked with reviewing the contents of the agendas for Synods 2020 and 2021 to identify matters that could not await action until the following synod. Those matters were addressed by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA in special meetings held in June 2020 and 2021 (cf. Church Order Art. 33-b).

The reports, overtures, and communications within this *Deferred Agenda for Synods 2020-2021* include the remaining pertinent information and matters for decision yet to be addressed by synod—the denomination’s broadest assembly.

Because of the significant amount of agenda material to be addressed by Synod 2022, the Council of Delegates decided that by way of exception the Program Committee of synod should identify matters on synod’s agenda that can be categorized as “consent agenda”—to be received as information by way of a single recommendation (e.g., report materials that contain no recommendations). This *Deferred Agenda* has been marked with shading and tabs in the margins to reflect the consent agenda matters identified by the Program Committee (see the preceding Contents section for a listing of consent agenda matters).

May God continue to bless the work of his servants in the church world-wide and to use this work to his glory!

Colin P. Watson, Sr.
Executive Director of the CRCNA

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES 2020 (PRESENTED FOR RATIFICATION)

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

COD-SM 01

The Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (COD), convening on behalf of Synod 2020, which was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, begins at 2:00 p.m. (EDT).

Rev. Paul R. De Vries, COD chair, reflects on the words of Psalm 51:17: "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise," noting that although we tend to run toward quick fixes, Psalm 51 reminds us that confession is necessary. Yet we often don't know what to do with lament, repentance, and sorrow; contrition is healthy for us as long as we don't linger there. Rev. De Vries encourages members to bring their repentance to the Lord. He urges that, as the COD meets today, all may be reminded that appropriate lament and turning back to God (repentance) are worthwhile. He leads in an opening prayer.

COD-SM 02

The chair proceeds to call the roll of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates.

Region	Member
Alberta North	Michelle J. Kool
Alberta South/Saskatchewan	Heather Cowie
B.C. North-West	Andy de Ruyter
B.C. South-East	Bev Bandstra
Chatham	Vacant
Eastern Canada	B. Bernard Bakker
Hamilton	William T. Koopmans
Huron	Ralph S. Wigboldus
Lake Superior	Donald G. Draayer
Niagara	Christopher W. deWinter
Quinte	Gloria Melenberg
Toronto	Samuel Cooper
At-large	Greta Luimes
	Aaltje van Grootheest
Arizona	Jose Tony Lara
Atlantic Northeast	Samuel D. Sutter
California South	John (Harold) Caicedo
Central California	Fernando L. del Rosario
Central Plains	Brian L. Ochsner
Chicago South	Jei Wilson
Columbia	Gary D. Bos
Georgetown	James Roskam
Grand Rapids East	Emmett A. Harrison

Grand Rapids North	Daudi Mutisya Mbuta
Grand Rapids South	David A. Struyk
Grandville	Timothy Bosscher
Greater Los Angeles	Melvin O. Jackson
Hackensack	Sheila E. Holmes
Hanmi	Roger Y. Ryu
Heartland	Mark Vande Zande
Holland	Wayne A. Brower
Hudson	George R. Young
lakota	John R. Lee
Illiana	Sally Haywood Larsen
Kalamazoo	Michael D. Koetje
Ko-Am	Theodore Lim
Lake Erie	Laurie Harkema
Minnkota	Roger W. Sparks
Muskegon	Susan B. Hoekema
North Cascades	Arie A. Vander Zouwen
Northcentral Iowa	Wendell Davelaar
Northern Illinois	Arnie J. Stolte
Northern Michigan	Bruce DeKam
Pacific Northwest	Sherry E. Fakkema
Red Mesa	Stanley W. Jim
Rocky Mountain	Adrian de Lange
Southeast U.S.	Jesus Bayona
Thornapple Valley	Paul R. De Vries
Wisconsin	Paula Coldagelli
Yellowstone	Peter J. DeVries
Zeeland	Tyler J. Wagenmaker
At-large	Elsa Fennema

The roll indicates that the following COD members are absent with notice: Heather Cowie (Alberta South/Saskatchewan) and Bev Bandstra (B.C. South-East).

The acting executive director of the CRCNA, Colin P. Watson, Sr., serves ex officio to the COD.

The following persons are also present as staff and guests: John H. Bolt, director of finance and operations; Zachary J. King, director of Resonate Global Mission; David R. Koll, director of Candidacy; Dee Recker, director of synodical services; Darren R. Roorda, Canadian ministries director; Kurt D. Selles, director of Back to God Ministries International; Kathy Smith, church polity adviser; Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns, interim director of Social Justice and Race Relations; Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, director of communications and marketing; and guest Gayla R. Postma, news editor for *The Banner*.

The chair presents announcements regarding technology, including the use of electronic voting and a speaker queue during this online meeting.

The chair notes that later in the meetings, the assembly will consider endorsing a resolution regarding racism.

The chair adds that the following persons will have the privilege of the floor for the meetings of the COD: COD members, the acting executive director, and persons granted privilege by the advisory committee chairs. Rev. David R. Koll serves as Candidacy Committee adviser. Rev. Kathy Smith, polity adviser, is present to assist with procedural matters.

Advisory Committee 1, chair Donald G. Draayer, presents the following:

I. Addressing CRCNA structure in light of Canadian charitable-law requirements

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda for Synod 2020*, p. 28)
2. Communication 5: Councils of Community CRC, Kitchener, Ontario; and First CRC, Owen Sound, Ontario (Agenda Supplement)

B. Background

The COD received a communication from Community CRC (Kitchener, Ont.) and First CRC (Owen Sound, Ont.) expressing concerns about the process that led to structural changes in light of Canadian charitable law.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, take the following actions with respect to CRCNA structure in light of Canadian charitable-law requirements:

1. That the report from the COD be received for information, acknowledging the difficulty of this journey and reaffirming the desired principle of unity.
2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, declare this to be the response to Communication 5.

—Adopted

II. Ministry presentations at synod

A. Materials: Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda*, p. 38)

B. Observations

Three videos were distributed to the Council of Delegates highlighting the work of Calvin Theological Seminary, Raise Up Global Ministries, and several other ministries in the area of Servant Leadership. The videos were well done and provide helpful information for all members of our congregations.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, recommend the following video presentations by Calvin Theological Seminary, Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Leadership Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, and Raise Up Global Ministries to the classes and churches (in lieu of presentations to delegates to synod).

Calvin Theological Seminary: vimeo.com/425890630
Servant Leadership Ministries: vimeo.com/425987996
Raise Up Global Ministries: vimeo.com/382655914

—Adopted

III. Ministry evaluation

A. *Materials:* Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda*, p. 47)

B. *Observations*

Ministry evaluations were received from Calvin Theological Seminary, Raise Up Global Ministries, and several Servant Leadership ministries. It was noted that now is an especially difficult time to be doing the work of Leadership Diversity. There is a need for ongoing prayer for this kind of work as the denomination's intentionality in this area increases. It was also noted that the work of Pastor Church Resources is appreciated across the denomination but is facing new challenges during this time of pandemic. Calvin Theological Seminary was commended for its recent accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools and for its new doctorate of ministry program. The seminary too is facing challenges during this time of pandemic. Both Denise Posie (director of Leadership Diversity) and Cecil van Niejenhuis (codirector of Pastor Church Resources) are retiring within the coming month. We thank them for their service.

C. *Recommendation*

That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the evaluation reports presented by Calvin Theological Seminary and the following ministries with regard to Servant Leadership: Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Leadership Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, and Raise Up Global Ministries (II, B, 5; Appendices G and H).

—Adopted

IV. Interim Executive Director of the CRCNA

A. *Materials:* Council of Delegates Supplement (section I, D)

B. *Background*

At its May 2020 meeting, the Council Of Delegates made a recommendation to Synod 2020 to appoint Colin P. Watson, Sr., to the role of interim executive director.

C. *Recommendation*

That the COD, on behalf of synod, appoint Colin P. Watson, Sr., the acting executive director of the CRCNA, as interim executive director of the CRCNA through June (or July) of 2021 (to be decided) (COD Supplement section I, D).

Grounds:

1. This will provide continuity in the denomination's senior position until such time as the COD and synod can define a new leadership scenario and approve any necessary personnel.
2. Mr. Watson already has a working relationship and a great deal of experience with CRCNA staff and agencies, as well as with the COD, ecumenical partners, and synod.
3. Having the acting executive director continue as interim executive director for an additional year will keep personnel and ecclesiastical disruption to a minimum.

4. Mr. Watson has expressed a willingness to delay his retirement (previously planned for January 2021) to serve the denomination in this way.
— *Adopted*

V. Senior leadership vacancies

A. *Materials:* Council of Delegates Supplement (section I, E)

B. Background

At its May 2020 meeting the COD took note of existing and pending vacancies in certain leadership roles and made recommendations to Synod 2020.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, take action on the following with regard to senior leadership vacancies (COD Supplement sections I, E, 1-2):

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the existing or pending vacancies in the following three senior leadership positions: executive director, director of ministries and administration, and director of finance and operations, due to retirements.
2. That, due to pending restructuring necessitated by Canadian tax laws, the COD, on behalf of synod, declare the intent for Synod 2021 to appoint or ratify new senior leadership positions and persons to fill the positions.

— *Adopted*

VI. Honoring former executive director of the CRCNA Steven R. Timmermans

A. *Materials:* Council of Delegates Supplement (section I, F, 1)

B. Background

In appreciation for the work of Steven R. Timmermans during his time as executive director of the CRCNA, the COD, at its May 2020 meeting, recommended that synod bestow on him the title of *executive director emeritus*.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, bestow on Steven R. Timmermans the title of *executive director emeritus*, effective upon adoption (COD Supplement section I, F, 1).

— *Adopted*

VII. Ministry Plan: Our Journey 2025

A. *Materials:* Council of Delegates Report (section II, A, 2)

B. Background

The COD recommended Our Journey 2025 and its four milestones to Synod 2020 for endorsement. Following the meeting of the COD in May, Resonate Global Mission suggested an amendment to the fourth milestone to specifically mention the work of church planting.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, endorse the new Ministry Plan: *Our Journey 2025* as follows (with amendment underlined) for use by the churches and ministries of the CRCNA (COD Supplement section II, A, 2; Appendix D):

Ministry Plan: *Our Journey 2025*

There's something about a journey that's exciting and invigorating. A promise of new horizons, new possibilities, new challenges. The Christian Reformed Church in North America is on such a journey.

It's called *Our Journey 2025*. *Our* because we are on it together as CRC people from congregations across the United States and Canada. *Journey* because we are moving ahead in our shared mission to express the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide, while also striving toward specific goals that our congregations and leaders have identified. And *2025* to remind us that this is just one stage of a journey that will see us living and growing together in new ways and in new places by the year 2025.

You may recall that we are nearing the conclusion of the ministry plan *Our Journey 2020*. During the time of this ministry plan, individuals, congregations, and ministries have specifically aimed to improve in the areas of discipleship, leadership, collaboration, Reformed identity, and community engagement, while also continuing to preach the gospel and seek out people who are lost.

We are pleased with the efforts and success stories that have been shared in the past five-year period. Churches have begun to flow like streams into their communities, meeting their neighbors and becoming channels for the love of Christ. New leaders have been identified, trained, and mentored to help bear fruit in local congregations. And CRC members of all ages have been nurtured in their faith to grow more and more into the likeness of Christ.

As we look toward 2025, it has become clear that there are four key aspects to this journey we are on. We are traveling *with God, with each other, with our neighbors, and for mission*.

Through conversations with Christian Reformed congregations, pastors, and leaders across North America, we have identified specific milestones toward which we believe God is calling us to strive in each of these areas in the next five years.

These are not the only purposes God is calling us to, but we believe that a denomination-wide emphasis on these milestones for the next five years will help us all move forward in appropriate and healthy ways in obedience to the Word of God.

In our journey *with God, with each other, with our neighbors, and for mission*, we desire to be congregations/communities that

- **cultivate practices of prayer and spiritual discipline**, transforming our lives and communities by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **listen to the voices of every generation**, shaping us for ministry together.
- **grow in diversity and unity** by seeking justice, reconciliation, and welcome, sharing our faith as we build relationships with and honor the cultures of our neighbors and newcomers.
- **share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant new churches in our neighborhoods** as we discover how to connect with our local and global ministry contexts.

Undergirding the journey toward these four milestones is a denomination-wide commitment to leadership development and renewal.

To assist leaders and congregations on this journey, the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America have committed to provide resources, training, and support for each of these milestone areas. We will measure the success of this journey by reporting on the use of ministry resources by congregations, telling stories of church engagement and learnings along the way, and seeing congregations report about progress on the journey. An annual denominational survey will also help us assess whether congregations and members sense that they are moving forward in these areas.

—Adopted

COD-SM 04

Advisory Committee 2, chair Samuel D. Sutter, presents the following:

I. Training of pastors

A. *Materials:* Council of Delegates Supplement (section I, M, 5)

B. *Recommendations*

That the COD, on behalf of synod, note the continuing work being done in addressing abuse of power matters and adopt the following recommendations for the training of pastors (COD Supplement section I, M; Appendix C):

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, endorse the training program for pastors as presented in Appendix C.
2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, encourage the coordination of training for all those involved in addressing abuse of power.
3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, endorse the timeline as listed in Appendix C, including requiring all Article 6 candidates for ministry to complete the pilot version of the abuse of power training as part of their candidacy process.
4. That the COD, on behalf of synod, declare that this training be considered a requirement, and that the training be embedded in the candidacy process for Church Order Articles 6, 7, 8 and all commissioned pastors in Articles 23 and 24.
5. That the COD, on behalf of synod, recommend that the training modules be made available in Korean and Spanish as soon as possible.
6. That the COD, on behalf of synod, receive the report in Appendix C as a fulfillment of the COD's mandate for this training and commend the ongoing work of developing and providing this training to Safe Church Ministry, Candidacy, and various resource people from Pastor Church Resources, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University, as well as to the COD-appointed team charged to "act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 798).

—Adopted

II. Candidates for ministry

A. *Materials:* Candidacy Committee Supplement (Agenda Supplement)

B. *Recommendation*

That the COD, on behalf of synod, declare the following persons as candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, subject to completion of all remaining (if any) requirements:

Namju Bae
Maria D. Beversluis
David Bouma
Richard A. Britton III
Andrea C. Bult
Ahnna E. Cho Park
Jaebok Choi
Erik M. Delange
Derek B. Ellens
Derek W. Elmi-Buursma
Eric D. Freeman
Cary R. Gephart
Noelle M. Jacobs
Travis Jamieson
Kelsi J. Jones
Kennedy M. Kailiti
Hyung-Jun Kim
Jinsol Kim

Jiyong “Jonathan” Kim
Seongjun Kim
Jeff M. Liou
Bryzon W. Masiboh
Loice M. Minito
K.O.
Jeremy Oosterhouse
Jennifer L. Rozema
Hannah G. Van Rees Saxton
Nathaniel A. Schmidt
Jeremy Scripps
Mike J. Slofstra
Lynn Song
Joshua P. Stammis
Chris A. Tibben
Steven M. Vandyk
Nathan J. Voss
Cory B. Willson

III. Extension of candidacy

A. *Materials:* Candidacy Committee Supplement (Agenda Supplement)

B. *Recommendation*

That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the following persons for approval of candidacy extension:

Ram Aryal
Yoon Chul (Daniel) Choi
Elisabeth A. De Vries
Brad Diekema
Steven Dykstra
Ben Gresik
Robert J. Gruessing
Elisabeth L. Huizenga
S.K.
Kiseok (Daniel) Kang
Hannah Ryou Lee
Courtney Mooney-Saldivar

Matthew Mulder
Katrina J. Olson
Jennifer L. Palkowski
Kyle J. Sandison
Ivan K. Santos
Sharon R. Smith
Rebecca L. Tjapkes
Thomas J. Van Wyk
Jantje Fenna (Femke) Visser-Ellenbaas
Klaas J. Walhout
Chad E. Werkhoven

—*Adopted*

IV. Reinstatement of Candidacy

A. Materials: Candidacy Committee Supplement (Agenda Supplement)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the reinstatement of the candidacy of Daniel Meyer as described in section I, C of the Candidacy Committee Supplement.

—Adopted

V. Article 8 candidates approved

A. Materials: Candidacy Committee Supplement (Agenda Supplement)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of need for the following persons for affiliation under Church Order Article 8:

Date	Name of applicant	Classis	Former denomination
6-4-19	Campbell, Karen	Grand Rapids East	Presbyterian Church in Ireland
8-7-19	Lee, John	Hudson	Presbyterian Church in America
8-19-19	Cho, Kang Wang (Joseph)	Hanmi	Evangelical Church Alliance
8-20-19	Kwon, “Joel” Byun	Hanmi	Korean Presbyterian Church
8-24-19	Chung, Yong Je	Hanmi	Korean Presbyterian Church
8-26-19	Lee, Phillip	California South	Global Mission Church SBC
8-28-19	Han, Samuel Samhyun	Hudson	Presbyterian Church in Korea
8-29-19	Jung, Yunho (Joseph)	Ko-Am	Presbyterian Church in Korea
8-29-19	Yi, Daniel Duyoung	Ko-Am	Presbyterian Church in Korea
10-6-19	Ho, Sea	Lake Erie	Presbyterian Church in Korea
10-18-19	Bailey, Justin A.	Iakota	Christ Our Savior Church in Chicago
12-5-19	Kim, Minsoon	Red Mesa	Presbyterian Church in Korea
12-15-19	Nieuwstraten, Doug	Toronto	Reformed Church in America
1-22-20	Hwang, Eunsang	B.C. South-East	Presbyterian Church in Korea
3-4-20	Schatzle, Joshua	Eastern Canada	Evangelical Presbyterian Church

—Adopted

COD-SM 05

Advisory Committee 3, chair Susan Hoekema, presents the following:

I. Personal Appeal: D. Lowe and M. Szto, Queens CRC, Jamaica, New York

A. Materials: Personal Appeal (Agenda, p. 335)

B. Background

Kathy Smith, polity adviser to our committee, shared that appeals (one of which has expired) have been submitted with over 300 pages of supporting documentation. She gave a brief overview of the appeals of two decisions of classis, one of which has exceeded the statute of limitations on appeals. She also shared that until an appeal is heard and decided, the decision of classis remains in force. The first matter a special committee will need to decide is whether the expired appeal will be considered.

C. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, appoint a special committee composed of members of the COD to review the Lowe/Szto personal appeal material and bring to the COD at its October 2020 meeting a recommendation to sustain or not sustain the appeal. This process will provide ample time to study the materials and, if needed, meet with the appellants and respondents.

—Adopted

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, appoint the following COD members to the special appeal review committee: Beverly Bandstra, Harold Caicedo, Samuel Cooper, Roger W. Sparks, David A. Struyk (chair), Aaltje van Grootheest, Kathy Smith (polity adviser), and David R. Koll (staff adviser).

—Adopted

II. Ministerial retirements

A. *Information:* Synod has received notice of the following ministerial retirements:

Minister	Classis	Effective Date
David H. Beelen	Grand Rapids East	January 1, 2020
Manny S. Bersach	Southeast U.S.	February 7, 2020
Daniel J. Brink	Greater Los Angeles	February 18, 2020
James Chiang	Central California	July 31, 2020
Jack B. Dik	Georgetown	June 15, 2020
Mark M. Douglas	Holland	March 29, 2020
A. Carel Geleynse	Huron	May 31, 2020
Emmett A. Harrison	Grand Rapids East	November 30, 2019
Yi-Ming Kao	California South	June 30, 2019
Yoon Whan Kim	Kalamazoo	June 30, 2017
Wayne A. Kobes	Iakota	August 1, 2017
Frederic J. Koning	Pacific Northwest	February 25, 2020
Chris A. Kostelansky	Yellowstone	December 31, 2019
Daniel R. Kuiper	Arizona	October 30, 2019
Ronald V. Luchies	Huron	September 1, 2019
David J. Nederhood	Central California	October 1, 2019
Christian Y.Y. Oh	Lake Erie	December 31, 2020
Cornelius C. (Nick) Overduin	Toronto	July 13, 2020
Bruce A. Persenaire	Central California	August 4, 2020
Leonard T. Riemersma	Quinte	May 24, 2020
Ho C. Song	Pacific Northwest	August 23, 2020
Peter C. Stellingwerff	B.C. South-East	March 3, 2020
Alfred J. Van Dellen	Heartland	November 30, 2019
Andrew Vanden Akker	Heartland	July 13, 2020
Herbert A. Vanderbeek	Eastern Canada	October 26, 2019
E. Alan van der Woerd	B.C. North-West	February 14, 2020
Thomas Van Engen	Greater Los Angeles	March 28, 2020
Cecil Van Nijenhuis	Alberta North	June 30, 2020
David J. Weemhoff	Minnkota	September 1, 2020
John Westfall	Pacific Northwest	October 12, 2017

B. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the above list of ministerial pastor retirements.

—*Noted*

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, instruct the executive director to send a letter of appreciation to each of the retirees listed above.

—*Adopted*

3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, offer a prayer of gratitude for these servants of God, and for the many years of service they represent.

—*Adopted*

Rev. Samuel Cooper leads in a prayer of gratitude for the retiring ministers of the Word.

III. Work of the synodical deputies

A. Ministers from other denominations, Church Order Article 8

1. Synodical deputies R.D. Drenten (Heartland), R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), and D.G. Draayer (Lake Superior), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Justin A. Bailey**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Iakota, in session on March 3, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Covenant CRC of Sioux Center, Iowa.
2. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Karen Campbell**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on June 27, 2019, to declare her eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Church of the Servant of Grand Rapids, Michigan.
3. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Kang Wang (Joseph) Cho**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Hanmi, in session on September 10, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Springing Fountain CRC of Buena Park, California.
4. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Yong Je Chung**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of

Classis Hanmi, in session on September 10, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Olympic Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles, California.

5. Synodical deputies J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), and S.A. Vander Ploeg (Southeast U.S.), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Samuel Samhyun Han**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on September 17, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is East West Church of New York CRC of Bayside Hills, New York.
6. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and J.L. Bloem (Grand Rapids North), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Sea (Hosea) Ho**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on October 5, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is All Nations Community Church of Toledo, Ohio.
7. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Eunsang Hwang**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on March 3, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Langley Immanuel CRC of Langley, British Columbia.
8. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Yunho (Joseph) Jung**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 24, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is L.A. Global Mission Church of Los Angeles, California.
9. Synodical deputies R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Minsoon Kim**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Red Mesa, in session on January 18, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North

America. The calling church is Korean Presbyterian Galilee CRC of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

10. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Joel Byung Kwon**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Hanmi, in session on September 10, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Life Stream Church of Artesia, California.
11. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend John Lee**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on January 23, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is City Grace Church of New York, New York.
12. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), and L.M. Korf (Columbia), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Phillip Lee**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 3, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Faith Community CRC of Fullerton, California.
13. Synodical deputies G. van Leeuwen (Huron) and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Doug Nieuwstraten**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Toronto, in session on February 20, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Community Church of Richmond Hill of Richmond Hill, Ontario.
14. Synodical deputies H. Wildeboer (Quinte), R.J. Loerts (Niagara), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Joshua Schatzle**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Eastern Canada, in session on March 2, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Charlottetown CRC of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

15. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Daniel Duyoung Yi**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 24, 2019, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Ye-Eun Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles, California.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

— Adopted

B. Classical examination of candidates, Church Order Article 10

1. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session June 27, 2019, to admit candidate **Joel S. Altena** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session November 21, 2020, to admit candidate **Israel Alvarado** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. Synodical deputies P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), J. Terpstra (Rocky Mountain), and P.J. De Vries (Yellowstone), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Columbia, in session October 19, 2019, to admit candidate **Seth A. Atsma** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
4. Synodical deputies D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session October 15, 2019, to admit candidate **Steven J. Berkenpas** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
5. Synodical deputies G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and M.A. Palsrok (Georgetown), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Zeeland, in session October 3, 2019, to admit candidate **Jonathan K. Bosma** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
6. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur

in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids South, in session August 22, 2019, to admit candidate **Christopher Bouma** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

7. Synodical deputies D.G. Draayer (Lake Superior), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and R.D. Drenten (Heartland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Minnkota, in session September 12, 2019, to admit candidate **J.C.** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
8. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Holland, in session December 12, 2019, to admit candidate **Luke M. Carrig** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
9. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Zeeland, in session July 18, 2019, to admit candidate **John Cleveringa** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
10. Synodical deputies T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Superior, in session March 3, 2020, to admit candidate **Daniel L. Crapo** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
11. Synodical deputies D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session October 15, 2019, to admit candidate **Jason D. Crossen** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
12. Synodical deputies G. van Leeuwen (Huron), H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), and E.W. Visser (Hamilton), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Niagara, in session July 3, 2019, to admit candidate **Zachary J. DeBruyne** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
13. Synodical deputies J.C. Dekker (Niagara), H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Hamilton, in session September 24, 2019, to admit candidate **Cara L.C. DeHaan** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

14. Synodical deputies M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids South, in session September 19, 2019, to admit candidate **Abigail S. DeZeeuw** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
15. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), R.W. Boersma (North-central Iowa), and H.A. Newhouse (Lake Superior), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session September 24, 2019, to admit candidate **Christopher J. Ganski** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
16. Synodical deputies J.W. Zuidema (Illiana), M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), and D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session September 17, 2019, to admit candidate **Daniel J. Gregory** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
17. Synodical deputies R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session March 7, 2020, to admit candidate **Nathan J. Groenewold** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
18. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and R.D. Drenten (Heartland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central Plains, in session September 20, 2019, to admit candidate **Aaron J. Gunsaulas** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
19. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), P.A. Hansen (Greater Los Angeles), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session October 1, 2019, to admit candidate **John Kyu K. Hahn** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
20. Synodical deputies H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session March 13, 2020, to admit candidate **Cristopher S. Harper** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
21. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), and M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Illiana, in session September 17, 2019, to admit can-

didate **Mark A. Janowski II** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

22. Synodical deputies R.A. Beumer (Pacific Northwest), D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. North-West, in session October 1, 2019, to admit candidate **Seok Won (Shaun) Jung** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
23. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), M.A. Palsrok (Georgetown), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session January 23, 2020, to admit candidate **JungSeong (Samuel) Kim** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
24. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session October 22, 2019, to admit candidate **Noah J.K. Kruis** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
25. Synodical deputies K. Van Schelven (Quinte), E.W. Visser (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Chatham, in session February 1, 2020, to admit candidate **Marcel R.J. Kuiper** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
26. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), P.A. Hansen (Greater Los Angeles), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session October 1, 2019, to admit candidate **C.L.** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
27. Synodical deputies M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Thornapple Valley, in session October 15, 2019, to admit candidate **L.L.** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
28. Synodical deputies R.D. Gorter (Hudson), C.A. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), and P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session September 18, 2019, to admit candidate **Aaron Mamuyac** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

29. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Hackensack, in session March 3, 2020, to admit candidate **Anthony Matias** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
30. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session January 23, 2020, to admit candidate **Timothy J. McHugh** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
31. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session March 3, 2020, to admit candidate **Shawn I. Richardson** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
32. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Niagara, in session October 16, 2019, to admit candidate **Janet A. Ryzebol** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
33. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session October 5, 2019, to admit candidate **Bailey B. Sarver** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
34. Synodical deputies R.D. Gorter (Hudson), C.A. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), and P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session September 18, 2019, to admit candidate **Garrett Saul** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
35. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Niagara, in session May 20, 2020, to admit candidate **Terrence R. Schilstra** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
36. Synodical deputies A.M. Barton (Northern Michigan), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and C.B. Lanham (Lake Erie), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session October

17, 2019, to admit candidate **Ryan Schreiber** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

37. Synodical deputies S.F.Terpstra (Zeeland), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session September 19, 2019, to admit candidate **Mitchell R. Sheahan** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
38. Synodical deputies H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session October 19, 2019, to admit candidate **Hilary Smith** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
39. Synodical deputies H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session October 19, 2019, to admit candidate **Loretta Stadt** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
40. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), G.G.Vink (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session October 22, 2019, to admit candidate **Jaleesa J. Stanford** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
41. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session October 5, 2019, to admit candidate **Brad C. Stolman** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
42. Synodical deputies F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and S.T. Terpstra (Zeeland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Georgetown, in session August 15, 2019, to admit candidate **Gale Tien** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
43. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), and M.A. Palsrok (Georgetown), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Michigan, in session March 3, 2020, to admit candidate **Kathy Vana** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
44. Synodical deputies P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the examina-

tion for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Yellowstone, in session July 30, 2019, to admit candidate **Kristopher R. Walhof** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

45. Synodical deputies R.D. Gorter (Hudson), C.A. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), and P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session September 18, 2019, to admit candidate **William R. Whitt** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
46. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session June 27, 2019, to admit candidate **Josiah Youngquist** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

C. Ministers in specialized services, Church Order Article 12-c

1. Synodical deputies T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), J.W. Zuidema (Illiana), and M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Center Grove Christian Reformed Church of Greenwood, Indiana, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session on September 17, 2019, to approve the position of Campus Pastor as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Samuel Boldenow**.
2. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), and J.C. Dekker (Niagara), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Living Hope Christian Reformed Church of Peterborough, Ontario, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Quinte, in session on May 26, 2020, to approve the position of Canadian Church Relations Liaison for Calvin Theological Seminary as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Shawn R. Brix**.
3. Synodical deputies D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Hope Community Christian Reformed Church of Surrey, British Columbia, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on October 15, 2019, to approve the position of Associate Profes-

sor of Worship Arts as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Joan G. DeVries**.

4. Synodical deputies G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Pillar Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Holland, in session on February 6, 2020, to approve the position of Director of Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Larry J. Doornbos**.
5. Synodical deputies M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), J.W. Zuidema (Illiana), and D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Wheaton Christian Reformed Church of Wheaton, Illinois, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on September 17, 2019, to approve the position of Military Chaplain as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Daniel J. Gregory, Sr.**
6. Synodical deputies R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on March 7, 2020, to approve the position of Associate Pastor/Cohort Detroit Director as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Nathan J. Groenewold**.
7. Synodical deputies M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Creston Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on September 17, 2019, to approve the position of Crossroads Antiracism Organizer and Trainer as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Noah J.K. Kruis**.
8. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of City Grace Christian Reformed Church of New York, New York, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on January 23, 2020, to approve the position of Teacher, Geneva School and Parttime Pastor as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend John Lee**.

9. Synodical deputies J. Meinema (Eastern Canada), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Belleville, Ontario, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Quinte, in session on September 24, 2019, to approve the position of Executive Director of Dunamis Fellowship Canada as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Trevor Payton**.
10. Synodical deputies M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Holland, in session on October 3, 2019, to approve the position of Chaplain, Calvary Christian School as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Brent W. Pollema**.
11. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Calvin Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 16, 2020, to approve the position of Chaplain, South Christian High School as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Arianna Tolsma**.
12. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 16, 2020, to approve the position of Ministry Director, The Dock as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Craig Van Hill**.
13. Synodical deputies F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Alive Ministries Christian Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Georgetown, in session on August 15, 2019, to approve the position of Young Adult and College Ministries Director as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Richard Visser**.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

D. Loaning a minister to another denomination according to Church Order Article 13-c

1. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and J.L. Bloom (Grand Rapids North), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on October 5, 2019, to approve loaning **Reverend John Y. Kim** to serve Hebron Presbyterian Church of Prospect Heights, Illinois.
2. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), and L.M. Korf (Columbia), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 3, 2019, to approve loaning **Reverend Yun Jin Kim** to serve Salinas Korean Presbyterian Church of Salinas, California.
3. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on January 23, 2020, to approve loaning **Reverend Timothy J. McHugh** to serve First Reformed Church of Lincoln Park, New Jersey.
4. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), and L.M. Korf (Columbia), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 3, 2019, to approve loaning **Reverend Joseph Nasvytis** to serve First Presbyterian Church of Starkville, Mississippi.
5. Synodical deputies S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and J.L. Bloom (Grand Rapids North), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on September 19, 2019, to approve loaning **Reverend Mitchell R. Sheahan** to serve The Bridge Reformed Church of Portage, Michigan.
6. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), and M.A. Palsrok (Georgetown), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Michigan, in session on March 3, 2020, to approve loaning **Reverend Kathy Vana** to serve Rehoboth Reformed Church of Lucas, Michigan.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

E. Extension of loan of a minister to another denomination according to Church Order Article 13-c

1. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapid East, in session on September 19, 2019, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Josiah Chung** to serve Cornerstone (UMN) Church of Ridgewood, New Jersey.
2. Synodical deputies H. Wildeboer (Quinte), J.C. Dekker (Niagara), and E. Groot-Nibbelink (Chatham), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Huron, in session on September 18, 2019, to approve loaning **Reverend Jacob De Vries** to serve the Christian Reformed Church of Australia of Brisbane, Queensland.
3. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and C. Pool (California South), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on March 3, 2020, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Ruth Febriana Folkerts** to serve Celebration Community Church of Denver, Colorado.
4. Synodical deputies J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Hackensack, in session on September 17, 2019, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Charles L. Geschiere** to serve Vienna Presbyterian Church of Vienna, Virginia.
5. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), P.H. Hansen (Greater Los Angeles), and C. Pool (California South), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 1, 2019, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Zeke R. Nelson** to serve Antwerp International Protestant Church of Antwerp, Belgium.
6. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), and C. Pool (California South), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 24, 2019, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Won Seok Song** to serve Singsang Central Church of Seoul, Korea.
7. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Ellen Van Tongeren** to serve Iglesia Emanuel Presbyterian Church of Durham, North Carolina.
8. Synodical deputies M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), satisfied that synodical

regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on September 10, 2019, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Ferenc Varga** to serve American Hungarian Reformed Church of Allen Park, Michigan.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

F. Release from office to enter a ministry outside the Christian Reformed Church under Church Order Article 14-b

1. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Michael R. Dadson** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on March 3, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Michael R. Dadson** is released in the status of one deposed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), M.A. Palsrok (Georgetown), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Thomas K. Groelsema** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on January 23, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Thomas K. Groelsema** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Choung Woo Kim** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 24, 2019, to declare that **Rev. Choung Woo Kim** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
4. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Mwaya Wa Kitavi** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on January 21, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Mwaya Wa Kitavi** is released in the status of one deposed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
5. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Simon S. Ko** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 16, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Simon S. Ko** is released in the status of one deposed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
6. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the discussions relating to the

resignation of **Rev. Tim Taesan Kwon** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hanmi, in session on September 10, 2019, to declare that **Rev. Tim Taesan Kwon** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

7. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Jacob L. Meadows** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on October 10, 2019, to declare that **Rev. Jacob L. Meadows** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

G. Release from office to enter a nonministerial vocation under Church Order Article 14-c

1. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Nathan de Vries** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.
2. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Todd Grotenhuis** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.
3. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on May 21, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Joella Ranaivoson** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.
4. Synodical deputies T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), having heard the discussion of Classis Lake Superior, in session on March 3, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Erin M. Stout** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

H. Return to office of one who was released to enter a nonministerial vocation under Church Order Article 14-e

1. Synodical deputies J.C. Dekker (Niagara), H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the interview of the applicant and the discussion of Classis Hamilton, in session on September 24, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-e, that **Mr. Steven G. Baarda** is *not eligible* for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the interview of the applicant and the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on June 27, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-e, that **Mr. Robert J. Rienstra** is eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

I. Release from ministry in a congregation under Church Order Article 17-a

1. Synodical deputies R.D. Drenten (Heartland), R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), and D.G. Draayer (Lake Superior), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Iakota, in session on March 3, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Paul J. Birnbaum** is released from ministerial service in Hope Christian Reformed Church of Rapid City, South Dakota.
2. Synodical deputies H. Wildeboer (Quinte), R.J. Loerts (Niagara), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Eastern Canada, in session on March 6, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Steven R. Eckersley** is released from ministerial service in Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Cornwall, Ontario.
3. Synodical deputies K. Van Schelven (Quinte), E.W. Visser (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Chatham, in session on February 1, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Gregory A. Fluit** is released from ministerial service in Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of St. Thomas, Ontario.
4. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), and T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), having heard the

weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on March 3, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Chelsey L. Harmon** is released from ministerial service in Christ Community Christian Reformed Church of Nanaimo, British Columbia.

5. Synodical deputies S. Elgersma (California South), E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), and J.A. Dykema (Arizona), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Central California, in session on March 3, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Daniel Munchul Kim** is released from ministerial service in East Bay Korean Christian Reformed Church of El Cerrito, California.
6. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), and L.M. Korf (Columbia), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis California South, in session on October 3, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Yun Jin Kim** is released from ministerial service in Orange Korean Christian Reformed Church of Fullerton, California.
7. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Niagara, in session on October 16, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Albertus Kleine Deters** is released from ministerial service in The Bridge Christian Reformed Church of Niagara Falls, Ontario.
8. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), P.H. Vander Klay (California Central), and J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis California South, in session on March 5, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Seung Jun Lee** is released from ministerial service in Hanaro Community Christian Reformed Church of La Puente, California.
9. Synodical deputies R.D. Drenten (Heartland), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Minnkota, in session on March 5, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Stephen D. Moerman** is released from ministerial service in Peace Christian Reformed Church of Menno, South Dakota.
10. Synodical deputies H. Wildeboer (Quinte), J.C. Dekker (Niagara), and E. Groot-Nibbelink (Chatham), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Huron, in session on September 18, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Stephen D. Tamming** is released from ministerial service in Trinity Christian Reformed Church of Goderich, Ontario.

11. Synodical deputies G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Holland, in session on February 6, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Marc Van Berkum** is released from ministerial service in Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.
12. Synodical deputies H. Wildeboer (Quinte), R.J. Loerts (Niagara), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Toronto, in session on April 25, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Thomas J. van Milligen** is released from ministerial service in Georgetown Christian Reformed Church of Georgetown, Ontario.
13. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Holland, in session on December 12, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Bryan J. Van Soelen** is released from ministerial service in Providence Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

— Adopted

J. Extension of eligibility for call under Church Order Article 17-c

1. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Aminah Al-Attas Bradford's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
2. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Nathaniel Al-Attas Bradford's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
3. Synodical deputies D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussion of Classis Alberta North, in session on March 13, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Folkert (Frank) de Boer's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
4. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), and J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), having heard the discussion of Classis California South, in session on March 5, 2020, concur in the

decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Charles M. Hong's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

5. Synodical deputies G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussion of Classis Holland, in session on February 6, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Gary L. Luurtsema's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
6. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), having heard the discussion of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on October 22, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Jonas T. Muljo's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
7. Synodical deputies J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having heard the discussion of Classis Hackensack, in session on September 17, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Trevor Payton's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
8. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), and T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), having heard the discussion of Classis Illiana, in session on September 17, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Jesse E. Powell's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
9. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Katrina M. Schaafsma's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
10. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), and E. Groot-Nibbelink (Chatham), having heard the discussion of Classis Huron, in session on February 12, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Andrew Zantingh's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
11. Synodical deputies J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having heard the discussion of Classis Hackensack, in session on September 17, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Hernan M. Zapata-Thomack's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

K. Release from the office of minister of the Word under Church Order Article 17-c

1. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), M.B. Stegink (Hudson), and G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), having heard the discussion of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on March 7, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Raymond E. Coffee** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), G.P. Timmer (Kalamazoo), and F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), having heard the discussion of Classis Zeeland, in session on February 6, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Leonard H. Meinema** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

L. Release from the office of minister of the Word under Church Order Article 17-d

Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-d, that **Rev. Nicholas D. Hopkins** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

M. Declaration that a commissioned pastor position fits synodical guidelines under Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a

1. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), K. Van Schelven (Quinte), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of ClearView Christian Reformed Church of Oakville, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Toronto, in session on October 1, 2019, that the position of Pastor of Preaching and Pastoral Care is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Joe Abbey-Colborne**.
2. Synodical deputies C.A. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Sunlight Ministries Christian Reformed Church of Port St. Lucie, Florida, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session on February 7, 2020, that the position of Pastor of Ministries of Support is in keeping with

synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Jesus M. Bayona**.

3. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on May 21, 2020, that the position of Lead Chaplain of Forgotten Man Ministries is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Jason Botbyl**.
4. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Mountainview Christian Reformed Church of Grimsby, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Niagara, in session on February 19, 2020, that the position of Pastor of Community Life is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Michael Collins**.
5. Synodical deputies D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church of Abbotsford, British Columbia, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on October 15, 2019, that the position of Pastor of Faith Formation is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Marcel DeRegt**.
6. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on May 21, 2020, that the position of Coordinator for Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Lisa A. DeYoung**.
7. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), and R.W. Boersma (North Central Iowa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Oostburg, Wisconsin, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session on September 24, 2019, that the position of Youth Director/Worship and Technology is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Zack Flipse**.

8. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), and J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Oasis Community Christian Reformed Church of Moreno Valley, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis California South, in session on March 5, 2020, that the position of CRCNA Office of Race Relations Advocate is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Rudy Gonzalez**.
9. Synodical deputies H. Wildeboer (Quinte), R.J. Loerts (Niagara), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Kentville Christian Reformed Church of Kentville, Nova Scotia, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Eastern Canada, in session on March 6, 2020, that the position of Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Justin Halbersma**.
10. Synodical deputies J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Grace Community Chapel Christian Reformed Church of New Brunswick, New Jersey, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Hackensack, in session on September 17, 2019, that the position of Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Timothy Joo**.
11. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), B. de Regt (North Cascades), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Crosspoint Community Christian Reformed Church of Anchorage, Alaska, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on March 5, 2020, that the position of Teaching Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Joel S. Kiekintveld**.
12. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), B. de Regt (North Cascades), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Living Word Community Christian Reformed Church of Kent, Washington, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on March 5, 2020, that the position of Pastor of Spiritual Leadership is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Alexander Lewis**.
13. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), P.A. Hansen (Greater Los Angeles), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Sacramento City Life Christian

Reformed Church of Sacramento, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 1, 2019, that the position of City Director with ReWire is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. David Lindner**.

14. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), and L.M. Korf (Columbia), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of CrossPoint Christian Reformed Church of Chino, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 3, 2019, that the position of National Director of Theological Formation with Intervarsity is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Jeff M. Liou**.
15. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, that the position of Pastor of the Kinyerwanda Fellowship is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Claude Maseruka Ngendahayo**.
16. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Sunrise Community Christian Reformed Church of Austin, Texas, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on March 3, 2020, that the position of Associate Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Kimberley W. Masters**.
17. Synodical deputies M.D. Bennink (Georgetown), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Westend Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on September 17, 2019, that the position of Youth Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Brian Myers**.
18. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), R.W. Boersma (North-central Iowa), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Mision de Fe Internacional Christian Reformed Church of Conroe, Texas, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 4, 2019, that the position of Church Planter is in keeping with synodical

guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Sandra Oliveto**.

19. Synodical deputies T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), J.C. Busscher (Illiana), and G.P. Timmer (Kalamazoo), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Hope Christian Reformed Church of Oak Forest, Illinois, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session on February 22, 2020, that the position of Church Planter in East Garfield Park/Chicago is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Moises Pacheco**.
20. Synodical deputies C.A. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of The Source Christian Reformed Church of Pembroke Pines, Florida, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session on February 7, 2020, that the position of Commissioned Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Erik Pluemer**.
21. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 2019, that the position of Director of Sister Church and Community Connections with Providence Baptist Church, Monrovia, Liberia, is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Laura Pritchard**.
22. Synodical deputies S. Elgersma (California South), E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), and J.A. Dykema (Arizona), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Granite Springs Christian Reformed Church of Lincoln, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Central California, in session on March 3, 2020, that the position of Theologian in Residence is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Libby Pruitt Backfish**.
23. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Church of the Servant Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 16, 2020, that the position of Coordinator of Christian Formation and Mission "on loan" to the First United Presbyterian Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Lorraine Rong Li**.

24. Synodical deputies H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), D.J. Swinney (Alberta South-Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Centrepointhe Community Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session on October 19, 2019, that the position of Pastor for Portuguese Ministry is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Meire Rosa**.
25. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), G. van Leeuwen (Huron), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Covenant Christian Reformed Church of St. Catharines, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Niagara, in session on September 11, 2019, that the position of Youth Director is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. David Scholman**.
26. Synodical deputies C.A. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), R.D. Gorter (Hudson), and P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Grace Christian Reformed Church of Orlando, Florida, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session on September 19, 2019, that the position of Pastor of Education is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Yoseph Seo**.
27. Synodical deputies C.A. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Sunlight Ministries Christian Reformed Church of Port St. Lucie, Florida, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session on February 7, 2020, that the position of Program Manager, Raise Up Global Ministries, is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Juan P. Sierra**.
28. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), R.W. Boersma (North-central Iowa), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Mision de Fe Internacional Christian Reformed Church of Conroe, Texas, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 4, 2019, that the position of Church Planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Manuel Sosa**.
29. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church of Abbotsford, British Columbia, and having com-

pared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on March 3, 2020, that the position of Pastor of Ministry Development is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Adam Van Dop**.

30. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of New Life Christian Reformed Church of Spring, Texas, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 4, 2019, that the position of Congregational Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Erika Vidal**.
31. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of New Life Christian Reformed Church of Spring, Texas, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 4, 2019, that the position of Lead and Teaching Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Leon Vidal**.
32. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), B. de Regt (North Cascades), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Flourish Church of Seattle, Washington, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on March 5, 2020, that the position of Lead Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Jevon Washington**.
33. Synodical deputies D.G. Draayer (Lake Superior), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and R.D. Drenten (Heartland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Worthington Christian Reformed Church of Worthington, Minnesota, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Minnkota, in session on September 12, 2019, that the position of Interim Pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Chad E. Werkhoven**.
34. Synodical deputies A.M. Barton (Northern Michigan), C.B. Lanham (Lake Erie), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 16, 2020, that the position of Associate Regional Director, Young Life of West Michigan, is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Steve Winkle**.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

— Adopted

N. Supplement, Article 23-a commissioned pastors, filling previously approved positions

The following commissioned pastors have been examined by the classes indicated for positions previously approved by synodical deputies (in addition to those listed above in the synodical deputy reports for Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a):

Name	Classis	Date
John Granada	Southeast U.S.	September 19, 2019
Nick Lang	Arizona	March 6, 2020
Andrew Littleton	Arizona	September 13, 2019

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the above-named persons ordained as commissioned pastors within the classes indicated.

— Adopted

O. Service of a commissioned pastor in an organized church as solo pastor under Church Order Article 24-a

Synodical deputies M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), and M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), having examined the request submitted by the council of Hammond Christian Reformed Church of Hammond, Indiana, concur with the decision of Classis Illiana, in session on January 10, 2020, that **Mr. Donald L. Jabaay** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

— Adopted

P. Calling a commissioned pastor to a specified term under Church Order Article 24-b

1. Synodical deputies R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), G.P. Timmer (Kalamazoo), and F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), having examined the request submitted by the council of Overisel Christian Reformed Church of Overisel, Michigan, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Zeeland, in session on February 6, 2020, to call **Mr. Ronald Boersma** to a specified term of five years.
2. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having examined the request submitted by the council of Mountainview Christian Reformed Church of Grimsby, Ontario, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Niagara, in session on February 19, 2020, to call **Mr. Michael Collins** to a specified term of one year.

3. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), P.A. Hansen (Greater Los Angeles), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the request submitted by the council of Community Christian Reformed Church of Oakdale, California, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 1, 2019, to call **Mr. Charles J. Dillender** to a specified term.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

Q. Commissioned pastors concluding service under Church Order Article 24

The following commissioned pastors have concluded service in the classes indicated in the positions to which they were appointed:

Name	Classis	Effective Date	Reason
James Baylor	Chicago South	May 24, 2019	Released
Khary Bridgewater	Grand Rapids East	May 21, 2020	Honorably Released
Michael Collins	Hamilton	February 25, 2020	Released
Aaron De Boer	Pacific Northwest	November 30, 2019	Honorably Released
Bruce Dykstra	Atlantic Northeast	March 31, 2020	Honorably Released
Linda Grace	Pacific Northwest	September 9, 2019	Released
Carlos Lezameta	Hackensack	October 1, 2019	Released in the status of one deposed
Jason Romine	Hudson	January 23, 2020	Honorably Released
Michael Sarkissian	California South	March 5, 2020	Released
John Span	Hamilton	May 28, 2020	Released
Eldon M. Stephenson	B.C. South-East	October 15, 2019	Released
Deano Su	Chicago South	September 17, 2019	Released
Jason Taff	Toronto	October 1, 2019	Released
Ethan P. van der Leek	B.C. South-East	October 15, 2019	Honorably Released
Nola Visser	Alberta North	October 18, 2020	Honorably Released

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note that these commissioned pastors have concluded service in the classes indicated.

—Noted

R. Commissioned pastors having reached retirement age under Church Order Article 24 and emeritus status noted

The following commissioned pastors have reached retirement age, and those receiving the title of *commissioned pastor emeritus* are noted.

Name	Classis	Effective Date
Helen Chew	Central California	December 31, 2019
Donald R. Finger	Lake Superior	August 18, 2019
Ronald L. Geerlings	Grand Rapids South	June 28, 2020
Francisco G. Godoy, <i>emeritus</i>	Wisconsin	February 25, 2020
Syd Hielema, <i>emeritus</i>	Hamilton	October 22, 2019
David L. Kuiper	Pacific Northwest	October 10, 2019
Socheth Na, <i>emeritus</i>	Holland	January 31, 2020
Barbara H. Schultze, <i>emeritus</i>	Grand Rapids East	September 19, 2019
Kelly Sibthorpe, <i>emeritus</i>	Chatham	September 29, 2019
Steven R. Timmermans, <i>emeritus</i>	Grand Rapids East	May 21, 2020

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note that these commissioned pastors have concluded service and that those receiving the title of *commissioned pastor emeritus* in their respective classes are noted.

—*Noted*

COD-SM 06

Advisory Committee 4, chair Michelle J. Kool, presents the following:

I. Recognition of the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda*, p. 37)
2. Overture 8: Do Not Adopt the Proposal to Recognize the 25th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women (*Agenda*, pp. 314-15)

B. Recommendations

That the COD, on behalf of synod, respond to the following recommendations regarding recognition of the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women:

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, recommend that Synod 2021 allow time in its schedule (up to 30 minutes) for recognition of the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women.

Ground: The 25th anniversary of the ordination of women is a significant milestone in the history of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, recommend that recognition of the ordination of women begin with Synod 2021 and end with Inspire 2021.
3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, recommend that denominational staff and resources be used to support classes and churches that desire to recognize the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women in their context and schedule.
4. That this be the response of the COD, on behalf of synod, to Overture 8.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote is registered: Rev. Tyler J. Wagenmaker (Zeeland).
(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Minute COD-SM 10.)

COD-SM 07

The Council of Delegates adjourns at 5:37 p.m. Donald G. Draayer leads in closing prayer.

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

COD-SM 08

The chair calls the assembly to order at 1:00 p.m. (EDT).

Bev Bandstra (B.C. South-East) and Heather Cowie (Alberta South/Saskatchewan) are now present.

The chair calls members into a time of prayer and lament for our nations and world. The executive director, Colin P. Watson, Sr., introduces the special time planned for this session. He indicates that this is a heart issue—lots of CRCNA members are hurting. He adds that we hurt together, and he invites members to reflect on this matter in our world.

Rev. Samuel Cooper opens with a reading of Psalm 46, followed by a video performance by Ronald Foster (a friend of Colin Watson) singing “Order My Steps.” Heather Cowie reads Isaiah 58:6-12, and Rev. Sheila E. Holmes reads 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22. Rev. Emmett A. Harrison shares that we are in a pandemic within a pandemic—with the effects of systemic racism compounding the effects of the COVID-19 virus. He notes that the virus takes a higher toll on African Americans and people with higher health risks. In the midst of this crisis, we have experienced the murders of several African Americans at the hands of police. He calls members to lament, repent, and repair. He introduces “A Litany for Those Who Aren’t Ready for Healing” by Dr. Yolanda Pierce, read by Rev. Cooper, Ms. Cowie, Rev. Harrison, and Rev. Holmes.

Rev. Holmes addresses members regarding this time of pandemic, noting that we are also affected by the Black Lives Matter movement—decrying a pandemic of systemic racism that has lasted for hundreds of years. She shares that she has ancestors who were slaves and Native American. She has worked in the Dutch CRC community for over 50 years—God has allowed her to be a part of many cultures and people. She adds that God has shown her that she is still black and that she’s special to him. The CRC has set up an Office of Race Relations, appointed committees on race relations, talked about diversity, and declared kinism a heresy. She explains that until we ask the Holy Spirit to change our attitudes and lives, we cannot instill change. We are the church, but there are things that hold us back. She shares that even in the church she has not been seen as an equal. She has witnessed black pastors becoming discouraged, but she states that she remains in the CRC because she has been placed here by God. Rev. Holmes shares that she has been prepared to love, not hate. Relationships have been an important part of her life in the church. God has reconciled us to one another. He calls us to action—to become a renewed body of Christ.

Rev. Holmes invites members to a moment of silence and reflection and leads in prayer, concluding this time of prayer and lament.

COD-SM 09

Andy de Ruyter, vice chair of the COD, assumes the chair.

A delegate presents the following motion:

By this resolution, the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, acting on behalf of synod, declares its abhorrence regarding the sin of systemic racism; its support of our denominational leaders who signed the statement about the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor; and its hope that in the midst of our struggle against racism the power of the gospel of justice and grace in Jesus Christ can be displayed.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Mr. Bruce DeKam (Northern Michigan), Rev. Jose Tony Lara (Arizona), Rev. Roger W. Sparks (Minnesota), Rev. Tyler J. Wagemaker (Zeeland), Rev. Ralph S. Wigboldus (Huron), and Rev. George R. Young (Hudson).

Note: The “Statement about the Deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor” is posted to crcna.org/news-and-views/statement-about-deaths-george-floyd-ahmaud-arbery-and-breonna-taylor.

Paul De Vries, chair of the COD, resumes the chair.

COD-SM 10

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Minute COD-SM 06.)

Advisory Committee 4, chair Michelle J. Kool, presents the following:

II. Proposed name change for Back to God Ministries International

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda*, p. 47)
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, A, 4)
3. Program Committee Minute from May 21, 2020

B. Recommendations

1. That the chair grant privilege of the floor to member Wayne Brower to answer questions when recommendations for the Back to God Ministries International name change are addressed.

—*Granted*

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve changing the name of Back to God Ministries International to *ReFrame Ministries*, with the tagline *God’s Story. Today’s Media*.

—*Adopted*

3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the following actions taken by the respective BTGMI Canada and U.S. corporations in order to comply with legal requirements subject to the adoption of a proposed name change for Back to God Ministries International (COD Supplement section II, A, 4):

By the BTGMI U.S. Corporation

That, subject to the approval of a name change for Back to God Ministries International, as an Illinois nonprofit corporation, to *ReFrame Ministries*, the Articles of Incorporation of Back to God Ministries International be revised as needed to implement this name change; and that the president or other elected officer of the corporation of Back to God Ministries International be authorized to sign any documents as are required to implement the name change, including an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation.

By the BTGMI Canada Corporation:

That, subject to the approval of a name change for Back to God Ministries International, as a Canada nonprofit corporation, to *ReFrame Ministries*, the Articles of Incorporation of Back to God Ministries International be revised as needed to implement this name change; and that the president or other elected officer of the corporation of Back to God Ministries International be authorized to sign any documents as are required to implement the name change, including an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation.

Grounds:

- a. *ReFrame* has been the name of BTGMI's English-language ministry for more than 10 years and thus has brand equity both within the CRCNA and among wider audiences beyond.
- b. For the past five years a concerted effort has been made to bring the Back to God Ministries International and *ReFrame* media brands closer together in appearance and language. This prior work will facilitate the elevation of the *ReFrame* name and the phasing out of the *Back to God Ministries International* name.
- c. Since *ReFrame* already has a user audience of more than 500,000, changing the agency's name should be seamless with *ReFrame* audiences. More work will need to be done with CRC donors, but plans have already been developed for communicating with donors that only the name, not the ministry, is changing, in order to reach younger and wider audiences.
- d. The tagline *God's Story, Today's Media* points to God, the gospel, and the distinctive use of media for ministry. Though the new name does not include the international aspect of the ministry, this is the aspect of the ministry most easily conveyed through imagery on the agency's website and via digital and print communication, as is presently being done.
- e. The new name does not affect the identity of BTGMI's international media partnerships, since the name *Back to God Ministries International* is used only in North America.

—Noted

III. Faculty reappointments

A. *Materials:* Calvin University Report (pp. 141-42)

B. *Recommendation*

That the COD, on behalf of synod, ratify the following faculty reappointments with tenure, effective September 1, 2020:

Brendan D. Looyenga, Ph.D., associate professor of chemistry
Elizabeth R. Oommen, Ph.D., associate professor of speech pathology and audiology
Jill R. Risner, DBA, associate professor of business
Derek C. Schuurman, Ph.D., professor of computer science
Samuel R. Smartt, MFA, associate professor of communication
Debra L. Snyder, Ph.D., professor of business
Renee Sparks, Ph.D., professor of geology

—Adopted

Advisory Committee 5, chair Timothy Bosscher, presents the following:

I. Unified budgets and ministry share

A. Materials: Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, B)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, receive the agencies and institutional unified budget as information and approve a ministry share of \$346.48 for fiscal year 2021 (COD Supplement sections II, B, 1-2).

— *Adopted*

II. Denominational salary grid

A. Materials: Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, B)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, adopt the 2020-2021 denominational salary grid for senior positions as proposed (COD Supplement section II, B, 3).

— *Adopted*

III. Denominational agencies, institutions, and ministries for support

A. Materials: Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, B)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, ratify the list of above-ministry share and specially designated offerings for the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the CRC and recommend them to the churches for consideration (COD Supplement section II, B, 4).

— *Adopted*

IV. Accredited organizations recommended for offerings

A. Materials: Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, B)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, ratify the list of nondenominational organizations, previously accredited, that have been approved for calendar year 2021 (COD Supplement section II, B, 5).

— *Adopted*

V. New request for inclusion on the list of nondenominational organizations approved for offerings

A. Materials: Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, B)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, ratify inclusion of the following organizations on the accredited organizations list (COD Supplement section II, B, 6):

1. United States

The Center for Church Renewal

Ground: The Center for Church Renewal seeks to equip churches and congregational leaders for renewed gospel impact in a rapidly changing world and to develop intentional missional congregations that make more and better disciples who transform lives and communities for Christ. Their long-term goal is to be a primary resource hub to assist more than two thousand CRC and RCA ministries and ministry leaders through the radical realignment of faith engagement that will be taking place over the next three to five decades so that the churches of our two denominations will have a vibrant missional presence in a post-Christian society.

Pathways to Promise

Ground: The mission of Pathways to Promise is to foster community collaborations, which promote acceptance and inclusion within the life and work of persons with mental illness and their families within faith communities.

2. Canada

Christian Labour Association of Canada Foundation (CLAC)

Ground: The Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), is a national labor union that has been helping workers in Canada for almost 70 years and around the world for more than 40 years. Founded on the European model of Christian unions, CLAC has sought to apply Christian principles of social justice to labor relations and the workplace. Through the CLAC Foundation, the efforts and ability of CLAC to aid struggling workers and their families have expanded to help homeless people and new immigrants in their own neighborhoods, and mistreated workers overseas.

—Adopted

VI. Ministers' pension assessment

A. *Materials:* Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, B)

B. *Recommendation*

That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the COD's endorsement of the following actions of the Pension Trustees (COD Supplement section II, B, 7):

1. The three-year average salary to be used to determine retirement benefits beginning in 2021 for ministers of the Word in the United States is \$55,357 and in Canada is \$56,140.
2. That the 2021 per-member assessment for the Canadian Plan remain \$42.96 and that the Canadian per-participant assessment remain \$9,840. Similarly, that the 2021 per-member assessment for the U.S. Plan remain \$37.20 and the U.S. per-participant assessment remain \$7,704.

—Noted

VII. Summary of denominational investments and compliance with investment policy

A. Materials: Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, B and Appendix F)

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the COD's response to the measures dealing with investment guidelines and disclosures (found in Appendix F).

—*Noted*

VIII. Housing allowance

A. Materials: Pensions and Insurance Report, pp. 162-63

B. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2021 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.

—*Adopted*

IX. Reimagining Ministry Shares update

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda*, pp. 51, 107-109)
2. Communication 6: Council of Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario (Agenda Supplement)

B. Background

The advisory committee met with Darren Roorda, Terry Veldboom, and Anthony Elenbaas to discuss Communication 6 and the possible implications and alternative paths forward, including delaying the decision to move forward until the meeting of Synod 2021.

C. Recommendation

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, consider the following with regard to Reimagining Ministry Shares (II, C, 2; Appendix J):
 - a. That the COD, on behalf of Synod 2020, implement the content of the Reimagining Ministry Shares report, adopted by Synod 2019 in principle.

Note: Members receive the presentation of the above recommendation and background by the advisory committee chair but take up the matter later in the session.

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Minute COD-SM 13.)

COD-SM 12

The chair welcomes the candidates for ministry to this Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates, convening on behalf of Synod 2020, and introduces Rev. David R. Koll, director of Candidacy.

Rev. Koll notes that this segment of the meeting is usually a highlight during synod. He shares that this session is being recorded for family and friends and the broader church (view at vimeo.com/430176141).

Colin P. Watson, Sr., executive director, addresses the candidates for ministry and welcomes them to a new chapter in their lives. He thanks the candidates for answering the call and completing the journey. Mr. Watson shares that they join a vast cloud of witnesses as key leaders within the denomination. He adds that although these are unsettling times, the institution important in these times is the church. He highlights four important foundations: remember to be people of prayer; lead across all generations; make new disciples and spread the gospel wherever you are planted; and keep connected—with friends, local leaders, and the denomination. He leads in prayer for the candidates.

Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, expresses his congratulations to the candidates, saying, “This is a doorway of transition—follow the calling before you. You will be blessed by the church.” He adds that this calling comes uniquely because of the situation we are in—a crying world. Where can we find hope and the foundation of justice? Rev. Medenblik adds, “We hope and pray that you have learned how to articulate this and an understanding of the love that holds and unites us.” He points to Ephesians 3:14-21, where Paul prays that his readers may be strengthened with God’s power through the Holy Spirit to know the depths of the love of Christ. He encourages the candidates to serve with imagination, thanks them for joining the Lord’s work in mission, and concludes, “We pray that God will bless and keep you.”

Rev. Koll reads the names of the thirty-six candidates for ministry as their photos appear on the screen.

Rev. Paul R. De Vries, COD chair, shares that he is delighted that these candidates are blessing the church, and he invites all to join together in blessing as he offers a benediction.

COD-SM 13

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Minute COD-SM 11.)

Advisory Committee 5, chair Timothy Bosscher, presents the following:

IX. Reimagining Ministry Shares update

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda*, pp. 51, 107-109)
2. Communication 6: Council of Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario (*Agenda Supplement*)

B. Background

The advisory committee met with Darren Roorda, Terry Veldboom, and Anthony Elenbaas to discuss Communication 6 and the possible implications and alternative paths forward, including delaying the decision to move forward until the meeting of Synod 2021.

C. Recommendation

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, consider the following with regard to Reimaging Ministry Shares (II, C, 2; Appendix J):

- a. That the COD, on behalf of Synod 2020, implement the content of the Reimagining Ministry Shares report, adopted by Synod 2019 in principle.

— Adopted

The following negative votes are registered: Mark Vande Zande (Heartland), Aaltje van Grootheest (Canada at-large), and Ralph S. Wigboldus (Huron).

- b. That the COD, on behalf of synod, adopt changes to the Church Order Supplement as follows (additions noted in *italics*; deletions noted by ~~strikethrough~~):

Proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 45, section a

- a. Denominational Funding

- 1) ~~The synod shall annually review the unified denominational budget as proposed adopted by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA and approve a ministry share assignment guidelines to provide the revenue for that budget.~~
- 2)1) Synod shall review the annual budgets of the denominational agencies.
- 3)2) Following each annual synod, denominational staff in accordance with national regulations ~~the executive director shall inform the classical treasurers as to their respective denominational ministry shares~~ *send to the churches an annual letter of guidance as they consider their denominational pledges for the coming fiscal year.*

— Adopted

- c. That the COD, on behalf of synod, instruct the executive director to make appropriate updates where necessary to the following Church Order Supplements referring to ministry shares in connection with assigned ministry-share amounts: Church Order Supplement, Articles 35-a; 38-b, section c; 38-g, section p; and 38-h, section k.

— Adopted

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note that the instruction to consider additional revenue sources has been fulfilled; no additional revenue sources were identified.

— Noted

COD-SM 14

Appointments, officers, and functionaries that follow are presented by the director of synodical services for review and ratification. This listing reflects the results of the synodical elections and appointments by way of the Denominational Boards and Committees Ballot completed within the advisory committees and includes the current study committees synodically approved.

I. Officers, functionaries, and convening church for Synod 2021

A. Officers

1. Executive director: Colin P. Watson, Sr.
2. Canadian ministries director: Darren C. Roorda
3. Acting director of congregational services: Lis Van Harten
4. Director of finance and operations: John H. Bolt
5. Director of synodical services: Diane S. Recker

B. Functionaries

Arrangements for Synod 2021: Sharla Gradert, events and auxiliary services director, Dordt University.

C. Convening church

Convening church for Synod 2021: First CRC, Orange City, Iowa.

II. Synodical deputies

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Arizona	Rev. Jeffrey A. Dykema	Vacant	2022(1)
Columbia	Rev. Louis M. Korf	Rev. Robert J. Toornstra	2023(2)
Georgetown	Rev. Jeffrey W. Scripps	Rev. Gerard Van Groningen	2023(1)
Grand Rapids North	Rev. Jerry L. Blom	Rev. Henry Admiraal	2023(1)
Grand Rapids South	Rev. George G. Vink	Rev. Edward C. Visser	2023(2)
Hanmi	Rev. Tukoon Timothy Jung	Rev. Jeong Ha Chun	2023(1)
Hudson	Rev. Mary B. Stegink	Rev. Kevin C. Vande Streek	2023(1)
Huron	Rev. Gary van Leeuwen	Rev. Sidney Couperus	2022(1)
Illiana	Rev. James C. Busscher	Rev. Richard T. Vanderwal	2022(1)
Kalamazoo	Rev. Ronald De Young	Rev. Hendrick De Vries	2023(1)
Ko-Am	Rev. Jonathan J. Kim	Rev. Amos H. Joun	2022(2)
Lake Erie	Rev. Randall D. Engle	Rev. Christopher B. Lanham	2023(2)
Niagara	Rev. M. Jeff Klingenberg	Rev. Christopher W. deWinter	2023(1)
North Cascades	Rev. Ben de Regt	Rev. J. Scott Roberts	2022(1)
Northern Illinois	Rev. Timothy H. Douma	Rev. Gregory D. Schuringa	2023(2)
Northern Michigan	Rev. Adam M. Barton	Rev. Gregory J. Kett	2023(2)
Pacific Northwest	Rev. Matthew J. Borst	Rev. Douglas E. Fakkema	2022(1)
Toronto	Rev. Hendrick P. Bruinsma	Vacant	2022(1)
Wisconsin	Rev. Mark J. Pluimer	Rev. Michael Winnowski	2022(1)
Zeeland	Rev. Stephen F. Terpstra	Rev. Terry D. Slachter	2023(2)

III. Denominational boards

Note: Members of the Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University regional boards are elected from the following twelve regions:

Region 1 – Classes B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East

Region 2 – Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan, and Lake Superior (Canadian congregations)

Region 3 – Classes Eastern Canada, Quinte, and Toronto

Region 4 – Classes Chatham, Hamilton, Huron, and Niagara

Region 5 – Classes Columbia, North Cascades, Pacific Northwest, and Yellowstone

Region 6 – Classes California South, Central California, Greater Los Angeles, Hanmi, and Ko-Am

Region 7—Classes Arizona, Red Mesa, and Rocky Mountain
Region 8—Classes Central Plains, Heartland, Iakota, Lake Superior (U.S. congregations), Minnkota, and Northcentral Iowa
Region 9—Classes Chicago South, Illiana, Northern Illinois, and Wisconsin
Region 10—Classes Georgetown, Holland, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Northern Michigan, and Zeeland
Region 11—Classes Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Lake Erie, and Thornapple Valley
Region 12—Classes Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson, and Southeast U.S.

A. Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Note: For the purpose of continuity in membership on the Council of Delegates, some members will serve shortened terms over the next couple of years (ideally 8-9 retiring each year)—indicated by the multiple years noted in the Term Expires column.

Classis	Member	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. Michelle J. Kool	2021/22/23
Arizona	Rev. Jose A. Lara	2021/22/23
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. Samuel D. Sutter	2021/22/23
B.C. North-West	Mr. Andy de Ruyter	2023(2)*
B.C. South-East	Ms. Bev Bandstra	2021/22/23
California South	Rev. John H. Caicedo	2021/22/23
Central Plains	Rev. Brian L. Ochsner	2021/22/23
Chatham	Rev. Mark Verbruggen	2023(1)
Chicago South	Mr. Jei Wilson	2021/22/23
Grand Rapids East	Ms. Jeanne Engelhard	2023(1)
Grand Rapids North	Mr. Daudi Mutisya Mbuta	2021/22/23
Grand Rapids South	Rev. David A. Struyk	2021/22/23
Grandville	Ms. Rachel Bouwkamp	2023(1)
Greater Los Angeles	Mr. Thomas Byma	2023(1)
Hackensack	Rev. Sheila E. Holmes	2021/22/23
Illiana	Ms. Jill Feikema	2023(1)
Ko-Am	Rev. Theodore Lim	2021/22/23
Lake Erie	Mrs. Laurie Harkema	2021/22/23
Lake Superior	Rev. Michael Ten Haken	2023(1)
Muskegon	Rev. Drew Sweetman	2023(1)
Niagara	Rev. Robert Loerts	2023(1)
North Cascades	Mr. Arie Vander Zouwen	2022(1)
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. Wendell Davelaar	2021/22/23
Northern Illinois	Mr. Arnie J. Stolte	2021/22/23
Northern Michigan	Mr. Bruce DeKam	2021/22/23
Red Mesa	Rev. Lora A. Copley	2023(1)
Yellowstone	Rev. Peter J. DeVries	2021/22/23
Canada at-large	Ms. Greta Luimes	2022(1)
United States at-large	Mrs. Elsa Fennema	2021/22/23
Ex officio	Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr., executive director	
*By way of exception (see <i>Agenda for Synod 2020</i> , p. 31).		

B. Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees

Region	Member	Term Expires
Region 2	Mr. Frank Zee	2023(2)
Region 4	Rev. Allen Kleine Deters	2023(2)
Region 11	Rev. R. Scott Greenway	2023(1)
Regional at-large		
Region 10	Dr. Susan Beving Strikwerda	2023(2)
At-Large	Ms. Susan Keesen	2023(1)
	Rev. Christian Oh	2023(1)

C. Calvin University Board of Trustees

Region	Member	Term Expires
Regions 1 and 2	Mr. Richard Mast	2023(2)
Region 9	Mr. Timothy Goudzwaard	2023(2)
Region 11	Rev. Nate DeJong McCarron	2023(1)
Region 12	Rev. Edward Wayne Coleman	2023(1)
Alumni	Ms. Rhonda Roorda	2023(2)
	Mr. Perrin Rynders	2023(1)
At-large	Mr. William Boer	2023(3)
	Mr. Jeffrey DeNooyer	2022(3)
	Mr. Lambert Kamp	2023(2)
	Mr. Scott Spoelhof	2022(2)
	Mr. Carl Triemstra	2023(2)
	Mr. Ray Vander Kooi	2023(3)

D. World Renew Board

Region	Member	Term Expires
Alberta North	Ms. Lisa Kuipers	2023(1)
Chicago South	Ms. Abbie Schrottenboer	2023(1)
Georgetown	Ms. Lynrae Frens	2023(1)
Heartland	Mr. Rod De Boer	2023(1)
lakota	Rev. Dr. Clifford D. Hoekstra	2023(1)
Ko-Am	Rev. Sungjin Kim	2022(1)
Lake Erie	Mr. Gerald Van Wyk	2023(1)
Northern Michigan	Rev. James Zwier	2023(1)
Pacific Northwest	Mr. Jay A. DeBoer	2023(2)
Quinte	Mr. John Batterink	2023(1)
Red Mesa	Ms. Debra Chee	2023(1)
Zeeland	Mr. Dale Compagner	2023(1)
Pastoral adviser (U.S.)	Rev. Bonny Mulder-Behnia	2023(1)
At-large Canada	Dr. Gerda Kits	2023(1)
	Ms. Jane Vander Velden	2023(1)
At-large U.S.	Mr. Jeff Banaszak	2023(1)
	Ms. LaVonne Koedam	2023(1)
	Mr. Charles Udeh	2023(1)

IV. Service committees

A. Candidacy Committee

Mr. James Jones (2021/2), Rev. Susan LaClear (2021/2), Rev. Henry Jonker (2021/1), Ms. Judy Cook (2022/1), Rev. Felix Fernandez (2022/1), Rev. Mark W. Hilbelink (2022/2), Rev. Andrew G. Vander Leek (2022/2), Rev. Ashley Bonnes (2023/2), Rev. Moon B. Kim (2023/1), Rev. David R. Koll (staff), Mr. Colin Watson, Sr. (ex officio as executive director), Rev. Julius T. Medenblik (ex officio as Calvin Theological Seminary representative).

B. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. Committee

Mr. James Brewer (2021/2), Mr. Howard Van Den Heuvel (2021/1), Ms. Barbara De Boer (2022/1), Mr. Jeffrey Feikens (2022/1), Mr. Jack Meyer (2023/2), Ms. Nancy Wiesman (2023/1), Mr. David E. Veen (ex officio member).

C. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

Mr. James Joosse (2021/1), Dr. William T. Koopmans (2021/1), Rev. Kathleen Smith (2021/2), Rev. John Tenyenhuis (2021/2), Dr. Lyle D. Bierma (2022/1), Ms. Lenore Maine (2022/2), Dr. Michael Wagenman (2022/1), Rev. InSoon Hoagland (2023/2), Ms. Ruth Palma (2023/2), Ms. Yvonne Schenk (2023/1), Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr. (ex officio member), Dr. Darren C. Roorda (ex officio member).

D. Historical Committee

Dr. James A. De Jong (2021/1), Dr. Herman DeVries Jr. (2022/1), Dr. Tony Mann (2022/1), Dr. John Bolt (2023/2).

E. Judicial Code Committee

Rev. Aldon L. Kuiper (2021/2), Ms. Roberta Vriesema (2021/2), Mr. Edward Bosveld (2021/1), Rev. Cindy de Jong (2021/1), Dr. Duane Bajema (2022/2), Ms. Eun-Joo Gloria Dykstra (2022/1), Rev. Henry Jonker (2022/2), Ms. Amy Vander Vliet (2022/1), Ms. Deloris Carter (2023/1), Rev. Bomsu Kim (2023/1), Mr. John Koot (2023/2), Mr. Doug Vande Griend (2023/2), Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr. (adviser).

F. Ministers' Pension Funds committees

Canadian Pension Trustees

Rev. Michael VanderKwaak (2021/1), Mr. Henry Eygenraam (2021/3), Ms. MaryAnn Kokan-Nyhof (2021/3), Mr. Dick Vreugdenhil (2022/1), Ms. Kathy Wassink (2022/2).

U.S. Board of Pensions

Mr. Darrel Raih (2021/1), Mr. Thomas Dykhous (2021/3), Rev. Joel J. Sheeres (2022/3), Mr. Alan Van Dyke (2022/1), Mr. Lloyd Bierma (2023/2).

V. Synodical study committees and task forces

A. Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (scheduled to report in 2021)

Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma, Pastor Charles Kim, Rev. Jose Rayas, Rev. Paula Seales, Dr. Matthew Tuininga, Dr. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (*promotor fidei*), Dr. Mary VandenBerg, Dr. William VanderWoerd, Dr. Jeffrey Weima, and Dr. Albert Wolters.

B. Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force (scheduled to report in 2021)

Rev. Bernard Ayoola, Rev. Joan DeVries, Mr. Henry Doorn; Ms. Gayle Doornbos, Rev. Gerald Koning, Mr. David VanderWoerd, Mr. Loren Veldhuizen, and Ms. Lis Van Harten (staff).

C. Study of Bivocationality Task Force (scheduled to report in 2021)

Rev. Bernard Bakker, Rev. John Bouwers, Ms. Beth Fellingier, Rev. Ernesto Hernandez, Ms. Sharon Jim, Rev. Michael Vander Laan, Rev. Phillip Westra, Mr. Robert Zoerman, and Rev. David Koll (staff).

VI. Recommendations

A. That the COD, on behalf of synod, ratify the above changes to the list of synodical deputies, denominational boards, and committees.

—*Adopted*

B. That upon completion of the Boards and Committees Ballot of Synod 2020 by the COD, acting in the interim of synod, the U.S. directors of the CRCNA U.S. Corporations (only) (1) appoint the following new U.S. Council of Delegates members as interim directors of both the Back to God Ministries International U.S. Corporation and the CRCNA U.S. Corporation, and (2) recommend that Synod 2021 appoint the interim directors as directors of the two U.S. corporations:

Classis	Member
Grand Rapids East	Ms. Jeanne Engelhard
Grandville	Ms. Rachel Bouwkamp
Greater Los Angeles	Mr. Thomas Byrna
Illiana	Ms. Jill Feikema
Lake Superior	Rev. Michael Ten Haken
Muskegon	Rev. Drew Sweetman
North Cascades	Mr. Arie Vander Zouwen
Red Mesa	Rev. Lora A. Copley

—*Adopted*

COD-SM 15

The chair gives special acknowledgment to the following COD members concluding service July 1, 2020:

Emmett A. Harrison (Grand Rapids East)
Timothy Bosscher (Grandville)
Melvin O. Jackson (Greater Los Angeles)
Sally Haywood Larsen (Illiana)
Donald G. Draayer (Lake Superior)
Susan B. Hoekema (Muskegon)
Christopher W. deWinter (Niagara)
Stanley W. Jim (Red Mesa)

The executive director expresses gratitude on behalf of the COD to Rev. Paul R. De Vries, chair, for his leadership throughout this Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates.

COD-SM 16

The COD adjourns at 4:45 p.m. Susan Hoekema leads in closing prayer.

Aaltje van Grootheest, Secretary

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES 2021 (PRESENTED FOR RATIFICATION)

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

COD-SM 01

The Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (COD), convening on behalf of Synod 2021, which was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, begins at 11:00 a.m. (EDT). Rev. Paul R. De Vries, COD chair, welcomes Council of Delegates members, staff, advisers, and persons watching via livestream.

Rev. Mark Vande Zande, COD member from Classis Heartland and pastor of the scheduled convening church of Synod 2021 (First CRC, Orange City, Iowa), reflects on the faithfulness of God throughout his marriage and his ministry. Isaiah 25:1 says, "O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago." Throughout Scripture, we find that God keeps his promises (Deut. 7:9; Ps. 145:8-13; Gen. 3:14-15; 8:20-22; 9:12-16), he never leaves us or forsakes us (Ps. 121; 139:1-7; Matt. 28:18-20; John 14:15-19; Heb. 13:5-6), and God is faithful to the very end (Ps. 117). We can respond to that faithfulness of God by trusting in him, holding fast to him, and being faithful to him to the very end.

Rev. Vande Zande leads in prayer and invites the delegates to respond by singing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

COD-SM 02

The chair proceeds to call the roll of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates.

Region	Member
Alberta North	Michelle J. Kool
Alberta South/Saskatchewan	Heather Cowie
B.C. North-West	Andy de Ruyter
B.C. South-East	Bev Bandstra
Eastern Canada	B. Bernard Bakker
Hamilton	William T. Koopmans
Huron	Ralph S. Wigboldus
Niagara	Wendy de Jong
Ontario Southwest	Mark Verbruggen
Quinte	Frederick Wind
Toronto	Samuel Cooper
Canada At-large	Greta Luimes
	Melissa Van Dyk
Arizona	Jose Tony Lara
Atlantic Northeast	Samuel D. Sutter
California South	John (Harold) Caicedo
Central California	Fernando L. del Rosario

Central Plains
Chicago South
Columbia
Georgetown
Grand Rapids East
Grand Rapids North
Grand Rapids South
Grandville
Greater Los Angeles
Hackensack
Hanmi
Heartland
Holland
Hudson
Iakota
Illiana
Kalamazoo
Ko-Am
Lake Erie
Lake Superior
Minnkota
Muskegon
North Cascades
Northcentral Iowa
Northern Illinois
Northern Michigan
Pacific Northwest
Red Mesa
Rocky Mountain
Southeast U.S.
Thornapple Valley
Wisconsin
Yellowstone
Zeeland
U.S. At-large

Brian L. Ochsner
Jei Wilson
Gary D. Bos
James Roskam
Jeanne Engelhard
Daudi Mutisya Mbuta
David A. Struyk
Rachel Bouwkamp
Thomas Byma
Sheila E. Holmes
Roger Y. Ryu
Mark Vande Zande
Wayne A. Brower
George R. Young
John R. Lee
Jill Feikema
Michael D. Koetje
Jonathan J. Kim
Laurie Harkema
Michael Ten Haken
Roger W. Sparks
Drew Sweetman
Arie A. Vander Zouwen
Wendell Davelaar
Arnie J. Stolte
Bruce DeKam
Sherry E. Fakkema
Lora A. Copley
Kelly L. Vander Woude
Jesus M. Bayona
Paul R. De Vries
Paula Coldagelli
Peter J. DeVries
Tyler J. Wagenmaker
Elsa Fennema

The roll indicates that the following COD members are absent with notice: Rachel Bouwkamp (Grandville) and Roger Y. Ryu (Hanmi).

The executive director of the CRCNA, Colin P. Watson, Sr., serves ex officio to the COD.

The following persons are also present as staff and guests: Amanda Benckhuysen, director of Safe Church Ministry; John H. Bolt, deputy executive director and chief financial officer; Zachary J. King, director of Resonate Global Mission; David R. Koll, director of Candidacy; Susan E. LaClear, director of Candidacy; Julius T. Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary; Diane (Dee) S. Recker, director of Synodical Services; Darren R. Roorda, Canadian ministries director; Kurt D. Selles, director of ReFrame Ministries; Kathy Smith, church polity adviser; Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, director of communications and marketing; Lis Van Harten, interim director of Congregational Services-U.S.; and guests Gayla R. Postma, reporter for *The Banner*, and Alissa Vernon, news editor of *The Banner*.

The chair presents announcements regarding technology, including the use of electronic voting and speaker queue during this online meeting.

The chair adds that the following persons will have the privilege of the floor for the meetings of the COD: COD members, the executive director, and persons granted privilege by the advisory committee chairs (Rev. David R. Koll and Rev. Susan LaClear as Candidacy Committee advisers; Rev. Jul

Medenblik on matters related to candidacy; Rev. Kathy Smith, polity adviser, for assistance with procedural matters).

The chair presents the following motion on behalf of the Council of Delegates executive committee meeting on June 2, 2021:

That the COD, on behalf of Synod 2021, in light of the anticipated heavy agenda for Synod 2022 and given conversations that have already begun with regard to an efficient use of time, task the Program Committee with a mandate to further explore options for the meeting of Synod 2022. This could include consultation with a design team consisting of staff and significant participants at synod.

Approval is requested of the COD because this task might be perceived as an expansion of the ordinary mandate of the Program Committee. The Program Committee will be asked to bring a preliminary report to the COD in October and a formal recommendation to the COD in February 2022.

— *Adopted*

COD-SM 03

Advisory Committee 1, chair William T. Koopmans, presents the following:

I. Addressing structure and leadership

A. Materials

1. *Deferred Agenda for Synod 2020*, Council of Delegates Report, section I, D (p. 72)
2. *Deferred Agenda for Synod 2020*, Council of Delegates Supplement, section I, G (pp. 146-48, 150-51)
3. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Council of Delegates Report, section II, A, 8, a (pp. 23-24)
4. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Overtures 1 and 2 (pp. 347-50)
5. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Council of Delegates Supplement, section I, G, and Appendix A

B. Observations

The advisory committee appreciates the intent of Overtures 1 and 2 to emphasize our unity as a binational church. The committee also appreciates the commitment to ensuring that good order and proper process are followed. Yet the committee believes that the COD has acted with the same intent and commitment.

The overtures contain some inaccurate and/or incomplete information. For example, there has been no attempt to create two denominations. The intent has only been to contextualize ministries in an optimal way and to be compliant with government regulations.

In addition, since the COD has mandated the CRCNA Canada Corporation to maintain fiduciary matters and synod has endorsed and supported bylaws for the CRCNA Canada Corporation, the COD's action was not in violation of Church Order.

Because the overtures were written and submitted by the March 2021 deadline, the committee believes some of the concerns within them may have been dealt with at the May 2021 COD meeting. The Structure and

Leadership Task Force (SALT) recommendations may make elements of these overtures moot.

Finally, the advisory committee recognizes that the current situation, in terms of senior leadership positions and working relationships, is untenable for much longer. For practical purposes, it does not seem possible to halt the process at this time. In addition, it should be noted that the decisions or actions of the COD with regard to these matters are not final. These decisions will be presented to Synod 2022, and churches and classes will have ample opportunity to respond to them before a new structure is finalized.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, not accede to Overtures 1 and 2.

Grounds:

1. In appreciation of the intent of the overtures to emphasize unity as a binational denomination, we affirm that this has also been the intent of the SALT report, the COD, and the CRCNA Canada Corporation as they made decisions.
2. Some of the information in the overtures, as noted in the background and observations above, is based on incomplete and/or inaccurate information.
3. The COD has approved the SALT report, which addresses some of these concerns.
4. The CRCNA Canada Corporation and the COD have been tasked with maintaining fiduciary and legal matters. This includes being proactive and responsible when it comes to charitable law. As such, their actions have not been out of order.
5. All actions taken by the CRCNA Canada Corporation have been reviewed by the COD. These decisions will be reviewed by Synod 2022, and churches and classes will have ample opportunity to respond to the actions before the decisions are finalized.

—Adopted

II. Consideration of a Neland Avenue CRC matter

A. Materials

1. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Overtures 4-11 and Communication 2 (pp. 352-76, 475-76)
2. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Communication 6 (Supplement)

B. Observations

The matter of the COD acting on behalf of synod is uncharted territory, and there are no clear Church Order rules to regulate how to deal with matters like this. We are aware of having to maintain a delicate balance between overstepping the reach of the COD and failing to act on significant and timely matters for the well-being of the denomination. With these concerns in mind, the advisory committee offers the following observations:

The advisory committee has deep respect for the people and ministry of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, active in important ministry over many decades. The committee was moved by “Michael’s” letter (appended to Communication 6) and the documen-

tation of the long history of conversation that the church has had. We acknowledge that there are times when we want to speak to something that is a high priority, and that urge may lead us to break rules or bend processes.

At the same time, what Neland Avenue CRC did was outside of our denominationally held position and good order. We have covenanted together as a denomination to abide by a shared commitment to biblical interpretation and pastoral care, and will change interpretations and practices only through appropriate processes. To act outside of these shared guidelines hurts the broader community.

On the Neland Avenue matter, the COD has already acted. A letter of admonishment was sent to the council on behalf of the COD. It acknowledged our disappointment in their actions and lamented the breaking of community that resulted. Going further than that would be outside the scope of our mandate. The COD cannot discipline a local council. Anything we do would be an interim action until synod is able to meet and act.

As a COD we urgently request that all congregations prayerfully maintain unity and seek to live within the procedures of our covenant. This includes taking a posture of listening to each other and to those with whom we disagree.

C. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, defer action on overtures and other communications regarding the Neland Avenue CRC matter (Overtures 4-10) and refer them to Synod 2022 for action, while pleading with all congregations in the denomination to maintain covenant with each other and respect proper procedure with regard to these matters.

Grounds:

- a. The COD has already addressed this matter in previous response and communication.
- b. The report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, which will be received and acted upon by Synod 2022, will provide a natural opportunity to deliberate and make decisions regarding this matter. In fact, the actions of Synod 2022 in regard to this report will heavily influence a proper response to Neland Avenue CRC's actions.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Wendell Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), Bruce DeKam (Northern Michigan), Sherry E. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), Jose Tony Lara (Arizona), Roger W. Sparks (Minnkota), Drew Sweetman (Muskegon), Mark Vande Zande (Heartland), Tyler J. Wagenmaker (Zeeland), Ralph S. Wigboldus (Huron), and George R. Young (Hudson).

A delegate presents the following motion:

That the COD send a "formal communication" to Synod 2022, reaffirming the COD letter of admonition and grave concern to Neland Avenue CRC and urging Synod 2022 to be mindful of the three marks of the true and vital church.

Grounds:

- a. The COD Governance Handbook states that “the COD itself may judge that synod would be well served by a formal communication in response to a matter on synod’s agenda.”
- b. In a time of denominational turmoil, it is incumbent on the COD to reaffirm our denominational commitments and to add further weight in hopes of preventing other churches from taking independent actions that bypass Church Order.

— *Adopted*

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, not accede to Overture 11.

Grounds:

- a. The COD, in its previous letter to Neland Avenue CRC (Oct. 29, 2020), acted in accordance with the denomination’s position.
- b. Any COD actions, by their very nature, are received and evaluated by the next synod. It would be better for Synod 2022 to evaluate the appropriateness of the letter than for the COD to do so while meeting in lieu of synod.

— *Adopted*

Note: Overture 11 will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2022* with a special note of explanation that the COD, meeting in lieu of Synod 2021, did not accede to the overture and that it is included on the agenda for Synod 2022 as background only.

III. Varia: Gratitude to retiring committee members

A. Materials

1. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Council of Delegates Report, section II, A, 16, a (p. 28)
2. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee Report, section III (p. 246)

B. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, express gratitude to Roberta Vriesema for her service to the Judicial Code Committee.

— *Adopted*

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, express its gratitude to Kathy Smith and John Tenyenhuis for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

— *Adopted*

COD-SM 04

The Council of Delegates adjourns at 1:07 p.m. (EDT). B. Bernard Bakker leads in closing prayer and shares prayer requests received from ecumenical partners (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Global Christian Forum, and Reformed Church in America).

COD-SM 05

The chair calls the assembly to order at 1:30 p.m. (EDT). Jonathan J. Kim leads in opening prayer.

COD-SM 06

Colin P. Watson, Sr., executive director, addresses the assembly regarding the State of the Church, with a focus on the vision of the CRCNA: "The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide."

He acknowledges the difficulty that the CRCNA has experienced in the past year with the unexpected challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, racial strife in North America and around the world, the human sexuality report coming to Synod 2022, tensions surrounding social justice/race relations issues, and the restructuring of senior leadership positions to better reflect governance needs in both Canada and the United States.

Despite these challenges, the state of the church is still hopeful and promising because God is in control and has a plan for his church. These elements can be seen through the new ministry plan, *Our Journey 2025*:

A. Milestone 1: Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

Faith Formation Ministries has launched a Faith Practices initiative that offers concrete ways to incorporate spiritual disciplines into individual, family, and congregational life. A denominational prayer team has been and will continue to arrange monthly prayer gatherings (contact prayer@crcnapartners.org to participate). The Council of Delegates recently endorsed a plan for a year of denominational prayer culminating at Synod 2022.

B. Milestone 2: Listening to the voices of every generation

A Lilly Endowment Inc. grant has been received that will give church leaders a research-based action plan not only to retain youth and adults but also to fully integrate them into the life and leadership of the church. This program will be called "Generation Spark" and will develop in partnership with the Reformed Church in America. Current statistics show that there is a challenge in reaching out to youth in the church and that faith community is aging. Listening to the voices of every generation is a gospel imperative.

C. Milestone 3: Growing in unity and diversity

There is a continuing opportunity to reach out and embrace a significant diversity of races and cultures. We aim to embrace existing diversity, grow even more diverse, and celebrate the things that unite us. Of the CRCNA's more than 1,000 churches, more than 100 are Korean, another 100 are made up of other minorities, and another 100 are self-identified as multiethnic.

D. Milestone 4: Sharing the gospel as we live it missionally and plant new churches

It is a privilege to share the good news of Jesus with our neighbors. Resonate Global Mission recently held a Glocal conference that emphasized equipping and encouraging people to share the gospel in their

own Jerusalem, Judea/Samaria, and the ends of the earth. The plenary sessions are available on Resonate's website (resonateglobalmission.org/glocal-mission-summit).

The executive director expresses his gratitude to God's people for their continued financial generosity, even during the global pandemic. When some churches felt the strain of economic recession during the pandemic, the CRCNA was able to provide grants to 175 congregations to help sustain ministry. Churches also participated in a denominational survey, with encouraging results. CRCNA congregations indicated the following top five desired outcomes:

1. To apply the Bible to every area of people's lives
2. To build relationships with one another
3. To be places shaped by grace
4. To nurture the faith of children in practical ways, including mentoring by seasoned Christians
5. To engage children in the life of the church

There are also ways to improve and do more, including the following:

1. Individually, building relationships with other Christians
2. Having our congregations be places where people of all generations find their spiritual home
3. Having our congregations be more encouraging to women to develop and use their leadership gifts
4. Having people in our congregations feel they are part of Christ's worldwide church
5. Having people in our congregations better respond to the call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8)

The executive director shares that the state of the church overall is hopeful and promising. As we move into a post-pandemic reality, there are many signs of hope. Although there are challenges, God is on the throne. We pray for courage like King Jehoshaphat of Judah, who prayed, "Our God . . . we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (2 Chron. 20:12).

The chair thanks Mr. Watson on behalf of the Council of Delegates for this report on the good work that is continuing in light of the global pandemic.

COD-SM 07

Advisory Committee 2, chair Brian L. Ochsner, presents the following:

I. Abuse of power matters

A. Materials

1. *Deferred Agenda for Synod 2020*, Council of Delegates Report, section II, A, 20, including Appendix F (pp. 80-81, 94, 113-16)
2. *Deferred Agenda for Synod 2020*, Council of Delegates Supplement, section I, M (pp. 149-50)
3. *Deferred Agenda for Synod 2020*, Overtures 9-10 (pp. 244-48)

4. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Council of Delegates Report, section II, A, 17, including Appendix A (pp. 29-31, 40-71)
5. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Overtures 14-16 (pp. 386-90)
6. *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Council of Delegates Supplement, section I, L

B. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, attend to the following with regard to addressing the abuse of power in response to decisions of Synod 2019:
 - a. That the COD, on behalf of synod, adopt the proposed Code of Conduct report in Appendix F and instruct the COD to devise a plan for implementation for the denomination, classes, and churches per the instruction of Synod 2019 (II, A, 20, b).
 - b. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the COD's progress report on the implementation of the decisions of Synod 2019 regarding abuse of power (section II, A, 20).

—Adopted

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, affirm the work that has already been done and instruct the executive director to make recommendations to the COD for improving the appeal process in light of Church Order, and that this be its response to Overture 9.

Grounds:

- a. A training program has been developed, was submitted for review by the COD at the May 2020 meeting, and includes a training requirement for all persons entering vocational ministry in the CRC. A focus on the dynamics of power within the variety of pastoral relationships, boundaries, tools for positive use of power and influence, and tools for preventing harmful use of power and influence will be widely available to enable effective ministry and will take into account the cultural diversity within CRC churches.
- b. The COD adopted revisions to both the Canadian and U.S. Employee Handbooks to address appellant care within the system.
- c. The COD provided an update by way of the COD Supplement report to Synod 2021 with regard to the processes implemented and under way for recordkeeping that will help trace and identify patterns of abuse.
- d. The executive director was directed by synod to review the use of nondisclosure agreements (NDAs), to develop a policy with criteria for the use of NDAs, to develop good practices and protocols on the use of NDAs for distribution to classes and councils, and to develop a reporting and accountability mechanism to monitor practices going forward. The COD provided an update by way of its report (see *Agenda for Synod 2021*, p. 30) on the use of nondisclosure agreements.
- e. The Abuse of Power training program and the revisions within the Employee Handbooks are strong responses and corrective actions with regard to this part of the overture.
- f. The ad hoc committee recommends a Dignity Team to respond when a person is abused or a person accused of abuse needs

support. The report is specific with regard to the role and function of this team.

- g. The training of pastors, development of a Code of Conduct, and enhanced training at the local congregation and classis levels are all steps to increase awareness and accountability.
- h. Because, historically, persons who have been abused have not felt they have had adequate opportunity to share their stories, we desire to ensure that all parties have an equal voice.

— *Adopted*

- 3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, not accede to Overture 10.

Ground: The information requested in this overture is currently available, although not in a single book format, in the Safe Church Ministry Timeline at crcna.org/SafeChurch/about-us and on the Synod Resources webpage (crcna.org/SynodResources), which is a searchable database.

— *Adopted*

- 4. That the COD, on behalf of synod, adopt the Abuse of Power Ad Hoc Committee report (Appendix A) and the following recommendations contained within it in response to directives of Synod 2019 (II, A, 17, a):
 - a. That the COD, on behalf of synod, adopt the following recommendations dealing with training to be provided for CRCNA staff:
 - 1) That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve that training in restorative justice practices, interpersonal relationships, and others will be offered for CRCNA staff.
 - 2) That the COD, on behalf of synod, instruct that the online training related to discrimination and harassment be reviewed regularly (not less than every three years).
 - b. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the following changes adopted by the COD with regard to the CRCNA employee handbook (in its respective versions for Canadian, U.S., and international staff).
 - 1) Add the following paragraph to the employee handbook:

“Complaint Resource Persons” are designated individuals who can act as a neutral resource for anyone who is considering initiating a complaint, and who can explain the various options. They are not involved in the investigation; nor do they act as advocates for either party. Communications between a potential complainant and a “Complaint Resource Person” are confidential, and the decision on whether or not to use this resource is up to a complainant. “Complaint Resource Persons” are identified on the website at [to be determined].
 - 2) Add the following subhead and paragraph to the employee handbook:

Representation

Throughout all of the steps of the complaint process, a complainant may choose to have another person accompany them as an advocate and/or for support and assistance.

- 3) Replace the current wording about “Unfounded allegations” with the following, to be added to the employee handbook:
Unfounded allegations of harassment may cause both the accused person and the CRCNA significant damage. However, disciplinary measures will never apply to a complainant for bringing a complaint (*unless a complaint is brought with malicious intent and the evidence supporting this is compelling and undeniable*).
- 4) Add the following paragraph to the employee handbook:
No one involved in the complaint process in good faith, including as a complainant, witness, adviser, representative, investigator, or decision maker, will be subject to any negative consequences for such involvement.
- 5) Add the following paragraph to the employee handbook:
At any time during the investigation of a complaint the parties may, by mutual agreement, explore different options for resolution including mediation, restorative justice practices, or other alternate dispute-resolution methods [*Note: These alternative options are not defined in the handbook. The various options and how to access them would need to be identified*].
- 6) Add the following paragraph to the employee handbook:
If necessary, a complainant may request reasonable support to ensure a safe working environment. Requests may include, but are not limited to, requesting an alternative reporting relationship during the investigation, or working in a different area/department during the investigation. Requests should be made to the director, the executive director, or the designee carrying out the investigation. However, the CRCNA reserves the right to reject requests depending on the nature of the incident(s) in question and the reasonableness of the requests being made.
- 7) Add the following paragraphs to the employee handbook:
Investigations (as described below) will be carried out by a director, the executive director, or their designee. Investigations should not be carried out by the direct supervisor of the parties involved in the dispute. The investigator should not be someone in a position to have any direct power or influence over the career progress of the parties involved, and must be at arm’s length from the parties involved.
Depending on the circumstances complained about, the CRCNA may engage the services of an external investigator. The decision about whether to do so will be made by the executive director, with the same rights of appeal as exist in the Grievance Resolution process (below).

Any concerns about who conducts the investigation, including concerns about the identity of the investigator, whether they are internal or external, and any other fairness or bias concerns, may be raised by the complainant at any time before the investigation process begins.

- 8) Instruct that the complaint processes in the employee handbook be reviewed regularly (not less than every three years).
 - 9) Approve the proposed process regarding what happens after an investigation is complete and add the following to the employee handbook:
 - a) that the investigator shall make a written report of their findings (which could include options or recommendations)
 - b) that the investigation report shall be submitted to the HR director and the executive director
 - c) that the HR director or the executive director shall determine what, if any, discipline is forthcoming
 - d) that the investigation report and any other evidence compiled by the investigator is placed in a sealed, confidential file, and that access to the file is restricted to the HR director or the executive director
 - e) that only the outcome of the investigation shall be made available in written form in files that are available to the complainant and the accused
 - 10) Urge that the definitions in the handbook policies be as broad as possible and that they address actions such as behavior that is belittling or demeaning.
- c. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note that the COD adopted changes to the Discrimination and Harassment Policy.
 - d. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve of the restorative justice practices described in this report as an additional support for the claimant.
 - e. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the examination and evaluation of conflict of interest or bias in this report and approve the criteria and process suggested for the use of experts outside of CRCNA staff.
 - f. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the proposed purpose and composition of the Dignity Team as outlined.
 - g. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the placement of the Dignity Team as reporting to the director of Congregational Services.
 - h. That the COD, on behalf of synod, declare that this report and its recommendations fulfill the instructions of Synod 2019 regarding a review of the training and support for CRCNA staff and regarding conflicts of

interest or bias (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 795-96) and dismiss the ad hoc committee.

—*Adopted*

5. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the additional updates provided within the COD report on addressing directives of Synod 2019 regarding the abuse of power (II, A, 17, b):

- Policy on nondisclosure agreements
- Abuse prevention resources for culturally diverse churches
- Recordkeeping
- Implementation and monitoring

—*Adopted*

6. That the COD, on behalf of synod, not accede to Overture 14.

Grounds:

- a. The scope of the overture is too large to take on, but it is desired that the spirit of the overture be considered by the COD.
- b. No cost estimates were received, and it was noted that it would be very difficult to determine full costs.
- c. Administration of a (or multiple, according to location) licensing board is prohibitive.
- d. It is unclear what we are actually asked to license.

—*Adopted*

7. That the COD, on behalf of synod, not accede to Overture 15.

Grounds:

- a. It is not the work of Safe Church Ministry to vet programs or resources that churches can access.
- b. The local council has the authority to bring in their choice of trainings for leaders and staff.

—*Adopted*

8. That the COD, on behalf of synod, not accede to Overture 16.

Grounds:

- a. The Code of Conduct being implemented will address the concerns about persons who are accused of abuse of power.
- b. The actions requested in the overture are overly broad.

—*Adopted*

9. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the updates of initiatives with regard to the prevention of abuse of power (COD Supplement section I, L).

—*Noted*

Advisory Committee 3, chair John R. Lee, presents the following:

I. Convening church of Synod 2022

A. Materials: Deferred Agenda for Synod 2020, Council of Delegates Report, section I, K (pp. 149, 151)

B. Observation

An opportunity to host synod outside of Michigan in the near future is desired. The cancellation of Synod 2021, to be held in Iowa, resulted in missing this important rotation to other areas in our denomination.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, accept the invitation of Encounter CRC in Kentwood, Michigan, to serve as the convening church of Synod 2022, scheduled to be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on the campus of Calvin University (COD Supplement section I, K).

Ground: Encounter CRC was appointed as, and had prepared to serve as, the convening church of Synod 2020; however, Synod 2020 was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

—Adopted

II. Report of COD Appeal Review Committee

A. Materials: Agenda for Synod 2021, Council of Delegates Report, section II, A, 14 (pp. 26-27, 40)

B. Observation

The COD committee experienced discomfort in approving work previously approved by the COD, but understood the reason for having to do so.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the COD with regard to the personal appeal submitted to Synod 2020 by D. Lowe and M. Szto (Queens CRC, Jamaica, N.Y.) regarding a decision of Classis Hudson (II, A, 14).

—Adopted

III. Ministerial retirements

A. Information: Synod has received notice of the following ministerial retirements:

Minister	Classis	Effective Date
Calvin J. Aardsma	Illiana	June 6, 2021
Robert D. Bolt	Grandville	June 30, 2021
Kenneth D. Boonstra	Central California	June 30, 2021
Rolf T. Bouma	Lake Erie	December 31, 2020
Ruth A. Boven	Grand Rapids South	July 1, 2021
Hendrick P. Bruinsma	Toronto	November 16, 2021
Pablo De Tarso Canche-Tun	Holland	January 20, 2021
Jantina (Tineke) Cornelison	Atlantic Northeast	December 31, 2020
Robert (BC) Cumings	Columbia	July 1, 2021

Folkert (Frank) de Boer	Alberta North	April 1, 2021
Kenneth de Boer	Quinte	February 1, 2021
Daniel S. Dykstra	Wisconsin	February 23, 2021
Larry M. Fryling	Central California	June 6, 2021
John Gorter	Iakota	July 31, 2021
James C. Halstead	Kalamazoo	September 15, 2020
Paul A. Hansen	Greater Los Angeles	May 1, 2021
Ronald E. Klok	Alberta North	October 31, 2020
David R. Koll	Greater Los Angeles	June 25, 2021
Marjorie B. Kooy	Chicago South	February 27, 2021
Sheryl Leisman	Grand Rapids East	May 21, 2021
Thea N. Leunk	Grand Rapids East	January 1, 2021
Richard W. Loerop	Central Plains	February 1, 2021
George W. Lubbers	Chatham	January 1, 2021
Gary Luurtsema	Holland	August 1, 2021
Timothy J. Ouwinga	Minnkota	January 16, 2021
John M. Rottman	Grand Rapids South	September 20, 2020
Kent Rottman	Grandville	November 2, 2020
Guillermo A. Serrano	Northern Illinois	October 31, 2020
Henry F. Steenbergen	Huron	July 31, 2021
David L. Van Der Wiele	Kalamazoo	August 1, 2021
Randall D. VanOsdol	Yellowstone	August 1, 2020
Chong Dae Yoon	Ko-Am	June 8, 2014
<i>B. Commissioned pastors having reached retirement age under Church Order Article 24 and emeritus status noted</i>		
Commissioned pastor	Classis	Effective date
Fernando Del Rosario, <i>emeritus</i>	Central California	October 22, 2020
Phil Du Bois, <i>emeritus</i>	California South	March 4, 2021
Barry K. Foster, <i>emeritus</i>	Illiana	March 31, 2020
Rudy Gonzalez, <i>emeritus</i>	California South	August 31, 2020
Robert Moore, <i>emeritus</i>	California South	March 4, 2021
<i>C. Recommendations</i>		
1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the above lists of ministerial and commissioned pastor retirements.		
—Noted		
2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, instruct the executive director to send a letter of appreciation to each of the retirees listed above.		
—Adopted		
3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, offer a prayer of gratitude for these servants of God and for the many years of service they represent.		
—Adopted		
V. Work of the synodical deputies		
<i>A. Ministers from other denominations, Church Order Article 8</i>		
1. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), M.B. Stegink (Hudson), and S.A. Vander Ploeg (Southeast U.S.), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of Reverend Willard Barham , in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the		

decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on October 7, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Webster CRC of Webster, New York.

2. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Greg Brady**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 10, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Hope CRC of Houston, Texas.
3. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Insuk Hannah Guan**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 10, 2020, to declare her eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is First CRC of Denver, Colorado.
4. Synodical deputies R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), A.E. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and D.J. Swinney (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Jung Min Kim**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session on October 17, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Red Deer Korean CRC of Red Deer, Alberta.
5. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and (third deputy not available), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend KwangBae Lee**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on January 28, 2021, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Namu Church of New York CRC of Flushing, New York.
6. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Chenaniah (Kenny) Perumalla**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 6, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian

Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Gateway Community CRC of Merced, California.

7. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Merlin Perumalla**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 6, 2020, to declare her eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Gateway Community CRC of Merced, California.
8. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Christian Sebastia**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 10, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is New Life CRC of Spring, Texas.
9. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Eukarys Sebastia**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 10, 2020, to declare her eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is New Life CRC of Spring, Texas.
10. Synodical deputies J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), M.J. Kooy (Chicago South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Albert (John) Sideco, Jr.**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on May 20, 2021, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Filipino-American CRC of Jersey City, New Jersey.
11. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Reverend Matthew W. Wright**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 6, 2020, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Visalia CRC of Visalia, California.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

B. Release from ministry following a specified term of service, Church Order Supplement, Article 8, C, 3

Synodical deputies F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the discussion of Classis Northern Michigan, in session on March 2, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, C, 3, that **Rev. David G. Kroon** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

C. Classical examination of candidates, Church Order Article 10

1. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session March 3, 2021, to admit candidate **Namju Bae** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Muskegon, in session September 24, 2020, to admit candidate **Richard A. Britton III** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session October 22, 2020, to admit candidate **Andrea Bult** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
4. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central Plains, in session February 20, 2021, to admit candidate **Jaebok Choi** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
5. Synodical deputies T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), B. de Regt (North Cascades), and L.M. Korf (Columbia), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session March 2, 2021, to admit candidate **Erik M. Delange** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

6. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Huron, in session October 17, 2020, to admit candidate **Betsy DeVries** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
7. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Chatham, in session December 8, 2020, to admit candidate **Derek Ellens** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
8. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session March 3, 2021, to admit candidate **Derek Elmi-Buursma** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
9. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), and T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Illiana, in session September 22, 2020, to admit candidate **Cary Gephart** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
10. Synodical deputies M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Toronto, in session October 20, 2020, to admit candidate **Benjamin Gresik** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
11. Synodical deputies T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), J.C. Busscher (Illiana), and M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session October 29, 2020, to admit candidate **Kelsi Jones** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
12. Synodical deputies R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids South, in session August 20, 2020, to admit candidate **Daniel Kwangmyung Joo** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
13. Synodical deputies T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), H.J. Vanderburgh (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. North-West,

in session November 24, 2020, to admit candidate **HyungJun Kim** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

14. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and D.R. Fauble (Grandville), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session October 3, 2020, to admit candidate **Seongjun Kim** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
15. Synodical deputies A.E. Beunk (B.C. North-West), D.J. Swinney (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session October 17, 2020, to admit candidate **Daniel Meyer** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
16. Synodical deputies M. Winnowski (Wisconsin), G.D. Schuringa (Northern Illinois), and R.T. Vanderwal (Chicago South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session February 27, 2021, to admit candidate **Jeremy Oosterhouse** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
17. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session October 10, 2020, to admit candidate **Ahnna E. Cho Park** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
18. Synodical deputies S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Holland, in session November 19, 2020, to admit candidate **Jennifer Rozema** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
19. Synodical deputies M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Toronto, in session October 20, 2020, to admit candidate **Courtney N. Saldivar** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
20. Synodical deputies R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and A.M. Barton (Northern Michigan), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session October 20, 2020, to admit candidate **Jeremy J. Scripps** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

21. Synodical deputies M.J. Borst (Pacific Northwest), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis North Cascades, in session February 25, 2021, to admit candidate **Mike J. Slofstra** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
22. Synodical deputies D. Meinema (Eastern Canada), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Chatham, in session September 22, 2020, to admit candidate **Steven Vandyk** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
23. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and R.D. Drenten (Heartland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Minnkota, in session September 17, 2020, to admit candidate **Chad E. Werkhoven** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
24. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session October 22, 2020, to admit candidate **Cory Willson** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

D. Ministers in specialized services, Church Order Article 12-c

1. Synodical deputies T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), R.D. Drenten (Heartland), and B.A. Meinders (Central Plains), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Covenant Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Iakota, in session on June 9, 2020, to approve the position of Professor of Theology as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Justin A. Bailey**.
2. Synodical deputies R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Kelloggsville Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids South (CIC), in session on December 17, 2020, to approve the position of Director of Safe Church Ministries (CRCNA) as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Amanda W. Benckhuysen**.

3. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Chinese Church of Iowa City Christian Reformed Church of North Liberty, Iowa, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Central Plains, in session on February 20, 2021, to approve the position of Nurture Process Ministry Leader and Pastor as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Scott S. Chiang**.
4. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T.T. Jung (Hanmi), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Korean Community Christian Reformed Church of Buena Park, California, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 29, 2020, to approve the position of Missionary as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Kyung Hyun Paul Cho**.
5. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), and R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Unity Christian Reformed Church of Prinsburg, Minnesota, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Superior, in session on September 22, 2020, to approve the position of Superintendent of Central Minnesota Christian Schools as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Jonathan De Groot**.
6. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East (Executive Team), in session on March 9, 2021, to approve the position of Vocational Assessment and Discernment Specialist as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Samantha DeJong McCarron**.
7. Synodical deputies J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), and C. Pool (California South), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Granite Springs Christian Reformed Church of Lincoln, California, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session on March 2, 2021, to approve the position of Army Chaplain as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend John (Kyu K) Hahn**.
8. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having reviewed the evidence

supplied by the council of Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East (Executive Team), in session on March 9, 2021, to approve the position of Safe Church Ministry Consultant as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Eric Kas**.

9. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Gold Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on February 16, 2021, to approve the position of Women's Leadership Developer with CRCNA as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Elaine May**.
10. Synodical deputies A.M. Barton (Northern Michigan), J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the counsel of Gold Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on May 18, 2021, to approve the position of Thrive Curriculum Developer as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Elaine May**.
11. Synodical deputies D. L. Spoelma (Holland), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Seymour Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East (Executive Team), in session on March 3, 2021, to approve the position of Vice President of Global Ministry with Multiplication Network Ministries as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Benjamin D. Meyer**.
12. Synodical deputies M. Winnowski (Wisconsin), G.D. Schuringa (Northern Illinois), and R.T. Vanderwal (Illiana), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Burbank, Illinois, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session on February 27, 2021, to approve the position of Bible Teacher at Chicago Christian High School as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Jeremy Oosterhouse**.
13. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and D.R. Fauble (Grandville), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of River Terrace Christian Reformed

Church of East Lansing, Michigan, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on October 3, 2020, to approve the position of Leadership Developer (Resonate) as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Anthony D. Sytsma**.

14. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T.T. Jung (Hanmi), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Phoenix Korean Presbyterian Christian Reformed Church of Phoenix, Arizona, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 29, 2020, to approve the position of Missionary as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Taek Ho Yang**.
15. Synodical deputies T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and D.W. De Groot (Iakota), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Hope Christian Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on September 26, 2020, to approve the position of Director of Church Relations (Dordt University) as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Reverend Todd M. Zuidema**.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

E. Loaning a minister to another denomination according to Church Order Article 13-c

1. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on March 4, 2021, to approve loaning **Reverend Woo Song Chung** to serve Kwang Yum Community Church of Los Angeles, California.
2. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 10, 2020, to approve loaning **Reverend Insuk Hannah Guan** to serve New Gate Church of Aurora, Colorado.
3. Synodical deputies J. Dykema (Arizona), T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), and R. Boersma (North Central Iowa), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on March 2, 2021,

to approve loaning **Reverend Daniel Jin Su Hwang** to serve Redeemer Christian Korean Church of Denver, Colorado.

4. Synodical deputies T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on March 3, 2020, to approve loaning **Reverend Eunsang Hwang** to serve Ekklesia Reformed Church of Langley, British Columbia.
5. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and D.R. Fauble (Grandville), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on October 3, 2020, to approve loaning **Reverend Seongjun Kim** to serve Korean Presbyterian Church of Farmington Hills, Michigan.
6. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on March 6, 2021, to approve loaning **Reverend Dongwon Na** to serve Waldorff Calvary Church of Waldorff, Maryland.
7. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 10, 2020, to approve loaning **Reverend Ahnna E. Cho Park** to serve Korean Christian Church of Denver, Colorado.
8. Synodical deputies D.L. Spoelma (Holland), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on March 9, 2021, to approve loaning **Reverend Eunchong David Shin** to serve Cornerstone Community Church of Palo Alto, California.
9. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on March 6, 2021, to approve loaning **Reverend Ferenc Varga** to serve American Hungarian Reformed Church of Allen Park, Michigan.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

F. Extension of loan of a minister to another denomination under Church Order Article 13-c

1. Synodical deputies J.A. Dykema (Arizona), T.H. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), and R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), satisfied that synodical

regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on March 2, 2021, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Andrew H. Chun** to serve the Korean Christian Church of Denver, Colorado.

2. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapid East, in session on September 17, 2020, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Josiah Chung** to serve the Cornerstone Church (UMN) of Englewood, New Jersey.
3. Synodical deputies M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Toronto, in session on October 20, 2020, to approve loaning **Reverend Philip F. Reinders** to serve Knox Presbyterian Church of Toronto, Ontario.
4. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Central Plains, in session on February 20, 2021, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Donald R. Ridder, Jr.** to serve the Escazu Christian Fellowship of San José, Costa Rica.
5. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 13-c, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 6, 2020, to approve the extension of loaning **Reverend Randal K. Young** to serve the Honolulu Christian Church of Honolulu, Hawaii.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

G. Release from office to enter a ministry outside the Christian Reformed Church under Church Order Article 14-b

1. Synodical deputies H.A. Newhouse (Lake Superior), G.D. Schuringa (Northern Illinois), and R.D. Drenten (Heartland), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Phillip Anderas** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session on September 29, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Phillip Anderas** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), S. Couperus (Huron), and H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Josiah Bokma** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hamilton, in session on May 25, 2021, to declare that **Rev. Josiah Bokma** is honorably released

from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Note: Synodical deputy H.P. Bruinsma was not able to remain at the meeting for the full discussion.

3. Synodical deputies T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and D.W. De Groot (Iakota), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Nevada DeLapp** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on September 26, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Nevada DeLapp** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
4. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Benjamin R.T. Katt** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on March 4, 2021, to declare that **Rev. Benjamin R.T. Katt** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
5. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), and M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Young Ryul Ki** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hanmi, in session on September 15, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Young Ryul Ki** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
6. Synodical deputies T. N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and D.R. Fauble (Grandville), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Do Hyeong Kim** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on October 3, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Do Hyeong Kim** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
7. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Simon (Sang Eun) Kim** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on March 4, 2021, to declare that **Rev. Simon (Sang Eun) Kim** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
8. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Allen Kleine Deters** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Niagara, in session on May 26, 2021, to declare that **Rev. Allen Kleine Deters** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

9. Synodical deputies T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and D.W. De Groot (Iakota), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Marvin J. Leese** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on September 26, 2020, to declare that **Rev. Marvin J. Leese** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
10. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), and M. Den Bleyker (Arizona), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Yong Chae Shin** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hanmi, in session on September 15, 2002, to declare that **Rev. Yong Chae Shin** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
11. Synodical deputies R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and B.A. Meinders (Central Plains), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Luke Wynja** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on March 2, 2021, to declare that **Rev. Luke Wynja** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

— Adopted

H. Release from office to enter a nonministerial vocation under Church Order Article 14-c

1. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussion of Classis Georgetown, in session on December 10, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Joshua S. Benton** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.
2. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), and J.A. Dykema (Arizona), having heard the discussion of Classis Red Mesa, in session on January 16, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Timothy Howerzyl** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.
3. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), and D.E. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), having heard the discussion of Classis North Cascades, in session on November 5, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Kyle P. Kloostra** is dismissed from the office of minister of

the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.

4. Synodical deputies R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), and B.A. Meinders (Central Plains), having heard the discussion of Classis Iakota, in session on March 2, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Mark E. Langenbach** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.
5. Synodical deputies M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara) and S. Couperus (Huron), having heard the discussion of Classis Hamilton, in session on May 25, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Roelof Peereboom** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.

Note: Synodical deputy H.P. Bruinsma was not able to remain at the meeting for this discussion.

6. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 17, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. William Zeilstra** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

I. Release from ministry in a congregation under Church Order Article 17-a

1. Synodical deputies F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on March 9, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Joshua O. Amaezechi** is released from ministerial service in Comstock Christian Reformed Church of Comstock, Michigan.
2. Synodical deputies N. de Koning (Alberta North), W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), and H.J. Vanderburgh (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis B.C. Northwest, in session on March 2, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma** is released from ministerial service in First Christian Reformed Church of Vancouver, British Columbia.
3. Synodical deputies B.A. Meinders (Central Plains), T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), and R.D. Drenten (Heartland), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Iakota, in session on June

9, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Joel A. De Boer** is released from ministerial service in Bridge of Hope Ministries Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa.

4. Synodical deputies A.E. Beunk (B.C. North-West), R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), and D.J. Swinney (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Alberta North, in session on October 17, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Bruce E. Gritter** is released from ministerial service in The River Community Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta.
5. Synodical deputies R.W. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and T. Howerzyl (Red Mesa), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 10, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Todd H. Hilkemann** is released from ministerial service in Cragmor Christian Reformed Church of Colorado Springs, Colorado.
6. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and H. Admiraal (Grand Rapids North), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Northern Michigan, in session on September 29, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Gregory J. Kett** is released from ministerial service in Highland Christian Reformed Church of Marion, Michigan.
7. Synodical deputies D.R. Fauble (Grandville), G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Georgetown, in session on December 10, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Thomas A. Kragt (RCA Pastor)** is released from ministerial service in Evergreen Christian Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.
8. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), E.C. Visser (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Georgetown, in session on February 24, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Leonard A. Kuyvenhoven** is released from ministerial service in Ridgewood Christian Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan.
9. Synodical deputies T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and D.R. Fauble (Grandville), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Lake Erie, in session on October 3, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. SangMyung (Samuel) Lee** is released from ministerial service in Ann Arbor Hope Christian Reformed Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

10. Synodical deputies S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Holland, in session on November 19, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Keith A. Mannes** is released from ministerial service in East Saugatuck Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.
11. Synodical deputies A.M. Barton (Northern Michigan), J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on March 23, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Benjamin McKnight** is released from ministerial service in Grant Christian Reformed Church of Grant, Michigan.
12. Synodical deputies D. Meinema (Eastern Canada), S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Chatham, in session on September 22, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Daryl J. Meijer** is released from ministerial service in Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Woodstock, Ontario.
13. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis California South, in session on October 8, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Joseph W. Nasvytis** is released from ministerial service in First Presbyterian Church of Starkville, Mississippi.
14. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), M.J. Pluimer (Wisconsin), and T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Illiana, in session on September 22, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Jason Nelson (RCA Pastor)** is released from ministerial service in Bethel Christian Reformed Church of Lansing, Illinois.
15. Synodical deputies G.J. Kett (Northern Michigan), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Muskegon, in session on September 24, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Benjamin M. Oliveira** is released from ministerial service in Allen Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Muskegon, Michigan.
16. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Northcentral Iowa, in session on January 19, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with

Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. David J. Prince** is released from ministerial service in Britt Christian Reformed Church of Britt, Iowa.

17. Synodical deputies F.M. Bultman (Muskegon), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on March 9, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Timothy L. Raakman** is released from ministerial service in Three Rivers Christian Reformed Church of Three Rivers, Michigan.
18. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on July 7, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Brian D. Seifert** is released from ministerial service in Milwood Community Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.
19. Synodical deputies R.G. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Grandville, in session on February 4, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Heather Strooboscher** is released from ministerial service in Calvary Christian Reformed Church of Wyoming, Michigan.
20. Synodical deputies G. van Groningen (Georgetown), E.C. Visser (Grand Rapids South), and L.B. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Zeeland, in session on October 1, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Vern D. Swieringa** is released from ministerial service in Oakland Christian Reformed Church of Hamilton, Michigan.
21. Synodical deputies T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), R.W. Boersma (North-central Iowa), and D.W. De Groot (Iakota), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Heartland, in session on September 26, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Norlyn J. Van Beek** is released from ministerial service in Inspiration Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center of Inwood, Iowa.
22. Synodical deputies D. Roeda (Wisconsin), R. Sparks (Minnkota), and R. Boersma (North Central Iowa), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Wisconsin, in session on February 23, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Doug Van Essen** is released from ministerial service in Crossroads Christian Reformed Church of Madison, Wisconsin.
23. Synodical deputies N. de Koning (Alberta North), W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), and H.J. Vanderburgh (Alberta South/Saskatchewan),

having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis B.C. Northwest, in session on March 2, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Kenneth M. Vander Horst** is released from ministerial service in Smithers Christian Reformed Church of Smithers, British Columbia.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

J. Extension of eligibility for call under Church Order Article 17-c

1. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 17, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Aminah Al-Attas Bradford's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
2. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 17, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Nathaniel Al-Attas Bradford's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
3. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having heard the discussion of Classis Georgetown, in session on October 20, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Mark D. Bennink's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
4. Synodical deputies T.L. Raakman (Kalamazoo), R.D. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and T.N. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussion of Classis Muskegon, in session on February 20, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Adrian Eising's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
5. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussion of Classis Muskegon, in session on February 25, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Adrian Eising's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
6. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), having heard the discussion of Classis California South, in session on March 4, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Charles M. Hong's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
7. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), having heard the discussion of

Classis Red Mesa, in session on September 19, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. James H. Kuiper's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

8. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), J. Scripps (Georgetown), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussion of Classis Holland, in session on February 4, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Gary Luurtsema's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
9. Synodical deputies L.B. Mensink (Grandville), H.J. Vanderburgh (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having heard the discussion of Classis Lake Superior, in session on March 2, 2021, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Mike F. Miedema's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
10. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 17, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Katrina M. Schaafsma's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
11. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 17, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Sharon Segaar-King's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.
12. Synodical deputies R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), A.E. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and H.A. Newhouse (Lake Superior), having heard the discussion of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, in session on October 30, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Derek Van Dalen's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

K. Release from the office of minister of the Word under Church Order Article 17-d

Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), H. Jonker (B.C. Northwest), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. Southeast), having heard the discussion of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, in session on October 25, 2019, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-d, that **Rev. Ronald J. Smeding** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

L. Declaration that a commissioned pastor position fits synodical guidelines under Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a

1. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (California Central), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of CrossPoint Christian Reformed Church of Chino, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 8, 2020, that the position of director of student ministries is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Chris Avery**.
2. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), T.J. Oosterhuis (Alberta North), and A.E. Beunk (B.C. North-West), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of New Life Christian Reformed Church of Abbotsford, British Columbia, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on October 20, 2020, that the position of director of faith formation at Faith Christian School is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Koenraad Beugelink**.
3. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Long Beach Christian Reformed Church of Long Beach, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on May 19, 2020, that the position of lead pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Bryan Branderhorst**.
4. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Gibson Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Holland, in session on October 1, 2020, that the position of interim pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Rodney Brandsen**.
5. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), M.J. Borst (Pacific Northwest), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis North Cascades, in session on October 8, 2020, that the position of associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Michael Brummel**.
6. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), and J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Mission Village Christian

Reformed Church of Tucson, Arizona, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Arizona, in session on March 6, 2021, that the position of associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Mark Crawford**.

7. Synodical deputies L.M. Korf (Columbia), M.J. Borst (Pacific Northwest), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Second Christian Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis North Cascades, in session on October 8, 2020, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Aaron De Boer**.
8. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), T.J. Ouwinga (Minnkota), and R.W. Boersma (North Central Iowa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Faith Christian Reformed Church of New Brighton, Minnesota, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Lake Superior, in session on September 22, 2020, that the position of faith formation pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Travis Deur**.
9. Synodical deputies S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Holland, in session on November 19, 2020, that the position of youth pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Nathaniel Dewitt**.
10. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), D.R. Fauble (Grandville), and D.L. Spoelma (Holland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 17, 2020, that the position of pastor of spiritual formation is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Susie Dixon**.
11. Synodical deputies J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and M.B. Stegink (Hudson), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Spirit and Truth Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Hackensack, in session on September 22, 2020, that the position of east coast organizer with the Office of Social Justice Climate Witness Project is in keeping with

synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Allen Drew**.

12. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of St. Thomas, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Chatham, in session on December 8, 2020, that the position of Eastern Canada regional mission leader with Resonate Global Mission is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Beth Fellingner**.
13. Synodical deputies A.E. Beunk (B.C. North-West), H.J. Vanderburgh (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Woody Nook Christian Reformed Church of Lacombe County, Alberta, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session on March 12-13, 2020, that the position of minister of discipleship: community and youth ministry is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Sean Folkerts**.
14. Synodical deputies S.A. Vander Ploeg (Southeast U.S.), P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), and M.B. Stegink (Hudson), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of The River Community Christian Reformed Church of Douglas, Massachusetts, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on March 5-6, 2021, that the position of pastor of spiritual formation and community engagement is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Kaitlin Givens**.
15. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), D.L. Spoelma (Holland), and S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Pathway Christian Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on April 15, 2021, that the position of lead pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Jim Heethuis**.
16. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Calvary Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Holland, in session on February 4, 2021, that the position of associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Matthew Hochhalter**.
17. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), D. Meinema (Eastern Canada), and S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), having examined the written

materials submitted by the council of Hebron Christian Reformed Church of Whitby, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Quinte, in session on May 18, 2021, that the position of solo pastor in a church plant is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Mark Jallim**.

18. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Oasis Community Christian Reformed Church of Moreno Valley, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 8, 2020, that the position of chaplain with Law Enforcement Community Services is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Robert L. Johnson**.
19. Synodical deputies M.B. Stegink (Hudson), S.A. Vander Ploeg (Southeast U.S.), and P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Avery Street Christian Reformed Church of Hartford, Connecticut, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on October 7, 2020, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. DongJin Polo Kim**.
20. Synodical deputies P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and (third deputy not available), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Restore Church of North Haledon, New Jersey, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on January 29, 2021, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Shamshadeen Mayers**.
21. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Providence Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Holland, in session on October 1, 2020, that the position of director of faith formation with Holland Christian Schools is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. David Mosterd**.
22. Synodical deputies G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), M.B. Stegink (Hudson), and J.D. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Grace Community Chapel of New Brunswick, New Jersey, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Hackensack, in session on March 2, 2021, that the position of campus minister with William Paterson University is in keeping with

synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Michael Mun**.

23. Synodical deputies H. Admiral (Grand Rapids North), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on July 9, 2020, that this position of commissioned pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Dr. David Murray**.
24. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on January 21, 2021, that the position of worship director is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Jordan Nickell**.
25. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Iglesia Cristiana El Sembrador Christian Reformed Church of Fontana, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 8, 2020, that the position of assistant pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Rosario Orosco**.
26. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Providence Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Holland, in session on October 1, 2020, that the position of pastor of worship and congregational life is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Dean Slenk**.
27. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), L.B. Mensink (Grandville), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Calvary Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Holland, in session on February 4, 2021, that the position of assistant chaplain for worship at Asbury University is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Ben Snoek**.
28. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), E. Groot-Nibbelink (Chatham), and J.C. Dekker (Niagara), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Bethel Christian Reformed Church

of Waterdown, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Hamilton, in session on June 30, 2020, that the position of senior theological lecturer at Mukhanyo Theological College, South Africa, is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Dr. John Span**.

29. Synodical deputies D.J. Roeda (Chicago South), R.W. Sparks (Minnkota), and T.M. Zuidema (Heartland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Wheaton Christian Reformed Church of Wheaton, Illinois, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on March 3, 2021, that this position of commissioned pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. George Tan**.
30. Synodical deputies M.J. Borst (Pacific Northwest), L.M. Korf (Columbia), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Sonlight Christian Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis North Cascades, in session on April 29, 2021, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Sean Taylor**.
31. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Four Corners Christian Reformed Church of Teecnospos, Arizona, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Red Mesa, in session on September 19, 2020, that the position of pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Omar Tsosie**.
32. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), M.J. Klingenberg (Niagara), and G. van Leeuwen (Huron), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Destination Christian Reformed Church of St. Thomas, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Chatham, in session on December 8, 2020, that the position of pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Anthony Vander Laan**.
33. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Ferrysburg Community Christian Reformed Church of Spring Lake, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Muskegon, in session on February 25, 2021, that the position of corporate and community chaplain is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Daniel Wierenga**.

34. Synodical deputies M.B. Stegink (Hudson), S.A. Vander Ploeg (Southeast U.S.), and P.J. Van Dyken (Hackensack), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Avery Street Christian Reformed Church of Hartford, Connecticut, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on October 7, 2020, that the position of executive pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Yushi Linda Yang**.
35. Synodical deputies J.W. Scripps (Georgetown), J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Grand Haven, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Muskegon, in session on February 25, 2021, that the position of **calling pastor** is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.
36. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Golden Gate Christian Reformed Church of San Francisco, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 6, 2020, that the position of **Cantonese associate pastor** is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.
37. Synodical deputies A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), H.J. Vanderburgh (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), and R.W. Ouwehand (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Bethel Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session on March 12-13, 2021, that the position of **director of youth ministries** is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.
38. Synodical deputies H.P. Bruinsma (Toronto), E. Groot-Nibbelink (Chatham), and J.C. Dekker (Niagara), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Ancaster Christian Reformed Church of Ancaster, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Hamilton, in session on May 27, 2020, that the position of **interim commissioned pastor** is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.
39. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Golden Gate Christian Reformed Church of San Francisco, California, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 6, 2020, that the position of

Mandarin associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

M. Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a commissioned pastors filling previously approved positions

The following commissioned pastors have been examined by the classes indicated for positions previously approved by synodical deputies (in addition to those listed above in the synodical deputy reports for Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a):

Name	Classis	Date
Elizabeth H.P. Backfish	Central California	November 1, 2020
Brian Boucek	Georgetown	November 1, 2020
Kimberly W. Masters	Rocky Mountain	October 10, 2020
Jeremy Rhodes	Georgetown	May 20, 2021
Carlos Rosa	Alberta North	October 16, 2020
Chava Vang	Lake Erie	March 6, 2021

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the above-named persons ordained as commissioned pastors within the classes indicated.

—Noted

N. Service of a commissioned pastor in an organized church as solo pastor under Church Order Article 24-a

1. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the request submitted by the council of Long Beach Christian Reformed Church of Long Beach, California, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on May 19, 2020, that **Mr. Bryan Branderhorst** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.
2. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), D. Spoelma (Holland), and S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), having examined the request submitted by the council of Pathway Christian Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan, concur with the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on April 15, 2021, that **Mr. James Heethuis** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.
3. Synodical deputies H. Admiraal (Grand Rapids North), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and S.F. Terpstra (Zeeland), having examined the request submitted by the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan, concur with the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on July 9, 2020, that **Dr. David Murray** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.
4. Synodical deputies E.D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), having examined the request submitted by the council of Oasis Community Christian Reformed

Church of Moreno Valley, California, concur with the decision of Classis California South, in session on March 4, 2021, that **Mr. David Rivera** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.

5. Synodical deputies C. Pool (California South), J.A. Dykema (Arizona), and R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), having examined the request submitted by the council of Four Corners Christian Reformed Church of Teconspas, Arizona, concur with the decision of Classis Red Mesa, in session on September 19, 2020, that **Mr. Omar Tsosie** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

O. Calling a commissioned pastor to a specified term under Church Order Article 24-b

1. Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and C. Pool (California South), having examined the request submitted by the council of Long Beach Christian Reformed Church of Long Beach, California, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on May 19, 2020, to call **Mr. Bryan Branderhorst** to a specified term.
2. Synodical deputies J.L. Blom (Grand Rapids North), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and G.G. Vink (Grand Rapids South), having examined the request submitted by the council of Fairway Christian Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Georgetown, in session on October 20, 2020, to call **Mr. Jeremy Rhodes** to a specified term.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

P. Commissioned pastors concluding service under Church Order Article 24-d

The following commissioned pastors have concluded service in the classes indicated in the positions to which they were appointed:

Name	Classis	Effective Date	Status
Leo Clemente	California South	March 4, 2021	Released
Catherine Evans-Smith	Central California	January 31, 2021	Honorably Released
Yuanita Gitamara	North Cascades	February 25, 2021	Honorably Released

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note that these commissioned pastors have concluded service in the classes indicated.

—Noted

Q. Deposition of a minister of the Word under Church Order Articles 82-83

Synodical deputies J.J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), J.J. Kim (Ko-Am), and P.H. Vander Klay (Central California), having heard the grounds submitted

by the council of Bethany Christian Reformed Church of Bellflower, California, and the discussion of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on October 27, 2020, concur in the decision of classis to approve, in accordance with Church Order Articles 82 and 83, the deposition of **Rev. David J. Jeltema** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

Rev. Cooper leads in a prayer of gratitude for the retiring ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors, giving thanks also for new appointments and calls received while also recognizing pain in the lives of individuals and congregations in various other transitions mentioned throughout the work of the synodical deputies.

COD-SM 09

The following matter from the report of Advisory Committee 4 is ruled by the chair in anticipation of the presentations scheduled for the opening of the session on Wednesday, June 16:

Ministry presentations

Materials: *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Council of Delegates Report, section II, A, 13 (p. 26)

Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, allow time in its schedule to receive the presentations by ReFrame Ministries and Resonate Global Mission.

—*Ruled by the chair*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Minute COD-SM 13.)

COD-SM 10

The Council of Delegates adjourns at 3:33 p.m. (EDT). Melissa Van Dyk leads in closing prayer.

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

COD-SM 11

The chair calls the assembly to order at 11:00 a.m. (EDT). The vice chair, Andy de Ruyter, shares an urgent prayer request from COD delegate Michelle J. Kool (Alberta North) regarding her daughter. Rev. Paul R. De Vries, chair, offers prayer for her safety.

The roll indicates that Michelle J. Kool (Alberta North) is absent with notice. Daudi Mutisya Mbuta (Grand Rapids North) arrived at 12:00 p.m. (EDT).

Zachary King, director of Resonate Global Mission, and Kurt Selles, director of ReFrame Ministries, reflect on the words of Acts 1:6-8. Rev. King shares that this text reminds us that the first apostles had changed from being a fearful band of followers, who had disowned their Lord, to wondering if they had finally “arrived,” with the resurrected Christ as their King. But Jesus reminded them, and us, that we are not there yet. For us today there are horizons of mission where we can all demonstrate the gospel: Jerusalem (family, friends, church family), Judea (neighborhood, workplace), Samaria (people who are part of a different culture, ethnicity, religion), and the ends of the earth (international mission with other countries and ethnic groups).

The Holy Spirit calls us to join in gospel ministry that is already happening. Rev. Selles shares that he sees the Holy Spirit’s work across North America and the world. He gives thanks for the ways in which the Holy Spirit leads people to know Jesus Christ. For example, seven young people in Bhutan recently became Christians through media ministry. Rev. King offers prayer.

The Council of Delegates views two Global Mission video presentations highlighting the work of Resonate Global Mission and ReFrame Ministries, and Rev. King and Rev. Selles follow up with additional reporting on the work of these agencies.

Resonate Global Mission: youtube.com/watch?v=KAAghGp96AY

Resonate Global Mission is grateful for the continued support received for ministry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic as many ministries and missionaries needed extra support to transition to new ways of doing ministry. Gains have been made with the help of new technology in sharing the gospel far and wide. Quarantine situations ironically provided people with new opportunities to form relationships with neighbors. Resonate is committed to continue its work for the CRCNA by deepening passion for mission, strengthening capacity to follow God on mission, and amplifying the impact churches have in neighborhoods and around the world.

ReFrame Ministries: vimeo.com/560429511

Throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ReFrame Ministries has reoriented its programming to address the spiritual needs of audiences around the world. Rev. Selles shares that the recent process of phasing out ministry work in Haiti has gone smoothly, and staff have been able to find new positions. He also shares that ReFrame’s ministry work in China has largely been shut down due to the government’s tightening of controls on a main media platform, WeChat. The Chinese ministry is working to address this new challenge through use of other media.

The chair thanks Rev. King and Rev. Selles for their reports and for the reminder that our ministry contexts are all engaged in global mission and sharing the gospel.

Advisory Committee 5, chair Gary D. Bos, presents the following:

I. Calvin University faculty reappointments

A. Materials: Agenda for Synod 2021, Calvin University Report (p. 131)

B. Background

The advisory committee spent time reflecting with Dr. Michael Le Roy as he described the work of Calvin University and the process of faculty reappointment.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, ratify the following faculty reappointments with tenure, effective September 1, 2021:

Rachael A. Baker, Ph.D., associate professor of biochemistry
Frederick L. Haan, Jr., Ph.D., professor of engineering
David B. Klanderman, Ph.D., professor of mathematics
Nathan Sunukjian, Ph.D., associate professor of mathematics
Renard G. Tubergen, Ph.D., associate professor of engineering
John R. Walcott, Ph.D., associate professor of education

—Adopted

II. Candidates for minister of the Word

A. Materials: Agenda for Synod 2021, Candidacy Committee Supplement, sections I and II

B. Background

Jul Medenblik, David Koll, and Susan LaClear describe the process for candidacy and offer biographical vignettes of some of the candidates.

C. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, declare the following persons as candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, subject to completion of all remaining (if any) requirements:

Maria L. Bowater
Mark D. Broadus
Kelly J. Buist
David M. Dick
Chuck J. Dillender
Bart B. Eisen
Josiah J. Gorter
Joshua L. Grimes
Tyler R. Helfers
Mackenzie M. Jager
"Joshua" Hang Jiang
Timothy K. Joo
Eunice Kim
Jooheyng David Kim
Young-Kwang Kim
Tim J. Kimbel

Hoonjae Lee
Jessica E. Maddox
Frank A. Meneses
Daniel F. Meyers
Seon Mok "Paul" Park
Ryan M. Phan
William S. Roelofs
Kent A. Sanders
David Shao
Evan J. Tinklenberg
Lynette A. van de Hoef
Ryan A. K. VanderWees
Ben E. Wiersma
Lea A. Wilkening
Paul Yang

—Adopted

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the following persons for approval of candidacy extension:

Ram Aryal
Maria D. Beversluis
David Bouma
Yoon Chul (Daniel) Choi
Brad Diekema
Steven Dykstra
Robert J. Gruessing
Noelle Meggie Jacobs
Travis Jamieson
S.K.
Kennedy Muli Kailiti
Jiyong “Jonathan” Kim
Hannah Ryou Lee
Jeff M. Liou
Bryzon Wanjala Masiboh

Loice Mueni Minito
Matthew Mulder
K.O.
Katrina J. Olson
Kyle J. Sandison
Ivan K. Santoso
Hannah G. Van Rees Saxton
Nathaniel A. Schmidt
Sharon R. Smith
Lynn Song
Joshua P. Stammis
Rebecca L. Tjapkes
Thomas Van Wyk
Jantje Fenna Visser-Ellenbaas

— *Adopted*

3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the reinstatement of candidacy of Lisa Meyer as described in section I, C.

— *Adopted*

4. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of *need* for the following persons for affiliation under Church Order Article 8:

Date	Name of applicant	Classis	Former denomination
9-3-20	Kim, Jung Min	Alberta North	Korean Presbyterian Church
9-3-20	Barham, William H.	Atlantic Northeast	Reformed Church in America
9-3-20	Wright, Matthew W.	Central California	Presbyterian Church (USA)
9-14-20	Peramulla, Chenaniah R.	Central California	Mennonite Brethren of India
9-14-20	Peramulla, Merlin	Central California	Mennonite Brethren of India
9-14-20	Sebastia, Christian	Rocky Mountain	Apostolic Church of Venezuela
9-14-20	Sebastia, Eukarys	Rocky Mountain	Apostolic Church of Venezuela
9-28-20	Brady, Greg S.	Rocky Mountain	Presbyterian Church (USA)
9-30-20	Guan, Hannah	Rocky Mountain	Association of Evangelical Churches
10-13-20	Lee, Kwang Bae	Hudson	Evangelical Church Alliance
1-20-21	Sideco, John Albert	Hudson	CRC of the Philippines

— *Adopted*

III. Finance matters

A. *Materials: Agenda for Synod 2021*, Council of Delegates Supplement, section II, B, including Appendix C

B. *Recommendations*

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, receive the agencies and institutional unified budget as information and note the approval of ministry-share allocations, based on ministry-share pledges reported by the churches and classes (COD Supplement sections II, B, 1-2).

— *Adopted*

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, adopt the 2021-2022 denominational salary grid for senior positions as proposed, noting that the current pay ranges reflect a 3 percent increase from the previous year (COD Supplement section II, B, 3).

Grounds:

- a. The recommended adjustment to the salary range targets are approximately half of the marketplace salary inflationary increase that has been experienced since they were established in 2018.
- b. These changes are consistent with the compensation levels included in the endorsed fiscal 2022 budget.

—Adopted

Andy de Ruyter, vice chair of the COD, assumes the chair.

3. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the COD's action to both approve and adopt in lieu of synod the following with regard to organizations requesting to be placed on the recommended-for-offerings list:
 - a. The list of above-ministry share and specially designated offerings for denominational agencies, institutions, and ministries of the CRC (COD Supplement section II, B, 4).
 - b. The list of nondenominational organizations, previously accredited, that have been approved for calendar year 2022 (COD Supplement section II, B, 5).
 - c. Inclusion of the following organization on the accredited organizations list (COD Supplement section II, B, 7):

United States

International Network for Christian Higher Education (INCHE)
INCHE is an organization whose aim is to foster development of Christian higher education worldwide. It does this by sharing information and research, equipping with training and scholarship, and cultivating enduring relationships through networking and mutual exchange. INCHE reaches organizations on six continents in twenty-two nations.

Ground: INCHE was previously included on the accredited agency list when it was called the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE); however, IAPCHE has not been included on the list since Synod 2011.

—Noted

The COD discussed the following motion at length before taking action:

That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the COD's action to both approve and adopt in lieu of synod the following with regard to organizations requesting to be placed on the recommended-for-offerings list:

Exclusion of Bethany Christian Services from the list of nondenominational organizations approved for offerings (COD Supplement section II, B, 6).

—Noted

The following negative votes are registered: Jeanne Engelhard (Grand Rapids East), Elsa Fennema (U.S. At-large), Laurie Harkema (Lake Erie), Sheila E. Holmes (Hackensack), and Frederick Wind (Quinte).

Paul De Vries, chair of the COD, resumes the chair.

4. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the COD's confirmation that the investments of the agencies and institutions of the denomination are in compliance with denominational investment policy.

—Noted

5. That the COD, on behalf of synod, take note of the COD's endorsement of the following actions of the Pension Trustees (COD Supplement section II, B, 8):
 - a. The three-year average salary to be used to determine retirement benefits beginning in 2022 for ministers of the Word in the United States is \$56,625 and in Canada is \$61,060. In addition, effective July 1, 2021, all ministers in the Canadian plan having retired between January 1, 2017, and July 1, 2021, will have their monthly benefit adjusted to reflect the three-year "final" average salary at the time of their retirement. A retroactive payment will also be made to bring their cumulative benefits in line with the new monthly benefit level.
 - b. That the 2022 per-member assessment for the Canadian Plan remain \$42.96 and that the Canadian per-participant assessment remain \$9,840. Similarly, that the 2022 per-member assessment for the U.S. Plan remain \$37.20 and the U.S. per-participant assessment remain \$7,704.

—Noted

IV. Housing allowance for U.S. retirement or disability pension and CRC 403(b)(9) Retirement Income Plan

A. Materials

1. *Agenda for Synod 2021, Pensions and Insurance Report* (p. 157)
2. *Agenda for Synod 2021, Pensions and Insurance Supplement*

B. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2022 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.

—Adopted

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, designate up to 100 percent of an ordained pastor's distributions from their CRC 403(b)(9) Retirement Income Plan as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes

(IRS Ruling 1.107-1) on or after July 1, 2021, but only to the extent that the funds are used to rent or provide a home.

—*Adopted*

COD-SM 13

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Minute COD-SM 09.)

Advisory Committee 4, chair David A. Struyk, presents the following:

I. Ministry evaluation

A. Materials: Agenda for Synod 2021, Council of Delegates Report, section II, B, 5, including Appendix B (pp. 35-36, 43, 71-85)

B. Recommendations

1. That the COD, on behalf of synod, approve the evaluation report presented by ReFrame Ministries and Resonate Global Mission with regard to the Global Mission calling area (II, B, 5; Appendix B).

—*Adopted*

2. That the COD, on behalf of synod, instruct the executive director to review the four-year program evaluation process; clarify the purpose, outcomes, goals, and metrics to be used; and bring any recommended revisions to the COD for consideration to the current policy.

Grounds:

- a. Several clarifications are required to make this a more helpful process:
 - 1) Is this an “internal” or “external” evaluation (i.e., performed internally or with an external perspective)?
 - 2) What are the desired outcomes, goals, and processes for the evaluation?
 - 3) Who is the recipient of the evaluation, and what feedback should be expected from it?
- b. It would be helpful to have a universal format and process for all the five calling areas to follow as they prepare their evaluations.

—*Adopted*

II. Challenging conversations and Overture 17

A. Materials

1. *Agenda for Synod 2021, Overture 17 (pp. 390-92)*
2. *Agenda for Synod 2021, Communication 1 (pp. 473-75)*

B. Observations

Overture 17 comes from Lantern Community CRC, a small urban congregation in Calgary, Alberta. The crux of Overture 17, though not overtly stated, is an intention to create an effective space for LGBTQ believers to share their perspectives on the recommendations that are coming to Synod 2022 as part of the human sexuality report (HSR). Lantern Community CRC has a concern that, given the predominant “profile” of CRC synodical

delegates, there may be very few directly from the LGBTQ community that can share their viewpoints during the sessions of synod. As part of the response to Overture 17, the advisory committee discussed the *Challenging Conversations* toolkit produced by the CRCNA's Pastor Church Resources for extended conversations about the HSR and its recommendations. This resource, which has been helpful for the congregations that have used it (approximately 40 CRC congregations in the U.S. and Canada), is not intended for classes and synod.

C. Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, accede to Overture 17 and instruct the executive director to develop and implement a mechanism or forum that would allow LGBTQ voices to be heard by the delegates to Synod 2022 with regard to the human sexuality report and present the proposal to the COD in February 2022 for approval.

Note: The *Challenging Conversations* toolkit is an effective tool for conversation within congregations but would need to be adapted for use at classes and synod.

The COD spent considerable time discussing the above recommendation but did not conclude the deliberations and vote until later in the meeting.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Minutes COD-SM 16.)

COD-SM 14

The Council of Delegates adjourns at 1:00 p.m. (EDT). Wendell Davelaar leads in closing prayer.

COD-SM 15

The chair calls the assembly to order at 1:30 p.m. (EDT) and welcomes the candidates for ministry to this Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates, convening in lieu of Synod 2021, and introduces Rev. David R. Koll and Rev. Susan E. LaClear, directors of Candidacy.

Rev. LaClear notes that this segment of the meeting is usually a highlight during synod. She shares that this session is being livestreamed and recorded for family, friends, and the broader church (see [Youtube.com/crcna](https://www.youtube.com/crcna)).

Colin P. Watson, Sr., executive director, addresses the candidates for ministry and welcomes them to a new chapter in their lives. He shares that although this meeting is being done virtually, this class of candidates is no less special or less honored. Mr. Watson praises God for the good work that he has done, continues to do, and will continue to do in the lives of the candidates. He leads in prayer for the candidates.

Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, expresses his congratulations to the candidates, noting that this is a "doorway" moment. Just as parents stand in the doorway when a child goes on a trip, this moment is to tell the candidates that we support and love them as they begin their journey. They are moving from study in a seminary to service in the church, and they are taking up a challenge to continue in "a long[-lasting] obedience in the same direction."

Rev. Koll reminds the candidates that ministry can sometimes feel like a vast desert; however, God is in that desert and provides. Rev. Koll reads the

names of the thirty-one candidates for ministry as their photos appear on the screen.

Rev. Paul R. De Vries, COD chair, shares that he is delighted that these candidates are blessing the church. He reminds the candidates to wait for the Lord and trust that the Holy Spirit has already been poured out on the them and has confirmed them in their calling. Rev. De Vries invites all to join together in blessing by raising their hands.

Rev. De Vries and Rev. LaClear provide a tribute to Rev. David Koll, who is retiring at the end of June, for his many years of service as director of Candidacy.

Rev. La Clear closes this special time by offering a benediction with the words of Hebrew 13:20-21.

COD-SM 16

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Minute COD-SM 13.)

Advisory Committee 4, chair David A. Struyk, presents the following:

Challenging conversations and Overture 17

Recommendation

That the COD, on behalf of synod, accede to Overture 17 and instruct the executive director to develop and implement a mechanism or forum that would allow LGBTQ voices to be heard by the delegates to Synod 2022 with regard to the human sexuality report and present the proposal to the COD in February 2022 for approval.

Note: The *Challenging Conversations* toolkit is an effective tool for conversation within congregations, but would need to be adapted for use at classes and synod.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Paula Coldagelli (Wisconsin), Lora A. Copley (Red Mesa), Wendell Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), Bruce DeKam (Northern Michigan), Sherry E. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), Michael D. Koetje (Kalamazoo), William T. Koopmans (Hamilton), Jose Tony Lara (Arizona), John R. Lee (Iakota), Brian L. Ochsner (Central Plains), Roger W. Sparks (Minnkota), Drew Sweetman (Muskegon), Michael Ten Haken (Lake Superior), Mark Vande Zande (Heartland), Mark Verbruggen (Ontario Southwest), Tyler J. Wagenmaker (Zeeland), Ralph S. Wigboldus (Huron).

Rev. De Vries, COD chair, offers a word of prayer for the church and the significant conversations and considerations before it.

COD-SM 17

Appointments, officers, and functionaries that follow are presented by the director of synodical services for review and ratification. This listing reflects the results of the synodical elections and appointments by way of the Denominational Boards and Committees Ballot completed within the advisory committees and includes the current study committees now scheduled to report to Synod 2022.

I. Officers, functionaries, and convening church for Synod 2022

A. Officers

1. Executive director: Colin P. Watson, Sr.
2. Canadian ministries director: Darren C. Roorda
3. Deputy executive director and chief financial officer: John H. Bolt
4. Director of synodical services: Diane S. Recker

B. Functionaries

Arrangements for Synod 2022: Juli Haga, event services director, Calvin University.

C. Convening church

Convening church for Synod 2022: Encounter CRC, Kentwood, Michigan.

II. Synodical deputies

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. Kornelis (Neil) De Koning	Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis	2024(1)
Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Rev. H. John Vanderburgh	Rev. David J. Swinney	2024(1)
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. Joel D. Vande Werken	Rev. Christopher A. Fluit	2024(2)
B.C. North-West	Rev. Andrew E. Beunk	Vacant	2024(1)
Central California	Rev. Paul H. Vander Klay	Rev. Eric J. Dirksen	2024(2)
Eastern Canada	Rev. David A. Vroege	Rev. Charles Gregg Lawson	2024(1)
Grand Rapids East	Rev. Alvern Gelder	Rev. Thea N. Leunk	2024(2)
Hackensack	Rev. Petr Kornilov	Vacant	2024(1)
Heartland	Rev. Todd M. Zuidema	Vacant	2024(1)
Holland	Rev. David L. Spoelma	Rev. Christopher J. De Vos	2024(2)
Iakota	Rev. Clifford D. Hoekstra	Rev. Daniel W. De Groot	2024(1)
Lake Superior	Rev. Harrison A. Newhouse	Rev. James T. Petersen	2023(1)
Minnkota	Rev. Roger W. Sparks	Rev. Joshua Christoffels	2024(1)
Muskegon	Rev. Leslie D. Van Dyke	Rev. Fred M. Bultman	2024(1)
Niagara	Rev. M. Jeff Klingenberg	Rev. Janet A. Ryzebol	2023(1)
North Cascades	Rev. Ben de Regt	Rev. J. Scott Roberts	2022(1)
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. Russell W. Boersma	Rev. Wendell Davelaar	2024(2)
Northern Illinois	Rev. Timothy H. Douma	Rev. Gregory D. Schuringa	2023(2)
Northern Michigan	Rev. Jeffrey S.M. Kroondyk	Rev. Steven J. Datema	2024(1)
Ontario Southwest	Rev. Eric Groot-Nibbelink	Rev. Norman J. Visser	2024(2)
Quinte	Rev. Henry Wildeboer	Rev. Kenneth M. deBoer	2022(2)
Red Mesa	Rev. John J. Greydanus	Rev. David J. Dykstra	2024(1)
Toronto	Rev. Hendrick P. Bruinsma	Rev. Richard E. Grift	2022(1)
Yellowstone	Rev. Clair Vander Neut	Rev. Brian D. Tebben	2024(2)

III. Denominational boards

Note: Members of the Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University regional boards are elected from the following twelve regions:

Region 1 – Classes B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East

Region 2 – Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan, and Lake Superior (Canadian congregations)

Region 3 – Classes Eastern Canada, Quinte, and Toronto

Region 4 – Classes Hamilton, Huron, Niagara, and Ontario Southwest (formerly Chatham)

Region 5—Classes Columbia, North Cascades, Pacific Northwest, and Yellowstone
Region 6—Classes California South, Central California, Greater Los Angeles, Hanmi, and Ko-Am
Region 7—Classes Arizona, Red Mesa, and Rocky Mountain
Region 8—Classes Central Plains, Heartland, Iakota, Lake Superior (U.S. congregations), Minnkota, and Northcentral Iowa
Region 9—Classes Chicago South, Illiana, Northern Illinois, and Wisconsin
Region 10—Classes Georgetown, Holland, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Northern Michigan, and Zeeland
Region 11—Classes Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Lake Erie, and Thornapple Valley
Region 12—Classes Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson, and Southeast U.S.

A. Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Classis	Member	Term Expires
Central California	Rev. Mark VanDyke	2024(1)
Chicago South	Rev. Kyle J. Dieleman	2024(1)
Columbia	Rev. Rob J. Toornstra	2024(1)
Eastern Canada	Rev. Daniel A. Meinema	2024(1)
Georgetown	Ms. Jeanne Kallemeyn	2024(1)
Hanmi	Rev. Roger Y. Ryu	2024(2)
Holland	Mr. Wayne A. Brower	2024(2)
Hudson	Mr. Roy G. Heerema	2024(1)
Huron	Rev. Ralph S. Wigboldus	2024(2)
Iakota	Rev. John R. Lee	2024(2)
Ko-Am	Rev. Jonathan J. Kim	2023(1)
Minnkota	Rev. Roger W. Sparks	2024(2)
Niagara	Ms. Wendy de Jong	2023(1)
Pacific Northwest	Mrs. Sherry Fakkema	2024(2)
Quinte	Mr. Frederick Wind	2024(2)
Rocky Mountain	Rev. Kelly Vander Woude	2022(1)
Thornapple Valley	Mr. Casey Jen	2024(1)
Toronto	Mr. Michael Irshad	2024(1)
Wisconsin	Ms. Paula Coldagelli	2024(2)
Zeeland	Rev. Tyler J. Wagenmaker	2024(2)
Canada at-large	Mr. A. Henry Eygenraam	2024(1)
	Ms. Melissa Van Dyk	2023(1)
United States at-large	Rev. Paul R. De Vries	2022(2)*
*By way of exception (see COD Supplement, section I, A, 2).		

B. Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees

Region	Member	Term Expires
Region 4	Mr. Keith Oosthoek	2022*
Region 5	Mr. Eric Lintner	2024(1)
Region 6	Pastor Julius Umawing	2024(1)
Region 7	Ms. Theresa Rottschäfer	2024(2)
Region 8	Rev. Robert D. Drenten	2024(2)
Region 9	Mr. Paul Boersma	2024(2)
Region 10	Rev. Arthur J. Van Wolde	2024(1)
Regional at-large (eligible for two 3-year terms)		
Region 4	Mr. Brian Verheul	2024(1)
Region 8	Dr. Charles Veenstra	2024(2)
Region 11	Mr. David Morren	2024(2)

*By way of exception (see Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, section II, D).

C. Calvin University Board of Trustees

Region	Member	Term Expires
Region 3	Ms. Rosanne Lopers-Sweetman	2022*
Region 5	Dr. Gary D. Bos	2024(1)
Region 6	Rev. Kevin Adams	2024(1)
Region 7	Mr. Michael DenBlyker	2022*
Region 10	Mr. Benjamin Ipema	2024(2)
Regional at-large		
Region 9	Ms. Heather Van Vugt Ramirez	2024(1)
Region 10	Mr. Christopher Grier	2022**
Region 11	Ms. Andrea Karsten	2024(2)
	Ms. Lois Miller	2024(2)
At-large		
	Ms. Niala Boodhoo	2024(1)
	Mr. Jonathan (Jona) Eigege	2024(1)
	Dr. Andrew Elliot	2024(2)
	Dr. Steven Triezenberg	2024(3)

*By way of exception (see Calvin University Supplement, section IV, A, 1, c).

**By way of exception (see Calvin University Supplement, section IV, A, 2).

D. World Renew Board

Region	Member	Term Expires
Alberta North	Ms. Margaret Hoogland	2023(1)
Alberta South/Saskatchewan	Mrs. Julie Vanden Heuvel	2024(2)
Central Plains	Ms. Carol Van Klompenburg	2024(2)
Eastern Canada	Mr. Echo Macloed	2024(1)
Hamilton	Mr. A. Raymond Anema	2024(2)
Illiana	Mr. James Groen	2023(1)
Lake Superior (Canada)	Mr. Daniel Mack	2024(2)
Lake Superior (U.S.)	Rev. Arlan Koppendrayner	2024(1)
Minnkota	Mr. Glen Talsma	2024(1)
North Cascades	Ms. Linda German	2023(1)
At-large Canada		
	Mr. Darryl Beck	2024(1)
	Mr. Andrew Geisterfer	2024(2)
	Ms. Lisa Kuipers	2023(1)
	Mrs. Margaret VanOord	2024(2)

IV. Service committees

A. Candidacy Committee

Ms. Judy Cook (2022/1), Rev. Felix Fernandez (2022/1), Rev. Mark W. Hilbelink (2022/2), Rev. Andrew G. Vander Leek (2022/2), Rev. Ashley Bonnes (2023/2), Rev. Moon B. Kim (2023/1), Rev. Andrew Beunk (2024/1), Pastor Debra Chee (2024/1), Pastor Caleb Dickson (2024/1), Rev. Susan E. LaClear (staff), Mr. Colin Watson, Sr. (ex officio, as executive director), Rev. Julius T. Medenblik (ex officio as Calvin Theological Seminary representative).

B. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. Committee

Ms. Barbara De Boer (2022/1), Mr. Jeffrey Feikens (2022/1), Mr. Jack Meyer (2023/2), Ms. Nancy Wiesman (2023/1), Ms. Layla Kuhl (2024/1), Mr. Howard Van Den Heuvel (2024/2), Mr. David E. Veen (ex officio member).

C. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

Dr. Lyle D. Bierma (2022/1), Ms. Lenore Maine (2022/2), Dr. Michael Wagenman (2022/1), Rev. InSoon Hoagland (2023/2), Ms. Ruth Palma (2023/2), Ms. Yvonne Schenk (2023/1), Rev. Joy Engelsman (2024/1), Mr. James Joosse (2024/2), Rev. Ruth Hofman (2024/1), Dr. William T. Koopmans (2024/2), Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr. (ex officio member), Dr. Darren C. Roorda (ex officio member).

D. Historical Committee

Dr. Herman DeVries Jr. (2022/1), Dr. Tony Mann (2022/1), Dr. John Bolt (2023/2), Dr. James A. De Jong (2024/2).

E. Judicial Code Committee

Rev. Aldon L. Kuiper (2022/2*), Dr. Duane Bajema (2022/2), Ms. Amy Vander Vliet (2022/1), Mr. Dexter W. Young (2022/1), Ms. Deloris Carter (2023/1), Rev. Bomsu Kim (2023/1), Mr. John Koot (2023/2), Mr. Doug Vande Griend (2023/2), Rev. Richard Bodini (2024/1), Mr. Edward Bosveld (2024/2), Rev. Cindy de Jong (2024/2), Ms. Kim Rhodes (2024/1), Mr. Colin P. Watson, Sr. (adviser).

*By way of exception (see *Agenda for Synod 2021*, p. 28).

F. Ministers' Pension Funds committees

Canadian Pension Trustees

Mr. Dick Vreugdenhil (2022/1), Ms. Kathy Wassink (2022/2), Mr. Hessel Kielstra (2024/1), Mr. Jacob Vanden Pol (2024/1), Rev. Michael VanderKwaak (2024/2).

U.S. Pension Trustees

Rev. Joel J. Sheeres (2022/3), Mr. Alan Van Dyke (2022/1), Mr. Lloyd Bierma (2023/2), Mr. Darrel Raih (2024/2). *Note:* Mr. John H. Bolt, serving an additional year as deputy executive director and chief financial officer, postponed beginning a first term until July 1, 2022.

V. Synodical study committees and task forces

A. Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (scheduled to report in 2021, deferred to Synod 2022)

Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma, Pastor Charles Kim, Rev. Jose Rayas, Rev. Paula Seales, Dr. Matthew Tuininga, Dr. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (*promotor fidei*), Dr. Mary VandenBerg, Dr. William VanderWoerd, Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Weima, and Dr. Albert Wolters.

B. Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force (scheduled to report in 2021, deferred to Synod 2022)

Rev. Bernard Ayoola, Rev. Joan DeVries, Mr. Henry Doorn; Ms. Gayle Doornbos, Rev. Gerald Koning, Mr. David VanderWoerd, Mr. Loren Veldhuizen, and Ms. Lis Van Harten (staff).

C. Study of Bivocationality Task Force (scheduled to report in 2021, deferred to Synod 2022)

Rev. Bernard Bakker, Rev. John Bouwers, Ms. Beth Fellingier, Rev. Ernesto Hernandez, Ms. Sharon Jim, Rev. Michael Vander Laan, Rev. Phillip Westra, Mr. Robert Zoerman, and Rev. David Koll (staff).

VI. Recommendations

A. That the COD, on behalf of synod, ratify the above changes to the list of synodical deputies, denominational boards, and committees.

— *Adopted*

B. That upon completion of the Boards and Committees Ballot of Synod 2021 by the COD, acting in the interim of synod, the U.S. directors of the CRCNA U.S. Corporations (only) (1) appoint the following new U.S. Council of Delegates members as interim directors of both the ReFrame Ministries U.S. Corporation and the CRCNA U.S. Corporation, and (2) recommend that Synod 2022 appoint the interim directors as directors of the two U.S. corporations:

Classis	Member
Central California	Rev. Mark VanDyke
Chicago South	Mr. Kyle Dieleman
Columbia	Rev. Rob Toornstra
Georgetown	Ms. Jeanne Kallemeyn
Hudson	Mr. Roy Heerema
Ko-Am	Rev. Jonathan J. Kim
Rocky Mountain	Rev. Kelly Vander Woude
Thornapple Valley	Mr. Casey Jen

— *Adopted*

COD-SM 18

The chair gives special acknowledgment to the following COD members concluding service July 1, 2021:

- Fernando L. del Rosario (Central California)
- Jei Wilson (Chicago South)
- Gary D. Bos (Columbia)
- B. Bernard Bakker (Eastern Canada)
- James Roskam (Georgetown)
- George R. Young (Hudson)
- Samuel Cooper (Toronto)
- Aaltje van Grootheest (Canada At-large)

The vice chair and executive director express gratitude on behalf of the COD and the CRCNA to Rev. Paul R. De Vries, chair, for his leadership throughout his term on the Council of Delegates and throughout this Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates.

The chair also expresses thanks to the following for their contributions to the meetings:

COD members for the commitment of time for the additional meetings, the technology support team, staff consultants and recorders to the advisory committees, communications and *Banner* staff, and Synodical Services staff. He gives special thanks to the executive director, Colin P. Watson, Sr., for his service to the denomination over the past year.

COD-SM 19

The COD adjourns at 2:45 p.m. (EDT). Elsa Fennema leads in closing prayer.

Paul R. De Vries, President

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES REPORT (DEFERRED FROM 2020)

The Council of Delegates (COD) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) began its service of interim governance on behalf of the CRC's annual synods after being appointed by Synod 2017. COD delegates represent the CRC's forty-nine classes. There are also four at-large members. Together they gather to address the mission and ministry of the CRCNA on behalf of synod. The COD addresses agency matters with regard to Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) and Resonate Global Mission, along with matters concerning Congregational Services ministries of the CRCNA—each of the entities being governed by the COD.

The COD presents the following report as a summary of its work in the interim since the meeting of Synod 2019.

I. Introduction

A. *Governing on behalf of synod*

The COD functions with a constituent-representative model of policy governance. Policy governance suggests a board's role is to see that the organization achieves what it should, avoiding the unacceptable (via the concept of limitations), all on behalf of its constituents. (Read more about the constituent-representative model in the COD Governance Handbook at crcna.org, search "COD Governance Handbook.")

This constituent-representative model of policy governance provides a "link between the organization's board and its constituents. The constituents are represented on the governing board and participate in policy development and planning."¹ For these purposes, the term *constituents* refers to CRCNA members.

Similar to all forms of policy governance, there is clear differentiation between board activity and staff/administrative activity. Those serving on the COD are not invited into management functions. Staff/administrative members do not chart the direction and set the policies for the denomination, but they serve as implementers, working within the contours of COD-set policies toward the goals and limitations identified by the COD in conjunction with the CRC constituency. Moreover, as the COD sets direction and evaluates the effectiveness of outcomes, staff and administration are always attentive to context, making recommendations and providing analysis to the COD in ways that consider national context, diversity, and the like.

This model flows from CRC church polity as described in Church Order Article 27-a: "Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of councils being original, that of major assemblies being delegated."

¹ Bradshaw, P., R. Hayday, R. Armstrong; "Non-profit Governance Models: Problems and Prospects," paper originally presented at ARNOVA Conference, Seattle, Washington, 1998.

In other words, ecclesiastical authority begins with congregations and is delegated to classis and then to synod. Church Order Article 27-a is balanced by Article 27-b: “The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis”—emphasizing the authority of the broader assemblies, which are made up of officebearers who represent Christ’s authority in those assemblies as they make decisions for the broader church. The role of officebearers in each of these assemblies is significant in Church Order Article 1-a: “The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that officebearers are ‘to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up’ (Eph. 4:12), and to do so ‘in a fitting and orderly way’ (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities.”

As an ecclesiastical governance entity serving in the interim of synod, the COD provides governance by means of the authority delegated to it by synod and with its synodically elected membership representing classes or serving in at-large capacities.

(COD Governance Handbook, section 1.1: Governance)

The mandate and functions of the Council of Delegates as adopted by synod are outlined in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook (at crcna.org, search “Council of Delegates”).

COD members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA Canada Corporation, the CRCNA U.S. Corporation, the BTGMI Canada Corporation, and the BTGMI U.S. Corporation. These legal entities (Canada and U.S.) interact via joint ministries agreements to govern ministry that is shared across the border between the BTGMI corporations and the CRCNA corporations. In fall 2019 the directors of the CRCNA and BTGMI Canada corporations were alerted to organizational implications of charitable laws in Canada, which necessitated immediate interim action in December 2019 to comply with the Canada Revenue Agency. More with regard to these changes is found in section I, D of this report.

The Council of Delegates has met two times since Synod 2019 (October 2019 and February 2020), and is scheduled to meet again in May 2020. The COD’s agenda is processed both by the legal corporations mentioned above and by the full ecclesiastical body of the COD. The agenda items are first reviewed by one of five committees: Congregational Ministries; Global Missions Ministries; Mercy and Justice Ministries; Ministry Plan, Communication, and Synodical Services; or Support Services. These committees hear and study reports regarding the mission, vision, and values of our various ministries; the ways our ministries are integrated into a ministry (strategic) plan and are evaluated; the financial status, administrative leadership, and organizational health in each ministry-priority area; and the ways in which the COD responds both to synod and constituents. Committees present their recommendations for review and feedback first to the four corporations (CRCNA and BTGMI Canada corporations, and CRCNA and BTGMI U.S. corporations) and then to the full COD for information and any required action. In addition, the COD oversees the work of the executive director.

Nearly all of the matters addressed by the COD affect the full CRCNA as one denomination in two countries. In compliance with Canadian regulations, the Canadian corporations review and approve all actions relative to providing effective national direction and control for collective ministry

activities and, as necessary, address the nonecclesiastical matters that relate directly to uniquely Canadian issues and matters of law. The same is done by the U.S. corporations. The COD, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the entire church.

B. Tasks carried out on behalf of synod

A significant part of the COD's work over the past year has been in response to synodical instructions directed to either the COD or the executive director in conjunction with the COD. An outline of the various instructions, organized by ministry-priority area, is provided in the following.

1. Faith formation

New City Catechism (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763): "That synod instruct the executive director to refer the New City Catechism to Faith Formation Ministries for curriculum review and potential use by the churches." *Note:* This review is in process by Faith Formation Ministries. One of their objectives is to provide a guideline for reviewing other potential materials so that congregations may be more readily equipped to consider curriculum options that are fitting from a Reformed theological perspective and suitable to their respective contexts. (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

2. Global mission

Note: The COD received no assignments in 2019 in this ministry-priority area.

3. Gospel proclamation and worship

Bible Translation (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 764): "That synod establish a standing committee of the Council of Delegates (COD) for the purpose of reviewing Bible translations for potential use in the CRCNA, with a mandate and composition as outlined in section II, A, 16. . . . Give the COD power to act in the appointment of additional committee members to fulfill the requirements of the mandate and composition in COD Report section II, A, 16 after consultation with Calvin Theological Seminary." (See section II, A, 17.)

Definition of Heresy (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 819-20): "That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to address the proper and ongoing definition and application of the word *heresy* by using one of its regular committees and/or an ad hoc committee and then have the Council of Delegates report back to Synod 2020. This committee would be best composed of members of the appropriate agencies, including especially Calvin Theological Seminary." (See section II, A, 15.)

Immigrant Churches, Pastors, and Their Families (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 777-78): "That synod recognize the ongoing work in response to synod's instruction related to enfolding immigrant churches and commend the Assisting Immigrant Churches document . . . to the classes and churches," and "that synod instruct the executive director, in consultation with the appropriate CRC agencies, to identify and communicate appropriate legal and financial resources to assist churches and classes with the immigration of pastors and their families." (See section II, B, 12.)

Worship Practices (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 770): “That synod affirm the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord’s Day and instruct the Council of Delegates to ensure that Worship Ministries and/or Faith Formation Ministries continue to make excellent resources available to the churches that would encourage existing congregations to continue, and new congregations to embrace, some kind of assembly that builds up the body of Christ.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

4. Mercy and justice

Addressing Abuse of Power (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 794-99)

- a. **Code of Conduct:** “That synod mandate the committee appointed by action in Recommendation b to draft a code of conduct for all employed ministry staff within the CRC. The draft code of conduct will be presented to Synod 2020 for approval and with recommendations for implementation for the denomination, classes, and churches.” (See section II, A, 20, b.)
- b. **Counseling Services:** “That synod encourage all classes to take measures to ensure that survivors of abuse within their classis have access to appropriate counseling services,” and “that the annual report of each classis for the CRC *Yearbook* include information about a counseling fund or other arrangements to ensure access to counseling services for abuse survivors.” (See section II, A, 20, d.)
- c. **Guardian Committee:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to establish a team that would act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service. Consideration should be guided by the following features, which draw on good practices in other sectors of society for preventing and responding to all forms of abuse of power.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)
- d. **Monitoring by the COD:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to ensure implementation by . . . monitoring progress at each meeting of the COD . . . making necessary adjustments in specific plans . . . and reporting to synod. . . .” (See section II, A, 20, k.)
- e. **Nondisclosure Agreements:** “That synod direct the executive director to . . . review the history of nondisclosure agreements within the CRC . . . develop a policy . . . develop good practices and protocols . . . [and] develop a reporting and accountability mechanism. . . .” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)
- f. **Prevention of Abuse in CRCNA Offices and Conflict of Interest Dynamics:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to review the adequacy of the training provided to CRCNA staff, the adequacy of the provisions for support to a complainant, and mechanisms to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the process for dealing with complaints. A review should be informed by careful listening to persons who found the processes helpful and persons who did not.” Further, “that synod mandate the Council of Delegates to examine in detail the potential for conflicts of interest in current safe church procedures and to evaluate the need for and benefits of using outside experts to deal with situations that have a high potential for conflicts of interest.” (See section II, A, 20, e.)

- g. **Record Keeping:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates and executive director to put in place a system of recordkeeping of cases that come to the attention of any level of church authority, to allow for the analysis of patterns and trends over time, without compromising the confidentiality of individual persons. Collection of data should include some record of responses and outcomes, as well as reporting of incidents.” (See section II, A, 20, i.)
- h. **Resources for Culturally Diverse Churches:** “That synod mandate the executive director to give a high priority to providing information about existing policies and mechanisms for abuse prevention and response in forms that use the language, examples, and styles of learning that are culturally appropriate for all communities including but not limited to the Korean, Latino, Chinese, African American, and Indigenous communities, through Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources. In each context, the tools shall be developed with input from members of the community to ensure they will be accessible and useful for members of the community.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)
- i. **Role of Regional Pastors and Church Visitors:** “That synod refer this report to the Classis Renewal Advisory Team to consider how the role of regional pastors and church visitors might be strengthened to foster a respectful culture and support churches with early assistance in situations that may give rise to concerns about abuse of power.” (See section II, A, 20, j.)
- j. **Strengthening Safe Church Ministry:** “That synod mandate the executive director to oversee a review of the adequacy of safe church policies for follow-up in reported cases that involve church leaders. Findings and actions taken by the executive director shall be reported to the Council of Delegates to ensure that the CRCNA is exercising due diligence to prevent repeat occurrences or transfer of abusive leaders to other churches. The review shall consider best practices in church abuse-prevention ministry.” (See section II, A, 20, e.)
“That synod mandate the executive director to oversee the development of appropriate measures for responding effectively to emotional abuse. Such measures will include definition, inclusion in relevant CRC policies, and appropriate responses through restorative practices and the safe church advisory panel process.” (See section II, A, 20, e.)
- k. **Training Programs:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to form a committee to develop a training program on abuse of power. The committee shall include members from the offices of Candidacy, Pastor Church Resources, Safe Church Ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College (because of available expertise).” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)
“That synod encourage all classes to develop a strategy to train officebearers and key church leaders to be alert to power dynamics within the communities they serve and to be equipped to prevent abuse of power. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that all officebearers receive initial training and refreshment through ongoing

educational initiatives.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

Diversity Report (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829): “The executive director will continue to request an annual diversity report from each agency and ministry and will include a summary of these reports in the report to the [COD] each February.” (See section II, A, 6.)

Goals and Priorities (*Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 634-35): “That synod (1) take note that the above proposal arises in response to a decision of Synod 2016 (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829), instructing ‘the executive director to encourage the Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) collaboration group to continue to prioritize goals and assign resources for all of our justice and mercy denominational issues,’ and (2) instruct the executive director to pursue other possible priorities as well as to plan and implement the program described in recommendation a, 4, [adopted by synod; *Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 633] and report the results to synod annually through 2020.” (See section II, B, 10, a.)

Israel and Palestine (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 817): “That synod encourage the work of addressing peace in the Middle East already being done, acknowledging the awareness of injustice, and commend with thanks the work being done,” and “that synod (with the COD) recognize and encourage our staff and churches to continue to strive for increased partnership that seeks a third way between mainline and evangelical approaches and fosters increased reconciliation on all sides.” (See section II, B, 10, b.)

Judicial Code (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 529; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763): “That synod instruct the executive director and the Council of Delegates to explore how to improve the gender and ethnic diversity of the Judicial Code Committee,” and “that synod instruct the Council of Delegates to review the Judicial Code every five years, seeking input from the Judicial Code Committee, the Office of Safe Church Ministry, and Church Order experts, to ensure that the Judicial Code continues to function as intended, and to assess whether updates and/or modifications are needed. (See section II, A, 16.)

Office of Social Justice U.S. Advisory Committee (*Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 527-28): “That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to create a U.S. committee to provide guidance and support to the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action.” (See section II, B, 13.)

Political/Justice Statements (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22): “That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to do historical research on synodical decisions and the defining rationale for making those decisions in dealing with political and/or justice matters, and to report through one of the COD committees and/or an ad hoc group. The Council of Delegates will report back to Synod 2020.” (See section II, A, 19.)

Reconciliation (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 473): “That synod urge the executive director to work with the appropriate agencies and ministries to publicize existing resources addressing unresolved conflict in our history and the need for reconciliation.” (See the report of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, section VII, C.)

Safe Church Reporting (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 476): “That synod instruct the executive director to have Safe Church Ministry report annually

through the Council of Delegates to synod regarding the number and names of classes with and without Safe Church teams, and the number of congregations with and without Safe Church teams and policies.” (See the report of Safe Church Ministry, section III.)

5. Servant leadership

Offices of Elder and Deacon (*Acts of Synod 2015*, pp. 669-70): “The executive director of the CRCNA shall report to synod on the annual progress of the . . . efforts of denominational agencies and ministries as all seek to work together for the revitalization of the offices of elder and deacon.” (See section II, A, 18.)

6. Other areas

Evaluation and Prioritization (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 455): “That synod instruct the Council of Delegates and the executive director to continue the important work of evaluation and prioritization by working together to implement a robust evaluation strategy whereby in a five-year cycle all agencies and ministries will be continually evaluated through the framework of the five ministry priorities.” (See section II, B, 5.)

Heritage Hall and Historical Committee Mandate (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761): “That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement report.)

Ministry Plan (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630): “That synod give ‘concept endorsement’ to the goals and strategies attached (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 54-61), which the agencies will use to work toward implementation of the strategic plan.” (See sections II, B, 1-2.)

Reimagining Ministry Shares (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 789-90): “That synod instruct the COD to provide a communication giving guidance to the churches as they consider their pledge. The guidance should consist of the following: (1) Material to communicate the denomination’s vision for ministry enabled through ministry shares; (2) Examples of possible methods to consider in determining the church’s pledge amount, including but not limited to (a) percentage of income, (b) rate per person based on average worship attendance, (c) percentage increase above the prior year gift.” (See section II, C, 2.)

“That synod instruct the COD to encourage possible additional revenue enhancements for a variety of denominational ministries (e.g., fee for service possibilities, ministry-specific fundraising) and report back to Synod 2020 regarding such potential enhancements.” (See section II, C, 2.)

Themed Synod (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 814): “That synod instruct the COD to periodically recommend a plan for a ‘themed agenda’ or ‘themed synod’ in which, alongside indispensable components of a typical synod agenda, the primary focus would be on a visioning or leadership theme germane to the health and growth of the entire denomination.” (See section I, H.)

C. *Meetings of the Council of Delegates*

When Synod 2015 adopted the recommendation of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture for a transition from the Board of Trustees of

the CRCNA to the Council of Delegates, with an expanded classically based membership, the hope was for at least one meeting per year to be held online to keep meeting costs at a minimum. The COD looked into the possibility of holding some meetings online but decided that unless there were no other choice, meeting in person would be preferred, given the amount and type of work the COD is tasked to do. Though some committees could meet part of the time online and thus save costs, the quality of plenary meetings would suffer, and the COD would lose valuable interpersonal relationship time.

Note: For its meeting this coming May, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the COD will be meeting entirely by video conference.

D. Addressing structure in light of Canadian charitable-law requirements

Having received queries from a few Christian Reformed congregations in Canada about how well we have been living up to our responsibility to meet Canadian legal requirements, the directors of the Canada Corporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America retained legal counsel to review Canada Corporation procedures and to assist in improving them where appropriate.

Together with the legal counsel, who specializes in charitable law, the directors carefully reviewed the CRCNA's corporate structures and processes and decided to take necessary steps to ensure that both our corporate structure and cross-border practices are compliant with all of Canada's requirements for Canadian charitable organizations. These initial measures have been put into place for a one-year period to give us all time to work through the details of what additional changes are needed before final action is taken. This also gives us time to properly align these decisions with appropriate ecclesiastical procedures, including synod. These measures include the following:

- identifying distinct leadership for each ministry in each country
- defining distinct budgets for each ministry in each country
- creating structures so that human resources, including staff recruitment, are managed within the relevant country

A joint group of COD members and senior leadership has begun meeting to bring recommendations to the COD in May and then to synod, addressing the ecclesiastical, structural, and legal implications of the recent Canada Corporation actions, including how they relate to the appropriate denominational governance protocols and rules. The Canada Corporation's decisions should be seen as part of a process that will continue to the denominational level using ecclesiastical channels. These steps include processing through synod.

E. COD membership

The members of the Council of Delegates from the classes include B. Bernard Bakker (Eastern Canada), Bev Bandstra (B.C. South-East), Jesus Bayona (Southeast U.S.), Gary D. Bos (Columbia), Timothy Bosscher (Grandville), Wayne Brower (Holland), J. Harold Caicedo (California South), Paula Coldagelli (Wisconsin), Samuel Cooper (Toronto), Heather Cowie (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Wendell Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), Fernando L. del Rosario (Central California), Bruce DeKam (Northern Michigan), Adrian

de Lange (Rocky Mountain), Andy de Ruyter (B.C. North-West), Paul R. De Vries (Thornapple Valley), Peter J. DeVries (Yellowstone), Christopher W. deWinter (Niagara), Donald G. Draayer (Lake Superior), Sherry Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), Laurie Harkema (Lake Erie), Emmett A. Harrison (Grand Rapids East), Sally Haywood Larsen (Illiana), Susan B. Hoekema (Muskegon), Sheila E. Holmes (Hackensack), Melvin O. Jackson (Greater Los Angeles), Stanley W. Jim (Red Mesa), Michael D. Koetje (Kalamazoo), Michelle J. Kool (Alberta North), William T. Koopmans (Hamilton), Jose Antonio (Tony) Lara (Arizona), John R. Lee (Iakota), Theodore Lim (Ko-Am), Gloria Melenberg (Quinte), Daudi Mutisya Mbuta (Grand Rapids North), Brian L. Ochsner (Central Plains), James Roskam (Georgetown), Roger Y. Ryu (Hanmi), Roger W. Sparks (Minnkota), Arnie J. Stolte (Northern Illinois), David A. Struyk (Grand Rapids South), Samuel D. Sutter (Atlantic North-east), Mark Vande Zande (Heartland), Tyler J. Wagenmaker (Zeeland), Ralph S. Wigboldus (Huron), Jei Wilson (Chicago South), and George R. Young (Hudson). Arie Vander Zouwen is serving as interim delegate from Classis North Cascades until Synod 2020 acts on his appointment.

Four at-large members also serve the COD. They include Elsa Fennema (U.S.), Ashley Medendorp (Canada), and Aaltje Van Grootheest (Canada); and Greta Luimes is serving as interim Canada at-large member until Synod 2020 acts on her appointment.

The denomination's executive director (Colin P. Watson, Sr., currently serves as acting executive director) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee of the CRCNA and BTGMI U.S. corporations and as a member of the Council of Delegates (without vote). The executive director and the Canadian ministries director are invited as guests to the meetings of the CRCNA and BTGMI corporations based in Canada.

In addition, two guests from the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees (Victor Chen and Henry Lane) and two guests from the World Renew Board of Delegates (Hyacynth Douglas-Bailey and Jim Joosse) attend the COD meetings and serve on a COD committee. These nonvoting COD guests are given privilege of the floor during meetings. COD member Fernando L. del Rosario from Classis Central California also serves as a member on the Calvin University Board of Trustees, providing a valuable link to this CRCNA institution.

The following serve as officers of the COD and of respective corporations for the 2019-2020 term:

1. COD officers: Paul R. De Vries, chair; Andy de Ruyter, vice chair; Timothy Bosscher, treasurer; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary.
2. Corporation officers
 - a. CRCNA Canada Corporation: Andy de Ruyter, president; Donald D. Draayer, vice president; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary; Gloria Melenberg, treasurer.
 - b. CRCNA U.S. Corporation: Paul R. De Vries, president; Sheila E. Holmes, vice president; Elsa Fennema, secretary; Timothy Bosscher, treasurer.

- c. BTGMI Canada Corporation: Andy de Ruyter, president; Donald D. Draayer, vice president; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary; Gloria Melenberg, treasurer.
- d. BTGMI U.S. Corporation: Paul R. De Vries, president; Sheila E. Holmes, vice president; Elsa Fennema, secretary; Timothy Bosscher, treasurer.
- 3. Executive Committee: Tim Bosscher; Andy de Ruyter; Paul R. De Vries, chair; Laurie Harkema; Susan Hoekema; Michelle J. Kool; Ashley Medendorp; and Aaltje van Grootheest. Colin P. Watson, Sr., serves ex officio. . . .

G. Protocol for right of comment

The COD adopted a protocol intended to inform staff of a ministry, agency, or institution, and to guide CRC boards (namely, the Council of Delegates, World Renew Board of Delegates, Calvin University Board of Trustees, and Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees) and standing committees of synod in consideration of an appropriate response to an overture or report on synod’s agenda. The protocol specifically outlines the rules and protocols found in the COD Governance Handbook and in the Rules for Synodical Procedure as a means of clarifying for staff and boards that inquire about communicating with synod.

H. Themed synod or agenda

In response to the instruction of Synod 2019 that the COD “periodically recommend a plan for a ‘themed agenda’ or ‘themed synod’ in which, alongside indispensable components of a typical synod agenda, the primary focus would be on a visioning or leadership theme germane to the health and growth of the entire denomination” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 814), the COD revised the mandate of one of its subcommittees to include synodical services matters that are placed on the agenda of the COD. The mandate of the Ministry Plan, Communication, and Synodical Services Committee now includes giving consideration to proposing a themed synod or themed agenda for synod.

I. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod, the Council of Delegates reports the following salaries for senior CRCNA, Back to God Ministries International, and Resonate Global Mission staff directly employed by the Council of Delegates:

Job level	Number of positions	Number below target	Number at target
E1	1	1	0
E2	6	5	1
E3	4	4	0

Synod 2014 adopted a salary administration system that uses a salary range *target* and a minimum of 85 percent of that target. The COD adopted a new salary structure with fewer levels than the previous structure. Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for the current fiscal year are as follows:

2019-2020 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range		Canadian Range	
	Minimum	Target	Minimum	Target
E1	\$148,000	\$185,000		
E2	\$133,559	\$166,949	\$127,261	\$159,076
E3	\$113,186	\$141,482	\$111,514	\$139,392
H	\$95,920	\$119,900	\$95,580	\$119,475
I	\$81,288	\$101,610	\$81,924	\$102,405
J	\$68,888	\$86,110	\$70,218	\$87,773
K	\$58,380	\$72,975	\$60,185	\$75,232
L	\$49,474	\$61,843	\$51,586	\$64,482

II. Activities of the COD

A. Polity matters

1. Resignation of the executive director of the CRCNA

In light of structural changes between Canadian and U.S. administration and anticipated changes to the role of executive director of the CRCNA, Steven R. Timmermans elected to speed up his intended retirement and resigned, effective February 20, 2020. The Council of Delegates accepted the resignation with deep regret. A time of celebration and thanks for Steven Timmermans' services is being planned to take place in the coming months.

Given the immediate departure of the executive director, the COD appointed Colin P. Watson, Sr., as acting executive director until a search and recommendation for appointment of an interim executive director can be presented to Synod 2020. Updates will be forthcoming by way of the COD Supplement in May. For the coming months, temporary reassignments in supervision and leadership have been made for several of the director of ministries and administration responsibilities held by Colin Watson prior to Steven Timmermans' resignation.

2. Senior leadership retirements

The COD received notices of retirement of the director of ministries and administration, Colin P. Watson, Sr., effective January 6, 2021, and the director of finance and operations, John H. Bolt, effective July 2, 2021. In the event that a new executive director (ED) is not appointed prior to these retirements, it is anticipated that the COD will appoint interim replacements until the new ED of the CRCNA can participate in the search processes to fill these roles. The COD expressed its gratitude to Mr. Bolt and Mr. Watson for their faithful service to the denomination.

3. Appointment to synodical task forces

To fill two unanticipated vacancies, the COD in October acted on behalf of synod to appoint Joan G. De Vries to the synodical Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force and Robert Zoerman to the synodical Consideration of Bivocationality Task Force. Both of these task forces were mandated by Synod 2019 and are scheduled to report to Synod 2021.

4. Interim appointments

On behalf of synod, the COD has ratified the following classical appointments of synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies* and has appointed the following World Renew board delegates:

Appointment	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Arizona	Rev. Jeffrey A. Dykema		2022(1)
	Pacific Northwest	Rev. Matthew J. Borst	Rev. Douglas E. Fakkema	2022(1)
	Wisconsin	Rev. Mark J. Pluimer	Rev. Michael Winnowski	2022(1)
World Renew	Arizona	Mr. Marv Faber		2022(1)
	Muskegon	Rev. Carl Bergman		2022(1)
	Thornapple Valley	Mr. James Boldenow		2022(1)
	Yellowstone	Rev. Timothy Kuperus		2022(1)

*Terms of alternate synodical deputies run concurrent with those of the synodical deputies.

5. Classes that have declared that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 2007, the executive director keeps a list of classes that, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, some classes have adopted a decision to declare that women officebearers may not be delegated to classis. A list of these classes may be obtained by contacting the office of the executive director.

6. Annual report on gender and ethnic diversity on denominational boards

Data for the board diversity report (with regard to gender and ethnic diversity) for the 2019-2020 year has been received from the denominational boards (Council of Delegates, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, and World Renew). In addition, data from the World Renew Joint Ministry Council (JMC) is included along with data from the World Renew Board of Delegates. *Note:* The JMC is elected from the membership of the World Renew Board of Delegates.

There are presently 161 denominationally appointed board members (not including the JMC count), and the JMC, elected from the World Renew Board of Delegates, has 15 members. So, among a total of 176 members, 59 (34%) are women, and 29 (16%) are people of color. These amounts reflect an increase of three women delegates (up 2%) and an increase of two persons of color (% unchanged) on our denominational boards in comparison to the data for the 2019-2020 reporting year. In the joining of the former Board of Trustees with the boards of Back to God Ministries International and Resonate Global Mission to form the new Council of Delegates, each board also is examined individually in light of synod's goal of having at least 25 percent ethnic minority membership. The board membership of Calvin Theological Seminary is 21 percent ethnic minority; Calvin University, 10 percent; World Renew (JMC), 13 percent; and the COD, 23 percent.

7. Annual report on denominational efforts to address ethnic diversity and racial justice

At the instruction of Synod 2013, each CRC agency, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University are asked to submit to the executive director, as part of their strategic plan, diversity goals and timelines in their leadership, administrative, and regional ministry teams. This

annual report was received by the director of ministries and administration on behalf of the executive director, and the compliance and progress were reported to the Council of Delegates in February.

In addition, the director of synodical services regularly reminds and encourages stated clerks and denominational boards to seek ethnic diversity in nominating people to serve on denominational boards and as delegates to synod. We need to be diligent in continuing to increase diversity.

8. Young adult representatives to synod

For the past ten years, synod has welcomed the engagement of youth and young adults (18- to 26-year-olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination and has sought to raise up leadership within the church through the appointment of young adult representatives to participate in the deliberations of synod. These individuals bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination by listening, engaging delegates during advisory committee meetings, and offering input on matters that arise in plenary. The COD has appointed the following persons to serve as young adult representatives to Synod 2020 (* indicates service in this capacity in 2019):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| * Rebecca Bokma, Kitchener, Ont. | Leah Sweetman, Fremont, Mich. |
| Daniel Choi, Prince George, B.C. | Luke Yang, Guelph, Ont. |
| Amy DeJong, Fairview, Alta. | Hope Zigterman, |
| * William Krahnke, Onamia, Minn. | Grand Rapids, Mich. |

9. Joint supervision of ordained CRCNA staff

The COD adopted a protocol, based on Church Order Article 13-b and its Supplement pertaining to the supervision of CRCNA staff who are ordained as ministers of the Word or as commissioned pastors, to help clarify joint supervision and to encourage open communication with the employee's supervising council. The protocol is provided for synod's information in Appendix A. . . .

11. Proposed Church Order changes

The COD, on behalf of Synod 2019, presents to Synod 2020 the Proposed Church Order Changes by Synod 2019 in Appendix C for adoption.

12. Report by moderator for formation of the new Classis North Cascades

Synod 2019 instructed the executive director to "appoint a neutral moderator" to assist in the formation of the new Classis North Cascades (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 758). Louis Korf served the denomination in this special role and presented the ED and the COD with a report as a fulfillment of his responsibility. The COD expressed appreciation to Rev. Korf for his service and here provides the following from his report as information:

"I hereby submit my report as the synodically appointed neutral moderator for the formation of Classis North Cascades out of a segment of Classis Pacific Northwest. Yesterday at the last regular meeting of Classis PNW . . . the recommendation to split the assets of Classis PNW on a 60/40 ration were resoundingly

adopted along with the recommended guidelines of allocation. Also, Classis PNW, which included the members of the new classis, adopted the recommendations of joint support for Northwest Hispanic Ministries, which will function in collaboration and support of both classes. What was of tremendous help was the input and recommendations of the classical treasurer, Jacob Buurma, who will now be the classical treasurer for Classis North Cascades. He provided valuable insight into the allocation of assets and the continuation of support for Northwest Hispanic Ministries. I extend much appreciation for his expertise. It made my job as neutral moderator of this division much easier.

“What also made my task as neutral moderator amenable was the spirit of collaboration throughout the whole process, from initial email conversations to the actual meeting together as a task force and the final decisions made at the classis meeting yesterday. I am hereby happy to report that as of January 1, 2020, a new classis, Classis North Cascades, will officially be part of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.”

13. Classis ministry plans

Synod 2018 encouraged “all classes to develop and share their ministry plan . . . with the Classis Renewal Advisory Team so that the team can provide the COD with a summary of the plans (to be forwarded to Synod 2020)” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 518). The COD received the report of the Classis Renewal Advisory Team in February and presents the report in Appendix D and its recommendations to synod for consideration. . . .

15. Definition of *heresy*

Synod 2019, after declaring Kinism a heresy, instructed “the Council of Delegates to address the proper and ongoing definition and application of the word *heresy* by using one of its regular committees and/or an ad hoc committee and then have the Council of Delegates report on the matter to Synod 2020. This committee would best be composed of members of the appropriate agencies, including especially Calvin Theological Seminary” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 819). Ronald Feenstra (Calvin Theological Seminary), with comment and review by William Koopmans, Kathy Smith (Calvin University / Calvin Theological Seminary), and Karin Maag (Calvin University / Calvin Theological Seminary), served as the primary author of the report on the definition of *heresy* presented to synod for consideration (see Appendix E).

16. Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee (JCC) hears appeals from a decision made by a council, a classis, or an agency of the Christian Reformed Church if it is alleged that an action violates the Church Order or the agency’s mandate. The procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. The committee’s members from both Canada and the United States include people with legal expertise, clergy, and nonclergy. . . .

b. Review of the Judicial Code Committee

Per instruction of Synod 2019 that the COD “review the Judicial Code every five years, seeking input from the Judicial Code Committee, the Office of Safe Church Ministry, and Church Order experts, to ensure that the Judicial Code continues to function as intended and to assess if updates and/or modifications are needed” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763), the COD adopted a process of review of the Judicial Code Committee to begin in 2022 and to be completed in 2024.

17. Bible Translations Committee update

Appointees to the Bible Translations Committee, at the instruction of Synod 2019, identified additional members for the committee to complete the committee composition. The COD made the final appointments in February 2020 to fully constitute the committee, allowing the work of the committee to get under way. Serving on the Bible Translations Committee are Kristine Johnson, William T. Koopmans, Benjamin Ribbens, Sarah Schreiber, and Michael Williams.

18. U.S. diaconal initiative

Synod 2015 requested reporting from the executive director on “annual progress of the . . . efforts of denominational agencies and ministries as all seek to work together for the revitalization of the offices of elder and deacon” (*Acts of Synod 2015*, pp. 669-70). The executive director reported in February a decision to hire a U.S. diaconate coordinator. The need for such a resource was affirmed by the COD.

19. Historical research on dealing with political and/or justice matters

Synod 2019 instructed “the Council of Delegates to do historical research on synodical decisions and the defining rationale for making those decisions in dealing with political and/or justice matters, and to report through one of the COD committees and/or an ad hoc group. The Council of Delegates will report back to Synod 2020” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22). The COD presents the following recommendation:

That synod appoint a study committee to address the issues raised by Synod 2019 (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22) regarding historical research on synodical decisions and rationale for making decisions dealing with political and justice issues. The composition of the committee must include a healthy representation of God’s diversity in the church (i.e., Indigenous and other ethnic minorities). The outcome should also include a robust process of communication oriented toward the church at all levels (i.e., Faith Formation Committee conversation re Children at the Lord’s Supper—“the shepherding model”).

Grounds:

- a. The issues raised in Article 77 of the *Acts of Synod 2019* (pp. 820-22) are important to the identity and future of our church. Due to the gravity of this issue, the importance of connecting with the church broadly, and a timetable necessary to do the work well, a synodical study committee would be a more appropriate means to address this issue.
- b. While the work of gathering the historical data requested can be done effectively and quickly, the definition of *ecclesiastical matters*

is a complex issue that affects more than justice and mercy matters and thus deserves a more complete study than the COD is equipped to make.

- c. Any study into proposing a Supplement to Church Order Article 28 should be undertaken through a synodical study committee, not by the COD, which is not set up to direct study committees. . . .

21. Terminology for partnerships

The COD considered the use of terms referring to partner ministries and organizations and adopted new terminology: *affiliated nondenominational agencies* are now referred to as *partnerships*. The CRCNA will no longer have need to differentiate between *denominationally related agencies/ministries*, *affiliated nondenominational organizations*, and *nonaffiliated nondenominational organizations*. The changes have also been incorporated into the policy regarding accreditation of organizations for denominational financial support.

22. Publications and services

a. Yearbook

The CRC *Yearbook* is made available in print, as a downloadable PDF (available at faithaliveresources.org), and in online format (crcna.org/Yearbook) near the beginning of each calendar year. This publication reflects an extensive information-gathering process of denominational and local-church information as of approximately August 31 of each calendar year preceding the annual publication. Data received from the churches, classes, and ordained personnel throughout the rest of the year is continually updated in the online *Yearbook* (at crcna.org/Yearbook). The online format includes the Church Finder feature, which provides maps, church service times, membership information, and links to church websites, among other helpful information. Classis and denominational statistics can also be downloaded at crcna.org/Yearbook. Minister service history, special days to be observed in the church calendar, and denominational ministry-share information are all linked via the online *Yearbook*.

Among some of the statistics available in the online *Yearbook* are the total number of members (baptized and confessing) in a local congregation; 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 received from other CRCs, through evangelism, and from other denominations. This data continues to present a historical record of our church and ministry together through the years.

b. Church Order and Its Supplements and Rules for Synodical Procedure

The *Church Order and Its Supplements 2019* reflects the updates adopted by Synod 2019. The latest version, published by the Office of Synodical Services, was distributed to each of the churches in early fall 2019 and has been translated into Korean and Spanish. The *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, also updated following the decisions of Synod 2019 and translated for Spanish-speaking and Korean-speaking churches, is available in electronic format only. Both the Church

Order and the Rules for Synodical Procedure are available in digital format at crcna.org/SynodResources.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the director of synodical services under the direction of the executive director. From time to time some decisions need to be made by the ED about which material properly belongs in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seems more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether material is properly on its agenda.

Synod 2019 decided that in order to improve the connection between synod and classes and churches, a summary of the *Agenda for Synod* should be sent to delegates and church council clerks with an encouragement to pass it along to church members. Watch for a summary document to be available in mid-spring 2020.

d. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

The *Manual for Synodical Deputies* is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and the stated clerks of classes. A revision of the manual was completed in summer 2019 by the Office of Synodical Services, reflecting the decisions of Synod 2019. Anyone desiring to access or download a copy of this tool for the classes may do so by going to the stated clerk and synodical deputy webpage at crcna.org/SynodicalDeputies.

e. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*

A very helpful tool for churches and classes, the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* was updated by Henry DeMoor in fall 2019 to reflect decisions through Synod 2019 that have been incorporated into the Church Order. We are grateful to Dr. DeMoor for his contribution of providing a tool for use by classes, churches, and many others working and advising on polity matters. This resource is intended as a companion to the CRC's Church Order, offering commentary and explanation of guidelines set forth and decisions made by synod over the years. The manual is available for viewing in the CRC Digital Library (crcna.org/DigitalLibrary), and print and downloadable versions are available through Faith Alive (faithaliveresources.org).

f. *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*

Also recently updated in 2020 is Henry DeMoor's *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, last printed in 2010. This invaluable resource, providing the context for the rules of the church—the "why" behind the rules—is available for viewing in the CRC Digital Library (crcna.org/DigitalLibrary), and print and downloadable versions are available through Faith Alive (faithaliveresources.org).

B. *Program matters*

A significant part of the Council of Delegates' work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of the reports of the agencies,

institutions, and ministries and via this section of the COD's report in this agenda. Additional information regarding financial matters is contained in Appendix K to this Council of Delegates Report as well as in the *Agenda for Synod 2020—Financial and Business Supplement* that will be distributed just prior to synod. The final budget and the ministry-share request will be presented to synod by way of the COD Supplement report and synod's financial matters advisory committee.

The COD provides denominational oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The office of the executive director serves as the primary link between the COD and the denomination's ministries. Serving within the office of the ED are the director of ministries and administration (DMA), the Canadian ministries director (CMD), the director of finance and operations (DFO), the director of Back to God Ministries International, the director of Resonate Global Mission, the director of synodical services (DSS), and the director of communications and marketing (DCM).

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC), convened by the executive director of the CRCNA, has responsibility for implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (*Our Journey 2020*), for the collaboration of the ministries, and for the review of program matters. The binational membership of the MLC is made up of executive leadership, directors of agencies, presidents of the educational institutions (or their designees), and others representing specific offices and functions. The Canadian Ministries Team, convened by the Canadian ministries director, provides leadership to the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Canada.

The program and financial matters processed by the COD from July through February are presented to synod as information. Any matters that require action by synod are identified within the body of this report.

1. Current: *Our Journey 2020* – The Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church

The Council of Delegates is mandated by synod to lead in developing and implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church that provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The plan provides a framework for the COD's supervision of the management of the agencies and ministries; the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.

After listening carefully to members and leaders of Christian Reformed churches across North America in previous years, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA identified (and the COD recognizes) a set of mutually desired futures. These desired futures, endorsed by Synod 2015, include the following:

Desired Future 1: Church and Community. We want to participate with each other, and with the people in the communities where we live and work, to discover where God's Spirit is already active and to bear witness to Christ in a way that invites others to accept him and become part of his family.

Desired Future 2: Discipleship. Our congregations will be vibrant communities, shaped by grace, that proclaim the gospel and are engaged in evangelism and lifelong discipleship with people of all generations.

Desired Future 3: Leadership. Our congregations and ministries at all levels—local, regional, and denominational—will be places where leaders, both ordained and lay, are identified, equipped, and empowered to serve effectively in today’s diverse and challenging world.

Desired Future 4: Identity. We will understand deeply, embrace fully, and express freely what it means to be the Christian Reformed Church in North America in this time and place.

Desired Future 5: Collaboration. We will work together—locally, regionally, nationally, and binationally—to live out our fivefold calling in ways that are effective, efficient, responsive, cross-culturally competent, accessible, and sustainable.

Our Journey 2020 has provided a set of strategic and integrated directions for the agencies, ministries, and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church by focusing on what we believe God was calling congregations to be and to do in ways unique to the ministry contexts and opportunities of each. Short videos about these desired futures—meant to inspire and encourage congregations and classes—have been developed and are available at crcna.org/welcome/our-journey-2020. In addition, assistance is provided for congregations and classes in using the desired futures and strategic goals of *Our Journey 2020* in ways that resonate with the needs and opportunities of each.

Our Journey 2020 officially launched in July 2016. Measures have been developed to track (a) denominational agency and ministry efficacy in the provision of assistance and resources, and (b) the attainment of the desired futures through surveying Christian Reformed churches and their members across North America.

2. Proposed: *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

The COD adopted a timeline for developing the next ministry plan (including listening sessions during national and binational gatherings during 2019 to gather input), for receiving a draft plan for endorsement, and for presenting a revised ministry plan to Synod 2020. The COD reviewed a draft of the proposed *Our Journey 2025* at its February 2020 meeting and anticipates a final version to present to synod by way of the COD Supplement in May.

3. Our Calling

Proposed by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture to Synod 2014, the term *Five Streams*—changed to “Our Calling” in 2016—became a focus of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in its collaboration, programs, and reporting. Synod 2015 adopted the five themes of Our Calling of the Christian Reformed Church (included below) to function as “ministry priorities to strategically focus and adaptively organize the work of the Christian Reformed Church in North America while respecting and building on our previous mission efforts,

history, and legacy of relationships and member support” (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 680).

Faith Formation

As a community of believers, we seek to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to nurture their faith through all ages and stages of life.

Servant Leadership

Understanding that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish, we identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God.

Global Mission

Called to be witnesses of Christ’s kingdom to the ends of the earth, we start and strengthen local churches in North America and around the world.

Mercy and Justice

Hearing the cries of the oppressed, forsaken, and disadvantaged, we seek to act justly and love mercy as we walk humbly with our God.

Gospel Proclamation and Worship

Believing that faith comes through the hearing of God’s Word, we proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and seek to worship him in all that we do.

Consistent with prior actions of both adopting the five features and then relabeling them as “Our Calling,” we note that these ministry priorities are being utilized to communicate more effectively what the CRC members and ministers, congregations and classes, and ministries and agencies are called do. The *Annual Ministry Report*, the *Agenda for Synod*, and introductory brochures all utilize this categorization. Further, the Council of Delegates committee structure and committee mandates reflect these priorities.

4. CRC agency, institution, and congregational services reports

The Council of Delegates is responsible for submitting a *unified* report to synod composed of individual segments provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports of the CRC ministries appear in the following pages of this *Agenda for Synod*.

These reports portray the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church at home and around the world. As you read these materials, we invite you to praise God for ministry opportunities and for the thousands of staff and volunteers throughout the church who are living and sharing the gospel. . . .

6. New Policy for Program and Personnel Reduction

The COD in October adopted a new Policy for Program and Personnel Reduction to add to the COD Governance Handbook. The policy provides guidelines to staff in the event of an economic turndown that might require immediate action for program or personnel reductions. . . .

8. Faith Formation Ministries

The COD presents on behalf of Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) the following recommendations for consideration by synod (see also the Faith Formation Ministries report, pp. 143-46):

- a. That synod encourage CRC congregations to consider/reconsider using the *Dwell* children's ministry curriculum as a vibrant, Reformed resource for faith formation among children.

Grounds:

- 1) Starting in the new ministry year, a *Dwell Digital* subscription will be available free to all CRC congregations as a benefit of our ministry-share resources.
 - 2) The *Dwell* curriculum has an established track record of being a beneficial faith-formative curriculum.
- b. That, in connection with Synod 2018's affirmation of an ongoing need for Reformed curriculum, synod encourage congregations to consult with their FFM regional catalyzers or Faith Formation Ministries office staff concerning their particular needs and opportunities for faith formation-related resources for all ages.
 - c. That synod encourage all classes to partner with FFM in appointing a volunteer Youth Ministry Champion to serve the congregations of their classis.
 - d. That synod encourage all congregations to recognize how critical the church/home relationship is for discipleship, and to take steps to strengthen the faith formation partnership between church and home.
 - e. That synod encourage CRC members to consider supporting Faith Formation Ministries with their personal gifts. (We are very grateful for the many congregations that now include Faith Formation Ministries for an annual offering.)

9. Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal

The CRC and Reformed Church in America received a generous grant from the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation to be used over a five-year period to establish a "third space"—not entirely within the RCA, and not entirely within the CRC—where churches from either denomination can access resources and support for congregational renewal. A steering committee, consisting of at least two senior staff members and one nonstaff member from each of the two denominations, successfully established the Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal (RPCR); this partnership has now been renamed Vibrant Congregations and is being led by Larry Doornbos. For more information on this initiative, see ReformedPartners.org.

10. Justice and mercy efforts

- a. As fulfillment of an instruction from Synod 2017, a follow-up report regarding renewed mercy and justice efforts in response to global humanitarian crises is provided in Appendix I.

b. The COD referred the following encouragement by Synod 2019 to the Center for Public Dialogue and Office of Social Justice: “That synod encourage the work of addressing peace in the Middle East already being done, acknowledging the awareness of injustice, and commend with thanks the work being done,” and “that synod (with the COD) recognize and encourage our staff and churches to continue to strive for increased partnership that seeks a third way between mainline and evangelical approaches and fosters increased reconciliation on all sides” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 817).

11. Church planting goals

The Council of Delegates has endorsed an interim report of the Collaborative Church Planting Team led by Resonate Global Mission staff and composed of church planters and CRCNA staff members. The interim report presented a grid of strategies that can be used to support three different styles of church planting in the CRC: classic and multi-site (emphasis on Sunday gathering), micro-church (community and house church), and macro-church (church planting hubs). The grid lays out the various resourcing needs (human, financial, and logistic) for these styles of church planting. The Collaborative Church Planting Team will be suggesting further recommendations to the COD in May. In addition, the Global Missions Committee of the COD is grateful for the helpful feedback received from the twenty-one classes that responded to the survey on church planting.

12. Immigration resources

Synod instructed “the executive director, in consultation with the appropriate CRC agencies, to identify and communicate appropriate legal and financial resources to assist churches and classes with the immigration of pastors and their families” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 778). The COD reviewed the list of immigration resources for pastors and churches and noted that the resources could be enhanced by including a list of individuals who have gone through the immigration process in the past. However, the COD considered the synodical commitment to provide immigration assistance for pastors and churches and decided not to list publicly (i.e., on the crcna website) the names of individuals who have been processed through the immigration system.

Grounds:

- a. Privacy laws in Canada would need to be considered.
- b. Given the current environment in the U.S. regarding visas, permanent residency, and the like, it would be unwise to post the names of any individuals currently or recently involved in immigration processes or decisions.
- c. The website directs the user to the Human Resources department; when such contact is made, the professional judgment of HR personnel (by permission of the intended person) could lead to personal contact (see crcna.org/resources/church-resources/immigration-resources).

13. U.S. Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice
The COD received an update that the U.S. Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice, appointed in 2019, has convened its first meeting. Work is under way to support this ministry of the CRCNA.

14. Ministry Support Services

- a. Shared services

The staff of Ministry Support Services (MSS) is responsible for *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Libros Desafio (Spanish-language resources), and a number of professional services that support CRC ministries. These services include marketing, order and subscription processing, call center, editorial services, translation, rights and permissions management, design and web services, purchasing, and distribution. At any one time, more than 100 projects are in process, and thousands of words are being combined with design elements for publication via paper or pixels. The call center handles about 20,000 phone calls per year, in addition to processing online orders, email, and live chats on various CRCNA websites.

In the interest of consistent style, branding, and quality presentation, MSS has supported CRC communications staff in creating guides for Brand Standards (crcna.org/Brand) and Editorial Style (crcna.org/Style).

As we plan for major construction in the Grand Rapids office, we have been exploring options for how to drastically reduce warehouse space. These options include inventory reduction, outsourcing to a third-party provider, and warehouse reconfiguration. The plan is to convert most or all of our upper warehouse into offices.

- b. *The Banner*

The Banner, the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, currently prints and distributes more than 75,000 copies of its paper version. Website pageviews average about 48,000 per month, and more than 3,000 people have signed up to receive the weekly *Banner* email. Our efforts on social media also help to ensure that *Banner* content is available to anyone in a variety of forms.

The Banner app is available for free download on iPhone and Android devices (thebanner.org/App); monthly, the app is receiving more than 6,500 pageviews.

We are most thankful for a huge show of support from *Banner* readers, as nearly 6,000 donors gave almost \$450,000 for the annual appeal fundraiser in 2019.

- c. Faith Alive and Libros Desafio

Although Synod 2013 approved the dissolution of the Faith Alive Christian Resources board and noted the necessary transition regarding critical functions of Faith Alive, MSS continues to sell and reprint resources that were already published. As those products grow older, and without new products to take their place, sales continue to decline. Sales are currently just under \$1 million per year, compared to about \$3 million in 2013. Similarly, Libros Desafio has ceased

publishing new titles but continues to sell and reprint the backlist; sales are about \$180,000 per year.

Christian Reformed congregations continue to receive a special “CRC discount” in comparison to what churches of other denominations pay. In addition, the CRC Digital Library allows anyone attending a Christian Reformed congregation free access to most Faith Alive titles online. And, new this year, CRCs will receive free, online access to *Dwell Digital* resources (other churches pay up to \$500 per year to access these Sunday school curriculum resources). All of these initiatives are intended to help Christian Reformed churches make full use of these resources that they helped publish.

d. The Network

Launched in 2010, the Network (crcna.org/Network) is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. Over the past decade the Network has become one of the CRC’s most-visited websites where people involved in their local church can connect—with each other and with denominational staff—about the “nuts and bolts” of ministry. Ministry Support Services oversees the site with a half-time community manager.

Use of the site continues to increase, with double-digit growth in each of the past five years and now over 100,000 pageviews per month. CRC members have posted thousands of blogs, discussion topics, and ministry questions. In addition, more than 2,000 ministry resources are now online and searchable from crcna.org/resources.

C. Financial matters

1. Introduction

In order to assure that synod has the most up-to-date and accurate financial information, detailed financial data will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2020—Business and Financial Supplement*, which will be made available to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021), and the recommended ministry-share amount for the first six months of calendar year 2021, in anticipation of synod’s adoption of the Reimagining Ministry Shares report. In addition, synod will be asked to approve a schedule for one or more above-ministry-share offerings for the ministries of the denomination, a quarterly offering for World Renew (in lieu of ministry-share support), and a listing of new requests for accredited agency status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the Council of Delegates Supplement report later in May. . . .

3. Remodeling and repurposing of the Grand Rapids facility and property

The COD in October 2019 endorsed a proposal to proceed with a radical remodeling and repurposing of the Grand Rapids, Michigan, facility and acreage, with costs not to exceed \$11.7 million, including but not limited to the following changes:

- demolishing the north wing (two stories)
- reclaiming some of the existing warehouse space for offices

- providing a range of improvements in existing office space
- addressing all deferred maintenance
- entering into real estate sales for three parcels along 28th Street
- participating in a possible three-way buy-sell arrangement for the south parcel

The COD adopted a revenue plan that includes \$3 million in donations, \$2.5 million in property sales, and \$5.6 million in self-financing.

Note: In mid-March the administration made the difficult decision to postpone the remodeling project of the Grand Rapids facility for up to a year due to the COVID-19 crisis and stay-at-home orders.

III. Recommendations

...

B. That synod grant all requests for privilege of the floor by the COD, agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2020. . . .

H. That synod take note of the appointment by the COD of Colin P. Watson, Sr., as acting executive director of the CRCNA until such a time as synod can appoint an interim executive director. The appointment was due to the immediate departure of Steven R. Timmermans as executive director on February 20 (II, A, 1).

I. That synod take note of the planned retirement of the director of ministries and administration (Colin P. Watson, Sr.), effective January 6, 2021; and the director of finance and operations (John H. Bolt), effective July 2, 2021; and express its sincere gratitude to Mr. Watson and Mr. Bolt for their service to the denomination (II, A, 2).

J. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the COD to the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force and the Consideration of Bivocationality Task Force on behalf of synod (II, A, 3).

K. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the COD for synodical deputies, alternate synodical deputies, and the World Renew Board of Delegates (II, A, 4). . . .

M. That synod adopt the following Church Order changes proposed by and presented on behalf of Synod 2019 (indicated by ~~striketrough~~ and *italics*; see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 357-59; *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 768-71, 812) (II, A, 11; Appendix C):

1. Categories of affiliation

Supplement, Article 8, G

G. *Joint Ministry of Ministers from Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship* Communion
Ministers of denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for their

services must be demonstrated and the pension fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denomination holding the minister's credentials.

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

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

(Acts of Synod 1997, p. 663)

(Acts of Synod 202_, p. ____)

Articles 38-g and -h

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

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-g

h. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may affiliate with one or more additional denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion, with the approval of classis and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-h

Supplement, Article 38-h

The following plan for affiliation shall be adopted by a particular church to affiliate with one or more denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion:

Article 49

a. Synod shall appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, especially those that are part of the Reformed family, as articulated in the synodically approved Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church 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 designate the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~, the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in dialogue, communion or in cooperation, and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.

Article 59-e

e. Confessing members coming from churches in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ communion shall be admitted as confessing members of the congregation upon the presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members.

Articles 66-a and -b

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

b. Baptized members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ *communion* shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

Article 67

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

2. Tasks of synod

Article 47

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the ~~hymnals~~ *Psalter-Hymnal*, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship. No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.

3. The Lord's Day

Church Order Articles 51-a and 51-b

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

b. Each classis shall affirm the rich tradition of assembling a second time on the Lord's Day for worship, learning, prayer, and fellowship by encouraging churches to include these items as part of a strategic ministry plan for the building up of the body of Christ.

Note: The current Articles 51-b and -c would become 51-c and -d respectively; Supplement, Article 51-a would be deleted.

Proposed deletion of Article 54-b

~~a. The proclamation of the Word shall be central to the worship of the church and shall be guided by the creeds and confessions.~~

~~b. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the creeds and confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism.~~

N. That synod receive the Classis Ministry Plans report as a fulfillment of the request from Synod 2018 and instruct the COD to request that the Classis Renewal Advisory Team report to Synod 2021 regarding (1) new resources being developed for creating or refining a classis ministry plan and (2) an update on which classes have a ministry plan, since many are currently in process (II, A, 13; Appendix D).

O. That synod adopt the report on the definition of heresy as a fulfillment of the instruction of Synod 2019, consider its recommendations, and express gratitude to the authors of the report for their work and contribution (II, A, 15; Appendix E). . . .

5. That synod appoint a study committee to address the issues raised by Synod 2019 (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 820-22) regarding historical research on synodical decisions and rationale for making decisions dealing with political and justice issues. The composition of the committee must include a healthy representation of God’s diversity in the church (i.e., Indigenous and other ethnic minorities). The outcome should also include a robust process of communication oriented toward the church at all levels (i.e., Faith Formation Committee conversation re Children at the Lord’s Supper—“the shepherding model”) (II, A, 19).

Grounds:

1. The issues raised in Article 77 of the *Acts of Synod 2019* (pp. 820-22) are important to the identity and future of our church. Due to the gravity of this issue, the importance of connecting with the church broadly, and the timetable necessary to do the work well, a synodical study committee would be a more appropriate means to address this issue.
2. While the work of gathering the historical data requested can be done effectively and quickly, the definition of *ecclesiastical matters* is a more complex issue that affects more than justice and mercy matters and thus deserves a more complete study than the COD is equipped to make.
3. Any study into proposing a Supplement to Church Order Article 28 should be undertaken through a synodical study committee, not by the COD, which is not set up to direct study committees. . . .

W. That synod address the following with regard to Faith Formation Ministries (II, B, 8; see also FFM report, pp. 143-46):

1. That synod encourage CRC congregations to consider/reconsider using the *Dwell* children’s ministry curriculum as a vibrant, Reformed resource for faith formation among children.

Grounds:

- a. Starting in the new ministry year, a *Dwell Digital* subscription will be available free to all CRC congregations as a benefit of our ministry-share resources.
- b. The *Dwell* curriculum has an established track record of being a beneficial faith-formative curriculum.
2. That, in connection with Synod 2018’s affirmation of an ongoing need for Reformed curriculum, synod encourage congregations to consult with their FFM regional catalyzers or Faith Formation Ministries office staff concerning their particular needs and opportunities for faith formation-related resources for all ages.
3. That synod encourage all classes to partner with FFM in appointing a volunteer Youth Ministry Champion to serve the congregations of their classis.
4. That synod encourage all congregations to recognize how critical the church/home relationship is for discipleship, and to take steps to strengthen the faith formation partnership between church and home.

5. That synod encourage CRC members to consider supporting Faith Formation Ministries with their personal gifts. (We are very grateful for the many congregations that now include Faith Formation Ministries for an annual offering.)
- X. That synod receive the follow-up report in Appendix I regarding renewed mercy and justice efforts in response to global humanitarian crises as fulfillment of an instruction from Synod 2017 (II, B, 10, a). . . .
- Z. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements of the agencies and educational institutions (Appendix K).

Council of Delegates of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Paul R. De Vries, chair

Appendix A Joint Supervision for Ordained CRCNA Staff

I. Background

Church Order Article 13-b states:

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

Cf. Supplement, Article 13-b

Supplement, Article 13-b states, in part:

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

As noted, for ministers of the Word employed by an agency / ministry of the CRCNA, the agency / ministry has *primary* responsibility for supervision of duties for the position held by that minister, and the council of the calling church has *primary* responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. Supervision of these two areas is not mutually exclusive, so it seems important to have appropriate communication between the council and the agency / ministry related to the minister's work, doctrine, and life.

Supervision for a commissioned pastor is addressed in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook: "The classis shall ensure that commissioned pastors, especially those working at some distance from their calling congregations, will have proper supervision and support for their ministry." Further instruction is given that the job description needs approval of the classis and synodical deputies, and that a "good job description" should include a description of the supervision and lines of accountability for the position.

II. Protocol

For ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors called to serve in a ministry, agency, or institution of the CRCNA, the CRCNA supervisor is responsible to provide a formal written performance review for the staff member on an annual basis (currently in June/July). At least one month prior to the review, the CRCNA supervisor should invite the calling church council to provide a communication related to their supervision of the person's doctrine and life. When the written performance review is completed, the agency/ministry supervisor will share a brief summary of that review (shared with the staff member in advance) with the council leadership of the calling church. This process will provide both the council and the agency/ministry an annual opportunity for communication.

If significant concerns are noted throughout the year by either the calling church council or the agency/ministry regarding performance of duties, the observing party will summarize those concerns for the other party, and the two parties may decide to hold a joint meeting with the staff member to address the concerns. This protocol is not intended to interfere with the agency/ministry's right (and potential need) to take immediate employment action when necessary for compliance with applicable laws, protection of other staff, or other compelling reasons.

This protocol (e.g., to request feedback from the calling church and to share a brief summary of the performance review) would be specified in writing for the staff member at the beginning of their employment with the CRCNA agency/ministry, and the staff member would be required to authorize the sharing of information with the council as a condition of employment with the agency/ministry.

Note: This pertains to all ordained ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors currently serving as CRCNA staff as well as for all new hires.

Adopted by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA
October 2019 . . .

Appendix C

Proposed Church Order Changes by Synod 2019

On behalf of Synod 2019, the COD presents to Synod 2020 the following Church Order changes proposed by Synod 2019 for adoption (indicated by ~~striketrough~~ and *italics*; see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 357-59; *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 768-71, 812):

A. Categories of affiliation

Supplement, Article 8, G

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

Ministers of denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ *communion* with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for their

services must be demonstrated and the pension fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denomination holding the minister's credentials.

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

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

(Acts of Synod 1997, p. 663)

(Acts of Synod 202_, p. __)

Articles 38-g and -h

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

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-g

h. Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may affiliate with one or more additional denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ *communion*, with the approval of classis and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-h

Supplement, Article 38-h

The following plan for affiliation shall be adopted by a particular church to affiliate with one or more denominations in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ *communion*:

Article 49

a. Synod shall appoint a committee to encourage ecumenical relationships with other Christian churches, especially those that are part of the Reformed family, as articulated in the synodically approved Ecumenical Charter of the Christian Reformed Church 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 designate the churches with whom the Christian Reformed Church is in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ *communion* or in cooperation, and the ecumenical organizations in which the Christian Reformed Church holds membership or significantly participates.

Article 59-e

e. Confessing members coming from churches in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ *communion* shall be admitted as confessing members of the congregation upon the presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members.

Articles 66-a and -b

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

b. Baptized members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ~~ecclesiastical fellowship~~ *communion* shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

Article 67

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

B. Tasks of synod

Article 47

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the ~~hymnals~~ *Psalter-Hymnal*, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship. No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.

C. The Lord's Day

Church Order Articles 51-a and 51-b

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

b. Each classis shall affirm the rich tradition of assembling a second time on the Lord's Day for worship, learning, prayer, and fellowship by encouraging churches to include these items as part of a strategic ministry plan for the building up of the body of Christ.

Note: The current Articles 51-b and -c would become 51-c and -d respectively; Supplement, Article 51-a would be deleted.

Proposed deletion of Article 54-b

~~a.-The proclamation of the Word shall be central to the worship of the church and shall be guided by the creeds and confessions.~~

~~b. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the creeds and confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism.~~

Appendix D Classis Ministry Plans

I. Background

Synod 2018 received the report of the Classis Renewal Group and adopted the following:

That synod encourage all classes to develop and share their ministry plan (cf. Church Order Art. 75, adopted by Synod 2015) with the Classis Renewal Advisory Team so that the team can provide the COD with a summary of the plans (to be forwarded to Synod 2020).

(Acts of Synod 2018, p. 518)

This report is presented as a fulfillment of the request of synod, sharing a summary of the ministry plans that the Classis Renewal Advisory Team has received from classes.

We have found that synod's encouragement has been helpful for generating conversation around the purpose of classis and the value of having an intentional ministry plan. In several cases, classis leaders who were not aware of Article 75 of the Church Order saw this as an opportunity to open up conversation in their own contexts. In other places it has led to classes' revisiting their ministry plan to ensure it is up to date and still purposeful. As such, the information that follows is a snapshot from January 2020. Some of the information will undoubtedly be out of date as you read this.

Copies of ministry plans can be found at crcna.org/classis.

II. Status of classis ministry plans

A. Classes with ministry plans

Following is a list of classes that have supplied the Classis Renewal Advisory Team with copies of ministry plans. The date of the ministry plan is also noted if made available to the team. Some classes are currently in the process of updating their ministry plan.

Alberta North (2019)
Arizona (2016)
Atlantic Northeast
B.C. North-West (2019)
California South (2016)
Central Plains (2019)
Chicago South (2018)
Eastern Canada (2015)
Georgetown
Grand Rapids East (2019 draft)
Grand Rapids South (2011)
Greater Los Angeles (2014)
Heartland (2012)
Holland (2018)
Illiana (2019 draft)
Ko-Am (2019)
Muskegon (2018)
Niagara (2016)
Northcentral Iowa (2019)
Quinte (2014)
Southeast U.S. (2018)
Thornapple Valley (2010)
Toronto (2019)
Zeeland (2010)

B. Classes with ministry plans in process

The following classes do not currently have a defined ministry plan but have indicated they are discussing or in the process of developing one:

B.C. South-East
Chatham
Grand Rapids North
Grandville
Hamilton
Hackensack
Hudson
Huron
Lake Superior
Minnkota
Northern Michigan
Pacific Northwest
Red Mesa
Rocky Mountain
Wisconsin
Yellowstone

C. Classes with no ministry plan

The following list of classes includes those that have indicated they do not currently have a ministry plan, and those for which our team has not been able to determine whether they have a plan:

Alberta South/Saskatchewan
Central California
Columbia
Hanmi
Iakota
Kalamazoo
Lake Erie
North Cascades
Northern Illinois

D. Observations about current ministry plans

Classis ministry plans are not uniform. They represent a variety of classis structures, as well as perspectives on what a ministry plan should be. In order to collect the ministry plans, we simply asked classes to provide what they had on file that would best constitute a current ministry plan. Themes that the team noted include the following:

1. Some ministry plans are generally descriptions of current organizational structure. For example, these ministry plans may be as simple as a list of the existing classis committees with their mandates. In these cases, the ministry plan primarily acts to clarify the overall activities of the classis in a helpful summarized way.
2. Some ministry plans define specific values and/or goals. This seems to be a trend particularly in some newer ministry plans, with five values/goals being a common number of values named.
 - a. In some of these classes, an extensive discernment process occurred to name these values; in other cases the leadership of one classis saw the ministry plan of another and simply decided to adopt it with some adaptations.

- b. It is also common in these classes to build a set of teams around the values/ goals. These teams are responsible for ensuring the value finds root within the classis structure. It is also common that the team is involved or responsible for developing an educational component of a classis meeting around their specific value.
 - c. While some classes have these teams and their values as an additional structure in the classis, in other cases the teams make up the structure of classis itself, and the leaders of the teams are part of the overall leadership team of the full classis.
 - d. In some cases a classis requires all agenda items, new ministries, educational opportunities, funding, etc. to be connected to one of the values. In other cases, the values exist alongside the preexisting structure and methods of decision making.
3. Some ministry plans have defined goals with timelines. This may be similar to what is called a *strategic plan*. In this case, a goal is named, a target date is set, and a person or position is named to accomplish the goal. This seems more rare for a classis to have this; but when it works, it can provide a helpful way forward if a classis is moving intentionally into a new reality.
 4. Some classes do not have a ministry plan. In these cases, it might not be clear how a ministry plan could be helpful, or it might not be clear what a ministry plan might actually entail. Or, in some cases, a ministry plan has just not developed yet, and asking the question has moved some classes to start exploring what it might take to develop a ministry plan. In these cases, there is a desire for a process to be laid out.

E. Some examples of named values and/or teams within classes

1. Classis Niagara – prayerful dependence on God, authentic community, disciples making disciples, leadership development, covenantal relationships
2. California South – discipleship, leadership development, church identity, collaboration, community engagement
3. Thornapple Valley – church planting, church renewal
4. Classis Atlantic Northeast – leadership development, church multiplication, church renewal (with a classis interim committee)
5. Classis Grand Rapids South – growing our classis/ reversing the decline, improving classis communication, promoting ministry partnerships, improving pastoral health, defining the ministry/ polity balance of classis
6. Other

Some classes are exploring the use of the four key purposes listed in the Classis Renewal Group report to Synod 2018 that are also now reflected in Church Order Article 39. For example, several classes are structuring their meeting agendas using the following four purposes:

- a. A place of discerning the Spirit in community
- b. A network of support and accountability
- c. Living into a collective calling
- d. A connection to the wider church

F. Other observations about ministry plans in general

1. Expectations of a ministry plan

It seems to be a common understanding that a ministry plan is designed around moving people into greater collective ministry. In this case, the idea of developing a ministry plan feels like a requirement to do more. However, our support for classes developing ministry plans is more based on ensuring the goals, whatever they may be, find alignment and a structure to support them. So a ministry plan, while it may lead to doing *more*, may also be just as effective in helping a classis do *less* as the ministries, networks, meetings, etc. come into better alignment.

2. In several cases, ministry plans and organizational structure are not in intentional alignment, or they are actually out of alignment. An example would be a classis with a ministry plan that specifies core values and new priorities without addressing the current rules of procedure or committee structures. So there may be additional teams created, but the mandates of the existing committees might not be folded into those of the new teams or might not be intentionally reconfigured to anchor their work in the core values. This is also true when it comes to the budget, which often is developed with the ministry plan in mind but is not shaped by and accountable to it.

3. Little imagination for local church experience to directly inform ministry plans

A classis may have a majority of its churches engaging in renewal journeys or pastors participating in peer support or learning opportunities. And yet there is often little attention paid to expanding the impact of these experiences into a classis setting.

4. Lack of value or even a sense of competition

While it is our desire that church members and leaders should be able to say their church is better off because it is part of a classis, this is not the common feeling. Rather, many see the collective ministry of classis as something that is in competition with local church ministry, particularly in terms of finances or participation availability.

5. The value of a leader

Classis renewal seems to thrive best when there is a champion in place.

6. Exposure to others

It is easy for a classis to function in isolation from other classes and only work together for larger denominational engagement (e.g., synod). We are finding that creating space for classis leaders to hear what is happening in other classes can spark imagination and create significant opportunities for developing ministry plans that are informed by their colleagues. It also allows bridging the gap between those things that are

truly unique to a classis and that which they might find in common, also creating opportunities for local adaptation.

7. Measuring

Other than in a ministry plan that is written like a strategic plan, it is easy for a ministry plan to define activities and structure but not necessarily to provide measurements to show the classis is faithfully living into the plan.

8. Ongoing refinement

Ministry plans are not static. Some classes have ministry plans that have been in existence for many years and may benefit from a revisit/refresh. Some classes have started having a more stable ministry plan that defines their structure, but they are also creating time-based strategic plans to go alongside the ministry plan.

9. Article 75

Church Order Article 75 mentions ministry plans that advance diaconal and evangelical witness, as well as drawing on the roles of both elders and deacons. Many ministry plans lean into these matters but could perhaps consider ways to more clearly articulate both of these aspects of witness.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod receive this report as a fulfillment of the request from Synod 2018.

B. That synod instruct the COD to request that the Classis Renewal Advisory Team report to Synod 2021 regarding (1) new resources being developed for creating or refining a classis ministry plan and (2) an update on which classes have a ministry plan, since many are currently in process.

Appendix E

What Is *Heresy*, and When Should This Term Be Used?

Outline of the Report

- I. Introduction
- II. Observations from Synod 2019
- III. The New Testament on *heresy*
- IV. The early church on *heresy*
- V. The Reformed tradition on *heresy*
- VI. Roman Catholic teaching on *heresy*
- VII. Contemporary usage of the term *heresy*
- VIII. What is *heresy*?
- IX. When should the term *heresy* be used?
- X. Recommendations

I. Introduction

Synod 2019 adopted several sections of an overture from Classes California South and Hackensack to declare aspects of Kinist teaching to be “a

grievous deviation from sound doctrine, a heresy.” Among the grounds for this declaration, the overture included these statements: “The CRCNA has declared both apartheid and the theological reasoning that supports apartheid to be heresy” and “A heresy is a serious deviation from sound doctrine” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 501-502; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818).

Immediately after making this declaration, Synod 2019 also approved a recommendation from its advisory committee to clarify the meaning and application of the term *heresy* (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 819-20):

That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to address the proper and ongoing definition and application of the word *heresy* by using one of its regular committees and/or an ad hoc committee and then have the Council of Delegates report on the matter to Synod 2020. This committee would best be composed of members of the appropriate agencies, including especially Calvin Theological Seminary.

Grounds:

- a. Overture 7 to Synod 2019 links to a 1984 synodical report on apartheid in South Africa. That report defines *heresy* as follows: “By ‘heresy’ we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions” (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 604). Our advisory committee deems this definition too broad, especially for a denomination that prides itself on its ecumenical involvement with other believers.
- b. The use of *heresy* in Overture 7 is unclear in the context of the 1984 synodical use of *heresy*. The clarity and precision of Overture 7 would be greatly strengthened by a well-researched definition of how the church has historically defined *heresy*.
- c. A more precise and clear definition of *heresy* and its use will benefit future work of the CRCNA in its ecclesiastical assemblies.

Mandate

That synod direct the committee appointed to research, determine, and define *heresy* and its application. This committee would be mandated to provide a precise and clear definition of *heresy* and its appropriate use. This mandate would help future discussions in the assemblies of the CRCNA when determining what heresy is and what heresy is not.

Composition

That the committee include at least a professor of theology from Calvin Theological Seminary, a professor of church history, an expert in CRCNA church polity, a minister of the Word, and other individuals the Council of Delegates deems appropriate.

After Synod 2019, the executive director asked Ronald J. Feenstra (heritage professor of systematic and philosophical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary) to draft this report. That draft was reviewed by the Council of Delegates in October 2019 and subsequently revised based on input from Karin Maag (director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, adjunct professor of the History of Christianity at Calvin Theological Seminary, and editor of *Calvin Theological Journal*), from Kathy Smith (associate director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, adjunct professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary, and adjunct professor of congregational and ministry studies at Calvin University), and from William T. Koopmans (pastor of Hope CRC, Brantford, Ont., and chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA).

II. Observations from Synod 2019

The synodical advisory committee that recommended to Synod 2019 that the term *heresy* be clarified also offered the following observations in the preface to its recommendations:

The advisory committee humbly acknowledges that, while the label *heresy* is easy to use, it has proven far more difficult to actually define and apply. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) has given a helpful warning for all: "It is highly important that people should go to work with the greatest caution when it comes to declaring anything heretical."

As an advisory committee, we think the definition given in the 1984 decision on apartheid is too broad. That definition reads as follows: "By 'heresy' (heretical) we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions." This definition seems too broad for a denomination that is committed to ecumenical relationships with other brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. It seems to our committee that every heresy is a theological error; but it is not true that every theological error is a heresy. As such, we do not consider our Baptist brothers and sisters who disagree with our Reformed confessions on baptism to be heretics. Therefore, we desire clarity and precision regarding the definition of *heresy*.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 819)

These observations point out some of the problems in defining and using the term *heresy*. Synod 2019 recognized the wisdom of its advisory committee in that, although some theological claims count as heresy, the church does not consider every deviation from the Reformed confessions to be a heresy.

In order to clarify the meaning and appropriate uses of the term *heresy*, it will help to gather input from Scripture and the history of the church about what counts as heresy.

III. The New Testament on *heresy*

The term *heresy* (Greek: *haireisis*) or its derivatives is used several times in the New Testament. At a basic level, the term *heresy* is derived from a Greek word meaning "to choose" and can designate a religious group or sect (e.g., within Judaism). Thus Acts describes the "party (heresy) of the Sadducees" (Acts 5:17) and calls the Pharisees "the strictest sect (heresy) of our religion" (Acts 26:5; also 15:5). In these passages, the term *heresy* or its derivatives seems to be descriptive rather than a term of condemnation.

Other passages cast *heresy* in a more negative light. For example, Christianity (called "the Way" at the time) was apparently seen by some as a Jewish sect when Paul was brought before governor Felix and accused of leading the "sect (heresy) of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). But in his response, Paul seems to distance himself from the term, presumably because of negative connotations (Acts 24:14). Then, showing that the term has negative connotations in some contexts, Paul himself uses the term *heresy* to speak about "factions" or "differences" that threaten church unity (Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 11:19). Titus 3:10 uses the same term to encourage Titus to avoid continued relations with anyone who causes "divisions (heresies)" among believers. And 2 Peter 2:1-2 speaks of false prophets and false teachers who "secretly introduce destructive heresies" and whom many will follow, thus bringing the truth into disrepute. In contrast to other New Testament usages, 2 Peter 2:1-2 focuses less on the faction or division than on the false teachings that

produce factions and divisions. Each of these New Testament passages uses some form of the word *heresy* to suggest that heresies are a threat to unity or truthful witness.

In short, the New Testament sees a heresy as a group or faction, whether within Judaism or within the followers of Jesus Christ. Although the term *heresy* is sometimes used as a neutral description of a specific group, more often it appears to suggest a faction that threatens the unity of believers, with some uses also referring to the false or destructive teachings associated with a faction or divisive group. The most negative uses of the term suggest that heresy can be covert, leading to the destruction of its adherents and bringing disrepute on the truth of the gospel.

IV. The early church on *heresy*

Like the New Testament, some in the early church use the term *heresy* rather neutrally to describe a group or a school of thought. But *heresy* is more commonly used to describe false teaching that claims to be true and therefore can mislead Christian believers. The term *heresy* was generally reserved to describe a serious distortion of Christian truth, and those who promote such heresy (“heretics”) are seen as traitors to the faith.

The understanding of heresy in the early church has been controversial in recent years, following the 1934 publication of Walter Bauer’s *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Bauer rejected the idea that a general sense of orthodox teaching prevailed in the early church and that heresy was a departure from that orthodox consensus. He argued instead that the original form of Christianity included and accepted a variety of views, many of which were later declared heretical when the church of Rome established one view and suppressed others. Although Bauer’s thesis continues to be advocated (for example, by Bart Ehrman), the scholarly consensus is that most of Bauer’s thesis has been discredited, except for the important point that the earliest Christianity was characterized by serious differences of belief. We can see some of those differences already in the New Testament, especially in the letters by Paul and others. But we can also see in the New Testament and in early Christian writings a deep understanding that some teachings are faithful to the gospel and others are not.

In order to understand the concept of *heresy* in the early church, it is worth noting that early Christians saw a difference between heresies and other divisive movements such as schisms. Schisms were seen as church divisions in which both sides held to the same basic essentials of the faith, but differed over something less essential such as church government or church discipline. Thus those entering the church from a schismatic body did not need to be baptized, since they had been baptized in the triune name, albeit outside of the orthodox church. But heresies were seen as church divisions in which the essentials of the faith were denied. So those entering the church from a heretical group needed to be baptized, just as if they had come from paganism, since they had not been baptized into the one true faith. Still, many in the early church saw both heretics and schismatics as counterfeit religious movements outside the true church.

In his *City of God*, Augustine describes heretics as people who profess to be Christian and use Christian sacraments, yet also stir up dissension from orthodox teaching that causes potential converts to hesitate in their faith and

provides evidence for unbelievers to criticize Christianity. In effect, heretics cause spiritual suffering in those who want to live genuine Christian lives but are misled or confused by heresy (book 18, chap. 51).

Although heresy involves serious theological error, the early church spoke less about what teachings counted as heresy and focused instead on heresy's sinfulness, with its proud isolation from the church, its rejection of church discipline, and its tragic effects on the spiritual life of the believer. In subsequent eras, both in the Roman Catholic Church and in Protestant churches, the focus has been less on the moral fault of heresy and more on heresy's unorthodox teaching.

V. The Reformed tradition on *heresy*

Accusations of heresy were not uncommon in the Reformation era. The Roman Catholic Church saw the Protestant Reformers as schismatics, some of whose views were heretical. In the 16th century, those deemed heretical might be in danger of losing their lives—and indeed some were put to death for promoting heresy. For example, when the well-known antitrinitarian and opponent of infant baptism, Michael Servetus, entered Geneva, John Calvin advocated his execution as a heretic. Calvin's role in Servetus's execution stands as a stain on Calvin's record and serves as a warning to Calvin's theological heirs to be careful in how we treat theological opponents, including those we deem heretical.

Despite frequent use of the term *heresy* during the Reformation era, the confessions of the CRCNA refer to heresy on just two occasions. Article 18 of the Belgic Confession affirms the incarnation over against "the heresy of the Anabaptists who deny that Christ assumed human flesh from his mother." The Canons of Dort speak of "the proud heresy of Pelagius" that holds that conversion results from our own free choice (Pt. III/IV, Art. 10). On both occasions, the teaching that is rejected as heretical is seen to strike at the heart of the gospel. And the Canons suggest that heresy involves prideful rejection of Christian truth. But the confessions give no guidance on how to define heresy or when to apply the term.

The confessions do provide a helpful precedent showing that we can disagree with others, even quite vigorously, without calling them heretics. Thus, although the Canons of Dort use the term *heresy* only once, they regularly include explicit rejections of certain teachings. In each main point of doctrine, after stating orthodox Reformed teaching on a number of points, the Canons include a section rejecting certain errors ("the Synod rejects the errors of those . . . who teach that . . ."). So the Canons reject a number of theological errors without calling each one a heresy. Similarly, the Heidelberg Catechism sharply criticizes Roman Catholic teaching and practice regarding the Mass (Q. and A. 80) without describing the Roman Catholic Church as heretical.

VI. Roman Catholic teaching on *heresy*

Traditionally, Roman Catholicism has seen heresy as a spiritual movement often rooted in individualism that threatens the foundations of the church. So Protestantism's focus on the individual was seen as indicative of heresy. Yet it seems absurd to designate all of Protestantism as heretical, so—especially since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)—the Roman Catholic Church no longer uses the term *heretical* to describe all Protestants.

Roman Catholics see heresy as often being embedded in an affirmation of Christian teaching. Those who do not affirm Christian teaching in any way are not heretics, but instead are in apostasy, paganism, or simple unbelief. So heresy arises as a difference of belief among fellow Christ-followers. What makes something heresy, then, is that heretical teachings dispute truths that are significant for salvation and thus endanger the ultimate basis of Christianity and the unity of the faith. Heresy is dangerous because it combats or subverts Christian truth even though it claims the name of Christianity. Heresy is also seen as dangerous because any elements of Christian truth that a heresy affirms are in danger of being pushed out by the heretical errors that are mixed in with that truth.

According to Roman Catholic Canon Law, someone who is baptized and claims to be Christian but obstinately denies or doubts any essential or obligatory Catholic teaching is a heretic. The marks of heresy, for Roman Catholics, include denial of central doctrines of the Catholic Church, stubborn adherence to that false teaching, and use of that false teaching to turn against the church and form one's own spiritual community. But Catholic Canon Law distinguishes between those who perpetrate such heresies and those who receive such teachings from others. Perpetrators are, formally, heretics. Those who are misled by heretics but who continue to seek the truth might materially accept heretical teachings, but because of their ignorance they are not formally heretics.

VII. Contemporary usage of the term *heresy*

In our contemporary world, people use the word *heresy* in a wide variety of ways, some of which are quite colloquial and others of which are based on thoughtful reflection. On a popular level, people might use the term *heresy* to describe almost any teaching or proposal that deviates from the norm. Divergences in hymnody, worship style, practices around the sacraments (e.g., offering children the Lord's Supper), the roles of women and men, or some other significant matter could result in accusations of heresy. Although the term *heresy* might be used colloquially in such cases, typically the differences involved do not actually qualify as heresy.

Still, Reformed churches have on rare occasions in recent years identified certain teachings as heresy. After a church in ecclesial fellowship, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC/NGSK) of South Africa, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared apartheid to be a sin and the theological defense of apartheid to be a heresy in 1982, Synod 1984 of the CRCNA took action. Based on an extensive study by the Interchurch Relations Committee, Synod 1984 adopted a recommendation that includes the following:

Any church that supports or warrants such an ideology [the ideology of apartheid] in the name of the Word of God is untrue to the Word of God, and the teachings it propounds in support or defense of such ideology must be judged heretical. And any church that does not vigorously oppose such an ideology must be judged guilty of disobedience to God's Word and to Christ its Lord.

(*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 604)

The accompanying statements and grounds offered by Synod 1984 make clear that the judgment of heresy was arrived at only after determining the

depths of apartheid's evils and the ways in which the theological justification of apartheid, which affected life both inside and outside the church, compromised the unity of the new reconciled humanity in the body of Christ and seriously impaired the integrity and witness of Reformed Christianity around the world.

Again, in 2019, synod declared something to be a heresy, this time focusing on Kinism, a movement that emerged in a group associated with the CRCNA and has many resemblances to the theological underpinnings of apartheid. In this case, Synod 2019 declared Kinist teachings that "interracial marriage is sinful" and that "God has ordained separation in a religio-ethnstate," including the theological reasoning supporting those teachings, to be "a grievous deviation from sound doctrine, a heresy" (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 501-502; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818). As in 1984, Synod 2019 noted the seriousness of Kinism's deviations from sound biblical and Reformed teaching and its distortion of Reformed doctrine.

VIII. What is *heresy*?

Synod 2019 wisely noted the importance of understanding the concept of *heresy* and discerning when the term is appropriately used. In common speech, people often describe almost any alternative or nonstandard theory on any topic as *heretical*. But such usage is not adequate for the church.

As the brief survey above shows, in understanding what *heresy* is, it is important to distinguish *heresy* from other similar concepts:

- schism: Although heresy might lead to a schism in the church, it also might not. Not every heresy leads to a schism. And just because a person or group is schismatic, it does not follow that their views are heretical. Their views might even be wrong in significant ways without yet being heretical.
- apostasy: Although heresy might lead people to reject the Christian faith in some form of apostasy, it need not do so. And a key difference between apostasy and heresy is that apostasy no longer makes a claim to be Christian, whereas heresy does. Still, the line between heresy and apostasy can be hard to discern. It is not always clear when someone is a heretical Christian as opposed to a person who has fallen into apostasy.
- paganism: Whether in ancient or modern forms, paganism is far from Christianity and not really connected to heresy. Paganism typically affirms belief in a number of deities and holds a non-Christian view of God, creation, and human persons. Of course, a heresy might adopt some views from pagan sources (as Gnostic Christianity did in the early church), but paganism itself makes no claim to be Christian and therefore is not itself heresy.
- unbelief: Like apostasy and paganism, unbelief does not claim to be Christian and therefore does not count as heresy. Still, heresy can discredit the church or the Christian faith in ways that dissuade people from seriously considering Christian faith and leave them in unbelief.
- theological or confessional difference: As the advisory committee to Synod 2019 observed, "It seems to our committee that every heresy is a theological error; but it is not true that every theological error is a here-

sy. As such, we do not consider our Baptist brothers and sisters who disagree with our Reformed confessions on baptism to be heretics.” Here the 2019 synodical advisory committee disagreed with the following statement by Synod 1984: “By ‘heresy’ (heretical) we mean a theological view or doctrine that is in conflict with the teachings of Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed Confessions” (see *Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 604). More broadly, any number of theological ideas and errors might be contrary to Scripture, the creeds, and the confessions, but not count as heresy.

In short, the term *heresy* needs to be used carefully, and only in appropriate situations. Using the term when it does not properly apply can be confusing to the church and also to people outside the church, including those whose views are rejected as heretical.

So when does a theological or doctrinal view or teaching count as heresy? What criteria must be met for something to count as heresy? In order to understand what heresy is, it is important to note that the concept of heresy assumes a contrasting standard of orthodoxy. Ordinarily, a heresy distorts or rejects central Christian teachings such as those in a creed or confession and threatens to divide the church and compromise the gospel message. Still, we can say a bit more to help the church know when the term is appropriately used.

Based on the survey above, it appears that heresy often includes several characteristics, many or all of which should be present before people or movements are identified as engaging in heresy:

1. Heresy typically involves serious distortion or rejection of basic or core Christian doctrines, including core Christian teachings about God, creation, humanity, or God’s dealings with creatures.
2. Heresy typically contradicts doctrines that have been defined by an official church body (such as a creed or confession).
3. Heresy typically is embedded in an affirmation of Christianity, claiming to be Christian while at the same time distorting or twisting central teachings of Christianity.
4. Heresy typically involves not just an individual, but a group or a faction that threatens the unity of the church and the Christian faith. Even if heretical teachings are initiated by an individual, those teachings typically do not reach the status of heresy until sufficient numbers of people are swayed by them.
5. Heresy typically leads its adherents away from genuine faith in the triune God. In contrast, other differences (even what we would regard as errors, such as not baptizing infants or holding a non-Reformed view of the roles of God and humanity in salvation) typically do not lead people away from faith in God.
6. Heresy typically causes inquirers and other believers to be confused about Christian teaching and thus led astray in their belief or discouraged from believing. In this way, heresy presents a special danger to the church that goes beyond its effect on its adherents.

7. Heresy typically ends up bringing disrepute on the truth of the gospel. Because it confuses people about what the gospel really is, heresy can lead those outside the Christian faith to mistakenly believe that heretical teaching is actually genuine Christianity.
8. Heresy typically involves a stubborn refusal to be corrected by patient and gracious engagement with the church. Even when the church thoughtfully shows biblical and theological problems with heresy, proponents of heresy refuse to change their views.
9. Heresy typically involves a moral failing as well as a theological or doctrinal one. Heresy misleads others about Christianity and threatens to introduce division into the body of Christ. In this way, heresy is a moral as well as a theological problem.

IX. When should the term *heresy* be used?

As the survey above shows, the church needs to have the concept of *heresy*. If the Christian faith is to be clear and have boundaries, then some beliefs and behaviors will be outside the permissible bounds of belief and action and may need to be identified as heresy.

But it is important to distinguish between doctrinal or confessional disagreements among authentic Christians and heretical doctrines that insidiously deny or undermine key elements of the Christian faith. The church needs discernment on when to use the term *heresy*. Although it can be hard to identify the boundaries that distinguish heresy from other departures from basic Christian teaching or our confessions, and therefore hard to identify what counts as heresy, that does not mean that there are no boundaries or that nothing counts as heresy.

So when should the church say, “Those who hold this view should be regarded as heretics”? When many or all of the characteristics identified in the previous section are present, then it seems reasonable for the church to consider declaring that people or movements are engaging in heresy. Still, making such a declaration should be done carefully and with due consideration. Thus, for example, the church should be careful to note that the proponents of heretical views are more deserving of the term *heresy* than those who may hold those views unthinkingly or while they are still earnestly searching for Christian truth.

Also, the church should not be quick to designate people or movements as heretical. When dealing with people who promote views that may fall under the category of heresy, the church should make all reasonable attempts to reconcile with the proponents and to help them see genuine Christian truth. Using the term *heresy* should be a last resort, not the first option in responding to theological error. Then, even after resorting to the term *heresy*, the church should be open to forgiveness and reconciliation with those whose teachings have been branded heretical, hoping that God’s grace and truth will prevail even after such a serious breach.

X. Recommendations

A. That synod receive this report on heresy as fulfillment of the mandate of Synod 2019 to define heresy and clarify when the use of the term is appropriate.

B. That synod commend this report to the churches as a helpful guide to what heresy is and when it might be appropriate to use the term.

C. That synod take note that there is currently considerable diversity of understanding of the term *heresy* in society and in the church.

D. That synod urge caution in using the term *heresy*.

Grounds:

1. Diverse understandings of the term *heresy* in both popular culture and the church make it a term easily susceptible to misunderstanding.
2. There are often other acceptable ways to identify and reject aberrant or false teachings—ways that are less susceptible to ambiguity or misunderstanding.

E. That synod urge any future synod, if it judges a teaching or movement to be heretical, to identify which of the characteristics noted in this report as typically associated with heresy lead to the judgment of heresy.

Grounds:

1. The exercise of sorting through the characteristics typical of heresy will be helpful in knowing whether the term *heresy* is appropriate in any given case.
2. Identifying the characteristics that lead to the judgment of heresy will help to inform members of the church and other interested parties why the church offers this strong rejection.

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Appendix I
Justice and Mercy Efforts

February 2020

I. Background

Synod 2017 adopted the following proposal (see *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 633-34, 696):

Endorse and support a renewed and revised multiple agency, collaborative program that would build on our existing ministry capacities to exercise the following within a healthy biblical Reformed worldview:

- a) Increase our efforts to educate CRC members, congregations, agencies, and educational institutions on how best to serve people who are poor and hungry.
- b) Continue and increase our effective relief, development, and justice ministries with people who are suffering from drought, famine, war, climate change, trafficking, and persecution.
- c) Increase our understanding of the root and systemic causes of hunger, poverty, oppression, and injustice.
- d) Improve and broaden our ability to be active and engaged Christian citizens, standing with and advocating for the rights and welfare of those whom the world would disdain and discard.

— *Adopted*

- e) Increase the financial support for World Renew's yearly World Hunger Sunday.

— *Recommitted*

Revised and adopted later at Synod 2017 (p. 696): That synod encourage our local churches to increase their financial support for World Renew's yearly World Hunger Sunday.

— *Adopted*

- f) Increase collaborative peace, justice, and reconciliation education and mobilization efforts of the Office of Social Justice, Canadian Ministries, Worship Ministries, Faith Formation, and other Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) ministries.

— *Recommitted*

Revised and adopted later at Synod 2017 (p. 696): That synod instruct the executive director to oversee an increase of collaborative peace, justice, and reconciliation education and mobilization efforts by the Office of Social Justice, Canadian Ministries, Worship Ministries, Faith Formation Ministries, and other Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) ministries.

—Adopted

Synod then decided the following in connection with the preceding actions (see *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 696-98):

That synod (1) take note that the above proposal arises in response to a decision of Synod 2016 (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829), instructing “the executive director to encourage the Justice, Inclusion, Mercy, and Advocacy (JIMA) collaboration group to continue to prioritize goals and assign resources for all of our justice and mercy denominational issues,” and (2) instruct the executive director to pursue other possible priorities as well as to plan and implement the program described in recommendation I, C, 3, a, 4 adopted by synod (see Article 31) and report the results to synod annually through 2020.

Grounds:

- 1) This proposal offers a timely and urgent response to the increase in suffering we see in a world where the recent progress made in alleviating poverty, hunger, and oppression at home and abroad is threatened by expanding violence, changing climate, and mass migrations.
- 2) This proposal recognizes the effective poverty response, educational, and advocacy resources our denomination has already developed and encourages CRC members to utilize those ministries and resources (e.g., World Hunger Campaign, *Live Justly*, Good Soil, *Churches Between Borders*, Dance of Racial Reconciliation, Journey with Me, Blanket Exercise, social justice mobilizers in Canada and the United States).
- 3) This proposal strongly reaffirms the findings of previous study committees and ministries that demonstrate that an effective antihunger and antipoverty response must be holistic. To be effective, we must weave together direct ministry action, education on root causes, and advocacy. (This could include, for example, development and agricultural programs; immigration reform; combating racism and discrimination; responding to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; creation care, including adaptation and mitigation of climate change; and refugee resettlement.)
- 4) This proposal reaffirms that an effective response to poverty and hunger must include holding our governments and international bodies accountable so that they devote sufficient resources to ending violence, preventing famine, trading fairly, reducing the causes of climate change, improving refugee and immigration policy, and paying attention to racism and discrimination endemic to our societies.
- 5) This proposal has strong continuity with previous synodical actions on hunger, poverty, and their root causes, including the World Hunger recommendations passed by Synods 1978 and 1979, the Freedom to Serve recommendations of 1993, endorsement of the Micah Challenge in 2004, the Migration of Workers report of 2010, and the Creation Stewardship climate recommendations in 2012.
- 6) This proposal responds to synod’s instruction (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829) by providing significant and integrative prioritization, relying on synodical decisions of the past to chart a direction for current challenges, and to do so in a collaborative, multiple agency / ministry approach utilizing existing resources as much as possible.
- 7) This proposal is in sync with a recent request from Christian Churches Together (CCT) to call our churches to prayer for the U.S. Congress as it considers budget cuts to major antipoverty programs. In addition, it supports ongoing advocacy by coalitions of which we are a part: Bread for

the World, Circle of Protection, Micah Challenge / Network, Alliance to End Hunger, and others.

- 8) This proposal implements and significantly prioritizes several ministry plan goals from Our Journey 2020, particularly in the area of Mercy and Justice:

Step 4.4.1 Congregations identify and set goals to address local/national/global justice issues — discerning unique steps they can take to make an impact from their own communities.

*4.4.4 Congregations engage in active citizenship and **advocacy** that encourages them and their leaders to be accountable for developing and implementing just policies.*

— Adopted

Last year, Synod 2019 received the following update by way of the Council of Delegates Report (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 46):

In connection with a directive from Synod 2017 to prioritize justice and mercy goals (see *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 633-35, [696-98]), the COD's Mercy and Justice Ministries Committee developed the following list of priorities and presented them to the COD:

- a. Reconciliation of communities within the Reformed fellowship and family who have a history with the CRC but have left our denomination.
- b. Care and consideration for unwed pregnant women and their inclusion in churches for support.
- c. Care and consideration to how ministry connects locally in terms of support (i.e., grants) to pursue justice and mercy.
- d. Formation of regional teams to help regions and classes contextualize the expression of justice and mercy in their area.

II. Current status – report of the executive director

A. CRC agencies and ministries excel at addressing the issues noted above

In this summary report, it is impossible to list all of the agencies' and ministries' activities, but be assured that the seeming increase in crises, disasters, and displaced people around the world continues to challenge World Renew and its many individual and congregational supporters to even greater engagement, and that other CRC ministries continue to hold biblical values high during a season where leaders in the highest governmental offices (U.S.) demean women by patterns of adultery and suggestive comments, mock the disabled, diminish traumatic brain injury to the category of a headache, demonstrate a bias against people of color in immigration issues (e.g., negative comments about the Diversity Lottery, mention of s***hole countries, etc.), and deny the racial fueling behind events such as occurred in Charlottesville and El Paso.

B. Prioritization of goals/assignment of resources

Updates to the list provided in the report to Synod 2019 (see above) are as follows:

1. This priority (reconciliation of communities) continues to be on the agenda of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee. The EIRC report in the *Agenda to Synod 2020* provides the latest status of these efforts.
2. This year the Office of Social Justice materials (justice.crcna.org/sanctity-human-life) prepared in advance of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (U.S.),

January 19, 2020, related to the specific foci of unwed pregnant women and their inclusion in churches, albeit in a holistic way:

- a. The theme based on the full body of Christ, as described in 1 Corinthians 12:26-27, included unwed pregnant women as well as those who have experienced abortion, as well as those of us who sit in pews and pull levers in voting booths.
 - b. The entire effort was to encourage local congregations to be caring and supportive.
3. The last two items—regarding local ministry connections and regional teams—continue to be utilized where possible.
- C. *Pursuit of other priorities; planning and implementation of the recommended program*
- A quick review of the instruction by Synod 2017 (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 633) uncovers words such as *broaden* and *increase* (the latter used five times). On behalf of the ministries and agencies implicated by this synodical instruction, consider the following observations and actions being taken:
1. While instructions to broaden, improve, and increase are full of hope and even urgency, follow-up is difficult when no additional resources are provided.
 2. Even more importantly, when a minority of the church continues to bombard these ministry leaders (and the executive director) with messages that such efforts are wrong and inappropriate, our souls lose their courage and we grow lonely. The authority of synod is diminished, and our Reformed witness is compromised. Consider one such message recently received from a U.S. congregation, indicating they are withholding all ministry-share dollars except for causes that directly support the advancement of the gospel, noting that they “are saddened by the recent direction of the CRCNA . . . It is evident that our denomination has positioned the social gospel in a place of primacy over and above faithful gospel ministry. . . .”
 3. As indicated elsewhere, the Office of Social Justice is being changed to restrict its activity to within the United States (pursuant to actions taken by the CRCNA Canada Corporation Board of Directors); further, (a) in light of the 2017 desire for “a renewed and revised multiple agency, collaborative program that would build on our existing ministry capacities” (p. 633) and (b) in order to be more effective (but not necessarily in increased and broadened ways) in the tasks illustrated in the 2017 series of synodical instructions (pp. 696-97), more of the advocacy work is in the process of being shared with World Renew, allowing the Office of Social Justice and the Office of Race Relations to focus more on equipping congregations. The rationale for the reallocation of costs and responsibilities for advocacy efforts and equipping efforts relates to the direction of Synod 2017 to “increase our efforts to educate” (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 633). . . .

Appendix K Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Ministries International
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2019-----			
	Unrestricted	(note 2) W/ Board Restriction	(note 3) W/ Donor Restriction	Total
Cash	\$ (294)	3,296	179	3,181
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	767	-	-	767
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-
Investments:				
Bonds	335	-	-	335
Equities	4,002	-	-	4,002
Partnerships	-	-	1,075	1,075
Property (non-operating)	6	-	-	6
PP & E (note 1)	222	-	-	222
Other	533	-	-	533
Total Assets	5,571	3,296	1,254	10,121
Accounts Payable	360	-	-	360
Notes/Loans Payable	269	-	-	269
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	263	-	-	263
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	892	-	-	892
Net Assets	\$ 4,679	3,296	1,254	9,229
Footnotes:				
Note 1: List details of property not in use.				
Note 2: List details of board designations.	Funds set aside by the board for future projects, particularly related to larger capital and new program needs. As well, Estate Gifts received above budgeted amounts are included in the Stewardship fund to be used over 10 years			
Note 3: List details of donor designations.	Donor designated endowments and memorial funds such as the Isaac Jen & Media Reach Endowments and the Jim Van Drunen Memorial fund			

**Back to God Ministries International
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	2,918	\$ 2,795
% of Total Income		29.8%	28.8%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,522	\$ 3,259
Estate Gifts	\$	2,207	\$ 3,281
Total Gift Income		5,729	6,540
% of Total Income		58.6%	67.5%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	1,133	\$ 357
Total Other Income		1,133	357
% of Total Income		11.6%	3.7%
TOTAL INCOME		9,780	9,692
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
English	\$	2,282	\$ 2,257
FTEs		13	13
International	\$	3,367	\$ 3,094
FTEs		6	6
Education	\$	168	\$ 165
FTEs		2	2
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,817	\$ 5,516
Total Program Service FTEs		21	21
% of Total \$		71.4%	69.5%
% of Total FTEs		66.3%	68.4%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	940	\$ 880
FTEs		4	3
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	1,395	\$ 1,538
FTEs		7	7
Total Support Service \$		2,335	2,418
Total Support Service FTEs		11	10
% of Total \$		28.6%	30.5%
% of Total FTEs		33.7%	31.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	8,152	\$ 7,934
TOTAL FTEs		31	30
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	1,628	\$ 1,758

**Calvin University
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2019				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 10,860		-		10,860
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	2,427	-	-	-	2,427
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	3,002	-	-	-	3,002
Investments (note 1):	36,762				36,762
Bonds	-		-	-	-
Equities	-		-	-	-
Partnerships	-		-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-		-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	53,051	-	-	-	53,051
Accounts Payable	10,696	-	-	-	10,696
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	2,860	-	-	-	2,860
Other	39,794	-	-	-	39,794
Total Liabilities	53,350	-	-	-	53,350
Net Assets	\$ (299)	-	-	-	(299)
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.					

**Calvin University
Income and Expenses (000s)**

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,349	\$ 2,221
% of Total Income	2.3%	2.1%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 3,258	\$ 3,451
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	3,258	3,451
% of Total Income	3.2%	3.3%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 92,332	\$ 92,175
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 5,409	\$ 5,803
Total Other Income	97,741	97,978
% of Total Income	94.6%	94.5%
TOTAL INCOME	103,348	103,650
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 86,491	\$ 85,880
FTEs	548	529
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 86,491	\$ 85,880
Total Program Service FTEs	548	529
% of Total \$	82.7%	82.9%
% of Total FTEs	80.6%	78.8%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 7,604	\$ 7,460
FTEs	40	44
Plant Operations	\$ 7,597	\$ 7,493
FTEs	63	69
Fund-raising	\$ 2,860	\$ 2,817
FTEs	29	29
Total Support Service \$	18,061	17,770
Total Support Service FTEs	132	142
% of Total \$	17.3%	17.1%
% of Total FTEs	19.4%	21.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 104,552	\$ 103,650
TOTAL FTEs	680	671
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (1,204)	\$ -

**Calvin Theological Seminary
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2019				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 1,752	-	\$ 1	-	1,753
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	5,216	-	-	-	5,216
Receivables & Advances	42	-	1,569	-	1,611
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	48	-	-	-	48
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	10,838	-	10,838
Equities	-	-	11,690	14,734	26,424
Partnerships	-	-	-	9,408	9,408
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	1,050	1,050
PP & E	9,892	-	-	-	9,892
Other	137	-	4,278	-	4,415
Total Assets	17,087	-	28,376	25,192	70,655
Accounts Payable	412	-	-	-	412
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	108	-	108
Capital Leases	47	-	-	-	47
Annuities Payable	-	-	133	-	133
Deferred Income	-	-	77	-	77
Other	5,547	-	-	-	5,547
Total Liabilities	6,006	-	318	-	6,324
Net Assets	11,081	-	28,058	25,192	64,331
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	Office building in endowment - investment income.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Accounts payable: Post retirement liabilities Notes/Loans Payable: Net student loan receivables and liabilities.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Donor designated, program, scholarship, grants and construction pledges.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Calvin Theological Seminary
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	2,405	\$ 2,277
% of Total Income		32.3%	30.1%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,295	\$ 1,366
Estate Gifts	\$	210	\$ 171
Total Gift Income		1,505	1,537
% of Total Income		20.2%	20.3%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	2,397	\$ 2,525
Grants	\$	1,018	\$ 998
Miscellaneous	\$	119	\$ 225
Total Other Income		3,534	3,748
% of Total Income		47.5%	49.6%
TOTAL INCOME		7,444	7,562
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Instructional	\$	2,716	\$ 2,762
FTEs		20	20
Public Service	\$	43	\$ 106
FTEs		1	1
Academic Support	\$	1,266	\$ 1,200
FTEs		5	5
Student Services	\$	644	\$ 692
FTEs		5	5
Student Aid	\$	323	\$ 317
FTEs		1	1
	\$	-	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,992	\$ 5,077
Total Program Service FTEs		32	32
% of Total \$		68.9%	68.7%
% of Total FTEs		66.7%	66.7%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	1,003	\$ 1,007
FTEs		9	9
Plant Operations	\$	689	\$ 742
FTEs		2	2
Fund-raising	\$	557	\$ 568
FTEs		5	5
Total Support Service \$		2,249	2,317
Total Support Service FTEs		16	16
% of Total \$		31.1%	31.3%
% of Total FTEs		33.3%	33.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	7,241	\$ 7,394
TOTAL FTEs		48	48
Post-retirement benefit costs >		-	-
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	203	\$ 168

Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada (in Canadian \$)

Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2019				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 173	-	-	-	173
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	305	-	-	-	305
Equities	5,345	-	-	-	5,345
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	126	-	-	-	126
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,949	-	-	-	5,949
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 5,949	-	-	-	5,949
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 - Canada (in Canadian \$)
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

		2018 Actual	2019 Actual
ADDITIONS:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$ -
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Employer Contributions	\$	477	\$ 501
Participant Contributions	\$	68	\$ 83
Investment Earnings	\$	(189)	\$ 788
Total Other Income		356	1,372
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		356	1,372

DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):

Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	414	\$ 714
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	414	\$ 714
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		95.6%	96.7%
% of Total FTEs			
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	19	\$ 24
FTEs		-	-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		19	24
Total Support Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		4.4%	3.3%
% of Total FTEs			
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	433	\$ 738
TOTAL FTEs		-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(77)	\$ 634

Employees' Savings Plan United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2019-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	6,605		-	-	6,605
Equities	20,622		-	-	20,622
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	3,259		-	-	3,259
Diversified	8,040		-	-	8,040
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	38,526	-	-	-	38,526
Accounts Payable	6	-	-	-	6
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable		-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	6	-	-	-	6
Net Assets	\$ 38,520	-	-	-	38,520
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' Savings Plan United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

		2018 Actual	2019 Actual
ADDITIONS:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$ -
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Contributions	\$	2,321	\$ 2,536
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Investment Income	\$	(1,922)	\$ 7,166
Total Other Income		399	9,702
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		399	9,702

DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):

Program Services:			
Distributions	\$	4,193	\$ 4,529
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	4,193	\$ 4,529
Total Program Service FTEs		-	-
% of Total \$		96.6%	97.2%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	146	\$ 131
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		146	131
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		3.4%	2.8%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	4,339	\$ 4,660
TOTAL FTEs		1	1
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTION)	\$	(3,940)	\$ 5,042

**Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2019-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 5,407	-	-	-	5,407
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	15,944	-	-	-	15,944
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	12	-	-	-	12
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	21,363	-	-	-	21,363
Accounts Payable	38	-	-	-	38
Notes/Loans Payable	15,232	-	-	-	15,232
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	15,270	-	-	-	15,270
Net Assets	\$ 6,093	-	-	-	6,093
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.					

Loan Fund Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$ -
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	863	\$ 856
Total Other Income		863	856
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		863	856
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Loan Interest	\$	313	\$ 306
FTEs		1	1
Total Program Service \$	\$	313	\$ 306
Total Program Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		45.4%	48.7%
% of Total FTEs		33.3%	50.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	377	\$ 322
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		377	322
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		54.6%	54.6%
% of Total FTEs		66.7%	0.5%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	690	\$ 628
TOTAL FTEs		2	2
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	173	\$ 228

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Balance Sheet (000s) in Canadian \$

	December 31, 2019-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 2,185	390	-	-	2,575
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,057	10	-	-	1,067
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	12,150	-	-	-	12,150
Equities	50,819	-	-	-	50,819
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Real Estate (nonoperating)	2,657	-	-	-	2,657
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	68,868	400	-	-	69,268
Accounts Payable	220	16	-	-	236
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	220	16	-	-	236
Net Assets	\$ 68,648	384	-	-	69,032
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.					

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada

Changes in Net Assets (000s) in Canadian \$

	MPF		MPF		SAF		SAF	
	2018		2019		2018		2019	
	Actual		Actual		Actual		Actual	
ADDITIONS:								
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	95	\$	85
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		93.1%		93.4%
Other Gift Income:								
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:								
Participant Assessments	\$	1,147	\$	2,582	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Investment Earnings/(Losses)	\$	328	\$	11,125	\$	7	\$	6
Total Other Income		1,475		13,707		7		6
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%		6.9%		6.6%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		1,475		13,707		102		91

DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):

Program Services:

Distributions	\$	3,093	\$	2,943	\$	174	\$	23
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,093	\$	2,943	\$	174	\$	23
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-		-		-
% of Total \$		77.2%		76.8%		100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%				

Support Services:

Management & General	\$	911	\$	891	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		1		1		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-		-		-
Total Support Service \$		911		891		-		-
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1		-		-
% of Total \$		22.8%		23.2%		0.0%		0.0%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%				

TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$	4,004	\$	3,834	\$	174	\$	23
TOTAL FTEs		1		1		-		-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$	(2,529)	\$	9,873	\$	(72)	\$	68

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----December 31, 2019-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 5,210	217	-	-	5,427
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	166	1	-	-	167
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	19,581	-	-	-	19,581
Equities	75,777	-	-	-	75,777
Diversified / Alternative	5,136	-	-	-	5,136
Real Estate (nonoperating)	11,464	-	-	-	11,464
PP & E	157	-	-	-	157
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	\$ 117,491	218	-	-	117,709
Accounts Payable	51	48	-	-	99
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	51	48	-	-	99
Net Assets	\$ 117,440	170	-	-	117,610
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.					

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	MPF 2018 Actual	MPF 2019 Actual	SAF 2018 Actual	SAF 2019 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 176	\$ 162
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	98.9%	98.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 5,174	\$ 5,117	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ (4,138)	\$ 21,122	\$ 2	\$ 2
Total Other Income	1,036	26,239	2	2
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	1.1%	1.2%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	1,036	26,239	178	164

DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):

Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 10,268	\$ 10,271	\$ 153	\$ 105
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 10,268	\$ 10,271	\$ 153	\$ 105
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	89.4%	89.7%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 1,223	\$ 1,176	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	2	2	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	1,223	1,176	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	2	2	-	-
% of Total \$	10.6%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 11,491	\$ 11,447	\$ 153	\$ 105
TOTAL FTEs	2	2	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (10,455)	\$ 14,792	\$ 25	\$ 59

**Resonate Global Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2019			
	Unrestricted	(note 2) w/Board Restriction	(note 3) w/Donor Restriction	Total
Cash	\$ 7,691	-	-	7,691
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	181	-	-	181
Inventory	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	257	-	-	257
Investments (note 1):	-	-	-	-
Bonds	1,641	-	-	1,641
Equities	2,132	5,122	1,964	9,218
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	335	-	-	335
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	12,237	5,122	1,964	19,323
Accounts Payable	2,401	-	-	2,401
Notes/Loans Payable	37	-	-	37
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	186	-	-	186
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-
Other	670	-	-	670
Total Liabilities	3,294	-	-	3,294
Net Assets	\$ 8,943	5,122	1,964	16,029
Footnotes:	<p>Funds set aside by the board for future projects, particularly related to larger capital and new program needs.</p> <p>Donor designated endowments and memorial funds such as the te Velde, Vanden Berg and Huizenga Endowments and the Van Thoff Trust.</p>			
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.				
Note 2: List details of designations.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.				

**Resonate Global Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	7,116	\$ 6,792
% of Total Income		38.3%	32.9%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$	9,807	\$ 9,924
Estate Gifts	\$	766	\$ 3,132
Total Gift Income		10,573	13,056
% of Total Income		56.9%	63.2%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	909	\$ 794
Total Other Income		909	794
% of Total Income		4.9%	3.8%
TOTAL INCOME		18,598	20,642
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Ministry Teams - N. America	\$	2,399	\$ 2,671
FTEs		18	18
Ministry Development - Mission Innovation	\$	1,866	\$ 1,923
FTEs		5	12
Africa & Europe	\$	2,586	\$ 3,169
FTEs		18	19
Eurasia-reclassified 17-18			\$ -
FTEs		14	-
Latin America & Asia	\$	3,660	\$ 4,499
FTEs		19	26
Global/other Int'l program	\$	2,279	\$ 2,119
FTEs		40	3
Mission Educ Engagement/Vol	\$	964	\$ 847
FTEs		2	5
Total Program Service \$	\$	13,754	\$ 15,228
Total Program Service FTEs		116	83
% of Total \$		76.7%	79.3%
% of Total FTEs		85.9%	77.6%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	1,585	\$ 1,642
FTEs		6	7
Operations and Logistics/PLC	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Mission Support & Fund-raising	\$	2,592	\$ 2,338
FTEs		13	17
Total Support Service \$		4,177	3,980
Total Support Service FTEs		19	24
% of Total \$		23.3%	20.7%
% of Total FTEs		14.1%	22.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	17,931	\$ 19,208
TOTAL FTEs**		135	107
**Ptnr & Vol fte est. incl above		30	30
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	668	\$ 1,434

**Synodical Administrative Services
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2019-----			
		(note 2)	(note 3)	
	Unrestr.	Temp. Restr.	Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 2,917	3,373	-	6,290
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	3,807	1,180	-	4,987
Inventory	797	-	-	797
Prepays & Advances	63	-	-	63
Investments (note 1):				
Bonds	282	-	-	282
Equities	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-
PP & E	7,251	-	-	7,251
Other	50	-	-	50
Total Assets	15,167	4,553	-	19,720
Accounts Payable	4,609	-	-	4,609
Notes/Loans Payable	57	-	-	57
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	41	-	-	41
Other	436	-	-	436
Total Liabilities	5,143	-	-	5,143
Net Assets	\$ 10,024	4,553	-	14,577
Footnotes:				
Note 1: List details of investments currently in use.	Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program.			
Note 2: List details of restrictions.	Includes: \$? AOYC, \$2,193,000 Lilly, \$201,000 Bi-natl Gathering, Chaplaincy 102,000, \$213,000 other.			
Note 3: List details of restrictions.				

Synodical Administrative Services Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,561	\$	2,300
% of Total Income		69.3%		54.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	322	\$	306
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		322		306
% of Total Income		8.7%		7.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	63
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	812	\$	1,554
Total Other Income		812		1,617
% of Total Income		22.0%		38.3%
TOTAL INCOME		3,695		4,223
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services	\$	1,368	\$	2,202
FTEs		5		4
Communications				
FTEs				
Ecumenical Relations	\$	111	\$	95
FTEs		-		-
Inspire	\$	755	\$	35
FTEs		1		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	2,234	\$	2,332
Total Program Service FTEs		6		4
% of Total \$		56.3%		56.0%
% of Total FTEs		46.2%		36.4%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	1,078	\$	940
FTEs		4		3
D.M.A.	\$	332	\$	364
FTEs		2		2
Fund-raising	\$	443	\$	528
FTEs		1		2
Total Support Service \$		1,845		1,832
Total Support Service FTEs		7		7
% of Total \$		46.5%		44.0%
% of Total FTEs		53.8%		63.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	3,968	\$	4,164
TOTAL FTEs		13		11
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(273)	\$	59

**Central Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$ -
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Services & Misc	\$	6,644	\$ 6,818
Total Other Income		6,644	6,818
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		6,644	6,818
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Advancement	\$	829	\$ 522
FTEs		9	5
Finance & Payroll	\$	2,506	\$ 2,607
FTEs		22	22
IT and Phones	\$	1,520	\$ 1,585
FTEs		7	7
Human Resources	\$	367	\$ 420
FTEs		2	3
Coordinated Services	\$	177	\$ 173
FTEs		2	2
Plant Operations	\$	1,245	\$ 1,511
FTEs		2	2
Total Program Service \$	\$	6,644	\$ 6,818
Total Program Service FTEs		42	39
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,644	\$ 6,818
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	-	\$ -

**Congregational Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	5,088	\$	4,960
% of Total Income		43.8%		46.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Gifts & Offerings	\$	970	\$	885
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		970		885
% of Total Income		8.4%		8.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	5,278	\$	4,809
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	268	\$	63
Total Other Income		5,546		4,872
% of Total Income		47.8%		45.5%
TOTAL INCOME		11,604		10,717
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Lead-Chaplaincy Services	\$	261	\$	316
FTEs		2		2
Lead-Pastor-Church Relations	\$	939	\$	823
FTEs		6		6
Lead-Candidacy	\$	221	\$	215
FTEs		2		2
Lead-Leadership Diversity	\$	-	\$	141
FTEs		-		1
Justice-Race Relations	\$	510	\$	504
FTEs		4		4
Justice-Safe Church Ministry	\$	235	\$	266
FTEs		2		2
Justice-Disability Concerns	\$	233	\$	257
FTEs		2		2
Justice-Social & Restorative Justice	\$	549	\$	633
FTEs		5		5
Justice-Ministries in Canada	\$	1,046	\$	1,157
FTEs		5		5
Bridge App	\$	139	\$	142
FTEs		2		1
Faith Formations	\$	666	\$	733
FTEs		4		9
MSS-Agency services	\$	3,469	\$	3,431
FTEs		24		13
MSS-Faith Alive	\$	1,049	\$	979
FTEs		6		4
MSS-Banner	\$	1,139	\$	1,131
FTEs		4		5
MSS-Libros Desafio	\$	267	\$	238
FTEs		3		1
Worship	\$	392	\$	388
FTEs		3		3
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,115	\$	11,354
Total Program Service FTEs		74		65
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	11,115	\$	11,354
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	489	\$	(637)

**Grants
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	1,006	\$	3,225
Services & Misc	\$	-	\$	-
Total Other Income		1,006		3,225
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		1,006		3,225
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Vibrant Congregations	\$	340	\$	120
FTEs		-		-
Connections	\$	307	\$	294
FTEs		-		-
Connections II	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Thriving Together	\$	-	\$	103
FTEs		-		-
Financial Shalom	\$	75	\$	220
FTEs		1		1
Total Program Service \$	\$	722	\$	737
Total Program Service FTEs		1		1
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	722	\$	737
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	284	\$	2,488

**World Renew
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2019-----				
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	Total
Cash	\$ 622	3,243	18,895	-	22,760
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	4,420	6,000	-	-	10,420
Receivables & Advances	903	-	-	-	903
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	977	-	-	-	977
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	883	-	99	-	982
Other		-	-	-	-
Total Assets	7,805	9,243	18,994	-	36,042
Accounts Payable	1,059	-	-	-	1,059
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	142	-	-	-	142
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,201	-	-	-	1,201
Net Assets	\$ 6,604	9,243	18,994	-	34,841
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Term endowments as stipulated by board = \$9,243				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$99; Purpose-restricted gifts = \$17,827;				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$1,068				

**World Renew
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 17-18 Actual		Fiscal 18-19 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		-		-
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	21,307	\$	28,042
Estate Gifts	\$	2,008	\$	4,168
Total Gift Income		23,315		32,210
% of Total Income		68.1%		92.7%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	10,094	\$	1,712
Miscellaneous	\$	835	\$	842
Total Other Income		10,929		2,554
% of Total Income		31.9%		7.3%
TOTAL INCOME		34,244		34,764
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	13,044	\$	11,244
FTEs		40		40
North American programs	\$	108	\$	312
FTEs		-		-
Disaster relief programs	\$	825	\$	1,778
FTEs		13		13
Above-budget relief costs	\$	9,991	\$	12,643
FTEs		3		3
Education	\$	2,629	\$	1,441
FTEs		13		13
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$		26,597		27,418
Total Program Service FTEs		69		69
% of Total \$		84.9%		85.1%
% of Total FTEs		68.3%		66.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General		1,717		1,879
FTEs		7		7
Plant Operations		-		-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising		3,012		2,922
FTEs		25		28
Total Support Service \$		4,729		4,801
Total Support Service FTEs		32		35
% of Total \$		15.1%		14.9%
% of Total FTEs		31.7%		33.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		31,326		32,219
TOTAL FTEs		101		104
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)		2,918		2,545

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES SUPPLEMENT (DEFERRED FROM 2020)

I. Polity matters . . .

B. Corporation officers and executive committee of the Council of Delegates

At its recent meeting the COD members from their respective corporations and the full Council of Delegates elected the following to serve as officers in 2020-2021:

1. CRCNA Canada Corporation

President: Andy de Ruyter
Vice president: Michelle J. Kool
Secretary: Aaltje van Grootheest
Treasurer: Greta Luimes

2. CRCNA U.S. Corporation

President: Paul R. De Vries
Vice president: Sheila E. Holmes
Secretary: Samuel Sutter
Treasurer: Gary D. Bos

3. Back to God Ministries International Canada Corporation

President: Andy de Ruyter
Vice president: Michelle J. Kool
Secretary: Aaltje van Grootheest
Treasurer: Greta Luimes

4. Back to God Ministries International U.S. Corporation

President: Paul R. De Vries
Vice president: Sheila E. Holmes
Secretary: Samuel Sutter
Treasurer: Gary D. Bos

5. Council of Delegates executive committee and officers

Chair: Paul R. De Vries
Vice chair: Andy de Ruyter
Secretary: Aaltje van Grootheest
Treasurer: Gary D. Bos
Heather Cowie
Laurie Harkema
Michelle J. Kool
John R. Lee . . .

F. *Honoring former executive director of the CRCNA Steven R. Timmermans . . .*

2. Resolution of thanks

The COD recommends that Synod 2021 publically honor Steven R. Timmermans by endorsing the following resolution of thanksgiving and appreciation:

**Resolution of Thanksgiving and Appreciation
for the Person and Service of
Dr. Steven R. Timmermans**

Dr. Steven R. Timmermans completed his service as executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America in February 2020. During his tenure he was instrumental in laying out the framework for the transition from a Board of Trustees governance model to a Council of Delegates model that would better serve local congregations, classes, and the denomination.

Under his leadership the biennial Inspire conferences, Our Journey 2020, and multiple other ministry initiatives were born and shepherded. We express deep appreciation for his faithful service in leading senior staff, assisting with numerous committees and boards in staying focused on synodical guidelines and decisions, being a friend and spokesperson to our ecclesiastical partners, and for being our CRCNA representative to the world.

Dr. Timmermans, with his extensive knowledge and experience, along with his love for our Lord Jesus Christ, served the denomination positively in assisting synod, the Council of Delegates, staff, classes, and local congregations in learning best practices to build up and equip the churches for service to our Lord in this ever-changing world in which we live.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Christian Reformed Church in North America declares its thanks and appreciation to Dr. Steven R. Timmermans for his faithful service to Christ's church and for his friendship, leadership, and encouragement on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

G. *Continued address of structure in light of Canadian charitable-law requirements*

In March 2020 the COD executive committee mandated a task force of ten COD members and staff to propose a new denominational structure in light of ecclesiastical, structural, and legal matters with regard to compliance with Canada's requirements for Canadian charitable organizations. The preliminary proposal, reviewed and endorsed by the COD executive committee, was presented to the COD for consideration at its May meeting.

The COD adopted the following three principles to guide the development of new position descriptions for three senior leadership roles (ecclesiastical officer, executive director of CRCNA-Canada, and executive director of CRCNA-U.S.):

1. Going forward, leadership of the CRCNA must be done through an independent executive director in each country, each of whom works collaboratively with the executive director in the other country on matters of

shared ministry. This collaborative work includes monitoring and making decisions about joint ministry agreements for shared programs.

2. In addition, there must be an ecclesiastical officer who can help shepherd the denomination forward in a way that fosters unity across the border, emphasizes our shared faith, synodical positions, and ecclesiastical polity, and advances the denomination's global ecclesiastical goals.
3. Finally, this model should be revisited in three years (and perhaps every three years) to ensure that it is working as intended. If it is decided that there is redundancy or a greater need for cross-border coordination, appropriate adjustments should be made.

The COD also approved plans as follows to develop the positions and governmental/administrative structure outlined above and to report back to the COD in October 2020:

- Following the model outlined above, the CRCNA Canada Corporation will further develop a job description for the executive director of CRCNA-Canada and outline the governance and administrative structure for the ministries of the CRCNA within Canada. This will include a plan for cross-border cooperation and unity.
- Following the model outlined above, the CRCNA U.S. Corporation will further develop a job description for the executive director of CRCNA-U.S. and outline the governance and administrative structure for the ministries of the CRCNA within the United States. This will include a plan for cross-border cooperation and unity.
- Following the model outlined above, the COD will appoint a task force, composed of membership from the CRCNA at large, to develop a job description and responsibilities for the ecclesiastical officer. Nominations for the task force will be solicited from COD members in May for final appointments to be made by the COD executive committee. This task force is also mandated to consider (a) how to ensure ecclesiastical accountability within the two national executive director positions, (b) how to deal with various ecclesiastical duties not covered by the two executive director positions (e.g., synodical committees such as the Candidacy Committee, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, Historical Committee, and Judicial Code Committee), and (c) how best to bring these changes to synod for discussion and approval.

In addition to position descriptions, the following issues should also be kept in mind as these groups carry out their work:

- The perceived conflict of interest that can exist when the directors/members of the BTGMI corporation are also the directors/members of the CRCNA corporation in each country.
- The perceived conflict of interest that can exist when one executive director is accountable to two corporations (e.g., CRCNA Canada Corporation and BTGMI Canada Corporation).
- The question whether members of a corporation should be the same persons as directors of a corporation (as is the current case for the Canada Corporation).

- The question whether the role of a delegate to synod acting on ecclesiastical matters would be in conflict with acting as a member of a CRCNA corporation (as with the U.S. Corporation) tasked with direction of temporal matters (such as management of resources, staff, organizational policy, etc.).
- The instruction of Synod 2016 to have a goal of “reducing the institutional footprint” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 858).

Note: In October the COD will either approve/ratify the recommendations of the three groups or, if needed, send them back for further development. Final proposals should be ratified (in the case of the corporations’ work) or approved no later than the February 2021 COD meeting in order to be forwarded to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2021*.

H. Denominational gatherings

Planning is under way for Inspire 2021—scheduled for August 5-7, 2021. The planning team is cochaired by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg and Steven Timmermans. The “Be One” theme for this event will take participants through the projected milestones of the new Ministry Plan: *Our Journey 2025*. Promotion of this event was planned to take place at Synod 2020 but is now being deferred until later this summer.

The next Canadian National Gathering, with an emphasis on “Hearts Exchanged 2.0,” may be delayed until 2023.

I. Review of the New City Catechism

Synod 2019 instructed the executive director to “refer the New City Catechism to Faith Formation Ministries for curriculum review and potential use by the churches” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763). The COD received and reviewed the report by Faith Formation Ministries (FFM), presented in Appendix A. The COD recommends that synod endorse the direction of Faith Formation Ministries as suggested in Appendix A and adopt the recommendations therein:

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Chris Schoon, director of Faith Formation Ministries, when matters related to the report in Appendix A are being discussed.
2. That synod encourage CRC churches to share with FFM the ways in which they are engaging in catechetical teaching in their local contexts, particularly with regard to people who come to faith as adults.
3. That synod consider the report in Appendix A in fulfillment of the directive by Synod 2019 for FFM to provide a curriculum review and advice regarding the use of the New City Catechism by our churches.

J. Worship Practices Report

Synod 2019 instructed the Council of Delegates “to ensure that Worship Ministries and /or Faith Formation Ministries continue to make excellent resources available to the churches that would encourage existing congregations to continue, and new congregations to embrace, some kind of [worship] assembly that builds up the body of Christ” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 770). Faith Formation Ministries and Worship Ministries prepared a response report and presented it to the COD in May. The COD endorsed the Worship

Practices report, presented in Appendix B, and recommends that synod note fulfillment of the Synod 2019 assignment regarding worship practices. . . .

L. Synodical Historical Committee mandate

Regarding the COD's assignment by synod "to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761), the COD subgroup that worked with the Historical Committee on this matter was not able to complete this task in time for the May COD meeting, due to interrupted schedules and the complexity of the assignment (see also *Agenda for Synod 2020*, pp. 262-63). A final report with a proposed Historical Committee mandate will be provided to Synod 2021. . . .

II. Program and finance matters

A. Program matters

1. Denominational Survey 2020

The 2020 annual Denominational Survey report, which gives a snapshot of how we as a denomination are doing from the perspective of congregations, is available for individuals and churches to review and study. The survey results can be accessed at crcna.org/survey/survey-results. . . .

3. Immigration resources

The COD reported in the *Agenda for Synod 2020* (pp. 23, 49) actions taken in response to the instruction of Synod 2019 to develop immigration resources for pastors and churches. Omitted from that update was a link to the immigration resources compiled and received by the COD at its October 2019 meeting. Members and churches can visit the following webpage to access helpful resources when addressing immigration issues: crcna.org/resources/church-resources/immigrationresources. . . .

5. Resonate Global Mission foundational statements

The COD endorsed updated foundational statements for Resonate Global Mission with regard to its mission, vision, strategies, priorities, and postures. The foundational statements are included in Appendix E for synod's information. . . .

III. Recommendations . . .

F. That Synod 2021 publically honor Steven R. Timmermans by endorsing the Resolution of Thanksgiving and Appreciation for the Person and Service of Dr. Steven R. Timmermans as found in section I, F, 2 of this report.

G. That synod take note of the ongoing work of the COD to propose a new denominational structure in light of Canadian charitable-law requirements, with the intent to present a proposal to Synod 2021 (COD Supplement section I, G).

H. That synod adopt the following recommendations as suggested by Faith Formation Ministries regarding review and use of the New City Catechism (COD Supplement section I, I; Appendix A).

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Chris Schoon, director of Faith Formation Ministries, when matters related to the report in Appendix A are being discussed.
2. That synod encourage CRC churches to share with FFM the ways in which they are engaging in catechetical teaching in their local contexts, particularly with regard to people who come to faith as adults.
3. That synod consider the report in Appendix A in fulfillment of the directive by Synod 2019 for FFM to provide a curriculum review and advice regarding the use of the New City Catechism by our churches.

I. That synod note fulfillment of the Synod 2019 assignment regarding worship practices (COD Supplement section I, J; Appendix B). . . .

M. That synod take note of the immigration resources available to members and churches when faced with immigration issues (COD Supplement section II, A, 3). . . .

O. That synod take note of the Resonate Global Mission foundational statements endorsed by the COD (COD Supplement section II, A, 5; Appendix E). . . .

Council of Delegates of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Paul R. De Vries, chair

Appendix A Review of the New City Catechism and Curriculum

I. Overview

The Council of Williamsburg (Ont.) CRC overtured Synod 2019 to classify the New City Catechism as a contemporary testimony (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 516-18). Their formal recommendation and grounds follow:

That synod place the New City Catechism into the category of contemporary testimony.

Grounds:

1. The format and content of the New City Catechism concur with a Reformed understanding of Scripture and with the Heidelberg Catechism.
2. This document is clear and concise and will be of particular benefit to children and youth.
3. The New City Catechism is in accord with the definition and purpose of the new contemporary testimony category. As described above, it speaks to essential matters in our society and will be useful for study, faith formation, teaching, and worship.

(*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 517-18)

Synod 2019 decided not to accede to this overture. However, in considering the overture, synod recognized that churches would benefit from further advice related to the New City Catechism. That being so, synod decided to “instruct the executive director to refer the New City Catechism to Faith Formation Ministries for curriculum review and potential use by the churches” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763).

This report serves as the response by Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) to this direction from Synod 2019.

II. Methodology

FFM made several decisions early in this process regarding the scope and framework of our responsibilities related to synod's directive on the New City Catechism (NCC):

A. Our review would focus on the quality of the New City Catechism Curriculum (newcitycatechism.com/books/curriculum/), both in terms of its ability to equip local lay leaders to facilitate learning and with regard to age- and ability-appropriate faith developmental approaches for potential students.

Grounds:

1. These parameters—equipping lay leaders and appropriate faith developmental approaches—allow for a more focused review.
2. These parameters allow FFM staff to utilize the variety of skills and experiences already present within the team, including curriculum design and editing, classroom educators at multiple educational levels, extensive service in children and youth ministry roles, and an advanced degree in how children make meaning.
3. While theologically trained ministers have traditionally led catechism teaching, more churches have shifted toward nonordained staff or lay leadership facilitating discipleship, particularly for youth.
4. The lens of age- and ability-appropriate faith developmental approaches conforms with an emphasis found in Church Order Article 59-a regarding participation in the Lord's Supper and with FFM's priorities for resource curation and creation.

B. While including some theological observations, our review would not undertake a formal or extended theological evaluation of the NCC itself.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2019 decided against considering the NCC as a contemporary testimony.
2. A substantive theological review would entail a broader synodical structure, such as a synodical study committee or, at minimum, a synodical task force, that contains a broader representation of theological expertise, including Calvin Theological Seminary faculty, than is implied by sending this to FFM for a curriculum review.

C. Through this report FFM would provide summary observations and considerations for churches regarding the potential use of the NCC Curriculum, rather than a simple statement of "use" or "don't use."

Grounds:

1. Church Order Articles 63 and 64 indicate that the church as a whole, and the consistory (elders) in particular, are responsible for the faith nurture of the local church members.
2. FFM's posture is to listen, consult, and coach ministry leaders in ways that strengthen the local church's capacity to discern context-appropriate faith formative resources and practices.

3. To mitigate against the potential for a series of future requests for FFM to review other catechisms and curricula, FFM believes the churches are better served by a report that utilizes this review process as a template for reviewing other potential curriculum resources.

With these guidelines in place, FFM undertook three steps in preparing this review. First, we distributed copies of the NCC Curriculum kit to the six FFM staff who would participate in this review process. Second, FFM staff reviewed the NCC Curriculum materials individually and submitted their observations to a shared document regarding content, pedagogy, and potential pros and cons of utilizing the NCC Curriculum. Third, FFM staff compiled and summarized the shared learning into this report. Thus, the bulk of this report regarding the NCC is structured into the five sections that follow:

- About the New City Catechism
- New City Catechism content observations
- About the New City Catechism Curriculum
- New City Catechism Curriculum content and pedagogy observations
- Additional perspectives for churches to consider

Additionally, FFM staff included a closing section in the report to share comments regarding the learning we experienced through this review process. This section highlights conversations that have emerged through this assignment.

III. About the New City Catechism

The NCC is a set of 52 questions and answers adapted from “Calvin’s Geneva Catechism, the Westminster Shorter and Larger catechisms, and especially the Heidelberg Catechism.” In this sense, the NCC is not a completely new catechism but a paraphrase of excerpts from several Reformation-era catechisms that is intended to make aspects of their content accessible to the church today. A more detailed explanation of the NCC’s roots is available at newcity-catechism.com/introduction-timothy-keller/ [last accessed Apr. 6, 2020].

Tim Keller and Sam Shammas authored the NCC project, a joint initiative of Redeemer Presbyterian Church (New York) and the Gospel Coalition, a network of broadly Reformed churches. The NCC was first published in 2012 with the intention of being a resource that is accessible to adults and children.

The purpose of this catechism is to reintroduce the historical practice of learning the central content of the Christian faith (from a Reformed perspective) as passed along by teachers to students. Two versions of the NCC are made available: a version for adults and a simplified version aimed at children ages 8-11. The simplified version is the focus of the NCC Curriculum.

In pursuing this purpose, the adult version of the NCC makes use of “archaic language” in the historical commentaries that accompany each question and answer. Moreover, the primary learning methodology expected by the curriculum is memorization of the questions and answers. This learning approach is so central to the curriculum that the introduction includes an orientation section on “Memorization Tips” for students.

As indicated in the NCC’s introduction, the NCC’s 52 questions are structured in three parts:

- Part 1: God, creation and fall, law (twenty questions)
- Part 2: Christ, redemption, grace (fifteen questions)
- Part 3: Spirit, restoration, growing in grace (seventeen questions)

At the time of this review, there are print, web-based, and mobile app editions of the NCC. Though format certainly influences learning, the content and pedagogical expectations do not substantively change across these media.

IV. New City Catechism content observations

A. Affirmations

There are several important affirmations to make regarding the NCC as churches consider whether or not to utilize the NCC as part of their discipling efforts.

1. As noted above, the NCC unfolds in three parts:
 - Creation and Fall, with attention to the Ten Commandments
 - Christ, Redemption, and Grace, with attention to the Apostles' Creed
 - Spirit, Restoration, and Growing in Grace, with attention to the Lord's Prayer

This arrangement is important to recognize for several reasons:

- The triune nature of God is emphasized.
 - A basic outline of the biblical narrative is apparent in the movement from Creation and Fall to Redemption in Christ to Restoration through the Spirit.
 - The three primary historical discipleship tools (Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer) are included.
2. Drawing from Reformed catechisms of the 16th and 17th centuries, the NCC affirms many important doctrinal truths from the Reformed tradition, particularly those connected to salvation by Christ alone and those that explain the concept of substitutionary atonement. For example, in the adult version the 24th answer responds to the question "Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?" by stating,

Since death is the punishment for sin, Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God. By his substitutionary atoning death, he alone redeems us from hell and gains for us forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and everlasting life.
 3. The NCC locates the Ten Commandments within the first section on the fall, as a tool to identify sin against God and our neighbors. This position is different from the Heidelberg Catechism, which locates the Ten Commandments in the final section as a teaching on how to live in response to God's salvation in Jesus Christ.
 4. In the web app version, alongside the NCC itself, theological commentary, a Scripture text, and a prayer are included with each question and answer. According to Keller's introduction, the inclusion of a specific accompanying Scripture passage and prayer is intended to frame the theological content in a devotional direction.

B. Questions and concerns

We also identified several questions and concerns related to the content of the NCC. We offer the following five observations for churches considering whether or not to utilize the NCC in their contexts:

1. **Is God too distant?** While the NCC clearly has a high view of God, including reverence for God's holiness, the personal and approachable nature of God is missing. The second question asks "What is God?" This impersonal language leaves the FFM team wondering why the NCC does not ask "Who is God?"
2. **Does the NCC have a minimalist and anthropocentric approach to creation?** Though the first part of the NCC is described as "Creation and Fall," very little space is given to describing God's creative work beyond humanity. In explaining what God created beyond humanity, the NCC states: "God created all things by his powerful Word, and all his creation was very good; everything flourished under his loving rule" (Q. & A. 5). Likewise, Christ's redemptive work of reconciling all things in the cosmos to God (Col. 1:15-20) is largely overlooked, as is the flourishing of creation in the new heaven and new earth described in Revelation. In its adult version, the NCC's Q. & A. 52 teaches:

It reminds us that this present fallen world is not all there is; soon we will live with and enjoy God forever in the new city, in the new heaven and the new earth, where we will be fully and forever freed from all sin and will inhabit renewed, resurrection bodies in a renewed, restored creation.

3. **The theological focus appears to be disproportionately weighted on the law and on our inability to satisfy God's anger.** While this perspective is certainly an element of Reformed theology, the NCC overlooks the biblical theme of God's love, affection, and compassion. Whereas the gospel of John states that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life," the NCC asks, "Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?" and responds with "Yes, to satisfy his justice, God himself, out of mere mercy, reconciles us to himself and delivers us from sin and from the punishment for sin, by a Redeemer" (NCC Q. & A. 19). The silence regarding God's love and the emphasis on the method of our escape from punishment appear to present only a partial picture of the biblical narrative regarding our redemption.
4. **The mention of our calling to do good works occurs in Part 2 on Christ's Redemption, instead of in the work of the Spirit in Part 3.** This arrangement seems odd to our sensibilities. Why isn't this located under the work of the Spirit? Moreover, the lack of any description within the NCC regarding what a life of good works looks like shows the benefit and wisdom of the Heidelberg Catechism's location of the Ten Commandments.
5. **Does the approach to the content lose too much of the richness of the original resources?** The content included in the NCC is abridged, paraphrased, and compiled from several historic Reformation documents written in the 16th and 17th centuries. For example, NCC Q. & A. 1 borrows from the Heidelberg Catechism Q. & A. 1, but changes *comfort*

to hope and includes only the first sentence of the Heidelberg Catechism's response. The forgiveness of sin, freedom from the devil's tyranny, God's providential care, the assurance of eternal life, and the Spirit's work to "make me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him" are left out. Our team wonders if the hope or comfort of the gospel is diminished too far by leaving out these other aspects of God's reconciling and restorative work in Jesus Christ and through the Spirit.

V. About the New City Catechism Curriculum

The New City Catechism Curriculum features 52 lessons developed from the questions and answers of The New City Catechism, designed to help children ages 8-11 learn the core doctrines of the Christian faith in a Sunday school, classroom, or homeschool setting.

The NCC Curriculum kit includes four copies of The New City Catechism for Kids, a three-volume leader's guide, and a book of 52 black-and-white reproducible graphics and activity pages needed for activities in the lessons.

Each lesson in the leader's guide includes outlines for 30-, 45-, or 75-minute sessions; a Bible passage and memory verse; a list of suggested materials; detailed instructions for activities; suggested prayers; and activity pages available for digital download. Those who are interested can download a sample featuring the first five lessons at static.crossway.org/excerpt/nccc-sample.pdf.

VI. New City Catechism Curriculum content and pedagogy observations

With regard to the NCC Curriculum's content, our main observations are outlined in section IV above because the curriculum content follows the catechism content. In this light, our essential curriculum content question is "How does the arrangement, inclusion, and absence of certain biblical and theological themes influence the ways students will come to understand who God is, their relationship with God, and their calling to participate as members of Christ's body within God's kingdom?"

A. Pedagogical strengths

With regard to pedagogy, our team identified several strengths for churches to note as they evaluate the appropriateness of using the NCC Curriculum in faith formation efforts within their churches.

1. The structure of the NCC's teacher's resources provides an outline and suggestions that help teachers develop a predictable and accessible pattern for the lesson plans. This pattern follows a traditional educational model of recap, intro and intro activity, lesson/teaching time, activity, discussion, take-home memory work, and closing prayer.
2. The curriculum articulates a difference between head and heart knowledge in the teaching notes.
3. The teaching notes draw attention to how the teacher's posture and engagement with the students is a form of teaching. This emphasis demonstrates an awareness of the relational aspects of teaching.
4. The flexibility of the lesson designs allows for contextualization of the NCC within a broad range of teaching settings.

5. The NCC encourages that learning about the NCC would occur in both church and home settings.

B. Pedagogical concerns

However, the review team also noted several significant pedagogical concerns for churches to keep in mind when discerning whether or not to utilize the NCC Curriculum in their contexts.

1. **The NCC Curriculum assumes that catechesis and virtue development are acquired through doctrinal knowledge about the Christian faith.** While faith formation includes learning biblical and theological content about God and the gospel, an age- and ability-appropriate faith also embeds this content within a process of nurturing a person's experiential relationship with God. Experiencing God's love, having our affections and desires transformed, and learning to live in communion with God's people and as participants with the Spirit in God's mission are also essential elements of a holistic faith formation process.
2. **There appears to be a lack of humility and gentleness.** Some of the "Big Idea" statements, which serve as the focal points for the various lessons, come across as heavy handed. For example, the lesson for Question 3 states that "a correct understanding of the Trinity is essential to right worship of God." But we are left wondering, who among us has a "correct" understanding of the Trinity? We may have partial understanding about the Trinity, but there is a fundamental mystery and incomprehensibility of the Trinity as well. The danger in asserting that a student must correctly understand the Trinity in order to worship God properly is that it leaves no room for worshiping God while growing in our knowledge about God. Statements like these unnecessarily increase the potential to stunt and damage a person's faith formation process.
3. **The reading level of the children's version of the NCC is significantly higher than that of the intended audience.** The language used in the children's NCC book is far too complex for its 8- to 11-year-old intended audience. When utilizing readability calculators, many of the answers require a Grade 8 (age 12-14) reading level. One calculator, the Gunning Fog index, assesses the NCC's reading level to be at Grade 11. The language is a real barrier to the younger members of the NCC's intended audience.
4. **Related to the previous point, the NCC Curriculum lesson plans make several other assumptions about the audience.** The content assumes that participants have a Christian faith background, understand terms like *worship* and *forgiveness*, and are familiar with the basic narrative arc of Scripture. Additional assumptions about family structures are also evident at times. There also are no accommodations suggested for persons with intellectual or physical disabilities.
5. **The primary pedagogical tool is memorization.** The NCC introduction states that memorization is an essential element of this curriculum. From a learning theory perspective, rote memorization is the lowest level of learning. While some memorization is foundational to learning, the pedagogy found in the lesson plans does not move toward higher levels of learning. If the goal is mere accumulation of theological knowledge

without integration or development of a Reformed worldview, then perhaps memorization is sufficient. However, faith formation calls for learning approaches that integrate head and heart in order for the head knowledge to become internalized as an assurance of God's faithfulness. Knowledge accumulation is foundational, to be sure, but if left there or if that is the main focus on what is achieved in this curriculum, we are only giving children content that does not engage in the higher levels of learning. To this end, the expectation of memorizing the catechism answer and an accompanying Scripture passage each week is unrealistic for most home situations.

6. **Will volunteers have the time and theological capacity needed to teach this material?** The lesson plans require preparation time and a fairly high level of theological and intellectual capability from the leaders. This reality limits the availability of potential teachers within a church community who can teach this material.
7. **What resources are available for parents, grandparents, or other caregivers at home to participate in teaching the NCC?** While Keller shares a story of how easy it was for their family to integrate catechism teaching into their home, the lesson plans and resources do not provide specific resources for "at home" learning of the NCC. Parents, particularly those who are new to the faith, would likely be challenged to participate in their child's learning.
8. **Does this curriculum nurture love?** One of the NCC's stated desires is that this curriculum "nurtures in children a love for and understanding of the essential doctrines for the Christian faith." But the pedagogical approach makes little room for cultivating a love for this knowledge. Many of the questions in the lesson plans are looking for yes or no answers and do little to invite wonder, awe, or affection for the God who took on flesh, suffered, and died in our place.
9. **Where is the transition toward application?** While there is a stated desire that the lessons will lead to a lifelong faith that knows how to respond to life's circumstances, the lessons create little space for students, whether children or adults, to wonder and explore how these theological principles relate to the real contours of the circumstances in which they are living. For example, the curriculum's "Virtue Vision" for Q. & A. 1 on belonging to Jesus is that "we must be quick to forgive." While forgiveness is indeed a Christian virtue, the historic emphasis on this teaching connects with the great comfort that we belong to God, who forgives us. An emphasis that would invite students to wonder about other places they belong and about how they experience belonging to God and to God's people would help to provide a more fitting application.

VII. Perspectives for churches to consider

In the process of this review, our team noted a few other perspectives for churches to consider when determining whether or not to utilize the NCC Curriculum in their contexts.

A. **A robust curriculum is multidimensional.** Is this a robust children's curriculum? No. A robust children's curriculum considers how children learn, utilizes developmentally appropriate language and thinking, engages multiple learning styles, cultivates spaces for wonder, stories, and reflection, and offers guidance for potential applications, in which content serves the formation of a person's character in relationship to God, community, and creation. Most of these elements appear to be missing from the NCC Curriculum.

B. **Curriculum design matters.** In a culture that is progressively more visual and in a context in which we are called to honor the way that we are embodied beings—not souls trapped within bodies—the physicality of our resources matter. We communicate value by the quality of our curriculum resources, particularly through the student materials. Regarding the print version of the children's catechism, there is little about it that would appeal to children. Except for the appealing small size of the children's catechism book, the static design and lack of color and graphics on pages does not convey to children that the material is intended for them.

C. **The attendance expectation is very high.** A 52-week catechism is ambitious and unrealistic in our current context of declining attendance for worship, Sunday school, and other discipleship programs. How could students make up for missed weeks? We wonder if the material might be better presented in another format rather than a one-year weekly immersion.

VIII. Faith Formation Ministry learning through this review process

While we bring a certain amount of expertise into a review process like this one, FFM staff recognize that our capacity to lead is rooted in a commitment to our own lifelong learning and growth. This final section of our report shares some of the wondering that has been evoked within the FFM team through this review process.

A. Are we seeing a resurgence in the desire for catechetical resources? We are perceiving a growing desire within the CRC to find culturally relevant ways to communicate the richness of what we believe. This request to provide a curriculum review of the NCC comes alongside numerous other requests from pastors, youth leaders, and other church leaders to assist them in locating new resources for teaching the creeds, confessions, and contemporary testimonies that shape the theological framework of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. This apparent resurging interest in catechetical teaching follows after years of many congregations' discarding all kinds of engagements with the historical documents of the church.

B. Are there gaps in our denomination's current catechetical resources? Yes. We have consistently heard from leaders working with people who are coming to faith later in life that our current catechetical resources assume a familiarity with the Christian faith, the characters and stories in the Bible, and higher levels of education. While the NCC Curriculum introduction states that the NCC is for children and adults, we are not convinced that the NCC is an appropriate resource for those who are early in their faith development, regardless of age. However, the NCC could be a beneficial conversation starter for persons already familiar with the basic Christian faith, biblical narrative, and theological terms.

C. Additionally, we wonder how many lifelong members of our churches have engaged the confessional documents of our tradition since they were in high school. Could all of us benefit from catechetical resources that are designed to introduce these documents as if we were encountering them for the first time?

D. Since the CRC's historical confessional resources were developed in European contexts within the 16th and 17th centuries, how might our catechetical teaching resources benefit from greater attention to the increasing diversity of the CRC today and of the communities in which God has planted us? If we include campus ministries and nontraditional churches, at least twenty different languages are spoken in the CRC, representing many cultural communities. Our congregations also embrace people of varying cognitive and physical abilities. How might our catechetical resources serve all members equally?

E. With today's increasing array of social media options, podcasts, webinars, etc., our team wonders if there is an opportunity to develop new forms of catechetical teaching that utilize these other approaches rather than a traditional curriculum approach. We are wondering how current technologies could encourage more integrated, intergenerational, lifelong, and lifebroad engagement with the creedal and confessional statements of our faith.

F. How can we engage current understandings from educational contexts—how children make meaning, faith formation theory, adult learning theory, practice-based learning, etc.—in shaping catechetical teaching within local church contexts? How might best practices offered by educational, social, and even faith-development research better equip Reformed churches to adapt our faith-formative approaches?

G. What current best practices can we identify within CRC congregations related to teaching our creeds, confessions, and contemporary testimonies? Rather than writing a new curriculum, which would require a high commitment of time and resources, are there ways to gather the best practices from CRC congregations to share and grow in our mutual learning around faith formation?

H. While FFM currently has a resource called *A Ten-Question Tool for Choosing a Children's Ministry Curriculum*, our NCC review process has sparked conversations about the potential of developing similar resources for teen and adult materials, as well as for identifying resources for persons who are new to the Christian faith and persons who live with cognitive impairments and learning disabilities.

IX. Conclusion

More than providing a simple yes or no regarding FFM's perspective on the New City Catechism and curriculum, our review team believes that churches are better served by sharing more of our conversation and considerations in reviewing this resource.

Therefore, our goal in sharing this curriculum review of the NCC for synod's consideration is to provide churches with a report that will allow them to see the process and types of observations made when conducting a resource review.

Additionally, we have seen this review as an opportunity to share how the process of reviewing the NCC has sparked within FFM additional conversations related to the CRC's catechetical teaching resources.

X. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Chris Schoon, director of Faith Formation Ministries, when matters related to this report are being discussed.
- B. That synod encourage CRC churches to share with FFM the ways in which they are engaging in catechetical teaching in their local contexts, particularly with regard to people who come to faith as adults.
- C. That synod consider this report in fulfillment of the directive by Synod 2019 for FFM to provide a curriculum review and advice regarding the use of the New City Catechism by our churches.

Appendix B

Worship Practices

Second Service: Response to Synod

I. Synod's request

In the context of a discussion about Church Order Articles 51 and 54 and churches' worship practices, Synod 2019 adopted the following recommendation (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 770):

That synod affirm the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day and instruct the Council of Delegates to ensure that Worship Ministries and/or Faith Formation Ministries continue to make excellent resources available to the churches that would encourage existing congregations to continue, and new congregations to embrace, some kind of assembly that builds up the body of Christ.

Ground: This provides congregations with resources for carrying on the tradition of, or beginning, a second Sunday service, in keeping with the decisions of earlier synods (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 766-67).

II. Response from Faith Formation Ministries and Worship Ministries

It is challenging to write a report on Synod 2019's request "to ensure that Worship Ministries and/or Faith Formation Ministries continue to make excellent resources available to the churches that would encourage existing congregations to continue, and new congregations to embrace, some kind of assembly that builds up the body of Christ," because in essence everything we do is for that purpose. Considering the larger context provided by the report, we ask your indulgence as we have reinterpreted the request as follows: "Whether we choose to meet twice each Sunday or at other times during the week, the CRC continues to value and encourage Sabbath observance, biblical and doctrinal literacy, prayer, opportunities for deep and rich fellowship, and opportunities for worship beyond Sunday morning. In what ways can Worship Ministries and Faith Formation help to support those values?"

Most of Faith Formation Ministries' resource toolkits, Ten Ways resources, Network posts, and other print resources include suggested practices

connected to a wide range of worship gatherings and discipling opportunities while also encouraging intergenerational relationships. Several resources introduce faith-formative practices designed for home settings, including family devotional resources.

Likewise, many of the worship-related resources—particularly prayers, responsive readings, and other litanies—curated by Worship Ministries, whether on the Network or through *Reformed Worship*, are readily adaptable to multiple formal and informal worship contexts: in small groups, family settings, or second worship services in a church building. Some representative resources from both ministries, highlighted below, can be accessed at network.crcna.org and search: Distributing the Weight: Reflections and Resources for When You Have or Don't Have a Second Sunday Service.

A. *Sabbath observance*

- Resources developed regarding *Worship and COVID-19* and including children in online worship
- *Ten Ways for Families to Engage Kids in Worship*
- *5 Ways to Help Kids Worship*

B. *Increased biblical and doctrinal literacy*

- *Dwell* children's ministry curriculum, which is undergoing a refresh
- *Dwell at Home* resources, including the *Jesse Tree* and *God's Big Easter Story*
- *Everyday Family Faith*—family faith practices guide, English and Korean editions
- Webinar: *Restoring Holy Communion in Reformed Churches*
- *Lord's Supper and COVID-19*
- *5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids*
- *The Big Question: Growing Spiritually with Heidelberg Q&A 1*
- *10 Ways My Reformed Identity Shapes My Life*
- "Trinitarian Worship" by Cornelius Plantinga, coming June 2020, RW 136
- "Confession of Sins: Why Do It?" by Chris Walker, coming June 2020, RW 136

C. *Prayer*

- Resources for 2020 Prayer Day Services
- *Reformed Worship* articles:
 - "Our Father in Heaven: A Prayer Service Using the Lord's Prayer and the Heidelberg Catechism"
 - "Hear, O Lord, And Answer: A Service of Prayer"
- *Let Justice Roll: Worship Planning Resources with a Justice Theme*
- *Community-Wide Worship*
- *In Jesus' Name*
- *Name(s) above All Names: Enriching Our Ways of Addressing God*
- *Reclaiming the Power of Prayer in Worship*
- "The Importance of Corporate Prayer" by Martin Boardman, coming June 2020, RW 136
- *Prayer Ideas (In Community and At Home)* from the Family Faith Formation toolkit

- *The Lord’s Prayer* (free event outline)
- *5 Ways to Pray with Kids*
- Also see prayer resources listed below under “Worship Opportunities Beyond Sunday Morning”

D. Deeper and richer fellowship

- “Belonging: 2020” —Worship Symposium workshop led by Joyce and Chris
- Faith Formation Ministries Toolkits:
 - *Building Blocks of Faith*
 - *Faith Storytelling*
 - *Intergenerational*
 - *Third of Life*
- *Reformed Worship* theme issue on “Including Older Adults in Worship” (June 2019, RW 132)
- Worship Ministries webinars:
 - *Training Youth for Leadership*
 - *Worship: Can I Be Included?*
 - *Generations Leading and Worshiping Together*
 - *The Mentoring Project*
 - *Mentoring and the Worship Leader*

E. Worship opportunities beyond Sunday morning

- Worship resources that are prepared for Sunday morning can be utilized and adapted to fit many other contexts as well.
- *Lectio Divina*
- From *Lift Up Your Hearts* (LUYH)
 - “A Service of Morning Prayer”—LUYH 373
 - “Midday Prayers”—LUYH 380
 - “A Service of Evening Prayer”—LUYH 381
 - “A Service of Night Prayer”—LUYH 385
- Resources developed for Worship and COVID-19
 - *House Worship Liturgy Template*
 - *Daily Worship for Holy Week and Easter*
- *Everyday Family Faith*
- “Worship ideas” in the Family Faith Formation toolkit
- From *Reformed Worship*:
 - “How to . . . Plan Worship for a Family Reunion”
 - “Everyday Jesus Spirituality”

III. Additional background material

A. Church Order Article 51 and its Supplement

Article 51

- a. The congregation shall assemble for worship, ordinarily twice on the Lord’s Day, to hear God’s Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.
- b. Worship services shall be held in observance of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost, and ordinarily

on Old and New Year's Day, and annual days of prayer and thanksgiving.

c. Special worship services may be proclaimed in times of great stress or blessing for church, nation, or world.

Supplement, Article 51-a

a. Synod affirms the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day and encourages existing congregations to continue and new congregations to embrace this tradition for the building up of the body of Christ.

b. Where congregations are exploring alternatives to the second service, synod encourages those congregations to ensure that such alternatives are part of a strategic ministry plan with full accountability to their classis.

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

Note: The following changes to Church Order Articles 51-a and 51-b (indicated by strikethrough and *italics*) will be considered by Synod 2020 for adoption. The current Articles 51-b and -c would become 51-c and -d respectively; Supplement, Article 51-a would be deleted.

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

b. Each classis shall affirm the rich tradition of assembling a second time on the Lord's Day for worship, learning, prayer, and fellowship by encouraging churches to include these items as part of a strategic ministry plan for the building up of the body of Christ.

B. Church Order Article 54

a. The proclamation of the Word shall be central to the worship of the church and shall be guided by the creeds and confessions.

Note: Synod 2019 proposed the deletion of Article 54-b to be considered by Synod 2020 for adoption.

b. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the creeds and confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism.

C. Acts of Synod 2019 (pp. 768-70)

The second service has long proven to be a helpful discipline in fostering appropriate observance of the Lord's Day, raising the level of biblical and doctrinal literacy in the church, and creating opportunity for deeper and richer fellowship. Many churches that have continued the practice of a second worship service can testify to these benefits. For congregations that are exploring an alternative to the evening worship service, or for congregations that have already discontinued worshipping on Sunday evening, perhaps

there are ways to reimagine what public gatherings for worship might look like [emphasis added].

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 768)

Synod 2019 adopted the following in response:

In order to bring the Church Order into closer alignment with our current practice as a denomination, and to foster conversation among the churches about the expectations that should shape our worship practices, the advisory committee recommends the following:

1. That synod propose that Synod 2020 adopt the following changes to Church Order Articles 51-a and 51-b so that they will read as follows (additions are in *italics*; deletions are in ~~strikethrough~~):

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

- b. *Each classis shall affirm the rich tradition of assembling a second time on the Lord's Day for worship, learning, prayer, and fellowship by encouraging churches to include these items as part of a strategic ministry plan for the building up of the body of Christ.*

Note: The current Articles 51-b and -c would become 51-c and -d respectively; Supplement, Article 51-a would be deleted.

Grounds:

- a. These changes would bring the Church Order into harmony with the current practice of the vast majority of congregations, so that its provisions for public worship are "faithfully observed" (Church Order Art. 86).
 - b. Though Scripture does not indicate the frequency of worship on the Lord's Day, the proposed Article 51-b highlights the value of a time beyond Sunday-morning worship when the whole congregation may be invited to assemble as Christ's people and invites the broader assemblies to foster conversations about how this might best be done.

— Adopted

2. That synod propose that Synod 2020 delete Church Order Article 54-b.

Grounds:

- a. Though it is important for our preaching to reflect the instruction of the Reformed confessions, the current Church Order Article 54-a already requires that preaching be guided by the creeds and confessions, and a specific obligation for catechetical preaching is an unrealistic expecta-

tion when the majority of our congregations do not have a second service.

- b. This brings Church Order into harmony with denominational practice (Church Order Article 86).

—*Adopted*

3. That synod affirm the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day and instruct the Council of Delegates to ensure that Worship Ministries and /or Faith Formation Ministries continue to make excellent resources available to the churches that would encourage existing congregations to continue, and new congregations to embrace, some kind of assembly that builds up the body of Christ.

Ground: This provides congregations with resources for carrying on the tradition of, or beginning, a second Sunday service, in keeping with the decisions of earlier synods (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 766-67).

—*Adopted*

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 768-70)

Chris Schoon, director, Faith Formation Ministries
Joyce Borger, director, Worship Ministries . . .

Appendix E

Resonate Global Mission Organizational Foundations

OUR MANDATE

Resonate Global Mission shall give leadership to the denomination in its task of bringing the gospel holistically to the people of North America and the world and drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church. The mandate of the agency has three aspects. The agency shall

- encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism and discipleship.
- initiate, support, and guide new-church development and other evangelistic and discipling ministries.
- develop Christian leaders.

(*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 464)

OUR VISION – WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

Communities of disciples joining in God's mission as they faithfully proclaim and live out the good news of Jesus in their local neighborhoods and around the world.

OUR MISSION – WHAT WE WANT TO DO

Compelled by God's mission to save the lost and renew all things, we exist to engage more and more people in the Spirit's call to live out God's mission in their neighborhoods and in the world.

OUR KEY STRATEGIES – HOW WE DO IT

Resonate joins with a diverse network of CRCNA congregations and other partners locally and globally. We work to mobilize individuals and communities to participate in God’s mission and work for the spiritual and social transformation of the world. We believe that the Holy Spirit is igniting a global gospel movement and that we can join in by investing in these three critical strategies:

Forming Leaders

Missional leaders are people who live out, influence, invite, and equip others to join God’s mission. We want to see an increasing number of Christians **formed** to engage and lead others on God’s mission.

Sending Congregations

Jesus sends all his followers into the world as his witnesses. We want to see an increasing number of diverse, locally rooted, and globally connected congregations and ministries **sent** to faithfully proclaim and live out the good news of Jesus.

Connecting Networks

As more people join God on mission, we want to see people working together for spiritual and social transformation in their neighborhoods and around the world. We work to foster an increasing number of networks of leaders **connected** in relationships of mutual learning, trust, and influence.

OUR PRIORITIES

Develop young adults and lay leaders for mission

We will open space for diverse groups of young adults and lay leaders, equipping, mentoring, and discipling them so that together we may share the good news and live out the gospel in all areas of life.

Plant churches that participate in broader church planting movements

We will catalyze the planting of diverse churches locally and globally that seek spiritual and social transformation in their communities.

Equip and encourage congregations in gospel witness

We will challenge, encourage, and equip communities of disciples locally and globally to discern the Holy Spirit’s work in their neighborhoods and boldly follow the Spirit into relationships that concretely demonstrate the love of Christ and grow the church.

Minister with diaspora communities

We will mobilize believers inside and outside communities of immigrants, migrants, refugees, and international students in a way that welcomes and embraces them, communicates God’s love, and calls them to faith in Christ.

OUR POSTURES

Prayer

We saturate all we do in prayer because we are completely dependent on God.

Listening

We listen to the Holy Spirit, the Word, and one another in order to discern God's will.

Serving

We serve others above ourselves, walking in the footsteps of Jesus, who gave his life for us.

Learning

We are at our best when we work together and learn from each other.

Care and Accountability

We offer appreciation for each other, we own our mistakes, and we celebrate what God is doing in and through us.

Peacemaking

We model and nurture trust and respect across barriers that divide people.

OUR PILLARS

Biblical values that undergird our mission

God's mission as central to our being as the church (God's mission)

Joining the mission of God, the church is sent with the gospel of the kingdom to call everyone to know and follow Christ and to proclaim to all the assurance that in the name of Jesus there is forgiveness of sin and new life for all who repent and believe. The Spirit calls all members to embrace God's mission in their neighborhoods and in the world: to feed the hungry, bring water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and free the prisoner.

We repent of leaving this work to a few, for this mission is central to our being.

On our part in God's mission, see Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:45-49, and John 17:18; on seeing our mission beyond our local community, Matthew 24:14 and Acts 13:1-3; on meeting the needs of people, Matthew 25:31-46 and Luke 4:18-19; and on the centrality of mission to our being, John 20:21. (Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony, para. 41)

God's loving care for creation and people (whole world)

We celebrate the abundance and diversity of the gifts and resources God has given to all peoples and cultures. We continually point others toward and remind ourselves of God's faithful provision to meet our own needs and to help us share with others. We embrace our calling as disciples of Jesus to live and learn together as faithful and generous stewards of God's best intentions for the world.

Our world, fallen into sin, has lost its first goodness, but God has not abandoned the work of his hands: our Maker preserves this world, sending seasons, sun, and rain, upholding all creatures, renewing the earth, promising a Savior, guiding all things to their purpose.

See Genesis 3; 9:8-16; Psalm 104, especially verse 30; Matthew 5:45; and Acts 14:17. For the promises of a Savior, see Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 11:1-5; 42:1-7; 53; and Micah 5:2.

(Our World Belongs to God, para. 4)

The comprehensive scope of God's redemptive work in Christ (whole gospel)

We announce the gospel of Jesus as good news of redemption for the whole world. We proclaim and embrace the reconciling work of Christ for personal salvation, and we participate in God's reconciling and transforming of our world by working for God's reign of peace and justice. We recognize all aspects of life and community, as well as the darkness in our own personal lives, as needing redemption and transformation.

In a world estranged from God . . . we witness—with respect for followers of other ways—to the only one in whose name salvation is found: Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God reconciles the world to himself. God loves all creation; his compassion knows no bounds.

On the exclusive claims of Christ, see John 14:6 and Acts 4:12; on God's love and compassion for the world, see Matthew 9:36-38 and John 3:16.

(Our World Belongs to God, para. 42)

The church as the worldwide body of Christ formed by the Spirit and the Word (whole church)

We celebrate the unity in diversity of the worldwide body of Christ. We humbly acknowledge that the church is empowered by the Spirit to not only announce but also live out the good news of Jesus. We commit ourselves and call others to a radical discipleship that follows Jesus in the way of the cross, putting others above ourselves and overcoming evil with good. We seek to model this by being a caring and diverse community ourselves. In our worldwide ministry, we honor the work the Spirit has done and is doing through other expressions of the church while contributing our distinctive Reformed flavor. We seek to partner with others whenever and wherever possible.

The Spirit gathers people from every tongue, tribe, and nation into the unity of the body of Christ. . . . Men and women, impelled by the Spirit, go next door and far away into science and art, media and marketplace—every area of life—pointing to the reign of God with what they do and say.

On the gathering of all nations, see Revelation 7:9-17 . . . and on the breadth of the church's mission in the Spirit, Philippians 1:27-2:15.

(Our World Belongs to God, para. 30) . . .

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES REPORT (DEFERRED FROM 2021)

The Council of Delegates (COD) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) began its service of interim governance on behalf of the CRC's annual synods after being appointed by Synod 2017. COD delegates represent the CRC's forty-nine classes. There are also four at-large members. Together they gather—this past year via video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic—to address the mission and ministry of the CRCNA on behalf of synod. The ministry matters addressed by the COD include agency matters with regard to ReFrame Ministries (formerly Back to God Ministries International [BTGMI]) and Resonate Global Mission, along with matters concerning Congregational Services ministries of the CRCNA—each of the entities being governed by the COD.

The COD presents the following report as a summary of its work in the interim since its special meeting June 11-12 and June 16-17 in lieu of Synod 2020, which did not meet because of the pandemic.

I. Introduction

A. *Governing on behalf of synod*

The COD functions with a constituent-representative model of policy governance. Policy governance suggests a board's role is to see that the organization achieves what it should, avoiding the unacceptable (via the concept of limitations), all on behalf of its constituents. (Read more about the constituent-representative model in the COD Governance Handbook at crcna.org; search "COD Governance Handbook.")

This constituent-representative model of policy governance provides a "link between the organization's board and its constituents. The constituents are represented on the governing board and participate in policy development and planning."¹ For these purposes, the term *constituents* refers to CRCNA members.

Similar to all forms of policy governance, there is clear differentiation between board activity and staff/administrative activity. Those serving on the COD are not invited into management functions. Staff/administrative members do not chart the direction and set the policies for the denomination, but they serve as implementers, working within the contours of COD-set policies toward the goals and limitations identified by the COD in conjunction with the CRC constituency. Moreover, as the COD sets direction and evaluates the effectiveness of outcomes, staff and administration are always attentive to context, making recommendations and providing analysis to the COD in ways that consider national contexts, diversity, and the like.

This model flows from CRCNA church polity as described in Church Order Article 27-a: "Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and

¹ Bradshaw, P., R. Hayday, R. Armstrong; "Non-profit Governance Models: Problems and Prospects," paper originally presented at ARNOVA Conference, Seattle, Washington, 1998.

domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of councils being original, that of major assemblies being delegated.”

In other words, ecclesiastical authority begins with congregations and is delegated to classis and then to synod. Church Order Article 27-a is balanced by Article 27-b: “The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis”—emphasizing the authority of the broader assemblies, which are made up of officebearers who represent Christ’s authority in those assemblies as they make decisions for the broader church. The role of officebearers in each of these assemblies is significant in Church Order Article 1-a: “The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that officebearers are ‘to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up’ (Eph. 4:12), and to do so ‘in a fitting and orderly way’ (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities.”

As an ecclesiastical governance entity serving in the interim of synod, the COD provides governance by means of the authority delegated to it by synod and with its synodically elected membership representing classes or serving in at-large capacities.

(COD Governance Handbook, section 1.1: Governance)

The mandate and functions of the Council of Delegates as adopted by synod are outlined in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook (at crcna.org, search “Council of Delegates”).

Some COD members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA Canada Corporation, the CRCNA U.S. Corporation, the ReFrame Canada Corporation, and the ReFrame U.S. Corporation. These legal entities (Canada and U.S.) interact via joint ministry agreements to govern ministry that is shared across the border between the ReFrame corporations and the CRCNA corporations. In fall 2019 the directors of the CRCNA and BTGMI Canada Corporations alerted the Council of Delegates to organizational implications of charitable laws in Canada, which necessitated immediate interim action to comply with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The COD continues to work on a proposed new structure that would bring the denomination into better alignment with CRA regulations (see section II, A, 8 of this report for an update on restructuring).

The Council of Delegates met four times via video conference since May 2020—in June 2020 to address matters on behalf of Synod 2020, which was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see section II, A, 1 for action requested re the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the COD 2020); in October 2020; in December 2020 for a special listening session; and in February 2021. The COD is scheduled to meet again via video conference in May 2021. The COD’s agenda is processed both by the legal corporations mentioned above and by the full ecclesiastical body of the COD. The agenda items are first reviewed by one of five committees: Congregational Ministries; Global Missions Ministries; Mercy and Justice Ministries; Ministry Plan, Communication, and Synodical Services; or Support Services. These committees hear and study reports regarding the mission, vision, and values of our various ministries; the ways our ministries are integrated into a ministry (strategic) plan and are evaluated; the financial status, administrative leadership, and organizational health in each ministry-priority area; and the ways in which the COD responds both to synod and constituents. Committees present

their recommendations for review and feedback first to the four corporations (CRCNA and ReFrame Canada Corporations, and CRCNA and ReFrame U.S. Corporations) and then to the full COD for information and any required action. In addition, the COD oversees the work of the executive director of the CRCNA.

Nearly all of the matters addressed by the COD affect the full CRCNA as one denomination in two countries. In compliance with Canadian regulations, the Canadian corporations review and approve all actions relative to providing effective national direction and control for collective ministry activities and, as necessary, address the nonecclesiastical matters that relate directly to uniquely Canadian issues and matters of law. The same is done by the U.S. corporations. The COD, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the entire church.

B. Tasks carried out on behalf of synod

A significant part of the COD's work over the past year reflects the *continued* response to synodical instructions (Synod 2020 was unable to meet due to the COVID-19 pandemic) directed to either the COD or the executive director in conjunction with the COD. An outline of the various instructions, organized by ministry-priority area, is provided in the following.

1. Faith formation

Note: The COD received no additional assignments in this ministry-priority area.

2. Global mission

Note: The COD received no additional assignments in this ministry-priority area.

3. Gospel proclamation and worship

Note: The COD received no additional assignments in this ministry-priority area.

4. Mercy and justice

Addressing Abuse of Power (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 794-99)

- a. **Guardian Committee:** "That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to establish a team that would act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service. Consideration should be guided by the following features, which draw on good practices in other sectors of society for preventing and responding to all forms of abuse of power." (See section II, A, 17 and Appendix A.)
- b. **Monitoring by the COD:** "That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to ensure implementation by . . . monitoring progress at each meeting of the COD . . . making necessary adjustments in specific plans . . . and reporting to synod. . . ." (See section II, A, 17, b, 4.)
- c. **Nondisclosure Agreements:** "That synod direct the executive director to . . . review the history of nondisclosure agreements within the CRC

... develop a policy ... develop good practices and protocols ... [and] develop a reporting and accountability mechanism. ...” (See section II, A, 17, b, 1.)

- d. **Prevention of Abuse in CRCNA Offices and Conflict of Interest Dynamics:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to review the adequacy of the training provided to CRCNA staff, the adequacy of the provisions for support to a complainant, and mechanisms to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the process for dealing with complaints. A review should be informed by careful listening to persons who found the processes helpful and persons who did not.” Further, “that synod mandate the Council of Delegates to examine in detail the potential for conflicts of interest in current safe church procedures and to evaluate the need for and benefits of using outside experts to deal with situations that have a high potential for conflicts of interest.” (See section II, A, 17 and Appendix A.)
- e. **Recordkeeping:** “That synod mandate the Council of Delegates and executive director to put in place a system of recordkeeping of cases that come to the attention of any level of church authority, to allow for the analysis of patterns and trends over time, without compromising the confidentiality of individual persons. Collection of data should include some record of responses and outcomes, as well as reporting of incidents.” (See section II, A, 17, b, 3.)
- f. **Strengthening Safe Church Ministry:** “That synod mandate the executive director to oversee a review of the adequacy of safe church policies for follow-up in reported cases that involve church leaders. Findings and actions taken by the executive director shall be reported to the Council of Delegates to ensure that the CRCNA is exercising due diligence to prevent repeat occurrences or transfer of abusive leaders to other churches. The review shall consider best practices in church abuse-prevention ministry.” (Coming by way of the COD Supplement Report.)

Diversity Report (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829): “The executive director will continue to request an annual diversity report from each agency and ministry and will include a summary of these reports in the report to the [COD] each February.” (See section II, A, 6.)

Safe Church Reporting (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 476): “That synod instruct the executive director to have Safe Church Ministry report annually through the Council of Delegates to synod regarding the number and names of classes with and without Safe Church teams, and the number of congregations with and without Safe Church teams and policies.” (See the report of Safe Church Ministry, section III.)

5. Servant leadership

Note: The COD received no additional assignments in this ministry-priority area.

6. Other areas

Evaluation and Prioritization (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 455): “That synod instruct the Council of Delegates and the executive director to continue the important work of evaluation and prioritization by working together to implement a robust evaluation strategy whereby in a five-year cycle all agencies and ministries will be continually evaluated through the framework of the five ministry priorities.” (See section II, B, 5.)

Heritage Hall and Historical Committee Mandate (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761): “That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders.” (See section II, A, 11.)

Ministry Plan (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 630): “That synod give ‘concept endorsement’ to the goals and strategies attached (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 54-61), which the agencies will use to work toward implementation of the strategic plan.” (See sections II, B, 1-2.)

C. *Meetings of the Council of Delegates*

After reporting in the *Agenda for Synod 2020* the decision of the Council of Delegates to hold its meetings in person *unless there were no other choice*, the COVID-19 pandemic forced all groups large and small to meet online. For the past year the COD has held its regular meetings virtually, beginning with the May 2020 meeting, and plans to do so through May 2021. In addition, the COD will meet virtually in June 2021 in lieu of synod, which has again been canceled, to address any matters on the *Agenda for Synod 2021* that cannot await a decision by Synod 2022. (See more regarding this decision made by the COD in section II, A, 2 of this report.) The forced online meeting format over the past year has shown the COD that it is possible to meet via video conference, but the in-person format is still missed for large-group deliberations and small-table conversations. Interpersonal relationships are not fostered through the virtual format. The members of the COD look forward to engaging with one another face-to-face in October 2021, Lord willing!

D. *COD membership*

The members of the Council of Delegates from the classes include B. Bernard Bakker (Eastern Canada), Bev Bandstra (B.C. South-East), Jesus Bayona (Southeast U.S.), Gary D. Bos (Columbia), Rachel Bouwkamp (Grandville), Wayne Brower (Holland), J. Harold Caicedo (California South), Paula Coldagelli (Wisconsin), Samuel Cooper (Toronto), Heather Cowie (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Wendell Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), Fernando L. del Rosario (Central California), Bruce DeKam (Northern Michigan), Andy de Ruyter (B.C. North-West), Paul R. De Vries (Thornapple Valley), Peter J. DeVries (Yellowstone), Michael Ten Haken (Lake Superior), Sherry Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), Laurie Harkema (Lake Erie), Jeanne Engelhard (Grand Rapids East), Jill Feikema (Illiana), Drew Sweetman (Muskegon), Sheila E. Holmes (Hackensack), Thomas Byma (Greater Los Angeles), Lora A. Copley (Red Mesa), Michael D. Koetje (Kalamazoo), Michelle J. Kool (Alberta North), William T. Koopmans (Hamilton), Jose Antonio (Tony) Lara (Arizona), John R. Lee (Iakota), Daudi Mutisya Mbuta (Grand Rapids North), Brian L. Ochsner (Central Plains), James Roskam (Georgetown),

Roger Y. Ryu (Hanmi), Roger W. Sparks (Minnkota), Arnie J. Stolte (Northern Illinois), David A. Struyk (Grand Rapids South), Samuel D. Sutter (Atlantic Northeast), Arie Vander Zouwen (North Cascades), Mark Vande Zande (Heartland), Tyler J. Wagenmaker (Zeeland), Ralph S. Wigboldus (Huron), Jei Wilson (Chicago South), and George R. Young (Hudson).

The following persons are serving as interim delegates until Synod 2021 can act on their appointments (included below): Wendy de Jong (Niagara) and Frederick Wind (Quinte).

Four at-large members also serve the COD. They include Elsa Fennema (U.S.), Greta Luimes (Canada), Aaltje Van Grootheest (Canada), and Melissa Van Dyk, who is serving as interim Canada at-large member until Synod 2021 acts on her appointment.

The denomination's executive director (Colin P. Watson, Sr.) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee of the CRCNA and ReFrame Ministries U.S. Corporations and as a member of the Council of Delegates (without vote). The executive director is invited as a guest to the meetings of the CRCNA and ReFrame Corporations based in Canada.

Classes Rocky Mountain and Ko-Am presently have vacancies on the COD due to moves away from these regions by their respective delegates. The COD anticipates presenting nominations to fill these two vacancies by way of the COD Supplement.

In addition, two guests from the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees (Victor Chen and Charles Veenstra) and two guests from the World Renew Board of Delegates (Rachel Conley and Andrew Geisterfer) attend the COD meetings and serve on a COD committee. These nonvoting COD guests are given privilege of the floor during meetings. COD member Fernando L. del Rosario from Classis Central California also serves as a member on the Calvin University Board of Trustees, providing a valuable link to this CRCNA institution.

The following serve as officers of the COD and of respective corporations for the 2020-2021 term:

1. COD officers: Paul R. De Vries, chair; Andy de Ruyter, vice chair; Timothy Bosscher, treasurer; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary.
2. Corporation officers
 - a. CRCNA Canada Corporation: Andy de Ruyter, president; Michelle J. Kool, vice president; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary; Greta Luimes, treasurer.
 - b. CRCNA U.S. Corporation: Paul R. De Vries, president; Sheila E. Holmes, vice president; Samuel Sutter, secretary; Gary D. Bos, treasurer.
 - c. ReFrame Ministries Canada Corporation: Andy de Ruyter, president; Michelle J. Kool, vice president; Aaltje van Grootheest, secretary; Greta Luimes, treasurer.
 - d. ReFrame Ministries U.S. Corporation: Paul R. De Vries, president; Sheila E. Holmes, vice president; Samuel Sutter, secretary; Gary D. Bos, treasurer.

3. Executive Committee: Gary D. Bos; Heather Cowie; Andy de Ruyter; Paul R. De Vries, chair; Laurie Harkema; Michelle J. Kool; John R. Lee; and Aaltje van Grootheest. Colin P. Watson, Sr., serves ex officio. . .

F. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod, the Council of Delegates reports the following salaries for senior CRCNA, ReFrame Ministries, and Resonate Global Mission staff directly employed by the Council of Delegates:

Job level	Number of positions	Number below target	Number at target
E1	1	1	0
E2	4	3	1
E3	4	4	0

Synod 2014 adopted a salary administration system that uses a salary range *target* and a minimum of 85 percent of that target. In addition, the COD recently adopted a revised salary structure with fewer levels than the previous structure. Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for the current fiscal year are as follows:

2019-2020 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range		Canadian Range	
	Minimum	Target	Minimum	Target
E1	\$148,000	\$185,000		
E2	\$133,559	\$166,949	\$127,261	\$159,076
E3	\$113,186	\$141,482	\$111,514	\$139,392
H	\$95,920	\$119,900	\$95,580	\$119,475
I	\$81,288	\$101,610	\$81,924	\$102,405
J	\$68,888	\$86,110	\$70,218	\$87,773
K	\$58,380	\$72,975	\$60,185	\$75,232
L	\$49,474	\$61,843	\$51,586	\$64,482

II. Activities of the COD

A. Polity matters

1. Special meeting of the Council of Delegates in June 2020

The Council of Delegates acted on behalf of Synod 2020 (cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic) to decide matters identified by the Program Committee of synod (officers of Synod 2019) that could not await decision until Synod 2021. The minutes of the special June 2020 meeting were recorded in the *Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates 2020*, sent to the churches and posted at crcna.org/SynodResources. The COD presents the Minutes of the Special Meeting of June 2020 for ratification.

2. Feasibility of the meeting of Synod 2021

The COD considered at length the report and proposal of the Program Committee regarding the feasibility of the meeting of Synod 2021, given the continuation of restrictions in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the COD reviewed a number of concerns expressed in correspondence regarding the meeting of synod and the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. It was noted that there was polarity in

the opinions expressed between protecting the health and well-being of individuals and protecting the health and well-being of the denomination. The COD also considered that the meeting of synod should ensure full participation from both U.S. and Canadian delegates, and, given current border and travel restrictions, it seemed highly unlikely that Canadians could be physically present at synod in Iowa in June. The COD decided the following with regard to the meeting of Synod 2021:

- a. To cancel the meeting of Synod 2021 and to hold a special meeting of the Council of Delegates in lieu of synod (in June) to address any matters on synod's agenda that cannot wait for decision until the meeting of Synod 2022.
- b. To defer consideration of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality until Synod 2022.
- c. To task the Program Committee of synod with deciding which matters remaining on the agenda for Synod 2021 should be addressed by the special meeting of the COD in June 2021.

3. Interim appointments

On behalf of synod, the COD has ratified the following classical appointments of synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies* and has appointed the following World Renew board delegates:

Appointment	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Lake Superior Niagara Quinte Toronto	Rev. Harrison A. Newhouse	Rev. James T. Petersen Rev. Janet A. Ryzebol Rev. Kenneth M. deBoer Rev. Richard E. Grift	2023(1)
World Renew	Illiana North Cascades	Mr. James Groen Ms. Linda German		2023(1) 2023(1)

*Terms of alternate synodical deputies run concurrent with those of the synodical deputies.

4. Classes that have declared that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 2007, the executive director keeps a list of classes that, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, some classes have adopted a decision to declare that women officebearers may not be delegated to classis. A list of these classes may be obtained by contacting the office of the executive director.

5. Annual report on gender and ethnic diversity on denominational boards

Data for the board diversity report (with regard to gender and ethnic diversity) for the 2020-2021 year has been received from the denominational boards (Council of Delegates, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, and World Renew). In addition, data from the World Renew Joint Ministry Council (JMC) is included along with data from the World

Renew Board of Delegates. *Note:* The JMC is elected from the membership of the World Renew Board of Delegates.

There are presently 164 denominationally appointed board members (not including the JMC count), and the JMC, elected from the World Renew Board of Delegates, has 15 members. So, among a total of 179 members, 62 (35%) are women, and 27 (15%) are people of color. The data received from the boards for the 2020-2021 board term reflects an *increase* of 1 percent in delegates who are women and a *decrease* of 1 percent in delegates who are persons of color, as compared to the 2019-2020 reporting year.

Individual board diversity makeup is also reported in light of synod's goal of having *at least 25 percent ethnic minority membership*. The board membership of Calvin Theological Seminary is 24 percent ethnic minority; Calvin University, 10 percent; World Renew (JMC), 13 percent; and the COD, 18 percent.

6. Annual report on denominational efforts to address ethnic diversity and racial justice

At the instruction of Synod 2013, each CRC agency, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University are asked to submit to the executive director, as part of their strategic plan, diversity goals and timelines in their leadership, administrative, and regional ministry teams. This annual report was received by the executive director, and the compliance and progress were reported to the Council of Delegates in February.

In addition, the director of synodical services regularly reminds and encourages stated clerks and denominational boards to seek ethnic diversity in nominating people to serve on denominational boards and as delegates to synod. We need to be diligent in continuing to increase diversity.

7. Advisers to Synod 2021

a. Young adult representatives

Since 2009 synod has welcomed the engagement of youth and young adults (18- to 26-year-olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination and has sought to raise up leadership within the church through the appointment of young adult representatives to participate in the deliberations of synod. These individuals bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination by listening, engaging delegates during advisory committee meetings, and offering input on matters that arise in plenary.

Prior to the decision of the Council of Delegates in February to cancel the meeting of Synod 2021, the COD had appointed the following persons to serve as young adult representatives to synod (* indicates service in this capacity in 2019). Several of these individuals were also appointed to serve in 2020, but Synod 2020 was canceled as well. We express gratitude for their commitment and gracious willingness to serve the denomination in this way. *Note:* Only six of the seven young adult representatives needed were appointed at the February 2021 meeting of the COD.

* Rebecca Bokma
Amy DeJong
Alaina Kats Puckett

* William Krahne
Leah Sweetman
David VanDokkumburg

b. Ethnic advisers

Determination of the need for the appointment of ethnic advisers to synod is based on a rolling three-year average (greater than 25) of ethnically diverse delegates appointed to synod. Due to a decrease in the diversity of synod delegates, the Council of Delegates appointed the following two ethnic advisers to Synod 2021: Pablo D. Canché and Albert M. Sideco. Due to the cancellation of synod, these individuals will not be called to serve in this capacity this year. We are grateful for their willingness to offer their unique perspectives to the issues before synod, and they will be invited to serve Synod 2022 if they are able.

8. Denominational structure and senior leadership

a. Mandated Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT)

As reported by way of the COD Supplement to Synod 2020, in continuation of the address of structure in light of Canadian charitable-law requirements, three task forces have been appointed to develop, respectively, a senior leadership position description for (1) an ecclesiastical officer who can help shepherd the denomination forward, (2) an executive director for CRCNA-Canada, and (3) an executive director for CRCNA-U.S.—all of whom will work collaboratively on shared ministry and make decisions about joint ministry agreements for shared programs. The COD reviewed the proposed position descriptions for these roles in October 2020 and received the endorsement of the CRCNA Canada and CRCNA U.S. corporations, respectively, regarding their nation-specific position descriptions. Subsequently the COD took action as follows:

- Endorsed the work of the Ecclesiastical Officer Task Force. *Note:* The COD endorsed the “basic contours” of the report to inform the completion of the two proposed executive director position descriptions. The reports of the Canada Executive Director Job Description Task Force and the Task Force to Propose the Executive Director U.S. Position Description were received as information by the COD and referred to the following new task force.
- Appointed a new task force to incorporate the feedback of the Council of Delegates and to ensure that the three reports/position descriptions are complete and compatible, meet the demands of our Reformed polity, and address other relevant ecclesiastical considerations; that the three position descriptions include reviews by the CRCNA Human Resources offices in Canada and the U.S. to ascertain the use of appropriate language to reflect desire for inclusiveness; and that a final report be presented to the COD in February 2021 for recommendation to synod.
- Referred the following to the new task force as part of its mandate:
 - Obtain legal reviews from Canadian and U.S. legal counsel.
 - Consult the leadership of standing committees as well as denominational leadership to ensure that each of the position

descriptions are properly supported and accurately account for existing tasks/needs and that any and all budget staffing implications are accounted for.

- Consider *Synodical Clerk of the CRCNA* among a range of options for the naming of the position previously described as “ecclesiastical officer.” (The task force did not achieve consensus regarding an alternative to the title *ecclesiastical officer*, which tends to be defined as a role that functions to promulgate policy and regulations regarding the ecclesiastical aspect of a society’s activities.)
- Request that synod instruct the executive director of the CRCNA to suggest updates to the *Rules for Synodical Procedure* and the *Church Order and Its Supplements* reflecting these structural changes and proposed positions as provided in the report of the task force and the work of the COD.

The Council of Delegates plans to consult with a Canadian conflict-of-interest lawyer to review matters that may have the potential for conflict of interest and how best to manage such conflicts. The COD also considered inclusion of a recommendation in its final report that synod implement use of the denominational Conflict of Interest Policy (adopted by the Council of Delegates) for delegates to synod.

Six COD members, two members from the CRC at large, and two ex officio (nonvoting) members were appointed in late October to the new Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT) and asked to complete their work by the time of the COD meeting in February 2021. In late November, however, the mandate of the task force was expanded to include an analysis of legal opinions received by the COD. This addition to the mandate presented a challenge for the team to accomplish its tasks by the time of the February COD meeting. The SALT team provided the COD with a progress report in February and plans to submit a final report for the May meeting of the COD.

The final SALT report will be presented to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to ensure that the CRCNA is tax compliant. The task force has developed a preliminary model of three senior leadership positions to be further developed: Executive Director-Canada, General Secretary (CRCNA), and Chief Administrative Officer. In the process of developing the position descriptions, governance is being considered with regard to the standing of the agencies, their accountability, and how they are managed. The report will give attention to organizational “hygiene”—care and tending (such as the legislation of synod for its smooth running).

b. Senior leadership transition

Given the realization that the SALT report will not be considered by the COD until May 2021 and that consideration and subsequent approval of a proposed new structure will be deferred to Synod 2022, Colin P. Watson, Sr., indicated his willingness to continue serving as executive director until June 30, 2022. John Bolt, scheduled to retire in July 2021 as director of finance and administration, also expressed his

willingness to extend his retirement and thus assist the denomination until June 30, 2022. The COD accepted these offers with thanks.

c. Approval of “deputy to the executive director”

At the same time that the COD considered the offer of Colin Watson to extend his service as executive director, the COD considered his request for assistance with U.S. ministry leadership by way of a *deputy* to assist during the interim period until 2022 (with some help from other ministry leaders, he has been filling two roles—executive director and director of ministries and administration—over the past year). The appointment of a deputy for the coming 18 months would alleviate a void in leadership from 2021 to 2022 and would help a new person transition into the position in July 2022. The CRCNA U.S. Corporation authorized the executive director, with final approval of the nominee by the CRCNA U.S. Corporation officers, “to appoint a deputy with responsibility for U.S. ministry operations in lieu of replacing the vacant position of the director of ministries and administration, effective until at least June 30, 2022.” (The CRCNA Canada Corporation approved extending its interim directorships until June 2022).

9. Inspire 2021

In response to an extensive survey and consideration of concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, Inspire 2021 has been postponed for one year until August 2022 as a hybrid model (primarily in-person with some virtual elements). The planning took into account the original intent of the conference to be a denominational *gathering*—a coming together to share ideas, collaborate, and celebrate—which would be difficult to do virtually. A virtual only “Inspire Light” will be offered in 2021 to pique interest in attending the denominational conference in 2022. Visit crcna.org/Inspire for more information.

10. Syncretism report

The COD received updates on the address of syncretism. The executive director shared that engagement has centered on building connection with Indigenous ministries, primarily in Classis Red Mesa. Unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the efforts—the Navajo Nation has been significantly adversely affected by the pandemic, with great loss of life. The COD learned that Rev. Reggie Smith, diversity director, has been connecting with Rev. Stanley Jim, who is providing pastoral care in the context of the pandemic within the Navajo Nation. Rev. Jim’s work is evolving into ministry-centered intercultural navigation. Intention is for a deep, long, relational approach in conversations and in developing relationships. The development of leadership in Classis Red Mesa is robust, but it has been noted that the Navajo Reservation has only one minister of the Word at present. This area needs our earnest prayer!

The COD also heard that the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Centres have been serving on the front lines during this year of pandemic and need our prayers and support. Together with them, the CRCNA is embarking on a “Hearts Exchanged” process to equip Reformed Christians

to engage with Indigenous people as neighbors in a fulsome and humble way that builds trust and transformation. Two cohorts (one in Eastern Canada and one in Alberta) have begun this process.

11. Historical Committee mandate

The work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and the organizational stakeholders of the archives in Heritage Hall—that is, Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the CRCNA (including but not limited to the CRC’s Historical Committee)—paused in 2020 due to the pandemic. More recently, the Historical Committee asked that the COD clarify how it interprets Synod 2019’s instruction about the role of the Historical Committee in providing “shared oversight” of the archives.

The COD considered the request and communicated to the Historical Committee that it recognizes that Synod 2019 spent much time and attention on this issue. The COD noted (1) that synod recognizes that the Historical Committee continues to be a valued partner as outlined in the Governing Policy of the Hekman Library (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 626-32), and (2) that synod is not ceding oversight but is delineating that the oversight should be shared between the Historical Committee and the other stakeholders of Heritage Hall.

12. Revisions to letters of call for ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors

Pastor Church Resources presented to the COD in February revisions to the letters of call for commissioned pastors and ministers of the Word, which the COD approved for posting. Churches and stated clerks can access the revised letters of call at crcna.org/StatedClerks. . . .

15. Appeal of a decision of synod

A letter of appeal, outlining four grounds for the appeal, was submitted to Synod 2021 regarding a matter that was adjudicated by Synod 2019. The executive director has the authority to make a ruling on the submission (re whether substantial and new grounds have been presented). The executive director may also seek the input and support of the Council of Delegates regarding his/her judgment of the appeal. The COD expressed its support of the executive director’s proposal to decline the appeal submitted to Synod 2021.

16. Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee (JCC) hears appeals from a decision made by a council, a classis, or an agency of the Christian Reformed Church if it is alleged that an action violates the Church Order or the agency’s mandate. The procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. The committee’s members from both Canada and the United States include people with legal expertise, clergy, and nonclergy. . . .

18. Response to communication from author of Overtures 9, 10, and 11 in the *Agenda for Synod 2020*

The author of Overtures 9, 10, and 11 to Synod 2020 sent correspondence to the COD with a request that the overtures not be deferred until Synod 2021. At the request of the COD, the Abuse of Power Ad Hoc Committee prepared a response, noting the work regarding abuse of power that is already being accomplished. It is the intent of the COD to offer this response to the synod advisory committee assigned to consider these three overtures.

19. Unity and diversity engagement

The COD received a disturbing report during its February meeting regarding incidents of bullying, name-calling, threatening letters, and other attacks toward staff of the Office of Social Justice (OSJ), the Office of Race Relations, and other ministries working in the area of justice. Prayer is requested of all members at this time, and the COD is called to commit to the hard work of fighting systemic racism. The COD paused in its work to enter a time of lament, confession, and silent prayer. In addition to the Committee to Provide Guidance and Support for the Office of Social Justice, a consultant and the CRCNA Human Resources office are working with the staff of these ministries.

20. Publications and services

- a. *Yearbook*

Following an extensive process to gather denominational and local-church information as of approximately August 31 of each calendar year, staff of the Synodical Services Office produce an annual “snapshot” each February as the CRCNA *Yearbook*. The *Yearbook* is made available in print, as a downloadable PDF (available at faithaliveresources.org), and in online format (crcna.org/Yearbook). In addition, data received from the churches, classes, and ordained personnel throughout the rest of the year is continually updated in the online *Yearbook*, often making the most current information available within a few days. The online format includes the Church Finder feature (crcna.org/church-finder), which provides maps, church service times, membership information, and links to church websites, among other helpful information. Minister service history, special days to be observed in the church calendar, and denominational ministry-share information are all linked via the online *Yearbook*.

In addition, classis and denominational statistics can also be accessed or downloaded at crcna.org/Yearbook. Among some of the statistics available in the online *Yearbook* are the total number of members (baptized and confessing) in a local congregation, number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, number of professing members, number of baptized members, number of membership transfers from other CRCs, and number of members received through evangelism and from other denominations. This data continues to present a historical record of our church and ministry together through the years.

b. *Church Order and Its Supplements and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

The *Church Order and Its Supplements 2020* reflects revisions to Supplements adopted by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA in June 2020, meeting on behalf of synod. Synod 2019 also adopted proposed changes to the Church Order, and those will await the adoption of synod before implementation. The latest version of the *Church Order and Its Supplements*, published by the Office of Synodical Services, was distributed to each of the churches in early fall 2020 and has been translated into Korean and Spanish. The *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, last updated following decisions of Synod 2019 and translated for Spanish-speaking and Korean-speaking churches, is available in digital format only. Both the Church Order and the Rules for Synodical Procedure are available for download at crcna.org/SynodResources.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the director of synodical services under the direction of the executive director. From time to time some decisions need to be made by the executive director about which material properly belongs in the *Agenda for Synod*. At times, the executive director consults with the COD or Program Committee for advice and input when materials are in question. In many cases, erring on the side of grace seems more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether material is properly on its agenda.

Synod 2019 decided that in order to improve the connection between synod and classes and churches, a summary of the *Agenda for Synod* should be sent to delegates and church council clerks with an encouragement to pass it along to church members. The summary document is usually available for distribution in mid-spring.

d. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

The *Manual for Synodical Deputies* is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and the stated clerks of classes. A revision of the manual was completed in summer 2020 by the Office of Synodical Services, reflecting suggested clarifications and updates from the Candidacy office. Anyone desiring to access or download a copy of this tool for the classes may do so by going to the stated clerk and synodical deputy webpage at crcna.org/SynodicalDeputies.

e. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*

A very helpful tool for churches and classes, the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* was updated by Henry DeMoor in fall 2019 to reflect changes made to the Supplements through Synod 2019 that have been incorporated into the Church Order. We are grateful to Dr. DeMoor for his contribution of providing a tool for use by classes, churches, and many others working and advising on polity matters. This resource is intended as a companion to the CRC's Church Order, offering commentary and explanation of guidelines set forth and decisions made by synod over the years. The manual is available for viewing in the CRC Digital Library (crcna.org/DigitalLibrary), and

print and downloadable versions are available through Faith Alive (faithaliveresources.org).

f. *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*

Also updated in 2020 was Henry DeMoor's *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, previously printed in 2010. This invaluable resource, providing context for the rules of the church—the “why” behind the rules—is available for viewing in the CRC Digital Library (crcna.org/DigitalLibrary), and print and downloadable versions are available through Faith Alive (faithaliveresources.org).

B. *Program matters*

A significant part of the Council of Delegates' work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of the reports of the agencies, institutions, and ministries and via this section of the COD's report in this agenda. Additional information regarding financial matters is contained in Appendix D to this Council of Delegates Report as well as in the *Agenda for Synod 2021—Financial and Business Supplement* that will be distributed in late May. The final budget approved by the COD, including the allocation of ministry-share pledges by churches, will be presented as information to synod by way of the COD Supplement report through synod's financial matters advisory committee.

The COD provides denominational oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The office of the executive director serves as the primary link between the COD and the denomination's ministries. Serving within the office of the ED are the director of ministries and administration (currently vacant), the Canadian ministries director (CMD), the director of finance and operations (DFO), the director of ReFrame Ministries (formerly Back to God Ministries International), the director of Resonate Global Mission, the director of synodical services (DSS), and the director of communications and marketing (DCM).

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC), convened by the executive director of the CRCNA, has responsibility for implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (the current version is *Our Journey 2025*), for the collaboration of the ministries, and for the review of program matters. The binational membership of the MLC is made up of executive leadership, directors of agencies, presidents of the educational institutions (or their designees), and others representing specific offices and functions. The Canadian Ministries Team, convened by the Canadian ministries director, provides leadership to the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Canada.

The program and financial matters processed by the COD from July through February are presented to synod as information. Any matters that require action by synod are identified within the body of this report.

1. Summary of *Our Journey 2020* (Ministry Plan)

Fall 2020 marked the conclusion of *Our Journey 2020*—the denomination's five-year ministry plan, implemented in 2015. Also implemented with the start of *Our Journey 2020* was an *annual* denominational survey to help track progress of the ministry plan, in addition to metrics

recorded along the way. Synod delegates are invited to read an executive summary of the denominational survey at crcna.org/survey/survey-results.

2. Implementation of *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan)

The rollout of the new denominational ministry plan, *Our Journey 2025*, following the endorsement of the COD acting on behalf of Synod 2020, is complete. There's something about a journey that's exciting and invigorating. A promise of new horizons, new possibilities, new challenges. The Christian Reformed Church is on such a journey. It's called *Our Journey 2025*. "*Our*" because we are on it together as CRC people from congregations across the United States and Canada. "*Journey*" because we are moving ahead in our shared mission to express the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide, while also striving toward specific goals that our congregations and leaders have identified. And "*2025*" to remind us that this is just one stage of a journey that will see us living and growing together in new ways and new places by the year 2025.

For this five-year period, we have identified four "milestones" that we wish to work toward. We desire to become congregations and communities that do the following:

- Cultivate practices of prayer and spiritual disciplines, transforming our lives and communities by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Listen to the voices of every generation, shaping us for ministry together.
- Grow in diversity and unity by seeking justice, reconciliation, and welcome, sharing our faith as we build relationships with and honor the cultures of our neighbors and newcomers.
- Share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant new churches in our neighborhoods as we discover how to connect with our local and global ministry contexts.

Churches can request resources including visuals, conversation cards, and other tools that can help congregations and members feel excitement and ownership of the ministry plan in more than a theoretical way. Visit crcna.org/OurJourney to learn more about sharing in the excitement!

3. Our Calling

Proposed by the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture to Synod 2014, the term *Five Streams*—changed to "Our Calling" in 2016—became a focus of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in its collaboration, programs, and reporting. Synod 2015 adopted the five themes of Our Calling of the Christian Reformed Church (included below) to function as "ministry priorities to strategically focus and adaptively organize the work of the Christian Reformed Church in North America while respecting and building on our previous mission efforts, history, and legacy of relationships and member support" (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 680).

Faith Formation

As a community of believers, we seek to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to nurture their faith through all ages and stages of life.

Servant Leadership

Understanding that the lifelong equipping of leaders is essential for churches and ministries to flourish, we identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God.

Global Mission

Called to be witnesses of Christ's kingdom to the ends of the earth, we start and strengthen local churches in North America and around the world.

Mercy and Justice

Hearing the cries of the oppressed, forsaken, and disadvantaged, we seek to act justly and love mercy as we walk humbly with our God.

Gospel Proclamation and Worship

Believing that faith comes through the hearing of God's Word, we proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ and seek to worship him in all that we do.

Consistent with prior actions of both adopting the five streams and then relabeling them as "Our Calling," we note that these ministry priorities are being utilized to communicate more effectively what the CRC members and ministers, congregations and classes, and ministries and agencies are called to do. The *Annual Ministry Report* (see crcna.org/MinistryReport), the *Agenda for Synod*, and introductory brochures all utilize this categorization. Further, the Council of Delegates committee structure and committee mandates reflect these priorities.

4. CRC agency, institution, and congregational services reports

The Council of Delegates is responsible for submitting a *unified* report to synod composed of individual segments provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports of the CRC ministries appear in the following pages of this *Agenda for Synod*.

These reports portray the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church both locally and around the world. As you read these materials, we invite you to give thanks to God for ministry opportunities and for the thousands of staff and volunteers throughout the church who are living and sharing the gospel. . . .

6. Ratifying the appointments of ministry directors

Upon learning of the announced retirements of two ministry directors and of a requested change in position for a third ministry director at its October 2020 meeting (directors of Safe Church Ministry, Candidacy, and Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, respectively), the COD implemented appropriate search processes. However, due to the immediacy of filling two of the positions, the COD gave its executive committee the authority

to ratify the appointments in the interim between the fall and winter COD meetings. Each of the following appointees met with and shared with the COD in February about their journey toward coming to work in their respective new roles.

a. Safe Church Ministry director

The executive committee ratified, on behalf of the Council of Delegates, the appointment of Rev. Amanda Benckhuysen as the director of Safe Church Ministry, effective January 25, 2021.

b. Chaplaincy and Care Ministry director

The executive committee of the COD, on behalf of the Council of Delegates, met with and ratified the appointment of Rev. Timothy L. Rietkerk as the director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, effective January 19, 2021.

c. Director of Candidacy

At its February 2021 meeting, the COD ratified the appointment of Rev. Susan E. LaClear as the director of Candidacy (effective April 5, 2021).

The Council of Delegates recommends that synod express the gratitude of the denomination to Bonnie Nicholas and David Koll in their retirements and to Sarah Roelofs as she fills a new role for Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

7. ReFrame Ministries Foundational document

The COD was presented in February with the ReFrame Ministries (formerly Back to God Ministries International) Foundational document (Appendix C), which includes the agency's vision, mission, core values, and strategy statements. The COD endorsed the document and recommends that synod receive it as information.

8. Revised missionary support program

Resonate Global Mission prepared and presented to the COD revisions of the missionary support program. It is noted that the revisions are managerial in nature, not requiring approval by the COD or synod. Resonate received the broad support of missionaries regarding the revisions. The current missionary support program, approved by Synod 2014, has been successful in fielding and supporting missionaries. However, it was noted that many CRC churches have misunderstood the missionary support program approved by Synod 2014 and believe that direct giving to missionaries supports the entire cost of the missionary program. In reality direct giving to missionaries and their projects covers 66 percent of the total cost of Resonate's Career Staff Missionary Program while general giving (including ministry shares) covers the remainder of costs.

The COD received the revised missionary support program report as information and recommends that the next synod (2022) hear a brief report and presentation by Resonate on raising missionary support as a follow-up to decisions on missionary support approved by Synod 2014.

9. Church Planting Definition and Strategy Changes

At the recommendation of Resonate Global Mission, the COD endorsed the following definition of *church planting* to be used in all CRCNA denominational contexts:

Planting churches is a missionary endeavor to form new Christian communities of faith-churches—from persons currently outside of existing established Christian communities for the purpose of discipling the new community in the ways of Jesus to be witnesses to the world in both word and deed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In addition, the COD endorsed strategies for church planting, including the categorization, funding, and credentialing of church plants and church planters to aid Resonate in its work.

10. Ministry Support Services

a. Shared ministry services

The staff of Ministry Support Services (MSS) is responsible for *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, Libros Desafio (Spanish-language resources), and a number of professional services that support CRC ministries. These services include marketing, order and subscription processing, call center, editorial services, translation, rights and permissions management, design and web services, purchasing, and distribution. At any one time, more than 100 projects are in process, and thousands of words are being combined with design elements for publication via paper or pixels. The call center handles about 20,000 phone calls per year, in addition to processing online orders, email, and live chats on various CRCNA websites.

In the interest of consistent style, branding, and quality presentation, MSS has supported CRC communications staff in creating guides for Brand Standards and Editorial Style.

During the past year, Ministry Support Services staff managed the transition to a new website for crcna.org, including all of the Congregational Services ministries. By using a common platform, we are able to save money and share functionality across all of the sites.

b. *The Banner*

The Banner, the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, currently prints and distributes more than 75,000 copies of its paper version. Website pageviews average more than 75,000 per month, and more than 6,000 people have signed up to receive the weekly *Banner* email. Our efforts on social media also help to ensure that *Banner* content is available to anyone in a variety of forms.

The Banner app is available for free download on iPhone and Android devices (thebanner.org/App); monthly, the app is receiving more than 7,500 pageviews.

We are most thankful for a huge show of support from *Banner* readers, as nearly 6,000 donors gave more than \$460,000 for the annual appeal fundraiser in 2020.

c. Faith Alive and Libros Desafio

Although Synod 2013 approved the dissolution of the Faith Alive Christian Resources board and noted the necessary transition regarding critical functions of Faith Alive to MSS, MSS continues to sell and reprint resources that were already published. As those products grow older, and without new products to take their place, sales continue to decline. Sales are currently just under \$1 million per year, compared to about \$3 million in 2013. Similarly, Libros Desafio has ceased publishing new titles but continues to sell and reprint the backlist; sales are about \$180,000 per year.

Christian Reformed congregations continue to receive a special “CRC discount” in comparison to what churches of other denominations pay. In addition, the CRC Digital Library allows anyone attending a Christian Reformed congregation free access to most Faith Alive titles online. And, when the pandemic hit, we provided CRCs with free, online access to *Dwell Digital* (other churches pay up to \$500 per year to access these Sunday school curriculum resources). All of these initiatives are intended to help Christian Reformed churches make full use of these resources that they helped to publish.

d. The Network

Over the past decade the Network has become one of the CRC’s most-visited websites where people involved in their local church can connect—with each other and with denominational staff—about the “nuts and bolts” of ministry. Ministry Support Services oversees the site with a half-time community manager. Launched in 2010, the Network (crcna.org/Network) celebrated its 10-year anniversary in February of 2020.

In the very next month the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and churches turned to The Network to support each other as they reinvented nearly every aspect of congregational life and ministry. As well, denominational ministries were able to support churches by posting resource lists, how-to articles, and blog posts about doing ministry during COVID. Traffic to the site averaged 116,000 pageviews per month during 2020—an increase of 33 percent over the prior year.

C. *Financial matters*

1. Introduction

In order to assure that synod has the most up-to-date and accurate financial information, detailed financial data will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2021 – Business and Financial Supplement*, which will be made available to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022). In addition, synod will be asked to approve a schedule for one or more above-ministry-share offerings for the ministries of the denomination, a quarterly offering for World Renew (in lieu of ministry-share support), and a listing of requests for accredited organization status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the Council of Delegates Supplement report later in May.

2. Reimagining Ministry Shares update

Since the adoption of the new ministry share system in June 2020, churches have received tools and information to educate them about the new system (e.g., a letter outlining three options for each congregation to consider making its pledge: last year +5%; \$350 per member; or 10% of the congregational budget). Pledges were slow to come in, so classes were encouraged to remind churches of the deadline and need for pledges. At the time of the February meeting, staff noted significant changes in giving levels, both reductions and increases.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Paul R. De Vries, chair of the Council of Delegates; Andy de Ruyter, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Colin P. Watson, Sr., executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, Re-Frame Ministries, or Resonate Global Mission are discussed.

B. That synod grant all requests for privilege of the floor by the COD, agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2021.

C. That synod approve all requests for special offerings for the agencies, ministries, and educational institutions of the CRC that are contained within the reports to Synod 2021. . . .

G. That synod ratify the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates 2020, acting in lieu of Synod 2020 (II, A, 1).

H. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the COD for synodical deputies, alternate synodical deputies, and the World Renew Board of Delegates (II, A, 3).

I. That synod take note of the action of the COD to accept with gratitude the offers by Colin P. Watson, Sr., and John Bolt to delay retirement until June 30, 2022; and that synod take note of the CRCNA U.S. Corporation's authorization of the executive director "to appoint a deputy with responsibility for U.S. ministry operations . . . until at least June 30, 2022" (II, A, 8, b-c).

J. That synod take note of revisions made to the letters of call for commissioned pastors and ministers of the Word, available at crcna.org/Stated-Clerks (II, A, 12). . . .

R. That synod encourage classes and churches to make use of the *Our Journey 2025* (Ministry Plan) resources, including visuals, conversation cards, and other tools to aid in engaging in the excitement and ownership of the ministry plan (II, B, 2). . . .

T. That synod (1) take note of the ratification by the COD of three new ministry directors (Amanda Benckhuysen, Timothy L. Rietkerk, and Susan E. LaClear) and (2) express gratitude on behalf of the denomination to Bonnie Nicholas and David Koll in their retirements and to Sarah Roelofs as she fills a new role for Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (II, B, 6).

U. That synod take note of and receive the ReFrame Ministries Foundational document in Appendix C as information (II, B, 7).

V. That the next synod (2022) hear a brief report and presentation by Resonate on raising missionary support as a follow-up to decisions on missionary support approved by Synod 2014 (II, B, 8).

W. That synod take note of the following definition of *church planting* to be used in all CRCNA denominational contexts (II, B, 9):

Planting churches is a missionary endeavor to form new Christian communities of faith-churches—from persons currently outside of existing established Christian communities for the purpose of discipling the new community in the ways of Jesus to be witnesses to the world in both word and deed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

X. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements of the agencies and educational institutions (Appendix D).

Council of Delegates of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Paul R. De Vries, chair . . .

Appendix C ReFrame Ministries Foundational Document

I. Vision

Why do we exist?

Vision: Our vision is that the lives and worldviews of all people around the globe will be transformed by God’s gospel message.

II. Mission

What do we do?

Mission: Relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we create contextual media resources that proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen the church throughout the world.

III. Core values

How do we behave?

Core Value 1: Redemptive—We believe that through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ is redeeming all of creation, so we speak with a healing and hopeful voice in all of our programming.

Core Value 2: Humble—We are unconcerned with ego and seek to, above all, serve God, the church, our colleagues, and our audiences.

Core Value 3: Diligent—We are willing to roll up our sleeves and do the hard, and often unglamorous, work needed to achieve excellence.

IV. Strategy

How will we succeed?

Strategic Anchors

Church rooted: We believe the Holy Spirit works through the church, so we partner with churches to build and strengthen the body of Christ.

Major languages: We strive to reach the widest possible audience, so we create content in the world's most-spoken languages.

Context driven: We work with local partners who faithfully contextualize the gospel message and use the most effective media for connecting with diverse audiences.

Relationship focused: Following the example of Christ, we seek to build long-term, discipling relationships with individual members of our mass audiences.

V. Thematic goal

What is most important right now?

If we could accomplish only one thing in the next three to twelve months, what would it be?

Optimize our ministry in response to the challenges of COVID-19.

- **Content and production:** Create responsive content strategy and processes.
- **Advancement:** Adapt fundraising and communication practices for this time when in-person visits are not possible.
- **Administration:**
 - Establish effective long-term work systems and shared best practices across language ministries.
 - Create a contingency plan/budget.

VI. Standard operating objectives

What are the metrics and areas of responsibility that the leadership team must maintain to keep the organization afloat?

ReFrame Ministries Executive Dashboard

Finance

- Total revenue vs. expenses
- Revenue categories compared to budget
- Expense areas compared to budget
 - Language ministries
 - Administrative
 - Advancement

Advancement

- Donors (vs. previous period)
- Donor contacts (visits + phone calls vs. previous period)

Digital marketing

- Donors in online channel (vs. previous period)
- New donors in online channel (vs. previous period)
- Online gifts (vs. previous period)

English ministry

- Email subscriptions
- Website users
- Website sessions
- Website pageviews
- Prayer requests



Executive Dashboard

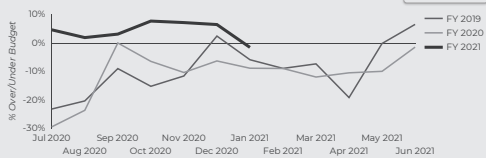
Updated through:
Jan 31, 2021

	Revenue to Date	Expense to Date	Change in Assets
	\$5.4M	\$4.2M	\$1.1M
Over/Under Budget?	↑ -1.5%	↓ -15.7%	
Last Year to Date	\$5.5M	\$4.6M	
% Change from Last Year	-2.0%	-8.8%	

Revenue by Category

	Revenue to Date	% Over/Under Budget
Revenue	\$5.4M	-1.7%
Ministry Share	\$1.8M	3.4%
Church Giving	\$257.4K	-53.1%
Other Gifts	\$2.1M	-2.2%
Estate Gifts	\$620.1K	-21.1%
Other Revenue	\$571.4K	164.8%

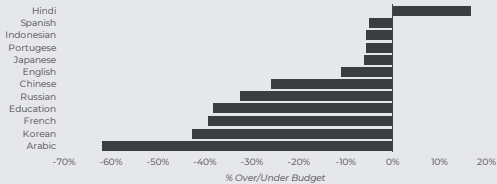
Is our revenue getting closer to budget over time?



Expenses by Area

	Expense to Date	% Over/Under Budget
Total Expense	\$4.2M	-15.7%
Program	\$2.9M	-14.2%
Administrative	\$524.8K	-14.9%
Advancement	\$759.8K	-21.2%

Which programs are spending over/under budget?



Advancement

As of Feb 28, 2021

Are we doing more donor visits?



Donor Visits this FY

201

↓ -70.1%

Donors this FY

7,630

↓ 12.2%

Digital Marketing

As of Dec 31, 2020

Online Donors

1,204

↓ 74.2%

New Online Donors*

510

↓ 122.7%

Online Gifts

1,743

↓ 71.1%

*New Online Donors as of Dec 31, 2020

English

As of Dec 31, 2020

Email Subscribers

500K

↓ 50.0%

Prayer Requests

2.5K

↓ 50.0%

Are we getting more web traffic?

(FY to date; % change vs. last year)

Users	Sessions	Page Views
1.5M	4.2M	8.9M
↓ 37.1%	↓ 51.0%	↓ 25.0%

Appendix D
Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Calvin Theological Seminary
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 3,320
Investments	\$ 54,556
Other	\$ 18,883
Total Assets	\$ 76,759
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 87
Other Payables	\$ 9,138
Total Payables	\$ 9,225
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ 55,221
Unrestricted	\$ 12,313
Total Net Assets	\$ 67,534
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	\$ 76,759

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Calvin Theological Seminary
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 2,405	\$ 2,277	\$ 2,143
% of Total Income	32.3%	30.6%	27.5%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 1,505	\$ 1,365	\$ 1,330
Disaster Gifts		\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ 171	\$ 198
Total Gift Income	1,505	1,536	1,528
% of Total Income	20.2%	20.7%	19.6%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales	\$ 2,397	\$ 2,526	\$ 2,413
Agency Services	\$ -		
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 1,141	\$ 1,092	\$ 1,699
Total Other Income	3,538	3,618	4,112
% of Total Income	47.5%	48.7%	52.8%
TOTAL INCOME	7,448	7,430	7,783
EXPENSES			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ 4,995	\$ 5,139	\$ 5,274
International	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Domestic Ministries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service	\$ 4,995	\$ 5,139	\$ 5,274
% of Total \$	68.8%	76.8%	79.2%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 1,566	\$ 995	\$ 902
Plant Operations	\$ 694	\$ 555	\$ 482
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ 573	\$ 494
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	2,260	1,550	1,384
% of Total Expenditures	31.2%	23.2%	20.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 7,255	\$ 6,689	\$ 6,658
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 193	\$ 741	\$ 1,125
 Total Program Service FTE's	 32	 32	 32
Total Support Service FTE's	16	16	16
TOTAL FTE's	48	48	48

FTE= Full time equivalent employees

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Calvin University
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 22,267
Investments	\$ 37,625
Other	\$ 3,487
Total Assets	\$ 63,379
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 10,006
Other Payables	\$ 52,769
Total Payables	\$ 62,775
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ -
Unrestricted	\$ 604
Total Net Assets	\$ 604
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	63,379

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Calvin University
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 2,349	\$ 2,221	\$ 2,075
% of Total Income	2.3%	2.1%	2.1%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 3,258	\$ 3,451	\$ 3,678
Disaster Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	3,258	3,451	3,678
% of Total Income	3.2%	3.3%	3.8%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$ 92,332	\$ 92,175	\$ 82,887
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 5,402	\$ 5,803	\$ 8,411
Total Other Income	97,734	97,978	91,298
% of Total Income	94.6%	94.5%	94.1%
TOTAL INCOME	103,341	103,650	97,051
EXPENSES			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ 86,489	\$ 85,342	\$ 80,841
Interenational	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Domestic Ministries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service	\$ 86,489	\$ 85,342	\$ 80,841
% of Total Expenditures	82.7%	82.8%	82.8%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 2,247	\$ 2,105	\$ 2,302
Plant Operations	\$ 7,597	\$ 7,491	\$ 6,862
Fund-raising	\$ 2,860	\$ 2,817	\$ 2,298
Debt Service	\$ 5,357	\$ 5,355	\$ 5,326
Total Support Service	18,061	17,768	16,788
% of Total Expenditures	17.3%	17.2%	17.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 104,550	\$ 103,110	\$ 97,629
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (1,209)	\$ 540	\$ (578)
 Total Program Service FTE's	 548	 528	 528
Total Support Service FTE's	132	143	143
TOTAL FTE's	680	671	671

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Central Services
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual @.7829	Fiscal 18-19 Budget @.7511	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @.7426
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales			
Agency Services	6,644	6,989	7,143
Grants/Miscellaneous			
Total Other Income	6,644	6,989	7,143
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME	6,644	6,989	7,143
EXPENSES:			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
International	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Domestic Ministries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ 5,399	\$ 5,569	\$ 5,647
Total Program Service	\$ 5,399	\$ 5,569	\$ 5,647
% of Total Expenditures	81.3%	79.7%	79.1%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$ 1,245	\$ 1,420	\$ 1,496
Fund-raising (Foundation)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Debt Service	-	-	-
Total Support Service	1,245	1,420	1,496
% of Total Expenditures	18.7%	20.3%	20.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 6,644	\$ 6,989	\$ 7,143
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
 Total Program Service FTE's	 42	 45	 45
Total Support Service FTE's	2	2	3
TOTAL FTE's	44	47	48

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Congregational Ministries
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual @.7829	Fiscal 18-19 Budget @.7511	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @.7426
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 5,088	\$ 4,960	\$ 4,812
% of Total Income	43.8%	43.9%	46.1%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 970	\$ 1,442	\$ 2,105
Disaster Gifts			
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ 2	
Total Gift Income	970	1,444	2,105
% of Total Income	8.4%	12.8%	20.2%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales	\$ 5,278	\$ 4,730	\$ 3,525
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 268	\$ 164	
Total Other Income	5,546	4,894	3,525
% of Total Income	47.8%	43.3%	33.8%
TOTAL INCOME	11,604	11,298	10,442
EXPENSES			
Program Services:			
Education	-	-	-
International	-	-	-
Domestic Ministries	11,498	11,429	11,771
Disaster	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
Total Program Service	11,498	11,429	11,771
% of Total Expenditures	97%	94%	98%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 332	\$ 523	\$ -
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fund-raising	\$ 21	\$ 224	\$ 293
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	353	747	293
% of Total Exenditures	3.0%	6.1%	2.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 11,851	\$ 12,176	\$ 12,064
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (247)	\$ (878)	\$ (1,622)
Total Program Service FTE's	77	63	81
Total Support Service FTE's	2	3	3
TOTAL FTE's	79	66	84

FTE= Full time equivalent employees

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Year: 2020
Agency: Employee's Retirement Plan - Canada (Canadian dollars)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Year 2020 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 337
Investments	\$ 6,287
Other	
Total Assets	<u>\$ 6,624.00</u>
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	
Other Payables	
Total Payables	<u>\$ -</u>
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	
Unrestricted	\$ 6,824
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 6,824.00</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 6,824.00

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Year: 2020

Agency: Employee's Retirement Plan - Canada (Canadian dollars)

Operating Budget (000s)

	2019 Actual	2020 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Employer Contributions	\$ 501	\$ 501
Participant Contributions	\$ 83	\$ 83
Investment Earnings	\$ 788	\$ 788
TOTAL ADDITIONS	1,372	1,372
DEDUCTIONS:		
Distributions	\$ 714	\$ 714
Management & General	\$ 24	\$ 24
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	738	738
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 634	\$ 634

TOTAL FTE's

FTE= Full time equivalent employees

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Year: 2020
Agency: Employee's Savings Plan - (US)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Year 2020 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ -
Investments	\$ 41,297
Other	\$ -
Total Assets	<u>\$ 41,297</u>
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ -
Other Payables	<u>\$ 16</u>
Total Payables	\$ 16
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	
Unrestricted	\$ 41,281
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 41,281</u>
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	\$ 41,297

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Year: 2020

Agency: Employee's Savings Plan - (US)

Operating Budget (000s)

	2019 Actual	2020 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Employer Contributions	\$ 2,536	\$ 2,242
Participant Contributions	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ 7,166	\$ 5,356
TOTAL ADDITIONS	9,702	7,598
DEDUCTIONS		
Distributions	\$ 4,529	\$ 4,701
Management & General	\$ 131	\$ 136
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 4,660	\$ 4,837
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTION)	\$ 5,042	\$ 2,761

TOTAL FTE's -

FTE= Full time equivalent employees

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Grants
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 3,480
Investments	\$ -
Other	\$ 640
Total Assets	\$ 4,120
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ -
Other Payables	\$ -
Total Payables	\$ -
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ 4,120
Unrestricted	\$ -
Total Net Assets	\$ 4,120
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	\$ 4,120

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Grants
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual @.7829	Fiscal 18-19 Budget @.7511	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @.7426
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	#DIV/0!	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster Gifts			
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-
% of Total Income	#DIV/0!	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ -	\$ 856	\$ 1,674
Total Other Income	-	856	1,677
% of Total Income	#DIV/0!	5.2%	5.8%
TOTAL INCOME	-	856	1,677
EXPENSES:			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ 532	\$ 1,141	\$ 1,798
International	\$ -	-	-
Domestic Ministries	\$ -	-	-
Disaster	\$ -	-	-
Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service	\$ 532	\$ 1,141	\$ 1,798
% of Total Expenditures	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	-	-	-
% of Total \$	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 532	\$ 1,141	\$ 1,798
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (532)	\$ (285)	\$ (121)

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 6,345
Investments	\$ -
Other	\$ 15,900
Total Assets	<u>\$ 22,245</u>
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 49
Other Payables	\$ 16,520
Total Payables	<u>\$ 16,569</u>
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ -
Unrestricted	\$ 5,676
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 5,676</u>
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	<u>\$ 22,245</u>

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Fiscal Year: 21-22

Agency: Loan Fund

Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Budget	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 863	\$ 852	\$ 831
Total Other Income	863	852	831
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 863	\$ 852	\$ 831
EXPENSES:			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
International	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Domestic Ministries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ 313	\$ 400	\$ 1,017
Total Program Service	\$ 313	\$ 400	\$ 1,017
% of Total Expenditures	45.4%	51.5%	81.6%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 377	\$ 376	\$ 230
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	377	376	230
% of Total Expenditures	54.6%	48.5%	18.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 690	\$ 776	\$ 1,247
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 173	\$ 76	\$ (416)

Schedule 1

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Year: 2020

Agency: Ministers Pension Plan - Canada (Canadian dollars)

Balance Sheet (000s)

	Year 2020 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 7,157
Investments	\$ 68,945
Other	\$ 70
Total Assets	<u>\$ 76,172</u>
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	
Other Payables	\$ 238
Total Payables	<u>\$ 238</u>
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	
Unrestricted	\$ 75,934
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 75,934</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 76,172

Schedule 1

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Year: 2020

Agency: Ministers Pension Plan - Canada (Canadian dollars)

Balance Sheet (000s)

	MPF 2019 Actual	MPF 2020 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Employer Contributions	\$ 2,582	\$ 2,592
Participant Contributions	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ 11,125	\$ 8,664
TOTAL ADDITIONS	13,707	11,256
DEDUCTIONS:		
Distributions	\$ 2,943	\$ 3,018
Management & General	\$ 891	\$ 952
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 3,834	\$ 3,970
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTION	\$ 9,873	\$ 7,286
TOTAL FTE's	1	1

FTE= Full time equivalent employees

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Year: 2020
Agency: Ministers Pension Plan - (US)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Year 2020 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 5,278
Investments	\$ 120,188
Other	\$ 328
Total Assets	<u>\$ 125,794</u>
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	
Other Payables	\$ 100
Total Payables	<u>\$ 100</u>
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	
Unrestricted	\$ 125,694
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 125,694</u>
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	\$ 125,794

Schedule 1

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Year: 2020

Agency: Ministers Pension Plan - (US)

Balance Sheet (000s)

	MPF 2019 Actual	MPF 2020 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Employer Contributions	\$ 5,117	\$ 5,037
Participant Contributions	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ 21,122	\$ 15,010
TOTAL ADDITIONS	26,239	20,047
DEDUCTIONS:		
Distributions	\$ 10,271	\$ 10,570
Management & General	\$ 1,176	\$ 1,223
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 11,447	\$ 11,793
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTION	\$ 14,792	\$ 8,254

TOTAL FTE's 2 1

FTE= Full time equivalent employees

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Raise Up Global Ministries
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 94
Investments	
Other	\$ 164
Total Assets	\$ 258
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 776
Other Payables	\$ 50
Total Payables	\$ 826
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ 98
Unrestricted	\$ (666)
Total Net Assets	\$ (568)
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	258

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Raise Up Global Ministries
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @.7426
INCOME:	
Ministry Share	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%
Other Gift Income:	
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 223
Disaster Gifts	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -
Total Gift Income	223
% of Total Income	28.1%
Other Income:	
Tuition/Sales	\$ 211
Agency Services	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 359
Total Other Income	570
% of Total Income	71.9%
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 793
EXPENSES	
Program Services:	
Education	\$ -
International	-
Domestic Ministries	\$ 915
Disaster	-
Other	\$ -
Total Program Service	\$ 915
% of Total Expenditures	71.8%
Support Services:	
Management & General	\$ 274
Plant Operations	\$ -
Fund-raising	\$ 85
Debt Service	\$ -
Total Support Service	359
% of Total Expenditures	28.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 1,274
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (481)
 Total Program Service FTE's	 8
Total Support Service FTE's	2
TOTAL FTE's	10

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: ReFrame Ministries
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 2,372
Investments	\$ 7,716
Other	\$ 588
Total Assets	\$ 10,676
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 627
Other Payables	\$ 1,736
Total Payables	\$ 2,363
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ 1,464
Unrestricted	\$ 6,849
Total Net Assets	\$ 8,313
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	\$ 10,676

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: ReFrame Ministries
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual @.7856	Fiscal 18-19 Actual @.7511	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @7426
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 2,918	\$ 2,795	\$ 2,611
% of Total Income	29.8%	28.8%	29.8%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 3,522	\$ 3,259	\$ 3,365
Disaster Gifts			
Estate Gifts	\$ 2,207	\$ 3,280	\$ 2,035
Total Gift Income	5,729	6,539	5,400
% of Total Income	58.6%	67.5%	61.6%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 1,133	\$ 357	\$ 750
Total Other Income	1,133	357	750
% of Total Income	11.6%	3.7%	8.6%
TOTAL INCOME	9,780	9,691	8,761
EXPENSES			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ 168	\$ 165	\$ 161
International	\$ 3,367	\$ 3,093	\$ 3,460
Domestic Ministries	\$ 2,282	\$ 2,257	\$ 2,630
Disaster			
Other			
Total Program Service	\$ 5,817	\$ 5,515	\$ 6,251
% of Total Expenditures	71.4%	69.5%	70.2%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 940	\$ 880	\$ 1,050
Plant Operations			
Fund-raising	\$ 1,395	\$ 1,538	\$ 1,599
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	2,335	2,418	2,649
% of Total Expenditures	28.6%	30.5%	29.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 8,152	\$ 7,933	\$ 8,900
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 1,628	\$ 1,758	\$ 267
 Total Program Service FTE's	 20.65	 20.55	 20.00
Total Support Service FTE's	10.50	9.50	10.35
TOTAL FTE's	31.15	30.05	30.35

FTE= Full time equivalent employees

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Resonate Global Mission
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 7,691
Investments	\$ 10,859
Other	\$ 773
Total Assets	\$ 19,323
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 2,401
Other Payables	\$ 893
Total Payables	\$ 3,294
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ 4,096
Unrestricted	\$ 11,933
Total Net Assets	\$ 16,029
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	\$ 19,323

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Resonate Global Mission
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual @.7829	Fiscal 18-19 Actual @.7511	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @.7426
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 7,116	\$ 6,855	\$ 4,861
% of Total Income	38.3%	32.8%	31.6%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 9,807	\$ 12,464	\$ 9,104
Disaster Gifts			
Estate Gifts	\$ 766	\$ 963	\$ 830
Total Gift Income	10,573	13,427	9,934
% of Total Income	56.9%	64.3%	64.6%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales	\$ -	\$ 10	\$ 10
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 909	\$ 594	\$ 573
Total Other Income	909	604	583
% of Total Income	4.9%	2.9%	3.8%
TOTAL INCOME	18,598	20,886	15,378
EXPENSES:			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ 964	\$ 1,075	\$ 872
International	8,525	10,763	8,889
Domestic Ministries	\$ 2,399	\$ 3,214	\$ 2,225
Disaster	-	-	-
Other	\$ 1,866	\$ 2,200	\$ 1,436
Total Program Service	\$ 13,754	\$ 17,252	\$ 13,422
% of Total Expenditures	90%	91%	100%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 1,585	\$ 1,787	\$ 1,186
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fund-raising	\$ 2,592	\$ 2,512	\$ 1,749
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service \$	1,585	1,787	5
% of Total \$	10.3%	9.4%	0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	15,339	19,039	13,427
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 3,259	\$ 1,847	\$ 1,951
Total Program Service FTEs	116	77	69
Total Support Service FTEs	19	25	17
	135	102	86

Schedule 1

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Fiscal Year: 21-22

Agency: Special Assistance Fund (SAF) - Canada (Canadian Dollar)

Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 449
Investments	\$ -
Other	\$ 13
Total Assets	\$ 462
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 13
Other Payables	
Total Payables	\$ 13
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	
Unrestricted	\$ 449
Total Net Assets	\$ 449
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 462

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Fiscal Year:21-22

Agency: Special Assistance Fund (SAF) - Canada (Canadian Dollar)

Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 245	\$ 250	\$ 218
% of Total Income	98.8%	97.3%	97.3%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 3	\$ 7	\$ 6
Total Other Income	3	7	6
% of Total Income	1.2%	2.7%	2.7%
TOTAL INCOME	248	257	224

EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):

Program Services:

Education			
International			
Domestic			
Disaster			
Other	\$ 137	\$ 287	\$ 107
Total Program Service	\$ 137	\$ 287	\$ 107
% of Total Expenditures	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Support Services:

Management & General	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Plant Operations			
Fund-raising			
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	-	-	-
% of Total Expenditures	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 137	\$ 287	\$ 107
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 111	\$ (30)	\$ 117

Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Special Assistance Fund (SAF)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 259
Investments	\$ -
Other	\$ 17
Total Assets	<u>\$ 276</u>
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 38
Other Payables	
Total Payables	<u>\$ 38</u>
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	
Unrestricted	\$ 238
Total Net Assets	<u>\$ 238</u>
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	<u>\$ 276</u>

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year:21-22
Agency: Special Assistance Fund (SAF) - US
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual	Fiscal 18-19 Actual	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 245	\$ 250	\$ 218
% of Total Income	98.8%	97.3%	97.3%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 3	\$ 7	\$ 6
Total Other Income	3	7	6
% of Total Income	1.2%	2.7%	2.7%
TOTAL INCOME	248	257	224
EXPENSES:			
Program Services:			
Education			
International			
Domestic			
Disaster			
Other	\$ 137	\$ 287	\$ 107
Total Program Service	\$ 137	\$ 287	\$ 107
% of Total Expenditures	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Plant Operations			
Fund-raising			
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	-	-	-
% of Total Expenditures	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 137	\$ 287	\$ 107
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 111	\$ (30)	\$ 117
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: Synodical Administrative Services
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	6,450
Investments	20,908
Other	19,685
Total Assets	47,043
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	715
Other Payables	33,714
Total Payables	34,429
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	379
Unrestricted	12,235
Total Net Assets	12,614
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	47,043

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Fiscal Year: 21-22

Agency: Synodical Administrative Services

Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual @.7829	Fiscal 18-19 Budget @.7511	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @.7426
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 2,561	\$ 2,750	\$ 2,283
% of Total Income	69.3%	83.1%	64.7%
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 322	\$ 388	\$ -
Disaster Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	322	388	-
% of Total Income	8.7%	11.7%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales	\$ -	\$ 10	\$ -
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 812	\$ 163	\$ 1,246
Total Other Income	812	173	1,246
% of Total Income	22.0%	5.2%	5.8%
TOTAL INCOME	3,695	3,311	3,529
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
International	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Domestic Ministries	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Disaster	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ 2,123	\$ 1,749	\$ 1,822
Total Program Service	\$ 2,123	\$ 1,749	\$ 1,822
% of Total Expenditures	66.3%	63.4%	61.2%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$ 1,078	\$ 1,010	\$ 1,154
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Debt Service	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Support Service	1,078	1,010	1,154
% of Total \$	33.7%	36.6%	38.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 3,201	\$ 2,759	\$ 2,976
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ 494	\$ 552	\$ 553

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: World Renew
Balance Sheet (000s)

	Fiscal 19-20 Actual
Assets	
Cash	\$ 19,357
Investments	\$ 10,964
Other	\$ 2,980
Total Assets	\$ 33,301
Liabilities	
Trade Payables	\$ 1,307
Other Payables	\$ 128
Total Payables	\$ 1,435
Net Assets	
Donor Designated	\$ 12,881
Unrestricted	\$ 18,985
Total Net Assets	\$ 31,866
Total Liabilites and Net Assets	\$ 33,301

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Fiscal Year: 21-22
Agency: World Renew
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 17-18 Actual @.7829	Fiscal 18-19 Actual @.7511	Fiscal 19-20 Actual @.7426
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	-	-	-
Other Gift Income:			
Gifts & Offerings	\$ 12,448	\$ 12,093	\$ 12,226
Disaster Gifts	\$ 15,960	\$ 12,318	\$ 13,897
Estate Gifts	\$ 2,062	\$ 5,397	\$ 2,877
Total Gift Income	30,470	29,808	29,000
% of Total Income	89.5%	90.8%	88.9%
Other Income:			
Tuition/Sales	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Agency Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 3,566	\$ 3,035	\$ 3,625
Total Other Income	3,566	3,035	3,625
% of Total Income	10.5%	9.2%	11.1%
TOTAL INCOME	34,036	32,843	32,625
EXPENSES:			
Program Services:			
Education	\$ 2,162	\$ 1,443	\$ 1,993
International	\$ 11,498	\$ 11,273	\$ 11,765
Domestic Ministries	\$ 291	\$ 312	\$ 372
Disaster	\$ 12,506	\$ 13,974	\$ 15,614
Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service	26,457	27,002	29,744
% of Total Expenditures	83.9%	84.7%	83.9%
Support Services:			
Management & General	1,723	1,892	\$ 1,982
Plant Operations	-	-	-
Fund-raising	3,341	2,974	3,710
Debt Service	-	-	\$ -
Total Support Service \$	5,064	4,866	5,692
% of Total Expenditures	16.1%	15.3%	16.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	31,521	31,868	35,436
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	2,515	975	(2,811)

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES SUPPLEMENT (DEFERRED FROM 2021)

I. Polity matters . . .

B. Corporation officers and executive committee of the Council of Delegates

At its recent meeting the COD members from their respective corporations and the full Council of Delegates elected the following to serve as officers in 2021-2022:

1. CRCNA Canada Corporation

President: Andy de Ruyter
Vice president: William T. Koopmans
Secretary: Bev Bandstra
Treasurer: Greta Luimes

2. CRCNA U.S. Corporation

President: Michael L. Ten Haken
Vice president: Sheila E. Holmes
Secretary: John R. Lee
Treasurer: Daudi Mutisya Mbuta

3. Back to God Ministries International Canada Corporation

President: Andy de Ruyter
Vice president: William T. Koopmans
Secretary: Bev Bandstra
Treasurer: Greta Luimes

4. Back to God Ministries International U.S. Corporation

President: Michael L. Ten Haken
Vice president: Sheila E. Holmes
Secretary: John R. Lee
Treasurer: Daudi Mutisya Mbuta

5. Council of Delegates executive committee and officers

Chair: Andy de Ruyter
Vice chair: Michael L. Ten Haken
Secretary: John R. Lee
Treasurer: Greta Luimes
Heather Cowie
Laurie Harkema
David A. Struyk
Melissa Van Dyk

C. *Deputy to the executive director*

The executive director of the CRCNA announced to the COD that he has appointed John Bolt, director of finance and operations, to also serve as a deputy to the executive director, primarily for U.S. ministry operations. The COD had previously approved the creation of such a position. In this new role Mr. Bolt will continue to provide executive oversight for financial operations and will assign day-to-day administrative responsibilities to other members of his current team. This appointment is extremely beneficial to the ongoing health and continuity of denominational and ministry operations. Mr. Bolt will bring ministry experience and leadership to the role and is very familiar with CRCNA operations.

D. *Recording of Meetings Policy*

The Council of Delegates adopted a Recording of Meetings Policy necessitated by the virtual meeting format over the past year. The policy will make clear which meetings are recorded, as well as the nature and use of recordings of meetings. The same policy was adopted by the Ministries Leadership Council for use during CRCNA staff-hosted virtual meetings.

E. *Code of Conduct for COD members*

Consistent with the COD recommendation that synod adopt a Code of Conduct for ministry leaders in the CRCNA (see *Deferred Agenda for Synod 2020*, pp. 113-16), the Council of Delegates adopted a Code of Conduct for COD members to sign prior to service on the COD. This requirement is similar to that of COD members' signing the Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA when appointed to the board.

F. *Supporting justice ministries*

In response to hearing about harassment and verbal abuse that several CRCNA justice ministries staff have experienced, the Council of Delegates is taking measures to help the denomination address the challenging conversations that have surfaced with respect to justice ministries, including but not limited to the following:

- Encouraging a macro-CRCNA discernment and action plan on building respect and love throughout the leadership and administration as well as the church at large, to respectfully listen to each other and to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Mic. 6:8).
- Considering how to ensure that our denomination encourages a Christ-centered macro-CRCNA discernment and short-, medium-, and long-term action plan on building respect and love throughout the leadership and administration as well as the church at large, to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.
- Ensuring that the U.S. Committee to Provide Guidance and Support for the Office of Social Justice and the OSJ staff evaluate their assets and challenges and provide a candid assessment to the October 2021 Council of Delegates meeting, together with an assessment of how they perceive OSJ's synodically mandated justice initiatives are being received and appreciated by churches and classes.

G. *Report of the Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT)*

Note: This discussion will also be on the agenda for Synod 2022.

The Council of Delegates received the report of the Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT) after mandating and appointing the task force in October 2020, and then expanding the mandate in December 2020. The COD presents the SALT report in Appendix A as received for consideration by synod. In response to this report, the COD, at its meeting in May 2021, adopted the following recommendations to synod:

Culture

- A. A motion carries to do the following in order to improve the culture of the CRCNA:
1. Affirm that we desire an organizational culture shaped by partnership, collaboration, cooperation, shared mission, and interdependency between countries, ministry institutions, agencies, programs, and partners. Board members and leaders will be selected who affirm these cultural values.
 2. Acknowledge the ongoing challenges the CRCNA organization faces in resolving the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) compliance issues in Canada. SALT understands that solutions to those challenges are necessary, and the task force affirms that the solutions should not unduly impact the CRCNA organizational culture.
 3. Recommend that synod also affirm these goals and acknowledge these challenges to improve CRCNA culture.

Leadership Model and Design

- B. A motion carries to do the following in order to revise the CRCNA leadership model:
1. Establish the position of General Secretary; the leader in this role will serve as *chief ecclesiastical officer*. The General Secretary will report to the COD and will serve as the executive leader of the CRCNA organization. A description of this position is contained in Appendix A to the SALT report.
 2. Establish the position of Chief Administrative Officer; this role will report to the General Secretary and be responsible and accountable for all administration and ministry operations within the CRCNA organization. A description of this position is contained in Appendix A to the SALT report.
 3. Establish the Office of General Secretary. The General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer will be contained in a newly established office called the *Office of General Secretary*. The Office of General Secretary will be responsible and accountable to the Council of Delegates to guide and direct the entire CRCNA organization. While each position has distinct roles and responsibilities as described in the position descriptions, the positions will require working together as partners and having shared leadership responsibilities and accountabilities based on abilities and

gifts as well as organizational changes and needs. The new CRCNA leadership model will ensure ecclesiastical, administrative, and ministry integration and will serve together to facilitate the shared governance partnerships and relationships that characterize the denomination's life, ministry, and mission.

Ground: Due to the cancellation of Synod 2021, the COD, in the best interests of synod, can create search teams and identify candidates for the three leadership positions, which could aid in a smooth transition to the new structure upon synod's ultimate decision on the matter in 2022 (see Recommendation E, 1).

4. Instruct the executive committee of the COD to implement the above recommendations by creating mandates and respective search teams.
5. Recommend that synod adopt the establishment of the senior leadership positions of General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer, as well as the Office of General Secretary.

Governance Framework and Design

C. A motion carries to adopt the following with regard to governance framework and design:

1. Begin the work of establishing an Office of Governance to help improve and strengthen the governance framework and design of the CRCNA organization. Just as the Office of Synodical Services supports the CRCNA's ecclesiastical structure, the Office of Governance would support the governance structure of the CRCNA. In partnership with the Office of General Secretary, the Office of Governance would seek to strengthen and support the board members and leaders in Canada and the United States as they carry out their *fiduciary duties and governing responsibilities*. The office would be responsible to advance the following activities:
 - a. Develop an effective process to recruit, select, and appoint members with appropriate insight and expertise.
 - b. Develop learning and development opportunities that would enable board members to effectively exercise their fiduciary and governing responsibilities.
 - c. Assist ministry leaders to develop effective governance partnerships with their boards.
 - d. Assist board chairs in effectively leading and managing their respective boards.
 - e. Oversee the governance framework of the CRCNA, making recommendations to improve the structure and framework.
 - f. Assist the CRCNA corporations in complying with the Canada CRA and the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) rules and regulations.

2. Recommend that synod adopt the establishment of an Office of Governance.

Ministry Plan and Joint Ministry Agreements

D. A motion carries to expand the Joint Ministry Agreement process to accomplish the following:

1. Clarify ecclesiastical, ecumenical, and synodical responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions.
2. Clarify the governance responsibilities and interrelationships between boards of directors and advisers in Canada and the United States. Learning and development opportunities will be addressed.
3. Clarify the administrative responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions. This includes oversight and supervision, human resources and staff development, budgets and finance, and so on.
4. Clarify ministry responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions.
5. Affirm that Joint Ministry Agreements will be approved by relevant governing authorities, including boards and executives, before they become effective.
6. Affirm that the process of developing and overseeing Joint Ministry Agreements will be managed by the Office of General Secretary and the Ministries Leadership Council.

Canadian Office

E. A motion carries to adopt the following with regard to the Canadian Office:

1. Establish the Canadian Office of the CRCNA organization. The Canadian Office will be governed by the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors and led by an Executive Director-Canada. The purpose of the Canadian Office is not to mirror the U.S. Office of the CRCNA organization. Instead, it is to implement the CRCNA Ministry Plan in a way and manner that recognizes the ministry needs of Canadian churches and that of their social and cultural context. The Canadian Office is part of the CRCNA organization, and as such the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors is responsible to partner with the CRCNA Council of Delegates, and the Executive Director-Canada is responsible to partner with the Office of General Secretary. A description of the Executive Director-Canada position is contained in Appendix A to the SALT report.

Ground: Due to the cancellation of Synod 2021, the CRCNA Canada Corporation, in the best interests of synod, can create a search team and identify a candidate for the Executive

Director-Canada position, which could aid in the smooth transition to the new structure upon synod's ultimate decision on the matter in 2022 (see Recommendation B, 3).

2. The CRCNA-Canada Board will revise and amend its synod-issued charter and related bylaws of 1998 and resubmit them to the COD. The revisions and amendments will in a legally sound way accomplish each of the following:
 - a. The identification of the Canadian Office as a function of shared governance in the CRCNA under the authority of synod.
 - b. The identification of the Executive Director-Canada as the sole director of the CRCNA-Canada charity.
 - c. The identification of the JMA process as the primary instrument by which it exercises direction and control.
3. Recommend that synod adopt the establishment of the Canadian Office and adopt the CRCNA-Canada Board's revised charter and bylaws.

Additional Recommendations

F. A motion carries to acknowledge that on the question of whether Directors and Members of the ReFrame Ministries and CRCNA corporations can be the same members, it rules that when the crossover of CRCNA directors is in the minority of the ReFrame Ministries corporation, it is acceptable.

G. A motion carries to recommend that synod implement use of a denominational Conflict of Interest Policy (similar to the policy in Appendix E to the SALT report, adopted by the Council of Delegates) for delegates to synod.

H. A motion carries to do the following:

1. Review the status of Resonate Global Mission with a view to possible modification in order to make its status equivalent to that of World Renew and ReFrame Ministries. As a result, Resonate would have its own board of directors in the United States and in Canada. The role of the board of directors would be to advise and provide expertise to the Directors of Resonate in Canada and the United States as they develop and implement the Resonate Global Mission Ministry Plan, which is aligned with the CRCNA Ministry Plan. Board size should not exceed 10 to 12 members who have strategic insight and expertise to further the purposes of Resonate Global Mission and its Ministry Plan.
2. Contingent upon the outcome of the preceding recommendation, recommend that synod approve the creation of a Board of Directors for Resonate Global Mission.
- I. A motion carries to appoint a task force to oversee the expansion of the Joint Ministry Agreement process for the CRCNA

organization. That the COD appoint the SALT reporter, Rev. Frederic Koning, together with Dr. Lloyd VanderKwaak, to serve as facilitators of the task force to ensure that the agreements reflect the SALT report's intent and realize contract documents that undergird the administrative model and satisfy legal and ecclesiastical requirements.

J. A motion carries to amend the COD Governance Handbook regarding background checks and testing. SALT recommends that all finalists for executive leadership positions in the CRCNA submit to psychological testing and criminal and extensive background checks conducted by an independent professional. The candidate should also submit to a medical evaluation designed to evaluate mental, physical, emotional health, and overall fitness for the role in order to rule out the presence of personality disorder, narcissism, and sexual deviancy. No position offers should be made until test reports have been filed and recommendations have been made by an independent professional who does this kind of work.

K. A motion carries not to implement the administrative decision to absorb the current Director of Finance and Operations functions into other positions, and that the Director of Finance and Operations role be retained, given (1) that a healthy organizational structure in the CRCNA, generally speaking, relies on a Chief Financial Officer, as distinguished from a CEO and CAO; and (2) that the skill set and experience of a Director of Finance is not captured in the new model by the role descriptions for the General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer.

L. A motion carries to affirm for reasons of editorial independence that *The Banner* editor-in-chief not report to the Director of Communications and Marketing but report administratively to the Office of General Secretary and editorially to the Banner Advisory Committee.

H. *Denominational gatherings*

An "Inspire Light" event, now planned for August 3-6, 2021, is being offered to pique interest toward attending the next full-scale Inspire gathering, postponed until August 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hosted entirely online, "Inspire Light" will focus on the *Our Journey 2025* milestones. Visit crcna.org/Inspire for more information or to register.

A planning team will soon be appointed to plan for the next Canadian National Gathering, to be held in summer 2023. The main focus of that gathering will be Hearts Exchanged.

I. *Approval of director search processes*

The COD approved the implementation of a search for a director of the offices of Social Justice and Race Relations with the hope of filling the role by the end of September 2021. Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns, has been serving as interim director of Social Justice and Race Relations since Reggie Smith, the former director in that role, was appointed to lead the CRCNA's Diversity ministry.

The COD received notice of the desired retirement of Mark Stephenson from his role as director of Disability Concerns, effective by the end of 2021. Because Disability Concerns' partnership with the RCA Disability Concerns is integral to the work of this ministry, a team of CRC leaders met with leaders from the RCA to explore the continuation of this partnership. The COD approved the start-up of a search for a new director of Disability Concerns, to be presented to the COD at its October meeting for ratification.

J. Clarification to Bible Translations Committee mandate

At the spring meeting of the Bible Translations Committee, the committee members noted that their current mandate states that requests to review translations can be made by "any church, classis, or synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA)." It was unclear how the church or classis would go about making such a request. In response, the COD adopted a revision to the mandate of the Bible Translations Committee to specify that "requests to review a translation should be sent to the Council of Delegates to decide which requests are appropriate to pass along to the committee."

K. Calvin University proposed bylaw changes

The COD reviewed proposed changes to the bylaws of Calvin University, adopted the changes as proposed, and recommends the bylaws as presented in Appendix B to synod for adoption. Following is a summary of the changes to these bylaws, communicated to the Council of Delegates by the Calvin University Board of Trustees to align good governing principles with current practice:

- To ensure that the board can identify qualified candidates for board appointment from the North American regions of the CRCNA.
- To preserve a CRCNA trustee majority on the university board.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of board officers and officers of the corporation and to consolidate redundant roles.
- To enable the board to fill vacant board seats with former board members for the remainder of a term when midterm vacancies occur.
- To clarify and improve the procedures for presidential appointment.
- To reflect best practices in higher education governance for an accredited institution of higher learning, consistency with the university's articles of incorporation, and compliance with the laws of the state of Michigan.

2.1.1 and 2.1.2 Board of Trustees

Changes to 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 retain the same regional trustee representation at Calvin University. Consolidating the number of regions from 11 to 6, as is practiced with other agency denominations, enables the institution to search from a greater number of classes to identify board members with the qualifications needed to meet academic accreditation standards. In the past there have been occasions when no nominations have been put forward from a given region. This change makes that situation far less likely. The total number of regional trustees (16) does not change, and regional trustees remain in the majority on the Calvin University Board of Trustees.

2.2 Vacancies

Vacancies have occurred more frequently over the past several years, primarily due to trustees' moving from one region to another. Often this situation creates an unfilled vacancy for more than a year. The board would like to call on former trustees in good standing from vacant regions to consider serving as temporary replacements representing their respective regions.

2.5 Meetings of the university board

This change to the bylaws specifies that meetings of the university board will occur in fall, winter, and spring rather than in October, February, and May. A change to our 2021-22 academic calendar makes it likely that next year's meetings will occur in October, January, and April. This change to the bylaws allows the university to be able to adjust these meetings in the future without changing the bylaws each time the academic calendar changes.

2.10 Corporate seal

This change specifies that the corporate seal will be maintained by the president's office rather than by a specific person.

2.12 Committees

This change aligns the bylaws with the Association of Governing Boards' best practice to ensure that qualified financial professionals from fields like investment management and accounting may be added to trustee committees as nontrustee members for the purpose of ensuring that the investment committee and audit committee have the expertise needed to provide proper board oversight of university finances.

3.1 Role of board officers

Background

Administrative and board leaders recently reviewed the university's bylaws to determine what may need to be updated to align with current best practices and processes. In the course of that review, a question arose on the optimal structure for board officers and university officers, with particular focus also on the preferred role of the board secretary. The bylaws currently provide that officers of the university board shall be a chair, a vice chair, a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, a secretary, and an assistant secretary. Today the board has appointed trustees to the chair position, vice-chair position, and secretary position only. Administrative leaders hold the offices of treasurer and assistant secretary. Officers of the university established under the bylaws include the positions of treasurer, assistant treasurer, secretary, and assistant secretary, in addition to president and cabinet leadership positions.

The secretary description in the bylaws requires the secretary to give or cause to be given notice of all board of trustees meetings. The secretary shall also record the proceedings of the meetings of the Calvin University Board of Trustees and perform all duties incident to the secretary role and as may be designated by the board of trustees. The board secretary does not currently perform all of these duties, as most are handled by the assistant secretary. Finally, the bylaws also allow the role of assistant

treasurer and assistant secretary to be filled but do not require them to be filled.

Proposed change

Create desired officer structure and update bylaws accordingly as follows:

- The board officers are chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary.
- Appoint an administrative treasurer if needed for operational purposes.
- Do not formally appoint an administrative secretary but instead include the operational secretary duties into a current administrative role.
- Modify the board secretary role to be one of review, oversight, and certification only.

3.2 Presidential appointment process

Currently, Section 3.2 of the bylaws provides that the president shall be appointed by synod. The proposed modification to Section 3.2 specifies that the president be appointed by the board of trustees instead. This process change aligns to the relationship of the university as employer of the president, improves the ability to recruit a president on a timely basis with clarity regarding the employer relationship, and reflects governance best practices in higher education.

Employers have certain legal obligations, including, in Calvin's case, the responsibility to enter into an employment agreement with the president. The synod should not be legally obligated (directly or indirectly) in a capacity as employer of the president. Potential candidates for the president position will also see this appointment protocol positively, as it clarifies the employer relationship and also accelerates the hiring and appointment process. The most recent presidential appointment took five months from the time of appointment by the board of trustees to the confirmation by synod. This timeline is not practical for contemporary presidential appointments.

It is understood that this change might be construed by certain constituencies as an action by the university to loosen the relationship ties to the denomination. Importantly, no such intention exists. But, in recognition of potential misperceptions, the above factors should be clearly communicated to those constituencies as the updated bylaws are published and communicated. Also, it should be noted that the denomination's influence and relationship to the university and its president remain prevalent through the denomination's authority to appoint all university trustees, the majority number of denominational trustees on the board, and the protocol for denominational representation on any search committee for a new president.

3.4 Removal

This section has been amended to reflect the distinction between governance oversight provided by the university board through the president, and the president's responsibility for operational oversight of the provost and vice presidents.

3.6 Chair and vice-chair absence

This revision clarifies that a trustee shall preside at a meeting of the board in the event that the chair and vice chair are absent.

3.7-3.8 Presidential roles and responsibilities

These revisions clarify the president's role vis-à-vis the board of trustees and other officers (e.g., vice presidents) of the corporation.

3.10 Board secretary responsibilities and elimination of other board offices

These changes clarify the secretary role and differentiate the role from operational administrative support that the university board may require. It clarifies the secretary's role as providing review, oversight, and certification. It also eliminates the roles of assistant secretaries and assistant treasurers to conform with current practice.

5.5 Indemnification

Upon review by legal counsel, this section was modified to conform with the Articles of Incorporation of Calvin University and the Michigan Non-profit Corporation Act. . . .

II. Program and finance matters

A. Program matters: Denominational Survey 2021

Each year the CRCNA surveys approximately one-fifth of our denomination's churches and membership. This survey provides demographic data and helps us listen to individual church members, gauge our ministry as a denomination, and plan for the future. The 2021 annual denominational survey report is now available for individuals and churches to review and study (see crcna.org/survey/survey-results). . . .

III. Recommendations . . .

E. That synod address the following recommendations with regard to the work of the COD in response to the report of the Structure and Leadership Task Force (COD Supplement section I, G; and Appendix A):

1. That synod affirm the following goals and acknowledge these challenges to improve CRCNA culture:
 - a. Affirm that we desire an organizational culture shaped by partnership, collaboration, cooperation, shared mission, and interdependency between countries, ministry institutions, agencies, programs, and partners. Board members and leaders will be selected who affirm these cultural values.
 - b. Acknowledge the ongoing challenges the CRCNA organization faces in resolving the Canada Revenue Agency compliance issues in Canada and recognize that the implementation of the recommendations in the SALT report must address these issues but should not unduly impact the CRCNA organizational culture.
2. That synod adopt the establishment of the senior leadership positions of General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer, as well as the Office of General Secretary.

3. That synod adopt the establishment of an Office of Governance.
4. That synod take note of the adopted process for developing and approving joint ministry agreements.
5. That synod adopt the establishment of the Canadian Office and adopt the CRCNA-Canada Board's revised charter and bylaws.
6. That synod implement use of a denominational Conflict of Interest Policy (similar to the policy in Appendix E to the SALT report, adopted by the Council of Delegates) for delegates to synod.
7. That synod take note that the COD will review the status of Resonate Global Mission with a view to possible modification in order to make its status equivalent to that of World Renew and ReFrame Ministries, and that the purpose of such a review is to ensure internal ministry presence on the Ministries Leadership Council and to foster ministry integration.

F. That synod take note of the clarification made to the mandate of the Bible Translations Committee to specify that "requests to review a translation should be sent to the Council of Delegates to decide which requests are appropriate to pass along to the committee" (COD Supplement section I, J).

G. That synod adopt the proposed changes to the bylaws of Calvin University as found in Appendix B (COD Supplement section I, K). . . .

Council of Delegates of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Paul R. De Vries, chair

Appendix A Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT)

Note Discussion of this report will also be on the agenda for Synod 2022.

Outline

- I. The SALT task
- II. A brief history
- III. Introduction to Reformed polity and ecclesiology
- IV. Introduction to the report
- V. Key Topic 1: Culture
- VI. Key Topic 2: Leadership model and design
- VII. Key Topic 3: Governance framework and design
- VIII. Key Topic 4: Ministry Plan and Joint Ministry Agreements
- IX. Key Topic 5: Canadian office
- X. Recommendations

Appendices

Appendix A: Position descriptions

Appendix B: Charts and narrative

Appendix C: Abbreviations and specialized terms

I. The SALT task

The Council of Delegates (COD), in a series of decisions in October 2020, approved the creation of the Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT). The mandate of SALT was to

ensure that the three executive role descriptions it had developed previously are complete, compatible, and meet the demands of Reformed polity as well as address other ecclesiastical considerations; ensure that the three position descriptions include review by Human Resources of the CRCNA in both Canada and the United States to ensure use of appropriate language to reflect the desire of inclusiveness; and present a final report to the COD in February 2021 for recommendation to synod.

A short time later, in a subsequent Executive Committee meeting of the Council of Delegates on November 24, 2020, the SALT mandate was expanded to read as follows:

A motion carries to empower the Structure and Leadership Task Force to take into account the range of legal opinions and provide preliminary guidance to the COD in February 2021 for moving the process forward.

Following the parameters of composition and membership delineated by synod, the task force was formed with the following members: Paula Coldagelli; Andy de Ruyter (facilitator), Paul De Vries (facilitator), Fred Koning (reporter), Michelle Kool, William Koopmans, John Lee (chair), Jose Rayas, Dee Recker (ex officio / nonvoting), and Kathy Smith (ex officio / nonvoting).

The SALT team, in preparing this report, sought to develop a leadership model and organizational design that would promote more durable and productive working relationships among CRCNA leadership and a mission-driven culture throughout the CRCNA organization. The organizational values pursued were role function and clarity; mutuality and reciprocity; communication and trust.

The SALT team recognized the unique structure and design of the CRCNA organization. The CRCNA was founded as an ecclesiastical organization governed by a Reformed polity and ecclesiology. The CRCNA found it necessary to establish nonprofit organizations in Canada and the United States to advance the churches' shared mission and purpose. While each nonprofit organization was authorized by synod, they are legal corporations that must comply with the rules and regulations that govern registered charities in Canada and tax-exempt nonprofit organizations in the United States. These rules vary between states and provinces as well as between the U.S. and Canadian federal governments. Additionally, as these governmental rules evolve and change over time, compliance efforts may be at odds with CRCNA Church Order. This currently is the case with rules and regulations for registered charities in Canada.

II. A brief history

The past is the prologue for the work of the Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT). The resignation of the previous executive director of

the CRCNA, Dr. Steven Timmermans, and the pattern of repeated resignations and unexplained departures of senior leaders since 2011 as well as the reports for the work of the synodical Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (TFRSC) in 2012-2015 have all formed the backdrop to the work of SALT. The recent update to the Canada Revenue Agency regulations regarding charities in Canada, and the discussion as to the nature of the changes required to render the CRCNA Canada Corporation in full legal compliance seem to have made the completion of SALT's task more pressing than would normally be the case.

The TFRSC report to Synod 2013 provides a perspective that is as helpful today as it was then:

The Christian Reformed Church has from its very beginning in 1857 concerned itself with organizing committees and governing boards as needed on an ad hoc basis to accomplish studies or tasks as deemed appropriate. Continuing organizational development is a necessary byproduct of evaluating the current organizational structure to determine how well this structure will serve in the future. Current organizational structure should be evaluated in the light of what we anticipate in that future. If ministry is our goal and covenantal interdependence is our chosen ministry pattern, then our organizational models need to reflect that choice. Organizational structure is not an end in itself. Organizational structure is not the primary mission of the Christian Reformed Church. It is a tool we use to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the Lord and his people to live out his mission.

(*Agenda for Synod 2013*, pp. 348-49)

In developing a renewed leadership model, SALT came to realize that attention to the matters of governance in the CRCNA is best seen as an ongoing duty of CRCNA boards. To date, it has largely been a matter of periodic review that tends to happen in response to specific administrative crises.

SALT also expressed a deep appreciation for the long history of shared ministry that its members have enjoyed as a binational church. Both Canadian and U.S. members have benefited from working together to contribute to God's mission in North America and beyond. Unity has been the foundation for ministry in Canada since 1905, when the first Canadian CRCNA church was launched in Lethbridge, Alberta. Over the years, ministry priorities and structures within the Canadian side of the CRCNA have changed to respond to changing circumstances, always with an emphasis on maintaining unity. Indeed, SALT acknowledges that a great deal of work has been done over the years in refining ministry priorities and structures to strengthen the capacity of the churches to contribute to the shared mission of the CRCNA.

However, in its research of past synodical decisions regarding governance in the CRCNA, SALT was reminded that some of what had once been decided had not yet been fully implemented. SALT therefore endeavored to work toward the full realization of those decisions once taken by Synod 2000.

Synod 2000 adopted "A Governance Proposal" that integrated the earlier Canadian Ministries Board into a larger and reconstituted Board of Trustees. The *Acts of Synod 2000* (p. 623) declares that the Canada Corporation shall "be responsible for all specific 'in Canada' functions that cannot be, or ought not be, the responsibility of a synodical binational Board." The *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 62, identified seven functions that flesh out how the Canada Corporation was to implement direction while serving as members of the Board of Trustees (now replaced by the current Council of Delegates). Noteworthy

among those functions was the overarching responsibility to exercise judgment “concerning the cultural appropriateness of ministry programs offered in Canada by denominational agencies.” In the seven functions, Synod 2000 affirmed that CRCNA Canada Corporation directors shall perform all the functions of a federally registered charity in Canada and, as directed by synod, of the CRC ministries in Canada. Synod indicated that CRCNA Canada Corporation directors shall be responsible for providing governance oversight for denominational ministries specific to Canada (see *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 62).

III. Introduction to Reformed polity and ecclesiology

It was important for SALT to make explicit a number of Reformed polity considerations when contemplating the most senior leadership roles in the CRCNA. These considerations helped define the roles as well as recognize the limits to the authority of the office and the office holder. These considerations also draw attention to the limits of the delegated authority of the CRCNA-Canada and -Michigan corporations, whose charter and bylaw documents make explicit that their continued existence is entirely contingent on the faithful implementation of synodical purposes.

In Reformed polity the local church council holds original authority, which in turn is delegated to classis, which delegates its authority to synod (Church Order Art. 27). Synod is the broadest assembly of the churches covenanting together on ecclesiastical matters. Synod therefore exercises direction and control of ecclesiastical matters and holds the ecclesiastical vision for the CRCNA. Current corporations exist within the CRCNA (most churches and classes are incorporated) because churches, through synod (Church Order Art. 32), have asked for collaborative and nationally contextualized ministry. Synod, however, is not a corporation.

Unlike ecclesiastical assemblies (classis and synod) that have delegated authority over lower assemblies (classes over councils and synod over classes), CRCNA corporations are legal entities whose boards do not function with ecclesiastical authority. They simply lack ecclesiastical standing, for they are legal entities whose purposes are to implement synod’s denominational Ministry Plan in all of its complexity and specificity. Therefore, CRCNA corporations do not have authority over other corporations in the CRCNA, including churches and classes that are incorporated.

Synod has created the Council of Delegates (COD), which is to serve as its interim committee and the governing authority for the CRCNA organization. All CRCNA chartered corporations are subsidiaries of the COD as the CRCNA governance board. The features of Reformed polity and ecclesiology underscore the indispensable role synod needs to play in ecclesiastical, administrative, and ministry integration.

IV. Introduction to the report

The SALT report contains five key topics followed by a set of recommendations and five appendices.

Briefly, the first key topic focuses on the CRCNA organizational culture and its continued struggle between three cultural models: an ecclesiastical model, a corporate/legal model, and a ministry-focused organizational model.

The second key topic focuses on proposed changes to the CRCNA leadership model. The position of Executive Director of the CRCNA would give way to two new positions, General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer. Both positions would together form the Office of General Secretary.

The third key topic focuses on governance. The CRCNA is a complex binational organization with multiple structures and boards that include hundreds of members and participants. A newly established office on governance will provide guidance that addresses issues of compliance with regulatory issues, training and education of members, and oversight of joint ministry agreements.

The fourth key topic focuses on expanding the use of Joint Ministry Agreements to include ecumenical affairs, governance, administration, and ministry. The expanded use of Joint Ministry Agreements will also include agreements between countries, institutions, agencies, programs, and partners.

The fifth key topic focuses on the Canadian Office of the CRCNA. While the office is currently working to ensure compliance with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), the office is also clarifying what it means to be the Canadian arm of the CRCNA.

The report also includes five appendices. The first appendix contains the draft position descriptions for the proposed positions of General Secretary, Chief Administrative Officer, and Executive Director-Canada. The second appendix contains a complete set of the charts used in the report, with additional annotations and narratives; and the third appendix provides a list of abbreviations and acronyms and descriptions. The fourth appendix provides a description of the Ministries Leadership Council, updated to reflect the recommendations in this report; and the fifth appendix contains the current COD Conflict of Interest Policy.

V. Key Topic 1: Culture

The CRCNA ecclesiastical structure has a well-developed culture defined and shaped by Reformed polity and ecclesiology over many years. CRCNA leaders are well versed in the nuances of this structure and are committed to its culture. Synod nurtures this culture through its selection of leaders and officers, use of specific language, dependence on the Church Order, commitment to an orderly synodical process, and the use of synodical deputies and recognized experts. The culture of the CRCNA ecclesiastical structure is understood and certain.

The rest of the CRCNA organizational structure is less certain. Past attempts to fix the organizational culture have been less than successful. Boards have been renamed, merged, and, if necessary, eliminated as a way to improve the culture. Leadership positions as well have been renamed and merged, and some have been eliminated as a path to organizational health.

Edgar H. Schein, a recognized expert in organizational culture and leadership, shared the following observation:

In an age in which leadership is touted over and over again as a critical variable in defining the success or failure of an organization, it becomes all the more important to look at the other side of the leadership coin – how leaders create culture and how culture defines and creates leaders.

(Organizational Culture and Leadership, p. xi)

The CRCNA organization continues to struggle with the issue of culture. On one hand, we all desire a culture that is shaped by collaboration; cooperation; shared mission; interdependency between ministry institutions, agencies, programs, and partners; and the binationality of the denomination.

On the other hand, there is a shift toward the use of governance by means of corporate and legal models that are creating a culture characterized by dominance, direction, and control. In the struggle to work out parameters of binationality and compliance with the Canada Revenue Agency, cooperation and interdependence have given way to autonomy, independence, control, and *us/them* thinking.

SALT recognizes the challenge the CRCNA organization faces in resolving the CRA compliance issues in Canada and offers some guidance and solutions in this report. Regardless of the challenges, the culture of the CRCNA organization should not be characterized by concepts of dominance, control, and *us/them* thinking that are often present in legal and corporate models. Instead, the culture of the CRCNA organization should be characterized by cooperation, collaboration, and partnership.

Each ministry institution, agency, program, and partner shares in the common mission of the CRCNA denomination and has a shared responsibility to advance the CRCNA Ministry Plan. Dominance, direction, control, and *us/them* thinking have no place in a healthy organizational culture.

Board members and officers, executive, senior, and ministry leaders should consider this:

- Words are important.
- The words we use reveal our mindset and worldview.
- The words we use communicate our view of the future.
- The words we use communicate the culture, the lived experience of organization.
- Leaders can create and improve the culture through their words.
- Culture has the power to define and create its leaders.

We should acknowledge the power of words to shape culture and challenge all CRCNA leaders, board members, and staff to adopt language that is congruent with its vision, mission, and work of ministry in Canada and the United States.

Shared visions emerge from personal visions. The passion and commitment that empowers a shared vision comes from personal visions. If there is a lack of alignment and dysfunction, the shared vision will fail.

(Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*)

While legal status is of concern to regulators, accountants, and tax experts, it should not have the power to shape the culture of the CRCNA organization. Legal language creates a level of complexity that can negatively impact the culture. For example, the continued description of the CRCNA in Canada as the “Canada Corp” does not do justice to the scope and responsibility of the CRCNA-Canada office. The use of the term “Michigan Corp” as a way to distinguish itself from Canada does not do justice to the scope of the CRCNA organization in the United States. Just as we do not describe Calvin University as the Calvin Corp or World Renew as the WR Corp, we should use words that fully describe the scope of ministry boards.

Defining roles and responsibilities is necessary to create clarity, just as identifying areas of mutuality, reciprocity, and cooperation is key to creating partnership. Developing healthy patterns of communication and paying attention to words are key to building organizational trust. All of this gives shape to a positive and healthy culture that is aligned with the values of the CRCNA organization.

VI. Key Topic 2: Leadership model and design

The current CRCNA leadership model is based on having a single executive leader—the Executive Director (CRCNA)—serving as the chief ecclesiastical officer, chief administrative officer, and chief ministry officer for the CRCNA organization. The Executive Director (CRCNA), who reports to the Council of Delegates (COD), supervises a team of senior leaders who work together to advance the mission and purposes of the CRCNA organization. The SALT team recommends that this current leadership model be changed.

The new CRCNA leadership model will be based on two executive leaders serving in a single office. Rather than having one person—the Executive Director (CRCNA)—be responsible and accountable for all ecclesiastical, administrative, and ministry functions in the CRCNA, the new CRCNA leadership model will be based on two positions.

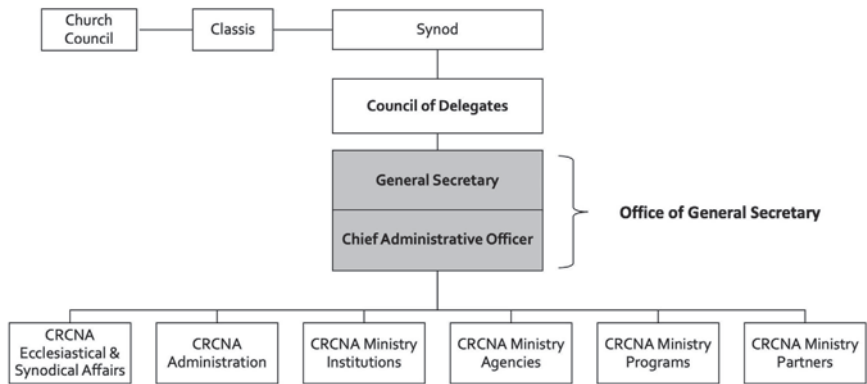
1. The chief ecclesiastical officer will be titled *General Secretary*. This is a familiar title that has been used in the past. The General Secretary will report to the COD and will serve as the executive leader of the CRCNA organization. A description of this position is contained in Appendix A.
2. The second position will be titled *Chief Administrative Officer*. The Chief Administrative Officer will report to the General Secretary and will have responsibilities and accountabilities for all administration and ministry operations within the CRCNA organization. A description of this position is contained in Appendix A.

Both positions—General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer—will constitute a new office called the *Office of General Secretary*. The Office of General Secretary will be responsible and accountable to the Council of Delegates to guide and direct the entire CRCNA organization. While each position has distinct roles and responsibilities as described in their position description, they will work together as partners and have shared leadership responsibilities and accountabilities based on abilities and gifts as well as organizational changes and needs. The new CRCNA leadership model will ensure ecclesiastical and administrative integration and will serve together to facilitate the shared governance partnerships and relationships that characterize the binational denomination's life, ministry, and mission.

The new CRCNA leadership model will also contain a new leadership position in Canada. SALT recommends that the position of Canadian Ministries Director be discontinued and the position of *Executive Director-Canada* be instituted. The Executive Director-Canada will report to the CRCNA-Canada Board to meet the legal expectations of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and to the Office of General Secretary to meet the ecclesiastical and ministry expectations of synod and the Council of Delegates. A description

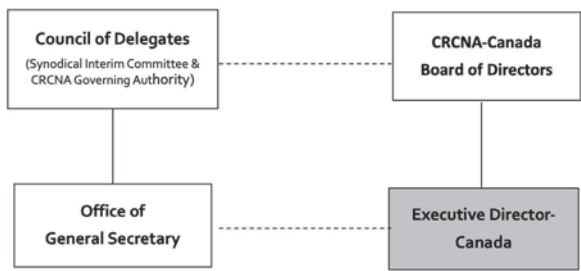
of this position is contained in Appendix A. This is discussed more fully in Key Topic 5: Canadian Office.

Chart 1: Office of General Secretary



The purpose of Chart 1 is to describe the scope of the Office of General Secretary (in gray). On one hand, the Office of General Secretary is responsible to the Council of Delegates and is to support the synodical and ecclesiastical structure. On the other hand, the Office of General Secretary is responsible to oversee the rest of the CRCNA organization as depicted functionally: administration such as pensions, budget, Human Resources; institutions such as Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary; agencies such as World Renew and ReFrame Ministries; programs such as Mercy and Justice; and partners such as synodical advisers from the seminary. Chart 1 is not meant to be all inclusive but, rather, a description of the scope of the Office of General Secretary.

Chart 2: CRCNA- Canada Office Structure

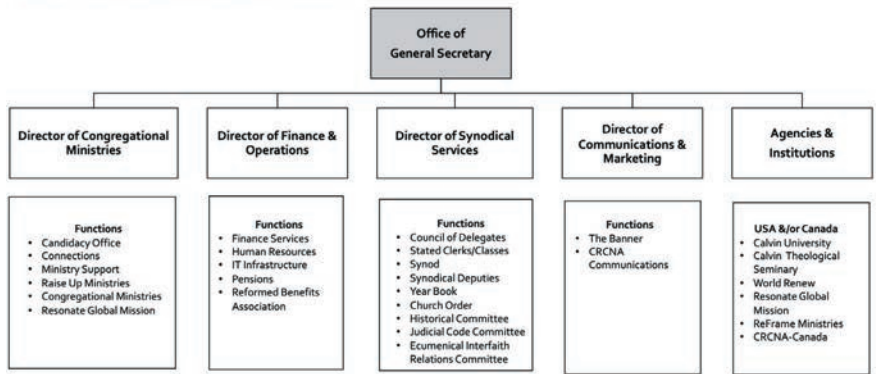


The purpose of Chart 2 is to pictorially describe the operating relationships the Executive Director-Canada (shaded in gray) has with the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors and the CRCNA Office of General Secretary. This is more fully described in Key Topic 5.

While the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors is considered independent from a legal perspective, as a subsidiary corporation that was chartered by the CRCNA synod, it is accountable to the CRCNA Council of Delegates. The

Council of Delegates is the synodical interim committee and the governing authority for the CRCNA organization. This is more fully described in Key Topic 3.

Chart 3: Administrative Positions & Functions



The purpose of Chart 3 is to describe the scope of the Office of General Secretary (in gray) as it relates to administering the CRCNA organization. The chart identifies the key leadership positions and the related administrative functions under each position. The section listing Agencies and Institutions recognizes that each entity may have their own administrative structures and staff as their organizations require.

Note: This chart is illustrative and may not reflect some administrative relationships by exception or changes not yet adopted.

VII. Key Topic 3: Governance framework and design

A. Background

The CRCNA is a complex binational organization that includes multiple ministry agencies and partners. This organization has developed and unfolded over many years in response to changing ministry needs and opportunities for growth. As a result, the organization can be difficult to navigate and has become increasingly difficult to manage considering the many administrative, ministry, fiduciary, and governance responsibilities. Many of the ministry agencies and partners are incorporated as nonprofit corporations and are registered and recognized as a charity in Canada by the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) and/or in the United States as a tax-exempt organization by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS). As such, boards are facing increasing demands and new requirements from federal, state, and provincial governmental units.

Each of these nonprofit corporations has a governing authority commonly referred to as a board. The board may be referred to as a Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, or Board of Advisers. The Council of Delegates, on behalf of synod, is the governing authority for the CRCNA organization. As such, all of the nonprofit corporations that are a part of the CRCNA organization are subsidiary and accountable to the Council of Delegates. While each nonprofit corporation is considered to be independent from a legal perspec-

tive, they are accountable to the Council of Delegates and to synod from an ecclesiastical and organizational perspective.

Chart 4: CRCNA Board Structure

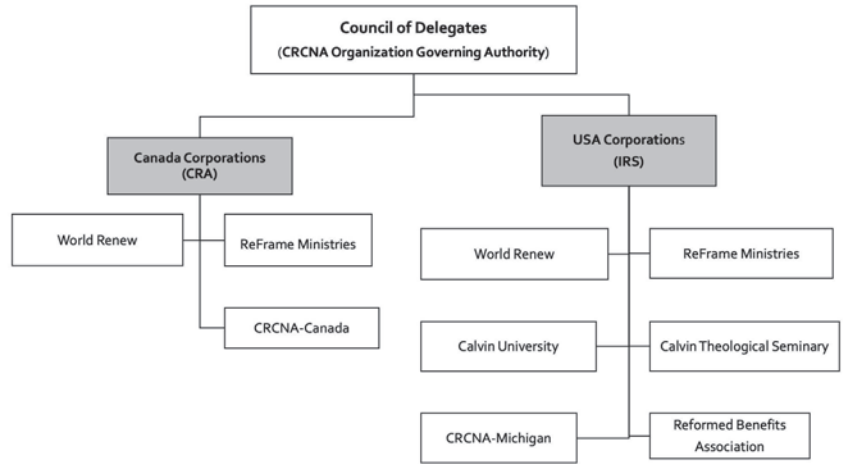


Chart 4 lists the current nonprofit corporations that are legally incorporated in Canada and the United States (Michigan and Illinois). Board membership for each of the nonprofit corporations listed in Chart 4 are linked to the ecclesiastical structure of the CRCNA organization.

Following is a breakdown of the membership:

Council of Delegates

- The membership of the Council of Delegates is representative of all the CRCNA classes plus from two to ten at-large members.
- Each classis appoints a single member to the Council of Delegates to fill a three-year term.
- In addition, from two to ten at-large members can be recommended to synod by the Council of Delegates to serve a three-year term.

CRCNA Corporations

- U.S. (Michigan) Board of Directors: The delegates to synod serve as the members of the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation and elect the board of the corporation. (The Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation are the Council of Delegates from the U.S.)
- Canada Board of Directors: The Canadian members of the Council of Delegates serve as the members of the CRCNA Canada Corporation. The same classis appointed members, as well as the Canadian at-large members of the Council of Delegates, constitute the board of the CRCNA Canada Corporation.

ReFrame Ministries

- U.S. Board of Directors: The delegates to synod serve as the members of the ReFrame-Illinois Corporation and elect the board of the corporation. (The Board of Directors of the ReFrame-Illinois Corporation are the Council of Delegates from the U.S.)

- Canada Board of Directors: The members of ReFrame Canada Corporation are the Council of Delegates members from Canada. The four officers of the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors serve as the Board of ReFrame Ministries Canada.

World Renew

- USA Board of Directors
- Canada Board of Directors

Calvin University

- Board of Trustees

Calvin Theological Seminary

- Board of Trustees

Reformed Benefits Association

- USA Board of Directors: The Board is made up of three members elected by the Board of Benefit Services of the Reformed Church in America and three members elected by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA. In addition, the Board of Benefits Services and the CRCNA name one staff person each to serve on the Board with vote. The board members other than the staff serve three-year terms.

Nonprofit organizations incorporated in Canada and/or the U.S. not included in Chart 4:

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc. U.S.

- U.S. Board of Directors: The Loan Fund Board is made up of six members that are nominated by the Loan Fund Board to synod and elected for a three-year term.

Ministers Pension Plans

- U.S. and Canada Board of Directors: The CRCNA maintains two defined benefit pension plans for its ministers of the Word serving in the United States and Canada. The plans are administered by the U.S. Ministers Pension Board and the Canadian Ministers Pension Board. Each board has five members, nominated by the pension boards and elected by synod. One member from each board is a minister of the Word. The members serve three-year terms and are eligible to serve three terms.

Raise Up Global Ministries

- U.S. Board of Directors: The board of Raise Up Global Ministries is nominated by and elected by the Council of Delegates.

Note: There may be other nonprofit corporations not listed that are part of the CRCNA organization and that need to be added.

B. Membership responsibilities

There are, perhaps, hundreds of CRC members who volunteer to serve on the many boards of the CRCNA organization. Many of these volunteers are not fully aware of their *fiduciary duties* and *governance responsibilities* as a board member when they begin their board service. Learning and development opportunities should be offered on a regular basis to ensure that boards fulfil their collective *fiduciary duties* and *governance responsibilities*.

1. Fiduciary duties of a board

a. Duty of care

Board members meet the duty of care by exercising their responsibilities in good faith and with diligence, attention, care, and skill.

b. Duty of loyalty

Board members meet the duty of loyalty by exercising their power in the interests of the organization and not in their own interests or the interests of another entity, particularly with which they may have a formal relationship. Members should avoid the use of organizational opportunities for personal gain.

c. Duty of obedience

Board members meet the duty of obedience by carrying out the purposes and mission of the nonprofit organization; complying with federal and provincial or state law applicable to nonprofits and registered charities; doing required filings; adhering to the organization's governing documents, articles of incorporation, and bylaws; and remaining guardians of the organization's mission.

2. Governance responsibilities of a board

a. Set and ensure organizational direction

Boards have the responsibility to set and ensure the direction of the organization. As part of the direction-setting process, Boards must develop and/or confirm the organization's purpose in a clear mission statement. Boards then construct a description of the organization's best future in a vision statement. Ensuring direction also involves developing a strategic plan and ensuring its alignment with the organization's annual operational plans.

b. Ensure adequate resources

Boards have the responsibility to ensure that the organization has the resources to implement the mission and achieve the vision. Necessary resources include board and executive leadership, people, money, equipment, facilities, and reputation.

c. Oversee the health of the organization

Boards are the stewards of the organization. They must ensure that the organization is in better shape for tomorrow than it was yesterday. Accountability for mission, organizational, and board effectiveness is core to ensuring long-term sustainability in the public interest.

C. *Governance challenges*

The nonprofit corporations that make up the CRCNA organization are managed by their respective boards and the leadership of the CRCNA. The lines of accountability are not always clear, and thus the task of mission integration has become all the more complex over time. What we have today is a framework that unfolded and developed over many decades, which seems at times to be lacking in guiding principles and overall vision.

The Structure and Leadership Task Force has observed, for example, that World Renew and ReFrame Ministries enjoy their own boards, given their corporate status, while Resonate Global Mission does not. Resonate Global

Mission's predecessors—Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) and Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM)—each had their own boards (U.S. and Canada) operating under their own synod-issued “charters” for decades. These entities in turn enjoyed a link of accountability to the then Board of Trustees. SALT believes that the story of historic merger bears retelling, given the desire to fashion a model of executive leadership that can account for the current realities of the CRCNA governance framework.

The recommendations of the synodical Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (2012-2015) led synod to consolidate the many boards of the CRCNA in order to decrease the organizational footprint and break down *silos*. This coincided with the decision to merge CRWM and CRHM, which saw in turn their amalgamation into the CRCNA Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation. Thus, Resonate Global Mission, unlike World Renew and ReFrame Ministries, no longer holds corporate status or its own board. It does, however, like World Renew and ReFrame Ministries, continue to enjoy a “synodical mandate.” This anomaly in the shared governance structure of the CRCNA may have made it harder for Resonate Global Mission to realize the advantages of the Council of Delegates structure and its integration with other ministry agencies and programs under one large board.

This structural oddity may also have served to create an administrative managerial challenge, given that the Leadership Council enjoys eight reserved seats, one for each executive of the “ministry related” CRCNA U.S. and Canada Boards. Resonate Global Mission is now viewed as different in kind, even though most would acknowledge that it is not.

It seems clear to the SALT team that more work needs to be done. The present moment in the history and life of the CRCNA may be an opportune time to provide a more detailed governance framework for the CRCNA organization and some guiding principles. This in turn would provide incoming executive role holders with policy guidance on “restructuring” and “mergers” of current ministry partners, or when new entities need to be formed, or when other entities (from other denominations) wish to join the CRCNA.

The SALT team recognizes that effective boards and an effective governance framework are critical to the success of the CRCNA organization. A newly established Office of Governance will provide guidance that addresses issues of compliance with Canada and U.S. rules and regulations, training and education of board members, nomination and election of board members, and oversight of joint ministry agreements.

Just as the Office of Synodical Services supports the CRCNA's ecclesiastical structure, the Office of Governance would support the governance structure of the CRCNA organization. In partnership with the Office of General Secretary and ministry leaders and partners, the Office of Governance would strengthen and support the board members and leaders in Canada and the United States to carry out their *fiduciary duties* and *governing responsibilities*.

The Office of Governance would advance the following activities:

1. Develop an effective process to recruit, select, and appoint members with appropriate insight and expertise.

2. Develop learning and development opportunities that would enable board members to effectively exercise their fiduciary and governing responsibilities.
3. Assist ministry leaders to develop effective governance partnerships with their boards.
4. Assist board chairs in leading and managing their respective boards.
5. Oversee the governance framework of the CRCNA, making recommendations to improve the membership, structure, and framework.
6. Assist the CRCNA corporations to comply with the Canada CRA and the U.S. IRS rules and regulations.
7. Conduct an annual assessment of the governance framework and its effectiveness.

VIII. Key Topic 4: Ministry Plan and Joint Ministry Agreements

A. CRCNA Ministry Plan

The work and ministry of the CRCNA organization is guided by the Ministry Plan. The Ministry Plan is a multiyear plan approved by synod that outlines the strategy and operational priorities for the entire CRCNA organization. Each ministry institution, agency, program, and partner works together to implement the Ministry Plan.

Consider the following:

- a. The CRCNA Ministry Plan is approved by the Council of Delegates and synod.
- b. The Plan contains strategies and priorities for all ministry leaders and partners, including agencies, institutions, programs, and staff.
- c. Agencies, institutions, programs, and partners will align their strategies, plans, and operational priorities with the CRCNA Ministry Plan. All of their unique and specific efforts are critical to the successful implementation of the Ministry Plan.
- d. The CRCNA-Canada board of directors and leaders will ensure that the CRCNA Ministry Plan guides and contextualizes the work and ministry in Canada.
- e. The Ministries Leadership Council provides an opportunity to ensure that all ministry agencies, institutions, programs, and staff are working together to implement the Ministry Plan.

B. Joint Ministry Agreements

Joint Ministry Agreements provide a useful process to implement the CRCNA Ministry Plan. Joint Ministry Agreements can create role clarity, responsibility, and accountability between ministry boards, leaders, and partners. The Joint Ministry Agreements between World Renew-U.S. and World Renew-Canada represent a successful use of Joint Ministry Agreements. Given the unfolding complexity with the CRCNA Canada Corporation and the clear preferences of the Carter legal advisory, the use of Joint Ministry Agreements will be expanded.

The Joint Ministry Agreement process will be used to clarify roles and responsibilities and to identify areas of common concern and patterns of communication between ministry leaders, agencies, and partners. Chart 4: CRCNA Board Structure describes the various ministry boards chartered by

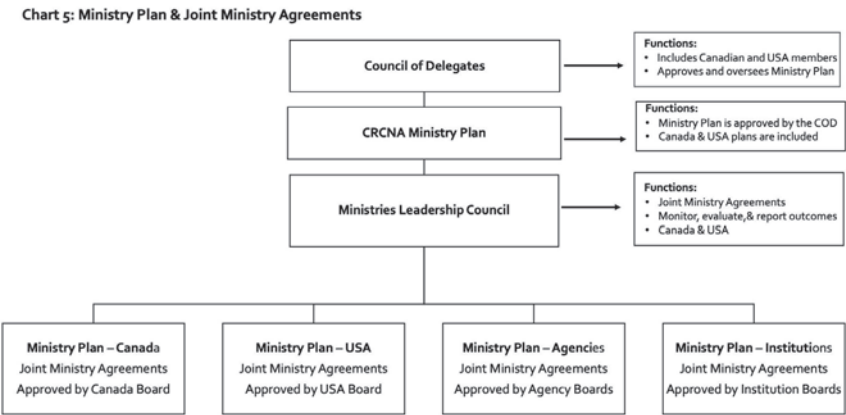
synod. All Joint Ministry Agreements will be approved by the appropriate governing authorities, including boards and executives, before becoming effective.

Joint Ministry Agreements have been used by ministry agencies, leaders, and partners to clarify roles, identify areas of shared responsibilities and opportunities, improve communication, and build organizational trust.

The Joint Ministry Agreement process will be expanded to accomplish the following:

1. Clarify ecclesiastical, ecumenical, and synodical responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions.
2. Clarify the governance responsibilities and interrelationships between boards of directors and advisers in Canada and the United States. Learning and development opportunities will be addressed.
3. Clarify the administrative responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions. This includes oversight and supervision, human resources and staff development, budgets and finance, and so on.
4. Clarify ministry responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions.

Joint Ministry Agreements will be approved by relevant governing authorities.



The Office of General Secretary will design and expand the Joint Ministry Agreement process to ensure it addresses ecclesiastical, governance, administrative, and ministry partnerships. The Ministries Leadership Council will bring together ministry leaders and partners to develop new ministry agreements and to review and monitor all current ministry agreements. Joint Ministry Agreements are developed by staff and will be reviewed and approved by relevant governing authorities before they become operational. When the Canadian Board approves these agreements, they demonstrate appropriate *direction and control* as required by the CRA.

It is important to note that the function of the Office of General Secretary in the Joint Ministry Agreement process is that of process management. The content of the JMAs is provided by the many boards and ministry partners. The Office of General Secretary is to manage the process by which the JMAs

are achieved, and as such this process must reflect the values of shared governance in the CRCNA—the values of clarity, mutuality and reciprocity, communication, and trust. The design and process of the expansion of the Joint Ministry Agreement process accomplished in the context of the Ministries Leadership Council must enjoy the approval and oversight of the Council of Delegates. The JMA process must at a minimum be a robust and informed process by which ministry leaders and partners can truly agree and feel blessed and empowered to meet the opportunities and overcome the challenges of ministry locally and globally in a complex world. The burden of designing and expanding the JMA process is best shared by members of the Ministries Leadership Council, and it should enjoy the input of the Executive Committee of the Council of Delegates.

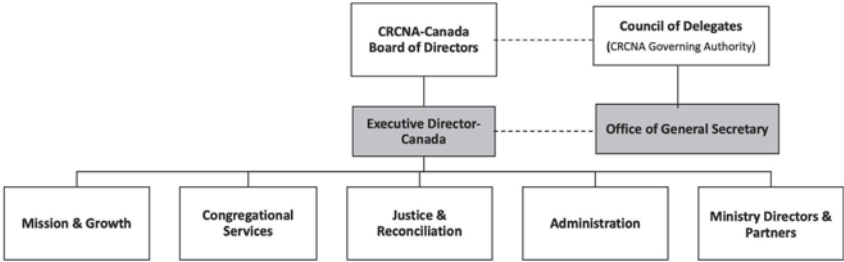
IX. Key Topic 5: Canadian Office

The current CRCNA leadership model for the Canadian Office is a single ministry leader in Canada, the Canadian Ministries Director, reporting to the Executive Director (CRCNA). The SALT team recommends that this leadership model be changed due to rules and recommendations from the Canada Revenue Agency. In the new leadership model, we recommend that the Canadian Ministry Director position be replaced by a new position titled *Executive Director-Canada*. A description of this position is contained in Appendix A.

As described in Chart 6, the Executive Director-Canada will *wear two hats*. She/he will report to the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors to meet the legal expectations of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and to the Office of General Secretary to meet the ecclesiastical and ministry expectations of synod and the Council of Delegates. Together, in *partnership* with the CRCNA-Canada Board, the Executive Director-Canada will oversee and direct the CRCNA ministry leaders, partners, and programs in Canada. Please note that the use of dotted lines in Charts 6 and 7 describes how boards and leaders need to work as *partners* to accomplish a shared mission. These relationships are not defined by *control* or *direction*.

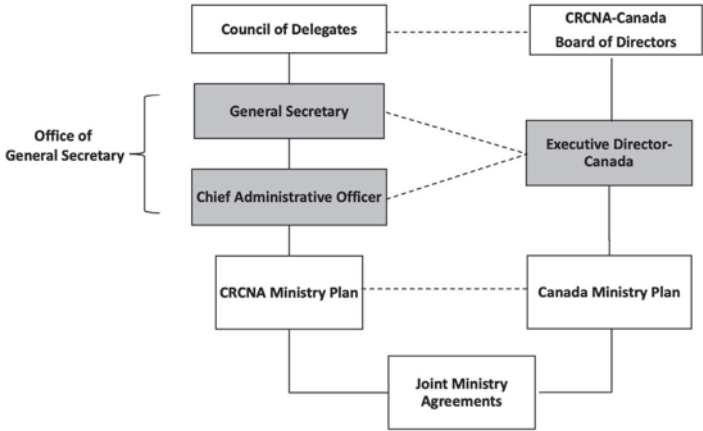
Rather it ought to be understood that the reporting relationship between the Executive Director-Canada and the Office of General Secretary is one of partnership, and the focus is on joining forces and resources as specified in the Joint Ministry Agreements between the Canada CRCNA Board of Directors and the Office of General Secretary. The reporting relationship is one of consultation, coordination, information sharing, and problem solving. It is not a relationship focused on the job performance or the fulfillment of management-issued directives but instead a conversation focused on organizational performance pertaining to synodically approved ministry goals. The General Secretary and the Executive Director-Canada are in an ecclesiastically defined peer relationship in order to coordinate specified resources (identified in the JMA) toward existing ministry and emerging opportunities as identified by the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors, the governance structure charged by synod to make such discriminations/choices on its behalf in Canada.

Chart 6: CRCNA-Canada Office Structure



The CRCNA-Canada Board and the Executive Director-Canada have responsibilities to work closely with the Council of Delegates and the Office of General Secretary to implement the CRCNA Ministry Plan in Canada and to use the Joint Ministry Agreement process as outlined in Chart 7. The Joint Ministry Agreement process will be used to clarify roles and responsibilities as well as areas of shared responsibilities and opportunities, improving patterns of communication and building organizational trust.

Chart 7: CRCNA Binational Working Relationships



The Joint Ministry Agreement process will be expanded to accomplish the following:

1. Clarify ecclesiastical, ecumenical, and synodical responsibilities between Canada and the United States.
2. Clarify the governance responsibilities and interrelationships between boards of directors and advisors in Canada and the United States.
3. Clarify the administrative responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions. This includes oversight, collaboration and supervision, human resources and staff development, budgets and finance, and so on.
4. Clarify ministry responsibilities between countries, U.S. and Canada agencies, and institutions.

Joint Ministry Agreements will be approved by relevant governing authorities, including the CRCNA-Canada Board.

The process of developing and overseeing Joint Ministry Agreements will be managed by the Office of General Secretary and the Ministries Leadership Council. The Ministries Leadership Council includes Canadian and U.S. representation.

The purpose of the Canadian Office is not to mirror the U.S. Office of the CRCNA organization. Instead, it is to implement the CRCNA Ministry Plan through the use of Joint Ministry Agreements in a manner that recognizes the ministry needs of Canadian churches and that of their social and cultural context.

X. Recommendations

Culture

A. That the COD do the following in order to improve the culture of the CRCNA:

1. Affirm that we desire an organizational culture shaped by partnership, collaboration, cooperation, shared mission, and interdependency between countries, ministry institutions, agencies, programs, and partners. Board members and leaders will be selected who affirm these cultural values.
2. Acknowledge the ongoing challenges the CRCNA organization faces in resolving the CRA compliance issues in Canada. SALT understands that solutions to those challenges are necessary, and the task force affirms that the solutions should not unduly impact the CRCNA organizational culture.
3. Recommend that synod also affirm these goals and acknowledge these challenges to improve CRCNA culture.

Leadership Model and Design

B. That the COD do the following in order to revise the CRCNA leadership model:

1. Establish the position of General Secretary; the leader in this role will serve as *chief ecclesiastical officer*. The General Secretary will report to the COD and will serve as the executive leader of the CRCNA organization. A description of this position is contained in Appendix A.
2. Establish the position of Chief Administrative Officer; this role will report to the General Secretary and be responsible and accountable for all administration and ministry operations within the CRCNA organization. A description of this position is contained in Appendix A.
3. Establish the Office of General Secretary. The General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer will be contained in a newly established office called the Office of General Secretary. The Office of General Secretary will be responsible and accountable to the Council of Delegates to guide and direct the entire CRCNA organization. While each position has distinct

roles and responsibilities as described in the position descriptions, the positions will require working together as partners and having shared leadership responsibilities and accountabilities based on abilities and gifts as well as organizational changes and needs. The new CRCNA leadership model will ensure ecclesiastical, administrative, and ministry integration and will serve together to facilitate the shared governance partnerships and relationships that characterize the denomination's life, ministry, and mission.

Ground: Due to the cancellation of Synod 2021, the COD, in the best interests of synod, can create search teams and identify candidates for the three leadership positions, which could aid in a smooth transition to the new structure upon synod's ultimate decision on the matter in 2022 (see Recommendation E, 1).

4. Instruct the executive committee of the COD to implement the above recommendations by creating mandates and respective search teams.
5. Recommend that synod adopt the establishment of the senior leadership positions of General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer, as well as the Office of General Secretary.

Governance Framework and Design

C. That the COD adopt the following with regard to governance framework and design:

1. Begin the work of establishing an Office of Governance to help improve and strengthen the governance framework and design of the CRCNA organization. Just as the Office of Synodical Services supports the CRCNA's ecclesiastical structure, the Office of Governance would support the governance structure of the CRCNA. In partnership with the Office of General Secretary, the Office of Governance would seek to strengthen and support the board members and leaders in Canada and the United States as they carry out their *fiduciary duties* and *governing responsibilities*. The office would be responsible to advance the following activities:
 - a. Develop an effective process to recruit, select, and appoint members with appropriate insight and expertise.
 - b. Develop learning and development opportunities that would enable board members to effectively exercise their fiduciary and governing responsibilities.
 - c. Assist ministry leaders to develop effective governance partnerships with their boards.
 - d. Assist board chairs in effectively leading and managing their respective boards.
 - e. Oversee the governance framework of the CRCNA, making recommendations to improve the structure and framework.
 - f. Assist the CRCNA corporations in complying with the Canada CRA and the United States IRS rules and regulations.
2. Recommend that synod adopt the establishment of an Office of Governance.

Ministry Plan and Joint Ministry Agreements

D. That the COD expand the Joint Ministry Agreement process to accomplish the following:

1. Clarify ecclesiastical, ecumenical, and synodical responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions.
2. Clarify the governance responsibilities and interrelationships between boards of directors and advisers in Canada and the United States. Learning and development opportunities will be addressed.
3. Clarify the administrative responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions. This includes oversight and supervision, human resources and staff development, budgets and finance, and so on.
4. Clarify ministry responsibilities between countries, agencies, and institutions.
5. Affirm that Joint Ministry Agreements will be approved by relevant governing authorities, including boards and executives, before they become effective.
6. Affirm that the process of developing and overseeing Joint Ministry Agreements will be managed by the Office of General Secretary and the Ministries Leadership Council.

Canadian Office

E. That the COD adopt the following with regard to the Canadian Office:

1. Establish the Canadian Office of the CRCNA organization. The Canadian Office will be governed by the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors and led by an Executive Director-Canada. The purpose of the Canadian Office is not to mirror the U.S. Office of the CRCNA organization. Instead, it is to implement the CRCNA Ministry Plan in a way and manner that recognizes the ministry needs of Canadian churches and that of their social and cultural context. The Canadian Office is part of the CRCNA organization, and as such the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors is responsible to partner with the CRCNA Council of Delegates, and the Executive Director-Canada is responsible to partner with the Office of General Secretary. A description of the Executive Director-Canada position is contained in Appendix A.

Ground: Due to the cancellation of Synod 2021, the CRCNA Canada Corporation, in the best interests of synod, can create a search team and identify a candidate for the Executive Director-Canada position, which could aid in the smooth transition to the new structure upon synod's ultimate decision on the matter in 2022 (see Recommendation B, 3).

2. The CRCNA-Canada Board will revise and amend its synod-issued charter and related bylaws of 1998 and resubmit them to the COD. The revisions and amendments will in a legally sound way accomplish each of the following:

- a. The identification of the Canadian Office as a function of shared governance in the CRCNA under the authority of synod.
 - b. The identification of the Executive Director-Canada as the sole director of the CRCNA-Canada charity.
 - c. The identification of the JMA process as the primary instrument by which it exercises direction and control.
3. Recommend that synod adopt the establishment of the Canadian Office and adopt the CRCNA-Canada Board's revised charter and bylaws.

Additional Recommendations

F. That the COD acknowledge that on the question of whether Directors and Members of the ReFrame Ministries and CRCNA corporations can be the same members, it rules that when the crossover of CRCNA directors is in the minority of the ReFrame Ministries corporation, it is acceptable.

G. That the COD recommend that synod implement use of a denominational Conflict of Interest Policy (similar to the policy in Appendix E adopted by the Council of Delegates) for delegates to synod.

H. That the COD do the following:

1. Review the status of Resonate Global Mission with a view to possible modification in order to make its status equivalent to that of World Renew and ReFrame Ministries. As a result, Resonate would have its own board of directors in the United States and in Canada. The role of the board of directors would be to advise and provide expertise to the Directors of Resonate in Canada and the United States as they develop and implement the Resonate Global Mission Ministry Plan, which is aligned with the CRCNA Ministry Plan. Board size should not exceed 10 to 12 members who have strategic insight and expertise to further the purposes of Resonate Global Mission and its Ministry Plan.
2. Contingent upon the outcome of the preceding recommendation, recommend that synod approve the creation of a Board of Directors for Resonate Global Mission.

I. That the COD appoint a task force to oversee the expansion of the Joint Ministry Agreement process for the CRCNA organization. That the COD appoint the SALT reporter, Rev. Frederic Koning, together with Dr. Lloyd VanderKwaak, to serve as facilitators of the task force to ensure that the agreements reflect the SALT report's intent and realize contract documents that undergird the administrative model and satisfy legal and ecclesiastical requirements.

J. That the COD amend the COD Governance Handbook regarding background checks and testing. SALT recommends that all finalists for executive leadership positions in the CRCNA submit to psychological testing and criminal and extensive background checks conducted by an independent professional. The candidate should also submit to a medical evaluation designed to evaluate mental, physical, emotional health, and overall fitness for the role in order to rule out the presence of personality disorder, narcissism, and sexual deviancy. No position offers should be made until test reports

have been filed and recommendations have been made by an independent professional who does this kind of work.

K. That the COD not implement the administrative decision to absorb the current Director of Finance and Operations functions into other positions, and that the Director of Finance and Operations role be retained, given (1) that a healthy organizational structure in the CRCNA, generally speaking, relies on a Chief Financial Officer, as distinguished from a CEO and CAO; and (2) that the skill set and experience of a Director of Finance is not captured in the new model by the role descriptions for the General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer.

L. That the COD affirm for reasons of editorial independence that The Banner editor-in-chief not report to the Director of Communications and Marketing but report administratively to the Office of General Secretary and editorially to the Banner Advisory committee.

Structure and Leadership Task Force
Paula Coldagelli
Andy de Ruyter (facilitator)
Paul De Vries (facilitator)
Fred Koning (reporter)
Michelle Kool
William Koopmans
John Lee (chair)
Jose Rayas
Dee Recker (ex officio / nonvoting)
Kathy Smith (ex officio / nonvoting)

Appendix A
Position descriptions

CRCNA Position Description
General Secretary

Scope of the Position
The General Secretary’s responsibility is to nurture the shared mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and to ensure the effective implementation of this mission through the CRCNA Ministry Plan in Canada and the United States. The General Secretary will shape and embrace an organizational culture that supports an effective partnership and collaboration between the ministry boards, agencies, partners, and staff that serve the CRCNA. The General Secretary will nurture strong ecumenical relationships and will keep the CRCNA attentive to synod’s long-term vision for its mission in the world, both locally and globally.

Reports to
The General Secretary serves at the pleasure of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The General Secretary reports directly to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council of Delegates.

Partnerships and Working Relationships

The General Secretary oversees the CRCNA governance and ministry frameworks and uses the Joint Ministry Planning System to outline the partnerships and working relationships required to implement the CRCNA ministry plans.

Supervises and Oversees

The General Secretary oversees the ministry leadership team.

Direct Reports

The Chief Administrative Officer, as a member of the Office of General Secretary, reports to the General Secretary. Other members that report directly or indirectly to the General Secretary will be identified in the table of organization.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Mission

- a. Serves as an effective partner with synod and the Council of Delegates in nurturing a culture that advances a shared mission for the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
- b. Ensures that each ministry agency and ministry partner is strategically and operationally aligned with the mission.
- c. Nurtures strong ecumenical relationships and will keep the CRCNA attentive to synod's long-term vision for its mission in the world, both locally and globally.
- d. Prompts and mobilizes missional engagement by imagining possibilities, promoting learning opportunities, sharing stories and best practices, and facilitating use of resources for mutual learning.

2. Synod and the Council of Delegates

- a. Board learning and development
 - Promotes an effective governance partnership between synod, the Council of Delegates, ministry boards, and partners in Canada and the United States.
 - Ensures that CRCNA boards and their members fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities and compliance with governmental rules and regulations.
 - Expands board capacity, builds board leadership, and promotes best governance practices and continuous improvement.
- b. Communications and logistics
 - Makes needed arrangements for the meetings of synod, the Council of Delegates, and synodical study committees and task forces; and functions as operations officer during such meetings.
 - Is responsible for all official proceedings and publications of synod, the Council of Delegates, and synodical study committees and task forces.
 - Ensures that the Acts of Synod are communicated to ministry leaders and partners, including Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - Communicates the denomination's mission, vision, and decisions based on synod's actions to the congregations and classes.

- Communicates with all churches regarding the denominational survey, synod’s agenda, and the request for synodical advisers.
- Provides “a state of the church” address and report to synod.
- c. Functions
 - Has the privilege of the floor at synod and at Council of Delegates meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of this office.
 - Serves synod with information and advice as requested regarding matters that come to the floor of synod.
 - Is present during all executive sessions of synod and of the Council of Delegates, except when matters under discussion affect the person or performance of the General Secretary and the General Secretary is requested to be absent.
 - Serves as an ex officio, voting member of the executive committee of the Council of Delegates (COD), the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, and such other committees as synod or the COD may, from time to time, decide.
 - Provides a report to each synod, offering a vision for the future ministry of the CRCNA.
 - Serves as ecumenical officer and author of church communications and correspondence on behalf of synod.

3. Leadership

- a. Serves as a rallying point in times of crisis and as a voice of our shared faith.
- b. Assumes a pastoral stance of nurturing, guiding, and setting the tone for leadership and service in the CRCNA.
- c. Provides pastoral support to all ministry leaders and partners to build and support an organizational culture that promotes partnership, innovation, and accountability.
- d. Provides regular and ongoing communication to the denomination, using multiple media platforms and publications.
- e. In partnership with the Chief Administrative Officer,
 - operates an administrative and ministry leadership system that builds staff capacity, engagement, learning, satisfaction, and succession.
 - oversees capital and operating budgets, ensuring they achieve budget metrics.
 - oversees an integrated system of organizational policies and practices that ensures compliance with decisions made by synod, the Council of Delegates, the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors, and governmental regulatory bodies.

4. CRCNA Ministry Plan

- a. Serves as leader and partner in the design and development of the CRCNA Ministry Plan, ensuring that it is aligned with the decisions of synod.
- b. Ensures that the culture of Ministry Planning and Integration is based on a cycle of strategic thinking, planning, innovation, and evaluation.
- c. Brings administrative and ministry leaders, partners, and staff together to ensure consistent implementation of Joint Ministry Agreements to advance the priorities of the CRCNA Ministry Plan.

- d. Ensures that the relevant governance groups, including the Council of Delegates, have provided the necessary reviews and approvals.
- e. Ensures that an annual Ministry Plan report is provided to synod, supplying progress updates and identifying future ministry needs, opportunities, and making recommendations.

5. Ecumenical Relations

- a. Invites ecumenical guests to synod and nurtures and tends those relationships.
- b. Consults and coordinates the ministry leaders and partners on international ecumenical and interfaith matters.
- c. Is responsible for advancing the work of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee by serving as an ex officio member of the committee and serving as Ecumenical Officer of the CRCNA.
- d. Works closely with the Executive Director-Canada as outlined in the Joint Ecumenical Agreement.

6. Synodical Services

- a. Supervises the offices and staff of Synodical Services to ensure the delivery of services and synodical functions.
- b. Serves as an ex officio member of the Candidacy, Historical, Judicial Code, and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations committees.
- c. Is responsible for the oversight of the budget processes for Synodical Services, synodical study committees, and task forces.

7. Other Duties

Performs such other duties as synod or the Council of Delegates shall direct.

Qualifications

1. Personal and Professional Characteristics

- a. Exemplifies a strong, vibrant Christian faith marked by spiritual humility and moral integrity.
- b. Is a member of the CRCNA, or is willing to become such a member.
- c. Understands the life and polity of the CRCNA.
- d. Possesses the ability to provide exceptional leadership within a multi-agency and binational denomination.
- e. Has the capacity to listen and learn.
- f. Exhibits the ability to bridge diverse perspectives and inspire trust.
- g. Has executive presence.
- h. Effectively stewards the authority of the position.
- i. Demonstrates sound judgment and wisdom in decision making.
- j. Has compassion for people who are poor, lost, or disenfranchised.

2. Education and Experience

- a. An M.Div. degree is a minimal requirement.
- b. Ordination as minister of the Word in the CRCNA.
- c. A minimum of 10 years of parish experience or a combination of chaplaincy, parish, educational, or relevant professional/organizational institutional leadership experience.

- d. Advanced degrees in theology with specialization in missiology, ecumenism, church polity, ecclesiology and/or graduate degrees/professional designations in areas such as communications, business administration, nonprofit leadership, and organizational behavior and development are preferred.
- e. Experience in organizational communication is required.
 - advanced written and oral communication and group presentation skills
 - ability to utilize a variety of media platforms in organizational messaging
- f. Oral or written fluency in a second language is desired: Korean, Spanish, French, or Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese).

3. Preferred Knowledge and Leadership Experience

- a. An exceptional knowledge and understanding of Reformed church polity and matters of Church Order interpretation and application.
- b. A developed understanding of Reformed theology and its relationship to other Christian traditions and major religions and their communities.
- c. Familiarity with the CRCNA, its history, its churches, its ministers, its lay leaders, and its ministries in both Canada and the United States.
- d. Ability to move with ease and dignity in North American and international ecclesiastical circles, and to be congenial and cooperative with representatives of other churches as well as with members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
- e. Administrative and organizational ability in such measure as to be able to plan and work collaboratively with individuals and teams.
- f. Proven success in establishing relationships with individuals and organizations of influence, including partner agencies/churches and volunteers.

CRCNA Position Description

Chief Administrative Officer

Scope of the Position

The Chief Administrative Officer, in partnership with the General Secretary, will communicate a clear and compelling vision that inspires administrative and ministry leaders and ministry partners to advance the binational mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). The Chief Administrative Officer will support and participate in the work of synod, the Council of Delegates, and other ministry boards, councils, and task committees. The Chief Administrative Officer will ensure that the CRCNA ministry agencies and partners work in partnership to support and advance the CRCNA Ministry Plan.

The Chief Administrative Officer, as a member of the Office of General Secretary, has the administrative authority and accountability to guide and oversee the leadership, strategy, and performance of the CRCNA administration, ministry agencies, and ministry partners. The Chief Administrative Officer will oversee administrative and support services needed to advance

the ministry plan in such areas as governance and compliance, joint ministry plans, finance and budgets, human resources, facilities, and transportation.

Reports to

The Chief Administrative Officer is accountable to and serves at the pleasure of the General Secretary.

Supervises and Oversees

The Chief Administrative Officer supervises members of the ministry leadership team.

Partnerships and Critical Relationships

The Chief Administrative Officer, as a member of the Office of General Secretary, works in partnership with the General Secretary and manages the Joint Ministry Agreement process. Joint Ministry Agreements clarify working relationships and accountabilities. Only when they are approved by the relevant Boards and Councils as outlined in the CRCNA Governance Framework are they considered operational and binding.

- a. General Secretary of the CRCNA: governance agreements, synodical activities, and ecumenical affairs.
- b. Chief Administrative Officer: administrative affairs.
- c. Ministry agency leaders and partners: ministry affairs.

Direct Reports

Members that directly report to the Chief Administrative Officer include the ministry directors and leaders as well as administrative directors and leaders as identified in the table of organization.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Mission

- a. Serves as an effective partner with the General Secretary in nurturing a culture that advances the mission and values of the CRCNA.
- b. Ensures that each ministry agency and ministry partner is strategically and operationally aligned with the mission.
- c. Ensures that the mission and values shape the organizational culture.

2. Governance

- a. Serves as an effective partner in the governance and oversight of the CRCNA.
- b. Promotes a governance partnership between synod, the Council of Delegates, the Canada and U.S. boards, and ministry boards.
- c. Expands board capacity, builds board leadership, and promotes best governance practices and continuous improvement.
- d. Carries out board directives and communicates appropriate information to ministry leaders and partners.

3. Strategy

- a. Serves as an effective leader and partner in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of the CRCNA Ministry Plan and ensures that it is aligned with the decisions of synod.
- b. Ensures that the joint ministry planning system advances the priorities in the CRCNA Ministry Plan through the relevant ministry agencies and partners in Canada and the United States.

- c. Ensures that the culture of the Ministries Leadership Council is based on a cycle of strategic thinking, planning, innovation, and evaluation in the development and implementation of joint ministry plans.

4. Operations

- a. Builds an organizational culture that promotes innovation and accountability.
- b. Brings administrative and ministry leaders and partners together to ensure consistent implementation of synodical and COD policy decisions in Canada and the United States.
- c. Operates an administrative and ministry leadership system that builds staff capacity, engagement, satisfaction, and succession.
- d. Oversees capital and operating budgets, ensuring they achieve budget metrics and outcomes.
- e. Oversees an integrated system of organizational policies and practices that ensures compliance with decisions made by synod, the Council of Delegates, ministry boards, and governmental regulatory bodies.
- f. Oversees the Joint Ministry Agreement process, including governance, ecumenical, administrative, and ministry agreements.

5. Communications and Denominational Affairs

- a. At the request of the General Secretary, participates in ecumenical, classical, and regional church meetings.
- b. At the request of the Executive Director-Canada, participates in the CRCNA-Canada Board meetings.

6. Other Duties

Performs other duties as assigned by the General Secretary.

Qualifications

1. Characteristics and Commitments

- a. Exemplifies a strong, vibrant Christian faith marked by spiritual humility and moral integrity.
- b. Is a member of the CRCNA, or is willing to become a member.
- c. Understands the life and polity of the CRCNA.
- d. Possesses the ability to provide exceptional leadership within a multi-agency and binational organization.
- e. Has the capacity to listen and learn.
- f. Exhibits the ability to bridge diverse perspectives and inspires trust.
- g. Has executive presence.
- h. Effectively stewards the authority of the position.
- i. Demonstrates sound judgment and wisdom in decision-making.
- j. Has compassion for people who are poor, lost, or disenfranchised.

2. Education and Experience

- a. Master's degree in a relevant discipline such as administration, leadership, and organizational development.
- b. Minimum of ten years of professional experience and a career progression marked by accomplishment through leadership roles in complex environments with a proven record of accomplishment.
- c. Minimum of five years of senior-level experience in complex organizations that include oversight of administration and finance operations.

3. Leadership Skills and Experiences

- a. Working with and/or service on a board of directors, preferably in a leadership role.
- b. Developing and implementing organizational strategy and ministry plans.
- c. Overseeing complex operations in public, nonprofit, and/or private companies.
- d. Leading significant organizational change in complex organizations.
- e. Bringing people of diverse backgrounds and experiences together to achieve shared strategies, priorities, plans, and/or goals.
- f. Developing people through coaching, mentoring, and learning and development programs.
- g. Making complex decisions in an environment of shifting demographics and significant cultural change.

CRCNA Position Description

Executive Director-Canada

Scope of the Position

The Executive Director-Canada, in partnership with the Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Canada, will communicate a clear and compelling vision that inspires ministry leaders and ministry partners to advance the binational mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) in Canada. The Executive Director-Canada will ensure that the CRCNA-Canada Ministry Plan, approved by the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors, is aligned with the CRCNA Ministry Plan.

The Executive Director-Canada will lead and oversee the ministry leaders and staff in Canada in accordance with CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors approvals and joint ministry agreements as well as those legally required to be performed by a registered charity in Canada.

Reports to

The Executive Director-Canada reports to and serves at the pleasure of the Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Canada.

Partnerships and Working Relationships

The Executive Director-Canada's responsibilities to the CRCNA Office of General Secretary, ministry leaders, and partners are outlined in the relevant Joint Ministry Agreements approved by the Board of Directors of the CRCNA-Canada. The Executive Director-Canada will work with the following CRCNA leaders:

- a. General Secretary of the CRCNA: governance agreements, synodical activities, and ecumenical affairs
- b. Chief Administrative Officer: administrative affairs
- c. Ministry agency leaders and partners: ministry affairs

Supervises and Oversees

The Executive Director-Canada supervises and oversees the administrative staff, ministry leaders, and partners that serve the CRCNA churches in Canada.

Direct Reports

Members that directly report to the Executive Director-Canada are identified in the table of organization for the Canadian Office.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Mission

- a. Serves as an effective partner with the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors and the CRCNA in nurturing a culture that advances a shared mission for the Christian Reformed Church in Canada.
- b. Ensures that each ministry agency and ministry partner is strategically and operationally aligned with the mission.
- c. Prompts and mobilizes missional engagement in the Christian Reformed churches in Canada by imagining possibilities, promoting learning opportunities, sharing stories and best practices, and facilitating the use of resources for mutual learning.

2. Governance

- a. Serves as an effective partner in the governance and oversight of the CRCNA-Canada.
- b. Promotes a governance partnership between synod, the Council of Delegates, the CRCNA-Canada Board, and Canadian ministry boards.
- c. Ensures that the CRCNA-Canada Board fulfills its fiduciary responsibilities and maintains compliance with governmental rules and regulations.
- d. Expands board capacity, builds board leadership, and promotes best governance practices and continuous improvement.
- e. Carries out board directives and communicates appropriate information to ministry leaders and partners.

3. Strategy

- a. Serves as an effective leader and partner in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of a Canadian Ministry Plan, ensuring it is aligned with the decisions of synod and the CRCNA Ministry Plan.
- b. Ensures that the joint ministry planning system advances the priorities in the CRCNA Ministry Plan through the relevant ministry agencies and partners in Canada.
- c. Ensures that the culture of Ministry Planning and Integration is based on a cycle of strategic thinking, planning, innovation, and evaluation.

4. Operations

- a. Builds an organizational culture that promotes partnership, innovation, and accountability.
- b. Brings administrative and ministry leaders, partners, and staff together to ensure consistent implementation of Joint Ministry Planning Agreements approved by the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors.
- c. Operates an administrative and ministry leadership system that builds staff capacity, engagement, learning, satisfaction, and succession.
- d. Oversees capital and operating budgets, ensuring that they achieve budget metrics and outcomes.
- e. Oversees an integrated system of organizational policies and practices that ensures compliance with decisions made by synod, the Council of

Delegates, the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors, and governmental regulatory bodies.

5. Communications and Community Affairs

- a. Serves as the spokesperson for the CRCNA in Canada on matters of communication with the government and of public pronouncement. Engages with provincial and federal authorities in regard to rules and regulations that affect the operations of the CRCNA in Canada.
- b. Participates in local and national ecumenical activity and engages in national partnerships through bodies such as the Canadian Council of Churches, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and others.
- c. Participates in classical and regional church meetings in Canada in partnership with the General Secretary and consults with congregations, classes, and synodical deputies on matters dealing with church polity, Church Order interpretation, synodical decisions, and ecclesiastical procedures.

6. Other Duties

Performs other duties as assigned by the CRCNA-Canada Board and the General Secretary.

Qualifications

1. Characteristics and Commitments

- a. Exemplifies a strong, vibrant Christian faith marked by spiritual humility and moral integrity.
- b. Is a member of the CRCNA, or is willing to become such a member.
- c. Understands the life and polity of the CRCNA.
- d. Possesses the ability to provide leadership within a multiagency and binational denomination.
- e. Has the capacity to listen and learn.
- f. Exhibits the ability to bridge diverse perspectives and to inspire trust.
- g. Has executive presence.
- h. Effectively stewards the authority of the position.
- i. Demonstrates sound judgment and wisdom in decision making.
- j. Has compassion for people who are poor, lost, or disenfranchised.

2. Education and Experience

- a. Master's degree in divinity, theology, or a relevant discipline such as administration, education, leadership.
- b. Certification in management, accounting, or operations management. An MBA or master's degree in a related discipline is strongly preferred.
- c. Ordained as a minister of the Word or as a commissioned pastor in the CRCNA.
- d. Familiarity with the Christian Reformed denomination as a whole and its Canadian context with regard to its history, churches, ministry leaders, and partners.
- e. Knowledge of the Church Order and is competent in interpreting the same.
- f. Knowledge and understanding of the Canadian regulatory framework for charitable organizations in Canada.
- g. Ten years of ministry experience in church/parachurch-related organizations with five years of senior-level administrative experience.

h. Oral or written fluency in French is strongly preferred, given that Canada has two official languages.

3. Leadership Skills and Experiences

- a. Working with and/or service on a governing board.
- b. Possessing administrative and organizational ability in such measure as to be able to plan and work collaboratively with others.
- c. Developing and implementing organizational strategy and ministry plans.
- d. Leading significant organizational change in complex organizations.
- e. Bringing people of diverse backgrounds and experiences together to achieve shared strategies, priorities, plans, and/or goals.
- f. Developing people through coaching, mentoring, and learning programs.
- g. Overseeing and integrating regulatory requirements into policies, processes, and joint agreements.

Appendix B
Charts and narrative

Chart 1: Office of General Secretary

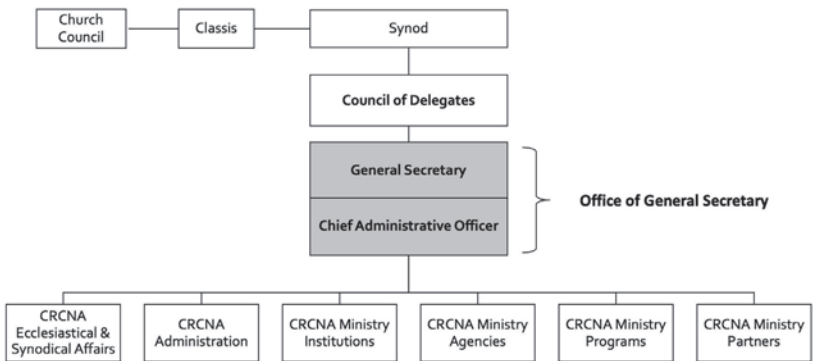


Chart 1 describes the scope of the Office of General Secretary (in gray). The General Secretary and the Chief Administrative Officer are at the intersection where the synodical structure of the CRCNA organization meets the administrative and ministry institutions, agencies, programs, and partners.

Chart 2: CRCNA- Canada Office Structure

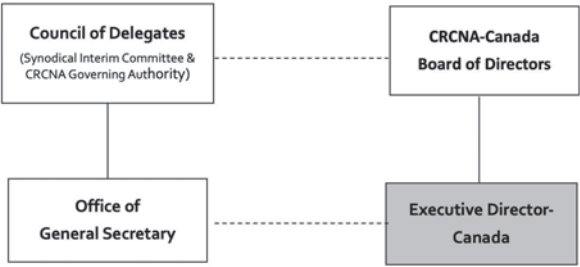


Chart 2 pictorially describes the two types of operating relationships that need to be more fully defined in Joint Ministry Agreements. While the CRCNA-Canada Board of Directors is considered independent from a legal perspective, as a subsidiary corporation chartered by the CRCNA synod it is accountable to the CRCNA Council of Delegates. The Executive Director-Canada (in gray) is accountable to the CRCNA-Canada Board and must partner with the Office of General Secretary.

Chart 3: Administrative Positions & Functions

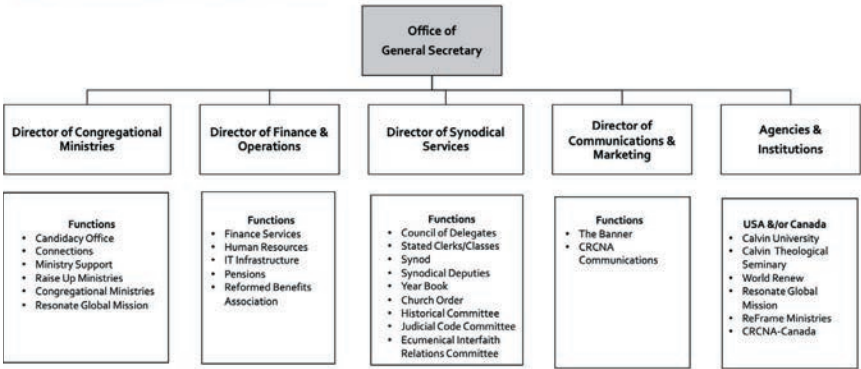


Chart 3 identifies the key leadership positions and administrative functions within the CRCNA organization. The listed agencies and institutions have their own leadership staff and administrative functions within the CRCNA organization.

Chart 4: CRCNA Board Structure

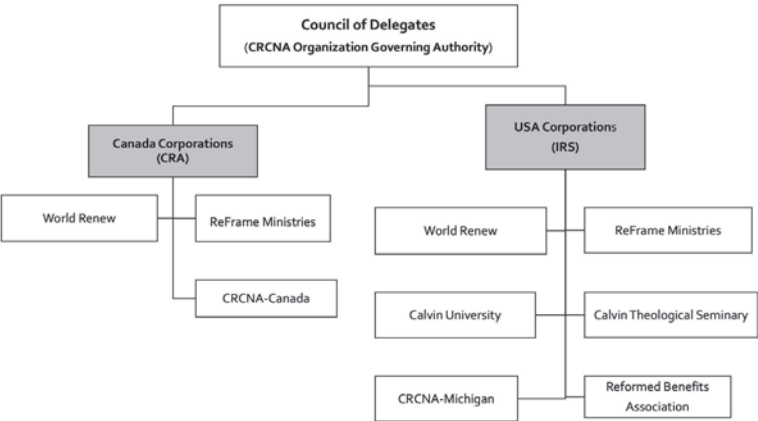


Chart 4 lists all of the CRCNA-chartered nonprofit organizations that further the mission of the CRCNA denomination. These legally incorporated organizations, listed by country (in gray), must comply with the rules and regulations established in each country for tax-exempt organizations and registered charities.

Chart 5: Ministry Plan & Joint Ministry Agreements

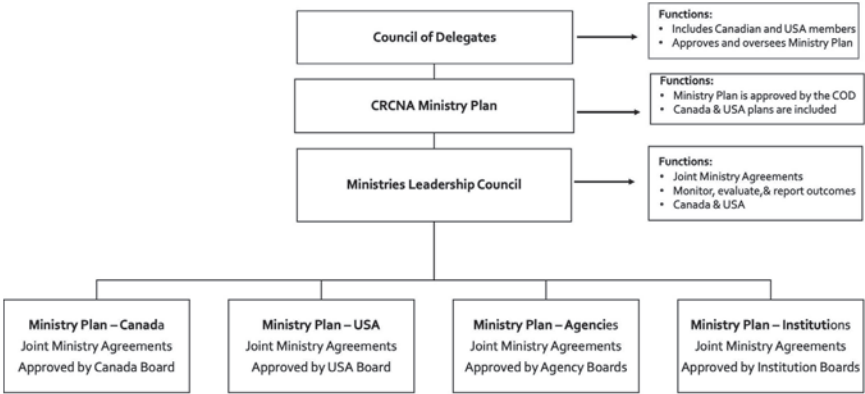


Chart 5 describes the importance of the use of Joint Ministry Agreements as a key process to unite the CRCNA organization around the CRCNA Ministry Plan. The planning process is managed by the Office of General Secretary in the context of the Ministries Leadership Council.

Chart 6: CRCNA-Canada Office Structure

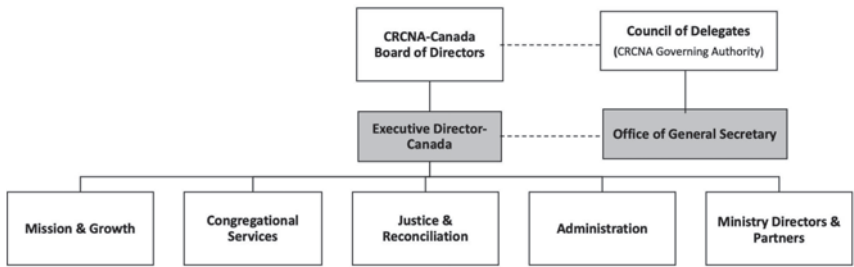
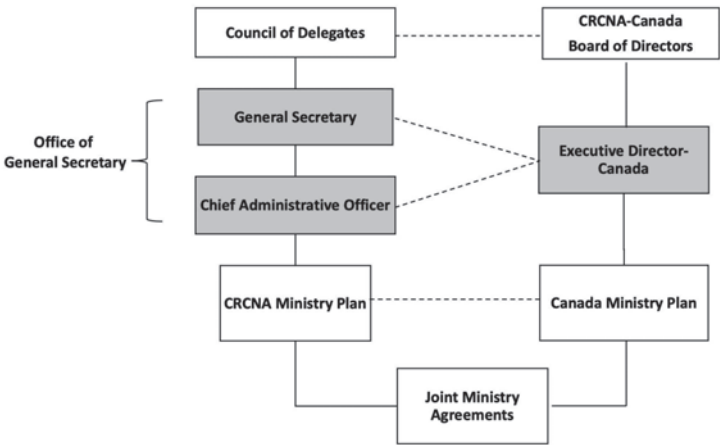


Chart 6 lists the administrative and ministry functions that may be part of the Canadian Office. The Canadian Office should reflect the needs of the Canadian churches in the context of the CRCNA Ministry Plan and not just mirror the U.S. administrative and ministry structure.

Chart 7: CRCNA Binational Working Relationships



The focus of Chart 7 is the CRCNA Ministry Plan and the use of Joint Ministry Agreements to structure the binational mission of the CRCNA denomination. These are also the principal means by which the CRCNA-Canada Board can demonstrate direction and control to the CRA in the context of the binational CRCNA denomination.

Appendix C
Abbreviations and Specialized Terms

For the purposes of this report, the following abbreviations and specialized terms are used to denote the following:

Abbreviation or Specialized term	Description
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
COD	Council of Delegates—the synodical interim committee and the governing authority of the CRCNA Organization when synod is not in session
CRA	Canadian Revenue Agency—oversees registered charities in Canada
CRC	Christian Reformed Church
CRCNA	Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRCNA denomination	CRCNA organization, classes, and churches
CRCNA organization	The organizational structure including synod, the COD, leadership, administration, and all ministry boards, institutions, agencies, and partners in Canada and the United States
Fiduciary duties	Board members, individually and collectively, are legally responsible to fulfill three duties: duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience.
Governing authority	The nonprofit corporation's board of directors, board of trustees, or board of advisors
Governance responsibilities	Board members are responsible individually and collectively to fulfill the following: Set and ensure organizational direction: mission, vision, and strategy Ensure adequate resources: board and executive leadership, finances and facilities, human resources, and reputation Oversee the health of the organization: mission effectiveness, organizational effectiveness, governance effectiveness, and compliance and accountability
IRS	Internal Revenue Service—oversees all 501(c)(3) organizations in the U.S.
JMA	Joint Ministry Agreements
Ministry institutions	Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary
Ministry agencies	World Renew, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, CRCNA-Canada and other CRCNA organizations that are legally incorporated in Canada and/or the United States
Ministry programs	Describes activities that are not legally incorporated but are part of a legally incorporated entity

Ministry partners	Includes individuals, experts, task forces, and committees within the CRCNA denomination. May also include other individuals, programs, and organizations not part of the CRCNA organization.
Organizational trust	Organizational trust drives the development of a positive organizational culture. Building organizational trust occurs when everyone shares commitment to the vision; each person, program, department shares concern for the whole organization; credibility and integrity are key practices; staff are regarded as competent; and individuals and the organization are willing to be accountable.
Process management	Refers to aligning processes with the organization's strategic goals, designing and implementing process architecture, establishing process measurement systems that align with the organization's goals, and educating organizing leaders to manage processes effectively.
SALT	Structure and Leadership Task Force
U.S., USA	United States of America
WR	World Renew

Appendix D Ministries Leadership Council

This description of the Ministries Leadership Council has been updated to reflect the recommendations in this report:

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC) is a binational gathering of ministry leaders of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and is convened by the Office of General Secretary to advance the vision, mission, values, and objectives of the Christian Reformed Church (including its Ministry Plan), as approved by the Council of Delegates (COD), which governs the agencies, educational institutions, and various ministries of the CRCNA by establishing and maintaining standards and strategies in the context of COD policies that facilitate such advancement, integration, and collaboration.

One of the key responsibilities of the Ministries Leadership Council is to oversee the implementation of the CRCNA Ministry Plan and the use of Joint Ministry Agreements; clarify roles and responsibilities; address issues of mutuality, reciprocity, and collaboration; develop effective patterns of communication; and build organizational trust.

The membership of the Ministry Leadership Council is listed by position:

1. the general secretary, who shall be its convener and chair
2. the chief administrative officer, who shall be its vice chair
3. the director of finance and operations
4. the director of synodical services
5. the director of the office on governance
6. the director(s) of human resources

7. the executive director-Canada
8. the director of ReFrame Ministries
9. the president of Calvin University (or their designee)
10. the president of Calvin Theological Seminary (or their designee)
11. the director of Resonate Global Mission
12. the codirectors of World Renew
13. a U.S. leader and a Canadian leader from the Offices of Race Relations and Social Justice
14. a leader representing ministry in Canada
15. the classis renewal coordinator
16. the director of communications and marketing

Appendix E

Conflict of Interest Policy

The Council of Delegates (COD) administers a synodically approved Conflict of Interest Policy for all members of denominational governing boards, inclusive of agencies and educational institutions, including its application to its own functioning. All COD members are required to sign a conflict of interest declaration form at the beginning of their service on the COD. The policy also requires notification to be given if any COD member finds him/herself in a conflict of interest situation during a term of service. The COD is required to implement this requirement at the first meeting of the COD following the meeting of synod. The full text of the Conflict of Interest Policy and a sample declaration form are as follows:

A. Background

1. The COD manages the business and affairs of the agencies and institutions. COD members are fiduciaries who must hold a position of trust and exercise a duty of care, including a general obligation to avoid conflicts of interest.
2. COD members have the duty of guiding the agencies' /institutions' affairs in such a manner as to achieve the objectives of the agency /institution. COD members have a fiduciary duty to act honestly, in good faith, and in the best interests of the agency /institution, as well as to be loyal to the agency / institution.
3. Honesty is the first component of this fiduciary duty. A COD member must disclose the entire truth and avoid fraudulent transactions or misleading representation.
4. Good faith is the second component of this fiduciary duty. COD members must pursue the best interests of the agency /institution. This means that a COD member may not pursue any improper purpose while acting on behalf of the agency /institution.
5. The duty of loyalty and the avoidance of conflicts of interest mean that a COD member must give loyalty to the agency /institution and must not subordinate the interests of the agency /institution to his or her personal interests.

6. Even when conflicts do not exist, COD members should understand that COD decisions may affect the business or affairs of a COD member. The impact is generally financial, but even social or political gain may violate the fiduciary duty. COD members must avoid direct or indirect benefits to relatives, friends, and associates.

B. Policy, purpose, and definition

1. A COD member must purposefully avoid conflicts of interest unless authorized under paragraphs C.4 and C.5. This policy statement applies to all COD members. Recognizing that synod carefully selects COD members, relying upon the trust of nominating assemblies in their integrity, judgment, and courage, the COD reasonably expects that no member would ever use his or her position for personal gain. However, to avoid any misunderstanding, this policy statement is promulgated and adopted.

2. A conflict of interest exists when a COD member has a personal interest of any kind which has the potential to be inconsistent in any degree with the best interests of the agency/institution. When a COD member's personal interests, whether real or perceived, could supersede or conflict with his or her dedication to the best interests of the COD, a conflict of interest arises. The test of a conflict of interest is not just in whether a personal interest actually influences a COD member, but also in whether circumstances lend themselves to such a possibility.

Examples:

- a. Conflicting financial interests
- b. Use of confidential information for personal gain
- c. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information
- d. Use of agency/institutional time and facilities for personal purpose or other activities.

3. COD members must recognize that the appearance of a conflict of interest, even when in fact it may not exist, can be damaging to the agency/institution and must be avoided.

C. Policy statement

1. A COD member should resign his or her position if he or she reasonably could conclude that any kind of financial or personal obligation might improperly affect his or her judgment on behalf of the board or agency/institution. Each person must examine his or her own activities and those of his or her immediate family to ensure that no condition exists which creates a potential conflict of interest or a potentially embarrassing situation with respect to transactions between the board member and the agency/institution. COD members shall sign and complete the attached Conflict of Interest Statement.

2. Unless the provisions in paragraphs C.3 through C.5 are followed, a COD member shall not solicit or be a party, directly or indirectly, to any financial or other opportunity between the agency/institution and

- a. himself or herself or a family member.
- b. any firm (meaning copartnership or other unincorporated association) of which he or she or any family member is a partner, member, employee, or agent.

- c. any not-for-profit organization of which he or she or member(s) of his or her immediate family is an officer, director, employee, or agent.
 - d. any for-profit corporation in which he or she is an officer, director, employee, agent, or stockholder owning more than one percent (1%) or the total outstanding stock of any class if the stock is not listed on a stock exchange, or stock with a present total value in excess of \$25,000 if the stock is listed on a stock exchange.
 - e. any trust of which he or she is a grantor, beneficiary, or trustee.
3. In the event that a potential contract or arrangement which could present a conflict situation described in paragraph C.2 is presented to the COD, the affected COD member shall
- a. not participate in any way on behalf of the agency / institution in discussion or negotiation of the contract or arrangement, or in the approval of the contract or arrangement.
 - b. promptly disclose in writing any financial, personal, or pecuniary interest in the contract or arrangement to the board or other official body which has the power to approve the contact or arrangement, which disclosure shall be made a matter of record in the COD's official proceeding.
4. A contract or arrangement referenced in paragraph C.3 must be approved by a vote of not less than two-thirds (2/3) of the full COD, or of the approving body, in open session without the vote of the affected COD member.
5. The board or other official body which has the power to approve a contract or arrangement must disclose the following summary information in its official minutes as to contracts or arrangements referenced in paragraph C.2:
- a. the name of each party involved in the contract or arrangements
 - b. the terms of the contract or arrangements, including duration, financial consideration between the parties, facilities or services of the entity included in the contract, and the nature and degree of assignment of employees of the agency / institution for fulfillment of the contract
 - c. the nature of the board member's financial, personal, or pecuniary interest
6. A COD member shall not engage in a business transaction or arrangement in which the member may profit from his or her official position or authority, or benefit financially from confidential information which the member has obtained or may obtain by reason of such position or authority.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I have read and understand this Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Policy. There are no present or future potential conflicts of interest other than those listed below. I have and will continue to observe the Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Policy carefully.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Disclosure(s)

(Indicate none if applicable; otherwise please give full explanation of the conflict.)

Note: Completed forms will be retained for seven (7) years from date of signing.

Approved December 1998

Appendix B

AMENDED AND RESTATED BYLAWS OF
CALVIN UNIVERSITY
A Michigan Nonprofit Corporation
(Initial adoption June 18, 1991; latest revision February 20192021)

ARTICLE I. OFFICES

- 1.1. Registered Office. The registered office of the Corporation shall be located at the address specified in the Articles of Incorporation or at such other place as may be determined by the University Board of Trustees if notice thereof is filed with the State of Michigan.
- 1.2. Other Offices. The business of the Corporation may be transacted at such locations other than the registered office, within or outside the State of Michigan, as the University Board of Trustees may from time to time determine, or as the business of the Corporation may require.

ARTICLE II. TRUSTEES

- 2.1. Board of Trustees. The business and affairs of the Corporation shall be managed by the Calvin University Board of Trustees (hereinafter referred to as the “University Board of Trustees”). The members of the University Board of Trustees shall consist of the following:
- 2.1.1. ~~Eleven (11)~~Six (6) regional trustees who shall be appointed by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (synod), or its designee, in accordance with the procedures set forth in these Bylaws and such procedures, if any, as are adopted from time to time by the synod (“regional trustees”). ~~Eleven (11) regional~~Regional trustees shall be selected by the classes of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in accordance with such procedures as are adopted by the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church of North America from time to time, in the numbers from the regions and sub-regions set forth below:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Classis</u>	<u># of Trustees</u>
1 and 2	British Columbia NW British Columbia SE Alberta North Alberta South/Saskatchewan Lake Superior (Canadian)	1
2	<u>Chatham</u>	<u>1</u>
	<u>Eastern Canada</u>	
	<u>Hamilton</u>	
	<u>Huron</u>	
	<u>Niagara</u>	
	<u>Quinte</u>	
	<u>Toronto</u>	
3	<u>Eastern Canada</u>	<u>1</u>
	<u>Atlantic Northeast</u>	
	<u>Quinte</u>	
	<u>Hackensack</u>	
	<u>Hudson</u>	
	<u>Toronto</u>	
	Southeast USA	
	<u>Chatham</u>	

4	<u>Chatham</u> <u>Georgetown</u> _____1
	<u>Hamilton</u> <u>Grand Rapids East</u>
	<u>Grand Rapids North</u>
	<u>Grand Rapids South</u>
	<u>Grandville</u>
	<u>Holland</u>
	<u>Kalamazoo</u>
	<u>Lake Erie</u>
	<u>Muskegon</u>
	<u>Northern Michigan</u>
	<u>Thornapple Valley</u>
	<u>Zeeland</u>
	<u>Huron</u>
	<u>Niagara</u>
5	<u>Columbia</u> <u>Central Plans</u> _____1
	<u>North Cascades</u> <u>Chicago South</u>
	<u>Heartland</u>
	<u>Iakota</u>
	<u>Illiana</u>
	<u>Lake Superior (US)</u>
	<u>Minnkota</u>
	<u>Northcentral Iowa</u>
	<u>Northern Illinois</u>
	<u>Yellowstone-Montana</u>
	<u>Wisconsin</u>
	<u>Pacific Northwest</u>
	<u>Yellowstone</u>
6	<u>Arizona</u> _____1
	<u>California South</u>
	<u>Central California</u>
	<u>Columbia</u>
	<u>Greater Los Angeles</u>
	<u>Hanmi</u>
	<u>Ko-Am</u>
	<u>North Cascades</u>
	<u>Pacific Northwest</u>
	<u>Red Mesa</u>
	<u>Rocky Mountain</u>
	<u>Yellowstone-Utah</u>
	TOTAL: 446

2.1.2. Ten~~Five~~ Regional At-Large Trustees: One representative from region 29, and ~~two~~ representatives each from regions ~~40~~5 and ~~44~~6. 5 representatives from region 4 shall be appointed as regional at-large members using the process for at-large board member appointment set forth below. Since these positions are regional positions, members must be from that particular region and shall not serve more than two (2) consecutive three-year terms. The University Board of Trustees may receive suggested nominations from the classes of each region; provided, however, that the University Board of Trustees shall have absolute discretion in determining its nominations of regional at-large trustees. They shall be appointed by the synod in accordance with the procedures set forth in these Bylaws.

TOTAL: 10

- 2.1.3. Up to three (3) individuals who are alumni of the Corporation or its predecessors, who shall be appointed as “alumni trustees” by the synod in accordance with the procedures set forth in these Bylaws.

The University Board of Trustees shall receive two nominations for each open position from the Calvin University Alumni Association. The University Board shall nominate one (1) candidate for each position as an alumni trustee. Alumni trustees shall be appointed by synod upon nomination by the University Board of Trustees. Alumni trustees shall not serve more than two (2) consecutive three-year terms.

- 2.1.4. Up to twelve (12) individuals, who shall serve as “at-large” members of the University Board and shall be appointed by the synod in accordance with the procedures set forth in these Bylaws. At-large trustees shall be appointed by synod upon nomination by the University Board of Trustees. The University Board of Trustees shall nominate one (1) candidate for each position as an at-large trustee.

The University Board of Trustees shall receive suggested nominations from its members and its Trusteeship Committee, the President of the Corporation, and such other sources as the University Board of Trustees may deem advisable; provided, however, that the University Board of Trustees shall have absolute discretion in determining its nominations of at-large trustees. At-large trustees shall not serve more than three (3) consecutive three-year terms.

Trustees assume their responsibilities on the convening date of the first full University Board of Trustees meeting following the meeting of synod.

- 2.2. Vacancies. Vacancies on the University Board of Trustees occurring for any reason, including an increase in the number of trustees, shall be temporarily filled by the synod or its designee ~~University Board of Trustees. The University Board of Trustees shall notify the CRCNA Council of Delegates and Synod of this temporary appointment.~~ A trustee appointed to fill a vacancy occurring for any reason, including an increase in the number of trustees, shall hold office until the first of the following occurs: (1) the expiration of the remainder of the term that the trustee whom he or she replaced was scheduled to serve, or (2) the resignation or removal of such trustee.
- 2.3. Resignation and Removal. A trustee may resign by written notice to the Secretary of the Corporation. The resignation shall be effective upon receipt by the Corporation or at a subsequent time as set forth in the notice. Any trustee(s) may be removed, at any time with or without cause, by the synod or upon the recommendation of the University Board of Trustees.
- 2.4. Place of Meetings and Records. The trustees shall hold their meetings, maintain the minutes of the proceedings of meetings of the University Board and committees thereof, and keep the books and records of account for the Corporation, in such place or places within or outside the State of Michigan as the University Board may from time to time determine.
- 2.5. Meetings of the University Board. Meetings of the University Board of Trustees shall be held in fall, winter and spring, ~~normally during the months of October, February, and May of each year,~~ respectively, at such time as may be fixed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Corporation. ~~The administrative assistant designated by the President Secretary of the Corporation shall notify the members of the University Board of Trustees of the time and place of the meetings as determined by the University Board of Trustees from time to time.~~ If an annual meeting is not so held, whether because a quorum is not present or for any other reason, the annual meeting of the University Board shall be called in the same manner as hereinafter provided for special meetings of the University Board of Trustees.
- 2.6. Regular Meetings. Regular meetings of the University Board of Trustees may be held without further notice at such time(s) and place(s) as determined by University Board action and announced or otherwise indicated at any prior meeting at which a quorum is present. Any notice given of a regular meeting need not specify the business to be transacted or the purpose of the meeting.

- 2.7. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the University Board of Trustees may be called by the Chair of the Board or the President and shall be called by one (1) of them on the written request of any three (3) trustees, upon at least two (2) days' notice to each trustee. The notice does not need to specify the business to be transacted or the purpose of the special meeting.
- 2.8. Attendance as Waiver. Attendance of a trustee at any meeting constitutes a waiver of notice of the meeting, except where a trustee attends the meeting for the express purpose of objecting at the beginning of the meeting to the transaction of any business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened.
- 2.9. Quorum and Vote. A majority of the members of the University Board of Trustees then in office constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business, and the vote of a majority of the trustees present at any meeting at which a quorum is present constitutes the action of the University Board of Trustees unless the vote of a larger number is specifically required by law or by the Articles of Incorporation or these Bylaws. If a quorum is not present, the trustees present may adjourn the meeting from time to time and to another place, without notice other than announcement at the meeting, until a quorum is present. Trustees present at any meeting at which a quorum was present may continue to do business until adjournment, notwithstanding the withdrawal of trustees to leave less than a quorum.
- 2.10. Corporate Seal. The University Board of Trustees may authorize a suitable corporate seal, which seal shall be kept in the custody of the ~~Secretary, Assistant Secretary~~ President, or other officer designated by the University Board of Trustees.
- 2.11. Compensation of Trustees. Trustees shall be paid no compensation or fees for their services as trustees, except that the Corporation may pay reasonable expenses of attendance at any meeting of the University Board or any committee thereof. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall be construed to preclude any trustee from serving the Corporation in any other capacity and receiving compensation thereof.
- 2.12. Committees. The Chair of the University Board, with the approval of the University Board, may appoint such committees of the University Board as are deemed appropriate.

No person may be a member of a committee at any time unless that person is then a member of the University Board, ~~except for those committees that require non-trustee members due to their professional qualifications (e.g., the Investment Committee).~~ That the President may serve as an *ex officio* member of any committee. All committees shall keep regular minutes of their proceedings and report to the University Board when required.

No committee shall have the power or authority to amend the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws of the Corporation, adopt an agreement of merger or consolidation, fill vacancies in the University Board of Trustees, fix compensation of the trustees for serving on the University Board or on a committee, or take any other action prohibited to committees by the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act.

- 2.13. Additional Rules and Regulations. The University Board of Trustees may also adopt, by a vote of the majority, other rules and regulations for the operation of the Corporation not inconsistent with the Articles of Incorporation of the Corporation and these Bylaws. Currently, the University Board of Trustees has adopted a Board of Trustees Handbook, a Student Handbook, a Staff Handbook, and a Handbook for Teaching Faculty. The rules and regulations set forth in each of these handbooks, as adopted from time to time, shall, to the extent consistent with the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws be binding upon the Corporation, its Board of Trustees, officers, faculty, staff, and students.
- 2.14. Meeting by Communication Equipment. Members of the University Board, or of any committee designated by the University Board, may participate in a meeting of the University Board or of any committee, as the case may be, by using a conference telephone or similar communications equipment, electronic video screen communications, or electronic transmission, by means of which all persons participating in the meeting have been provided notice of the means of remote communication, provided the names of participants in the meeting are provided to all participants and all the participants in the meeting can communicate with each other. Participation in a meeting pursuant to this paragraph shall constitute presence in person at the meeting.

- 2.15 Action Without a Meeting. Notwithstanding any other provision in these Bylaws, any action required or permitted to be taken by the University Board or by any committee at a meeting may be taken without a meeting, without notice or without a vote by unanimous consent of all Trustees or committee members represented by one or more written consents describing the action so taken, signed and dated by each Trustee or committee member, and filed with the Secretary and included in the corporate minutes or filed with the corporate records. Prompt notice shall be given to the University Board members who have not consented to any such action taken without a meeting. For purposes of this Section 2.15, "written consents" shall include consents by members of the University Board or a committee in electronic form and delivered by electronic mail. Such action by consent shall have the same force and effect as a unanimous vote of such Trustees.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS

- 3.1. Officers of the University Board. The officers of the University Board shall be a chair, a vice chair, ~~a treasurer, an assistant treasurer, and a secretary, and an assistant secretary,~~ all of whom shall be annually elected by the University Board of Trustees. The Vice President for Finance shall also serve as the Treasurer of the University Board. The Treasurer is not a trustee of the University Board. If the Board of Trustees has designated a chair-elect, that person serves as vice chair of the Board during his/her time as chair-elect.
- 3.2. Officers of the Corporation. The officers of the Corporation shall be a president; a provost; ~~a vice president for administration and finance; a vice president for advancement; a vice president for enrollment management; a vice president for student life; a treasurer; an assistant treasurer; a secretary; and an assistant secretary, and vice presidents.~~ The President of the Corporation shall be appointed by the University Board of Trustees synod. ~~The Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Secretary, and Assistant Secretary, provost and vice presidents shall be selected appointed by the President and ratified by the University Board of Trustees. The Vice Presidents and the Provost, if any, shall be appointed by the University Board of Trustees, upon nomination by the President.~~ Each officer shall hold office until his or her successor is elected and qualified or until his or her earlier resignation or removal. ~~A person may serve as an officer of the Corporation even though that person is not a trustee of the Corporation. The President shall designate an administrative secretary to serve the administrative needs of the University Board. Two or more offices may be held by the same person, and an officer may also hold office in Calvin Theological Seminary.~~
- 3.3. Other Officers and Agents. The University Board of Trustees may appoint such other officers and agents as it may deem advisable, and they shall hold their offices for such terms and exercise such powers and perform such duties as determined from time to time by the University Board. The University Board may, by specific resolution, empower the Chair, the President, or the Executive Committee, if such a committee has been designated by the University Board, to appoint such subordinate officers or agents and to determine their powers and duties.
- 3.4. Removal. The officers described in paragraph 3.1 hereof may be removed at any time, with or without cause, ~~but only by the vote of a majority of the trustees. The President may be removed by the vote of the majority of the University Board of Trustees.~~ Any vice president, or any other subordinate officer or agent elected or appointed pursuant to paragraphs 3.2, may be removed at any time, with or without cause, by the President in consultation with the Executive Committee of the University Board of Trustees. ~~action of the University Board of Trustees or by the committee or officer empowered to appoint such vice president, or subordinate officer or agent.~~
- 3.5. Compensation of Officers. No compensation shall be paid to the officers of the University Board, except as approved by action of the University Board of Trustees. Compensation of officers of the Corporation shall be approved by action of the University Board of Trustees, except that the Corporation may reimburse reasonable expenses incurred by an officer. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall be construed to preclude any officer from serving the Corporation in any other capacity and receiving compensation therefor.

- 3.6. Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair of the University Board of Trustees shall be elected by the trustees from among the trustees then serving. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the University Board of Trustees and shall perform such other duties as may be determined by resolution of the University Board. No person may serve as chair for more than six (6) consecutive years, provided that any person shall be eligible for reelection as chair if such person has not served as chair for at least one (1) annual term after the expiration of his or her previous term of office. The Vice Chair shall preside at meetings of the University Board and shall perform the duties of the Chair in the event of the Chair's inability or refusal to act. The Vice Chair also shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned by the University Board. If the Chair and Vice Chair must be absent with notice, the board may appoint a trustee to preside at a meeting of the University Board of Trustees.
- 3.7. President. Unless the University Board determines otherwise, the President shall be an *ex officio* (non-voting) member of the University Board of Trustees and of any committee thereof and also shall be the chief executive officer of the Corporation and shall have general supervision, direction, and control of the business of the Corporation as well as the duty and responsibility to implement and accomplish the objectives of the Corporation. ~~If neither a chair nor vice chair has been elected or if neither is present, the President shall preside at all meetings of the University Board of Trustees.~~ The President shall perform such other duties as may be assigned by the University Board of Trustees. The Vice Presidents of the University shall have such responsibilities and duties as are designated by, and shall report directly to, the President.
- 3.8. Vice President. Each Vice President shall have such power and shall perform such duties as may be assigned by the ~~University Board of Trustees~~ President and may be designated by such special titles as recommended by the President and ratified by the University Board of Trustees ~~shall approve.~~
- 3.9. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall have custody of the Corporation's funds and securities and shall keep full and accurate account of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the Corporation. The Treasurer shall deposit all money and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Corporation in such depositories as may be selected by the University Board of Trustees. The Treasurer shall disburse the funds of the Corporation as may be authorized by the University Board of Trustees, or the President, taking proper vouchers for such disbursements. In general, the Treasurer shall perform all duties incident to the office of treasurer and such other duties as may be assigned by the University Board of Trustees.
- 3.10. Secretary. The Secretary shall ~~give or cause to be given over~~ see notice of all meetings of the University Board of Trustees and all other notices required by law or by these Bylaws—provided, however, that if the Secretary is absent or refuses or neglects to do so, any such notice may be given by any person so directed by the Chair, President, or by the trustees. The Secretary shall review and certify that record all the proceedings of the meetings of the University Board have been properly recorded by the administrative designee appointed by the President, in one or more books provided for that purpose, ~~and~~ The Secretary shall perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and such other duties as may be designated by the University Board of Trustees.
- ~~3.11. Assistant Treasurers and Assistant Secretaries. Assistant treasurers and assistant secretaries, if any shall be appointed, shall have such powers and shall perform such duties as shall be assigned to them by the University Board of Trustees or by the officer who shall have appointed such Assistant Treasurer or Assistant Secretary.~~
- 3.11.2. Bonds. If the University Board of Trustees shall require it, the Treasurer, ~~any assistant treasurer,~~ or any other officer or agent of the Corporation shall give bond to the Corporation in such amount and with such surety as the University Board of Trustees may deem sufficient, conditioned upon the faithful performance of his or her respective duties and offices.

ARTICLE IV. CONTRACTS, LOANS, CHECKS AND LEGAL ACTION

- 4.1. Contracts. The University Board of Trustees may authorize the Corporation President, Vice Presidents and any Corporation officer or officers, agent or agents to enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation, and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.
- 4.2. Loans. No loans shall be contracted on behalf of the Corporation, and no evidences of indebtedness shall be issued in its name, unless authorized by a resolution of the University Board of Trustees. Such authorization may be general or confined to specific instances.
- 4.3. Checks. All checks, drafts, or other orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of the Corporation shall be signed by such officer or officers, agent or agents of the Corporation and in such manner as shall from time to time be determined by resolution of the University Board of Trustees.
- 4.4. Deposits. All funds of the Corporation not otherwise employed, shall be deposited to the credit of the Corporation in such banks, trust companies, or other depositories as the University Board of Trustees may select.

ARTICLE V. MISCELLANEOUS

- 5.1. Fiscal. The fiscal year of the Corporation shall end on June 30 of each year or at such other time as may be fixed by resolution of the University Board of Trustees from time to time.
- 5.2. Notices. Whenever any written notice is required to be given under the provisions of any law, the Articles of Incorporation, or by these Bylaws, it shall not be construed or interpreted to mean personal notice, unless expressly so stated, and any notice so required shall be deemed to be sufficient if given in writing by mail, by depositing the same in a post office box, postage prepaid, addressed to the person entitled thereto at his or her address as it appears in the records of the Corporation, and such notice shall be deemed to have been given at the time and on the day of such mailing. In addition, and notwithstanding the preceding, any notice for a University Board meeting or any committee meeting also shall be deemed to be sufficient if delivered by electronic transmission, including but not limited to email to the email address the notice recipient provided to Corporation or the University Board, or notice may be made by any other method not prohibited by the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act.
- 5.3. Waiver of Notice. Whenever any notice is required to be given under the provisions of any law, the Articles of Incorporation, or these Bylaws, a waiver thereof in writing, signed by the person or persons entitled to said notice, whether before or after the time stated therein, shall be deemed equivalent thereto.
- 5.4. Voting of Securities. Securities of another corporation, foreign or domestic, standing in the name of the Corporation, which are entitled to vote may be voted, in person or by proxy, by the Chair or the President of the Corporation or by such other or additional persons as may be designated by the University Board of Trustees.
- 5.5. Indemnification. The Corporation shall indemnify its trustees, officers, and others to the extent provided by the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation and to the extent provided in any agreements for indemnification heretofore or hereafter executed by the Corporation for the benefit of the party claiming thereunder that are authorized under the Articles of Incorporation and the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act.

ARTICLE VI. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended or repealed, and new bylaws may be adopted only by resolution adopted by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the University Board of Trustees, and adopted and approved by the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

REPORTS OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES (DEFERRED FROM 2020-2021)

Faith Formation

Calvin University Supplement (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Introduction

The Calvin University Board of Trustees met May 7-8, 2020, and presents to synod this supplemental report. The board had a successful meeting and completed its scheduled work for committee and plenary sessions. During its May meeting, the board thanked two members who are leaving—David Cok and Craig Lubben—for their diligent work on the board and their service to Calvin University.

II. Finance

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved the 2020-2021 budget proposal and received for information the completed Form 990 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019.

III. Academic

The Calvin University Board of Trustees ratified or endorsed revisions of curricular programs, new courses, and course revisions.

The Board of Trustees also approved changes to faculty expectations for reappointment and tenure designed to deepen and strengthen Calvin University's Reformed Christian witness. For an overview of these changes please see calvin.edu/about/who-we-are/faculty-expectations.html.

IV. Board matters . . .

B. Board officers

The Calvin University Board of Trustees appointed the following officers of the board for 2020-2021: Bruce Los, chair; Mary Tuuk, vice chair; Janice Buikema, secretary; Jim English, treasurer (vice president for finance); and Sharolyn Christians, assistant secretary (executive assistant to the president).

V. Other

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved the new endowment goal of \$210 million by 2025. . . .

Calvin University
Michael K. Le Roy, president

Calvin University Supplement (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Introduction

The Calvin University Board of Trustees met May 6-7, 2021, and presents to synod this supplemental report. The board had a successful meeting and completed its scheduled work for committee and plenary sessions. During its May meeting, the board thanked seven members who are leaving—Jan Buikema, Fernando del Rosario, Wendy Hofman, Marge Hoogeboom, Tim Howerzyl, Alicia Sinclair, and Tom Wybenga—for their diligent work on the board and their service to Calvin University.

II. Finance

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved the 2021-2022 budget proposal and received for information the completed Form 990 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020.

III. Academic

The Calvin University Board of Trustees ratified or endorsed revisions of curricular programs, new courses, and course revisions. . . .

IV. Board matters . . .

B. *Board officers*

The Calvin University Board of Trustees appointed the following officers of the board for 2021-2022: Bruce Los, chair; Mary Tuuk Kuras, vice chair; Rhonda Roorda, secretary; and Jim English, treasurer (vice president for finance).

V. Other

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved the global campus tuition rates, the authority for President Le Roy to grant degrees, honors, and certificates, and emerita status for Provost Cheryl Brandsen, who is retiring. . . .

Calvin University
Michael K. Le Roy, president

Faith Formation Ministries *(Deferred from 2020)*

“Helping churches grow faith for life”

...

IV. New City Catechism

Synod 2019 requested that the executive director refer the New City Catechism to Faith Formation Ministries “for curriculum review and potential use by the churches” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763). This review is in process, and one of our objectives is to provide a guideline for reviewing other potential materials so that congregations may be more readily equipped to consider curriculum options that are fitting from a Reformed theological perspective and suitable to their respective contexts.

Faith Formation Ministries
Christopher J. Schoon, director

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. (Deferred from 2020)

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was established 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. The board of directors of the Loan Fund oversees the loan approval process, the determination of loan interest rates, and the setting of Loan Fund policies. The board also establishes interest rates for Investment Certificates sold—primarily to members, classes, churches, and agencies of the CRCNA. . . .

III. Financial operations

A. The Loan Fund is eligible to sell Investment Certificates to investors in twenty-three states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Additional states could be added as needed to benefit the fund.

B. At the close of the 2019 fiscal year (June 30, 2019), a total of \$15,232,000 in interest-bearing Investment Certificates held by investors was outstanding. Interest rates vary from 2.50 percent to 3.50 percent. Including the Flexible savings accounts, the overall weighted average interest paid was 2.46 percent. The variance in interest rates reflects the terms of the certificates and market conditions at the times the certificates were issued.

C. Since its inception in 1983, the Loan Fund has originated more than two hundred loans totaling over \$70 million to churches across the United States. As of June 30, 2019, the Loan Fund had \$15,872,000 in loans and interest outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are closely monitored and are very low. The fund maintains a loan loss reserve to help cover potential losses. We are blessed to have experienced minimal loan losses throughout the Loan Fund’s history.

D. Financial operations are also reflected in the following data:

	2019	2018	2017
Cash and equivalents	\$5,407,381	\$3,618,933	\$6,102,071
Net loans and interest receivable	15,943,762	17,297,235	17,563,541
Other assets	11,611	42,587	70,606
Total assets	\$21,362,754	\$20,958,755	\$23,736,218
Certificates, interest, and fees payable	\$15,270,398	\$15,094,334	\$18,044,395
Net assets	6,092,356	5,864,421	5,691,823
Total liabilities and net assets	\$21,362,754	\$20,958,755	\$23,736,218

E. A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2019, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2020—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

- A. The sale of Investment Certificates in states where legal approval to offer them has been obtained.
- B. Gifts and bequests made to the Loan Fund.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Alice M. Damsteegt, customer service specialist, and David E. Veen, director.

VI. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Loan Fund director or any members of the Board of Directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed. . . .

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
David E. Veen, director

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. (Deferred from 2021)

I. Introduction

The CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was established 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. The board of directors of the Loan Fund oversees the loan approval process, the determination of loan interest rates, and the setting of Loan Fund policies. The board also establishes interest rates for Investment Certificates sold—primarily to members, churches, classes, and agencies of the CRCNA. . . .

III. Financial operations

The Loan Fund is eligible to sell Investment Certificates to investors in twenty-three states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Additional states could be added as needed to benefit the fund.

At the close of the 2020 fiscal year (June 30, 2020), a total of \$16,569,556 in interest-bearing Investment Certificates and accrued interest held by investors was outstanding. Interest rates vary from 0.50 percent to 2 percent. Variances in interest rates reflect the terms of the certificates and market conditions at the times the certificates were issued.

Since its inception in 1983, the Loan Fund has originated more than two hundred loans totaling nearly \$75 million to churches across the United States. As of June 30, 2020, the Loan Fund had \$16,293,351 in gross loans and accrued interest outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are closely monitored and are very low. The fund maintains a loan loss reserve to help cover potential losses. The fund is blessed to have experienced only minimal loan losses throughout its history.

Financial operations are also reflected in the following data:

	2020	2019	2018
Cash and equivalents	\$6,346,923	\$5,407,381	\$3,618,933
Net loans and interest receivable	15,893,278	15,943,762	17,297,235
Other assets	6,635	11,611	42,587
Total assets	\$22,246,836	\$21,362,754	\$20,958,755
Certificates and interest payable	\$16,569,556	\$15,270,398	\$15,094,334
Net assets	5,677,280	6,092,356	5,864,421
Total liabilities and net assets	\$22,246,836	\$21,362,754	\$20,958,755

A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2020, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2021 – Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

- A. The sale of Investment Certificates in states where legal approval to offer them has been obtained.
- B. Gifts and bequests made to the Loan Fund.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is staffed by Alice M. Damsteegt, program coordinator, and David E. Veen, director.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Loan Fund's director or any members of the board of directors of the CRC Loan Fund when matters pertaining to the fund are discussed. . . .

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
David E. Veen, director

Pensions and Insurance (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations. . . .

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers' pension plans

The ministers' pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined by formula, and the required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits to plan participants. The plans also provide benefits to the surviving spouses of participants as well as to any dependent children who are orphaned. In addition, long-term disability benefits are provided through an insurance product to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the insurance carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2019, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (generally the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column where they have residence.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	692	270	962
Ministers receiving benefit payments	599	154	753
Spouses and dependents	191	46	237
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	106	22	128
Total	1,588	492	2,080

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. The U.S. plan is required to have a valuation every three years while the Canadian plan is required to submit an annual valuation to provincial regulators. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of the date of the plans' last valuation, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$133.6 million for the U.S. plan (as of December 31, 2016) and approximately \$45.9 million for the Canadian plan (as of December 31, 2018). These amounts reflect the present value of the plans' future obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2019	December 31, 2018
United States (U.S. \$)	\$116,563,000	\$101,720,000
Canada (Can. \$)	67,179,000	58,464,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings along with contributions to the plans provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While the basic defined benefit form of the plan was not altered, changes were made to benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

The more significant changes to the plans (or changes that affect them) made in recent years including those approved by synod are as follows:

2010 Decreased the multiplier used to determine the annual benefit accrual from 1.46 percent to 1.3 percent for credited service beginning January 1, 2011.

Approved a change in the early retirement reduction factor to 0.5 percent from 0.3 percent per month, effective January 1, 2014.

2011 Increased the normal retirement from age 65 to age 66.

Advanced the implementation of the change to the early retirement factor (from 0.3% to 0.5% per month) from January 1, 2014, to July 1, 2011.

Froze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2010 level.

Changed the normal form of retirement benefit from joint and survivor to single life with five years certain. (Participants can still elect to receive a joint and survivor benefit at a slightly reduced level of payment.)

2019 Froze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2016 level and adjusted current benefit payments previously frozen at the 2010 levels to reflect the new amounts as appropriate.

3. Funding

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor's participation in the plan. The amount of the assessment for 2020 is \$42.96 per member in Canada and \$37.20 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$9,840 and \$7,704, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of

monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, or teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. Beginning January 1, 2020, the denomination introduced an additional defined-contribution plan for commissioned pastors and staff at U.S. churches. The plan is a 403(b)(9) plan that offers a housing allowance tax benefit for pastors upon retirement. Commissioned pastors in the denominational agencies and ministries have become participants in this new plan. In the United States, contributions are paid to the plans by participating denominational agencies and ministries in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount. U.S. churches with staff participating in the 403(b)(9) plan set the contribution rates independently. In Canada, contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada, there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In both plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal or provincial regulation. Participants receive periodic statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Empower Retirement and Envoy Financial, and Great-West Trust serves as custodian of the plan's assets. For Canadian participants, Sun Life Financial Group manages and serves as custodian of the plan's assets.

As of December 31, 2019, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$38,521,000 in the United States and \$5,948,000 in Canada. As of that date, there were 351 participants in the U.S. plan and 89 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	228	87
Inactive	123	2

C. Nonretirement employee benefit programs

Oversight of the denomination's nonretirement employee benefit programs is provided by the Council of Delegates.

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in Canada to ministers and employees of

local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 337 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 230 pastors and employees of local churches, 106 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and one retiree. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider and is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs.

In the United States, the denomination offers health, dental, and life coverage to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 562 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 206 pastors and employees of local churches, 208 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 148 retirees. The plans are provided by the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) through a trust established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. RBA was established as of July 2013 by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the Board of Benefit Services of the Reformed Church in America to provide nonretirement benefit programs for both denominations.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are set by RBA based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans and of all of the agencies and institutions are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active 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 the U.S. Board of Pensions and to John H. Bolt when matters pertaining to insurance and to pension or retirement plans are discussed. . . .

Pensions and Insurance

John H. Bolt, director of finance and operations

Pensions and Insurance (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

II. Board matters

The ministers’ pension plans, special-assistance funds, and the employees’ retirement plans are governed by the boards of the U.S. Pension Trustees and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed. . . .

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers’ pension plans

The ministers’ pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined by formula, and the required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits to plan participants. The plans also provide benefits to the surviving spouses of participants as well as to any dependent children who are orphaned. In addition, long-term disability benefits are provided through an insurance product to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the insurance carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2020, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (generally the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column where they have residence.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	672	268	940
Ministers receiving benefit payments	606	155	761
Spouses and dependents	192	44	236
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	107	23	130
Total	1,577	490	2,067

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. Both plans are required to have a valuation every three years. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination’s investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans' actuaries have informed us that as of the date of the plans' last valuation, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$134.7 million for the U.S. plan (as of December 31, 2019) and approximately \$48.2 million for the Canadian plan (as of December 31, 2019). These amounts reflect the present value of the plans' future obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019
United States (U.S. \$)	\$124,890,000	\$116,563,000
Canada (Can. \$)	74,657,000	67,179,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans' holdings along with contributions to the plans provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans' obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While the basic defined benefit form of the plan was not altered, changes were made to benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

The more significant changes to the plans (or changes that affect them) made in recent years including those approved by synod are as follows:

2010 Decreased the multiplier used to determine the annual benefit accrual from 1.46 percent to 1.3 percent for credited service beginning January 1, 2011.

Approved a change in the early retirement reduction factor to 0.5 percent from 0.3 percent per month, effective January 1, 2014.

2011 Increased the normal retirement from age 65 to age 66.

Advanced the implementation of the change to the early retirement factor (from 0.3% to 0.5% per month) from January 1, 2014, to July 1, 2011.

Froze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2010 level.

Changed the normal form of retirement benefit from joint and survivor to single life with five years certain. (Participants can still elect to receive a joint and survivor benefit at a slightly reduced level of payment.)

2019 Froze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2016 level and adjusted current benefit payments previously frozen at the 2010 levels to reflect the new amounts as appropriate.

3. Funding

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor's participation in the plan. The amount of the assessment for 2021 is \$42.96 per member in Canada and \$37.20 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$9,840 and \$7,704, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. Beginning January 1, 2020, the denomination introduced an additional defined-contribution plan for commissioned pastors and staff at U.S. churches. The plan is a 403(b)(9) plan that offers a housing allowance tax benefit for pastors upon retirement. Commissioned pastors in the denominational agencies and ministries have become participants in this new plan. In the United States, contributions are paid to the plans by participating denominational agencies and ministries in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount. U.S. churches with staff participating in the 403(b)(9) plan set the contribution rates independently. In Canada, contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada, there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In both plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal or provincial regulation. Participants receive periodic statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Empower Retirement and Envoy Financial, while Great-West Trust serves as custodian of the plan's assets. For Canadian participants, Sun Life Financial Group manages and serves as custodian of the plan's assets.

As of December 31, 2020, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$41,738,000 in the United States and \$6,624,000 in Canada. As of that date, there were 364 participants in the U.S. plans and 91 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	237	89
Inactive	127	2

C. Nonretirement employee benefit programs

Oversight of the denomination's nonretirement employee benefit programs is provided by the Council of Delegates.

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 343 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 235 pastors and employees of local churches, 107 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and one retiree. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider and is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs.

In the United States, the denomination offers health, dental, and life coverage to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 521 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 182 pastors and employees of local churches, 205 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 134 retirees. The plans are provided by the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) through a trust established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. RBA was established in July 2013 by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the Board of Benefit Services of the Reformed Church in America to provide nonretirement benefit programs for both denominations.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are set by RBA based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans and of all of the agencies and institutions are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active 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 the U.S. Pension Trustees and to John H. Bolt when insurance matters and matters pertaining to insurance and retirement plans for ministers and employees are discussed. . . .

Pensions and Insurance

John H. Bolt, director of finance and operations

Mercy and Justice

World Renew (*Deferred from 2020*)

IV. Board Matters . . .

B. Financial matters

1. Salary disclosure

In accord with synod’s mandate to report executive salary levels, World Renew reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Number below target	Number at target
E2	2	1	1
H	4	1	3
I	8	4	4

2. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2020—Financial and Business Supplement*.

C. Human Resources management

World Renew continually evaluates the excellence of its programs and relies on its human resource (HR) systems to provide support to its teams. World Renew’s diverse, professional, skilled staff is expected to meet the goals set around its vision and mission.

World Renew has a rigorous recruiting process and successfully hired more than 30 highly skilled staff last year. We continually expand our recruitment activities to ensure that we meet our diversity and professional learning goals. To that end, we promote professional development and learning, and we continue to develop competencies across the organization.

World Renew is also committed to gender mainstreaming, with the goal of gender equality across our structure and in our staffing processes. As part of its gender plan, World Renew regularly tracks goals for the number of men and women in leadership positions, staff perception about their team’s commitment to gender equality, and the participation of men and women in decision-making. In terms of World Renew’s leadership positions (those with a job level of 14 or higher), 56.52 percent are held by women.

Annual performance reviews are routine for all World Renew staff. This practice gives staff an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and critically review their growth areas. World Renew is thankful for all of its human resources, who are essential to providing program excellence in communities in need around the globe.

D. Resource Development report

Last year World Renew was blessed to receive nearly \$35 million (USD) from all sources in the United States and Canada. These funds were then leveraged into greater ministry dollars through grants, partnerships, and collaborations. Through various grants and matches from our funding networks, World Renew leverages every dollar given into \$1.60 in ministry impact.

World Renew’s connections to international organizations such as Canadian Foodgrains Bank, ACT Alliance, Integral Alliance, and Growing Hope Globally (formerly Foods Resource Bank) provided technical and financial

resources that expanded our reach to more people and communities. For example, in 2019, as a member of CFGB, World Renew committed over \$9 million in resources toward food- and disaster-related programming. Currently World Renew-Canada director Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo serves on the governing and executive boards of both ACT Alliance and the U.K.-based Integral Alliance, further strengthening World Renew's global partnerships and funding resources.

World Renew's fundraising efforts in 2019 resulted in just over \$2 million from grants and more than \$6 million from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for emergency disaster response and food security programs internationally.

World Renew directed approximately \$11.2 million (USD) of its 2019 financial resources toward core international development programs, and \$14.4 million (USD) went to disaster response. Over \$300,000 (USD) was used for community development in North America, and just over \$1.4 million (USD) was directed to constituent education.

World Renew has made great strides in building up its Comprehensive Impact Campaign (CIC). The CIC is intended to grow World Renew's fundraising capacities, strengthen its relationships with CRC congregations, and acquire new churches and donors beyond the denomination. The overall goal is to raise \$200 million to reach 6 million participants in five years to increase ministry impact and to change even more lives. In order to prepare for the launch of this CIC, World Renew is expanding and improving its marketing reach to acquire new donors. One example of this effort is World Renew's website redesign in order to attract new donors and improve user experience.

World Renew continued to receive accolades from nonprofit monitoring organizations for its financial and management practices in the U.S. and Canada, including a high rating (4) from Charity Intelligence Canada and a spot in *Canada's Top 100 Charities in 2019* in the International Aid category. World Renew was also featured in the Canadian national publication *MacLean's*. Each year the publication assesses Canadian charities based on data provided by Charity Intelligence. They look at how each charity spends the money they receive, and how transparent they are in providing this information. This past year World Renew came out with a score of 92.5 percent, placing it in the top 10 "International charities" and in the top 100 charities overall.

In the U.S., World Renew was approved by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance and achieved a Gold Star of Transparency from Guide Star. We continue to maintain excellent standing with Christian monitoring organizations, CCCC in Canada and ECFA in the U.S., and we thank God for these recognitions of World Renew's values: faith, people flourishing, effectiveness, and stewardship.

World Renew used about 15 percent of its resources for administration and fundraising purposes in 2019, meaning that 85 percent of the money entrusted to World Renew by churches and donors directly helped people who experience poverty, injustice, and disaster with community development programs and emergency assistance, providing long-term hope. . . .

World Renew

Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, World Renew-Canada

World Renew (*Deferred from 2021*)

...

IV. Board matters

The World Renew Board of Delegates is a key support of World Renew’s ministry. The board’s primary function is to set the vision and mission of World Renew and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

World Renew’s governance structure is made up of delegates from each CRC classis, in addition to as many as 27 members-at-large, who together constitute the Board of Delegates of World Renew.

The delegates serve as a vital communication link with CRC classes and churches. They select member national boards, with up to seven members on the U.S. board and up to nine members on the Canadian board. The two boards together form the Joint Ministry Council, which provides governance for World Renew as a whole.

Board of Directors of World Renew-Canada

Andrew Geisterfer, president; Edmonton, Alberta
 Dennis DeGroot, vice president; Langley, British Columbia
 Jason De Boer, treasurer; Jerseyville, Ontario
 Margaret Van Oord, secretary; Jewetts Mills, New Brunswick
 Sheku Koroma, member-at-large; Brampton, Ontario
 Gerda Kits, member-at-large; Edmonton, Alberta
 Ray Anema, member-at-large; Simcoe, Ontario
 Joseph Hamilton, pastoral advisor; Sarnia, Ontario

Board of Directors of World Renew-U.S.

Charles Adams, president; Sheboygan, Wisconsin
 Rebekah Vanderzee, vice president; Bellflower, California
 Jeff Banaszak, treasurer; Holland, Michigan
 Shirley VanHeukelem, secretary; Denver, Colorado
 Monika Grasley, member-at-large; Merced, California
 Shanti Jost, member-at-large; North Haledon, New Jersey
 Bonny Mulder-Behnia, pastoral advisor; Bellflower, California . . .

B. Financial matters

1. Salary disclosure

In accord with synod’s mandate to report executive salary levels, World Renew reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Number below target	Number at target
E2	2	1	1
E3	1	1	0
H	13	13	0

2. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2021—Financial and Business Supplement*.

C. Human Resources management

World Renew continually evaluates the excellence of its programs and relies on its human resource (HR) systems to provide support to its teams. World Renew's diverse, professional, skilled staff is expected to meet the goals set around its vision and mission.

World Renew has a rigorous recruiting process and successfully hired approximately twenty highly skilled staff last year. We continually expand our recruitment activities to ensure that we meet our diversity and professional learning goals. To that end, we promote professional development and learning, and we continue to develop competencies across the organization.

World Renew is also committed to gender mainstreaming, with the goal of gender equality across our structure and in our staffing processes. As part of its gender plan, World Renew regularly tracks goals for the number of both men and women in leadership positions, staff perception about their team's commitment to gender equality, and the participation of men and women in decision making. In terms of World Renew's leadership positions (those with a job level of H or higher) 56.25 percent are held by women.

Annual performance reviews are routine for all World Renew staff. This practice gives staff an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and critically review their growth areas. World Renew is thankful for all of its human resources, who are essential to providing program excellence in communities in need around the globe.

D. Resource Development report

For the 2019-2020 fiscal year, World Renew was blessed to receive over \$37 million (USD) from all sources in the United States and Canada. These funds were then leveraged into greater ministry dollars through grants, partnerships, and collaborations. In 2020, 83 percent of each gift World Renew received benefited people in need. The other 17 percent supported World Renew's core mission through administration and fundraising. Six percent helped to administer our programs effectively, and 11 cents of each dollar provided donors with communication and accountability about how their gifts were used.

World Renew directed approximately \$11.7 million (USD) of its 2020 financial resources toward our core international development programs, and \$14 million (USD) went to disaster response. Over \$1.3 million (USD) was used for community development in North America, and just over \$1 million (USD) was directed to constituent education.

World Renew's connections to international organizations such as Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), ACT and Integral alliances, and Growing Hope Globally (formerly Foods Resource Bank) provided technical and financial resources that expanded our reach to more people and communities. For example, in 2020, as a member of CFGB, World Renew committed over \$10 million in resources to food-related programming in 12 countries, while Growing Hope Globally supported World Renew with over \$475,000 (USD) for food security programs in nine countries.

World Renew's fundraising efforts in 2020 resulted in just over \$3 million (USD) from grants, and more than \$7 million (USD) from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for disaster response and food security programs internationally.

Although at the end of fiscal year 2019-2020 World Renew had an income deficit over expenses of \$4.2 million, these funds were spent out of reserves that had built up from the previous year. During this period World Renew launched an intentional long-term effort to better serve churches and to increase revenue and therefore ministry impact around the world. Its investments today will yield more lives changed in the years to come. Of the deficit, approximately \$2.2 million (USD) was operating expenses over revenues, \$1.0 million (USD) was due to a net decrease in unrestricted estate gifts, and the remaining \$1.0 million (USD) was the net spend-down of prior-year donor-restricted contributions for disaster and community development programs.

World Renew has made great strides in building up its Comprehensive Impact Campaign (CIC). The CIC is intended to grow World Renew's fundraising capacities, strengthen its relationships with CRC congregations, and acquire new churches and donors beyond the denomination. The overall goal is to raise \$200 million to reach 6 million participants in five years in order to increase ministry impact and change even more lives. The CIC focuses attention on the "five keys" of World Renew's programs: disaster response, food security, community health, economic opportunity, and peace and justice. In order to prepare for the launch of this year's CIC, World Renew is expanding and improving its marketing reach to acquire new donors. One example of this effort is World Renew's development of an automated proposal system. It provides proposals that link country program funding opportunities with church and donor engagement teams to ensure a coordinated fundraising effort for the highest areas of need. It helps churches and donors connect more to specific World Renew programs so that they can better understand the impact of their gifts.

In an effort to continue improving the quality of our programs and processes, especially to ensure that our work ultimately blesses communities and provides good accountability to our donors, we have pursued a verification and certification process from an internationally recognized body that sets standards for this. They are called the Core Humanitarian Standards. Over the course of the 2020-2021 year, there will be an audit to achieve our verification. The auditors conduct interviews with over 20 staff and then do country desk audits in select countries. Depending on pandemic restrictions, country visits will also be made.

In 2020, World Renew continued to receive accolades from nonprofit monitoring organizations for its financial and management practices, including being ranked among Canada's Top 100 Charities in the International Aid category in the Canadian national publication, *MacLean's*. Each year the publication assesses Canadian charities based on data provided by Charity Intelligence. They look at how each charity spends the money they receive and how transparent they are in providing this information. In 2020, World Renew was also rated as one of Canada's Top 100 Charities by *MoneySense* magazine. This rating includes financial efficiency and transparency.

In the U.S., World Renew has achieved a Gold Star of Transparency from GuideStar. We continue to maintain excellent standing with Christian monitoring organizations—CCCC in Canada and ECFA in the U.S. World Renew is committed to our mission and to carefully stewarding with absolute

integrity the financial gifts we receive, and we thank God for these recognitions of its values: faith, people flourishing, effectiveness, and stewardship.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Charles Adams, president of World Renew-U.S.; Andrew Geisterfer, president of World Renew-Canada; Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S.; and Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of World Renew-Canada, when World Renew matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support. . . .

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

World Renew

Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, World Renew-Canada

Gospel Proclamation and Worship

Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement (*Deferred from 2020*)

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this supplement of additional matters relating to the seminary.

I. Board of Trustees

At its meeting on May 21-22, 2020, the board elected the following officers for 2020-2021: Keith Oosthoek, chair; Dave Morren, vice chair; Heather Garretson, secretary.

II. Academics

A. *Graduates and new programs*

COVID-19 has obviously affected our global village as well as our ongoing formation and education programs at Calvin Theological Seminary. We are grateful for the investment made many years ago in an online delivery system of education, by means of which we moved all of our classes online from mid-March through the end of this academic year.

Calvin Theological Seminary graduated 61 students, collectively celebrated by means of a 2020 Commencement Congratulations Video released on our originally scheduled commencement date of May 23, 2020 (see vimeo.com/421778354).

The international reach and scope of the ministry of Calvin Theological Seminary was again illustrated by graduates from the following locales: Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, South Korea, and the United States.

Calvin Seminary is beginning a new, completely online certificate program in cooperation with Christian Schools International (CSI). We are now offering a Certificate in Bible Instruction, a 15 credit-hour program with required courses in “Integrating Faith and Teaching” and “Teaching Bible,” along with 11 hours of other seminary courses. All of these credits will count toward a master’s degree in ministry leadership or a master of divinity degree at CTS. In addition, we have an agreement with the Calvin University Education Program that all of these credits will count toward a master of education degree at Calvin University. We see this certificate as a service to Christian schools binationally and as a gateway to encourage students to consider further CTS Education (see calvinseminary.edu/academics/certificate-in-bible-instruction).

Calvin Seminary has been approved by the Association of Theological Schools to begin offering a doctor of ministry (D.Min.) degree with an anticipated start date in the late summer of 2020. A previous synod asked CTS to investigate this degree program as part of a continuing education report—and we are glad for the ongoing support of the church. We aim to begin with a cohort of twelve students from diverse backgrounds (see calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry).

B. *Distinguished Alumni Awards*

Rev. John DeVries (founder of Bibles for India, now known as Mission India) and Rev. Stanley Jim (regional director for CRC Home Missions from

2000-2016 and longtime pastor in Classis Red Mesa) received the seminary's Distinguished Alumni Award for 2020.

C. Board actions

At its two most recent meetings, the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees took the following actions or took note of the following items for information:

1. Reappointed Cory Willson for two years (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2022) as Jake and Betsy Tuls associate professor of missiology and missional ministry.
2. Received notice from Mariano Avila of his intention to retire on January 31, 2023, which (D.V.) would complete 20 years as a professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary.
3. Affirmed the placement of Jeffrey A. D. Weima as holder of the Deppe family doctoral chair in New Testament as part of the expansion of the Calvin Theological Seminary Ph.D. program into New Testament studies.
4. Noted the intention to hold, at a future date, the first bachelor of arts commencement ceremony for students completing this degree through the Calvin Prison Initiative. This program is part of an ongoing partnership with Calvin University.
5. Noted that the Meeter Center of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary is planning a two-day conference for September 18-19, 2020, to commemorate the Puritans.
6. Noted that the upcoming Loving Your Neighbor Conference: "Forming Citizens of God's Kingdom in Prison and Upon Re-entry" will be fully online and held July 6-7, 2020. More information can be found at calvinseminary.edu/academics/loving-your-neighbor-2020.
7. Heard an update of "Ministry in a COVID-Shaped World." These are fully online courses, with some classes presented entirely in Spanish. More information on this joint venture of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary can be found at calvinseminary.edu/academics/covid-19-courses.
8. Heard an update from Rev. Shawn Brix, who on January 2, 2020, began work as the Calvin Theological Seminary Canadian church relations liaison.
9. In keeping with the actions of Synod 2019 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (or the Council of Delegates in the interim), identified two additional at-large trustees for the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. . . .

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Heather Garretson, secretary

Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement (*Deferred from 2021*)

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this supplement of additional matters relating to the seminary.

I. Board of Trustees

At its meeting on May 20-21, 2021, the board elected the following officers for 2021-2022: David Morren, chair; Keith Oosthoek, vice chair (pending extension of term for one year by way of exception); Susan Keesen, secretary.

II. Academics

A. *Graduates and new programs*

The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously affected our global village as well as our ongoing formation and education programs at Calvin Theological Seminary. We are grateful for the investment made many years ago in an online delivery system of education, which became necessary as we moved back and forth to offer in-person classes as well as an online option in addition to our usual online distance classes throughout the entire academic year.

On May 21, 2021, Calvin Theological Seminary conducted a 2020 and 2021 Commencement Program to honor the 61 graduates from 2020 and 89 new graduates in 2021, including 27 students who graduated from our certificate programs, including a certificate program offered in Spanish. A viewing of the ceremony can be found on Vimeo at vimeo.com/554417377.

The international reach and scope of the ministry of Calvin Theological Seminary was again illustrated by graduates from the following locales: Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Rwanda, South Korea, and the United States.

In the past year Calvin Theological Seminary launched a new, completely online certificate program in cooperation with Christian Schools International, and we just celebrated our first graduate from this program. This 15 credit-hour program offers a Certificate in Bible Instruction with required courses in Integrating Faith and Teaching and Teaching Bible, along with 11 hours of other seminary courses. All of these credits will count toward a master's degree in ministry leadership or a master of divinity degree at CTS.

In addition, we have an agreement with the Calvin University Education Program that all of these credits will count toward a master of education degree at Calvin University. We see this certificate as a service to Christian schools binationally and as a gateway to encourage students to consider further CTS education (see calvinseminary.edu/academics/certificate-in-bible-instruction).

Calvin Seminary has been approved by the Association of Theological Schools to begin offering a doctor of ministry (D.Min.) degree, and we are ready to welcome our second cohort this coming summer. A previous synod asked us to investigate this degree program as part of our continuing education offerings, and we are glad for the ongoing support of the church. (See calvinseminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry.)

B. *Distinguished Alumni Awards – 2020 and 2021*

Rev. John DeVries (founder of Bibles for India, now known as Mission India) and Rev. Stanley Jim (regional director for CRC Home Missions from

2000-2016 and longtime pastor in Classis Red Mesa) were recognized as Distinguished Alumni Award recipients for 2020, but their contributions could not be publically recognized until 2021 due to the pandemic.

For 2021, we also included Rev. Emmanuel Bileya for recognition as a Distinguished Alumni Award recipient following his death (and that of his wife and unborn child) in Nigeria. During the past year, Rev. John DeVries also died, but we were able to honor him posthumously at the 2020/2021 commencement.

Three separate videos on the ministries and testimonies of Rev. DeVries, Rev. Jim, and Rev. Bileya are available for viewing:

Rev. John DeVries: vimeo.com/554390728

Rev. Stanley Jim: vimeo.com/554390143

Rev. Emmanuel Bileya: vimeo.com/554390480

C. *Board actions*

At its two most recent meetings, the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees took the following actions or took note of the following items for information:

1. Reappointed Danjuma Gibson as professor of pastoral care and awarded him tenure as a faculty member of Calvin Theological Seminary.
2. Reappointed Matt Tuininga for two years (2021-2023) as associate professor of moral theology.
3. Reappointed Sarah Schreiber for three years (2021-2024) as associate professor of Old Testament.
4. Reappointed Sarah Chun for three years (2021-2024) as dean of International Student and Scholar Services.
5. Reappointed Jeff Sajdak for three years (2021-2024) as dean of students.
6. Noted the intention to hold, at a future date, the first bachelor of arts commencement ceremony for students completing this degree through the Calvin Prison Initiative. The pandemic interrupted plans to hold this ceremony last year for the first class. This program is part of an ongoing partnership with Calvin University.
7. Noted that the Meeter Center of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary is planning a two-day conference for September 24-25, 2021, to commemorate the Puritans.
8. Noted that the Kuyper Conference and Prize sponsored by Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary is being planned in connection with the Henry Institute for April 5-9, 2022.
9. Heard an update on COVID-19 summer course offerings under the umbrella of "Ministry in a COVID-Shaped World." These are fully online courses. More information on this joint venture of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary can be found at calvinseminary.edu/academics/covid-19-courses.

10. Heard an update from Rev. Shawn Brix, who on January 2, 2020, began work as the Calvin Theological Seminary Canadian church relations liaison.
11. The Calvin Seminary Board of Trustees approved a search process for one or more faculty members in the areas of Old Testament (appointment of professor Amanda Benckhuysen as director of Safe Church Ministry for the CRCNA), history of Christianity (upcoming retirement of professor Lyle Bierma), and philosophical theology (anticipated completion of term of service of professor Young Ahn Kang).
12. Finally, the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees received an update about a major renovation / remodeling project that will focus on the classrooms, Student Center, and chapel for the purpose of upgrading technology, providing flexibility in use of space, and developing collaborative learning environments. This project will include updating parts of the building that have not been updated since 1959, and other areas not updated since the last major renovation in 2004. We give thanks for the support that has been received above and beyond our annual operating fund. . . .

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Heather Garretson, secretary

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Candidacy Committee (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the concept of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee began meeting in late 2004 and was provided with a full-time staff person in late 2007. The committee mandate is available in a document titled *Journey Toward Ordination*, accessible on the Candidacy Committee website (crna.org/candidacy).

II. Committee membership

The members of the committee meet three times per year. As with other denominational committees, Candidacy Committee members serve a potential of two three-year terms.

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Rev. Ashley Bonnes (2020/1), Rev. Changguk “Joseph” Byun (2020/2), Pastor James Jones (2021/2), Rev. Susan LaClear (2021/2), Rev. Henry Jonker (2021/1), Judy Cook (2022/1), Rev. Felix Fernandez (2022/1), Rev. Mark Hilbelink (2022/2), Rev. Andrew Vander Leek (2022/2), Rev. David Koll (staff), Rev. Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), and Colin Watson, Sr. (ex officio, as acting executive director). . . .

III. Response to synod re protocol for “anonymous candidates”

Synod 2019 was asked to approve four individuals as candidates without publicly revealing their names. The missional reasons behind this request were judged to be adequate, and synod approved the request. Synod also asked the Candidacy Committee to provide a protocol for use in any similar future requests. The Candidacy Committee therefore offers the following Protocol for Processing Anonymous Candidates:

Proposed Protocol for Candidates Wishing to Remain Anonymous

1. Potential candidates may identify themselves as persons who wish to have their identities as candidates protected from publication (in all forms of media).
2. Such requests are based on current or anticipated involvement in a ministry in which being identified as an ordained minister could endanger oneself, their family members, and/or people with whom they work.

3. Any person receiving permission to remain anonymous will complete all the requirements and processes for ministry candidates.
4. To honor the request for anonymity, such persons will be referred to in print and electronic media only by their initials and without photographic images. Their identities and information will be shared only with the appropriate synodical advisory committee.
5. The director of Candidacy will maintain records regarding such persons' eligibility for call, and will communicate with churches and classes as appropriate in order to complete the process toward ordination.
6. Once the anonymous candidate is scheduled for ordination, the Office of Synodical Services will be informed and will make use of a process already in place for ordained persons whose identities are protected.

IV. Update on the uses of Church Order Article 8

Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E, 1 declares that a church may consider calling a minister ordained outside of the CRCNA and RCA "only if it has put forth a sustained and realistic effort to obtain a minister from within the Christian Reformed Church or the Reformed Church in America." The Candidacy Committee has on numerous occasions in the past 10-15 years reported to synod the challenges in defining and discerning the meaning of "a sustained and realistic effort."

Discerning what constitutes "a sustained and realistic effort" has been a challenge as information systems and search processes have developed greatly and provide churches with many immediate options. In addition, the individual needs and cultures of our congregations are becoming more and more diverse. Thus, standing as arbitrator on whether a congregation should be allowed to move ahead with use of Church Order Article 8 has become increasingly challenging. The Candidacy Committee has nonetheless found it helpful to work with the local congregational leadership and the regional classis leadership to make this judgment in a contextual way.

The most recent report to synod on this matter (see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 262-64) mentioned the use of a program called the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC), involving a specific form of the learning plans required of pastors who affiliate with the CRC via Church Order Article 8. For those local churches and classes that agree that "a sustained and realistic effort" has been made, yet in the opinion of the Candidacy Committee the search has been rather brief, the use of the MEPMC has been agreed to by all parties as a condition of proceeding with Church Order Article 8.

We reported to Synod 2019 that there were currently six pastors, representing congregations in five different classes, engaged in an MEPMC arrangement. We also reported that the Candidacy Committee would keep synod informed regarding this trend. We continue to receive requests from churches, often with classis endorsement, to make use of Article 8 in a situation in which it seems debatable that the search effort conducted has been "sustained and realistic."

The Candidacy Committee is compelled to live under the authority of synod as it does its work, and it seeks to faithfully represent the mind of the

church and to serve the interests of the church as expressed by synod. As our committee discussed this matter, we have agreed that continuing use of the MEPMC in select circumstances is a wise approach.

Therefore we recommend that synod formally endorse the strategy of requiring the MEPMC for Article 8 cases when it seems debatable that a “sustained and realistic” search effort has been put forth or that the situation is in need of contextualization.

V. Report regarding the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy review

The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) is designed for potential candidates who earn their M.Div. degree at an institution other than Calvin Theological Seminary. The elements of the program are integrated into the M.Div. at the seminary and afford participants the opportunity to receive required orientation into the CRC as they prepare for candidacy. The Appendix to this Candidacy Committee report describes the history of recent discussions regarding this matter and offers proposals for updates to this program.

VI. Review of the committee’s work

The work of the Candidacy Committee involves many dimensions as the routes to ordination are managed, supported, and considered. In our annual report to synod we have a practice of also sharing initiatives and challenges beyond matters that are presented for synodical action. This year we call the attention of synod to the following:

A. *Cherished partnerships with classes*

Our work is intimately tied to the work of classes, and we depend on many committed volunteers in order for the work to be accomplished. These include persons who work on classis leadership committees, classis interim committees, and persons serving as classis stated clerks and synodical deputies. We are grateful for the devoted effort of many, and for the respectful attitudes demonstrated as we together seek to apply and shape the Church Order in serving our ordination processes.

B. *Development of training for new pastors*

As a Candidacy Committee, we have opportunity to observe and celebrate the growing diversity of our denomination as shown by the increasing diversity of persons becoming ordained. We now have vibrant annual orientation events for new pastors in Korean, Spanish, and English, and we continue to consult with regional and ethnic minority leaders in order to fashion a hospitable and sufficiently thorough process so that new leaders can participate in our regional and denominational life.

C. *Two significant resources now updated and available*

Synod 2019 approved updated versions of two resources that explain and guide the work of the Candidacy office. The Commissioned Pastor Handbook presents all the actions of synod related to the office of commissioned pastor. The Journey Toward Ordination document has been used since the inception of the Candidacy Committee as a synodically approved guide for our various ordination processes. Both are now available in print-ready PDF format on the Synod Resources webpage (crcna.org/SynodResources).

VII. Recommendations

...

C. That synod note the protocol for approving anonymous candidates, as presented in section III of this report, and receive it as fulfilling the request by Synod 2019 for such a protocol.

D. That synod endorse the strategy of requiring the MEPMC in Article 8 cases when it seems debatable that a “sustained and realistic” search effort has been put forth or that the situation is in need of contextualization.

E. That synod approve the formation of an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team, as described in section III, A of the Appendix to the Candidacy Committee report.

F. That synod endorse the increased flexibility in EPMC learning plans as described in section III, B of the Appendix to the Candidacy Committee report.

G. That synod direct the Candidacy Committee, in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, to implement the proposals contained within the Appendix and provide Synod 2021 with a progress report.

H. That synod take note of the various tasks and challenges identified by the Candidacy Committee in this report.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

Appendix

Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy Review Task Force Report

I. Introduction

Over the past decade there have been many changes in the educational process of the broader academic community. Included in these are the processes of theological education. At one time all seminary students participated in a three- or four-year full-time residential program. Most seminaries now offer a distance education opportunity for the M.Div. degree, and the timing of the program varies. Seminaries continue to adjust their educational approach in terms of degrees and curriculum offered, and in methods of instruction.

The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) once consisted of a one-year program requiring residency at Calvin Theological Seminary following the completion of an M.Div. degree earned elsewhere. In 2006 it became a one-semester program with a required residential component. More recently the EPMC has transitioned to a predominantly online program for coursework, with two required visits for orientation and for reflection, and with a required two-year mentoring relationship that includes making connections at the classis level.

Synod 2005 mandated a major revision of this program (at that time known as the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy), and since that

time only minor revisions to the program have been made. It is the conviction of both the denominational Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) that we regularly need to review the program and make adjustments accordingly. Thus in the past two years a task force composed of persons from the Candidacy Committee and the CTS community has conducted a review of the EPMC, as reported to Synods 2018 and 2019 (*Agenda for Synod 2018*, p. 204; and *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 668-74).

The work involved gathering input from a variety of partners beyond the Candidacy Committee and CTS. Three surveys were conducted in 2019 to gather input. These included EPMC participants since 2012, classis leaders who work with the ordination processes, and delegates to Synod 2019.

A variety of key insights emerged from these surveys and through related conversations:

- Currently the EPMC requires candidates who earn an M.Div. at a seminary other than CTS to earn nine credits at CTS. Ninety-seven percent of classical leaders agreed that EPMC candidates should be required to earn credits at Calvin Theological Seminary.
- In an EPMC survey to Synod 2019 delegates, we asked the following open-ended question: *What has been your knowledge and experience of the EPMC?* A significant number of respondents wrote comments such as “very little,” “none,” “second-hand,” and “very little to none.”
- In our survey of current and past EPMC students, we discovered that a majority of them chose to pursue CRC ordination *after* deciding to attend seminary, with 27 percent deciding *while attending* seminary, and 41 percent deciding *after finishing* seminary.
- Our survey of classical leaders and synodical delegates indicated a strong desire for the EPMC to help the CRC maintain a Reformed identity. EPMC students affirmed the desire to be grounded in a Reformed perspective while also hoping the program can have greater flexibility.
- Of the ten values identified (see section II of this report), all are judged to be “somewhat important” to “extremely important.” Three of the values rose to the top: (1) a Reformed hermeneutic for handling Scripture; (2) an in-depth knowledge of and commitment to the Reformed creeds and confessions; and (3) a well-formed character, heart, and leadership for ministry.
- Our committee’s analysis of the existing joint (CRCNA and CTS) administration and oversight of EPMC found there is a need to better identify where the authority and responsibility rest for the program.

By the time Synod 2020 convenes, the EPMC Review Task Force will have been meeting for almost two years. This report has been reviewed by a variety of persons, including mentors, representatives of classes, Calvin Theological Seminary, Resonate Global Mission, various ethnic subgroups, and persons who have completed the EPMC program. The report reflects as much as possible the best ideas offered from these diverse sources. You will find below a brief description of the current EPMC program and a variety of statements describing adjustments to the program. It is our intention as a Candidacy Committee, in partnership with CTS, to continue to review the effectiveness of the EPMC on a regular basis and either to report or, depending on the significance of the degree of change, to propose changes to synod.

We recommend that Synod 2020 endorse the direction of and approve the current proposals outlined in this report.

II. Description of current program

The current EPMC program has three components: (1) required academic course work as administered through Calvin Theological Seminary, (2) participation in the “24-month candidacy mentorship” as administered through the Candidacy office, and (3) review of vocational formation as administered through the seminary’s vocational formation office. The Addendum to this report lists the current requirements of each of these three categories.

At the risk of becoming too simplistic in describing the guiding values and desired outcomes of the program, ten basic statements can be useful. Students will show or give evidence of

- competency in knowledge of “Reformed standards” (creeds and confessions)
- competency in CRC polity
- knowledge of CRC history, culture, and ministry
- knowledge of the flow, themes, and content of Scripture
- an understanding of a Reformed hermeneutic
- a proficiency in studying the Bible with use of digital tools that access the biblical languages
- a sufficient degree of skill in preaching
- a sufficient degree of skill in pastoral care and leadership, expressed through a well-formed character
- the development of a peer support network within the CRCNA
- an ability to access a rich tradition of general, theological, and ecclesiastical thought

Each of these ten statements is embedded in the current M.Div. program at Calvin Theological Seminary, and each finds expression in the current EPMC.

III. Proposed changes to the EPMC program

The proposals that follow are presented in order to provide greater clarity in administration, greater flexibility in the experience of the program, and continuing faithfulness to our high values of preparing persons for ordained ministry.

A. Formation of an Admissions and Standards Team

We propose the creation of an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team, to be appointed and overseen by the denominational Candidacy Committee. The volunteer team will make admissions decisions and ensure that program participants are supported throughout the program up to the point of candidacy.

1. Team membership, process, and implementation

Details regarding the proposed Admissions and Standards Team include the following:

- The team would consist of seven or eight people appointed by the Candidacy Committee.
- Team members would be selected on the basis of their knowledge of the ordination process, their wisdom, and their ability to recognize the diverse needs of congregations in the CRCNA.
- Calvin Theological Seminary would contribute input to the team through material submitted by the admissions office and academic office. The seminary would also have opportunity to appoint one to two ex officio members to the team.
- The team would review profile material on each candidate applicant and then conduct an interview. In coordination with the interview a learning plan would be negotiated with each applicant, guided by the program requirements described in section III, B below.
- The team would communicate with the regional classis team appropriate for each applicant, serving as a catalyst for active relationship at the local and regional levels.
- The team would also interview each applicant as they near completion of their learning plan. This interview would substitute for the current EPMC faculty interview. The team would then recommend the applicant for interview in the Candidacy Committee process (the Candidacy Committee interview process is where the EPMC process and the CTS M.Div. candidacy process merge).
- For the initial implementation of the team, the Candidacy Committee hopes to secure volunteers who would be served adequately by existing administrative support staff. In the future, additional administrative staff support may need to be requested.

2. CTS contributions

The following current contributions of CTS will not change:

- The admissions office of CTS will gather the application materials required for admission to the EPMC.
- The academic office of CTS will review the transcripts of each applicant and offer input to the EPMC Admissions Team.
- The faculty of CTS will give input to the candidacy process for those completing their degree at the seminary.

3. Anticipated results

It is our hope that this process will produce the following results:

- EPMC applicants will more clearly understand that they are applying for a denominational candidacy process rather than a Calvin Theological Seminary program.
- The administrative load of the CTS admissions office and academic dean office will be reduced, limited to their specialized competency.
- The process toward candidacy will have greater continuity.
- Those who give input on candidacy will have greater familiarity with the candidates. The faculty of CTS will no longer be asked to complete candidacy interviews for EPMC students, many of whom they have never met.

B. Greater flexibility in program requirements

We propose that a more flexible learning plan strategy be adopted, with the inclusion of the following elements:

1. The EPMC Admissions and Standards Team will review each candidate's profile and history and create an individual learning plan appropriate to each student.
2. Ordinarily EPMC candidates will be required to take a minimum of nine credits of study at CTS, and the choice of course selection will be broadened.
3. The guiding values and desired outcomes mentioned in section II of this report will be demonstrated as follows:
 - a. To demonstrate knowledge of Reformed creeds and confessions, students will be required to either take the three-credit Christian Theology in Reformed Confessions course at CTS (residence or online format) or pass an advanced placement test (current cost: \$125).
 - b. To demonstrate understanding of CRC polity, students will be required to take the current 1.5-credit polity course at CTS (residence or online format).
 - c. To demonstrate a knowledge of CRC history, culture, and ministry, students will be required to either take the pertinent 1.5-credit course at CTS (residence or online format) or pass an advanced placement test (current cost: \$125). Nonresident students will also be required to participate in two group trips to Grand Rapids, Michigan—as required in the current program.
 - d. To demonstrate a knowledge of the flow, themes, and content of Scripture, students will be required to either complete a three-credit Bible-survey course at an institution judged to be Reformed in nature or pass a Bible-knowledge exam.
 - e. To demonstrate understanding of a Reformed hermeneutic, students will be required to either take a course at an institution judged to be Reformed in nature (including, but not limited to a one-credit online course offered at CTS in January) or pass an advanced placement test.
 - f. To demonstrate proficiency in studying the Bible with use of the original languages, students will be required to match the current CTS requirement of 14-15 credits of coursework (six credits in Old Testament Hebrew; six credits in New Testament Greek; plus one additional exegetical course). An optional one-credit digital tools course will be offered. The Candidacy Committee will match the requirements of CTS, including any potential changes to this requirement in the future.
 - g. To demonstrate a sufficient degree of skill in preaching, students will successfully complete either five credits of preaching at an accredited seminary (including, but not limited to CTS) and will submit testimony from three mentors of effective preaching.

- h. To demonstrate a sufficient degree of skill in pastoral care and leadership and to demonstrate a sufficiently well-formed character, students will complete a minimum of 600 hours of contextual ministry experience, engage in a psychological evaluation protocol (completing any requirements arising from this evaluation), and produce testimony from three mentors regarding effectiveness in pastoral care and leadership.
 - i. To demonstrate the development of a peer support network within the CRCNA, students will submit a recommendation from a CRC classis (or classes) indicating connection for at least two years, and students will also submit letters of testimony from three mentors or peers within the CRCNA.
 - j. To demonstrate an ability to access a rich tradition of general, theological, and ecclesiastical thought, students will demonstrate some undergraduate study in the liberal arts, such as philosophy, history, natural science, and literature. In addition, they must complete an M.Div. or M.Div. equivalent at a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.
4. Continuation of elements in the current EPMC and Candidacy program
- a. The 24-month candidacy mentoring will remain the same, including reports to the Candidacy Committee by an appointed mentor and from sponsoring classes.
 - b. The process for the final stretch of candidacy will remain the same. This process includes gathering documents and material from both CTS M.Div. graduates and from EPMC participants for use by the Candidacy Committee in their work of making recommendations for candidacy to synod.
 - c. The interview process for students seeking candidacy, as administered by the Candidacy Committee, will remain the same. It will be augmented, however, by an enhanced relationship with the EPMC students as potential connections are made through the work of the new EPMC Admissions and Standards Team.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That Synod 2020 approve the formation of an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team, as described in section III, A of this report.
- B. That synod endorse the increased flexibility in EPMC learning plans as described in section III, B of this report.
- C. That synod direct the Candidacy Committee, in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, to implement the proposals contained within this report and provide Synod 2021 with a progress report.

Addendum

Overview of the Current EPMC Program

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

- Required Courses
 - Hermeneutics (1 credit)
 - Christian Theology in Reformed Confessions (3 credits)
 - Christian Reformed Church Polity (1.5 credits)
 - Christian Reformed Church History (1.5 credits)
 - Digital Tools Course at Calvin Theological Seminary (1 credit)
 - Preaching the Word (2 credits) (may be optional if 5 or more credits of preaching are taken at home seminary)
- Bible Survey advanced placement exam; or complete 3-credit Bible Survey course
- Completion of personal Learning Plan, if required (ref. undergraduate liberal arts studies)
- Biblical Language Competency
 - Two courses in Old Testament Hebrew (6 credits)
 - Two courses in New Testament Greek (6 credits)
 - One exegetical elective (3 credits)

24-MONTH MENTORING REQUIREMENTS

- “Trip #1” (for nonresident students)
- Seven mentor reports (one initial report plus six others)
- Three classis reports (one initial report plus two others)
- “Trip #2” (for nonresident students)

VOCATIONAL FORMATION REQUIREMENTS

- Preaching
 - Apply for license to exhort in the CRC through Vocational Formation office
 - In consultation with mentor, present a report that four evaluated sermons have been presented in at least three distinct settings, due March 1 of candidacy year (report part of mentor recommendation for candidacy – see below)
- Psychological Assessment reviewed with mentor; completion of any recommendations
- Vocational Formation experiences
 - Congregational internship: 600 hours of supervised ministry experience and any additional requirements
 - Vocational Formation Reflection Paper, due March 1 of candidacy year
- Faculty Panel Interview

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III. Other matters

In view of the cancellation of Synod 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Candidacy Committee discussed in our meeting of April 2020 what would constitute a wise course of action regarding our proposals to synod relative to the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). See Recommendations E and F and the accompanying Appendix in the Candidacy Committee report to Synod 2020 (*Agenda for Synod 2020*, pp. 240-47). The Candidacy Committee judged that it would be wise to proceed with the matters described in the proposals because the concerns they address are significant and ought not wait for another year for action. In addition, the approaches contained in these proposals are consistent with the history, purposes, goals, and development of the EPMC program and were presented in a survey open to all synod delegates at Synod 2019. We will provide an update to Synod 2021, and we will remain open to all input offered by churches and classes in the intervening year.

IV. Recommendations

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E. That synod take note of the action of the Candidacy Committee as noted in section III of this supplemental report.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

Candidacy Committee (Deferred from 2021)

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the concept of the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee mandate is available in a document titled Journey Toward Ordination, accessible on the Candidacy Committee website (crcna.org/candidacy).

Because Synod 2020 did not meet, several matters in the Candidacy Committee report and in its supplemental report to Synod 2020 were addressed in June 2020 by the Council of Delegates (COD) on behalf of synod. Other matters in the 2020 Candidacy Committee reports have been deferred to Synod 2021. The Candidacy Committee presents this report reflecting its work in 2020 to Synod 2021.

II. Committee membership

The members of the committee meet three times per year. As with other denominational committees, Candidacy Committee members serve a potential of two three-year terms.

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Pastor James Jones (2021/2), Rev. Susan LaClear (2021/2), Rev. Henry Jonker (2021/1), Judy Cook (2022/1), Rev. Felix Fernandez (2022/1), Rev. Mark Hilbelink (2022/2), Rev. Andrew Vander Leek (2022/2), Rev. Ashley Bonnes (2023/2), Rev. Moon Kim (2023/1), Rev. David Koll (staff), Rev. Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), and Colin Watson, Sr. (ex officio, as executive director). . . .

III. Report regarding the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy review

The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) is designed for potential candidates who earn their M.Div. degree at an institution other than Calvin Theological Seminary. The elements of the program are integrated into the M.Div. at the seminary and afford participants the opportunity to receive required orientation into the CRC as they prepare for candidacy. The Appendix to the Candidacy Committee report to Synod 2020 described the history of recent discussions regarding this matter and offered proposals for updates to this program.

In view of the cancelation of Synod 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Candidacy Committee considered what might constitute a wise course of action regarding its proposals to synod related to the EPMC (see recommendations E and F in the *Agenda for Synod 2020*, p. 240). In summer 2020 the committee judged that it would be wise to proceed with the matters described in the proposals because the concerns they address are significant and ought not wait for another year for action. In addition, the proposed approaches in these recommendations are consistent with the history, purposes, goals and development of the EPMC program and were presented in a survey open to all synodical delegates at Synod 2019. Thus we provide here an update to Synod 2021, with a request for endorsement of our work in this area. We remain open to all input offered by churches and classes.

A. Formation of an EPMC Facilitation Team

The Candidacy Committee has worked with appropriate leaders at Calvin Theological Seminary to form an EPMC Facilitation Team (initially proposed to Synod 2020 as an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team). The team consists of nine persons—one of whom is the current and retiring director of Candidacy, and two of whom are ad hoc advisers from Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS):

Rev. Al Gelder, general member from Classis Grand Rapids East

Rev. Rob Toornstra, general member from Classis Columbia

Rev. Kang Won Kim, general member from Classis Central California

Rev. Darrell Delaney, general member from Classis Grand Rapids East

Rev. Jen Rozema, general member from Classis Holland

Rev. Emily Vanden Heuvel, general member from Classis Grand Rapids South

Rev. David Koll, director of Candidacy

Rev. Shawn Brix, staff adviser from CTS and liaison for CTS in Canada

Joan Beelen, staff adviser from CTS

As the committee finds their way, they may need to add an additional general member, and they will need to decide whether the new director of Candidacy and/or a member of the Candidacy Committee will serve. They will also need to propose terms of three years to facilitate turnover in their membership. The design is that this team will serve as a subcommittee of the Candidacy Committee and be appointed by the Candidacy Committee under the authority of and with accountability to synod.

B. Progress on the task

Over the past academic year this team has met a number of times and has worked hard to implement a set of protocols that facilitate greater flexibility in EPMC learning plans. They also seek to bring clarity to participants that this is a denominational, not a seminary, program and to provide improved ways to walk alongside participants.

The team is developing a variety of tools for this work, including an online application, a chart for constructing a learning plan, and a schedule of interviews between participants and members of the new team. The learning plans will normally still involve nine credit hours through Calvin Theological Seminary, but there will be greater flexibility for course selection as opportunity is given to test out of material that used to be covered in mandatory courses.

Further information regarding the tools and the new process may be provided to Synod 2021 by way of the Candidacy Committee supplemental report.

C. Synodical action requested

Our hope is to receive the affirmation of synod regarding the choice made in summer 2020 to proceed with the task of updating the EPMC. We also seek synod's confirmation on the formation of the EPMC Facilitation Team and on the values of increased flexibility in EPMC learning plans, as was requested of Synod 2020 in recommendations E, F, and G of the *Agenda for Synod 2020*, p. 240.

IV. Clarifying the use of commissioned pastor as a “bridge ordination”

Observers of synod will recognize that there have been significant developments in the use of the office of commissioned pastor over the past decade. Most recently, Synod 2019 approved a major reformatting of Church Order Articles 23-24 and their supplements, implementing a planned strategy of making greater use of the record of synodical decisions regarding the office by means of a document called the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

During the past year, response to these developments has been remarkably positive, yet an area of needed clarity has been called to our attention in a way that prompts a proposal from the Candidacy Committee. The wording of Church Order Supplement, Article 24-a would be well served with some simple modifications to clarify the intent of the use of commissioned pastors serving in a senior role in an established church. The proposal involves the addition of a few words, as indicated by italics and strikethrough in the following proposed text:

Commissioned pastors may serve in positions of solo leadership in an established church only in specific circumstances. *Three of these* circumstances were specified before 2019 in Church Order Articles 23-b, 23-c, and 23-d. *A fourth was adopted by Synod 2018. All four* ~~and~~ are now presented and explained in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook (*sections IV, I and J*). A classis may decide to make such appointments contingent upon implementation of a learning plan leading toward meeting the qualifications for minister of the Word, as described in Church Order Article 24-b. In all cases in which a commissioned pastor serves in a solo leadership position in an emerging or organized church, it is mandatory that such a person, in cooperation with classis, shall develop and complete a contextualized learning plan for denominational orientation, adopted by classis and approved by the Candidacy Committee, as described in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

The Candidacy Committee also intends to add the following statement at the end of section IV, I in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook as a transition to section IV, J, which explains using the office as a “bridge” to becoming a minister of the Word:

To summarize, there are three scenarios, formerly noted in the Church Order and still valid, by which a commissioned pastor may serve as a lead or solo pastor in an established church. There is also a fourth scenario, referred to unofficially as a “bridge ordination,” to which we now turn our attention.

V. Search for a new director of Candidacy

Because of the planned retirement of the current director of Candidacy, the committee formed a new-director search committee, reviewed the director’s job description, and invited applications toward filling the position. As of this writing, the search committee aims to present a nominee for ratification by the Council of Delegates at their meeting February 17-19, 2021. We anticipate that an announcement, and even an introduction, can be made at Synod 2021.

VI. Recommendations

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C. That synod affirm the formation of an EPMC Facilitation Team (initially proposed as an EPMC Admissions and Standards Team) as described in section III, A of this report, and that synod affirm the values of increased flexibility in EPMC learning plans as the Candidacy Committee administers the EPMC with the assistance of the EPMC Facilitation Team.

D. That synod approve the revisions to Church Order Supplement, Article 24-a as noted in section IV of this report, and that synod also take note of a transitional statement to be included in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

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III. EPMC Facilitation Team update

As mentioned in our report to Synod 2021, an Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) Facilitation Team formed in fall 2020 and will work under the authority of the Candidacy Committee. They have been meeting monthly and are making good progress in understanding the challenges and needs of the EPMC. They also have conducted interviews of all persons presented as potential EPMC candidates for approval by Synod 2021.

Their hope is to be ready to serve in the admission and support processes beginning in fall 2021. Toward that end, they are working on a number of documents. These include the following:

- an application form that includes the licensure process for EPMC applicants
- a document showing the process for the EPMC from admission to candidacy
- an assessment chart to assist in constructing a personalized learning plan for each EPMC applicant

These documents are not yet in final form but are available on request to anyone who is interested. The EPMC Facilitation Team, along with the Candidacy Committee, is committed to implementing a transition from the previous program into the updated program in a way that serves the church well. We do not want to disrupt or create an adverse experience for any participants and for any partners in the program. We anticipate that our update to Synod 2022 will be able to include much more detail.

IV. Committee membership

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The committee is also pleased to note and to celebrate the appointment of Rev. Susan E. LaClear as the new director of candidacy. This appointment takes place as the current director is retiring after thirteen years of service. Rev. LaClear has just completed six years of service as a committee member and brings wonderful gifts to this role. With the appointment of two new committee members in regular rotation, plus the new appointment noted above, the committee will begin a new chapter this fall. We pray for God's blessing on this transition, and we are grateful for the provision of gifted, committed persons to serve the church in this work.

The Candidacy Committee expresses gratitude to David Koll for faithfully serving in the role of director of Candidacy for thirteen years. He has been an encouragement to many in their journey to ministry and has served our denomination well. We especially appreciate his passion for and leadership in the area of diversity. Throughout his tenure as director he developed the EPMC program, which has made a vital impact on our congregations. His commitment to equipping and empowering leaders from various ethnic backgrounds has resulted in many leaders embracing a Reformed perspec-

tive and joining the CRC. We have been richly blessed through his service to the denomination.

V. Recommendations

. . .

E. That synod take note of the EPMC Facilitation Team update as noted in section III of this report.

F. . . . and that synod also rejoice in the provision of a new director of candidacy, Rev. Susan E. LaClear.

Candidacy Committee
Mark W. Hilbelink, chair
David R. Koll, director

I. Introduction

As the name of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) indicates, there are two distinct and important aspects to our work: *ecumenical* relationships with other Christian denominations and *interfaith* interactions between the CRC and non-Christian faith traditions.

To guide the work of the EIRC relative to the ecumenical directive in bilateral (denomination-to-denomination) relationships, we have used synodically approved categories. First is the category of *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*—those with whom the CRC has a particular affinity or history. For denominations with which the CRC is in a stage of exploration for a closer relationship, or maintaining the status quo of certain valued relationships that are not intended to progress to the level of *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*, we have used the category *churches in dialogue*. The third category is that of *churches in other ecumenical relationships*, where a relationship is important to the CRC as part of the global Christian family. Anticipated changes to the Church Order at Synod 2020 resulting from the actions of Synod 2019 will lead to modified categories in the future. In addition to bilateral relationships, we pursue our ecumenical work with organizations that allow for numbers of denominations to come together in unity.

Our interfaith efforts are led by a subcommittee of the EIRC and, as a result of decisions by the Reformed Church in America's General Synod 2019 and the CRCNA's Synod 2019, we have begun to work together to spur on this work, particularly as it relates locally between and among Reformed congregations and those whose house of worship may be a synagogue, mosque, or temple.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the EIRC for the current year ending June 30, 2020, are Andrew Beunk (2020/2); Lyle Bierma (2022/1); InSoon Hoagland (2020/1); James Joosse (2021/1); William Koopmans (2021/1); Lenore Maine (2022/2); Ruth Palma (2020/1); Kathy Smith (2021/2); John Tenyenhuis (2021/2); Michael Wagenman (2022/1). The executive director and the Canadian ministries director serve as *ex officio* members of the EIRC.

The EIRC met in October 2019 and February 2020. A conference call meeting is scheduled to be held in April 2020. . . .

IV. Bilateral relationships

The CRC maintains a relationship of *ecclesiastical fellowship* with 23 denominations and partners with 13 *churches in dialogue*. In addition, we have four partners in the category of *churches in other ecumenical relationships*. Of these three categories combined, we have 22 partners on the African continent; five partners in Central and South America (including the Caribbean); two partners in Europe; six partners in Asia and the Pacific Rim; and five partners in North America. A complete list is available on the "Relationships" page of the EIRC website (crcna.org/EIRC).

A. Bilateral reports

1. Activities with bilateral partners

Our *ecclesiastical fellowship* arrangement with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) as well as the accord we struck together in Pella in 2014 leads us to many collaborative efforts. The most recent of these is the Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal, which has developed into the *Vibrant Churches* effort led by Rev. Larry Doornbos. In addition, the general synod of the RCA and the synod of the CRC both adopted a plan in 2018 to combine our interfaith efforts. That work has just begun.

One of the RCA's regional synods encompasses all of the RCA's Canadian congregations. Our Canadian ministries director, our current EIRC chair, the leader of the RCA Regional Synod-Canada, and the leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC)—a denomination with whom we enjoy a *church in dialogue* relationship—meet together regularly. A pressing issue for the PCC and the RCA is human sexuality and decisions that their denominations will make in 2020.

In anticipation of Synod 2020's adoption of Church Order changes to fully operationalize the new categories of *churches in communion* and *churches in cooperation*, the EIRC has interacted with the CRC agencies that have partnerships around the world. In terms of the 35 non-North American denominations with whom we have a current ecumenical relationship (in any of the three current forms), our agencies have ongoing partnerships with 15 of these communions. Our work to make the transition to the new categories will begin in earnest after Synod 2020.

2. Formal exchanges

The following delegated ecumenical representations to bilateral partners occurred during this past year:

- a. To the general assembly of the Reformed Church in Japan, Lawrence Spalink (Resonate Global Mission)
- b. To the general synod of the Reformed Church in America, Steven Timmermans (as executive director)
- c. To the general assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, InSoon Hoagland (EIRC member)
- d. To the national gathering of the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK), William Koopmans (EIRC chair)

The exchange with the NGK deserves special mention. The NGK is in conversations toward a merger with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland Vrijgemaakt (GKv). While we have not had ecumenical relationships with the latter, William Koopmans was invited to speak to the meeting of the GKv while in the Netherlands to address the NGK. This additional invitation was a first for the GKv and the CRCNA, and this opportunity to explain the CRCNA's posture for ecumenical relations may have served to help bring these two groups closer together, thereby potentially providing a new dimension to our ecumenical relations in the Netherlands.

B. Changes in bilateral partnerships

1. The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

In April 2019 the EIRC received a communication from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, dated February 8, 2016, giving notice of their having moved us from their category of *ecclesiastical fellowship* to that of *correspondence*. Having responded in writing as a result of the EIRC's October 2019 meeting, the EIRC made the decision to remove the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia from our category of *ecclesiastical fellowship* and to so inform Synod 2020.

2. The Reformed Church in Argentina

The EIRC has learned that the Reformed Church in Argentina has split in two, just ten years after the joining of two communions: the original Reformed Church in Argentina and the River Plate group. The EIRC remains mindful of the CRCNA's *ecclesiastical fellowship* with the Reformed Church in Argentina; no communication has been received from the split-off group, now called the Evangelical Church of River Plate.

V. Multilateral relationships – ecumenical organizations and dialogues

We belong to a number of ecumenical organizations, including the Canadian Council of Churches, Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Global Christian Forum, the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Reformed Fellowship. We also participate in important dialogues among those of various Christian faiths. The organizations and dialogues with which we have made specific connection this past year are highlighted in the following:

A. World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

The WCRC is divided into nine regions, six of which are represented by regional councils. One such group is the Caribbean and North America Area Council (CANAAC). As the director of ministries and administration, Colin Watson has served on the Steering Committee of CANAAC. Rev. Najla Kassab, president of the WCRC, visited Grand Rapids, Michigan, in January and met with some of the EIRC's members. She stressed the importance of active regional groups; in addition, we benefited from learning more about the history and current challenges of the binational (Syria and Lebanon) denomination she serves.

B. Canadian Council of Churches

Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda as well as other EIRC members (see section V, D below) routinely participate in gatherings and initiatives of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), an organization ably led by CRC member Peter Noteboom.

C. Other multilateral organizations and dialogue

We benefit from partnership with the National Association of Evangelicals and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and we participate in the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue (noting an anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification held in Edmonton, Alberta, last fall with EIRC member Jim Joosse and former EIRC member Karen Norris

providing representation). Finally, in response to informal questions and actions, the partnership we had with Sojourners has transferred from the EIRC to the CRCNA's U.S. Office of Social Justice.

D. Appointed representatives and observers

The EIRC appoints representatives and observers to many of the aforementioned multilateral ecumenical organizations and to other ecumenical efforts; often Christian Reformed Church members are asked by these organizations to serve as well.

1. Colin Watson, Sr., has served as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and on the Steering Committee for the WCRC's Caribbean and North American Area Council. He has also represented the CRC, alternating with the executive director, to meetings of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. and the Global Christian Forum.
2. Darren Roorda and Michael Wagenman serve on the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches, and Kathy Vandergrift serves as vice-chair of the board. Peter Schuurman has represented the CRC on the Commission of Faith and Witness of the Canadian Council of Churches and is being replaced by CRC member Jessica Joustra. Working groups from the Commission of Faith and Witness are served by Jim Payton (National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee), Jim Rusthoven (Faith and Life Sciences Group), Greg Sinclair (Christian Interfaith Reference Group), and Janiece Van Oostrom (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity). Dayna Vreeken and Michael Wagenman are part of working groups relative to the Commission on Justice and Peace.
3. Tim Wood serves on the board of KAIROS; a number of CRC members serve on KAIROS's partnership circles.
4. Darren Roorda represents the CRCNA to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).
5. Matthew Lundberg serves as the representative on a commission of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A.
6. Since the United States Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue has not yet moved to its next round of dialogue, our CRC members are in a holding pattern.

VI. Interfaith activities

The Interfaith subcommittee of the EIRC continues its work. Membership includes Bernard Ayoola, Jacob Bol, Priscilla Brink, Jim Payton, Raidel Martinez, Greg Sinclair, Mark Wallace, Cory Willson, and the executive director.

The Ecumenical Charter that guides the EIRC states that our "responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally)." For interfaith efforts, the EIRC and its Interfaith subcommittee emphasize regional and

local engagement. To that end, they seek to highlight regional groups that are open to CRC members and to publicize local efforts.

Jim Payton, chair of the Interfaith subcommittee, has also been serving as the ecumenical representative on the RCA's Commission for Christian Unity. Greg Sinclair leads Resonate Global Mission (RGM)'s Diaspora project. Raidel Martinez is a military chaplain, and Mark Wallace leads RGM's campus ministry efforts; including these leaders on the subcommittee provides ample evidence of the interfaith opportunities in military settings and on university campuses.

Most encouraging was the first meeting of the RCA Interreligious group and the CRC's Interfaith subcommittee on February 4, 2020. Members of the RCA Interreligious group are drawn from many different ministries and regions of their denomination. While the first meeting provided sufficient time for developing cross-denominational relationships, areas of common endeavor were also identified. For example, two efforts with roots in Resonate Global Mission, Peer to Peer Interfaith Network and Journeys into Friendship, currently involve both CRC and RCA leaders; these efforts seek to invite clergy and others into experiences with those of other faiths, to engage in scriptural reasoning, and to bring their learnings back to their congregations and communities. In addition, possible new joint activities were discussed, such as developing joint web resources, building a network of champions to guide local congregations into interfaith engagement, and/or developing regional contextual learning experiences that include the interfaith dimension.

VII. Synodical assignments

A. *U.S. Roman Catholic Reformed Dialogue*

Synod 2018 instructed the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee to make the report of the most recent round of the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue, *The One Body of Christ: Ministry in Service to the Church and the World*, accessible to the churches, along with study materials; and synod asked the EIRC to consider the recommendations in the report for their applicability to the CRCNA and to report its conclusions to Synod 2019. Unfortunately, the final release of the report (introduced in summary form at Synod 2018) has not yet occurred, necessitating postponement of work on these assignments.

B. *Categories of affiliation*

As mentioned in the Introduction of this report regarding changes to our categories of affiliation as proposed to Synod 2020, the EIRC has been discussing the implications of these changes on our work. We anticipate closer work with our agencies (Back to God Ministries International, Resonate Global Mission, and World Renew) and look forward to Memorandums of Understanding that will guide the breadth and focus of our work together with partner denominations around the world.

C. *Reconciliation*

As a follow-up to previous synodical actions ("addressing unresolved conflict in our history and the need for reconciliation"—*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 473), the EIRC has initiated contact with the Committee for Ecumenical

Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America and will seek to promote a spirit of Christian unity between our denominations.

VIII. Closing comments

In all of the work of the EIRC, a preeminent goal is to equip members and congregations as they seek to interact in ecumenical circles and interfaith ways in their home communities. While at times the EIRC is required to develop relationships well beyond the congregational level as Memorandums of Understanding between denominations are inked, participation in groups such as the World Communion of Reformed Churches are scheduled, or guidelines for interfaith encounters are developed, these efforts too should be understood as needed engagements that pave the way for local awareness and engagement in a world that desperately needs to see the unity of the church and experience the love of Christ.

IX. Recommendations . . .

B. That synod express its gratitude to Andrew Beunk for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC. . . .

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
 William T. Koopmans, chair
 Colin P. Watson, Sr., acting executive director (ex officio)

I. Introduction

Despite an unusual year due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and necessary changes to the schedule and form of the meetings of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC), the significant work of this committee has continued. As our name indicates, there are two distinct and important aspects to our work: *ecumenical* relationships with other Christian denominations and organizations and *interfaith* interactions between the CRC and non-Christian faith traditions. According to our Ecumenical Charter, “the CRC recognizes its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel.”

To guide the work of the EIRC relative to the ecumenical directive in bilateral (denomination-to-denomination) relationships, we have continued to use synodically approved categories. First is the category of *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*—those with whom the CRC has a particular affinity or history. For denominations with which the CRC is in a stage of exploration for a closer relationship, or maintaining the status quo of certain valued relationships that are not intended to progress to the level of *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*, we have used the category *churches in dialogue*. The third category is that of *churches in other ecumenical relationships*, where a relationship is important to the CRC as part of the global Christian family. Anticipated changes to the Church Order at Synod 2021 (delayed due to the cancellation of Synod 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic) resulting from the actions of Synod 2019 are expected to lead to modified categories in the future. In addition to bilateral relationships, we pursue our ecumenical work with organizations that allow for numbers of denominations to come together in unity (sometimes known as multilateral relationships).

Interfaith efforts between the CRC and non-Christian faith traditions are led by a subcommittee of the EIRC. As a result of decisions by the Reformed Church in America’s General Synod 2019 and the CRCNA’s Synod 2019, we have begun to work together to spur on this work, particularly as it relates locally between and among Reformed congregations and those whose house of worship may be a synagogue, mosque, or temple.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the EIRC for the current year ending June 30, 2021, are Lyle Bierma (2022/1); InSoon Hoagland (2023/2); James Joosse (2021/1); William Koopmans, chair (2021/1); Lenore Maine (2022/2); Ruth Palma (2023/2); Yvonne Schenk (2023/1); Kathy Smith (2021/2); John Tenyenhuis (2021/2); and Michael Wagenman (2022/1). The executive director and the Canadian ministries director serve as ex officio members of the EIRC.

The EIRC met virtually in both October 2020 and February 2021. Another virtual meeting is scheduled to be held in April 2021.

III. Nominations for membership/protocols

... The current EIRC membership distribution/nomination process states that there is a preference for five members to be “ordained clergy.” To bring this description into alignment with phrasing in Church Order Supplement,

Article 45, b, 2, the EIRC recommends that synod receive the following update for information (noted in strikethrough and italics):

The preference is to strive for balancing the membership of the EIRC as follows:

- a. That five members be ordained ~~clergy~~ *ministers of the Word or commissioned pastors serving as a solo pastor of an organized congregation.*

IV. Bilateral relationships

The CRC maintains a relationship of *ecclesiastical fellowship* with 23 denominations and partners with 13 *churches in dialogue*. In addition, we have four partners in the category of *churches in other ecumenical relationships*. Of these three categories combined, we have 22 partners on the African continent; five partners in Central and South America (including the Caribbean); two partners in Europe; six partners in Asia and the Pacific Rim; and five partners in North America. A complete list is available on the “Relationships” page of the EIRC website (crcna.org/EIRC).

A. Bilateral reports

1. Activities with bilateral partners

Our *ecclesiastical fellowship* arrangement with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) as well as the accord we struck together in Pella in 2014 leads us to many collaborative efforts. The most recent of these is the Vibrant Churches effort led by Rev. Larry Doornbos (vibrantcongregations.org). In addition, the general synod of the RCA and the synod of the CRC both adopted a plan in 2018 to combine our interfaith efforts. That work continues; the Interfaith Subcommittee of the EIRC met with the RCA’s Interreligious Committee two times in the past year to share updates and ways to collaborate.

One of the RCA’s regional synods encompasses all of the RCA’s Canadian congregations. Our Canadian ministries director, the leader of the RCA Regional Synod-Canada, and the leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC)—a denomination with whom we enjoy a *church in dialogue* relationship—meet together regularly. In ordinary, non-COVID-19 times, a subcommittee consisting of additional members from each of these three denominations also meets from time to time for dialogue and joint action.

Anthony Elenbaas has been appointed to the RCA’s Commission on Christian Unity.

2. Formal exchanges

Throughout the past year, our formal exchanges and engagements have been curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, many letters and communications with our *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship* have been received and sent, expressing condolences and solidarity in the midst of the pandemic as times for fellowship have been limited.

B. Change in bilateral partnership: Reformed Church in Argentina

The EIRC received formal communication in July 2020 that the Reformed Church in Argentina has split in two, just ten years after the joining of two

communions: the original Reformed Church in Argentina and the River Plate group. The EIRC remains mindful of the CRCNA's *ecclesiastical fellowship* with the Reformed Church in Argentina.

V. Multilateral relationships – ecumenical organizations and dialogues

We belong to a number of ecumenical organizations, including the Canadian Council of Churches, Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Global Christian Forum, the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Reformed Fellowship. We also participate in important dialogues among those of various Christian faiths. The organizations and dialogues with which we have made specific connection this past year are highlighted in the following:

A. *World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)*

The WCRC is divided into nine regions, six of which are represented by regional councils. One such group is the Caribbean and North America Area Council (CANAAC). As executive director, Colin P. Watson, Sr., continues to serve on the Steering Committee of CANAAC. He has also been asked to convene a racial justice team.

B. *Canadian Council of Churches*

Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda as well as other EIRC members (see section V, E) routinely participate in gatherings and initiatives of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). In October 2020 the EIRC had the opportunity to hear updates from Peter Noteboom, general secretary of the CCC.

C. *Global Christian Forum*

The Global Christian Forum is a broad gathering of Christian churches representing all branches of the Christian church worldwide. Executive director Colin P. Watson, Sr., met with Casely Baiden Essamuah, general secretary of the Global Christian Forum, in August 2020.

D. *Other multilateral organizations and dialogue*

We benefit from partnership with the National Association of Evangelicals and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and we participate in the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue.

E. *Appointed representatives and observers*

The EIRC appoints representatives and observers to many of the aforementioned multilateral ecumenical organizations and to other ecumenical efforts; often Christian Reformed Church members are asked by these organizations to serve as well.

1. Colin P. Watson, Sr., serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and on the Steering Committee for the WCRC's Caribbean and North American Area Council.
2. Darren Roorda and Michael Wagenman serve on the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches, and Kathy Vandergrift serves as vice-chair of the board (until May 2021). Youth members of the Govern-

ing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches are being nominated for inclusion beginning 2021. Jessica Joustra represents the CRC on the Commission of Faith and Witness of the Canadian Council of Churches. Working groups from the Commission of Faith and Witness are served by Jim Payton (National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee), Jim Rusthoven (Faith and Life Sciences Group), Greg Sinclair (Christian Interfaith Reference Group), and Janiece Van Oostrom (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity). Dayna Vreeken and Michael Wagenman are part of working groups relative to the Commission on Justice and Peace. Bruce Adema has accepted the nomination to serve as chair of the Project Ploughshares board (a Canadian peace research institute with a focus on international security).

3. Mike Hogeterp serves on the board of KAIROS; a number of CRC members serve on KAIROS's partnership circles.
4. Darren Roorda represents the CRCNA to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).
5. Matthew Lundberg serves as the representative on a commission of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A.
6. Steven Timmermans serves on the board of World Reformed Fellowship.
7. Since the United States Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue has not yet moved to its next round of dialogue, our CRC members are in a holding pattern. We anticipate that the conversation will resume after COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed.

VI. Interfaith activities

The Interfaith subcommittee of the EIRC continues its work. Membership includes Bernard Ayoola, Raidel Martinez, Jim Payton, Greg Sinclair, Ben Van Haitsma, Mark Wallace, Cory Willson, and the executive director. The subcommittee met in October 2020 and January 2021. Another meeting is scheduled for March 2021.

The Ecumenical Charter that guides the EIRC states that our "responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally)." For interfaith efforts, the EIRC and its Interfaith subcommittee emphasize regional and local engagement. To that end, they seek to highlight regional groups that are open to CRC members and to publicize local efforts.

Jim Payton, chair of the Interfaith subcommittee, has also been serving on the National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee. Greg Sinclair leads Resonate Global Mission's Diaspora project. Raidel Martinez is a military chaplain, and Mark Wallace leads Resonate's campus ministry efforts. Cory Willson, professor of missiology and missional ministry at Calvin Theological Seminary, organizes interfaith gatherings for seminary students. Including these leaders on the subcommittee provides ample evidence of the interfaith opportunities in a variety of settings.

The RCA Interreligious group and the CRC's Interfaith subcommittee met October 7, 2020, and January 25, 2021. Another meeting is scheduled

for March 2021. Members of the RCA Interreligious group are drawn from many different ministries and regions of their denomination. Collaboration between CRC and RCA leaders continues with Peer to Peer Interfaith Network and Journeys into Friendship. Possible new joint activities continue to be discussed, such as developing joint web resources, creating a joint mission statement and related values, building a network of champions to guide local congregations into interfaith engagement, and/or developing regional contextual learning experiences that include the interfaith dimension.

VII. Synodical assignments

A. *U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue*

Synod 2018 instructed the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee to make the report of the most recent round of the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue, *The One Body of Christ: Ministry in Service to the Church and the World*, accessible to the churches, along with study materials; and synod asked the EIRC to consider the recommendations in the report for their applicability to the CRCNA and to report its conclusions to Synod 2019. Unfortunately, the final release of the report (introduced in summary form at Synod 2018) has not yet occurred, necessitating postponement of work on these assignments.

B. *Categories of affiliation*

As mentioned in the Introduction of this report regarding changes to our categories of affiliation as proposed to Synod 2021, the EIRC has been discussing the implications of these changes on our work.

C. *Reconciliation*

As a follow-up to previous synodical actions (“addressing unresolved conflict in our history and the need for reconciliation”—*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 473), the EIRC has initiated contact with the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America and will seek to promote a spirit of Christian unity between our denominations.

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to William T. Koopmans, chair, and Colin P. Watson, Sr. (ex officio), when matters relating to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee are discussed. . . .

E. That synod receive the following update to the EIRC membership distribution/nomination process description as information (noted in strikethrough and italics):

The preference is to strive for balancing the membership of the EIRC as follows:

- a. That five members be ordained ~~clergy~~ *ministers of the Word or commissioned pastors serving as a solo pastor of an organized congregation.*

Ground: This would bring the description into alignment with phrasing in Church Order Supplement, Article 45, b, 2.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

William T. Koopmans, chair

Colin P. Watson, Sr., acting executive director (ex officio)

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is the standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934 to oversee the work of the denominational archives and to promote publication of denominationally related historical studies. Current committee members, listed according to their concluding year and present term of service, are John Bolt, chair (2020/1); James A. De Jong, secretary (2021/1); Herman De Vries (2022/1); and Tony Maan (2022/1). . . .

The committee met on October 30 (with three representatives from the COD), November 8 (briefly with interim curator Will Katerberg and library dean David Malone), November 15, November 22, December 12 (at length with the three representatives from the COD), January 24, and February 6 and 13 with Will Katerberg.

II. Archives staff

At a time of significant transition and adjustment, the Heritage Hall staff continues to provide fine continuity of service to the various constituencies of the denominational archives, which include those of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. Will Katerberg of the university's history department began his work as interim curator of the archives in February 2019 with Historical Committee endorsement. He has brought both a steady-hand and creative innovation to the center's programming. The dedicated work of longer-term staff is particularly appreciated. This includes the invaluable guidance of Hendrina Van Spronsen, long-time office manager; Laurie Haan, assistant archivist; and Janet Sheeres, editor of *Origins*. Last fall Emily Koelzer was hired as the archives' new, part-time collection and metadata assistant for, among other things, creating and maintaining digital finding aids and descriptive resources for the collections.

The archives currently also benefit from the work of three student assistants. Caleb Ackerman is writing for Heritage Hall's blog, *Origins Online*. Aaron Van Dyke is working on a digital catalog of Heritage Hall's photo collection. Another student is working on entering the finding aid for the Calvin University collection into Archon, Heritage Hall's digital finding aid, accessible through the Heritage Hall website and via Google.

The committee also notes with special appreciation the often-unsung work of our Heritage Hall volunteers: Phil Erffmeyer, Clarice Newhof, and Jeannette Smith. In addition, Casey Jen has been working with the curator, the Hekman Library dean, library staff, and staff from the CRCNA offices to bring the ministers database up to date, reconcile differences between the denominational and Heritage Hall versions of the database, and to develop a plan going forward to maintain the database. Since last year's report, the archives have lost the services of two deeply appreciated volunteers: Ed Gerritsen and Helen Meulink. Our committee recommends that synod express its appreciation to both of them. The work of our volunteers over the years has greatly enhanced the orderliness and completeness of our collections.

Robert Bolt, who served as the committee's field agent and assistant archivist for several decades, retired in 2019. He recruited and nurtured contact

with regional classical representatives, sent reminders to submit minutes and records to the archives, and constructed the lists of ministerial and congregational anniversaries that appeared annually in our reports to synod. He usually drafted a large portion of the detail that went into our reports to synod and customarily met with our committee to review it. In this vital role of networking with our denomination's classes and councils, he followed in the footsteps of E.R. Post, who pioneered that role on behalf of the Historical Committee and synod, and of Post's successors Henry Ippel and Nick Huizenga. We recommend that synod recognize with deep appreciation the vital role that Robert Bolt has played in building up our denominational archives.

The staff's report of Heritage Hall activities during the past year has been assembled and written by Will Katerberg.

III. Regional classical representatives and noteworthy anniversaries

Last year we provided synod with a list of classical representatives serving the Historical Committee and the archives. Adjusted since then, it now includes the following names. Robert Bolt worked with these representatives on behalf of synod and the churches, and since his resignation the staff and our committee have done so as well, to some degree. It is important that the churches have an accessible, current record here of these contacts. The committee is working with the Heritage Hall leadership toward designating a staff person to continue maintaining these contacts.

Alberta North – Stated clerk Gary Duthler
 Alberta South/Saskatchewan – Stated clerk David Swinney
 Arizona – Rodney Hugen
 Atlantic Northeast – Richard Vanden Berg
 B.C. North-West – Anne Kwantes
 B.C. South-East – Stated clerk Leonard Batterink
 California South – Stated clerk Cornelius Pool
 Central California – Stated clerk Larry Fryling
 Central Plains – Stated clerk Jonathan Spronk
 Chatham – John Koole
 Chicago South – Stated clerk Jeremy Oosterhouse
 Columbia – Stated clerk Roger Kramer
 Eastern Canada – Jean Lauziere
 Georgetown – Stated clerk Glenda Tebben
 Grand Rapids East – Stated clerk Alfred Mulder
 Grand Rapids North – Stated clerk Kory Plockmeyer
 Grand Rapids South – Stated clerk George Vink
 Grandville – Stated clerk Daniel Mouw
 Greater Los Angeles – Stated clerk Aaron Solomon-Mills
 Hackensack – Stated clerk Sheila Holmes
 Hamilton – Stated clerk Dick Kranendonk
 Hanmi – Charles Kim
 Heartland – Stated clerk Robert Drenten
 Holland – Stated clerk Calvin Hoogstra
 Hudson – Stated clerk Jeremy Mulder
 Huron – Stated clerk John Medendorp
 Iakota – Garry Zonnefeld

Illiana – Jeffrey White
 Kalamazoo – Stated clerk Dan Sarkipado
 Ko-Am – Charles Kim
 Lake Erie – Stated clerk Benjamin Van Arragon
 Lake Superior – Stated clerk Henry Gunnink
 Minnkota – Stated clerk LeRoy Christoffels
 Muskegon – Stated clerk Drew Sweetman
 Niagara – Stated clerk Wendy de Jong
 North Cascades – Stated clerk Steve Van Noort
 Northcentral Iowa – Stated clerk Steven Schulz
 Northern Illinois – Gerald Frens
 Northern Michigan – Stated clerk Roger Hoeksema
 Pacific Northwest – Matthew Borst
 Quinte – Stated clerk Joan Crawford
 Red Mesa – Stated clerk John Greydanus
 Rocky Mountain – Stated clerk Mark Hilbelink
 Southeast US – Stated clerk Vivian Cassis
 Thornapple Valley – Stated clerk Roger Bultman
 Toronto – Hendrik Bruinsma
 Wisconsin – Stated clerk Rodolfo Galindo
 Yellowstone – Stated clerk Del VanDenBerg
 Zeeland – Stated clerk Ronald Meyer

At its January meeting, members of the Historical Committee agreed to divide this list among themselves and to make direct contact with these representatives, as explained below in section V.

The committee recognizes the following ordained ministers who will celebrate anniversaries of their ordination in the year 2021. The list includes ministers with current denominational ministerial status, listed at five-year intervals and beginning after fifty years of ordination.

70 Years (1951-2021)

Hofman, Leonard John
 Lee, Myung Jae
 Malestein, John Theodore

Holwerda, David Earl
 Koedoot, Gerrit
 Mennega, Harry
 Van Essen, Lester Wayne
 Woudstra, Sierd J.

65 Years (1956-2021)

Cooper, Sidney
 Doornbos, Milton Roger
 Jones, Norman E.
 Kok, James Robert
 Quartel, Jacob Arie
 Van Essen, Clarence
 Van Ryn, John George

55 Years (1966-2021)

Bultman, Stanley J.
 Doyle, David Michael
 Duifhuis, Richard
 Hogeterp, Peter C.
 Klompeen, Donald John
 Louwerse, Anthony Louis
 Meyer, Galen Harris
 Meyer, John S.
 Noorman, Ronald Jon
 Schoonveld, Arthur John
 Van Donselaar, Marvin Lee
 Vander Kwaak, Nicholas

60 Years (1961-2021)

Beukema, Alvin
 De Vries, John Fredric
 Evenhouse, James Melvyn
 Hellinga, John D.

Vander Meyden, Calvin Dale
Visser, Duane A.
Westenbroek, Robert Lee
Wigboldy, Homer John

50 Years (1971-2021)

Alferink, Jerry Lynn
Baker, Ronald Dennis
Bulthuis, William Keith
Cho, Chung Choo
Compaan, Arlo Don
de Jong, Harold
De Jong, Peter
De Moor, Henry, Jr.
De Vries, Hendrik
De Vries, John, Jr.
De Young, Ronald Duane
De Young, Ronald William
Dykman, Thomas Earl
Holtrop, Philip Cornelius
Joldersma, John

Kim, Paul Soomyung
Kok, Philip Jay
Kuiper, Aldon Lee
Mast, Stanley Paul
Meyer, Larry Dean
Osterhouse, James David
Plantinga, Cornelius, Jr.
Roeda, Jack
Roossien, Louis, Jr.
Samplonius, Homer Gerben
Scholten, James Henry
Slings, Larry Dean
Smits, Lee Roger
Steen, Robert Duvalopis
Timmer, Robert J.
Van der Borgh, R. John
Ver Heul, Stanley Eugene
Vredeveld, Ronald Clare
Vugteveen, Howard John
Zoerhof, Laryn Gene

The committee also recognizes the following congregations who will celebrate milestone anniversaries of their founding.

25th Anniversary (1996-2021)

Boulder, Colorado – Boulder Korean
Grand Haven, Michigan –
Covenant Life
Pella, Iowa – Grace Fellowship
Santa Ana, California – Hmong

50th Anniversary (1971-2021)

Ames, Iowa – Trinity
Big Rapids, Michigan – Fellowship
Binghamton, New York – Valley
Crownpoint, New Mexico—
Crownpoint
Grand Rapids, Michigan – Sunshine
Lynden, Washington – Mountain
View
Mason City, Iowa – Rolling Acres
Wheeling, Illinois – Yebon Korean

75th Anniversary (1946-2021)

Bozeman, Montana – Bozeman
Cadillac, Michigan – Cadillac
Grand Rapids, Michigan – Calvin

Holland, Michigan – Bethany
Phoenix, Arizona – Phoenix
Ripon, California – Immanuel

100th Anniversary (1921-2021)

Falmouth, Michigan – Aetna
Martin, Michigan – East Martin
Orange City, Iowa – Calvary
Waupun, Wisconsin – First

125th Anniversary (1896-2021)

Sully, Iowa – Sully
Grant, Michigan – Grant
Whitinsville, Massachusetts –
Pleasant Street
Willard, Ohio – Willard
Woden, Iowa – Woden
Wyckoff, New Jersey –
Faith Community

150th Anniversary (1871-2021)

Orange City, Iowa – First

IV. Archival activity during 2019

This portion of our report on activities at Heritage Hall during the past year has been assembled with staff input as submitted by Will Katerberg, with committee edits and additions.

A. Collections

A variety of materials has been accessioned to CRCNA, Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary and manuscript collections in the past year, including the following:

- letters by William Fridsma to his family during World War II
- material related to poet John Heath-Stubbs, a Christian poet from England, donated by John Van Domelen, a Calvin graduate and English professor
- material from CRC Home Missions (e.g., relating to Jews, Native Americans, church planting)
- other material from the CRC: budgets, reports, and documents; synodical documents, reports
- material from Calvin University, from the provost's office and the president's office
- material from Calvin professors Roger Griffioen, Chris Overvoorde, Joel Carpenter— some new collections, some additions to existing collections
- material from Armand Merizon, artist, adding to an existing collection
- Calvin Institute for Christian Worship brochures and programs
- two framed maps from Andreas Cellarius's *Harmonia Macrocosmica*
- a collection of 1,500 postcards of Dutch American enclaves in the mid-western United States. The postcards were acquired from Conrad and Dee Bult and include images of churches, schools, businesses, street scenes, and more from West Michigan and other parts of the Midwest where Dutch immigrants settled between the late 1800s and the 1960s.
- glass "magic lantern" slides and a two-reel film related to Christian Reformed missions to the Navajo and Zuni peoples of the southwestern United States. The material dates to the early to mid-twentieth century. It supplements collections of material long held that have come from the denomination and retired missionaries.
- records related to the Student Activities Office of Calvin University, including materials related to conferences on faith and music

B. Research

As usual, the most commonly requested material has been related to the Immigrant Letters Collection, the Genealogy Collection, and the history of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. More specifically, patrons requested material in the following areas:

- **Topics:** congregational histories; Japan missionary materials; genealogies; photographs collection; Dutch immigrants/education; Christian school collection; Dutch beyond Holland, Michigan, and Pella, Iowa; Symposium on Christianity and Leisure; Council of Reformed Charities; Home Missions (southwestern U.S.); CRCNA classis minutes; Psalter Hymnal Revision Committee minutes; Canadian CRC architecture; origin and history of First Netherlands Reformed congregation; Calvin

Radio shows; Korean periodicals; CRC *Acts of Synod*; Historical Committee minutes, reports to synod, related documents

- **Individuals:** H. Evan Runner; Geerhardus Vos; Johanna Timmer; Diet Eman

C. Digitization

An intern from the University of Michigan graduate program in library science last summer began work on a database for the photographs collection. A student worker, Aaron Van Dyke, is continuing this project now that it is set up. A digital humanities class has been doing a small project on a collection of postcards of Dutch American enclaves. Work continues toward making the finding aids for Heritage Hall's collections available online.

D. Banner indexing

Work continues through the help of volunteers on the indexing of *The Banner*. They had been working on the 1920s and early 1930s but have since moved into the 1900s and 1910s, including work on the magazine's predecessor, *The Banner of Truth*.

E. Promotion and outreach

Staff members have made presentations to Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary classes. The Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies held its biennial meetings last June on the Calvin campus. In conjunction with this conference, the archives staff hosted a small exhibit and tour of Heritage Hall. In October, staff also hosted a delegation from the Province of Zeeland in the Netherlands. Publications in 2019 included Volume 37, issue 1 of *Origins* last spring, focusing on the Great Plains, and Volume 37, issue 2 of *Origins* last fall, focusing on Dutch Reformed entrepreneurs involved in furniture manufacturing, particularly in western Michigan.

A major new development at Heritage Hall is *Origins Online*, a blog started in October 2019 that features news and history related to the work of the archives. It will include stories about new collections and current work and events at Heritage Hall. It will also feature stories about the history of Dutch North America, the seminary and university, the Christian Reformed Church, and more. A page on the blog provides a convenient link to older issues. It eventually also will allow people to subscribe (or renew subscriptions) to the print version of *Origins*. A Heritage Hall Facebook page also has been started to promote the *Origins Online* blog and other news and stories related to the histories of the CRCNA, Calvin University, and Calvin Theological Seminary; Dutch American immigration and ethnic history; local and state history; and Reformed intellectual and cultural history.

The Heritage Hall staff has been active and creative despite the facts that for intermittent periods it lost staff and student assistance, that its volunteer ranks have decreased, and that it is operating with only a part-time interim archivist. For part of the 2019 year, due to financial constraints and to accommodate part-time staff schedules, the archives and Heritage Hall reduced the number of hours it was open. Shortages in staff also caused some regular operations to be delayed or curtailed. Several years ago two of the funding entities (the denominational office and the seminary) supported the need for additional staffing. This was also endorsed by our committee. Nonetheless, the university (then college) did not support the proposal, and the

archives were compelled to carry on under less than adequate circumstances. The hiring of Emily Koelzer as part-time collection and metadata assistant has begun to address these concerns. As of February 2020, Heritage Hall is searching to hire a full-time curator/archivist.

The committee is grateful that these matters are being attended to. At the same time, it recommends that the three funding entities revisit the matter of restoring and enhancing the funding required to carry on the important work of Heritage Hall as mandated by synod, including an emphasis on the historical legacy this organization was created to protect and make widely available.

The committee applauds the dedication, resolve, and sacrifice exhibited by the staff and volunteers. Their dedication and devotion are a gift to us all.

V. Committee initiatives

While the bulk of its time and attention in the past year has been invested in organizational matters, the committee has also devoted attention to programmatic initiatives in response to the synodical directive to “promote publication of denominationally related historical studies.” Brief notations on some initiatives follow.

Shortly after his appointment as interim curator, Will Katerberg was asked by the committee to communicate on its behalf with their classical representatives, asking them to solicit and/or supply information to him and the committee on any historical projects and research of denominational interest. This initiative developed from the conviction that deepening knowledge of and appreciation for all facets of our rich spiritual and communal legacy is as much a local and regional responsibility as a denominational one.

After receiving a rather meager initial response, the committee members undertook the task of following up by directly contacting their classical representatives. We asked a series of specific questions not only to gather wider information on our shared heritage but also to give the committee and its resolve greater visibility and to inspire the regional representatives to participate in promoting this legacy. We also, importantly, asked how we could more effectively resource the representatives in their role. We have specifically asked that paid staff be appointed to fill the vacancy left by Robert Bolt’s retirement, thus restoring the work in place since the time of E.R. Post. The interim curator noted that when the new curator/archivist is in place, Heritage Hall will need to review its current and future needs and develop a plan to define the roles of staff in order to meet them effectively.

As noted in the previous section, one example of archival activity in the past year has been research into the work of Geerhardus Vos. Vos was an early professor of Calvin Theological Seminary and later of Princeton Theological Seminary. Specifically, this research involved examining and transcribing two detailed, substantially identical sets of student notes in long-hand on Vos’s lectures on natural theology. These lectures were given while he taught at our seminary. A proposal to fund the translation and annotated publication of this material was presented to the board of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society last fall. The two members of our committee who also serve on that board carefully vetted the transcribed lectures and recommended that the proposal be accepted. It was, and the translation work is under way. Vos’s work on natural theology is amazingly well-informed

philosophically, lucid, and timely. It harmonizes with Article 2 of the Belgic Confession. Its appearance in English will contribute significantly to lively current discussions on the subject and should find a wider market also in light of the recent appearance of his systematic theology in English translation. This one example reinforces the importance of a competent, motivated Historical Committee membership and staff with the capacity to carry out synod's mandate. What else lies hidden in our archives to be discovered and promoted in sharing our legacy more widely?

A growing concern of the committee has been the use of earnings on the Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund. This endowment has accumulated over the years almost entirely from gifts by appreciative readers of the archives' *Origins* magazine. This Heritage Hall publication falls under the committee's responsibility in light of promoting "publication of denominationally related historical studies" and exercising "oversight" of the archives. This year, as has been the case from time to time, significant expenditures from this fund have been submitted to the Historical Committee for advice and approval. The Historical Committee has also sometimes initiated publication projects, with the curator's assent, funded from this endowment's earnings. Yet stipulations on the expenditure of funds from this endowment have not explicitly been developed and put in place. Expenditures have been made through collaboration and good faith between the curator and the Historical Committee, both respecting the synodically vested interest in these projects through the Historical Committee. At a time of managerial change regarding Heritage Hall, the committee believes that the time has come for a policy requiring that significant expenditures from this endowment be approved by the Historical Committee. The committee is also recommending that such expenditures not exceed the expenditure rate from endowments governed by the COD through the denominational financial office.

As the committee solicits suggestions on ideas and projects for "promoting denominationally related historical studies," it has assigned one of its members to look into the possibility of publishing in print or some other accessible form a fine collection of essays from the *Reformed Journal* on significant denominational leaders of the past and their contributions to our shared legacy.

The committee solicits and will heartily welcome suggestions, preferably in writing, on other such ideas from synodical delegates—either their own or ones they might solicit in their areas.

VI. Clarifying the committee mandate

In late 2019 and early 2020, the Historical Committee spent considerable time responding to the directive given by Synod 2019 to the COD and the Historical Committee:

That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761)

The need to clarify the Historical Committee's mandate arose because Synod 2019 approved the recommendation from the boards of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary to change the organizational structure of Heritage Hall management. The proposal approved by synod was

incomplete in that it did not address the fact that the archives of the CRCNA are owned by the denomination and that ever since synod took initiative to gather and preserve these archives, the denominational Historical Committee has been synod's agent in providing oversight of the archives.

To address this matter, synod instructed the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review and clarify "the continued relationship" between the committee and the stakeholders.

At its October meeting, the COD appointed its members Paul De Vries, Victor Chen, and Michael Koetje to work with our committee in drafting a clarifying statement. The committee first met with these representatives on October 30. The COD delegates requested that the Historical Committee draft a clarifying statement that would reflect our discussion. The Historical Committee subsequently met several times to consider various drafts of such a statement and sent a unanimously agreed-upon draft to the COD representatives on December 3. The committee and the COD representatives adopted the draft unanimously at a meeting together on December 12. That document, titled Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the COD and Historical Committee to the COD – A Draft, is appended to this report.

At the December 12 joint meeting it was also agreed to submit our mutual draft clarifying the Historical Committee mandate to the three funding stakeholders and to the Van Raalte Institute stakeholders for comment and/or advice. The Van Raalte Institute (VRI) is the archival repository at Hope College. The three VRI staff members with whom two of our committee members met on January 2 are all Christian Reformed leaders—one has served on our committee in the past; one is an elder in one of our congregations, the long-time director of the VRI, and a former trustee of Calvin Theological Seminary; and the other is a retired Calvin College professor and one of last year's nominees for appointment to our committee. All are very familiar with archival work and are deeply engaged in archival research and historical publication. They have been vitally interested in the welfare and oversight of Heritage Hall. All found the jointly supported clarifying document very helpful and offered no improvements to it. As of the deadline for submitting this report for the *Agenda for Synod 2020*, our joint committee has not yet received or considered in a form it has been able to consider together a response from the three funding stakeholders invited to submit suggestions. At its February 13 meeting, the Historical Committee affirmed its readiness to continue working together as a joint COD-Historical Committee toward final formulation.

VII. Proposal to expand the committee

As the Historical Committee grappled with its identity, acceptance, importance, and responsibilities in light of developments during the past two years, it was compelled to do a self-assessment.

Synod has only three standing committees.

As a synodical standing committee, the Candidacy Committee includes nine regular members, ex officio members Jul Medenblik and Colin Watson, Sr., plus a full-time staff member, David Koll.

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations standing committee has ten regular members and ex officio members Colin Watson, Sr., and Darren Roorda.

Both of the foregoing committees have funding and in some cases office space and support staff to carry out their important work on behalf of synod. The work of nurturing and evaluating prospective ordained leadership for the CRCNA and of maintaining healthy interdenominational relationships within the wider body of Christ are obviously both of vital importance to our communal life.

For 86 years our synods have judged that maintaining and enhancing the best of our treasured spiritual, theological, communal, institutional, liturgical, and organizational legacy is vitally important as well. Thus, at this time of organizational adjustment and clarification, the Historical Committee respectfully recommends that synod approve expanding and structuring it in a way that is in greater conformity with its other two standing committees and that would enhance its visibility and effectiveness in carrying out the mandate synod has assigned it.

We call attention to the fact that the Historical Committee has only four regular members in comparison with the membership of the other standing committees. The first appointment of a member from outside the wider Grand Rapids area was made only last year. The Historical Committee has no discreet budget or staff other than that on which it gratefully relies at Heritage Hall by precedent and synodical assumption. We envision that very minimal expenses for the denominational office would be involved in this expansion, likely no more than travel and lodging expenses once a year for several members. The returns in the form of wider representation and expertise and greater historical creativity in fulfilling its mandate would far outweigh the costs.

Important to emphasize in this connection is that the archives and Heritage Hall are in a very real sense the outcome of the work of the Historical Committee and its precursors over the years. This has been recognized by people who know the history of this development. In the course of the growth of Heritage Hall, the Historical Committee has enjoyed a dynamic, mutually supportive, and respectful relationship with the first full-time archivists, Herb Brinks and his successor, Richard Harms. That relationship was productive in both cases without being consigned to a written understanding. Everyone accepted the Historical Committee's collaborative authority and leadership in this joint endeavor.

Meanwhile, several developments have compelled the recent review of the relationship of archival stakeholders in Heritage Hall. The first development was the denomination's reorganization of executive leadership, eventually resulting in the designation of an executive director. As that position evolved, a brief statement of that person's involvement with the archives was introduced in 2004, saying that the executive director would "be responsible for denominational archives and historical documents and administer the right of access to such documents" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 93). This statement was repeated verbatim in the executive director's 2017 revised position description (*Agenda for Synod 2017*, p. 96). Noteworthy, however, is the absence from the record of any correlation of this assignment with the much longer standing mandate of the Historical Committee. In retrospect it is regrettable that synod was asked to approve the executive director's responsibility for the archives without addressing how that duty interfaced with the Historical Committee's mandate.

The second development came about as a result of the greater organizational integration of Heritage Hall with the Hekman Library operation. This occurred under the leadership of a new dean of the Library, appointed in 2016, with keen archivist interests and background. His active managerial role in the affairs of Heritage Hall was coupled with diminished involvement of the Historical Committee in archival programming and leadership.

The third development was the retirement of Richard Harms as archivist in 2017 and the hiring of his replacement later that year, but without benefit of the requested overlapping of tenure that would have assured a deeper understanding of the Historical Committee's relationship to the archives. Despite this, the Historical Committee developed a fine working relationship with the new archivist in the one year she held that position. Her technical abilities as well as her skills as a research historian were much appreciated.

A fourth factor has been a heightened interest of leaders of the funding entities in the structure and operations of Heritage Hall, an interest codified in the formation of the Archives Advisory Council recognized by last year's synod.

Because the new library governance document, also approved last year, provided inadequate clarity on the relationship of these recent developments to the Historical Committee and its mandate, Synod 2019 directed the COD to work with the Historical Committee in clarifying its mandate.

The committee believes that coupled with its clarified mandate is the need to expand the membership of the Historical Committee. By including the executive director (ED) on the committee, the collaboration that could have been built into this position description in 2004 and 2017 would be achieved. The expanded membership with the presence of the ED would bring the structure of the Historical Committee into closer conformity with the other two standing committees of synod. It would also honor an expressed desire that this happen. Further, it would give the committee the benefit of wider representation, including the richness of ethnic minority spirituality, wider geographic representation, and the benefit of outside archival expertise. The committee also judges that the denominational archivist, who in practice but without designated appointment functioned on the committee ex officio, should now be formally added to the committee ex officio and without vote. The involvement of that person historically has served both the committee and the church well and should now be formally stipulated, just as comparable staff positions are with the other standing committees.

Accordingly, the committee recommends expanded membership of the Historical Committee as set forth in our recommendations.

VIII. Conclusion

Our committee expresses its gratitude to synod for entrusting us with the mandate assigned us. Our extensive attention to organizational structure last year and again this year has deepened our appreciation for the precious resources we oversee with others and our resolve to enhance their meaningful use. We invite and welcome advice and creative suggestions on how Heritage Hall and its archives can be an even greater blessing for our denomination and for others. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

IX. Recommendations

...

C. That synod recognize with deep appreciation the work of dedicated Heritage Hall volunteers Ed Gerritsen and Helen Meulink.

D. That synod recognize with deep appreciation the significant contributions of Robert Bolt to the denominational archives in his position as the Historical Committee's field agent and as the assistant archivist of Heritage Hall.

E. That synod expand the membership of its Historical Committee by adding two regular members to the committee as well as the executive director (ex officio, without voting privilege) and the Heritage Hall archivist (ex officio, without voting privilege).

Grounds:

1. This would bring the committee into closer conformity with synod's other two standing committees.
2. This would allow the broadening of committee expertise to include, for example, such matters as outside archival experience and wider geographic and ethnic minority representation.
3. This comports with the CRCNA executive director's job description and is similar to roles the executive director has with other standing committees of synod.
4. This would reinforce the committee's visibility and stature in carrying out its synodical mandate.
5. The formally recognized presence of the archivist on the committee would provide synodical sanction to actual past practice.

F. That synod acknowledge the Historical Committee's contribution to the joint statement clarifying its synodical mandate (see the Appendix to this report).

Grounds:

1. The statement was unanimously approved by the Historical Committee and the COD representatives assigned to draft such a proposal.
2. The statement honors the synodical mandate assigning oversight of the joint archives at Heritage Hall to synod's standing Historical Committee.
3. The statement clarifies the Historical Committee's leading but shared oversight of the archives.

Historical Committee
 John Bolt, chair
 James A. De Jong, secretary
 Herman De Vries
 Tony Maan

Appendix

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the COD and Historical Committee to the COD – A Draft (December 16, 2019)

Introduction

In approving the “Change to Library Governance” document requested by the boards of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary, Synod 2019 also adopted the following:

That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761)

In response, the COD appointed a subcommittee of Victor Chen, Paul De Vries, and Michael Koetje to meet with the Historical Committee. The document that follows is the product of our meetings, and we present it together as a draft for your consideration and feedback. We first present some essential background, discuss the 2019 synodical decision, and then take up the task assigned to us jointly by synod as given above.

Essential background

1. The CRCNA Synod of 1934 appointed

a permanent committee with the mandate to gather and preserve books and documents of historical value pertaining to the history of our Church and the Church from which we originated and to religion in general, and to provide a room and facilities in the College or Seminary building where they can be properly preserved and displayed

(*Acts of Synod 1934*, pp. 81-82)

The stated clerk of synod together with the professor of church history were designated as “the permanent *Historical Committee* for this purpose.” The grounds given:

- a. The Stated Clerk has been and is the official keeper of all official documents.
- b. Since these documents are of special significance for the history of our Church, the Professor of Church history is the logical man to serve on this Committee.

(p. 82)

2. Since 1934 the Historical Committee has served the CRCNA synod as its agent of oversight for the archives and other documents of the church and has provided annual reports to synod. An example: The 1991 report to synod states that “the primary task [of the HC is] as synod’s supervisory agent over the work of the archives” (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 159-60). The activities of the committee over the years have sometimes included the following:

- reviewing and approving the Heritage Hall annual budget and goals with the curator
- submitting both to the three stakeholders for endorsement and approval
- approving major expenditures
- participating at times in formulating Heritage Hall policies and position descriptions

- having input into the curator’s appointment, periodic reviews, and reappointments
 - planning and initiating new CRCNA historical studies
 - engaging in fund-raising as necessary to finance projects
 - receiving reports on the Origins endowment
 - serving as the editorial committee of *Origins*
3. The current mandate of the CRCNA Historical Committee has two distinct components, reflected in the quotation from the *Acts of Synod 1969* below:
- a. Supervising the gathering, preserving, and use of the archives of the CRCNA and its agencies.
 - b. An educational and research responsibility that involves use of the archives for the benefit of the church.

The Historical Committee shall gather, preserve and supervise the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and cultivate in the Christian Reformed Church knowledge of and appreciation for the church’s history.
(*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 74)

The Decision of Synod 2019

The key points of the Synod 2019 decision as it relates to Heritage Hall (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 629-31, sections H and I of the governance document; 761):

- a. “The operations of and personnel in Heritage Hall are under the administration of the Dean of the Library. The Curator of the Archives reports to the Dean of the Library and the other staff in Heritage Hall report to the Curator of the Archives.”
- b. “The Dean of the Library reports to Calvin College’s provost and to Calvin Theological Seminary’s president (or designee), given that both institutions are funders of the library.”

Observation on a and b

The full import of “reports to” needs to be spelled out. We observe that there are four entities with responsibility for oversight of Heritage Hall—the synod of the CRCNA through its Historical Committee and the three “funders” or “stakeholders.” Only two are included in the opening paragraph of Section I.

- c. The formation of an Archives Advisory Council to “inform” the work of the Curator.

Observation

The Historical Committee also recommended that synod approve the establishment of such an advisory council (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 677). One major difference between the Historical Committee’s proposal and that of the two schools is that the former included a clear reporting structure to the four entities that have oversight over Heritage Hall:

The advisory council will report to the Historical Committee, the executive director of the CRCNA, and the administrations of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. The Historical Committee remains responsible for reporting to synod on Heritage Hall and the archives.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 677)

The proposal approved by Synod 2019 fails to make provision for synod's ownership and direct oversight of its own archives through its Historical Committee and thus might leave the impression that synod is relinquishing ownership and oversight of its own archives.

The responsibility of the Historical Committee includes a fiduciary obligation to the denomination and donors to oversee the endowment of Heritage Hall and to ensure that the endowment is used for the educational and publication purposes for which the funds were donated.

A way forward

Since the Historical Committee's responsibilities for Heritage Hall exceed those stipulated in the 2019 decision of synod, and since synod affirmed "the work of the CRCNA Historical Committee" (ground 1, d, *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761), and since the mandate given to our joint committee speaks of the "continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders" (ground 2, p. 761), our proposal for moving ahead is to clarify that oversight for Heritage Hall is properly shared by four entities:

- a. The Historical Committee of the CRCNA as synod's standing committee on archival oversight and use.
- b. The Executive Director of the CRCNA, who on behalf of synod oversees agency compliance with archival policy and denominational funding of 40 percent of Heritage Hall's operating budget.
- c. The administration of Calvin University, which provides 40 percent of the funding for Heritage Hall's operating budget, provides space for the archives, and oversees management of personnel.
- d. Calvin Theological Seminary, which provides 20 percent of the funding for Heritage Hall and shares the oversight of the Hekman Library with Calvin University.

A proposed new mandate for the Historical Committee of the CRCNA

Our proposal for clarifying the mandate of the Historical Committee seeks to take into account the synodically mandated role of the Historical Committee, the expressed desires of the three stakeholders for greater direct involvement in the affairs of Heritage Hall, the new administrative role of the Dean of the Hekman Library and the Archives Advisory Council, the concerns that the current Historical Committee has about the governance change, along with those of previous members of the Historical Committee and people who are "friends of the archives," who have supported the work of Heritage Hall by contributing generously to its endowment (see ground 1, c, *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761). The proposed mandate is intended as a *clarification* of the Historical Committee's mandate and as an acknowledgment of *shared* oversight in a spirit of cooperation.

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church created its Historical Committee in 1934 with the vision that the records, papers, and other artifacts of the CRC's congregations, agencies, schools, and other institutions be scrupulously gathered, carefully preserved, and treasured as a witness to the faithfulness of our Lord to his church in the past, as a guide to the present, and as a testimony for all future generations. For 85 years, synods have entrusted supervision of its archives through the Historical Committee to leaders with recognized expertise in and devotion to the Reformed heritage

upon which the CRCNA is built. A reliable historical grasp and appreciation of the Reformed faith, particularly in its Dutch Reformed manifestation, has usually been a *sine qua non* for synodical appointment to this standing committee. These qualifications served the committee and synod well in guiding the appointed staff in gathering, archiving, protecting, regulating, and making available for research all the materials now archived in Heritage Hall. They have also positioned the Historical Committee strategically for fulfilling its mandate to cultivate knowledge of and appreciation for the denomination’s rich spiritual and corporate legacy.

With all this in mind, following is our draft proposal for a revised Historical Committee mandate:

Current Mandate from 1969	Proposed Mandate (2020)
“The Historical Committee shall gather, preserve and supervise the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and cultivate in the Christian Reformed Church knowledge of and appreciation for the church’s history.” (<i>Acts of Synod 1969</i> , p. 74)	The Historical Committee, on behalf of synod, provides leading but shared ¹ oversight ² of the gathering, preservation, and use of the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and its agencies. ³ It also cultivates within the Christian Reformed Church and the wider church and academic worlds ⁴ knowledge of and appreciation for the CRCNA’s history, heritage, and legacy. ⁵

Implementation of the revised mandate

If this draft proposal is accepted, then one additional revision is needed to meet the requirement of final synodical oversight through its Historical

¹ The phrase “leading but shared” attempts to capture (1) the important role of the Historical Committee to ensure that synod’s vision for Heritage Hall is maintained, and (2) the final authority of the CRCNA synod over the archives through its Historical Committee. Two other issues in discussion during the past few years are clarified: (1) An explicit role for the stakeholders in important issues involving Heritage Hall such as budgets, major expenditures, key appointments, and policies. This has always been understood and practiced in the past but never written down. (2) The Historical Committee’s oversight has never meant and does not mean that it serves as a kind of “super-management team,” directly involved in every detail of Heritage Hall.

² The expression “provides . . . oversight” replaces the active verbs “gather, preserve and supervise” in the current mandate. These active verbs are misleading because the actual work is not done by the Historical Committee but by Heritage Hall staff. “Provides . . . oversight” (on behalf of synod) clarifies the nature of the Historical Committee’s relation to Heritage Hall: the word used in the current mandate—i.e., “supervise”—brings the Historical Committee too close to the notion of “management,” which it has never done, and paves the way for a major conflict with the proposal approved by synod in 2019. The word “supervision” should be limited to the internal administrative/management tasks of personnel, policy, and programs that is in place. Nonetheless, the Historical Committee should be involved in the decision-making process with respect to Heritage Hall, since it reports annually to the synod of the CRCNA.

³ Includes Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University, which are owned and operated by the CRCNA and are subject to denominational policies and regulations through the oversight of the CRCNA synod.

⁴ This expands the horizons of Heritage Hall’s educational mission beyond the CRC and more accurately reflects what is happening in the world of scholarship.

⁵ “Heritage” and “legacy” have been added (1) to suggest that the CRC’s history is more than merely a matter of antiquarian interest but a vital part of its current mission, and (2) to include the wider impact of the Christian Reformed Church in North America on its surroundings locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Committee as well as the desires of the three funders for greater participation in governance.

Section I of the governance document approved by synod provides for a strong and direct role for the three funders but not for the Historical Committee apart from its two representatives on the Archives Advisory Council.

Section I

The Council will advise on matters approved by the funders of Heritage Hall as set forth in the funders' Statement of Responsibilities. Normally such responsibilities include advising on the vision and strategic plan of Heritage Hall as well as its evaluation, its strategic alignment with the respective funders' visions, new programs and outreach, budgets, fundraising, and other items named in the Statement of Responsibilities. In addition to their representatives on the Archives Advisory Council, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (including but not limited to the CRC's Historical Committee) shall from time to time, address major strategic vision, structure, and evaluative matters appropriate to their role as organizational stakeholders and consistent with their governance documents.

(Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 629-30)

Without changing the structure by which the two educational institutions handle their respective roles—namely, through the joint library committee and the Dean of the Hekman Library who reports to the provost of Calvin University, we propose clarifying the approval process by *adding* the Historical Committee to the process as follows:

All matters concerning Heritage Hall are handled by the Archives Advisory Council, are reviewed by the joint Library Committee of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary, the Historical Committee of the CRCNA, and the three stakeholders. Major decisions involving budget, personnel, and programs require the approval of the Historical Committee and the three stakeholders.

In this way of shared oversight of Heritage Hall, all four participants and synod's own interests are honored.

Comment

We do not presume to suggest how the three funders structure their own approvals of major decisions regarding Heritage Hall; hence the word "reviewed" in the preceding statement. When major decisions are at stake (appointment of curator, programs, budgets), recommendations should be reviewed by the four oversight partners and approval sought from all four. This is in fact how the governance of Heritage Hall took place prior to the introduction of the new governance document. The goal is that all four "overseers" agree, but, preparing for the eventuality that disagreements *may* occur, we propose the following "rules" for working out disagreements:

- i. Final approval on major matters requires agreement among the Historical Committee and two of the stakeholders.
- ii. Should there be a disagreement between the Historical Committee and all three stakeholders, the matter is subject to appeal to the CRCNA's Council of Delegates and, if need be, to the CRCNA synod for adjudication.

A final point

As the agent of the CRCNA synod, the Historical Committee has a fiduciary responsibility to the donors to see that the Heritage Hall (*Origins*) endowment is used for the educational and publication purposes for which the funds have been donated. These funds should not be merged into the general operating budget of the Hekman Library.

Conclusion

Our proposal attempts to satisfy the obligations placed upon the CRCNA Historical Committee by its synodical mandate and the expressed desires of the three stakeholders / funders for greater direct oversight over Heritage Hall. This proposal meets our concerns about our responsibilities; we trust that it also satisfies the desires of the three stakeholders / funders.

Addendum

The revision of Section I in the Library Governance Document (“Relationship with Heritage Hall”) is, as we said, not up to us. In a spirit of cooperation, we offer the following ideas:

Section I of Library Governance Policy Approved by Synod 2019	Ideas for revision
The Council will advise on matters approved by the funders of Heritage Hall as set forth in the funders’ Statement of Responsibilities. ⁶	The Council handles all matters relating to Heritage Hall. It will advise the Curator and process requests from the Curator, the Historical Committee of the CRCNA, the three stakeholders, individually or in consort, and the joint library committee of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary.
Normally such responsibilities include advising on the vision and strategic plan of Heritage Hall as well as its evaluation, its strategic alignment with the respective funders’ visions, new programs and outreach, budgets, fundraising, and other items named in the Statement of Responsibilities.	Responsibilities of the council include advising on the vision and strategic plan of Heritage Hall as well as its evaluation, new programs and outreach, budgets, and fundraising.
In addition to their representatives on the Archives Advisory Council, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (including but not limited to the CRC’s Historical Committee) shall from time to time, address major strategic vision, structure, and evaluative matters appropriate to their role as organizational stakeholders and consistent with their governance documents.	Does this add anything? It is less than fully clear.

On behalf of the COD Subcommittee
Victor Chen
Paul De Vries
Michael Koetjé

On behalf of the CRCNA Historical Committee
John Bolt
James De Jong
Herman De Vries

⁶ Since this document is not public, is this helpful?

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is the standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934 to oversee the work of the denominational archives and to promote publication of denominationally related historical studies. Current committee members are John Bolt, chair (2023/2); James A. De Jong, secretary (2021/1); Herman De Vries (2022/1); and Tony Maan (2022/1). . . .

The committee met via videoconference on October 29 and November 19, 2020, and on February 24, 2021. The committee also met with the reconstituted COD ad hoc committee via videoconference on February 2, 2021.

II. Committee initiatives**A. Archives Advisory Council**

The committee designated John Bolt and Herman De Vries to serve as its representatives on the Archives Advisory Council created by the administrations and boards of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 629-30, 637-38) and acknowledged by synod (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761). The committee recommended through these representatives that the “one external person” serving on the council be one of the Van Raalte Institute research fellows because of their expertise and close relationship to Heritage Hall and the Historical Committee. The committee is grateful that the council has that recommendation under consideration as of the drafting of this report.

B. Contacts with classical representatives

Throughout 2020, committee members directly contacted most of the classical representatives appointed to work with them and the Heritage Hall staff in promoting the work of the archives and enhancing the collection of materials related to the committee’s mandate. This specifically includes congregational and classical minutes and reports. But it also involves anniversary booklets and photographs, historical studies, family histories and genealogies, papers of key leaders, and other related items.

What these contacts yielded is that the representatives are dutiful in reminding churches to submit their council minutes and anniversary materials to Heritage Hall. They are also faithful in forwarding classical minutes. Several reported knowing of and reading the magazine *Origins*, but most said they did not know of it, of the newly created web blog, or of how to access Heritage Hall information and resources through the Hekman Library website. One timely suggestion was that a list of suggested ideas and resources be sent to all stated clerks along with an appeal for them to become more involved in promoting the work of the archives.

The committee is committed to giving attention to this matter with the Heritage Hall staff. We are deeply grateful for these representatives and their work. Their names appear in section III of this report.

C. Publication of studies

A major part of synod’s mandate to the Historical Committee is “to promote publication of denominationally related historical studies.”

In the era of E.R. Post as the committee's field representative, this work occurred in the form of a number of monographs translated from Dutch and printed with subsidies from synod.

It continued with the subsequent appearance of *Origins* and several monographs in the 1990s and early 2000s, the publication and distribution of which was supported both by committee fundraising and by subventions from the Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund approved collaboratively by the archivist and the Historical Committee.

In the past several years the committee has considered a few manuscripts for publication but has adopted none. Last year the committee made synod aware of a significant translation and publication by a related organization of a Geerhardus Vos set of lectures on natural theology, given when he taught at Calvin Theological Seminary.

This year the committee was approached by Ryan Faber, a pastor affiliated with Faith CRC in Pella, Iowa, about the possibility of the committee publishing his doctoral dissertation *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: A Church Juridical Inquiry into the Sacramental Liturgies of the Christian Reformed Church*. While the work is commendable and qualifies according to our committee mandate, the committee lacks the expertise and resources to produce its publication in print. Dr. Faber is generously willing to make this work available online at no charge through Heritage Hall, however. This proposal stimulated the committee to initiate a conversation with the curator of the archives about the possibility of creating a Heritage Hall site that could make this study and similar ones related to denominational history available electronically.

The committee will pursue that possibility with the curator and Heritage Hall staff as a priority.

D. Expenditures

The committee approved the following expenditures from the Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund:

1. Support for a student research assistant to help the archivist create a multicultural CRCNA history website.
2. An estimated \$9,000 for the Albertus Van Raalte digitalization project being undertaken in cooperation with the Van Raalte Institute and as matching funds to a grant from the government of the Netherlands.

III. Report of the curator

A. The Archives staff

The past year was marked by minor transitions in staff and significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those challenges have persisted into 2021.

Heritage Hall staff continued to serve the CRCNA, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin University, but for about five months (March to August 2020) they did so mostly from home, as the university reduced in-person functions in response to the pandemic. In-person functions at the denominational offices and the seminary were also largely reduced for parts of the year. As a result, less material than usual was deposited in Heritage Hall, and a planned project was postponed (transitioning the Faith Alive catalog

of material to the archive). Since August 2020, staff members have staggered shifts or moved their workspaces to meet the university's social-distancing requirements.

Staffing in Heritage Hall did not change significantly in 2020. The most notable transition was in William Katerberg becoming the curator of Heritage Hall on a continuing, full-time basis. Hendrina Van Spronsen continued her work as office manager and in supporting production of *Origins*, the historical magazine of the archives, and providing archival assistance in processing material related to the denomination. Laurie Haan continued her work as an archival assistant, focusing on material related to the seminary and university. Emily Koelzer continued her work as an archival assistant, specializing in processing manuscript collections and digital archival projects. Janet Sheeres retired as editor of *Origins*. Calvin University professor of history emeritus Robert Schoone-Jongen edited the fall 2020 edition of *Origins*. William Katerberg has taken over the continuing work of editing *Origins*, beginning with the spring 2021 issue. Heritage Hall also hired a student worker to focus on digital projects and plans to hire one or two more student workers for other projects in 2021.

The work done by the denominational field agent in the past has been reconfigured. The curator, Will Katerberg, is the primary contact for clerks of church councils and classes. Hendrina Van Spronsen also communicates with local churches about submitting minutes. A volunteer processes the minutes, preparing them to be microfilmed, and gets the originals ready to be returned to churches or classes if they were submitted in paper form.

Heritage Hall thanks and honors Janet Sheeres for her many years of service in Heritage Hall as a volunteer who translated records from Dutch to English, compiled genealogical material, and organized collections. She also worked for Heritage Hall as the editor of *Origins*, and she conducted research and wrote widely on Dutch immigration and the Christian Reformed Church, notably producing a groundbreaking book and a variety of articles on women and Dutch Reformed history. She exemplifies the ideal of a non-academic historian whose research and writing reaches popular audiences and are of value to scholars.

Volunteers have long been essential to the work of Heritage Hall. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented volunteers from working in Heritage Hall from March to August 2020. Since then, Phil Erffmeyer has been the only volunteer working onsite. His primary role is to process minutes from congregations and classes. He also processes new material to be archived, mostly related to the denomination. Limits of space related to social-distancing requirements have prevented other volunteers from working in Heritage Hall. We plan to welcome back volunteers more generally as soon as it is safe to do so.

B. Archival activity during 2020

The amount of material accessioned by Heritage Hall in 2020 was smaller than in a typical year. Notably, Faith Alive Christian Resources planned to send a copy of its entire catalog to Heritage Hall, but that process will not happen until the CRCNA offices in Grand Rapids open for regular business and onsite staffing. Nonetheless, the archives received and processed a variety of materials:

- records related to faculty development at Calvin University
- Christian school records
- photographs
- records from congregations that closed in 2020
- Sunday school material of the CRCNA
- writings and other material from Henry J.G. Van Andel
- sermons and speeches of John B. Hulst
- records from the Calvin Theatre Company at Calvin University
- records of the Plaster Creek Stewards project at Calvin University

C. Research

Heritage Hall received fewer visitors than usual for research in 2020. It closed to patrons from March to August 2020 and since then has been open to receive up to three researchers at a time, by appointment only, following the COVID-19 policies for university staff and students. The archives addressed many requests for material in digital form.

The most commonly requested material in 2020 was related to immigrant letters and memoirs, genealogy and family history, photo collections, congregational and classical minutes, the history of the denomination (in relation to a variety of topics), and rare books. Specific topics include Native American and First Nations history related to missions and Indigenous spirituality, the CRC and the Civil Rights movement in Detroit, chaplains in World War II, postcards, the Calvin Theatre Company, the Dutch in Kansas, the CRC and lodges, Diet Eman, Calvin University's "Project Neighborhood," and Reformed thought during World War II.

A noteworthy book project completed with some material from Heritage Hall was *The Fort: Growing Up in Grosse Pointe during the Civil Rights Movement* (2020), a memoir written by Rev. Douglas J. Vrieland. Justin Vos, a history graduate student at Florida State University, is conducting research on the Dutch ethnic community and its relationship with North American Christianity, especially post-World War II evangelicalism.

The curator, William Katerberg, regularly posted on *Origins Online* (origins.calvin.edu/) about history related to the CRCNA, the seminary, the university, and Dutch North American immigration and enclaves. Thus far, the blog has reached over 9,000 unique readers. He also is developing a project on the history of race relations, diversity, and the CRCNA and two rephotography projects. Rephotography involves taking old postcards and photos and rephotographing them as closely as possible to show change or continuity visually. The two projects will use images from Heritage Hall and will include research and writing to provide context for the photographs. One project will focus on Christian Reformed and Reformed Church in America church buildings on the U.S. Plains (e.g., Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota); another will focus on West Michigan.

D. Digitization

Work in digitization continued in a variety of areas: creating a database of Heritage Hall's photograph collections, continuing the process of making online finding aids for our collections, and focusing on Calvin University records, the largest of the archive's collections. Due to COVID-19, Heritage Hall was unable to work with a digital humanities class in 2020; that relationship will resume, hopefully, in the 2021-2022 academic year.

The most noteworthy digital project begun in 2020 is in cooperation with the Van Raalte Institute at Hope College and is being supported by the Dutch Consulate in New York City. It involves digitizing and making publicly available the A.C. van Raalte and Dirk van Raalte collections in the two institutions. Doing so will aid scholars and local history researchers. Heritage Hall and the Van Raalte Institute also hope to curate some material for use by middle schools and high schools.

E. Indexing and digitizing denominational magazines

The work of indexing articles published in *The Banner* continued; this indexing can be used via the CRC Periodicals Index hosted by the Hekman Library website. The work of volunteers in indexing obituaries and birth, death, and marriage announcements in *The Banner* stopped when Calvin University closed on-campus activities in March 2020. Heritage Hall hopes to continue the genealogy indexing when social-distancing restrictions end. Heritage Hall and Hekman Library also are planning to include the Calvin University student newspaper, *Chimes*, in the CRC Periodical Index (calvin.edu/library/database/crcpi/).

Heritage Hall is cooperating with Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario, to help digitize *Calvinist Contact* (now *Christian Courier*) and its predecessor magazines, *Contact* and *Canadian Calvinist*. Redeemer is doing the bulk of the work; Heritage Hall is helping with issues that Redeemer is missing. In the future, Heritage Hall plans to digitize *The Banner* and *De Wachter*.

F. Promotion and outreach

Staff presentations were made to Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary classes via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Origins Online, a blog started in October 2019, continued to be a vibrant form of outreach to a variety of audiences. Its stories are promoted through the Heritage Hall Facebook page, which enables the blog to reach out to local audiences for some stories. Heritage Hall will continue to assess its social media presence and find ways to connect with denominational, university, and seminary related audiences and people interested in the history of Dutch North Americans.

The spring 2020 issue of *Origins*, the last issue edited by Janet Sheeres, has articles on a variety of topics. The fall 2020 issue, edited by Robert Schoone-Jongen, focuses on Dutch immigrants, their descendants, and politics. The spring 2021 issue will focus on religious education in Dutch immigrant and ethnic communities in the United States and Canada.

The curator is developing plans to reach out to classical representatives to promote *Origins* magazine and the work of Heritage Hall more generally.

IV. Regional classical representatives and significant anniversaries

A. Classical representatives

The following is a list of classical or regional representatives for gathering archival material, particularly congregational and classical records and documents, and for encouraging the use of archival material in understanding and appreciating our denominational legacy. The historical committee and the Heritage Hall staff, with Phil Erffmeyer as the denominational field representative, would appreciate being updated on any changes to this list.

Alberta North – Stated clerk Gary Duthler
 Alberta South/Saskatchewan – Stated clerk Nelly Eyk
 Arizona – Rodney Hugen
 Atlantic Northeast – Richard Vanden Berg
 British Columbia North-West – Anne Kwantes
 British Columbia South-East – Stated clerk Leonard Batterink
 California South – Stated clerk Cornelius Pool
 Central California – Stated clerk Larry Fryling
 Central Plains – Stated clerk Jonathan Spronk
 Chatham – John Koole
 Chicago South – Stated clerk Jeremy Oosterhouse
 Columbia – Stated clerk Roger Kramer
 Eastern Canada – Jean Lauziere
 Georgetown – Stated clerk Glenda Tebben
 Grand Rapids East – Stated clerk Robert Arbogast
 Grand Rapids North – Stated clerk Pete Byma
 Grand Rapids South – Stated clerk George Vink
 Grandville – Stated clerk Daniel Mouw
 Greater Los Angeles – Stated clerk Aaron Solomon-Mills
 Hackensack – Stated clerk Sheila Holmes
 Hamilton – Stated clerk Dick Kranendonk
 Hanmi – Charles Kim
 Heartland – Stated clerk Robert Drenten
 Holland – Stated clerk Calvin Hoogstra
 Hudson – Stated clerk Jeremy Mulder
 Huron – Stated clerk Fred Vander Sterre
 Iakota – Garry Zonnefeld
 Illiana – Jeffrey White
 Kalamazoo – Stated clerk Dan Sarkipado
 Ko-Am – Charles Kim
 Lake Erie – Stated clerk Benjamin Van Arragon
 Lake Superior – Stated clerk Henry Gunnink
 Minnkota – Stated clerk LeRoy Christoffels
 Muskegon – Stated clerk Drew Sweetman
 Niagara – Stated clerk Wendy de Jong
 North Cascades – Stated clerk Steve Van Noort
 Northcentral Iowa – Brian Hofman
 Northern Illinois – Gerald Frens
 Northern Michigan – Stated clerk Roger Hoeksema
 Pacific Northwest – Matthew Borst
 Quinte – Stated clerk Joan Crawford
 Red Mesa – Stated clerk John Greydanus
 Rocky Mountain – Stated clerk Mark Hilbelink
 Southeast U.S. – Stan Workman
 Thornapple Valley – Stated clerk Roger Bultman
 Toronto – Hendrik Bruinsma
 Wisconsin – Stated clerk Rodolfo Galindo
 Yellowstone – Stated clerk Del VanDenBerg
 Zeeland – Stated clerk Ronald Meyer

B. Ordained ministers—anniversaries of service

Names are listed according to years of ordained service in the CRCNA; in some cases, the date of prior ordination in another denomination is indicated in parentheses.

50 years (1972-2022)

Bierma, Merle H.
 Bierman, Harry J.
 Boot, Joel R.
 Borrego, Ramon C. (1964, 1972)
 Cooper, Dale J.
 Davies, Mark A.
 De Boer, John
 DeHaan, Peter W.
 Den Bleyker, Merle
 de Vries, John, Jr.
 De Vries, Stanley
 Erffmeyer, Gerald R.
 Flikkema, Melvin J.
 Fyneweever, Ronald L.
 Hekman, Donald E.
 Heslinga, Frederick F.
 Holwerda, Peter J.
 Kammeraad, Carl L.
 Kortenhoven, Paul
 Lagerwey, Donald W.
 Lamsma, John H.
 Lindemulder, Al
 Palsrok, Russell
 Postema, Gerald D.
 Postuma, John
 Remeur, James F.
 Roels, Edwin D.
 Stob, Harvey A.
 Tigchelaar, David J.
 Van Daalen, Siebren A.
 Vanden Bosch, William
 Vanden Heuvel, Jack
 Vander Plate, Jack C.
 Van Schepen, John
 Van Wyk, Kenneth E.
 Visser, John

55 years (1967-2022)

Blankespoor, Edward J.
 Brouwer, Peter
 De Vries, Ecko
 De Vries Gerald E.
 Duifhuis, Richard
 Evans, Aalt Dirk. A.

Grevengoed, Richard O.
 Koops, Ralph
 Lunshof, Henry
 Mans, Peter J.
 Numan, Henry
 Pool, Melle
 Pruim, Jay R.
 Rietema, Fred D.
 Sprik, Ronald
 Tinklenberg, Duane E.
 Uken, Charles D.
 Van Tol, William
 Wagenveld, Louis W.
 Warners, Douglas A.
 Witvliet, John L.

60 years (1962-2022)

Bierling, William A.
 Boonstra, John
 De Berdt, Michiel M.
 Eshuis, Henry
 Hofland, Gary G.
 Hofman, John, Jr. (1955, 1962)
 Kerkstra, Louis
 Mulder, Alvin A. (1958, 1962)
 Steinstra, Arthur J.
 Van Antwerpen, Berton
 VanderBrug, Duane E.
 Vos, Jack B.
 Vriend, Cornelius

65 years (1957-2022)

Kranenburg, Peter P.
 Los, Eugene W.
 Ouwinga, Harvey A.
 Rubingh, Eugene
 Rumph, Arnold E.
 Stulp, Jack
 Tamminga, Louis M.
 Uittenbosch, Hans
 Wisse, Donald P.
 Wolters, Lloyd J.

70 years (1952-2022)

Tadema, Rits

C. Church anniversaries—at 25 year intervals

25th Anniversary (1997-2022)

Albuquerque, New Mexico – Korean Presbyterian Galilee (founded in 1996; organized in 1997; emerging in 2016)

Anchorage, Alaska – Alaska Korean (started in 1994; organized in 1997)

Bellflower, California – Grace United Church (started in 1994; organized in 1997)

Buena Park (Anaheim), California – Orange Han Min (founded in 1994; organized in 1997)

Hudsonville, Michigan – Evergreen Ministries (started in 1993; organized in 1997)

Jersey City, New Jersey – Jersey City Mission (started in 1989; organized in 1997)

Tualatin, Oregon – Christ Community

Tucson, Arizona – The Village Community Ministries (started in 1997)

50th Anniversary (1972-2022)

Cedar Rapids, Iowa – Peace (started in 1970; organized in 1972)

Hudsonville, Michigan – Forest Grove

Kelowna, British Columbia – Kelowna

Sheldon, Iowa – Immanuel

75th Anniversary (1947-2022)

Edgerton, Minnesota – Bethel

100th Anniversary (1922-2022)

Rock Rapids, Iowa – Rock Rapids

Sioux Center, Iowa – Bethel

125th Anniversary (1897-2022)

Pella, Iowa – Second

Allendale, Michigan – Rusk

150th Anniversary (1872-2022)

Cleveland, Ohio – East Side

Midland Park, New Jersey –

Midland Park (organized in 1872; joined the CRC in 1892)

McBain, Michigan – Vogel Center

175th Anniversary (1847-2022)

Zeeland, Michigan – Drenthe (organized in 1847; joined the CRC in 1882)

Holland, Michigan – Graafschap (organized in 1847; joined the CRC in 1857)

Holland, Michigan – Pillar (organized in 1847; joined the CRC in 1885)

V. Response to the COD

Subsequent to the meeting of the Council of Delegates on February 17-19, 2021, the committee was informed of its response to the directive given to it by Synod 2019: “That synod instruct the COD to work with the Historical Committee to review their mandate and clarify the continued relationship between the committee and all of the stakeholders” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 761).

That decision affirms the recognition by Synod 2019 of the Historical Committee as a valued partner with “all of the stakeholders” in the work of the archives. It proposes no change in the mandate of the Historical Committee, and in reaching this decision the COD reviewed without registered objection the document that its ad hoc committee for working with our committee had requested of us at our February 2 meeting with them. That document is titled “Historical Committee Oversight Specified” and is reproduced here.

Historical Committee Oversight Specified

Overseeing “the work of the denominational archives” mandated by synod to its Historical Committee involves the following from the committee acting on behalf of synod:

1. Identifying materials that preserve the spiritual, confessional, communal, institutional, and theological legacy of the broader CRCNA community.
2. Advising the Heritage Hall staff and collaborating with it in soliciting, procuring, and properly preserving these materials.
3. Participating with the Heritage Hall staff in planning effective ways of making archived materials available for appropriate research and other use.
4. Stimulating knowledge of and appreciation for our legacy through the archives.
5. Advocating for the resources needed for achieving this purpose.
6. Being meaningfully involved in the hiring and evaluating of Heritage Hall staff and management.
7. Recruiting, orienting, and inspiring synod’s regional representatives in carrying out its mandate.
8. Receiving the information needed and requested from staff to fill its mandate.
9. Taking such additional initiatives, with appropriate consultation, as may be needed from time to time to carry out its mandate.
10. Keeping synod informed on the work of the archives and issues related to it.

The Historical Committee’s oversight of the work of the archives through Heritage Hall does not involve managing the day-to-day work of staff or management or administering personnel matters delegated by synod to the boards and administrations of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary.

These specifications have characterized the work of the Historical Committee in the past, as shown by its own minutes and documents as well as by the synodical record. In light of the COD’s decision and support, the Historical Committee will continue its work as specified in this document.

The committee expresses its deep appreciation for the open, attentive, and supportive approach the COD’s ad hoc committee took in working with us on clarifying our mandate. We extend that appreciation to the COD itself for its February decision.

Synod’s positive action on our committee’s recommendation to expand its membership as set forth in our report last year (see *Agenda for Synod 2020*, section VII of the report, pp. 263-65; and Recommendation E, p. 266) will greatly enhance the collaboration of all stakeholders in the work of the archives.

VI. Recommendations

...

C. That synod recognize the document “Historical Committee Oversight Specified” as providing the clarification directed by Synod 2019.

Historical Committee

John Bolt, chair

James A. De Jong, secretary

Herman De Vries

Tony Maan

OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS (DEFERRED FROM 2020-2021)

OVERTURES (DEFERRED FROM 2020)

Overture 1: Formally Allow Campus Ministers to Serve as Delegates to Classis (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Background

As in most classes, churches in Classis Huron send three delegates to classis meetings in keeping with Church Order Article 40-a. Due to an amendment to Supplement, Article 40-a approved by Synod 2007, organized congregations are also able to delegate officebearers from the emerging churches under their care.

Classis Huron also recognizes campus ministries as “member churches” similar to emerging congregations and allows organized churches to delegate campus ministers who are ordained as ministers of the Word or commissioned pastors under the care and supervision of their council. We have found great benefit in this practice for both the classis as a whole as well as our campus ministers. Campus ministers benefit from greater visibility, accountability, encouragement, collegiality, and regular opportunities for reporting and sharing the fruit of their ministry in both formal and informal capacities through participation in the deliberative process of the classical assembly. Classis as a whole benefits from the insight and experience of campus ministers, who serve in unique and diverse ministry settings, are engaged at the forefront of the intersection of faith and academia, minister with young adults, stay informed on the latest research and cultural trends, and bridge the gap between the significant cultural institutions of church and academy. Campus ministers serve in a missional laboratory where they are uniquely positioned to learn for the sake of the wider church, and their input into ecclesiastical proceedings is vital as we together seek to navigate the globalized, post-Christendom world in which we now find ourselves.

Whereas church planters are able to be delegated by their calling churches through the credential forms provided by the denomination, this is not currently the case for campus ministers. Due to the benefits of expecting campus ministers to be involved in the proceedings of the classical assembly, Classis Huron presents the following overture.

II. Overture

That synod amend the Supplement to Church Order Article 40-a to formally allow campus ministers to serve as delegates to classis as follows (deletions indicated by ~~strike through~~; additions indicated by *italics*):

If a classis so desires, it may ~~also invite emerging churches to~~
~~delegate three officebearers to the meetings of classis~~ *invite councils*

to delegate up to three officebearers from emerging churches and campus ministries under their care.

Grounds:

1. Such delegation will benefit classes by the expected presence and contributions of campus ministers at classis meetings.
2. Such delegation will give greater recognition and encouragement to these officebearers in classis.
3. An amendment to the supplement would invite classes to implement this practice without obligating them to do so.

Classis Huron

John C. Medendorp, stated clerk

Overture 2: Revise Church Order Article 45 to Permit Classes to Delegate an At-large Alternate to Synod (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Overture

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to revise Article 45 of the Church Order to permit classes to send an “at-large alternate” delegate to synod if the classis has documented that they cannot find a pastor, an elder, or a deacon to serve in the assigned delegate role for that year.

The proposed wording for Church Order Article 45 follows (with new text indicated by *italics*):

Synod is the assembly representing the churches of all classes. Each classis shall delegate one minister, one elder, one deacon and one other officebearer to synod. *A classis that has documented that it cannot find a minister, elder, or deacon delegate to serve shall be permitted to delegate to synod an at-large alternate delegate. The at-large alternate delegate may be a minister, an elder, or a deacon.*

Grounds:

1. In 2017, nine classes had three or fewer delegates attend synod; in 2018, eight classes had three or fewer delegates attend synod; in 2019, eleven classes had three or fewer delegates attend synod (data gathered from Agendas for Synod).
2. Minority-majority classes, rural or geographically distant classes, and smaller classes have been most likely to have sent three or fewer delegates to synod and have been the most affected by the decision to mandate deacon delegates to synod.
3. The principles of Christian fellowship and unity call us to act in ways that promote justice and equality instead of ways that promote injustice or discrimination for those classes unable to provide deacon delegates every year.
4. Mandating that a classis can only substitute an at-large alternate delegate if they document not being able to find a deacon, elder, or minister delegate upholds the spirit of the 2015 change while honoring the reality many classes face.

5. Allowing for an at-large alternate delegate accommodates the classes who find it difficult to nominate even four regular delegates or who have churches with “leadership teams” with shared deacon/elder responsibilities.

II. Background and elaboration of grounds

In 2015 synod adopted the changes to Article 45 of the Church Order first proposed by the 2013 Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force. The changes adopted in 2015 to this article changed the typical synodical delegation from two ministers and two elders to one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer. After four years of the new system of delegation, we are now in a position to reflect on how this change has affected the classes:

Year	Number of Churches with Fewer than Four Delegates
2013	1
2014	2
2015	1
2016*	3
2017	9
2018	8
2019	11

* The delegation change went into effect in 2016.

The chart suggests a significant change from one or two classes being less than fully delegated through 2015, to an average of nine classes being less than fully delegated from 2017-2019.

In effect, over the past three years, an average of nine classes each year have had one fewer delegate present to contribute to the dialogue and decisions of synod. Perhaps we might call this a “disenfranchisement” of sorts, in which these classes with fewer than four delegates have had their voices minimized because they could not find a fourth delegate—usually a deacon—who was available to attend synod.

While some might suggest that this might only be a problem for classes who are not sufficiently motivated to recruit, equip, and provide for a fourth delegate, the data show that, in fact, the classes most likely to send three or fewer delegates have been either minority-majority¹ classes; classes smaller than the median size²; or classes that are spread out over a significant geographical distance or are rural classes.³ This means that the effect of the 2015 decision to change the delegation to synod has had a larger impact on our fellow churches and classes that are minority-majority, smaller, or rural. We might suggest that this has resulted in a discriminatory effect on those types of classes, since they are more likely to be underrepresented.

¹ We define “minority-majority” as a classis in which an ethnic minority constitutes a majority of the members of classis.

² We define smaller than median classes as those in the lower 24 classes in terms of number of total members.

³ We define geographically distant or rural classes as those where two or more churches are more than three hours by car from the majority of the classis, or those comprised largely of rural or small-town communities.

Consider the list of classes who have sent fewer than four delegates over the past four years⁴:

Classis	Year	Minority-Majority?	Rural/Geographically Distant?	Smaller Than The Median?
Arizona	2017		Yes	Yes
Arizona	2018		Yes	Yes
Arizona	2019		Yes	Yes
Central Plains	2017		Yes	Yes
Chicago South	2019			Yes
Columbia	2017		Yes	Yes
Columbia	2018		Yes	Yes
Columbia	2019		Yes	Yes
Georgetown	2017			
Grand Rapids South	2018			
Hanmi	2016	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hanmi	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hanmi	2018	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hudson	2018			Yes
Hudson	2019			Yes
lakota	2016		Yes	
Illiana	2018			
Kalamazoo	2019			Yes
Ko-Am	2016	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ko-Am	2017	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lake Superior	2019		Yes	
Niagara	2019			Yes
Northcentral Iowa	2018			Yes
Northern Illinois	2019			
Northern MI	2017		Yes	Yes
Northern MI	2018		Yes	Yes
Northern MI	2019		Yes	Yes
Quinte	2017			
Thornapple Valley	2019			Yes
Yellowstone	2019		Yes	Yes
Zeeland	2017			Yes

Out of 31 instances over the past four years in which classes sent fewer than four delegates, 26 of those occurrences involved a minority-majority classis; a rural or geographically distant classis; or a smaller than median classis. Even more, the six classes that have had less than a full representation multiple times are in the lowest 11 classes in terms of number of total members.

We want to affirm the good work of the Diakonia Remixed: Office of Deacon Task Force (2013) and the followup work of the Task Force to Study the Offices of Elder and Deacon (2015). It is good for us to strive to nominate a deacon delegate every year, and this ought to remain our aim—for deacons are equal partners with elders and pastors in the leadership of the church. But as we see above, the result of changing the synodical delegation has resulted in an accidental discrimination effect that has limited and reduced the representation at synod rather than having broadened it. Our overture to permit classes to delegate an at-large alternate is intended to undo this discrimination effect and allow for classes who find it challenging to send delegates from all three offices to synod. We believe this is an equal and just

⁴ Data gathered from *Agendas for Synod 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019*, and the 2019 *Yearbook*.

approach to the difficulties experienced by minority-majority, small, and rural/distant classes.

In addition, Classis Chicago South believes delegating an at-large alternate instead of four separate alternates is preferable to the current system for the following reasons:

1. Church Order Article 27 recognizes the delegated authority of the major bodies (classis and synod) and the original authority of the churches. Allowing for an at-large alternate allows for churches and classes to delegate the persons whom they believe are best called and suited to represent them at synod.
2. Allowing for an at-large alternate accommodates the growing movement that blurs the lines between elders and deacons. At least two churches in Classis Chicago South elect a “leadership team” in which deacons and elders share responsibilities and titles. As the overturing classis, Chicago South also occasionally makes exceptions for our small churches to send alternate delegations in which deacons or elders are seated in place of each other so that these churches may fully contribute to the ministry of our classis.
3. Allowing for an at-large alternate accommodates the needs of classes who find it difficult to nominate even four main delegates, much less four separate alternates as well.

Thus, Classis Chicago South overtures synod to permit classes to send an at-large alternate delegate to synod if the classis has documented that it cannot find a pastor, an elder, or a deacon to serve in the assigned delegate role. We believe this is right and just because it promotes the unity and equality of all members, all churches, and all classes; and because it best accommodates the unique needs of each classis.

Classis Chicago South
Jeremy Oosterhouse, stated clerk

Overture 3: Revise Church Order Article 45 to Reduce Number of Delegates to Synod to Three per Classis (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Background

We are grateful for the excellent work of the Synod Review Task Force (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 445-73). This overture is not intended to re-do the work of the task force but, rather, to add another consideration to how synod is conducted.

Of concern to Classis Muskegon is the high absentee rate and the overall costs of synod.

Church Order Article 45 currently states, “Each classis shall delegate one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer to synod.”

Consider the following disturbing trend in unfilled roles (both primary and alternate delegates) and incomplete delegations (data gathered from *Agendas for Synod*):

Year	Number of unfilled roles (primary delegates)	Number of incomplete delegations (primary and alternate delegates)
2015	53	1
2016	58	4
2017	80	9
2018	79	8
2019	85	12

The costs for synod were presented by the Synod Review Task Force (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 471). While not all costs are variable, a reduction of one delegate per classis could result in up to a 20-percent cost savings (fixed costs remaining the same; variable costs reduced by 25 percent).

Prior to the change in Article 45 to include deacons, there was equal representation of the officers (two ministers and two elders per classis). Article 45, in its current form, creates an imbalance among the offices.

Classis Muskegon currently delegates one minister, one elder, and one deacon to each classis meeting.

II. Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to revise Church Order Article 45 to read as follows (changes indicated by ~~strike through~~ and *italics*):

Synod is the assembly representing the churches of all the classes. Each classis shall delegate one minister, one elder, ~~and one deacon,~~ *and one other officebearer* to synod. *One alternate would fill any of the three delegates.*

Grounds:

1. At the present time classes have difficulty presenting four delegates and four alternates (see above).
2. The costs for synod would be less expensive and thus more stewardly for the denomination (cost savings of up to 20 percent).
3. Synod advisory committees could be smaller and still include all delegates.
4. Fewer individuals would need to miss work and take on additional expenses to be delegates, thus reducing the financial impact to classes that provide stipends to delegates.
5. Having three delegates would restore a more equal representation of the offices that existed when only ministers and elders were delegates.

Classis Muskegon
Drew K. Sweetman, stated clerk

Overture 4: Amend Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, and 17 with Respect to Supervision and Transition of Ministers (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Background re Church Order, Articles 12-14 and section III, A-E

Whereas all members of the church are to engage in ministry as parts of the living body of Christ, the church has recognized and assigned unique

roles and functions to certain members. The Belgic Confession lists three marks of the true church: the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline. In the Christian Reformed Church, while the task of discipline falls to the church elders (general discipline of members) and the church council (special discipline of office-bearers), the tasks of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments are assigned in a primary way to the role of ministers of the Word.

Responsibility for these essential tasks in the faith and life of the church is why entry into the ministry of the Word and the acceptance of specific ministry positions require both an internal sense of “call” to mission as well as an external “call” from a local church for a specific ministry position. Both dimensions of this “call”—the call to ordained ministry and the call to a specific position—underscore the importance of both the “called” minister and the “calling” church desiring and cultivating a healthy relationship of trust, support, and supervision.

In the Christian Reformed Church today there is a growing number of persons, already ordained or seeking ordination, who are serving or seeking to serve in ministry positions other than pastoral ministry in a congregation. For the purposes of this overture, on occasion we also use the term *specialized ministry* in referring to this wide variety of ministry positions.

The Church Order requires that there be clear description of such positions and official approval that each ministry position is in fact “consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word” (cf. Church Order Art. 12-c). However, the Church Order and Supplements have been less precise in providing guidance for establishing and maintaining a solid relationship of trust, support, and supervision between the calling church and ministers called to specialized work.

One unique aspect of specialized ministry is the requirement of joint supervision: “A minister of the Word whose work is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved” (Art. 13-b). Frequently, however, an organization that employs a specialized minister may have no obligation to consult with the calling church prior to modifying or even terminating the position. Consequently, even though the Supplement to Church Order Article 13-b requires communication between the partners in supervision, frequently the position of a specialized minister may be changed or concluded without any communication to the calling church.

Church Order Article 14 also clearly stipulates that a minister must seek the permission of the calling church before leaving their approved position. Again, however, the reality exists that ministers can have their position in an organization terminated or radically changed solely at the discretion of the organization without prior consultation with either the minister or the calling church. In any case, whether the change in status is effected unilaterally or upon prior consultation, it still renders the minister without a call to a specific position, thus prompting the need for redefining the relationship between the specialized minister and the calling church.

The urgency of these considerations is highlighted by the following:

- The large and growing number of specialized ministries and therefore of joint supervisory relationships (currently, more than sixty specialized ministries exist in Classis Grand Rapids East alone).
- The seemingly abrupt nature of many of these transitions as well as the inconsistent nature of communication with the calling/supervising churches.
- The periodic transition from a ministry position or even relocation from the area without consulting or even informing the calling church.

While recognizing that these situations will not be rectified completely by changes to the Church Order and its Supplements, we believe that certain revisions and other provisions will provide a better framework for more effective support and supervision of specialized ministries.

In keeping with the history and concerns as outlined above, we propose the following direction as further specified in section III, A-E below.

- Provide and require utilization of a Covenant of Supervision to assist the specialized minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization in defining, understanding, and supporting the joint supervision of specialized ministers (cf. Art. 12-b and -c, and Supplement, Arts. 12-c and 13-b).
- Revise and standardize the vocabulary in Articles 12, 13, and 14 by replacing the word *work* with the word *position* as a common referent for the ministry being carried out by agreement with the calling church and the appointing agency.
- Strengthen practices in support of the requirement that ministers of the Word transitioning out of an approved ministry position also need to obtain release by their calling church from their call to that position (cf. Art. 14-a).

II. Background to Church Order Article 17 and section III, F-G

The focus in the preceding section has been on the supervision and transition of ministers of the Word under the provisions of Church Order Articles 12, 13, and 14. However, when a minister is released from one call without having received and accepted a call to another position, Church Order Article 17 also applies. Specifically, while Article 17 only names “active ministerial service in a congregation,” in practice its application is *intended* for specialized ministers as well. For this reason, and because of unique history and perceptions surrounding Article 17, we are proposing revisions to Article 17-a as well.

Ever since the adoption of the revised Church Order in 1965, there have been ongoing efforts to clarify and improve Article 17 (Article 11 in pre-1965 Church Order). Some changes have been minor tweaks: 1973, allowing transfer of a minister’s credentials, not just membership, to a new church; 2010, clarifying that when a pastor leaves a congregation for personal reasons, the council is not required to provide extended compensation and benefits. Other changes, however, suggest that Article 17 as currently formulated has not been serving diverse ministry situations satisfactorily.

- In 1983 synod clarified that the separation for “weighty reasons” may be initiated by a pastor or a council or jointly, and synod recognized

that the standard two-year eligibility for call after an Article 17 separation may be inadequate given the challenge of a minister receiving a call after an Article 17 separation.

- In 1987, Article 16, which allowed a temporary leave of absence (with the expectation of return) was expanded to include a terminal release (without expectation of return) when the request for release from one's ministry position was initiated by the minister. Commensurate with this change, releases from a ministry position under Article 17 were limited to requests initiated by the council.
- By 1998 these changes were revoked, with Article 16 again limited to a temporary leave of absence and Article 17 reinstated as the official route for a terminal separation, regardless of who initiated it. Also in 1998 the Supplement to Article 17 was modified to include the provision that a classis may require that the minister undergo evaluation before being eligible for call and/or that the congregation undergo evaluation before it may extend a call.
- In 2003 the Supplement was amended once more to allow for releasing a minister from ordination if, after a time of evaluation, classis decides it cannot declare the pastor eligible for a call.

Taking note of an increase in Article 17 separations, Synod 2012 instructed the denominational Board of Trustees and some of its ministry offices to consider what could be done to address this concern (*Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 755, 798-99). In response to a follow-up charge from the Board of Trustees, Pastor-Church Relations began work on a "Better Together" initiative and reported on developments over the next few years. One important result has been the implementation of vocational ministry assessment for pastors, begun in 2016 (see *Agenda for Synod 2013*, pp. 34, 67-75; *Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 31, 63-65, 166). Indeed, the numbers of separations under Article 17 in recent years are startling: in the 1980s, there were 24; in the 1990s, there were 25; in the 2000s, the number jumped to 146; and in the nine years from 2010-2018, there are already 141.

Until 2004, synodical deputy reports in the *Acts of Synod* specified when a classis put conditions in place before a call could be issued, but that is no longer the case. However, it is instructive to observe that in the years 2001 through 2004, only 46 percent of the Article 17 separations reported noted conditions imposed by classis. Conversely, 54 percent of the separations gave no indication of problem situations.

It would be a faulty conclusion, therefore, to assume that all or even the majority of these releases were due to problem situations. Ministers serving in congregations may request release from their position for a wide variety of "no-fault" reasons, such as advanced education or training, the closing of a congregation, parental leave, the relocation of a spouse, or other family changes. In addition, multiple classes have a growing number of "specialized ministers" whose positions are with other than their calling church (cf. Art. 13-b). We already cited the example of Classis Grand Rapids East having approximately sixty ministers in active specialized ministry positions plus a steady stream of others in transition. In addition to the no-fault reasons cited above, specialized ministry situations involve other factors: staff positions are seriously altered or concluded, term calls come to an end,

transfers and resignations occur. Although there are exceptions, the majority of these releases involve no concern regarding the minister's eligibility for accepting a call to a new ministry position.

Notwithstanding this increase in specialized ministries, Article 17-a remains the only Church Order provision for allowing or approving the release of a minister from their position. In 2012 synod received an overture to amend Article 17 by adding a section 17-e for application specifically for persons desiring to pursue further education, but this was rejected on the basis of not wanting to single out one special reason for release when Article 17 already allows release for a wide variety of reasons (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 749). Consequently, all releases continue to be reported under this single Church Order article, whether the actual release was negative or positive, complicated or uncomplicated.

Given this history, it seems compelling to modify Article 17-a in a way that gives some recognition of differing reasons for which ministers may be released from their call to ministry positions, and in a way that counters the unfortunate assumption of some that all releases under Article 17-a are due to problem situations.

Another consideration is the current policy of requiring the presence of synodical deputies for *all* releases by way of Article 17-a. When specific releases raise no questions regarding the minister's eligibility for a call to another ministry position, approval for such releases can be granted by the classis itself. It is being proposed, therefore, that the concurrence of synodical deputies be required *only* when the classis may wish to require that a released minister needs evaluation and assistance before accepting another call (Supplement, Article 17-a).

III. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures Synod 2020 to amend Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, and 17 by making the following changes (indicated by strikethrough and italics):

A. Revise Church Order Articles 12-b and -c as follows:

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

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

B. Revise Church Order Article 13-b as follows:

b. A minister of the Word whose ~~work~~ *position* is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in

cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, where applicable, shall have primary responsibility for supervision of duties.

Ground: The word *position* is consistent with language used in the Supplements to Articles 12-c and 13-b.

C. Add a new Article 13-d as proposed by the following:

d. When the position of a minister of the Word is with other than the calling church, the position shall be regulated by a Covenant of Supervision as approved by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization, with concurrence of the classis. Any changes to the status of the Covenant of Supervision, as soon as they are known, shall be submitted to all parties for review and concurrence.

—Cf. *Covenant of Supervision Form in Synodical Resources*

Ground: Establishing and utilizing a standard framework for joint supervision will facilitate clear expectations of all parties involved while maintaining appropriate flexibility within the variety of ministry situations.

D. Revise Supplement, Article 12-c, section a, 2 as follows:

~~2) The evidence that the minister will be directly accountable to the calling church, including an outline of requirements for reporting to the calling church, and supervision by the calling church, in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.~~
A Covenant of Supervision shall be mutually agreed to and signed by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization.

—Cf. *Covenant of Supervision Form in Synodical Resources*

Ground: Requiring a review of specific responsibilities and commitments of supervision prior to determining whether a minister's position "is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word" (Art. 12-c) will help to ensure that all relevant considerations have been addressed by the parties involved.

E. Revise Church Order Article 14-a and add a new Article 14-b as follows:

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

b. A minister of the Word whose position is with other than the calling church shall seek appropriate approval of the calling church and classis as soon as major changes in the status of the position are known.

—Cf. *Supplement, Article 13-b and Article 17-a and -b*

Ground: Adding the stipulation that those serving in specialized ministry shall seek approval of the calling church and classis when

their position has been altered or concluded will ensure appropriate supervision, even if or when they are temporarily without an approved position.

Note: If the above changes to Articles 14-a and -b are adopted, the current Articles 14-b, -c, -d, and -e, along with the respective Supplements to Articles 14-b, -c, and -e, would be relettered accordingly.

F. Revise Article 17-a and add a new Article 17-b as follows:

Note: Classis Grand Rapids East submitted revisions / clarifications to this subsection F (indicated by underlining in Art. 17-b and Grounds; Ground 3 has been deleted) in March 2022.

a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may ~~for weighty reasons~~ be released from active ministerial service in a congregation ~~or other position~~ through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis ~~or its interim committee, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies,~~ and in accordance with synodical regulations.

b. If the classis interim committee, in consultation with the assigned church visitors and/or supervising agents, judges that the event(s) leading to the request for release from active ministerial service may warrant evaluation and assistance of the minister before accepting another call, such release shall be given only with the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

Grounds:

1. The language in the proposed Articles 17-a and 17-b clarifies that releases from any and all calls require the approval of classis, whether the ministers are serving in congregations ~~or~~ in other ministry positions.
2. Articles 17-a and 17-b as proposed differentiate between those releases when no evaluation and assistance are required (Article 17-a), and those releases when evaluation and assistance are required (proposed Article 17-b).
3. ~~This differentiation will relieve synodical deputies from the need to ratify releases which are routine and in keeping with synodical regulations.~~

Note: If the above changes to Articles 17-a and -b are adopted, the current Articles 17-b, -c, and -d, along with the Supplement to Article 17-a, would be relettered accordingly.

G. Instruct the Candidacy Committee to recommend commensurate changes to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

Note: Classis Grand Rapids East requests that the Synodical Services Office include synodical action regarding this overture in its summary of Synod 2020 actions reported to the classes for their special attention.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Alfred E. Mulder, stated clerk

Appendix

Covenant of Supervision (COS) for Ministers of the Word and Commissioned Pastors Serving in Specialized Ministry Positions

This Covenant of Supervision (COS) provides a working framework for the calling and supervision of CRC ministers of the Word (hereafter, *MW*) and commissioned pastors (hereafter, *CP*) who serve in ministry positions with appointing agencies, institutions, or organizations other than their calling church (hereafter, *Organization*), and in keeping with CRC Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, 23, and relevant Supplements. These ministry positions, also referred to below as *specialized ministries*, include but are not limited to those of denominational leaders, missionaries, chaplains, campus pastors, church planters, theological professors, Bible teachers, and ministry leaders with Christian nonprofit organizations.

The expectations and responsibilities listed below are designed to facilitate effective supervision of specialized ministers/ministries, as stipulated in Church Order Article 13-b:

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

A. Expectations of the MW/CP: _____

1. Submit your position description to the council of your calling church (hereafter, *Calling Church*), accompanied by (a) your Organization's mission statement, (b) your letter of appointment, and (c) a summary description for information to the congregation.
2. Inform your Organization of the contact person(s) for your Calling Church.
3. Request your Calling Church to extend you a letter of call for the ministry position and submit a letter of acceptance to your Calling Church, provisional *as applicable* upon approval of the position description and sustaining an examination for ordination.
4. Meet with your Calling Church at least once annually, in the manner stipulated in section B, 3 below to review, discuss, and pray regarding
 - a. your personal and spiritual life, including family joys and concerns.
 - b. your professional life, including a summary of your annual work review as provided by your Organization.
5. Participate in the congregational life and ministry of your Calling Church in keeping with gifting and availability, and as mutually agreed (cf. section B, 4).
6. Inform your Calling Church, *as soon as known*, of an impending change or conclusion to your ministry position or appointment, and/or of your desire or intention to resign your ministry position for educational, professional, personal/family, or other reasons.
7. Inform your Organization in the event of transferring your church membership and ecclesiastical credential to a different Calling Church.

8. Meet other expectations of your Calling Church and Organization, if any, as stipulated: _____
- _____
- _____

Examples include a code of ethics as required of CRC Chaplains, joint supervision for ordained CRCNA staff (signature required), a code of conduct or other expectations and concerns as stipulated by the respective Organization.

B. Responsibilities of the Calling Church: _____

1. Extend a letter of call to the MW/CP and, *as applicable*,
 - a. recommend classis approval of the specialized ministry position.
 - b. request that classis examine the MW/CP candidate for ordination.
2. Prior to proceeding with the installation of a previously ordained MW or CP, have in hand the classis-approved ecclesiastical credential or other required approval.
3. Arrange to meet with the MW/CP at least once annually for reporting, discussion, and prayer, regarding the MW/CP's (cf. section A, 4 above)
 - a. personal and spiritual life, including family joys and concerns.
 - b. professional life, including a summary of their annual work review as provided by the Organization.

These meetings shall take place with the council, the elders, or their appointed representatives, as stipulated below, in fulfillment of the above purposes.

4. Invite and encourage the MW/CP to participate in your congregational life and ministry in keeping with their gifting and availability, and as mutually agreed (cf. section A, 5).
5. Meet other responsibilities toward the MW/CP or Organization, if any, as stipulated: _____

6. If the Calling Church notes significant concerns regarding the MW/CP's doctrine and life or duties, the Calling Church will summarize those concerns to the Organization and may request a joint meeting with the MW/CP to address those concerns (cf. section C, 4 below).
7. Inquire directly of the MW/CP and the Organization regarding reasons for conclusion of the ministry position or termination of the appointment by the Organization, or for the resignation by the MW/CP from the ministry appointment (cf. section C, 5 below).
8. In the event of the conclusion of the position, or termination of or resignation by the MW/CP, the Calling Church shall obtain the concurrence of the classis or its interim committee prior to declaring the MW/CP eligible for call to a new ministry position.

C. Responsibilities of the Appointing Organization: _____

1. Provide the MW/CP with appropriate compensation and support.
2. Provide the MW/CP with required training, reporting protocol, and professional support, as stipulated: _____
3. Provide the MW/CP a summary of their annual work review for sharing with the Calling Church, with the content of the summary determined by the Appointing Organization.
4. If the Appointing Organization notes significant concerns regarding the MW/CP's doctrine and life or duties, the Appointing Organization will summarize those concerns to the Calling Church and may request a joint meeting with the MW/CP to address those concerns (cf. section B, 6 above).
Note: This protocol is not intended to interfere with the Appointing Organization's right (and potential need) to take immediate employment action when necessary for compliance with applicable laws, protection of other staff, or other compelling reasons.
5. Inform the Calling Church in writing when the position of a MW/CP is being altered or eliminated (cf. section B, 7 above).
6. Meet other responsibilities toward the MW/CP or Calling Church, if any, as stipulated: _____

Required Signatures:

MW/CP _____	Date _____
Calling Church _____	Date _____
Organization _____	Date _____

This completed *Covenant of Supervision* has been approved by the following authorized designee of classis (printed name):

_____ Signature	_____ Classis position
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Overture 5: Appoint a Study Committee to Review Church Order Articles 12-17 *(Deferred from 2020)*

I. Background

In response to an overture to Classis Columbia by one of its churches following a recent negative experience with Church Order Article 17, classis formed a committee "to review matters dealing with outcomes of the use of C.O. Art. 17 and . . . to formulate an overture to synod . . . to address these concerns."

The committee soon noted that since the adoption of the revised Church Order in 1965, there have been continuing efforts to clarify Article 17. In spite of these efforts the number of separations under Article 17 have risen dramatically. Whereas in the 1980s such separations totaled 24 for the

decade; by the 2000s they had risen to 146. The decade of 2010s has seen nearly the same number, with 141 Article 17 separations. In total, the past 20 years have seen nearly 270 churches and 270 pastors separated from one another via Article 17. (For further statics, see Overture 4 from Classis Grand Rapids East to Synod 2020.)

It would be faulty to conclude that all, or even most, of these separations are directly the result of conflict between pastor and congregation. However, if even half of these separations stem from conflict, the aftermath is still far too many wounded individuals and congregational communities for us in good conscience to ignore.

As the committee looked into Article 17, it quickly became clear that any effort to address Article 17 would also require a deeper look into the articles leading up to it—namely, Articles 12 through 16. These articles address the duties, supervision, leave of absence, and support for a minister of the Word. All of these articles, the committee found, have a direct impact on the use, or misuse, of Article 17.

The committee also became aware of certain cultural and ecclesiastical shifts that affect not only the use of Article 17 but also the manner in which the ministry of the Word is viewed. A few examples:

- More and more ministers have come to see themselves as “free agents,” who move about at will when their present position is uncomfortable or when another position looks more desirable.
- Councils and congregations are quicker to adopt a “hire and fire” model when addressing conflict or dissatisfaction with their pastor.
- Church leadership is often undertrained in Church Order which, in times of conflict or dissatisfaction with the pastor, can result in (1) failure to use the tools Church Order provides, such as church visitors and/or the wisdom of classis and other classical functionaries, and (2) deferring instead to Pastor Church Resources for a quick solution.
- The speed with which the surrounding culture moves has birthed in our churches a desire to deal with things very quickly instead of bearing with one another and looking prayerfully for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

All of these shifts, and more, result in a change of perception with respect to

- the call issued by a congregation and accepted by a minister (Art. 12).
- the supervision and accountability of the minister (Art. 13).
- the acceptance or pursuit of a resignation of a minister (Art. 14).
- matters of compensation of the minister (Art. 15).
- the use and abuse of leaves of absence (Art. 16).

There are other cultural and ecclesiastical shifts causing pastors to seek release from their positions—for example, more pastors seeking advanced education, the closing of a church, an increase in the number of specialized ministry positions, the relocation of a spouse. Many of these situations end up being dealt with via Article 17 or a locally “adjusted” version of a related article.

Synod has responded to these shifts by giving advice via commentary in the Church Order or in appendices to the *Manual for Christian Reformed Church Government*. These may not be given enough consideration or may

even be difficult to find. Who knew that Appendix B in the 2008 *Manual for Christian Reformed Church Government* became Appendix A in the 2017 version or even that there was such an appendix? Handbooks for such people as synodical deputies appear to contain material that has not previously been clearly presented to congregations or ministers, often creating the impression that information has been withheld from local church councils.

In 2013 synod's response to the increasing Article 17 separations was to ask the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA (now known as the Council of Delegates) to consider what could be done. This resulted, in part, with Pastor Church Resources implementing the vocational assessment program now in place. While this program will be helpful, it fails to consider adequately many of the matters noted above as cultural and ecclesiastical shifts.

In February 2012, the *Banner* published an article titled "The Scarlet Number," indicating that in spite of all the efforts put forth, Article 17 continues to carry with it a stigma, especially on the pastor. This was also confirmed by research conducted by the Classis Columbia committee by sending a communication to each stated clerk of the CRCNA. The responses this received indicated a broad-based desire in the denomination to see Article 17 revisited. Clarification was sought specifically regarding the proper use of Articles 14 and 16 in cases that should technically be settled according to Article 17 but frequently are not, due to the negative perception attached to Article 17. The overture of Classis Grand Rapids East (Overture 4) to Synod 2020 also addresses Article 17 in particular as regards those serving in "specialized ministry" assignments. The second to last paragraph of that overture's background is worthy of note.

It is the belief of Classis Columbia that we are in need of clearer guidelines, guidance, and resources to aid pastors, councils, and congregations both in situations of pastoral transition and in order to improve the way in which we deal with pastor/council (congregational) conflict. The goals of such guidelines, guidance, and resources must be (1) that matters of conflict are resolved in a way which leave fewer damaged people in their wake, (2) that there might be more amicable transitions for pastors and congregations, (3) that by following scriptural mandates more vigorously, we may improve the spiritual health and well-being of both our congregations and our clergy, and (4) that the honor of the God whom we serve is upheld.

II. Overture

Classis Columbia overtures Synod 2020 to appoint a study committee to conduct a comprehensive review, and possible revision, of Church Order Articles 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 with a view to providing clearer guidelines to pastors and churches in times of conflict as well as assistance for positive pastoral transitions.

Grounds:

1. Two-year committee action mandated by Classis Columbia to review matters dealing with outcomes from the use of Church Order Article 17 revealed the essential interconnected relationship between Article 17 and Articles 12-16 such that all Church Order Articles 12-17 must be evaluated to form helpful congregational guidelines.

2. There is a strong understanding of “the call” of a pastor by a congregation in Articles 12-17, which recent cultural and ecclesiastical shifts have watered down.
3. There is precedent for the request to review and improve Church Order Articles 14, 16, and 17, (e.g., Synod 1996 instructed the Pastoral Ministries Board “to prepare guidelines for congregations which are considering separations from their ministers under Church Order Articles 14, 16, and 17”; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 578). Classis Columbia’s request is consistent with that decision in asking for a revision and update 24 years later.
4. A review of the data of *Acts of Synod*, the *Manual for Synodical Deputies*, and memos to stated clerks from 1972 to the present indicates that the best synodical advice for congregations unhelpfully lies in synodical supplements and board/committee memos (see Appendix A of the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, for example).
5. Research conducted by a Classis Columbia committee in communications sent to each stated clerk of CRCNA classes indicates a broad-based desire to see Article 17 revisited and to clarify the proper use of Article 14 and 16 in cases that should technically be settled according to Article 17.
6. Given that so many pastors and churches within our fellowship are experiencing pain, frustration, disappointment, and discord, and given that the occurrence of these situations seems to be rising, it seems self-evident that we are not fulfilling the mandates our Lord has laid down in Scripture to honor our leaders and to live in uniting love (see Heb. 13, esp. v. 17; Rom. 12, esp. vv. 9-10; Titus 3:1-11).
7. Church Order does not currently provide clear, helpful, biblical guidance in matters of disagreement between a pastor and a council or congregation.
8. Church Order currently does not provide for the amicable separation of pastor and congregation, other than Article 17, in such cases as
 - a pastor in a specialized ministry whose position or term of service ends.
 - a pastor who seeks to pursue further education with no intent of returning to the congregation she/he is leaving.
 - a pastor who becomes ill and can no longer serve his/her congregation.

Classis Columbia

Roger D. Kramer, stated clerk

Overture 6: Revise Church Order Article 16 to Provide for a Terminal Leave of Absence and Avoid Unnecessary Stigma of Article 17 Separation (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Background

Within Church Order Article 17-a, action can be initiated unilaterally by a pastor or by a council, or action can be initiated “jointly.” If initiated unilaterally, the Article 17 action generally indicates an unresolved and

even unresolvable conflict, raising a red flag with regard to both pastor and congregation. By default, an Article 17 red flag is also raised when action is initiated jointly, even if the separation is mutual and free of conflict. Article 17 is the only means by which pastor and congregation can separate and credentials be retained. This creates a stigma for both pastor and congregation.

II. Overture

Classis Holland therefore overtures Synod 2020 to create a specific provision in Church Order Article 16 whereby a pastor and council can enter into a mutually agreed-upon *terminal leave of absence*.

Grounds:

- a. Multiple pastors and congregations are seeking a separation that does not demand identifying “weighty reasons” for a separation, which often increases the pain of the separation and carries baggage for both pastor and congregation.
- b. A terminal leave of absence allows severance to be applied during the leave, which makes available a period of time when a pastor can seek alternative employment while also having daily needs met.
- c. A terminal leave of absence recognizes, without assigning blame, that in a rapidly changing ministry context not every pastor nor every congregation will be a good fit. In addition, with a growing number of pastoral positions within one congregation, fit and capacity for very specific functions and job descriptions are necessary and do not always match well.
- d. A terminal leave of absence continues to provide classical supervision and a duration for ministerial credentials to be retained.

II. Explanation

1. Adding a specific provision in Article 16 for a mutually agreed-upon terminal leave of absence would allow for a specified length of time for pastor and council—in conjunction with the classis and Pastor Church Resources—to work together in discerning the next call.
2. In differentiation from the current Article 16, at the conclusion of the terminal leave of absence a pastor would not return to ministerial service in that congregation.
3. If at the conclusion of the terminal leave of absence the pastor does not have a call to a classically approved ministerial service, a separation between pastor and congregation would take place.
4. A minimum of a 13-week severance is attendant to a terminal leave of absence but may be applied during the time of leave. Other provisions governing Article 17, its Supplements, and explanations in the *Acts of Synod 1998 and 2010* would guide the separation, as applicable.
5. The terminal leave of absence would not exceed six months.
6. A pastor’s ministerial credentials would be retained for up to two years following a terminal leave of absence.

7. A leave of absence would commence with approval of the classical interim committee (CIC) and concurrence of the church visitors. The terminal nature of the leave of absence would require classical approval. If greater conflict is evident, requiring counseling and further supervision, the CIC and church visitors could recommend Article 17.
8. Over the course of the past few decades, the use of Article 17 to separate church and pastor has been enacted with greater and greater frequency. Paul Vander Klay, in his article on the CRCNA network, titled "The Article 17 Flag" (Nov. 28, 2011; updated Feb. 27, 2014) notes the following figures:

1980 to 1989: 24 Art. 17-a; 7 Art. 17-d

1990 to 1999: 25 Art. 17-a; 13 Art. 17-d

2000 to 2009: 146 Art. 17-a; 26 Art. 17-d

Classis Holland

Calvin Hoogstra, stated clerk

Overture 7: Adopt an Additional Supplement to Church Order

Articles 82-84 (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Observations

The Reformed churches in continental Europe determined that mutual support and accountability were an important part of being Christ's church, so in the mid-16th century the idea of church officebearers signing a "Form of Subscription" began to take root. The Synod of Dordrecht 1574 determined that its officebearers must "attest" to the Reformed confessions, but it took the great Synod of Dort of 1618-19 to formally require all officebearers in the Dutch Reformed Churches to subscribe to a "Form of Subscription." In signing this form, officebearers were vowing before God and his people, in part, to hold one another accountable for their faith and doctrine, both lived out and taught. The Christian Reformed Church, at its inception as a denomination, also included the requirement that its officebearers sign a Form of Subscription. We took those promises seriously, including the pledge that "we are prepared moreover to submit to the judgment of the council, classis, or synod, realizing that the consequences of refusal to do so is suspension from office." Synod 2012 adopted an updated Form of Subscription, referred to as the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church, by which all officebearers serving the church likewise vow: "We promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority. We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Church Order Article 82 states, "All officebearers, in addition to being subject to general discipline, are subject to special discipline, which consists of suspension and deposition from office." Article 83 states, "Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct." But what does this look like, when officebearers in one congregation or even in one classis might be lax in or refuse to hold its officebearers accountable to the confessional

decisions of synods? There appears to be sufficient ambiguity in the Church Order to cause a paralysis of action in officebearers being able to hold one another accountable to the vow each made when signing the Covenant for Officebearers upon their ordination. What role does another council or classis have in helping to encourage or move forward special discipline when made aware of a failure in another council or classis to uphold our covenant together? Greater clarity is necessary.

We do have some guidance from past actions of synods. A brief study of the history of synodical decisions shows us that classes and synods have intervened in the decisions of local congregations, even when those decisions did not originate in the council itself. Synods in the past have decided that it is permissible for a broader assembly to step in and impose special discipline on a narrower assembly, even if no one in a narrower assembly of the offending party has requested such intervention. Many of these decisions were highlighted by the Judicial Code Committee back in 1993, based on an appeal it received and then passed on to synod, about the ability of other assemblies to enforce the Form of Subscription's covenanted responsibilities (see *Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 523ff.).

1. Classis Muskegon deposed the minister and entire consistory of one of its churches in 1919 (with synod's later approval of the synodical deputies' work) when the consistory refused to depose its minister (see *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 526).
2. Synod 1926 upheld Classis Grand Rapids West in its actions deposing a minister and the majority of his consistory. Synod stated that "Article 36 of the Church Order [currently Article 27-b] gives the classis jurisdiction over the consistory" (*Acts of Synod 1926*, p. 142).
3. Synod 1980 considered an appeal from elders of a church in Classis Huron who had been deposed by the classis. They found that the broader assembly of the classis was not guilty of abusing their God-given authority over the narrower assembly of the consistory by lording it over them based on the following grounds:
 - a. Classis did not exceed its authority when it engaged itself with the situation at Goderich CRC. Christ gave authority to the church as a whole and thereby entrusted authority to the occasions of its exercise in classis and synod as gatherings of the churches to maintain the unity of the congregations in both doctrine and discipline.
 - b. The gathering of churches and their representatives in Jerusalem set a pattern of authoritative decisions, which pattern is followed in principle in the deliberations and decisions of the major assemblies.
 - c. To contend that Classis Huron had no proper jurisdiction over the Goderich Consistory proceeds on a mistaken conception of the relation of the minor assembly to the major assembly. The same authority, constituting the same standards and the same goals, is applied by the several assemblies. Classis Huron adhered to the correct use of the authority delegated to them by Christ.
 - d. In the application of Article 17 (re the release of a minister) to the Goderich situation, it is in order that a classis act when a consistory fails to do so (Art. 27). Classis Huron's action was within the range of the delegated authority."

(*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 28-30)

4. Synod 1982 concurred with Synod 1980's ability to have authority over a consistory (*Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 55, 628-29).
5. Synod 1991 upheld the action of Classis Lake Erie in suspending the entire council of a church, and instructed the classis to immediately complete the discipline proceedings and deposition of an elder and a deacon (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 771).
6. Synod 1993 heard an appeal from a church in Classis Hudson when the classis suspended and deposed its minister. Synod did not sustain the appeal. Some of the grounds included the following:
 - a. The Church Order does not specify that the local council is the only body that may initiate and impose special discipline.
 - b. Synodical precedents establish the authority of a classis to suspend and depose a minister without request or appeal from a member of the council or congregation of the church involved under circumstances such as those present in this matter.

(*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 529)

7. Synod 2004 instructed Classis Toronto to urge one of its churches to act in accordance with the guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 632). Synod 2005 appointed an in loco committee, and Classis Toronto passed their recommendation, stating that the biblical/ethical guidelines of Synod 1973 and Synod 2002 are considered settled and binding, and that the actions of First CRC of Toronto constituted a breaking of the denominational covenant (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 459). Synod 2006 approved the work of the In Loco Committee after the church agreed to conform to the denomination's position (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 653).

More recently, Synod 2019 showed us the need for greater clarity in this manner, as it was confronted with a situation in which a minister was teaching Kinism and was not being disciplined for that false teaching by his council. Such teaching was doing great damage not only to that local congregation but also to our entire denomination. The classis had slowly begun a process of investigation, after this pastor had been publicly advocating this position for years, though it was contrary to what he had vowed to uphold when he signed the Covenant for Officebearers. But the question was raised, asking, What if a majority of this classis' delegates were also sympathetic to Kinism? What options would be available to another classis in the CRCNA to hold that officebearer accountable to the Covenant for Officebearers if his own council and classis refused to do so? This pastor's teaching was damaging the witness and reputation of our entire denomination. Synod 2019, beginning to acknowledge that, adopted the following guidance for the churches:

That synod, given the recent history of Kinist teaching in a particular church of the CRCNA, admonish councils and classes to promote confessional fidelity and mutually to pursue special discipline of an officebearer [emphasis added] who is found to hold views contrary to our standard.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818)

Synod 2019 was presented with many recommendations for how we as a denomination might go about protecting our members and churches from abuse of power. In the process of wrestling with this, we were reminded

how we are stronger together than apart, particularly when dealing with the matter of abuse. We need mutual accountability, and we need fellow brothers and sisters in other classes to hold one another accountable to the vows made in the Covenant for Officebearers when it comes to matters of abuse.

Synod 2019 saw a greater need, both with Kinism and the abuse of power, to broaden the contact that we have with one another, both on a congregational and a classical level. The need is great and pressing in this current age. We see the importance of clarifying this in our Church Order, detailing what it means to continue to covenant together as fellow officebearers in our respective classes when there is a failure to abide by the vows we have made in signing the Covenant for Officebearers.

There is clear scriptural instruction, Church Order mandate, and historical precedent that we should hold one another accountable to these mutual vows to Christ and his church, so that the honor of Jesus would be upheld and that the witness of his church, as represented in the Christian Reformed Church, would not be tarnished. The Church Order foundation, in Article 1, is that we are in “complete subjection to the Word of God.” The Church Order has always been intended as a means to that end and must never be allowed to be used as an excuse for permitting such gross recent affronts as Kinism or abuse of power to continue on technicalities. Let us hold ourselves to high standards and ensure that our Church Order not only allows but also encourages and enables us to live up to our covenant responsibilities.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2020 to adopt the following addition to Church Order Supplement, Articles 82-84:

To carry out our mutual, covenanted responsibility, any narrower assembly may make a formal appeal to a broader assembly regarding the action or inaction of another assembly when an officebearer is deemed to be in violation of the Covenant for Officebearers. Such an appeal may proceed only after the perceived violation has been communicated to the council and classis of the officebearer. Synod shall be the final body of appeal in all matters.

Grounds:

1. There is consistent historical precedent in the CRCNA for broader assemblies to hold narrower assemblies accountable to the Form of Subscription/Covenant for Officebearers as an expression of our vows to covenant together as a Reformed denomination.
2. There is a pressing need for clarity to define the ability of one classis to hold another classis accountable to the enforcement of the Covenant for Officebearers, which all officebearers in all classes have signed, for the sake of our common witness and testimony in this world.
3. Synod is the final body to appeal to and is the proper avenue to appeal to, in carrying out our covenanted responsibilities.
4. Synod is the appropriate authoritative body that determines whether it will instruct a classis to a certain point of action regarding the imposition of special discipline on an officebearer within that

classis, so synod has the ultimate authority to enforce that (Church Order Art. 27-b).

5. The appointment of synodical deputies (Art. 48) recognizes the vital importance and value of other classes, with synodical approval and authority, to speak into certain decisions of another classis, and has been deemed by synods past not to be an instance of one body “lording it over” another body (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 28).

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk . . .

Overture 11: Curtail Clergy Use of Pornography (*Deferred from 2020*)

I. Scripture support

- Galatians 5:19—“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality. . . .”
- Ephesians 5:3—“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity . . . these are improper for God’s holy people.”
- Colossians 3:5—“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires. . . .”
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5—“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust, like the pagans. . . .”

II. Overture

I, Judy De Wit, overture synod to recommend that every church-owned computer (i.e., any church-owned computer used by pastor(s), ministry staff, and/or support staff or any other church-owned computer) shall be searched regularly to ensure no porn usage by anyone has occurred.

Grounds:

1. Pornography used by pastors and church leaders is contrary to Scripture.
2. Accountability about the use of pornography stops it.

Judy De Wit, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Note: This overture was adopted by the council of Hancock (Minn.) CRC in January 2020 and submitted to Classis Lake Superior at its meeting in March 2020 but was not adopted by the classis. The council of Hancock CRC decided not to forward the overture to synod. Therefore it is being forwarded to synod by the author.

OVERTURES (DEFERRED FROM 2021)

...

Overture 3: Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Decisions (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Background

The November 2020 *Banner* article titled “Woman in Same-Sex Marriage Installed as Deacon” noted that the council of Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, does not believe it has “crossed any line of orthodoxy, only pastoral advice” and “that all synodical reports and decisions related to homosexuality have been *pastoral advice* given to the churches.” It is not clear to us that this distinction is a valid one—and if it is not, the decision of Neland CRC to break covenant is based on an incorrect understanding of the nature of synodical reports.

There is some history of a discussion. Synod 1973 appointed a committee “to study the use and function of synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters, and their relation to the confessions” (*Acts of Synod* 1975, p. 595). That committee reported to Synod 1975, and its report states, “Guidelines for study, pastoral advice, and other decisions of this nature allow for varying measures of agreement. Officebearers are expected to ‘abide by’ certain specified deliverances of synod as well as to synodical decisions in general” (p. 602). The report seems to suggest that, although we may not all agree on the pastoral advice offered in synodical reports, as officebearers we are expected to abide by them—and so they are binding in some respect.

Further, the second recommendation of that report states, “Synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters are subordinate to the confessions and ‘shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order’ (Church Order, Art. 29). All officebearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances” (p. 603).

Noting that the report to Synod 1975 still lacked clarity, Synod 1995 addressed the issue of clarifying what “settled and binding” means. A majority and minority report were presented, but both were defeated.

As a denomination, we are in need of such clarity.

II. Overture

Classis Chatham overtures Synod 2021 to clarify the distinctions in categories of synodical pronouncements, decisions, reports, positions, and advice and the extent to which they bind the churches.

Grounds:

1. We are concerned that other churches may also make decisions based on an incomplete knowledge of which synodical decisions are binding and which are not.
2. This needs to be addressed separately from reports on the floor of synod because this is a matter of some urgency as other congregations wrestle with different issues.
3. As churches have conversations, they need to have strong, biblically supported guidance from the denomination.
4. Churches need to understand the clear boundaries of our synodical decisions as we move forward in covenant with one another.
5. Synod has not clearly articulated what it means that synodical decisions are considered settled and binding.

Classis Chatham
Ron Middel, stated clerk

Overture 4: Instruct Neland Avenue CRC to Rescind Its Decision
(*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Background

According to the November 2020 issue of *The Banner* (pp. 22-23), Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, “installed a woman in a same-sex marriage as a deacon last June.” It appears that, aside from the question of her marriage, this woman is well suited to serve in this role. After all, according to a Calvin University *Chimes* article (“Local CRC appoints deacon who is in same-sex marriage,” Sept. 10, 2020), “the deacon in question was elected to the council three times prior to her marriage, including a term as chair of deacons.”

Even so, the question pertaining to her marriage is a significant one. For while *The Banner* article indicates that the council of Neland Avenue (1) received advice from Classis Grand Rapids East before this deacon was installed and (2) “does not believe that it has ‘crossed any line of orthodoxy, only pastoral advice [from synods],” it is nevertheless also true that, since 1973, synodical decisions and guidance have consistently upheld the traditional interpretation of Scripture related to the ethics of same-sex sexual practice and, more specifically, to same-sex marriage. This suggests that in ordaining a person in a same-sex marriage, Neland Avenue CRC has acted outside the bounds of (1) past synodical decisions and guidance and (2) the CRCNA’s interpretation of Scripture as it relates to same-sex marriage—and, in so doing, has broken covenant with its fellow churches.

II. Overture

Classis Holland of the Christian Reformed Church overtures Synod 2021 to instruct Classis Grand Rapids East to instruct the council of Neland Avenue CRC to rescind its decision to ordain a deacon in a same-sex marriage, thus nullifying this deacon’s current term.

Grounds:

1. Past synodical decisions and guidance related to Scripture's teaching on the permissibility of a Christian to engage in same-sex sexual practice or to enter a same-sex marriage suggest that Neland Avenue's decision to ordain a deacon in a same-sex marriage is outside the trajectory of the intentions of past synods. See the CRCNA's Position Statement on homosexuality and bibliographical references to synodical reports, decisions, and guidance on this topic at crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/homosexuality.
2. Synod 2016 recommended "to the churches the pastoral guidance of the minority report" from the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 917). Even though the pastoral guidance from this minority report acknowledged the possibility that a person in a civil same-sex marriage might comply with CRC teaching (for example, when a person entered a same-sex marriage before becoming a Christian and for legal reasons, while committing to celibacy within it, chose to remain in that marriage after becoming a Christian; see *Agenda for Synod 2016*, p. 439), that same report discourages Christians from entering a same-sex marriage and concludes that entering a same-sex marriage disqualifies one from serving as an ordained leader in the church (*Agenda for Synod 2016*, p. 442). To add weight to the guidance of the minority report, Synod 2016 decided to add a reference to it in the Church Order of the CRCNA, with the result that Church Order Supplement, Article 69-c now reads as follows: "The pastoral guidance recommended to the churches by Synod 2016, found in the minority report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage (*Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 436-43), represents one example of how synod has determined that a marriage is considered to be in conflict with the Word of God."
3. The Council of Delegates Fall 2020 update ("COD Highlights," October 22, 2020) includes a report of the following action taken by the COD: The COD "tasked the executive committee to draft a letter to Neland Ave. CRC, grieving their decision to break covenant with the CRC in this way before Synod 2021 has had the opportunity to address the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality." Such action by the COD suggests that Neland Ave. CRC acted outside the agreed-upon parameters by which we operate in the CRCNA.

Classis Holland
Calvin Hoogstra, stated clerk

Overture 5: Admonish and/or Discipline Neland Avenue CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.) (*Deferred from 2021*)

As Classis B.C. North-West, we were distressed to hear of Neland Avenue CRC's actions to ordain an individual to the office of deacon who is involved in a same-sex marriage. Out of love for God and our brothers and sisters in Christ at Neland Avenue CRC, we overture synod to administer godly

admonishment and/or appropriate disciplinary action, if necessary, to bring Neland Avenue CRC back within the bounds of Scripture, our confessions, and the position of our denomination on same-sex marriage as stated in the 1973 report on homosexuality.

Grounds:

1. An officebearer holds that office within the denomination and not merely in a local congregation or classis.
2. Neland Avenue CRC has taken action contradictory to the position of the CRCNA, which is rooted in a biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman.
3. As per Report 47, section IV, B, 2 (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 603): "Synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters are subordinate to the confessions and 'shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order' (Church Order Art. 29). *All officebearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances*" (emphasis added). Under the list "Compilation of Synodical Pronouncements" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, pp. 602-603) *homosexuality* is listed as an ethical matter. By ordaining a woman in a same-sex marriage to the office of deacon, Neland Avenue CRC was not merely disagreeing with "pastoral advice"; they were acting in direct contravention to the denominationally agreed upon synodical pronouncement that was considered settled and binding.
4. On the question of whether synod is only able to intervene if an appeal is received, we draw the following to your attention:
 - a. According to Church Order Article 27, synod has a broader authority than classis, and a delegated authority over classis. According to Church Order Article 28-b, "A major assembly shall deal only with those matters which concern its churches in common or which could not be finished in the minor assemblies." This gives synod the prerogative to deal with the matter at Neland Avenue CRC as this matter concerns churches of the denomination in common.
 - b. Church Order Article 30-b states that "synod may establish rights for other appeals and adopt rules for processing them." This entitles synod, for the well-being of the church, to hear and adjudicate appeals without being bound by precedent or even the existing current rules of appeal.
 - c. According to the *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, section V (Matters Legally before Synod), B, 12 (Other Matters), it states, "All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable." This indicates quite clearly that synod need not be curtailed in discussing matters that are of concern to the entire denomination on the ground that they have not come to synod via an appeal from a classis. Synod is free to deal with "other matters" when it judges them to be of importance for the well-being of the denomination. Synod ultimately is able to decide for itself what should be on the agenda.
5. Neland Avenue CRC proceeded with its actions despite having full knowledge that the denomination's Committee to Articulate a Foun-

dition-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality was to be released prior to Synod 2021 and taken up in its agenda.

Classis B.C. North-West
Kathy N. Smith, stated clerk

**Overture 6: Hold Neland Avenue CRC Accountable to Scripture,
Church Order, and the Covenant for Officebearers**
(Deferred from 2021)

I. Background

Last fall we were grieved to hear of the action of Neland Avenue CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.) to knowingly install to the office of deacon an individual who is involved in a same-sex marriage. To our knowledge, Neland Avenue CRC has not repented of this decision. Also, Classis Grand Rapids East has not disciplined Neland Avenue CRC.

While we have great compassion for individuals who experience same-sex attraction, at the same time we cannot compromise on the truth of Scripture. Out of love for God and our brothers and sisters in Christ at Neland Avenue CRC, we are compelled to overture synod regarding Neland Avenue CRC.

We bring this overture in the spirit of Christian discipleship: “The purpose of admonition and discipline is to restore those who err to faithful obedience to God and full fellowship with the congregation, to maintain the holiness of the church, and thus to uphold God’s honor” (Church Order Art. 78).

II. Overture

Classis Rocky Mountain overtures synod to hold Neland Avenue CRC accountable to Scripture, Church Order, and the Covenant for Officebearers, administering godly admonishment and appropriate disciplinary action, if necessary, so that they may be restored to live within the bounds of Scripture, our CRC confessions, and Church Order adopted by common consent.

Grounds:

1. Neland Avenue CRC has taken action contradictory to the stance of the CRCNA, which has clearly and repeatedly concluded that Scripture is opposed to same-sex behavior, specifically same-sex marriage (Church Order Supplement, Art. 69-c).
2. Neland Avenue CRC refused to provide admonition and discipline. “Members who have sinned in life or doctrine shall be faithfully disciplined by the consistory” (Art. 81-a).
3. Neland Avenue CRC’s actions oppose our CRC Church Order. Specifically, these actions “violate the Covenant for Officebearers” and “seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct” (Art. 83) and fail to faithfully observe the Church Order “adopted by common consent” (Art. 86).
4. Neland Avenue CRC’s actions threaten the witness and mission of the CRCNA. Both gospel witness locally and fellowship with churches globally are put at risk by these actions.

5. Classis Grand Rapids East has not exercised its responsibility to hold Neland Avenue CRC accountable for its actions, so the task of admonition and discipline falls to synod.

Classis Rocky Mountain
Mark W. Hilbelink, stated clerk

Overture 7: Ensure that Neland Avenue CRC Deposes their Deacon Living in a Same-sex Marriage or Disaffiliate the Congregation from the CRCNA (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Introduction

Early in the summer of 2020, Neland Avenue CRC installed new office-bearers in their church and our denomination. When doing so, they recognized that one of the members they were ordaining as a deacon was living in a same-sex marriage. Fully understanding that this was contrary to synod's clear decisions, and fully aware that a synodical study committee was scheduled to report to Synod 2021, their council distributed a statement to their congregation in August 2020 (Appendix A). As something like this had never been done in our denomination, news of it quickly spread, and it became public knowledge through an article in the *Calvin University Chimes* (Sept. 10, 2020) and then in *The Banner* (Sept. 14, 2020).

After the matter became public knowledge, the councils of Coopersville (Mich.) CRC (Appendices B and C); North Blendon CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan (Appendix D); and North Street CRC, Zeeland, Michigan (Appendix E)—as well as many other churches in our denomination—sent letters of admonition to Neland Avenue CRC. Neland Avenue CRC replied with a form letter of response (Appendix F) and a copy of their communication to their congregation (Appendix A). In addition, Classis Zeeland sent a communication to Classis Grand Rapids East (Appendix G), calling them to admonish and discipline Neland Avenue CRC and bring them back into line with our covenant commitments. To date, Neland Avenue has refused to recognize our denominational covenant, including our agreement to abide by our shared decisions at synod, and to reverse their decision and rejoin our fellowship.

A. Biblical grounds

As the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality has already provided detailed arguments around the topic of what Scripture says about homosexuality (section XII, pp. 96-113), and our denominational position has been consistent since the adoption of Report 42 by Synod 1973, we see no need to make a biblical case against same-sex marriage within this overture. It is profitable to be reminded of the biblical patterns of discipline. In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus gives us a clear pattern for handling sins within the body of Christ. If someone sins against you, you are expected to go and tell them. If they refuse to listen, you take others with you. If they still will not repent, you tell the church. If they will not listen to the church, they are to be considered outside church fellowship. Multiple congregations have communicated directly with Neland Avenue CRC. Fail-

ing in that, they have communicated with Classis Grand Rapids East. In the spirit of Matthew 18, the next step is to tell the broader church.

Matthew 18 is not the only word or example regarding discipline in Scripture. The situation at Neland Avenue CRC is similar to what is described in 1 Corinthians 5. The Corinthian church was boasting in their tolerance, as they let a member living in sexual immorality continue among them undisciplined. In that case, Paul did not contact that member, or his district elder or pastor. Instead, in covenant with the Corinthian church and representing the broader church, Paul declared what they must do: “Expel the wicked man from among you.” If they had refused, they would have expelled themselves from that broader covenant community and ceased to be a church in fellowship. The church is local, but it is not only local. The church also exists at the broader level. Based on the precedent established by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 5, synod has the biblical grounds and authority to address Neland Avenue CRC directly concerning those ordained as officebearers, and to demand that they either return to living within our covenant bonds or leave our fellowship.

B. Historical precedent

While Neland Avenue CRC may be the first church to publicly ordain someone living in a same-sex marriage, this is not the first time synod has addressed a council with regard to ordaining someone living in sexual immorality. In October 2002, the council of First CRC in Toronto, Ontario, sent correspondence to Classis Toronto, informing the classis that they intended to nominate a member in a same-sex marriage as an officebearer in their church. This set off multiple communications and overtures for years within Classis Toronto and involving synod. In 2005, though no officebearer was ever ordained, synod formed a “committee in loco,” which met three times with Classis Toronto and First CRC, Toronto, until First CRC stated in writing that they would adhere to the teachings of the CRC; otherwise the congregation would have been disaffiliated from the denomination. This is a clear precedent for what our denomination has done in this very situation in the past.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Zeeland overtures synod to do the following:

A. Appoint a committee in loco to deal directly with Neland Avenue CRC on this public matter that affects our whole denomination.

Grounds:

1. An officebearer holds their position throughout the entire denomination, not merely in a local congregation or classis.
2. We all sign the same Covenant for Officebearers and, by doing so, we pledge to be accountable to one another.
3. Synod appointed a committee in loco for First CRC, Toronto, while the congregation intended to ordain an officebearer living in sexual immorality. Neland Avenue CRC has already ordained such an officebearer, and thus a committee in loco is all the more warranted.
4. Due to the very public nature of Neland Avenue CRC’s actions, members and congregations are beginning to contemplate leaving the

denomination if this matter is not handled. Doing nothing is neither right, practical, nor possible.

B. Declare that Neland Avenue CRC has six months from the adjournment of Synod 2021 to either repent for breaking covenant and publicly depose their deacon or begin the process of disaffiliation.

Grounds:

1. Neland Avenue CRC has entered into these actions intentionally and has broken covenant with our denomination. If they have disagreed with our stance on any issue, there are means by which they could have overtured synod. Publicly acting in defiance of our agreed-upon understanding of orthodoxy and orthopraxy is an untenable way to live together as a denomination.
2. Failure to discipline a publicly wayward church is to disregard the third mark of a true church (Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

C. If Neland Avenue CRC removes their deacon, the committee in loco shall encourage Neland Avenue and Classis Grand Rapids East to faithfully live out their covenant vows of discipleship and discipline, as they love and care for all of their members in line with our denominational covenant commitments.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Appendix A

Neland Avenue CRC Statement to Congregation

August 2020

Dear Neland Congregation,

Earlier this summer we marked our usual transition of leadership, installing gifted members to serve in our Council. But we note the significance that for the first time this year one of our newly appointed deacons is a member of a same sex marriage (SSM). This has caused us to be reflective on Neland's identity and mission, and the journey that has brought us to this point. We hope these reflections help to clarify things and shed more light than heat on this matter.

As a church, Neland has been through many challenging chapters, and faced many challenging issues over its history – from the racial tensions of the 1960's-70's, to the debates over women in church office in the 1980's and '90's, to the church's relationship with LGBT+ persons in recent years. These periods have been times of much pain and disagreement, but also of learning to live in tension, with more grace and humility and truth. And so, while we acknowledge that Neland's journey toward LGBT+ inclusion has resulted in another period of strain, we trust in God's promise that "in Christ all things hold together." (Col 1:17)

Our Journey Together

Over a decade of active dialogue in our congregation, under the prayerful guidance of Council and a Generous Spaciousness Committee.

Both biblical and scientific experts consulted. Many educational events and speakers from a variety of viewpoints.

Much time spent in prayer, seeking God's will and the Spirit's leading.

Several specific Council retreats on LGBT+ concerns, and restorative circles.

Great patience from our SSM members, and participation from many congregants of various viewpoints.

Thoughtful engagement with the Classis GR East report, synodical reports, and pastoral guidelines of Synod.

A 2016 survey of positions in the congregation, revealing a broad range of views from traditional (40%) to affirming (40%), and in between (20%).

Several Colossian Way small groups on Sexuality and Gender, and a Sunday evening series on navigating adaptive challenges/ change.

An extensive study and report by our Nominations Committee in 2019.

Requested and received assistance from church advisors from Classis GR East.

Lament over the gradual departure of some of our members who felt we needed to nail down either more 'traditionalist' or more 'affirming' positions.

An increasing number of nominations for SSM members from the congregation each year. Much greater congregational participation in the selection and election of office-bearers this year (2020), and a very strong affirmation vote of all nominees (each received over 87%).

Where We Stand Today

Identity: Neland is a 100+ year old intergenerational Christian Reformed Church.

We are reformed and always reforming. We believe Christ sent us the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. No church has ever "arrived."

We are a people on a journey, seeking to remain faithful to God's Word as we also learn more from God's world. This includes matters of gender and sexuality.

Mission: Neland seeks to be a place where all will experience the deep welcome of Christ, especially in these divisive times. We lament that so often the church has pushed away LGBT+ persons or refused to incorporate their gifts.

Gifts: We are a place where all members may fully use the gifts God has given them for the common good, and receive God's means of grace. We see the Spirit at work in our SSM members as much as any other.

Unity: We don't all agree on SSM, or on having a SSM member in leadership. However, we also don't believe that having a uniform position on this matter is necessary to maintain unity as a body of Christ. The gospel runs deeper. In opening a space for dialogue on this issue over the past decade, Neland members have grown to appreciate the important commitments that each holds dear, and to realize that "all things hold together in Christ," and not in our hard-fought opinions. In Christ, our default position should be one of gracious inclusion and hospitality; our differences need not divide.

Humility and Gratitude: Thus, although we are humbled that we could not come to complete agreement on this issue, we are grateful that there is a place at Neland for all God's children to serve with all their gifts.

Q & A

Is Neland "getting out ahead" of Synod, or breaking the rules of our denomination?

Neland remains strongly committed to the CRC, its theology, its mission. We are hardly a "rebel" congregation, but remain deeply invested in denominational ministries, including Calvin University, Calvin Seminary, and our mission agencies.

While Neland continues to work hard to follow the pastoral advice on LGBT+ inclusion of Synod 1973 and 2002, our Council found it could not do what Synod 2016 advised: namely, consider SSM persons deserving of church discipline. The SSM person we have elected and affirmed as deacon is clearly gifted and spiritually mature. She has been a deacon twice before, and on our Admin Committee as chair of deacons, in the years prior to her marriage. She was nominated by many in the congregation. Although some in our Council are not in favor of SSM, none would make a motion to put her under discipline. So Council concluded that as a member in good standing, she should be eligible for office just like any other adult confessing member. The congregation overwhelmingly voted to affirm her nomination.

Our understanding is that all synodical reports and decisions related to homosexuality have been pastoral advice given to the churches (1973, 2002, and 2016). According to Calvin Seminary's Adjunct Professor of Church Polity, Kathy Smith, who spoke with our congregation in several educational sessions, this is of a less binding nature than confessional or church order matters (Synod 1975). Unlike the women-in-office issue, there are no church order articles that explicitly regulate what congregations may or may not do with respect to LGBT+ and SSM members. So we do not believe we have crossed any line of orthodoxy, only pastoral advice.

Does this decision mean that Neland is an "affirming" church?

That depends on what is meant by the word "affirming" Affirming of LGBT+ persons and that all members may use their gifts to serve God? Yes! Certainly. Affirming in the sense that all Neland members support a particular stance on SSM? No. We will continue to be a community with diverse opinions on that.

Does Neland still believe in the authority of Scripture?

Absolutely! We continue to rely on God's Word as our only rule in faith and life. However, not all of us believe that scripture is as clear on the question of SSM as many of us once believed. Our classis (Classis GR East) submitted to Synod a very thorough report in 2016 that shows a wide range of biblical interpretations one can support with a reformed view of scripture. Many respected reformed/evangelical scholars now support the full participation of LGBT+ persons in the life of the church, including those who are SSM. We also await the report of our denominational study committee on human sexuality, though we regret that they were not given full freedom to consider questions of biblical interpretation.

Thus, given the present reality of a range of opinions within the CRC and the church at large, we do not believe it is right to bind all consciences in our congregation to one position. Could the Spirit be leading Christ's church into more truth? Challenging as it may be, we must be open to taking that journey together.

Family in Christ, it is difficult to live in tension on these important matters, but we firmly believe "there is a place for you at Neland" – that's not just a motto. We believe that God has the strength to maintain our unity, in the midst of our differences, because "all things hold together in Christ."

Please let us know if you have any questions, comments, or would like to talk more about this letter. Our journey is certainly not done! And pray with us that God will work in us together just what is pleasing to him: more and more of Christ's perfect love.

Yours in Christ,
Neland's Council and Pastors

Appendix B

Coopersville CRC Correspondence to Council of Neland Avenue CRC

September 21st, 2020

To the Council of Neland CRC,

It is not with any joy or delight that we reach out to you, but rather out of our covenant commitment and love, that we find it necessary to send this communication. Yet, this is the very reason for which we are united in a denomination, to hold and be held accountable to God's Word. We recognize how easily we can go astray, as the old hymn says, that we are all "prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." With that truth in mind, we are compelled to contact you regarding your ordination of a deacon, that is living in a public, same-sex relationship, as reported in the Chimes, Banner, and your own position paper / explanation. This deacon must be expelled from office immediately because their ordination violates both the spirit and letter of our denominational agreement, as well as the plain teaching of Scripture.

From your writing, it is clear that you are not ignorant of how our denomination, through previous Synodical decisions and statements, has understood the topic of same-sex relationships. In 1973 our denomination explained, and has affirmed multiple times since, along with the catholic Christian church, that intimate same-sex relations are contrary to both Scripture and God's design and order. While you allude to new and unorthodox interpretations, that seek to cast doubt on what God has said; instead of making your case, as such to Synod, you have chosen to ignore our covenant by your actions, and become a law to yourselves. While all decisions of Synod are considered settled and binding, you have besmirched our denomination, by calling our understanding, merely "pastoral advice." While that is technically where it lands, you are treating it as advice that one is free to take or leave. Your actions in this way are similar to an uncle Jeb, who thinks his theory of the earth being flat is equal to the scientific understanding of gravity, as they are both called "theories." While an "uncle Jeb" may not know better, we all do.

Synod 2016 made the ruling that the ministers of our Denomination were not to participate in the solemnizing of same-sex unions. Of course, we understand that those in our culture and even other denominations or groups may do otherwise. But in our church order, we are held to a higher standard. How then, as you have reported, could you ordain to the office of a deacon, one that you could not participate in solemnizing their relationship? Our church order permits Elders, with prior approval from Classis, to lead Communion. But, there is no such provision for an Elder to ordain office bearers. Only ordained ministers are allowed to hold an ordination service, to install elders and deacons. To ordain an office bearer, publicly living in a relationship that the same minister could not participate in solemnizing, is a very serious breach of conduct.

But, while this action was a violation of both the spirit and letter of our denominational covenant, far more seriously, it is contrary to God's Word. In both 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1, Scripture lays down the qualifications for those who would be ordained in the body of Christ. These lists are both largely summarized in the opening language of Titus 1:6, that office bearers must be "above reproach." Yet this union that your deacon is living in, is far from above reproach. Speaking to the issue of marriage, in Matthew 19, Jesus affirmed the created order of union, and that such a union was only lawful, ordained by God, among one man and one woman, covenanted together for life. Any sexual and full life unions, outside of that formulation, both Scripture and our Confessions condemn as a form of adultery, breaking the seventh commandment. To have a deacon, living in open adultery among you, is a horrible reproach to the church of Christ. And so, we write to demand the immediate removal and discipline of this office bearer, as well as the public repentance for your divisive actions.

Sincerely,
The Elders of Coopersville CRC

Appendix C

Coopersville CRC Response to Neland Avenue CRC Correspondence

November 23rd, 2020

To the Council of Neland CRC,

Thank you for your response, and for forwarding to us the letter of explanation that you gave your Congregation.

In your response to us, you state that, "We have come to believe that Scripture not only permits us, but calls us to the decision that we have made." As Reformed believers, we all confess that Scripture is our final authority for both life and doctrine. When Scripture calls us to something, then we must submit. If any will not submit to Scripture, they must be disciplined, out of love and care for those in error. There certainly is no option for us all to just "find room for differing positions." But, while you are willing to ignore the "pastoral advice" of previous Synods, and the Biblical arguments that they made, you are not putting forth your arguments for how you came to this novel understanding of Scripture. If previous Synods are all in error, make the case in your gravamen to Classis and Synod, and let us open the Scriptures and reason together. If there was truly a "deep commitment"

to our “Denomination” on your part, that is the path you would have been compelled to take. Instead, you are willing to let our Denomination continue in our error, and just do your own thing, while proclaiming our ongoing unity. Therefore, Neland is behaving as if you are an independent congregation and a law to yourselves. This goes far beyond just “getting out ahead of Synod.” Depose your deacon, and make your case through the proper channels, and let us all reason together.

Second, from your Q & A section 1. b., you say: “our Council could not do what Synod 2016 advised: namely consider SSM persons deserving of church discipline...” and, “Although some in our Council are not in favor of SSM, none would make a motion to put her under discipline.” As many of us have reminded our children, two wrongs never make a right. We are grieved that you are not living up to your covenant commitment, to discipline members of your congregation living in ongoing error, either in life or in doctrine, as you have promised you would do. Just because you are negligent in the first matter does not permit you to then go and ordain an erring member to the role of an office-bearer among your congregation, and throughout our Denomination. Again, we plead with you to be honest and make your case. Scripture does not say both “yes” and “no” upon such a critical matter as the Seventh Commandment and human sexuality. Live up to your covenant responsibilities and promises. Make the case how all of those that have gone before you are in error, and how we all must now change, or you must come back into line with our covenant bonds.

Sincerely,
The Council of Coopersville CRC

Appendix D

North Blendon CRC Correspondence to Council of Neland Avenue CRC

North Blendon CRC
7284 Taylor St
Hudsonville, MI 49426
September 14, 2020

Neland Avenue CRC
940 Neland Ave SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Dear Council of Neland Avenue CRC,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wanted to communicate with you as a fellow church of Christ in the Christian Reformed Church in response to your recent decision to appoint someone in a same-sex marriage to the office of deacon as reported in the recent Banner article. We have reviewed your August 2020 congregational letter explaining Neland’s journey to this point. You have certainly given this decision much consideration. However, we believe the decision to ordain someone in a same-sex marriage to be not only against the commands of Scripture but a volatile action that impacts the entire denomination. While you have determined that synod’s decisions on homosexuality in 1973, 2002 and 2016 were merely

advice, many if not most congregations in our denominational fellowship maintain that synod's decisions reflect what the Bible clearly teaches. While your congregation appears to be evenly divided on the topic but is able to continue together despite this disagreement, many if not most CRC congregations (including ours) believe this action to be a breaking of our covenant together only one year before we are to make decisions together at Synod 2021 on matters of sexuality.

As fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who believe the Bible is clear on God's will for sexuality, we urge you to reconsider your decision. As fellow members in the Christian Reformed Church, we urge you to reconsider your decision for the sake of harmony in our denomination leading up to the difficult decisions on the plate of Synod 2021.

Yours in Christ,
The Council of North Blendon CRC

Appendix E

North Street CRC Correspondence to Elders of Neland Avenue CRC

December 21st, 2020
North Street Christian Reformed Church
20 E. Main Avenue
Zeeland, Michigan 49464

Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church
940 Neland Avenue
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

To the Elders of Neland Avenue CRC,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The reason for our communication with you is because of your ordination of a deacon who is living in a public, same-sex relationship as has been reported in *The Chimes*, *The Banner* and your own public explanations. You have justified your decision by stating that the decisions of the synod 1973, 2002 and 2016 are merely, "pastoral advice," but you have not repudiated the Biblical undergirding of these decisions in order to Biblically justify your decision. We are writing to you not simply because your decisions are in violation of synodical positions, but because your decisions are in violation of the Word of God (Genesis 19:1-11, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, I Corinthians 6:9-10, I Timothy 1:10). Synod 2016 made the ruling that ministers in our denomination were not to participate in the solemnizing of same-sex unions. How then, could you (the pastor) ordain to the office of deacon a person that you could not participate in the solemnizing of their relationship? Not only that, but this deacon does not meet the qualifications laid out in Titus 1:7 of being above reproach.

Because your decisions are in violation of God's Word, because your actions are in violation of denominational decisions, because your deacon is Biblically unqualified to serve and because you are dividing your own church and our denomination, we are imploring you as brothers in Christ, for the unity and purity of the church and the glory of Christ, 1) to repent

of your sin and turn back to the Lord Jesus, 2) to remove this deacon from her office and 3) call her to repentance and if unwilling, to bring her under the discipline of the church. We offer this call out of Christian love and with the Biblical warning found in James 3:1, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

In Christ,
The Elders of North Street CRC

Appendix F

Neland Avenue CRC Response to Council of Coopersville CRC

Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church
940 NELAND SE
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49507
(616) 245-0669
www.neland.org

Pastors:
Joel DeMoor (616) 245-0669 jdemoor@neland.org
Cindy de Jong (616) 245-0669 cdejong@neland.org

October 28, 2020
Clerk of Council
Coopersville Christian Reformed Church
200 Henry St.
Coopersville, MI 49404

Dear Council of Coopersville CRC,

Thank you for your letter of concern. It is clear that you have a deep commitment to Scripture, the gospel, and to our denomination, for which we are grateful. We also share those deep commitments. We did not enter this decision lightly. As we describe in the enclosed letter, it reflects 10 years of study and prayer, seeking the Spirit’s leading. We have come to believe that Scripture not only permits us, but calls us to the decision we have made. It is our fervent prayer that our denomination will find room for congregations to have differing positions on these difficult issues, even as we affirm our unity in Christ and unity of mission.

In the spirit of Ephesians 4:2, please continue to pray for us, to be patient and forebear with us, as we “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” We promise to do the same for you and your ministry. Blessings to all!

In Christ,
Larry Louters, Admin Elder
on behalf of the Council of Neland Avenue CRC

Enclosure: Letter from Council to Neland Congregation (Appendix A)

Appendix G

Classis Zeeland Correspondence to Classis Grand Rapids East

October 1st, 2020

To the delegates of Classis Grand Rapids East,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wish to communicate with you as one classis to another our deepest concern about the Neland Avenue congregation.

It has been reported in The Banner and the Calvin University Chimes that Neland has ordained someone to the office of deacon who is living in a same-sex marriage. The Neland council has concluded that living in a same-sex marriage is compatible with leading in the church of Christ. We believe the decision to ordain someone in a same-sex marriage to be not only against the commands of God in Scripture but a volatile action that impacts the entire denomination. Synod's decisions and declarations of 1973, 2002 and 2016 reflect a denomination that believes marriage to be between one man and one woman. Though Neland Avenue has determined that these synodical decisions are merely pastoral advice, many others in our denominational fellowship believe this move by Neland to be a blatant violation of God's commands. Even if your classis and delegates are divided on what the Bible says regarding same-sex marriage, surely you can understand the concern for denominational unity. For the members and congregations under the "Christian Reformed Church" name who believe the Bible's commands are clear on sexuality, Neland's decision will provoke doubts about the denomination and cynicism about its future. As the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality reports to Synod 2021, the agitation sparked by Neland's move will make the difficult decisions before Synod 2021 even more anxious.

We appeal to you on the basis of our Lord Jesus Christ to respond to Neland Avenue's decision with loving admonition and discipline. At the very least, we urge you to act for the sake of unity and harmony within the church of Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Classis Zeeland of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Overture 8: Hold Neland Avenue CRC and Classis Grand Rapids East Accountable to Church Order and the Covenant for Officebearers *(Deferred from 2021)*

I. Background

In a letter dated August 2020, the Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church (NACRC) council announced to its congregation two actions that significantly violate the confessions all CRC officebearers have covenanted to uphold. First, they indicated that their council has chosen not to place members living in a same-sex marriage (SSM) under general discipline. Second, they have ordained one of these members—a woman living in a SSM—to the office of deacon.

Classis Grand Rapids East is the appropriate ecclesiastical body to adjudicate and carry out the special discipline Christian Reformed Church Order prescribes for a violation of the Covenant for Officebearers. However, Classis Grand Rapids East has not fulfilled its responsibility.

All Christian Reformed officebearers have signed the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church by which they promise to “honor this covenant for the well-being of the church.” Among other things, entering into this Covenant obligates the signer to

Affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. *These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.*

Grateful for these expressions of faith, *we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.* (emphasis added)¹

The Covenant for Officebearers also specifies a clear procedure for presenting a confessional difficulty:

Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God’s Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. If the church asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the church’s judgment and authority.²

In August 2020 the NACRC council announced in a letter to its congregation that “for the first time this year one of our newly appointed deacons is a member of a same-sex marriage (SSM).”³ In addition, their letter indicates that “although some in our council are not in favor of SSM, none would make a motion to put her under discipline.”

The omission of the NACRC council to place this member (and others) under discipline contradicts our confessions and therefore is in violation of the Covenant for Officebearers that these officers have signed. The subsequent action of appointing this person to their church council illustrates a flagrant disregard for scriptural and confessional fidelity.

Homosexuality is clearly prohibited in Lord’s Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism. There the Catechism’s author, Dr. Zacharias Ursinus, in addressing God’s will in the seventh commandment, indicated that “God condemns all *unchastity*” (emphasis added).⁴ Ursinus used the word *unchastity* (*unkeuschheit*) twice and *chaste* (*keusch*) once in this short Lord’s Day, and he left no ambiguity as to how he defined *chastity* in his commentary.⁵ “CHASTITY, in

¹ Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5).

² Ibid.

³ Neland Avenue CRC Letter, August 2020.

⁴ Heidelberg Catechism, Q.&A. 108.

⁵ German translations taken from Van Den Brink, J.N. Bakhuizen, *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften in Authentieke Teksten met Inleiding en Tekstvergelijkingen* Door (Uitgeverij Ton Bolland: Amsterdam, 1976).

general, is a virtue contributing to the purity of body and soul, agreeing with the will of God, and shunning all lusts prohibited by God. . . .”⁶

Ursinus went on to designate three classes of lusts:

The first class or kind are those which are contrary to nature, and from the devil—such as are even contrary to this our corrupt nature, not only because they corrupt and spoil it of conformity with God, but also because this our corrupt nature shrinks from them and abhors them. The lusts of which the apostle Paul speaks in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, are of this class, as the confounding of sexes, also abuses of the female sex.⁷

Ursinus also uses the word *unchaste* (*unkeuscher*) to describe those who continue to live wicked lives in Q.&A. 87. Although he does not explicitly list homosexual activity in the list of vices given in this answer, he does fully include the text of 1 Corinthians 6:9 in his commentary, using the word **effeminate** (in the English translation) to render the original *μαλακοὶ οὐτε ἀρσενικοῖται* written by Paul. It may be that Ursinus kept this phrase out of the catechism because one of the primary uses of the catechism was to be a pedagogical tool for children, but it is clear from his commentary that he considered homosexual activity *unchaste*.

In that Ursinus was so clear in his commentary about the inclusion of homosexual activity within the meaning of *unchastity* in both Q.&A. 87 and 108-109, it is not necessary to further establish, either theologically or exegetically, that NACRC’s teaching and actions regarding SSM members are unconfessional since the *prima facie* teaching of both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Scriptures which it confesses indicate the sinfulness of homosexual behavior. The burden of proof would be on those seeking to show that Scripture and the confessions condone homosexual behavior.

The proper course of action for NACRC to follow in seeking to exempt their SSM member(s) from general discipline and to promote the eligibility of SSM members for church office would have been to follow the Church Order procedures for filing a “confessional-revision gravamen” regarding Q.&A. 87 and 108-109.⁸ There is no record of NACRC, or any other laypersons or ecclesiastical bodies having done this with respect to Lord’s Day 41.

NACRC’s decision to not discipline members actively participating in and promoting an activity which contradicts both Scripture and a confession, and then taking the additional step of installing one of these members as a deacon, necessarily means that this church is also in violation of confessional imperatives to practice church discipline (H.C., Q.&A. 81-85; and Belgic Confession, Art. 29, 32), to which NACRC council members obligated themselves upon their signing of the Covenant for Officebearers. Therefore, the entire NACRC council has violated the Covenant for Officebearers of the Christian Reformed Church.

According to Church Order Article 83, “Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers.” Although the Church Order is vague in how special discipline might be applied to an en-

⁶ Ursinus, Zacharias; tr. G. W. Williard; *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 590.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁸ Christian Reformed Church Order, Supplement, Article 5.

tire council, the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* outlines the procedures to be followed for a church council to be disciplined by a classis:

1. The deposition of a council by a classis has been upheld by synod on various occasions.
2. Ordinarily, before a classis proceeds to the deposition of a council, or members of a council, the classis must proceed by way of suspension in accord with Article 82 of the Church Order. Before suspension or deposition may take place, the assembly must determine which of the officebearers in the council is/are subject to the discipline imposed. Discipline by its nature must be applied to individuals rather than to groups or assemblies. . . .
3. A classis may not depose a council that has appealed to synod. This is an exception to the general rule that appeals do not normally suspend the judgment of an assembly. This exception, no doubt, is because of the seriousness of the issues involved.
4. In response to a specific case and its appeal, synod declared that the Church Order concerns itself with normal situations. When a situation is abnormal, the Church Order cannot be applied in a legalistic way (*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 28-29; *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 55).⁹

Classis Minnkota sent a letter outlining its concerns with NACRC's actions to NACRC, Classis Grand Rapids East, and the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA. NACRC replied back with a response indicating their reception of our letter and gave no indication that they would repent of their violations. Classis Grand Rapids East, which has a clear responsibility to adjudicate special discipline upon the NACRC council, has acknowledged Classis Minnkota's letter but has not taken any public action in fulfilling its responsibility to church discipline.

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2021 and the Council of Delegates, meeting in lieu of synod, to hold Neland Avenue CRC and Classis Grand Rapids East accountable to Christian Reformed Church Order and the Covenant for Officebearers, which specify that the Neland Avenue council be subjected to special discipline pursuant to Church Order Articles 82-84 for their decision to ordain a deacon living openly and unrepentantly in a sinful lifestyle. Ignoring these decisions and actions erodes both the commitment that the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has to Scripture as being the absolute normative authority for both ecclesiastical and individual life, as well as our confidence that our confessions plainly and accurately summarize what Scripture says.

Grounds:

1. NACRC's teachings and positions allowing members and officebearers to live unrepentantly in a SSM are in conflict with the Heidelberg Catechism's prohibition of unchaste living in Q.&A. 87 and Lord's Day 41, and their failure to enact general discipline upon their members violates Heidelberg Catechism Q.&A. 81-85 and Belgic Confession Articles 29 and 32.
2. The appropriate course of action for NACRC would have been to file a confessional-revision gravamen arguing that living in a SSM does not constitute *unchastity* prior to allowing SSM members to serve on their

⁹ *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (2019 Revision), pp. 270-71.

council, and then abide by the ecclesiastical rulings. They have not pursued this.

3. NACRC's decisions to maintain their unconfessional teachings and actions puts each council member in violation of the Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church.
4. Classis Grand Rapids East has a responsibility to enact special discipline upon the NACRC council for this covenantal violation, but has not taken appropriate action to fulfill their responsibility. Therefore it is incumbent upon Synod 2021 (and now necessarily the Council of Delegates) to uphold the scriptural and confessional teachings of the CRCNA.

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Appendix

A brief study of the history of synodical decisions shows us that classes and synod have intervened in the decisions of local congregations, even when those decisions did not originate in the consistory itself.

- 1877, Art. 16, p. 177: "Classis stands above a consistory and not only may, but must, concern itself with the smallest congregational matter if it be the cause of congregational difficulties and if the matter be legally brought to classis." (As found in Spaan, *Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 69.)
- Classis Muskegon deposed the minister and entire consistory of one of its churches in 1919 (with the later approval of the synodical deputies) when the consistory refused to depose its minister. (As presented in *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 526.)
- Synod 1926 upheld Classis Grand Rapids West in its actions deposing a minister and the majority of his consistory. Synod said that "Article 36 of the Church Order [today's article 27-b] gives the Classis jurisdiction over the consistory" (*Acts of Synod 1926*, p. 142). It also said:

The authority which such assemblies exercise in the name of Christ is also of a disciplinary nature. They have the right in the name of Christ to demand obedience and, in case of resistance, to use discipline. They exercise this power when a minister becomes delinquent either in doctrine or in life. Moreover, we point to the Formula of Subscription, which among other things, states: We shall be ready at all times to submit cheerfully to the judgment of consistory, classis, or synod under penalty, in case of refusal, to be suspended from our office by that very fact. This proves the right of a major assembly to act in a disciplinary manner in case of resistance or rebellion. The form does not speak of breaking with the denomination when one rebels, but of disciplinary action. This expression (to be suspended) requires an official act on the part of the major assembly whereby such discipline is exercised.

(*Acta der Synode 1926*, p. 324; trans. by Rev. L. Mulder as found in *Acts of Synod 1970*, pp. 91-92)

- In 1960, Classis Eastern Ontario approved a minister for the ministry in the CRC, but the synodical deputies objected due to doctrinal concerns of the candidate, and synod upheld their objection (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 46).

- Synod 1980 considered an appeal from the elders of a church in Classis Huron who had been deposed by the classis. They found that classis was not guilty of abusing their God-given authority over the minor assembly by lording it over the consistory on the following grounds:

- a. Classis did not exceed its authority when it engaged itself with the situation at Goderich CRC. Christ gave authority to the church as a whole and thereby entrusted authority to the occasions of its exercise in classis and synod as gatherings of the churches to maintain the unity of the congregations in both doctrine and life.
- b. The gathering of churches and their representatives in Jerusalem set a pattern of authoritative decisions, which pattern is followed in principle in the deliberations and decisions of the major assemblies.
- c. To contend that Classis Huron had no proper jurisdiction over the Goderich Consistory proceeds on a mistaken conception of the relation of the minor assembly to the major assembly. The same authority, constituting the same standards and the same goals, is applied by the several assemblies. Classis Huron adhered to the correct use of the authority delegated to them by Christ.

(*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 28-30)

Synod 1982 concurred with Synod 1980's ability to have authority over a consistory:

The Synod of 1980 declared that it is indeed proper according to Reformed Church polity for either classis or synod to intervene in the affairs of a local congregation, if the welfare of that congregation is at stake.

(*Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 55, 628-29)

- Synod 1988 upheld an appeal which overturned a decision that Classis Grand Rapids East had made in installing women associate elders (*Acts of Synod 1988*, pp. 542-43).
- Synod 1991 upheld the action of Classis Lake Erie in suspending the entire council of a church, and instructed the classis to immediately complete the discipline proceedings and deposition of an elder and a deacon (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 771).
- Synod 1993 heard an appeal from a CRC church in Classis Hudson when the classis suspended and deposed their minister. Synod did not sustain their appeal. Some of the grounds were as follows:
 - a. The Church Order does not specify that the local council is the only body that may initiate and impose special discipline.
 - b. Synodical precedents establish the authority of a classis to suspend and depose a minister without request or appeal from a member of the council or congregation of the church involved under circumstances such as those present in this matter.

(*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 529)

- Synod 1994 instructed all councils that had ordained women office-bearers to release them from office (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 520).
crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/women-ecclesiastical-office
- Synod 2004 instructed Classis Toronto to urge one of its churches to act in accordance with the guidelines of the reports of homosexuality of 1973 and 2002 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 632). Synod 2005 appointed an In Loco committee, and classis Toronto passed their recommendation, stating that the biblical/ethical guidelines of Synods 1973 and 2002 are

considered settled and binding, and their actions constitute a breaking of the denominational covenant (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, p. 459). Synod 2006 approved the work of the In Loco Committee after the church agreed to conform with the denomination's position (*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 653).

– Synod 2019 adopted the following motion:

That synod, given the recent history of Kinist teaching in a particular church of the CRCNA, admonish councils and classes to promote confessional fidelity and mutually to pursue special discipline of an officebearer who is found to hold views contrary to our standard.

Grounds:

- a. The pastor who was teaching Kinist views was able to do so for several years without special discipline being successful.
- b. By admonishing councils and classes to encourage confessional fidelity and special discipline when applicable, it sends a strong message from the broadest body of our denomination that Kinist teaching will not be tolerated in our churches.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 818-19)

Overture 9: Instruct Neland Avenue CRC Concerning a Deacon in Question (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Background

In 2016 synod commissioned a study committee to “articulate a foundation-laying biblical theology of human sexuality that pays particular attention to biblical conceptions of gender and sexuality” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 919). This committee was to distribute its final report in November 2020, for consideration at Synod 2021. This committee also presented an interim report to Synod 2019, updating the church on the progress of their work.

On September 14, 2020, *The Banner* reported that Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church (NACRC) installed a member in a same-sex marriage as a deacon earlier in the year. According to the article, this action was taken with the support of Classis Grand Rapids East. The underlying assumption behind NACRC's actions was, as reported in *The Banner*, “We do not believe we have crossed any line of orthodoxy, only pastoral advice” (*The Banner*, Sept. 14, 2020). This describes their understanding to be “that all synodical reports and decisions related to homosexuality have been pastoral advice given to the churches” (*The Banner*, Sept. 14, 2020).

In addition, NACRC intended to push this issue to the forefront in order to catalyze a change in the denomination's position on human sexuality. A longtime member of the church was quoted as saying, “Somebody had to push it a little [to change the denomination's stance on women in office], and then finally, I think, the denomination changed their stance. I think that's the kind of thing that could happen here” (*The Banner*, Sept. 14, 2020).

Predictably, these actions raised serious concerns among many churches in the CRC, including those in Classis Columbia. In the spirit of Matthew 18, several churches in Classis Columbia communicated their disappointment and concern over the actions of NACRC on this matter. Specifically these communications requested that the council of NACRC publicly acknowledge that

their actions are in violation of God's Word, and that NACRC remove the individual from the office of deacon. In response, the NACRC council maintained that "scripture not only permits us, but calls us to the decision we have made" (correspondence from NACRC council, dated Oct. 28, 2020). Since NACRC has, to date, resisted calls to repent from individual churches, the next step is to request the next assembly in order—namely the classis—to take action.

II. Overture

Classis Columbia overtures synod to instruct NACRC to remove the deacon in question from office, and to call on NACRC to acknowledge publicly that their actions were a violation of our covenant and a violation of God's Word.

Grounds:

1. It stretches credulity to believe that synod's position on same-sex marriage and human sexuality may be interpreted merely as "pastoral advice" that a church may freely ignore.
 - a. In reference to synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters, Synod 1975 stated, "All officebearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 603). In describing Reformed church governance, Louis Berkhof says that "no single church has the right to disregard matters of mutual agreement and of common interest. The local group may be even called upon occasionally to deny itself for the far greater good of the Church in general" (*Systematic Theology*, pp. 589-90; quoted in Henry DeMoor, *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, p. 152). In other words, decisions made by synod are considered "settled and binding," and it should be expected that local churches will honor these decisions. For churches to accept or reject synodical decisions (especially such weighty decisions as the reports on homosexuality) as "pastoral guidance" is to open the door for widespread congregationalism, ecclesiastical anarchy, or disunity within the church. Consider again Henry DeMoor's warning: "If member churches of the CRCNA can deny the plain intent of the church's constitution, the denomination quickly breaks into a collection of independent groups that become a law unto themselves" (*Church Order Commentary*, p. 433). So it is expected that synodical decisions, while not holding the same authority as creedal statements, are to be honored by our churches.
 - b. Furthermore, Church Order Article 69-c specifically states that a same-sex marriage is "considered to be in conflict with the Word of God." When Synod 2016 considered what this meant in relation to same-sex marriage, they stated that a same-sex marriage "represents one example of how synod has determined that a marriage is considered to be in conflict with the Word of God" (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 915). So, far from being "pastoral guidance," synod has explicitly stated that a same-sex marriage is in conflict with the Word of God. Therefore, such an individual is not only disqualified from serving in church office; they are also subject to church discipline.

2. In their letter responding to the concerns of churches, NACRC stated, "We have come to believe that scripture not only permits us, but calls us to the decision we have made." This conclusion and the course of action that flowed from it are in violation of our covenant together.
 - a. Church Order Article 69-c prohibits ministers from solemnizing same-sex marriages "because [they are] in conflict with the Word of God." Simply put, Church Order explicitly states that same-sex marriage is a violation of God's Word.
 - b. The CRCNA explicitly stated: "Homosexuality—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 52).
 - c. When an individual, a church, or classis believes that our Church Order is in error, the Church Order spells out a process for change that relies on our corporate wisdom and discernment to determine whether or not change is warranted. In his commentary on the Church Order, Henry DeMoor states, "Minor assemblies may seek to 'prove' that a certain decision of synod 'conflict[s] with the Word of God or the Church Order.' Obviously, the proving must not be done to oneself, or to one's council, or to one's classis, but to synod" (*Church Order Commentary*, p. 169). As a church, we rely on one another to discern God's will. Discerning truth in community is a corrective to individualism and congregationalism, and for that reason DeMoor also warns that a failure to honor this process can result in "a stifling congregationalism or, even worse, a crippling form of ecclesiastical anarchy that plays havoc on those we are called to serve" (*Church Order Commentary*, p. 433). By installing a deacon in a same-sex marriage, NACRC intentionally disregarded our communal process that is clearly spelled out for us, and in the process has caused a great deal of pain and division within the denomination. This disregard for our process is not only disrespectful to the churches in our denomination; it is also dismissive to previous synodical decisions.
3. Churches within Classis Columbia have approached NACRC, urging them to repent; however, NACRC has maintained their present course of action. Therefore, the next step in church discipline is warranted.
4. According to Matthew 18:15-20, when a person does not listen to the admonishment of one person, others must be brought in to participate in the process. Church Order Article 30 provides for this mutual accountability: "Assemblies and church members may appeal to the assembly next in order if they believe that injustice has been done or that a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order." Since NACRC has, so far, refused to acknowledge calls from individual churches to repent, the next step is to speak to NACRC with multiple but unified voices, asking for them to repent. It should be acknowledged that Church Order is not always clear or consistent in this matter. Only in rare instances has a classis (or synod) stepped in to administer church discipline when the church council fails to act. However, there are occasions in which church discipline, applied by a classis to a local council, was upheld by synod. Synod has further stated that it is appropriate for a classis or synod to be involved in the activity of a

local church “when the welfare of the congregation is at stake” (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 55). Given the gravity of this situation, and the provocative nature of NACRC’s actions, the welfare of the congregation—and indeed our denomination—is in fact at stake, and it would therefore be appropriate for synod to act in this situation.

5. Ordinarily, the next step in the process of special discipline (when lower assemblies will not take action) would be for the classis to act. However, Classis Grand Rapids East has, to date, declined to enact special discipline in this matter. We believe that their lack of action makes this situation “abnormal.” Synod has the right to speak in this way because “when a situation is abnormal, the Church Order cannot be applied in a legalistic way” (*Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 271).
6. A public acknowledgment of error by the NACRC congregation would serve as a necessary and helpful step toward reconciliation and healing in the denomination. Publicly confessing our sins to one another is a part of what we are called to do as a Christian community, and it will allow those who have been hurt over NACRC’s actions the opportunity to extend forgiveness.

Classis Columbia

Roger D. Kramer, stated clerk

Overture 10: Allow Neland Avenue CRC and Like-minded Churches to Resign Membership from the CRCNA (*Deferred from 2021*)

Classis Iakota overtures synod to give Neland Avenue CRC and all like-minded churches who desire to read, think, and live outside of the confessional nature and bounds of authoritative Scripture the option to be allowed a one-time six-month window to resign their membership from the denomination with their assets including church property at the vote of their individual bodies.

Grounds:

1. It is clear both from the persistent actions of Neland Avenue CRC and of the lack of oversight by Classis Grand Rapids East that there is no longer a way forward in conversation if we cannot read the holy Scriptures in mutual agreement.
2. It is the unfortunate consequence of those affirming same-sex marriage to have broken covenant in this way with the body of the CRC and the living and historical church universal. By its actions Neland Avenue CRC is not only disagreeing with the decisions of synod but also showing disregard for the decisions of synod.
3. In this way a resignation of membership can occur without the need for further church discipline to proceed.
4. This act of mutual separation will allow for healing to take place within both the majority body that remains and those who are now freed to live and minister as they have already deemed fit.

Classis Iakota

Bernard J. Haan, stated clerk

Note: The COD, meeting in lieu of Synod 2021, did not accede to the following overture; Overture 11 is included on the agenda for Synod 2022 as background only (Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates 2021, p. 630).

Overture 11: Rescind Action of the Council of Delegates in Sending a Letter to the Council of Neland Avenue CRC

(Deferred from 2021)

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to rescind the action of the Council of Delegates in sending a letter to the Council of Neland Avenue CRC expressing disappointment and grieving Neland Avenue CRC's decision to ordain a person who is in a same-sex marriage to the office of deacon.

Grounds:

1. The Council of Delegates usurped the authority of the local council and local classis.
2. The proper line of accountability for a situation of concern is through the local council (Neland Avenue CRC) and local classis (Grand Rapids East) to synod, by way of appeal. These assemblies had not received any appeals of the Neland council's decision and did not express concern or request assistance from the Council of Delegates.
3. The Council of Delegates could have reported the concerns it received in correspondence from other classes and churches to Synod 2021, but the COD overstepped its authority by communicating directly to a church council based on correspondence from other churches. The Council of Delegates is not an assembly of the church and therefore ought not to act as if it has the standing of one assembly speaking to another. Neither is it intended to be the conduit of concerns that churches and classes may have about one another. In this situation, the letters from churches and classes requesting that the Council of Delegates intervene with Neland Avenue CRC should have been answered by encouraging their authors to express their concerns to Neland's council directly. The Council of Delegates has no authority to engage local councils directly regarding their decisions.
4. There was no urgency or benefit in the Council of Delegates' acting on behalf of synod in this manner that could not have waited until Synod 2021.
5. While the Council of Delegates has authority to act on behalf of synod between meetings of synod as its interim committee, that authority is constrained by whether a matter cannot wait for synod to act on it. There is nothing in this situation that could not have waited until Synod 2021.
6. The Council of Delegates' expression of disappointment to the council of Neland Avenue and grieving its decision undermines synod's deliberative responsibility in relationship to the report on human sexuality that will be considered at Synod 2021.
7. The consequence of the Council of Delegates' acting in this manner is that the deliberative process, which properly belongs to synod—not the Council of Delegates—has been undermined. The implicit message to the churches is that the reflective discernment that Synod 2021 is called to engage regarding the human sexuality study committee

report has already been determined by the Council of Delegates as sustaining a traditional theological perspective and necessitating a disciplinary response to those who disagree.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

Overture 12: Declare Denials of Penal Substitutionary Atonement as Heresy and Instruct Classes to Guard the Reformed Confessional Teaching of the Cross (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Introduction

Synod 2019 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America took a bold and necessary step toward confessional fidelity when it declared its opposition to the teachings of Kinism, making a clear case from both Scripture and our Reformed confessional standards.

One particular duty was placed on the officebearers in our denomination as a whole with this motion, which was adopted:

That synod, given the recent history of Kinist teaching in a particular church of the CRCNA, admonish councils and classes to promote confessional fidelity *and mutually to pursue special discipline of an officebearer* [emphasis added] who is found to hold views contrary to our standard.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 818)

The cross of Jesus Christ is central and foundational to the Christian gospel. When the biblical and Reformed teaching of the cross is attacked, the very Christian faith is attacked. In the book of Jude, the church is instructed to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Here, the faith refers not to the subjective act of believing, but the doctrinal content of the message of salvation found in the Scriptures and in biblical proclamation.

Various places in the New Testament warn us of the reality and danger of false teaching and false teachers. Entire letters emerge from the threat of false teaching (e.g., Galatians), while other books regularly intersperse warnings and instruction to renounce and avoid false teaching (e.g., Phil. 3; Titus 1; 2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; etc.).

Thus the church is to be on guard against threats to “the faith.” One common threat to our faith is the challenge to the historic teaching of the cross which states that Jesus bore the wrath of God against the sin of his people. The historic Christian belief that Jesus satisfied God’s wrath against our sin at the cross is commonly called *penal substitutionary atonement*. It is the historic view of the creeds and confessions, and of the historic Christian church. It is a central tenet of the work of Christ and essential to the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation.

This threat is most often articulated by denying that Jesus went to the cross as a way to bear God’s wrath. Whatever specific form the denial takes, most begin with the foundational claim that the cross was not a way for God to judge sin in and through his Son.

This overture will not discuss every minute detail of the various expressions of teachings that deny penal substitutionary atonement (PSA), but it

will address the core truth that we confess and is refuted by all denials of PSA: that Jesus bore God's wrath against sin on the cross at Calvary.

This overture, in a way like Synod 2019 and its consideration of Kinism, deals with the question of heresy. A recent study committee in the CRCNA addressed the question of heresy, and we find their definition helpful and useful for our purposes. The committee broadly defined *heresy* in this way: "Ordinarily, a heresy distorts or rejects central Christian teachings such as those in a creed or confession and threatens to divide the church and compromise the gospel message" (*Agenda for Synod 2020*, p. 75).

The denial of PSA is a fitting example of the above definition of *heresy*. Moreover, we appreciate the committee's consideration of when the term *heresy* ought to be used. They gave nine characteristics that are often present in situations of heresy. The following characteristics from the committee's list are clearly present in a denial of PSA (from *Agenda for Synod 2020*, p. 75):

1. Heresy typically involves serious distortion or rejection of basic or core Christian doctrines, including core Christian teachings about God, creation, humanity, or God's dealings with creatures.
2. Heresy typically contradicts doctrines that have been defined by an official church body (such as a creed or confession).
3. Heresy typically is embedded in an affirmation of Christianity, claiming to be Christian while at the same time distorting or twisting central teachings of Christianity. . . .
5. Heresy typically leads its adherents away from genuine faith in the triune God. . . .
6. Heresy typically causes inquirers and other believers to be confused about Christian teaching and thus led astray in their belief or discouraged from believing. In this way, heresy presents a special danger to the church that goes beyond its effect on its adherents.
7. Heresy typically ends up bringing disrepute on the truth of the gospel. Because it confuses people about what the gospel really is, heresy can lead those outside the Christian faith to mistakenly believe that heretical teaching is actually genuine Christianity.

The characteristics not cited here become much more applicable in specific occurrences of denying PSA, but when dealing with the biblical and theological question, we have used the above characteristics to show how even the general issue fits with both the definition of *heresy* and the threshold of when the term may be used.

II. Why should we address denials of PSA?

Some may wonder why such a clear biblical and confessional teaching needs to be dealt with by an overture at our annual synod. Our reasons are clear and simple:

1. We must be diligent in defending the historic Christian faith, especially when denials such as these are within our own walls.
2. All threats against the historic teaching of the cross must be dealt with by any church which claims allegiance to the Scriptures.

3. Currently within the CRCNA there is not universal agreement on this core gospel issue.¹
4. The continued presence of this teaching in our denomination places a responsibility upon all officebearers to deal with the matter in integrity and faithfulness to the Scriptures and Reformed confessions.

III. A biblical overview of PSA – “In my place condemned he stood”

The Scriptures are very clear: Jesus Christ is the God-man who came to earth to bear the judgment of God upon human sin. He alone is the mediator between God and humanity and our only hope for salvation from our sin.²

Here are several examples of New Testament texts, which leave no doubt as to the substitutionary nature of Christ’s work on the cross. What we find is that Christ bears God’s just punishment for our sin in his life lived as a true human, and in his sacrificial death.

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Rom. 3:20-26)

God’s righteousness is upheld through the cross, for by it the price for sin was paid. God must remain both holy and just in the outpouring of his mercy, thus a satisfactory sacrifice must be given.

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. (Rom. 5:8-9)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. . . . (Eph. 1:7)

It is the blood of Christ which allows us to be justified, which means to be forgiven of sin and declared righteous in God’s sight.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. . . . (Col. 1:19-22)

This passage speaks not only of the blood of Christ but also how reconciliation is achieved through the “body of flesh” and “death” of Jesus. Through these means, we are presented “holy and blameless and above reproach” before the living God.

¹ See the Appendix to this overture for excerpts of sermons preached from a pulpit in the CRCNA.

² Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV), © 2001, Crossway.

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:10-14)

Sin brings us under a curse, and the context for this passage is legal standing before God ("justified before God," v. 11). Thus, the curse is the punishment for sin, which is enacted by God himself; he is the One who curses his rebellious creatures, for sin cannot dwell with him.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

Where and when did Christ bear our sins? Ultimately on the cross, that sin might be put to death in us. Where do we find healing? In his wounds. This also makes a clear allusion to Isaiah 53, which is the clearest Old Testament prophecy dealing with PSA.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. . . . (1 Pet. 3:18)

What did Christ do for our sins? He suffered for them. What was our standing before God prior to Christ's vicarious work? We were unrighteous and sinful. What is the result of Christ's suffering? We are able to be brought to God, proving that our unrighteousness has been dealt with.

IV. The position of our standards – "He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood"

The CRCNA is a church constituted under the Three Forms of Unity, our confessional standards. It is these we have been tasked to uphold as officers in the church. To fail to do so is to fail at our calling and to break our ordination vows.

As we survey the teaching of our standards, we find that PSA is the clear and consistent position regarding Christ's life on earth and his death on the cross. Emphasis will be added in italics at key points and phrases.

A. The Heidelberg Catechism

First, we begin with the Heidelberg Catechism, which is one of the clearest expositions from all the Reformed confessional documents of our need for satisfaction from sin through a mediator. That Mediator is Jesus Christ alone, who bears God's wrath upon our sin in his human nature and suffers all the way to death as the just punishment for our sin. Here are several questions and answers that make this case.

Question 9: But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?

Answer: No, God created human beings with the ability to keep the law. They, however, provoked by the devil, in willful disobedience, robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.

Question 10: Does God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

Answer: Certainly not. God is terribly angry with the sin we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit. As a just judge, God will punish them both now and in eternity, having declared: “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.”

Question 12: According to God’s righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God’s favor?

Answer: God requires that his justice be satisfied. *Therefore, the claims of this justice must be paid in full*, either by ourselves or by another.

Question 16: Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?

Answer: God’s justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, *must pay for sin*; but a sinful human could never pay for others.

Question 17: Why must the mediator also be true God?

Answer: So that the mediator, by the power of his divinity, *might bear the weight of God’s wrath in his humanity* and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

Question 18: Then who is this mediator—true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?

Answer: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given to us to *completely deliver us* and make us right with God.

Question 37: What do you understand by the word “suffered”?

Answer: That during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, *Christ sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race*. This he did in order that, by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice, *he might deliver us, body and soul, from eternal condemnation*, and gain for us God’s grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

Question 38: Why did he suffer “under Pontius Pilate” as judge?

Answer: So that he, though innocent, might be condemned by an earthly judge, and so *free us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us*.

Question 39: Is it significant that he was “crucified” instead of dying some other way?

Answer: Yes. By this I am convinced that he *shouldered the curse* which lay on me, since death by crucifixion was cursed by God.

B. The Belgic Confession

The Belgic Confession is the oldest of our Reformed confessional standards. It should be noted that Guido De Brès, the author of this confession, wrote it at least partially to show how the Reformed churches affirmed the orthodox doctrines of the gospel.

Article 20: The Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God—who is perfectly merciful and also very just—sent the Son to assume the nature in which the disobedience had been committed, *in order to bear in it the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death*. So God made known his justice toward his Son, *who was charged with our sin*, and he poured out his goodness and mercy on us, *who are guilty and worthy of damnation*, giving to us his Son to die, *by a most perfect love*, and raising him to life for our justification, in order that by him we might have immortality and eternal life.

Article 21: The Atonement

We believe that Jesus Christ is a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek—made such by an oath—and that he presented himself in our

name before his Father, to *appease his Father's wrath with full satisfaction by offering himself on the tree of the cross and pouring out his precious blood for the cleansing of our sins, as the prophets had predicted.* For it is written that “the punishment that made us whole” was placed on the Son of God and that “by his bruises we are healed.” He was “like a lamb that is led to the slaughter”; he was “numbered with the transgressors” and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though Pilate had declared that he was innocent. So he paid back what he had not stolen, and he suffered—“the righteous for the unrighteous,” in both his body and his soul—in such a way that when he sensed the horrible punishment required by our sins “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.” He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” *And he endured all this for the forgiveness of our sins.*

Therefore, we rightly say with Paul that we know nothing “except Jesus Christ, and him crucified”; we “regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus [our] Lord.” We find all comforts in his wounds and have no need to seek or invent any other means to reconcile ourselves with God than this one and only sacrifice, once made, which renders believers perfect forever. This is also why the angel of God called him Jesus—that is, “Savior”—because he would save his people from their sins.

C. *The Canons of Dort*

The Canons of Dort likewise affirm the clear and consistent position of our standards regarding the substitutionary nature of Christ’s sacrifice. Following are the first three articles of the Second Main Point of Doctrine:

Article 1: The Punishment Which God’s Justice Requires

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. This justice requires (as God has revealed in the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. *We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God’s justice.*

Article 2: The Satisfaction Made by Christ

Since, however, we ourselves cannot give this satisfaction or deliver ourselves from God’s wrath, God in boundless mercy *has given us as a guarantee his only begotten Son, who was made to be sin and a curse for us, in our place, on the cross, in order that he might give satisfaction for us.*

Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ’s Death

This death of God’s Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.

D. *The teaching of contemporary testimonies: Our World Belongs to God*

Contemporary testimonies are “dynamic statements,” which can speak to essential matters within a particular situation and context. Our World Belongs to God, though situated within a particular context, nevertheless affirms Christ’s work as a timeless truth of the gospel and source of unending comfort and power against evil.

25: *Standing in our place, Jesus suffered during his years on earth, especially in the tortures of the cross. He carried God’s judgment on our sin—his sacrifice removed our guilt.* God raised him from the dead: he walked out of the grave, conqueror of sin and death—Lord of Life! We are set right with God, given new life, and called to walk with him in freedom from sin’s dominion.

The above examples make very clear the position of our confessional standards and other documents:

Jesus Christ is the God-man who was sent to earth to bear in his body the just punishment of God for sin. He bore God’s wrath and suffered for us, in

order that through faith in his work we might be cleansed, justified, sanctified, and made to be forever with God.

Not only do we find this to be the position of the confessions; it is also the position of the CRCNA. Rather than a relic or icon of the past, this is the very power that we hold out to a world lost in sin and death, and the very power which God has commanded us to use for his glory in the salvation of the lost. Without clear affirmation and protection of this doctrine, we forfeit the power entrusted to us.

V. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2020 to do the following:

A. Declare that it is a grievous deviation from sound doctrine, a heresy, to in any way deny that Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide a substitutionary work of bearing God's wrath on our behalf because of the just punishment we deserve for our sin.

Grounds:

1. This is an error that is currently being allowed to exist within the denomination.
2. The Scriptures and confessional standards make clear the substitutionary nature of Jesus Christ's work.
3. To deny penal substitutionary atonement is to take away from the glory of our Savior.
4. To fail to take action against such heresy is to break the Covenant for Officebearers and to commit grievous sin against our Creator and Redeemer.

B. Declare that any officebearer who explicitly denies penal substitutionary atonement or promotes teachings contrary to the penal substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of special discipline in accordance with Church Order Article 83.

Grounds:

1. Church Order Article 83 states, "Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct."
2. A heresy is a serious deviation from sound doctrine, and is a teaching contrary to the Scriptures as interpreted by the Reformed confessions. Therefore, any officebearer who denies penal substitutionary atonement is seriously deviating from sound doctrine and should be subject to discipline.

C. Instruct all classes, councils, and officebearers in the CRCNA that it is our duty to uphold the clear teaching of the Scriptures and confessions on the nature of Christ's substitutionary work. Failure to do so may result in special discipline in any of the courts of the church, and will certainly result in an accounting for such negligence when one day we stand before our holy God.

Grounds:

1. As Christians, we are called to be people of the truth, with integrity and honor, and failure to defend the faith is to break the Covenant of Officebearers.
2. The church must make every effort to correct such a grievous error, that we might not continue to sin in the eyes of God.
3. Local councils are accountable to the classis, and the classes are to “ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God’s kingdom” (Church Order, Art. 42-b).
4. Tolerating denials of foundational gospel truth puts the CRCNA in danger of transgressing its own boundaries for what a true church is, which includes the proper exercise of church discipline (Belgic Confession, Art. 29).
5. Our witness to the world is severely damaged when we abuse the very gift that God has given as his instrument for kingdom advancement, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

D. Acknowledge, with lament, the distortion of the gospel and the covenant breaking that has gone on within our own denomination and has perpetuated confusion, condemnation, and the displeasure of our God and King.

Grounds:

1. As we remain diligent to uphold our theological heritage, we must name the errors that we have committed, that we might learn from them and never again repeat them.
2. Given the clarity of our Reformed confessional standards on the nature of Christ’s substitutionary work, we must lament the extent of our negligence and ignorance that could have allowed for such sin to exist within our denomination.

Classis Illiana

Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Note: Classis Illiana submitted an earlier version of this overture to Synod 2020 but decided in March 2021 to withdraw it and to resubmit it with revisions to Synod 2021.

Appendix

Sermon Excerpts Referenced in Section I

(Excerpts transcribed from audio sermons posted on the website of the church where the minister is serving.)

Excerpt 1 (from 2016):

God sent His Son Jesus to die for my sins. Right? God sent His Son Jesus to die for my sins. So, that’s kind of a starting point with faith and especially with life. So why, why would God bother to do that? Why would God bother to go to the cross for my sin? The way I see it and come to see it is that there’s two possible answers to that question. Two kinds of answers.

The first possible answer for why God sent Jesus to die for my sins is that God needed to do that. So the story goes something like this. God created the universe and the earth and then humanity. It was all very good. It was all perfect in fact. And then pretty much right away the humans mucked it up. We fell. Sin was introduced into the good world which was a big problem because our new condition couldn't stand up beside God's infinite goodness and justice, so God was put out, and the only way that the situation could be fixed was with a proper payment. But the payment was impossible for us because we're human, and so then the payment had to be infinite because it was an infinite wonder.

So because, so God's idea was to make the payment himself by sending His Son to be sacrificed and as a human, make the payment as a human. So this way God could be satisfied and God could once again look upon humanity with favor. Is that a familiar kind of storyline to a number of you, to most of you?

So this option, in this option, the problem that's trying to get solved is the kind of plotline is that God is the offended party, so God's anger needs to be placated or satisfied and then but humans are incapable of doing that and so the solution has to be God's as well. So really, so the problem and the solution are all kind of God's feelings, and humans we really almost have nothing to do with it other than that we're the ones who caused the problem in the first place and now we experience a sort of gratitude that God fixed it for us and we kind of have this sense of remorse that it took such a drastic measure to make it happen.

So that's one option why Jesus had to die.

The other option for why God would bother to send Jesus to die for my sin is love. So I'm saying it's the other option that's love. This other option is love because I do mean to suggest that the first option might not be love. I think the first option has been familiar to me as long as I can remember but it feels more like compulsion, retribution, the story of an insatiable God who has trouble managing his appetite for blood, and Jesus essentially absorbs God's wrath. In the most crass way that I've heard it put is that Jesus takes a cosmic bullet for us, as if God is like shooting bullets at us and Jesus steps in front of them and saves us.

The best argument I think you can make is just logic like simple logic. The formula works if you want to, and it kind of fits in like this kind of scheme of culture and sacrifice, but it, even if that's the case, even if the formula works it still isn't, I can't see the love in it. Like it seems like God is just kind of working out his own satisfaction. So what I want to talk about is love.

Excerpt 2 (from 2019):

I had taken issue with one of the ways that evangelicals commonly interpret the meaning of the cross and um, the way that people talk about atonement which is the storyline that you've probably encountered in some form, right, that God created the earth, and all humanity. It started out very good, perfect in fact but then Adam and Eve messed it up, and sin was introduced into the good world and that, the storyline goes that that created this really big problem for God because he couldn't look upon us in our kind of sinful condition, um, we couldn't stand up beside God's infinite holiness and justice. So basically God was really angry, which made it so that there was this kind of giant chasm between God's holiness and our sinfulness. And because we are so sinful there's nothing that we can do to fix the problem so the only way to make things right would be for God to send his own Son, Jesus, and then he could take out his anger on Jesus instead of us, and that would make it so that now God is satisfied, and we're kind of back to square one, we're off the hook. Have you guys heard some version of that storyline with respect to the gospel?

And that view that I just told you about, the one about this giant chasm between us and God where God is like taking out his anger. The issue there, I don't think the issue there is that people...are taking the issue too seriously or making too big of a deal out of atonement, it's that they're actually not taking

it seriously enough...and I wonder if that's kind of the main reason this other storyline about God appeasing his own wrath in the death of Jesus has gotten so much traction. I wonder if why that is because it's actually kind of an easier way to think about it...if we can pin it all on God, then we can avoid having to face up to the reality of our own place in this process our own participation and our own, kind of reality of the situation of our own anger and fragmentation, and our own wrath. That's what this James Allison guy says, or asks, "Who is actually the angry divinity in the story of atonement?...Who is the angry divinity?" He asks, and then he says, "We are. That is the purpose of atonement. We are the angry divinity, we are the ones inclined to dwell in wrath and think that we need vengeance in order to survive."

This I think is one of the most crucial moves that we need to make in order to really understand the significance of the life and death of Jesus is the question of who the atonement is actually happening to.

It's not God who needs to change. It's not God who needs to be reconciled, it's not God who needs to work out God's stuff. It's us. We are the ones who are disconnected from ourselves, we are disconnected from each other, we are disconnected from the earth, and we are disconnected from God.

And that's what the story of atonement addresses. It's not God resolving his anger and fragmentation, it's God confronting us in the midst of ours. And that, I think, is just really important to let that settle in that there is no vengeance in God. God is not interested in trying to even the score, or settle debts, or fulfill obligations, or exact retribution. God's justice is always only a matter of restoration and reconciliation.

Overture 13: Honor Ordination of a Reformed Church in America Commissioned Pastor if Called to a CRC Congregation (Deferred from 2021)

I. Background

A joint resolution (widely known as the "Pella Accord") adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) at the joint synod meeting of 2014 calls for the churches of the two denominations to work together whenever and wherever possible (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 502-504). To do this, we are tasked to make efforts to remove, or reduce, obstacles that stand in the way of this collaborative work. There is a desire in both denominations to plant and grow churches that are union churches, dually affiliated churches, or joint efforts of the two denominations. This desire calls us to raise up leaders who can be delegated to the broader assemblies of the two denominations. Ministers of the Word from both denominations already are eligible to attend broader assemblies when on loan to the other denomination.

However, the role of commissioned pastor is an office in the CRCNA but not in the RCA, where it is a commissioning to a task, thus making commissioned pastors from the RCA, serving in CRCNA churches, currently ineligible to be delegated to our broader assemblies. To facilitate mutuality and hospitality, we overture synod as follows:

II. Overture

Classis Arizona overtures Synod 2021 to declare that persons who serve as a commissioned pastor in the Reformed Church in America (RCA), if called

to serve in a Christian Reformed congregation or in a dually affiliated RCA / CRCNA congregation or church plant, receive all the rights and privileges of those who have been ordained to the office of commissioned pastor in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), including the eligibility to be delegated to the broader assemblies.

Grounds:

1. This honors the intentions of the joint Resolution on the Relationship between the RCA and the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 502-504).
2. This allows the churches to benefit from the wisdom and expertise of those outside our denomination.
3. This gives appropriate voice to all commissioned pastors serving in our churches (see Church Order Articles 38-g, -h, and 45).

Classis Arizona

Jose Rayas, stated clerk . . .

Overture 18: Adopt the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Background

Synod 2016 appointed

a new study committee to articulate a foundation-laying biblical theology of human sexuality that pays particular attention to biblical conceptions of gender and sexuality. The central aim of this theological task [was] to provide concise yet clear ethical guidance for what constitutes a holy and healthy Christian sexual life, and in light of this to serve the church with pastoral, ecclesial, and missional guidance that explains how the gospel provides redemptive affirmation and hope for those experiencing sexual questioning, temptation, and sin.

(*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 919-20)

II. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to adopt the report and recommendations of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Grounds:

1. The study committee report is timely and needed as our congregations struggle to minister with grace and truth in a society where sexual norms are constantly changing.
2. The report fulfills the mandate of Synod 2016 by providing clear interpretation and explanation that faithfully honors God's will as revealed in Scripture and offers avenues of ministry for and with each other in our common struggle with sexual sin.
3. The recommendations of the report provide a biblical and confessional foundation on which our churches and our members can be united to

extend the love of Christ to one another and the world into which we are called to go and make disciples.

Classis Holland
Calvin Hoogstra, stated clerk

Overture 19: Adopt the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality
(Deferred from 2021)

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2021 to adopt the synodical report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Ground: The findings and conclusions of the report regarding human sexuality are consistent with the Bible, our confessions, and our Covenant for Officebearers in the following ways:

1. Consistent with the Bible

The report to the churches offers much biblical teaching regarding human sexuality, as well as sound pastoral advice concerning this area of our lives. The verses below are a sampling of numerous Scripture passages throughout the report that have been expounded, applied, and used even to correct the revisionist arguments to affirm sexual immorality (i.e., pp. 409-25, where revisionist claims are refuted from the clear teaching of the Bible).

Matthew 19:1-10; Genesis 1; Genesis 2; Acts 15:20; Galatians 3:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 1 Timothy 1:10; Romans 1:24-27; Romans 1:32; Matthew 5:28; James 1:13-16; 1 Peter 2:11; Galatians 5:19-22; Ephesians 5:5-7; Jude 1-4; 2 Timothy 4:3; Ezekiel 33:8

Note: The committee presents a much-needed warning of how important it is to rightly understand and teach the Bible lest we confuse following the Holy Spirit with following another spirit (p. 423):

It is one thing to reexamine Scripture, but it is quite another thing to ignore the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture in order to reach an alternative reading of the key texts and then claim that this all happened through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Is it not equally possible that all this happened through the guidance of another “spirit”—the “spirit” of our secular age and contemporary culture (1 John 4:1-3)? Is it not equally possible that what the Holy Spirit is leading the church to do today is not to change its interpretation of Scripture (after all, it is the same Holy Spirit speaking to the church today as to the church of Paul’s day) but to challenge contemporary Christians to love better and minister more effectively to those who are attracted to the same sex?

2. Consistent with the confessions

The report is in agreement with Lord’s Day 41, Q.&A. 108, of the Heidelberg Catechism; Lord’s Day 32, Q.&A. 87; and Belgic Confession, Article 29, especially where this confession describes the marks of a true Christian: “namely, faith, and when, having received Jesus Christ the only Savior, they avoid sin, follow after righteousness, love the true

God and their neighbor, neither turning aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof. . . . they fight against [great infirmities], through the Spirit all the days of their life, continually taking refuge in the blood, death, passion, and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom they have remission of sins, through faith in Him.”

The committee stated that our current teaching on homosexual sex already has confessional status and should be recognized as such:

D. That synod declare that the church’s teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status. (p. 461)

3. Consistent with the Covenant for Officebearers

The purpose of requiring church leaders to sign the Covenant for Officebearers is accountability to God and to the church in which they make their promises to be faithful to the Bible and to our confessions. Because the report is in agreement with the Bible and our confessions, adopting the report would not unbiblically violate anyone’s conscience and would help to ensure that our church leaders are faithfully leading God’s people in his Word and gospel.

Note 1: See Church Order Supplement, Article 5 for the text of the Covenant for Officebearers and Guidelines and Regulations re Gravamina.

Note 2: See also Church Order Article 20, noting especially that Article 20 requires ministers who are appointed as professors of theology to train seminary students are required also to “vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.”

Classis Minnkota

LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

Overture 20: Amend Recommendations of the Human Sexuality Report; Continue Deliberation re Human Sexuality; Delegate the Issue of Same-Sex Marriage as a Decision of Local Conscience (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Overture submitted by five assemblies

As The Road CRC (Calgary, Alta.) council, First CRC (Toronto, Ont.) council, delegates to Classis Toronto, Jubilee Fellowship CRC (St. Catharines, Ont.) council, and delegates to Classis Niagara, we have received this overture from a group of post-secondary students. As the only avenue available to them to have their voices heard at synod is to follow the flow from congregation to classis to synod, the three councils have adopted the full overture, Classis Toronto has adopted the first two recommendations (A, B), and Classis Niagara has adopted the second recommendation (B). The following content was written by these students in their own voices. (Several of the students involved in writing this overture are members of either The Road CRC; First CRC, Toronto; or Jubilee Fellowship CRC.) The council of The Road CRC presented the overture to Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, but the overture was not adopted; thus the council is presenting this overture to synod because the council believes it is important for the voices of the authors to be heard.

Because Classis Toronto adopted only the first two recommendations of the overture presented by the council of First CRC, Toronto, the council of First CRC is submitting the full overture, and Classis Toronto is submitting the first two recommendations only. Classis Niagara deliberated on this overture on October 27, 2021, and decided to submit only the second recommendation (B). Because Classis Niagara adopted only recommendation B, the council of Jubilee Fellowship CRC is submitting the full overture.

The councils of The Road CRC; First CRC, Toronto; and Jubilee Fellowship CRC overture synod to act on the following three recommendations; Classis Toronto overtures synod to act on only the first two recommendations (A, B); Classis Niagara overtures synod to act on only the second recommendation (B):

- A. Make amendments to the recommendations of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.
- B. Create a plan of action to continue careful deliberation of the complex issues around human sexuality (particularly gender identity, same-sex orientation, and same-sex marriage) and engagement with people affected by these issues.
- C. Prioritize the unity of the body of Christ in the CRCNA by delegating the issue of same-sex marriage as a decision of local conscience (while actively studying the fruit of this decision to inform further dialogue).

II. Introduction to student authors

This overture is a collaborative effort by over twenty-five students across ten post-secondary campuses. Our team includes student representatives from six post-secondary institutions who have ties to the CRCNA (Calvin University, The King's University, Redeemer University, Trinity Christian College, the Institute for Christian Studies, and Calvin Theological Seminary) as well as students from several other post-secondary institutions¹ who heard of the efforts and asked to join the cause. The school with the most representation is Calvin University, with seven students. Our passion for both the church and LGBTQIA+ concerns inspired us to collaborate, blessing us with new connections and an enriching experience. We are diverse in

- gender: Male, female and nonbinary people were represented
- sexual identity: Both straight and queer sexual identities were represented
- ethnicity: White American, White Canadian, Dutch American, Jewish, Chinese Canadian, Japanese American, Hispanic, Latino
- geographical location: Alberta, British Columbia, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Ontario, South Dakota
- age: 19 to 45 years with 20 members of the group under age 25 years

Several churches offered to bring this overture to their councils. In the end, this overture was adopted by several church councils and forwarded to the classical level for consideration.

Why did we choose to write this collaborative overture in addition to involvement in our local congregations? We wanted to follow the intended flow

¹ Augustana University (Sioux Falls), Seattle Pacific University, University of Western Ontario, Wycliffe College (Toronto School of Theology, U of T), Knox College (Toronto School of Theology, U of T), University of Toronto.

of Church Order from local congregation to classis to synod, and, as a result, many of us were also involved in overture efforts within our local congregations. However, it seemed important also to submit an overture entirely written and signed by post-secondary students, because we have unique concerns, a unique voice, and may be underrepresented in these conversations. Although we were approached with requests from youth, alumni, chaplains, and faculty members to join the efforts, we limited involvement in this overture to post-secondary students only. We advised the other contacts to engage via their own congregations. While assembling our team, we discovered three categories of post-secondary students who wanted to be involved.

1. Current and active CRCNA members who have serious concerns with the report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (nineteen students from ten CRCNA classes who represent the majority of the team and primary authors of this overture²)
2. Students who were CRCNA members at one time but no longer consider themselves CRCNA members and no longer attend a CRCNA local congregation because of the pain and harm experienced around CRCNA's posture toward human sexuality issues (one student)
3. Students who are not CRCNA members but are attending schools with ties to the CRCNA and/or care deeply about the flourishing of the denomination (seven students³)

As such, in the Personal Impact Statements section below, students are identified by name, post-secondary institution, and CRCNA membership if applicable.

We write to you because we care deeply about the health and unity of the CRCNA. Some of us may even be future ministers or leaders (or current lay leaders) within the CRCNA. We take God's Word very seriously as well as the ongoing flourishing of the church now and into the future. First and foremost, our hearts cry out for unity, forbearance, and a commitment to Christian communion. The mystery of God's will has been revealed to us in Christ, and its goal is the unity of all things in Christ. "With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his

² CRCNA members who signed this overture: Andrews, Jessica (The Road CRC in Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan); Beck, Renya (Jubilee Fellowship CRC in Classis Niagara); Bouman, Abigail (Neland Ave. CRC in Classis Grand Rapids East); Bouma, Emily (River Park CRC in Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan); Bonsma, Ben (Jubilee Fellowship CRC in Classis Niagara); Bonsma-Fisher, Madeleine (First CRC, Toronto, in Classis Toronto); de Boer, Shayanne (Redeemer CRC in Classis Chatham); Clemens, Jonathan (First CRC, Toronto, in Classis Toronto); DeJager, Catherine (Washington, D.C., CRC in Classis Hackensack); Elgersma, Kat (First CRC, Denver, in Classis Rocky Mountain); Klompmaker, Kirsten (Jubilee Fellowship CRC in Classis Niagara); Krale, Lauren (CrossPoint CRC in Classis Toronto); Lise, Nathan (Holland Marsh CRC in Classis Toronto); Overbeek, Nicholas (Calvin CRC in Classis Grand Rapids East); Roseboom, Michelle (Terrace CRC in Classis B.C. North-West); Schat, Kyra (First Hamilton CRC in Classis Hamilton); Tuit, Samuel (Neland Ave. CRC in Classis Grand Rapids East); Jodi VanWingerden (Neland Ave. CRC in Classis Grand Rapids East); Tolsma, Theoren (Fleetwood CRC in Classis B.C. South-East).

³ Non-CRCNA members (or no longer members) who signed this overture: De Martinez, Brandon (Calvin University); Ford, Maggie (Redeemer University); Murashima, Claire (Calvin University); Newton, Jo (Calvin University); Barz, Ross (Trinity Christian College); Salamun, Sean (Calvin University); Van Arragon, Emma (The King's University); Young, Justus (Calvin University).

good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ” (Eph. 1:8-10, NIV).

We acknowledge a charitable posture toward the committee and gratitude for their many efforts so far. We strongly agree with Synod 2016’s grounds for the human sexuality committee in that “the consideration of *status confessionis* is a **weighty matter** that requires **extended and careful deliberation**” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 926-27; Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, p. 315). We lament that from its very inception, both in committee makeup and synod-assigned mandate, this committee fell short of the deep vulnerability and humility required of “careful deliberation” which, in our understanding of the term, would have required a posture of balanced openness to conflicting biblical and theological viewpoints and extensive listening, particularly to harmed and marginalized voices among us. We are saddened that the restricted synodical mandate from the outset put the committee members in a tricky and contentious position, and our hearts go out to them as our family members in the body of Christ. We experience this as a flawed process with the resulting report falling short of our Reformed heritage and values of fairness, perspicacity, and thorough biblical scholarship as well as being deeply hurtful for its exclusion of the godly voices and perspectives of LGBTQIA+ family members and allies among us.

III. Background

In response to multiple overtures, Synod 2016 created the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (henceforth referred to as the human sexuality committee) with a mandate to

articulate a foundation-laying biblical theology of human sexuality that pays particular attention to biblical conceptions of gender and sexuality. The central aim of this theological task will be to provide concise yet clear ethical guidance for what constitutes a holy and healthy Christian sexual life, and in light of this to serve the church with pastoral, ecclesial, and missional guidance that explains how the gospel provides redemptive affirmation and hope for those experiencing sexual questioning, temptation, and sin. . . .

(*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 919-20)

At the end of October 2020, the report of the human sexuality committee was published in preparation for deliberation at Synod 2021. We commend the committee for their five years of hard work in addressing a multitude of concepts related to human sexuality, including pornography, gender identity, homosexuality, singleness, premarital sex and cohabitation, polyamory, divorce, and sexual desire. The report highlights the challenges of our current contemporary cultural context around issues of human sexuality, and it seems as though its recommendations are based on a genuine desire by its members to demonstrate loyalty and submission to the authority of Scripture (even though we disagree with some of their conclusions). However, the report is lacking in the following key areas:

- It insufficiently meets the goal of “extended and careful deliberation” of these “weighty matters” of human sexuality.
- It insufficiently reflects and represents the membership of the CRCNA.

- It lacks constructive suggestions or guidance for how our denomination might move forward in unity to continue to fulfill our Christian mission while respecting the lack of consensus on human sexuality issues.

A note regarding timing: We acknowledge that this response is limited by the timeline and will lack the level of in-depth study and analysis we would have preferred to include. As such, major areas of concern will be noted, but analysis will be brief or absent. Although “prior opportunity” (according to Church Order Article 47) was met since the final report was published Oct. 29, 2020, the report is much longer than typical committee reports, and therefore the timeline provided between October 29, 2020, to March 15, 2021, was insufficient to thoughtfully and thoroughly engage with all aspects of the 175 pages. To meet the Church Order requirements for submitting an overture through both church council and classis, overtures needed to be completed by the turn of the year. After taking into account student responsibilities with midterms and finals, this left very little time in November and December to organize as a group and respond well to this report. We believe that the “how” of being God’s people is as important as “what” we believe and that we are not called to be frantic or rushed, especially in grappling with such important matters. It seems to us that we and many of our contacts within the CRCNA, out of polite respect and good faith in the human sexuality committee, have waited for the final outcome of this report only to be seriously disappointed in the lack of balance therein. We grieve that the result of this will likely be further delay in providing clear, ethical guidance or any prompt resolution to these issues.

A. The human sexuality report insufficiently meets the goal of “extended and careful deliberation” of these “weighty matters” of human sexuality as referred to in the report’s mandate (Acts of Synod 2016, pp. 926-27; Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, p. 315)

Article 29 of the Church Order states that “decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon **due consideration**.” In light of the clearly lacking denominational consensus regarding credible, sincerely held biblical interpretations around LGBTQIA+ issues, the human sexuality report does not meet an acceptable standard of careful deliberation or due consideration. The human sexuality report can be received as a hearty effort into exploring a traditional view of biblical and theological scholarship, but it remains a partial effort toward due diligence in adequately examining these issues—certainly not meeting the standard of due consideration required for either *status confessionis*, confessional status, or any change to Church Order. Additional study and listening to supplement the work of the current human sexuality committee is needed.

1. The report insufficiently presents vigorous discussion or exploration of biblical and theological support in favor of same-sex marriage and full inclusion and celebration of LGBTQIA+ people.
2. The report insufficiently engaged in robust listening. For example, only four LGBTQIA+ people were interviewed for this report (p. 316). In the range of personal stories included in the report, there were no stories that depicted faithful, married same-sex couples. Theoretical research was given precedence over listening to the voices of real people. In-depth local conversations have also not yet been fostered. There is work yet to do, and we cannot consider these teachings settled and binding without generous, extensive listening to our CRCNA members.

3. There is much contested about the report's claim that "the church's teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status" (p. 461). According to CRCNA Church Order expert Dr. Henry DeMoor, the report claims confessional status around same-sex relationships where none exists.⁴ (There is also confusion around the use of the terms *status confessionis* and confessional status, which seem to be used interchangeably but may have two different definitions.⁵)
4. The report insufficiently addresses the potential for a new movement of the Holy Spirit or the abundant evidence of the fruit of the Spirit present in the lives of faithful LGBTQIA+ Christians.
5. The report does not engage in the level of balanced study or formal listening that we have seen modeled by fellow Reformed denominations.

For example, the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC) is currently grappling with the issue of same-sex marriage. Part of its methodology was for its Committee on Church Doctrine to appoint two teams of learned and gifted people. One team thoroughly articulated the biblical foundations and theological arguments for a traditional view of marriage as only between one man and one woman, and the second team thoroughly articulated the biblical foundations and theological arguments for a view affirming same-sex marriage. They also attended to the growing evidence of harm done to LGBTQIA+ people and its pastoral implications within Christian communities. In this way they presented a balanced resource to their general assembly (synod) and membership for listening and learning regarding this issue. After this document was shared and widely considered within the PCC, the general assembly decided to draw up legislation that allows for same-sex marriage and ordination of married LGBTQI clergy while it also allows for freedom of conscience on the matter. This legislation was voted on by each local presbytery (classis), and about 70 percent of these voted in favor of the new legislation. In 2021 this legislation is going back to the general assembly for a final vote.^{6 7} In regard to listening to marginalized people, the 2019 General Assembly declared it "a matter of urgency . . . [to] provide a means for those affected by this decision to express their concerns, views, and pain in a safe environment, and that these concerns be reported back to the 2020 General Assembly"; and the 2017 General Assembly had already "established a listening committee, the Rainbow Communion, to create safe space for LGBTQ+ persons to tell of their experiences in the church."⁸

⁴ DeMoor, Henry. *Status Confessionis*, The Network, Nov. 11, 2020. Retrieved Dec. 31, 2020, from network.crcna.org/church-order/status-confessionis.

⁵ Please refer to Overture 28 from Classis Toronto and its discussion of *status confessionis*.

⁶ Email communication with Dr. Charles Fensham (Knox College professor), Dec. 31, 2020.

⁷ Kendall, Stephen and Muir, Don; 2019 *General Assembly: Summary of decisions regarding human sexuality*, June 2019, the Presbyterian Church in Canada; retrieved Dec. 31, 2020, from file:///media/fuse/drivefs-6d44a3bacf91b5e895d80cab61e3d569/root/PCC/2019-General-Assembly-Decisions-re-Sexuality.pdf.

⁸ Currie, Amanda; Letter from the Moderator of the 2019 General Assembly, Sept. 3, 2019, the Presbyterian Church in Canada; retrieved Dec. 31, 2020, from file:///media/fuse/drivefs-6d44a3bacf91b5e895d80cab61e3d569/root/PCC/Pastoral-Letter-from-the-Moderator-2019.pdf.

6. The report insufficiently engages with the potential that changing our minds to increased acceptance and celebration of LGBTQIA+ people may be a deeply devout response, particularly in relationship to the harm being caused by nonaffirming theology.
7. The matter of current and historical harm done toward LGBTQIA+ people at the hands of the church is insufficiently addressed in this report.
 - a. As we continue in careful deliberation around these human sexuality issues and a Christian pastoral response, it is essential that we highlight and grapple with the issue of harm toward LGBTQIA+ people at the hands of the church. Theology that does harm calls into question the validity of the theology and biblical interpretation itself.
 - b. The human sexuality report has the potential to do harm by assuming that those with developmental sexual disorders or those who identify as LGBTQIA+ have a “disordered sexuality” (p. 331) and that this is a result of the fall. There is no clear teaching in Scripture on this. This is an exceedingly important distinction due to the close connection between one’s gender and sexual identity and one’s identity as God’s imagebearer.
 - c. We have several pastoral care concerns with the report. For example, in the gender identity section, the report says that using correct names and pronouns decreases suicide risk, but the report immediately follows this by suggesting that congregations need not use correct names and pronouns if they do not want to (p. 398).
 - d. Length of process—Although delay is required for careful deliberation, we acknowledge that further delay in providing resolution to many of these issues of human sexuality is painful to individuals, families, and congregations.

Continued careful deliberation of the complex issues around human sexuality (particularly gender identity, same-sex orientation, and same-sex marriage) and engagement with people affected by these issues is still required. Practical suggestions to this end are offered in the overture section that follows.

B. The human sexuality report insufficiently reflects and represents the membership of the CRCNA

The report was written by a committee that was restricted in both its make-up and mandate. This restriction does not reflect the broad lack of consensus on these issues within the CRCNA and therefore provides imbalanced biblical and theological interpretations and recommendations.

1. In the 2014 survey by the Calvin College Center for Social Research, 21 percent of church members, 31 percent of CRCNA students, and 14 percent of ministers agreed with same-sex marriage.⁹ Furthermore, 17 percent of church members, 34 percent of CRCNA students, and 16 percent of pastors surveyed said that gay Christians should celebrate the sexual

⁹ Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage (majority report) 2016, Appendix A, p. 49; retrieved Dec. 31, 2020, from crcna.org/sites/default/files/same-sex_marriage.pdf.

identity God has given them.¹⁰ The human sexuality report misrepresents a singular biblical interpretation as an already settled matter. There are clearly a spectrum of beliefs on this issue within the CRCNA, and therefore it is unwise and injurious to promote a one-sided report to confessional status in light of this reality.

2. Committee make-up was restricted to adherence to the CRC's 1973 teaching regarding homosexuality. Restricting the allowed viewpoints on a study committee is discriminatory, reflects poor governance, and is inconsistent with the CRCNA's historical methods and its ethos of valuing thoughtful, multifaceted scholarship and engagement.
3. Synod 2016 requested that a chaplain or campus minister be on this committee as a way to represent the diversity of pastoral vocations in the CRCNA. When the committee member that was a campus minister, and perhaps most closely in touch with students such as ourselves, had to resign in 2017 because of his move to Korea, he was not replaced even though there were still three years remaining before the due date for the report's publication (Nov. 1, 2020).
4. Synod 2016 specifically articulated its desire that a person who identifies as "gender dysphoric" serve on the committee. As far as we can tell, no one who identified as gender dysphoric was ever on the committee, and the committee consultation with one "FtM (female to male) transgender person and his father" (p. 316) was very late in their process (May 28, 2020). Given the clarity of this representation desired by Synod 2016, this minimal interaction from the committee is insufficient.
5. Even if the compositional mandate of the committee as desired by Synod 2016 had been met, the representation of gender minorities and sexual minorities on the committee and in the consultative process is markedly insufficient, especially noting the perspectival requirement around adherence to 1973.
6. Representation of young adults was missing on the human sexuality committee. Nobody who signed the report was under the age of 40 years. As post-secondary students, most of whom are young adults, we recognize that young adults may navigate these questions differently than other age groups. In our experience, the younger generation is generally more accepting of unity amid diversity and remaining in the tension of uncertainty. We tend to be more sensitive to power dynamics that exist because of the influences of patriarchy, colonization, and racism. These are valued parts of our worldview that we feel will serve us well as we faithfully navigate our present and future cultural contexts. We, as the younger generation, are deeply interested in the content of this report because we will carry the long-term burden of its ramifications. We also lament the increasing loss of our age group among church membership. For example, in reaching out to post-secondary institutions, numerous students told us that they could not, with integrity, be involved with this overture because they had "already left the CRC far behind" because of its posture toward LGBTQIA+ people. We

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

ask that you “listen to the voices of every generation,”¹¹ as the CRCNA has made this a denominational priority in *Our Journey 2025*.

7. There is a lack of collective congregational leadership experience among the human sexuality committee members.¹² Pastors may become experts on fostering unity among nonunified congregations to continue worshipping together despite disagreement. We can imagine that the wisdom gained through navigating “worship wars,” differences of conviction regarding women in church office, and even the recent COVID-19 crisis around worship in person versus worshipping online would be helpful wisdom to guide a denomination toward unity, even when there is not a consensus around the issues of human sexuality (particularly gender identity, same-sex orientation, and same-sex marriage). This type of wisdom does not seem to be accentuated in this report.

C. The human sexuality report lacks constructive suggestions and guidance for how our denomination might move forward in unity to continue to fulfill our Christian mission while respecting the lack of consensus on human sexuality issues

1. The human sexuality report implies that holding a view that affirms same-sex marriage is biblically heretical, condemning such as false teaching with severe words of warning (pp. 458-60). Yet there are faithful and respected individuals, leaders and scholars within the CRCNA who hold this view in their best conscience.¹³ We are concerned that some of the teaching in the report will increase divisiveness within the church by unduly burdening those with traditional biblical perspectives with a fear to remain in communion with those acting upon affirming views (pp. 458-60). Generally speaking, it seems that those with LGBTQIA+ affirming views are asking their more traditional church family members to be willing to remain in communion despite disagreement. However, the report encourages those with traditional/nonaffirming views to require agreement with a singular biblical interpretation at the risk of breaching unity.
2. The report is inconsistent with precedent in CRCNA church history for addressing controversial issues. In previous cases of faithful disagreement around biblical interpretation (i.e., female ordination and divorce), the CRCNA has recognized that differing interpretations may “arise from credible and sincerely held interpretations of Scripture.”¹⁴ Historically,

¹¹ crcna.org/news-and-events/news/announcing-our-journey-2025

¹² The best we could do to research this data was to use the CRCNA's *Yearbook* website (crcna.org/yearbook). These are the results we found for the six committee members who are ordained ministers or commissioned pastors in the CRCNA, noting only their years as pastors of congregations (not total years of ordained service): Jeff Weima, 0 years; Mary Vanden Berg, 0 years; Paula Seales, 4 years, starting in 2016; Jose Rayas, 6 years, starting in 2014; Charles Kim, 20 years, starting in 2000; Mary Lee Bouma, 23 years, starting in 1997). Matt Tuininga, who supported the report's creation until nearly the end, adds 0 years of congregational pastoring. Total congregational pastoring years by the report's signers is 53 years (including 16 years from 2016-2020). This total would be close to the amount of years served by many of our retiring ministers all on their own.

¹³ To name a few: Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff, Dr. Duane Kelderman, and Rev. Leonard Vander Zee.

¹⁴ Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, p. 394.

the CRCNA has favored the option of exception at the local level as a way to uphold church unity and allow congregations freedom for careful and deliberate discernment on complex issues. Local discernment can bear healthier fruit on some vulnerable, contentious matters because it is harmful to remove the “particulars” of an individual’s story to create a “universal rule” in our quest for the false idol of certainty.

3. The practical ramifications of this report claiming confessional status and a singular “right” way of interpreting Scripture are numerous and devastating, yet they are not considered or discussed in this report. Taking a moment to consider the potential fruit of this report, were it to be assigned confessional status, demonstrates its own insufficiency. For example, would all current officebearers who agree with same-sex marriage be required to relinquish their positions? Would ordination candidates who consider gender diversity to be a reflection of God’s goodness in creation (and not a result of the fall) lose their candidacy status and be blocked from potential ordination? Would this proposed confessional status apply retroactively to remove church membership for those in disagreement with the report or only apply to new members? Would LGBTQIA+ members who do not feel called to celibacy have to leave the denomination? Would noncelibate LGBTQIA+ people or those who affirm same-sex marriage employed at organizations associated with the CRCNA lose their jobs?
4. Corpus linguistics analysis indicates room to grow in the human sexuality report.¹⁵
 - a. For example, more use of “we” in the sections on singleness and pornography indicates that the report writers identify more with these groups of people than the sections on gender identity or homosexuality. In particular, frequent use of “you” with less frequent use of “we” in the report’s section on homosexuality may indicate that people who are not heterosexual may be seen as outsiders.
 - b. Only one case study in the report uses the first person “I” language (p. 353). Direct quotations allow people to tell their story in their own words and prevent paraphrasing toward any particular (intended or unintended) bias.
 - c. It was good to see the recommendation to listen in the sections on gender (7x) and homosexuality (4x), but vocabulary about listening was low in the report in general and absent in the remaining sections.
 - d. Scriptural arguments made by negation are higher in the gender identity Scripture section while absent in the pornography Scripture section. Providing more positive arguments prevents straw-man arguments.

¹⁵ Catherine DeJager is a fifth-year senior at Calvin University majoring in Computer Science and minoring in Mathematics, Data Science, and Linguistics. She learned corpus linguistics at Calvin in 2018 and has been using it ever since. As a lifelong CRC member and an advocate for LGBTQIA+ issues, Catherine decided to use her corpus linguistics skills to investigate and respond to this report. Her full analysis can be found here: gitlab.com/cmd16/crc-sexuality-reports/-/blob/master/results.ipynb.

- e. The current human sexuality report uses a more passive voice than the 1973 report on homosexuality. This is concerning because it suggests to readers that the report content is from a neutral, objective source rather than reflective of the views/interpretations of its authors.

In the introduction of the CRCNA's *Church Order and Its Supplements 2020*, John Calvin is quoted: "Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe" (Institutes, IV.X.30). Let us rebuild mutual trust and follow careful and due process while letting the Word, love, and the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit be our guide as we continue to navigate these complex issues of human sexuality together.

IV. Personal impact statements

We offer the following personal impact statements written by the students who contributed to this overture as additional background information. We do not ever want policy decisions or scholarly discussions to be disconnected from the lived realities of our Christian family.

I have long been proud of the CRC for its commitment to love of neighbor, activism, and thorough, well-rounded biblical scholarship. This report flies in the face of all that. I am devastated. I want a church where I know people will love me and respect me as I am, and where I can love and respect other people in turn. I want a church where I can bring LGBT+ friends and know they will be loved and welcomed just like anyone else. I want a denomination where I don't have to caveat with "Well, I agree with them except for the LGBT+ stuff." I want to know that no matter what someone's sex, gender identity, gender expression, and interaction of all those factors is, that their chosen name and pronouns will be used by everyone in the congregation (or at the very least the leaders will set an example), because that's what it means to love our neighbor. I want full membership in a church that doesn't see me as sinful or broken just for who I love. I am bisexual, and I want a church that doesn't force me to choose between a man and celibacy. I look forward to when I move this summer and get to find a new church that is affirming, because I don't want to stay in the CRC given its treatment of LGBT+ issues.

Catherine DeJager, she/her pronouns, student at Calvin University, member of Washington, D.C., CRC

I am a senior at Calvin University. Four and a half years ago, I spent countless hours searching for a college where I could live authentically as a nonbinary queer person and worship God inside the classroom as well as outside. Calvin was the only place I felt that met both requirements to my satisfaction, and I was amazed to find out it was the flagship institution of the CRC. While the CRC may hold an unaffirming stance, plenty of faculty and staff, and almost three-quarters of the students I've met are affirming. I love that Calvin is a space for diverse opinions and mutual respect, and I hope to see the CRC as a whole move in that direction. Yet this report has made me incredibly anxious, both for LGBTQIA+ members of the denomination and for myself. I fear that, if adopted, this report will force Calvin and the other CRC-affiliated institutions to reprimand their

LGBTQIA+ students for living authentically as they feel called to. I'm afraid that, as I pursue transitioning (something I have discussed with two of the three chaplains at Calvin University, as well as my therapist, psychiatrist, and doctor), Calvin will be forced by the CRC to take action against me.

Jo Newton, student at Calvin University, they / them pronouns

Having grown up in a CRC church and being a current member, I find the CRC an almost impossible thing to talk about with my non-Christian friends. Since my faith is an important part of my identity, I would like to be able to share why it is important to my many non-Christian friends. However, I find it impossible to tell others about a loving God when the church I am part of is actively causing harm. When I do share with others, it is full of caveats stating that the current church I attend, Jubilee CRC, is relatively accepting and that I myself am not "one of those conservative Christians." Without these caveats my statement of faith would have little bearing with others who can see the harm the church has done, and being kind and loving people themselves, want nothing to do with the CRC or Christianity as a whole. It is tragic that the part of me that most motivates me to love others is the part of me that I have to both hide and caveat to actually show others that I love.

Ben Bonsma, he / him, student at Redeemer University, member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC

I am currently an M.Div. student who is candidating for ordination within the CRCNA. I experienced a strong vocational call toward pastoral ministry later in life, when my three kids were grade-school age. I love my church and the people that I am blessed to be in relationship with through the church. Supportive Christian community has and continues to be one of the most formative aspects of my lifelong faith journey. Three years ago I had an uninspected, inherited theology that was nonaffirming. After two years of praying, studying, and researching these issues, as well as listening to stories of faithful LGBTQIA+ Christians, I felt compelled by my faith in Jesus to change my theology to become fully affirming. The resulting peace of God around this issue in my life has brought my spirit much consolation. One of the biggest factors for me in this journey was hearing about the harm LGBTQIA+ people had experienced from the very body of Christ that had always been so supportive of me. This human sexuality report has hit me like a ton of bricks. I have felt incredulous, grieved, angry, suffered insomnia, and shed many tears. My love of Jesus compels me to fully accept and celebrate my LGBTQIA+ family members, and I know that the church's future is in God's hands. However, because I am in favor of same-sex marriage, I am scared that when I am examined for ordination, I will be rejected.

Jessica Andrews, she / her, student at Knox College (University of Toronto), member of The Road CRC

For several generations, my family has been involved with the CRC as active members, teachers at CRC affiliated schools, and preachers. I was raised in the church and attended Fellowship CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, for most of my life. However, I no longer feel at home in the CRC and cannot foresee a future where I return to the denomination. While there were many factors leading to this

decision, the biggest one was that I could not be a part of a denomination that does not recognize LGBTQIA+ identities as biblically legitimate. This was not a doctrinal concern but a personal one, as I am a lesbian. Despite the support of many in my congregation, being a part of a denomination that views LGBTQIA+ identity as incompatible with Christianity made it impossible to stay. How can we say we want to emulate Christ while preaching an exclusive, conditional understanding of what it looks like to love our neighbor? How can we claim to represent the love of God when we fail to adequately love each other? I attend a CRC-affiliated university, where I have been working to establish support for LGBTQIA+ students. Despite significant progress, our connection to the CRC has caused many problems. The CRC's position on human sexuality limits the ability of LGBTQIA+ students to integrate within the community and limits the ability of the administration to support students without fear of repercussions. If there is a future for the CRC, it is embodied in the grace of LGBTQIA+ people who remain in a church that does not fully accept them. However, for myself and many other LGBTQIA+ people who were raised in the CRC, staying within the denomination is no longer possible.

Emma Van Arragon, she/her pronouns, student at The King's University, former/inactive member of Fellowship CRC

I personally do not identify as a member of the CRC. Yet I am a student at Calvin University, which predominantly consists of students who are of the CRC faith. I was raised in the Roman Catholic church my entire life. My own faith, like for many in the CRC, is very important to my well-being and plays a vital role in my life everyday. Here at Calvin University, I am honored with the incredible opportunity to have an intimate look into many of the views and beliefs that CRC Christians follow. It allows me to use my own faith upbringing and filter it through this lens while trying to better understand that even though we are of different faiths, we are still branches of the same Divine Tree.

At Calvin University, we follow the mission statement of "to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly." As Christians and non-Christians alike, we must believe that the LGBTQIA+ community is loved; they too are just as Christian and vital as any one of us, and they must be validated with that same Christian spirit as well. Many friends that I have made while attending Calvin University, who also identify as Christian and affirm the LGBTQIA+ community, are personally affected by this report. Their voices and their views absolutely matter because they too are "Christ's agents of renewal in the world." So, I plead with the readers of this report that you carefully, thoughtfully, listen and follow the recommendations these important voices in this response have outlined. It's so imperative to make considerations and edits for a true, equal, and equitable future.

Sean Salamun, he/him, Student Senate Team Leader at Calvin University

I have attended a CRC church and CRC-affiliated schools all my life and have been thoughtfully disciplined and cared for by these communities. As most of the institutions within which I have been disciplined have held what the report refers to as a "traditionalist" perspective on issues of gender and sexuality, I also held this perspective without a great deal of consideration for much of my life. However, in

recent years, I have felt called upon to engage with a greater variety of perspectives in this conversation. As I have allowed space for tension, made note of areas of dissonance, and wrestled prayerfully with my theological convictions, my relationships, both with God and with my neighbors, have been enriched and deepened. I am grateful for the report insofar as it thoroughly and thoughtfully provides one perspective on issues of gender and sexuality held by members of the CRC and serves as a much-needed catalyst for dialogue within our denomination. That said, I lament the significant reality that my LGBTQIA+ family members and friends have experienced fear, anger, and grief in reading this report. I am concerned about its implications for myself and others considering, pursuing, or participating in vocational ministry within the CRC who do not support all of its conclusions. While this report is helpful in some respects, I believe that it ultimately falls short of adequately including the voices of our denomination's LGBTQIA+ members, thoughtfully representing the variety of perspectives held by members of the CRC, and engaging fully with its pastoral and missional implications. Ultimately, I worry that the adoption of this report will further inhibit the fostering of unity (already so rare in the context of this conversation) and create a confessional barrier to full participation for many who currently call this denomination home.

Kyra Schat, she/her, student at Redeemer University, member of First Hamilton CRC

I have grown up in the CRC denomination, and it has been something that I have found great comfort in. When I left for university, the CRC was something that I strongly identified with and was a community that I longed to extend in a new city. I especially connected with new friends over our shared CRC background. As I have developed more relationships with people who are not part of the CRC denomination or do not consider themselves Christian, I have become increasingly aware of how the CRC's statement demonstrates an exclusive stance. While the congregation that I grew up in nurtured my faith and encouraged my exploration of my faith – especially through my youth group – I felt an underlying tension about how the church viewed and (un)welcomed the LGBTQIA+ community and how we are called to be in relationship with others. Although I am blessed to have several CRC mentors, friends, and people of other perspectives with whom I can discuss LGBTQIA+ inclusion, I am more hesitant to share my CRC affiliation with others because of its position on the LGBTQIA+ community. Despite personally identifying as a cisgender female, I cannot – and I believe that we as a church cannot – simply ignore, forget, or, even worse, punish our fellow believers who identify differently than I do; I am not called to judge my neighbor but to love them. Being part of and growing up in the CRC is something that I treasure and am grateful for, but it is also something that brings discomfort in identifying with because I know the harm that the CRC has brought and will continue to bring until we amend our perspective to be inclusive of our LGBTQIA+ neighbors.

Emily Bouma, she/her, student at The King's University, member of River Park CRC

I have been a member of the CRC all my life, and as a child I always thought that it was the best denomination of all. In recent years, and especially upon reading this report, that is no longer my opinion. Church is meant to be a community of people who love and care for each other no matter what. This report

does not reflect that love. If I did not feel that I could safely bring my LGBTQIA+ friends into the church before, now I know that I could not. Many of my closest friends have already faced religious harm from other churches, and I have always had hope that mine would be different. It hurts to know that my church is still stuck in a place that calls for judgment on LGBTQIA+ members of the community. I cannot comfortably say that I trust in the CRC and its decisions any longer. Our choice should be one of never-failing love, like that of Christ, not judgment and harm that could last a lifetime.

Shayanne de Boer, she/her, student at University of Western Ontario, member of Redeemer CRC

The CRC, in unique fashion, has found a way that allows me (a woman) to serve in every possible leadership position. While the denomination's decision to make allowances for differing scriptural interpretations on this matter has not been embraced by every single individual or congregation within the denomination, I firmly believe that gracious decision has been a witness to the unity of all believers that is possible in Christ—the unity that Jesus himself desired for us—“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you . . . that they may be brought to complete unity [so that] . . . the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:21-23). Jesus knew that the church would never have uniformity—but yet he tells us that unity is possible through him.

I have had so many opportunities to love and be loved by the church in ways I never would have imagined—Sunday school teacher, committee member, youth elder, classis delegate, chair of council, seminary student. Through those experiences I have received the love and the Word of God. I have learned about God, about grace and forgiveness extended and received, about the beautiful complexity of the body of believers. I have learned that a life of faith is a life of learning how to hold tension—light and darkness, justice and mercy, truth and human fallibility, strength in weakness, power in humility. These opportunities have been a means of grace.

It pains me that the church has become known more for excluding rather than embracing—particularly among younger generations. Who are we to deny these means of grace to others, especially when thoughtful, educated Christians have arrived at different interpretations with strong scriptural support? In cases like this, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to extend more grace, rather than place more limits on it. And in so doing, we also have an opportunity and a responsibility to be a witness to the world that in Christ “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).

Jodi VanWingerden, she/her, M.Div. student at Calvin Theological Seminary, member of Neland Avenue CRC (and previously Calvin CRC, Sheboygan, Wisconsin)

I have grown up within the CRC church and have attended CRC-affiliated schools my entire life. Throughout my time at The King's University in Edmonton I have often connected with others who attend CRC churches, and this has been a way for me to create many new friendships. However, I have also developed my beliefs and understandings in this time, and have met and formed relationships with many people who do not identify with Christianity or the CRC

denomination. I have witnessed people in my life experience exclusion from the CRC due to the views of the CRC regarding LGBTQIA+. I have struggled with seeing this occur and have at times felt embarrassed that the church as a whole has been so exclusive. Upon reading the statement put out by the CRC, I was shocked to see just how exclusive it was, and I see that a statement such as this one would be harmful for many people. I am concerned that the CRC is issuing a statement such as this which excludes many from the church and is not loving and accepting of all people equally.

Michelle Roseboom, she/her, student at The King's University, member of Terrace CRC, B.C.

Growing up in the church has had its impact on my day-to-day life. My faith has always intersected with my race, ethnicity, sexuality, and educational opportunities. Because of this, I have always felt that in some way the church has excluded me because of one of my identities. Although I did not grow up as CRC, I did grow up as Roman Catholic and Pentecostal. Because of this, I often did not have a specific church I could go to as my parents did not feel comfortable staying in one church or another because of their immigrant status or because of how they would discuss topics regarding homosexuality. I ultimately felt that there was no place for me in the church, and because of this I decided to leave. With that being said, I felt that oftentimes my sexuality intersected with my cultural aspects growing up. Growing up in a Hispanic household, there was not much said on my sexuality. Because of the conservative culture at home on top of the culture outside of the home, I felt the double pressure of conforming to the societal structures of being "straight" or having to be "straight passing" in order to be loved. In other words, growing up in the United States while growing up within a Hispanic house has had its challenges of accepting my LGBTQ+ identity, and because of that I felt pressured to leave the church as a result.

However, coming to Calvin University has opened up the possibility of being gay and also being religious. Although some aspects of Calvin are fairly conservative and although Calvin is progressing as a University, there is still much work to be done for LGBTQ+ students on campus. Growing up as gay and first generation in the United States has presented its unique challenges within the education system as well. As a gay first-generation college student, I grew up attending mostly private academies, Christian school, and public high school, and now I am attending Calvin, a private Christian liberal arts university. Being able to see several perspectives of higher education has given me the privilege to see how my sexuality has intersected with higher education. For example, at Calvin, I have noticed that in the classroom it is not very inclusive with LGBTQ+ acronyms or simply mentioning the existence of LGBTQ+ students. Because of my experiences at Calvin, I have often felt excluded within the classroom because of the religious component. Because of being at Calvin, I noticed the recent CRC report on Human Sexuality summarizing how being "homosexual" is not tolerated and is a sin. Because of the exclusive nature of this statement, it can affect the lives of LGBTQ+ students on campus, whether that be socially, politically, or even in a feeling of safety in the classroom. As a first-generation, Latinx/Hispanic, multiracial, gay person of color I felt the need to add my personal opinion on this as the LGBTQ+ community is so expansive and often times queer people of color

are overlooked. That is why I see it as my duty to ensure that LGBTQ+ student voices are amplified when marginalized.

Brandon De Martinez, he/him/él, Student Senator at Calvin University

I spent the first 20 years of my life in the closet. When I came out publicly in a Calvin Chimes op-ed, I had to rely on my resilience, my support systems, and my already strong relationship with Jesus when I faced criticism. Every single piece of criticism was from someone who called themselves a Christian—and almost everyone who called themselves a Christian or used Scripture did so in a way that made me feel excluded. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ people who aren't believers will not be motivated to join our churches if they see how poorly we treat LGBTQIA+ individuals who are already in our faith communities.

Upon reading this report, the first thing I noticed was how quick we were to judge LGBTQIA+ individuals. Right away, I felt excluded by the use of “we” to describe straight people in the church and “them” as queer individuals who may or may not be in the church. As I read it from the perspective of a bisexual woman, I noticed that it was lacking the nuance that queer voices would have provided.

However, I saw a glimmer of hope when Jess Andrews and I were able to mobilize a team of over 20 students from 10 different universities across the U.S. and Canada to write and edit a 15-page overture in the course of a month. This is the type of inclusion that I love about the CRC and Calvin; there are people who are quick to volunteer their time and talents to pave a way for marginalized populations. I'm proud of my institutions and am sharing my opinion because I want us to see the negative impact that taking a confessional, nonaffirming stance will have on already-excluded people in our communities.

Claire Murashima, she/her, Student Body President at Calvin University

V. Overture

Given the background above as provided by students from across North America, the councils of The Road CRC and First CRC, Toronto, overture synod to act on the following three recommendations (A, B, C), and Classis Toronto overtures synod to act on only the first two recommendations (A, B):

A. Make the following amendments to the recommendations of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality:

1. Recommendation B: Amend recommendation B that this report be received for information, but note that it insufficiently addresses the following:
 - a. A careful, in-depth exploration of biblical and theological foundations for alternate viewpoints that favor the celebration of gender/sexual minorities and same-sex marriage.
 - b. The diversity of credible and sincerely held interpretations of Scripture within the CRCNA denomination and that 21 percent of CRCNA church members, 31 percent of CRCNA students, and 14 percent of

pastors agreed with same-sex marriage in 2014, a number likely to be higher at present.¹⁶

- c. Practical guidance for moving forward at the level of everyday ministry and for unity in the denomination as a whole.

Grounds:

- 1) While some of the scholarship is sound in this report, some is contentious or requires additional analysis or supporting references, while alternate credible biblical and theological perspectives have been underemphasized or neglected.
 - 2) Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the close connection between one's gender and sexual identity and one's identity as God's imagebearer, the teachings in this report may therefore be at risk for leading to harm in peoples' lives.
2. Recommendation C: We offer an amendment for recommendation C. While we believe this report may be worth considering at the local level as per recommendation C, we have offered a more robust suggestion for engagement in our second recommendation below (that is, recommendation B—and particularly B, 1, c) regarding a committee that would take this report into account as it curates or creates a collection of resources for engagement of human-sexuality content from a balanced perspective, giving voice to both a traditional and fully affirming outlook.

Grounds:

- a. We strongly support the use of listening circles and restorative-practice theory (as per the Challenging Conversations toolkit) and heartily commend Pastor Church Resources for choosing a direction that fosters openness, vulnerability, humility, and forbearance.
 - b. We recommend that this Challenging Conversations curriculum be seen as an insightful and helpful way to engage with parts of the needed dialogue, but since a limited perspective is offered, we caution the risk of harm. People may mistakenly interpret this curriculum as addressing the full spectrum of biblical and theological scholarship around human sexuality, and people may experience active exclusion because of its limitations.
3. Recommendation D: That synod not accede to recommendation D: "that synod declare that the church's teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status."

Grounds:

- a. Confessional status is a "weighty matter," and deeming this teaching as confessional status would cause widespread devastation in our denomination, including mandatory removal of many current officebearers and harm to LGBTQIA+ people and their loved ones.

¹⁶ Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage (majority report) 2016, Appendix A, p. 49; retrieved Dec. 31, 2020, from crcna.org/sites/default/files/same-sex-marriage.pdf.

b. Proposing that the teaching of this report already has confessional status is both erroneous and an overreach.

4. Recommendation E: That synod not accede to recommendation E: “that synod declare that Church Order Article 69-c is to be interpreted in the light of the biblical evidence laid out in this report,” due to the aforementioned serious limitations of this report. We suggest that Church Order Article 69-c remain unchanged and not be bound by the teachings of this report.

Ground: This report may be one of several useful resources to consult in challenging pastoral decisions, but it would be harmful and an overreach of this report to deem it as the primary lens for interpreting this Church Order article.

B. Create a plan of action to continue careful deliberation of the complex issues around human sexuality (particularly gender identity, same-sex orientation, and same-sex marriage) and engagement with people affected by these issues.

1. We request that synod create a second human sexuality committee to shepherd the CRCNA through continued careful deliberation and deep listening around these issues. This committee make-up should be devoted to scriptural authority and pay careful attention to diversity in gender identity (including nonbinary gender identities), ethnicity, binationality, ministry location (including lay leaders and/or post-secondary students), age, and sexual identity and not be restricted to adherence to the Synod 1973 report on homosexuality. It should contain people holding both traditional/nonaffirming and fully affirming views. If possible, we also recommend that this committee have at minimum one member from the human sexuality committee reporting to Synod 2021 and one member that signed the majority report to Synod 2016 to aid in continuity. We ask Synod 2021 to assign the following tasks to this committee¹⁷:

- a. As an initial task, create a safe listening space for LGBTQIA+ people associated with the CRCNA to submit their concerns and stories of experiences in the church without fear of repercussion.
- b. As another initial task, survey the congregations and classes of the CRCNA to learn how they have (or have not) meaningfully included LGBTQIA+ people in response to the advice of Synod 2016: “That synod advise the classes and congregations to invite, as much as possible, the presence and involvement of same-sex attracted members when dealing with matters that affect the lives and discipleship of same-sex attracted members within the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 929). Information gathered may inform best practices for listening to LGBTQIA+ people and for local engagement around LGBTQIA+ issues. It may also demonstrate the distance we have yet to go in terms of meaningfully including LGBTQIA+ people in our midst.

¹⁷ If Synod 2021 does not decide to adopt the recommendation of creating a second human sexuality committee for ongoing deliberation, we request that these tasks still be adopted by Synod 2021 and delegated to appropriate channels.

- c. As another initial task, curate or create a collection of resources (listening circle curricula, restorative practices, readings, podcasts, videos, etc.) for engagement with LGBTQIA+ issues as individuals, congregations, and classes, perhaps through a collaboration with Pastor Church Resources. This collection should include a balance of both traditional and affirming biblical and theological articulations around gender identity, same-sex orientation, and same-sex marriage and engage a Reformed worldview. This collection should also include many first-person stories from LGBTQIA+ people without editing them to fit conclusions, but intended to help our members hear of the complexities of Christian discernment about how to faithfully follow Jesus as sexual beings. It should also include stories of how LGBTQIA+ people have been harmed by the church.
- d. After a, b, and c above, ongoing shepherding of CRCNA communities will be needed to foster the faithful, ongoing work of listening well to both Scripture and stories, of promoting unity amid diversity, and of continually gathering feedback for future equipping. These may be tasks for this committee, or they may come under the proposed role described in item B, 2 below. (It may also be helpful to consider ways to foster conversations at the classical level, or even between congregations from different classes, so that we can experience the diversity of deep convictions within the CRCNA as we engage with this complex conversation.)
- e. Commission a follow-up survey to the 2014 survey done by the Calvin College Centre for Social Research to gather updated denominational data regarding perspectives on human sexuality issues, including same-sex orientation, same-sex marriage, and gender identity. If possible, include those who have left the CRCNA because of our denomination's posture toward LGBTQIA+ concerns, especially those who seek to be reconciled with a denomination whose decisions brought them pain or harm.
- f. After reviewing previous applicable reports regarding human sexuality (i.e., at least 1973, 2016, 2020), discern whether additional work is worthwhile regarding the articulation of an affirming biblical theology of human sexuality to provide information alongside the traditional biblical theology espoused in the 2020 human sexuality report.
- g. Consider if synod would be well served by a new group of gender/sexual minority synodical advisors (parallel to ethnic and women advisors and young adult representatives). Since a similar overture was submitted but not accepted at Synod 2016, this committee could review the grounds of the 2016 decision, discern if there are new grounds for this request, and clarify any specifics related to who might fit on this advisory group.
- h. For a final task, help the CRCNA discern what level of agreement is needed around beliefs related to human sexuality going forward (especially same-sex orientation, same-sex marriage, and gender identity). We believe that this "level of agreement" is at the heart of the questions around confessional status. After ongoing careful deliberation and a re-

newed posture of deep listening with mutual trust, we hope this committee will be prepared to make prayerful recommendations to clarify our denominational level of agreement related to beliefs around human sexuality. If it is foreseen that some congregations, officebearers, and members will not be satisfied with the level of agreement recommended, it may also be wise for this committee to discern and recommend ways to kindly and generously part ways with those whose convictions mean they must depart from the communion of the CRCNA.

2. We request that synod instruct the COD to create a new role at a senior denominational level (like the senior leader for antiracism) for promoting church dialogue, education, and listening around LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. The COD would be responsible for further clarification of this role once synod has adopted it, and it would seem wise for the one holding this role to serve ex officio on the committee named above. There is an acute need for raising awareness of the harm that we, the church, have caused to our LGBTQIA+ family in order to foster lament, repentance, restoration, and reconciliation with LGBTQIA+ people and each other.
3. We request that synod task Pastor Church Resources with creating a curriculum resource and training for LGBTQIA+ support groups that can be hosted at the local level.

Grounds:

- a. Issues around human sexuality and any dialogue around changing confessional status amount to a “weighty matter that requires extended and careful deliberation” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 926-27; Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, p. 315). Additional study and listening to supplement the work of the current human sexuality committee is needed.
 - b. We suggest it is time for renewed listening and rebuilding of mutual trust within the denomination—to recognize the sincerity of the CRCNA community of believers and the deep engagement with Scripture of so many, even when we end up with different conclusions and convictions.
 - c. As per the *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, which indicate that for “young adult representatives, the pool of selection will, at least in part, depend on recommendations received from the churches and classes” (p. 5; *Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 537; *Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 673). Our cross-campus student response team would be happy to assist synod in finding LGBTQIA+ young adult representatives who hold a variety of biblical perspectives (traditional and affirming).
 - d. Our history since 1973 has shown our difficulty in loving our LGBTQIA+ family well. If we want to truly include them and actively listen to them, we need to take formal actions to support their voices while we continue to engage deeply with these issues. Pastoral guidance has not been enough.
- C. Prioritize the unity of the body of Christ in the CRCNA by delegating the issue of same-sex marriage as a decision of local conscience (while actively studying the fruit of this decision to inform further dialogue).

Grounds:

1. In order to continue careful deliberation of the full breadth and complexity of the issues of human sexuality, including the multiple biblical perspectives, there will necessarily be a delay in providing ethical and clear pastoral, ecclesial, and missional guidance. During this delay, local congregations should be trusted to make decisions around LG-BTQIA+ participation and same-sex marriage. Individuals ought not to bear the brunt of institutional delay.
2. The option of local conscience is in keeping with historical CRCNA precedent in addressing issues in which more than one credible and sincere interpretation of Scripture is possible (as exemplified by female ordination).
3. Gathering additional information on the fruit of local interactions with the LGBTQIA+ community will aid our continued careful deliberation on human sexuality issues at the denominational level.

Council of The Road CRC, Calgary, Alberta
Luise Kinsman, clerk

* Council of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario
Margaret J. Nott, clerk

** Classis Toronto
Richard Bodini, stated clerk

*** Classis Niagara
Wendy de Jong, stated clerk

**** Council of Jubilee Fellowship CRC,
St. Catharines, Ontario
Alice Klamer, stated clerk

Note 1: This overture was submitted by The Road Church to Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan at its meeting in March 2021, but classis voted to table the overture. The Road CRC is therefore submitting the overture to synod.

**Note 2:* The council of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario, after adopting the overture, presented it to Classis Toronto for consideration and adoption. The final decision of Classis Toronto on March 11, 2021, was to adopt recommendations A and B of the overture, but not recommendation C. Therefore, the council of First CRC, Toronto, submits the full overture (all three recommendations) to synod for adoption.

***Note 3:* Classis Toronto, after deliberating on the full overture, adopted recommendations A and B and decided not to adopt recommendation C of the above overture.

****Note 4:* Classis Niagara, after deliberating on the preceding full overture on October 27, 2021, adopted recommendation B and decided not to adopt recommendations A and C.

*****Note 5:* The council of Jubilee Fellowship CRC reviewed and adopted the full overture at its council meeting on November 30, 2021.

Overture 21: Clarify What Already Has Confessional Status in the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, and Consider Concerns about Recommendation D (*Deferred from 2021*)

The Council of West End Christian Reformed Church, Edmonton, Alberta, overtures synod as follows:

A. That synod not process Recommendation D until it has been clarified, and sent to the churches for consideration, precisely which part of the 175 pages of the report is already considered to have confessional status.

Grounds:

1. It is not clear what exactly within the report would be considered confessional, assuming it is not every phrase in the report's 175 pages. This would be important to determine for numerous reasons, not the least of which concerns the signing of the Covenant for Officebearers, which identifies agreement with and defense of the confessions.
2. With all the turmoil already in discussions about these matters, it would be helpful not to spend significant time in churches or classis speculating as to what is considered to already have confessional status.
3. Once clarified, it would be important for the churches to have adequate time to review Recommendation D in order to both understand and consider responses.

B. That synod consider the following concerns and implications that have been a part of discussions regarding Recommendation D:

1. Synodical decisions do not ordinarily have confessional status; examples of those that have not been given confessional status are synod's decisions regarding the reports of the Committee to Study Homosexuality (1973) and the Creation Stewardship Task Force (2012).
2. Synod 2016 accepted the minority report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-sex Marriage but did not assume that this already had confessional status.
3. Confessional status for the report will be difficult for those who are wrestling with Scripture, especially with respect to committed same-sex relationships. This may make it difficult for officebearers, including pastors, to sign the Covenant for Officebearers.
4. This recommendation by itself has the potential of causing severe division within the denomination.

Council of West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta
David van Berkel, clerk of council

Note: The preceding overture was submitted to Classis Alberta North prior to its agenda deadline for receiving overtures to synod, following the Rules for Synodical Procedure. Classis Alberta North decided not to address the overture due to the cancellation of Synod 2021.

Overture 22: Do Not Accede to the Report and Recommendations from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (*Deferred from 2021*)

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod not to accede to the report and recommendations from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Grounds:

1. The study committee did not fulfill its mandate.

The committee's assigned mandate states:

The central aim of this theological task will be to provide concise yet clear ethical guidance for what constitutes a holy and healthy Christian sexual life, and in light of this to serve the church with pastoral, ecclesial, and missional guidance that explains how the gospel provides redemptive affirmation and hope for those experiencing sexual questioning, temptation, and sin.

(Acts of Synod 2016, p. 919)

The committee's report does not "serve the church with pastoral, ecclesial, and missional" advice. Rather, the report raises significantly more questions regarding how councils, pastors, classes, and synods ought to respond to those who diverge from the committee's proposed theological standard regarding the church's teachings on sexuality if they are given confessional status and deemed a salvific issue. While some pastoral advice is provided, almost no attention is given to the ecclesial implications or to the missional circumstances that are frequently encountered in the church. Simply recommending that churches be proactive with how they will respond to various requests (pp. 430-31) does not equip the church sufficiently to navigate our present circumstances. In the same way, raising ecclesial questions without providing any response to those questions (p. 457) does not provide churches with the mandated guidance. In this regard, the proposed theological standard combined with the absence of substantive pastoral, ecclesial, and missional guidance creates more confusion and tension among the churches and marks a glaring failure of the committee to fulfill its mandate.

2. The report does not address examples of people who are legally married in same-sex marriages, and, particularly, for those who have kids that are participating in church ministries.

The failure of this study committee to directly engage same-sex marriage in the report is particularly noticeable for several reasons. Synod 2016 formed the current study committee in response to the report from the previous synodical study committee: Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance regarding Same-sex Marriage. Additionally, the primary circumstances regarding human sexuality faced by churches today certainly include legally married same-sex couples who are seeking to follow Jesus Christ within the Reformed tradition. While acknowledging that both Canada and the United States have legalized same-sex marriage, the report does not include any examples of legally married same-sex couples seeking to participate in and contribute to

the life of a local congregation. Churches need guidance as to what extent those in same-sex marriages can participate in the life and ministry of the local church.

More particularly, how does the church respond when the Spirit's ongoing work of conversion leads people in legal, same-sex marriages to Christ? Ought the church recognize their marriage? Does the church advise them to live a sexless marriage? Does the church expect them to get divorced? What happens when their same-sex marriage was officiated and approved by another denomination with whom the CRC has an established ecclesial relationship?

Additionally, churches encounter circumstances where professing members who are in same-sex relationships, whether legally married or not, desire to have their children baptized and have them involved in the ministry of the local church. How do local congregations respond? The report raises this question but simply advises churches to have their answers prepared ahead of time (pp. 430-31).

The committee's failure to include prominent examples like these—and to address the questions associated with these situations—is a serious deficiency in the committee's report that undermines the benefit of this report to the churches.

3. The report's conclusion that synod's previous teaching related to sexuality is already confessional contradicts previous synodical decisions regarding sexuality as pastoral advice.

While certainly including biblical and theological teaching on sexuality, previous synods have clearly indicated that synod's discernment on topics related to human sexuality is pastoral advice to the churches. For this report to indicate that these teachings already have confessional status misrepresents the synodical record.

Furthermore, the mandate provided by Synod 2016 states that this committee is to provide advice as to whether future synods ought to "declare a *status confessionis*" with regard to aspects of human sexuality. That element of their mandate clearly indicates that Synod 2016 did not consider the teachings of previous synods to already have confessional status. Thus, for the committee to state that the church's teachings on sexuality already have confessional status is a serious misrepresentation of the synodical record and the directions provided by Synod 2016.

4. The report's conclusion that sexuality is a salvific issue, accompanied by the significant lack of pastoral advice noted already in this overture, has the potential to create significant spiritual harm by elevating sexuality to be on par with the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord.

While Scripture does provide warnings regarding sexual immorality, Scripture also clearly includes many examples of people entangled in distorted and sinful sexuality within the kingdom. Abraham, Jacob, Rahab, David, Solomon, the woman caught in adultery (John 8), and others are all recipients of God's grace—and some are even upheld as exemplars of the faith and righteousness. To tell one part of the biblical account regarding sexuality without the other part of the story borders on a manipulative use of Scripture.

Moreover, if our faith and salvation are truly secured in Christ alone—and not our own behavior—how can our sexuality become a

salvific issue? Does the committee's proposed teaching of what qualifies as sexual sin somehow place those who commit those sins beyond the reaches of Jesus Christ's atoning grace? Labeling sexual sins, as distinguished from any other sin, as a salvific issue produces confusion regarding the church's teaching about salvation in Christ alone. In so doing, even in merely proposing this understanding, this report has the potential to create spiritual harm both for those whose sexuality diverges from the report's perspective and also for those who care deeply about people whose sexuality is different from the report's perspective.

5. The report makes technical scientific claims regarding human sexuality, particularly in the area of human biology, without having a member on the committee who is academically qualified to provide such assessments or applications of the scientific literature.

While this is not an oversight of the committee per se, it is an overreach of the committee to speak so declaratively into areas that are beyond their expertise.

6. The cumulative effect of grounds 1-5 is that this report and its recommendations create the potential for spiritual harm to many people, threaten to divide the church rather than unite the body of Christ, and fail to provide the church with the necessary resources to respond pastorally, ecclesiastically, and missionally to the real and present questions on human sexuality facing the church today.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

Overture 23: Do Not Adopt the Report and Recommendations of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality *(Deferred from 2021)*

Members of First CRC of Denver, Colorado, overture synod not to adopt the report and recommendations of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

We have been in contact with various other groups within our denomination working on overtures that ask for more time to consider the human sexuality report, or ask that synod choose not to accede to the report, and many of them have lengthy and well-researched statements about the theological implications, biological groundings, and historical contexts. We do not claim expertise in these matters, and we wish to address synod largely from the context of our relationships with you as our faith leaders, in a community that prioritizes authentic relationships and communication, and so our wish is to let you know how we believe this report's adoption would impact our experience of the church, of our God, and of each other.

We acknowledge the time and effort that was spent preparing this report, but we do not believe it is beneficial to adopt it, on the grounds delineated below.

We further ask that in local conversations around this topic, LGBTQ+ voices as well as those whose experience includes divorce, premarital sex, or cohabitation, are centered and valued as their witness is vital to this

conversation. In order to center conversations on these voices, our council and community needs to make a commitment to fostering a culture that acknowledges harm that doctrines have made to the LGBTQ+ community and individuals whose experience includes divorce, premarital sex, or cohabitation. Our prayer is that these conversations and voices be a compass for a reexamination of the way sexual ethics are taught in the church. Our doctrine should not harm others and should guide us in celebrating the image of God in all of God's children.

Grounds:

1. Our identity is that of "a family of God, living our faith and growing by joyfully surrendering to Jesus, freely sharing our lives and humbly embracing the hurting" (vision statement, firstcrcdenver.org). We are a body that warmly welcomes each other and those who choose to join us, for a service or as new members. There's much to say in this respect about diversity—racial, socioeconomic, family status, political—and our capacity to acknowledge and address biases surrounding these topics, especially considering the national events of this past year. With respect to our capacity to welcome others, our understanding of those whose gender identity, sexuality, sexual history, marital history, and family structure differs from what is traditionally expected will be sharply framed by a confessional statement defining who Jesus saves, and further inhibit our hospitable identity.
2. The call for confessional status limits our leadership and is divisive to our denomination. The report does not provide answers about the impact on leaders in the church, but rather only poses questions: "If a teaching is declared to have confessional status, questions arise about what that means for those who sign the Covenant for Officebearers (CFO) in the CRCNA. Will those who have already signed it need to accept this new item as having confessional status? What happens if they don't? Will those who subsequently sign the CFO need to accept this new item?" (p. 457).

With confessional status, how are churches to interpret who can and who cannot lead on council? There is insufficient information and advice from the report regarding leadership on council and the Covenant for Officebearers, where we would see the most impact on our congregation.

3. The contents of this report are contrary to the Doctrine of Salvation. Section XVI, B of the report states: "As a committee, we conclude, therefore, that the church's teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status. . . . We also conclude that this status is warranted because these sins threaten a person's salvation. The Scriptures call the church to warn people to flee sexual immorality for the sake of their souls and to encourage them with God's presence and power to equip them for holy living. A church that fails to call people to repentance and offer them the hope of God's loving deliverance is acting like a false church" (p. 460). This goes against the very basic gospel message our denomination affirms, that salvation in Christ is not contingent on works but rests entirely in the saving death of Jesus Christ.

4. The report does not encourage us to wrestle with Scripture as a community but assumes biblical clarity. We were struck by the thoughtful and extensive theological work that was done by those who prepared the report. However, the report relies on a singular interpretation of passages that have been alternatively interpreted by godly and wise theologians; it thereby takes away the opportunity to wrestle together with Scripture as one source of divine revelation. Scripture is complex, contextual, and requires faithful wrestling with difficult passages. In the adoption of this report, a decision has been made as to how some of Scripture's most difficult and culturally contextual passages ought to be interpreted, which denies the average churchgoer the opportunity to engage with Scripture fully.
5. The scope of the report was limited by members whose participation was limited to their agreement with the 1973 report (crcna.org/sites/default/files/1973_report_homosexuality.pdf). For this reason, the human sexuality report does not meet the goal of "extended and careful deliberation" of these "weighty matters" of human sexuality as referred to in the report's mandate (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 926-27; Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, p. 315). Because the issues discussed in the report are multisided, with a wide variety of experiences and perspectives that play into how these issues are perceived, it adds little value if everyone who works to create a workable resource starts off with similar views and beliefs. In addition, this stipulation limits the group's ability to represent the wide range of perspectives within the denomination as a whole. Therefore, those whose views differ from the 1973 report are limited to consulting roles and do not have a voice in the report itself.
6. Members of our community will be harmed by the adoption of this report, as demonstrated by the personal impact statements that follow. The personal statements are included without personal identification to protect those who prefer to remain anonymous.

I grew up in First Church, which prides itself on being a welcoming community, and I believe that is true, but it is a community that can also be unintentionally exclusive to those who don't quite fit the mold of a traditional member of First CRC. I began feeling separate from the church community as I grew older and learned more about myself, specifically the fact that I am bisexual. As it is right now, the CRC is not a place where I am safe to be open about this part of my identity, a part that I cannot see as anything but the way that God made me. I am no theologian, and my point is not to debate the meaning of the language of Scripture on homosexuality. It is simply to say that First Church is a place where the minority voice often goes unheard. I don't believe this is due to any malicious intent on the part of church leadership or the rest of the congregation; on the contrary, I believe that many members of this church don't know that the minority voice exists in our community because for years we have remained silent. Even now, I write this anonymously because there isn't a safe place for me to talk about these issues without being judged or ostracized. I love this community, but I can't be fully myself within it. I hope that this congregation can come together

with the intention of understanding, rather than condemning, and that we create a safe place where we can discuss these issues without risk of being pushed to the margins of this community. The report on human sexuality and expectations for the LGBTQ+ members of the church further separates me from the community.

I was raised in the Christian Reformed Church. I am deeply saddened by this report and the push to make the 1973 report confessional, because I have been harmed by the Christian Reformed Church's teachings on human sexuality. I was raised to believe that God intended sex to be within marriage between a man and a woman. When I went to college, I met openly LGBTQ+ people for the first time. I was not equipped to extend hospitality to those whom my church taught me were "living in sin." Instead of treating marginalized people with love and respect, I openly debated their lives. I had no framework for seeing openly LGBTQ+ people as faithful Christians, and I lament the harm I have caused as a result of my upbringing. I was also raised to believe that my body was a gift from God, and the best way to honor my body and God was by keeping it pure. When I was in a position where my consent was violated, I viewed my body as damaged before God because I was no longer pure, and sinned by not saying "no" loudly enough. I have yet to feel safe enough to talk about this experience with my church or family, because my church has prioritized purity over consent and safety. I understand that in teaching me those things, my church did not intend harm, and even had my best interests in mind. However, this sexual ethic was not adequate for addressing my lived experience, and it provided no space for care or questioning when life was not as straightforward as I was taught. I pray that this report will not be made confessional and that the CRC will find a way to fully embrace a sexual ethic that provides care, love, and faithfulness to its members.

I urge you to carefully consider the implications of this report on the current and future church climate. I personally have dear family and friends including close family members who identify as nonbinary and who are not comfortable attending the CRC church because of the current climate of judgment regarding sexuality and marriage mores. I became a Christian and joined the church body when I was 25 years old after I learned how Jesus modeled deep love, acceptance, and protection of marginalized people in his life and ministry. I sincerely hope our church body and the church universal will place a high priority on embracing all people into the church body and value differences so that we can all feel welcome to worship, serve, and love God together. Please consider this carefully in prayer and humility.

As a lifelong member of the CRC, the church has been a primary context for growing up, for beliefs about identity and belonging and behavioral expectations. Over time, my work in particular has taken me places that aren't always compatible with my faith community's beliefs and values, and I've wondered whether a line, between what my community believes, and what I believe and practice, is tolerable and convenient.

I had an inside connection, so to speak, in terms of the Human Sexuality report's publication, a family connection whose commitment to the CRC and whose work and presence in the world diverge from the report's potential adoption by synod; undoubtedly for me, the report has a symbolic meaning that hooks into my history with the church and with belonging to it. In reaching out about it within my church, I found companions who also have found a home at First and who are deeply invested in our community, and who also find the impact of the report threatening to their belief in the power of our local body of Christ to be Christ in the world and the capacity of our body to address human sexuality as it relates to sexual minorities. As stated in many words above, we believe that our presence and work in the world is diminished if we tie ourselves to beliefs that condemn our LGBTQ+ friends, family, and allies; pigeonhole our beliefs about salvation; and qualify God's love for us. In finding these allies, I find renewed belonging to and investment in our First community even as I realize there are new limits to them.

As we enter into dialogue about human sexuality and belonging within our community, I can see possibilities that my own ties to this church, that encompass more diversity than I'd known, may become, in ways I hadn't predicted, a place of growth for me around who God's people are and why we are.

I haven't addressed my family's needs, as a mother whose children attend schools where inclusion is presumed and allyship is not suspect. (I am certain that my identity as an adoptive mother also has impacted my understanding of what it means to belong, although that won't find more expression here, beyond that acknowledgment.) My prediction is that church will become increasingly less relevant to them if we do not struggle to learn and understand more about the depth of God's love and the nature of his created love-objects, and the breadth of the ways God-love and human-love find expression. That line I referenced above, between beliefs and behavior that offer belonging in our church, and the experiences that God gives to me and to them outside the church for which the church may have little interest in understanding because they imply sexual differences about which we have already made judgments, may become a reality for them too, unconscious and then conscious. That is my fear, and I don't think that my own experience and acknowledging of that line will address it in my children's lives. So even as I want the church to be a place that helps my children with their experiences, I want the church to be a place that holds my LGBTQ+ siblings as in the arms of our creator.

Thank you for your time, for the work that you do, for serving in the roles that you have chosen to do, for investment in the deliberation you are called to with respect to all of Christ followers' belongingness within the Christian Reformed Church.

As a member of the CRC community for over two decades, and a highly active one, I have found the CRC community to be a welcoming and supportive place for me and my family in all but one area. The report on human sexuality that is being put before Synod 2021 hits the mark on a few topics, but misses the mark on several. If adopted, I fear I will no longer have a place in the CRC community. I want to address one that I uniquely can speak to.

Growing up in the Christian faith, I adhered to the church's beliefs around sex and marriage. I believed that marriage was a sacred and forever commitment. It was this deep belief and my holding myself to this doctrine that kept me in an emotionally and verbally abusive marriage for twelve years. I was stuck and had no options, so I silently suffered for six of those years. When I finally had the courage to come forward and seek the support of my pastor, there was not much that could be done.

There were no broken bones, blackened eyes, or a confirmed mistress. It would have been easier to call out the sinful state of my marriage and get the support I needed if there were. Instead, my marriage was saturated with emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and pornography—all hidden from the view of our church community and family. I knew, and one of my pastors knew. I kept it hidden from friends and family members. I did not have a safe place to get the support and care I needed because as much as our church community strives to be a body of Christ that is there to serve the broken, there are certain topics (issues of human sexuality as an example) that they are not prepared or equipped for. Humanity is not tidy; it is messy, and we have to be ready to handle sensitive topics with love and grace as God would have us do. When I finally reached my breaking point and decided to accept the sin of breaking up my marriage and leaving my abuser, I was left to wear a scarlet letter D. We as a CRC community do not support our members that go through divorce well. I have had to forge my own path to healing mostly outside the CRC community because we do not have the resources to support those going through divorce. The overwhelming message I received was that unless there has been sexual immorality, reconciliation to your partner is the only righteous path. However, it is a path that fails to acknowledge the nuance in cases of abuse, especially emotional and verbal. I believe that there is room in our communities to come alongside fellow Christians and offer them love and support instead of the sting of shame and judgment.

I am also concerned about how this report calls for the CRCNA to emphasize the biblical principle that divorce and remarriage constitutes adultery. If I were to find love again and want to remarry, then I would have to trade in my scarlet "D" for Hester Prynne's scarlet "A," only furthering the shame that I have already felt. This is not a community that I want to be a part of, this is not the community and belief that I want to shape in my children. If adopted, this report calls me an adulterer, and I will not remain in a church community that places that shame on me and my family. As I stated in the beginning, I am addressing one of several topics in this report that misses the mark. There are several other parts of this report that would hurt family members and friends deeply, and for this reason I choose not to sit silently by. We as a CRC community are better than this; we need to strive to do better than this.

I have many friends and colleagues who would not identify as Christians but who are members of, or support, the LGBTQ community. I have often struggled with the fact that while I can talk to these friends about Jesus welcoming them with open arms, I can't invite them to my church because I know they will not be fully embraced. This is hard, because I consider the people at First CRC to be my family, and I love our church. It hurts to know that my friends would not be loved equally by them.

As a parent, I also struggle with raising my children in the environment outlined in the report. As my children grow older, I have concerns regarding the messages they will be receiving, especially if this report is adopted. My heart breaks for the children —members of our church family!—in our congregation who are dealing with these issues currently. Our church is not a safe place for them.

Adoption of the report as confessional draws a line, forcing dualistic thinking and not allowing for the healthy dialogue we so desperately need in our congregation. My prayer is that we can have these discussions and keep them centered in love, justice, and wisdom. However, if the report is adopted as confessional, my family will leave our church, as we would not be allowed to serve without agreeing with the report. I grieve this possibility, and I hope instead we can move toward being a place of grace, safety, and love for all.

Members of First CRC, Denver, Colorado

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Note: This overture was deliberated by the council of First CRC, Denver, Colorado, on January 20, 2021, and was tabled by the council. It was then submitted to Classis Rocky Mountain, which deliberated regarding the overture on March 2, 2021, and decided to table it.

Overture 24: Do Not Accede to Recommendations D and E of the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (Deferred from 2021)

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod not to accede to Recommendations D and E of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

I. Background

Recommendations D and E of the report concern the status of various teachings and practices concerning human sexuality (p. 461).

D. That synod declare that the church's teaching on premarital sex, extra-marital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status.

E. That synod declare that Church Order Article 69-c is to be interpreted in the light of the biblical evidence laid out in this report.

Confessional status means elevating teachings on sexuality to the level of doctrines of God and salvation. The report deems that unrepentant contravention of the report's biblical interpretation of several areas of human sexuality—whether by teaching or action—endangers a person's salvation and requires church discipline up to and including excommunication. These are deeply serious matters for the church.

In this overture, we address concerns under the headings of Pastoral Concerns, Theological Concerns, CRCNA Polity, and Lack of Clarity. We refer to the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality simply as "the Committee." Our recommendation and summary grounds follow the more comprehensive discussion of our four areas of concern.

A. Pastoral concerns

1. The negative impact of declaring *status confessionis* would disproportionately fall on LGBT+ persons in our churches, especially LGBT+ youth, who already experience high levels of bullying, internalized shame and self-loathing, self-harm, and suicidal ideation and attempt. The report cites the Trevor Project National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2020 (thetrevorproject.org/survey-2020/) in relation to transgender youth but fails to discuss or take into account the well-documented harms experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth. The same Trevor Project survey finds that
 - 40 percent of LGBTQ respondents seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months, with more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth having seriously considered suicide.
 - 68 percent of LGBTQ youth reported symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder in the past two weeks, including more than 3 in 4 transgender and nonbinary youth.
 - 48 percent of LGBTQ youth reported engaging in self-harm in the past twelve months, including over 60 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth.
 - 46 percent of LGBTQ youth report they wanted psychological or emotional counseling from a mental health professional but were unable to receive it in the past 12 months.
 - 10 percent of LGBTQ youth reported undergoing conversion therapy, with 78 percent reporting it occurred when they were under age 18.
 - 29 percent of LGBTQ youth have experienced homelessness, been kicked out, or run away.
 - 1 in 3 LGBTQ youth reported that they had been physically threatened or harmed in their lifetime due to their LGBTQ identity.

Another study finds LGBT+ youth to be four times as likely to self-harm or attempt suicide than straight cisgender (i.e., nontransgender)

peers (Marshal et al., 2011).¹ In another, LGB students from more conservative families were found to be over eight times as likely to attempt suicide as LGB peers from supportive families (Ryan et al., 2009).² These are literally matters of life and death for our sexual- and gender-minority youth, yet the report glosses over this reality.

2. Not only does the report fail to adequately acknowledge the harms and injustices experienced by sexual and gender minorities, it actually adds to the harm by continuing to pathologize those who fall outside what is deemed normal and pleasing to God. The words “disorder” or “disordered” appear 54 times in the report, sending a message to LGBT+ persons that is likely to increase shame, self-hatred, and internalized homophobia/transphobia. While this is not the report’s intent, it is its probable impact.
3. The report exchanges the false hope of reparative therapy (in the 1973 and 2002 reports) for the unrealized vision of a church that prioritizes communal living, is closer than biological family, discusses sexual struggles openly, and is a safe place for LGBT+ persons. The report itself recognizes in several places that the denomination has failed to respond to all previous calls to be a more loving and inclusive community for sexual minorities. Declaring a *status confessionis* before the church has anything approaching a reasonable track record on this score is irresponsible and offers only illusory hope to vulnerable minorities.
4. Pastoral discernment on these matters rightly belongs at the consistory level and not at the level of the assemblies of the church. The report itself nods to this when it mentions that some churches allow members not to baptize their children as infants, despite infant baptism being a clear confessional matter for the CRCNA (p. 457). Concerning divorce and remarriage, Synod 1980 refers discernment to the church consistory: “the church must apply these biblical principles to concrete situations in the light of its best understanding of what happened in the divorce and what is being planned for the remarriage. The major part of the burden in making this application necessarily rests on the local consistory, for it has the most intimate and accurate knowledge of the situation of divorce and contemplated remarriage” (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 484). The current report, however, appears to undercut local discernment and situational pastoral decision making by appealing to judgment: “the church must warn its members that those who refuse to repent of these sins . . . will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). It must discipline those who refuse to repent of such sins for the sake of their souls (1 Cor. 5-6)” (p. 458).

¹ Marshal, M.P.; Dietz, L.J.; Friedman, M.S.; Stall, R.; Smith, H.; McGinley, J.; . . . Brent, D.A. (2011), “Suicidality and depression disparities between sexual minority and heterosexual youth: A meta-analytic review,” *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 49(2): pp. 115-23.

² Ryan, C.; Huebner, D.; Diaz, R.M.; and Sanchez, J. (2009), “Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults,” *Pediatrics* 123(1): pp. 346-52.

5. Drawing a confessional line in the sand has the potential to split families, churches, and the denomination, involving serious spiritual, missional, psychological, and financial consequences.
6. Far from being comprehensive, the report fails to discuss several important issues in human sexuality—most glaringly, consent. The report’s blindness to questions of power in sexual relations is particularly egregious given the ubiquity and normalization of sexual violence in society. The report, for instance, presumes the woman at the well (John 4) to be promiscuous rather than the victim of a series of men who alone had the power to divorce and abandon her (p. 445). Contraception, oral and anal sex, and asexuality are also unaddressed. The report’s one reference to queer as an identity label gives a definition that is misleading and bizarre: “‘queer’—that is, rejecting not just dichotomies such as gay / straight but even the trichotomy of gay / straight / bisexual, and asserting instead complete randomness and / or arbitrary choice in human sexual attraction” (footnote, p. 472). This is a far cry from its common usage as an umbrella term to describe “a sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms” (apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexualitydefinitions.pdf).

B. *Theological concerns*

1. The report’s assertion that male / female sexual difference is a core component of the image of God in humans is unorthodox and unbiblical. The report states:

The poetic structure of Genesis 1:27 indicates that humanity’s creation as male and female is inextricably linked with humanity’s creation in God’s image. We image God not simply as generic human beings, who happen to be male and female, but as male and female human beings.

(p. 329)

In addition, the male / female binary is grammatically connected with the image of God, that is, with what is a central identifying biblical feature of being human (v. 27), something that is reaffirmed in Genesis 5:2. Paul Niskanen writes, “The statement ‘male and female he created them,’ far from being dissociated from the concept of the image of God, stands at the very crux of its interpretation.”

(p. 387)

Since the Bible teaches that being created male or female is part of how humans reflect the image of God. . . .

(p. 400)

This claim is made without reference to the long and varied history of interpretation and conjecture about the meaning of the *imago dei*. Astonishingly, in the report’s section about Genesis 1-2 (p. 387), the only theologian quoted is Paul Niskanen, a Catholic author. Linking our very humanity to genital sexual difference, as the report does, threatens to oversexualize human beings—including children, the elderly, and the unmarried.

This problematic interpretation may be used to infer that LGBT+ people are willfully rejecting their God-given image / sexuality and are

therefore less than human in a way that cisgender heterosexuals will never be, no matter how much they may sin sexually. Although the report recommends compassion for transgender and intersex people, it insists that they are suffering from post-fall “disorders and diseases” (p. 387). This focus actually undermines the plea for compassion by highlighting that transgender and intersex people do not fall within the report’s understanding of the creational image of God. If the report’s theology were declared to be confessional and used to interpret Church Order Article 69-c, persons who identify as transgender or nonbinary, intersex persons who do not identify with their sex assigned at birth, and perhaps any person experiencing gender dysphoria, may thus be cast as disobediently rejecting God’s image. Since the image of God is what sets humans apart from animals, this would imply that gender variant persons are choosing to be subhuman—a terrifying claim. The report’s attempt to make the image of God about binary sexual difference threatens to dehumanize vulnerable people experiencing the disorientation of gender dysphoria or an intersex condition. It communicates shame and exclusion and potentially empowers further abuse of already marginalized and at-risk minorities.

The report nowhere addresses how Jesus can be the preeminent image of God (Col. 1:15) if the image is primarily linked to male/female sexual difference. The fact that Jesus is the image of God par excellence negates the report’s focus on the image as sexual difference.

Ironically, viewing sexual difference as core to the *imago dei* is not a theologically conservative or traditional position. John Calvin, for example, rules out the view “that the image of God is in the body of man” as “by no means consonant with Scripture” (Calvin, 1979; p. 94).³ Jesus speaks positively of intersex eunuchs in Matthew 19, and Isaiah 56 and Acts 8 both describe the inclusion of eunuchs among God’s people. Ancient Jewish commentary on the Law discusses the place of intersex persons in the community without suggesting that their sexual ambiguity negates their status as imagebearers of God (DeFranza, 2015).⁴

In Genesis 1, not only humans but also the fish and the birds are commanded to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:22). Hence, we understand that they too (along with the livestock) were created male and female. But despite possessing male and female sexual difference appropriate to their kind, these creatures are not in the image of God. Why then would sexual difference constitute the image in humans but not in animals?

Genesis 1:27 is better understood as stressing that both men and women reflect who God is in the world. The created equality of women suggested by the text stands in stark contrast to the foundational beliefs of other Ancient Near Eastern cultures, which viewed men as more godlike, with women ranking sometimes below male slaves in the social hierarchy. God’s people are to be different from the surrounding cultures by valuing women as fully equal to men in personhood and worth.

³ Calvin, J. *Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (1979), reprinted from the Calvin Translation Society edition of 1847 (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust).

⁴ DeFranza, M.K. *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2015).

While the report's scriptural sections tie the *imago dei* to sexual difference, in other places the report states that all persons bear the image of God (pp. 376, 384). This confusion within the report itself is particularly troubling, given the centrality of the image of God to theological anthropology.

2. The report overstates the ability of sexual sin to threaten salvation. The Belgic Confession Articles 16 and 23 teach that salvation is by God's grace alone and by God's initiative. The Bible includes many fathers and mothers of the faith who sinned sexually, yet the narrative does not warrant the view that they thereby lost their salvation (e.g., Abraham and other patriarchs who practiced polygamy).
3. It is problematic that the report misrepresents the gracious tone of the 1980 report on divorce and remarriage and takes a harsher stance on divorce. The current report emphasizes from 1980 "the general biblical principle that divorce and remarriage constitute adultery" (quoted twice on p. 451) while downplaying the plea for compassion and pastoral humility that runs through the same report. The 1980 report roundly rejects a legalistic approach: "Although the Scripture speaks clearly in terms of principles regarding divorce and remarriage, it is neither possible nor wise for the church to attempt to construct a legal code which would cover all cases or all the circumstances that would apply" (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 480). The 1980 report also exhorts that, "recognizing the limits of human ability to discern the subtlety and intricacy of human motivation, the church must recognize the limits of its ability to assess guilt and blame in the intimate and private turmoil of marital distress" (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 483).
4. The report fails to adequately grapple with arguments in favor of covenanted, monogamous, same-sex unions between believers in Christ. Straw-man arguments are put forth without nuance. There is little respectful, sustained engagement with the reasoning of authors such as James Brownson and the Classis Grand Rapids East study committee (classisgreast.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ssmRevised.pdf), as the synodical study committee's mandate required. The 1973 report shows more willingness to listen to alternative interpretations and recognize hermeneutical problems with its own position than does the current report. In this respect, the current report goes beyond 1973 in advancing a hardline approach.

C. CRCNA polity

1. The synodical study committee's mandate asks the committee to reflect on and evaluate "whether or not, with respect to same-sex behavior and other issues identified in the study, it will be advisable for future synods to consider . . . changing the main text of Church Order Article 69" and "declaring a *status confessionis*" (p. 315). In crafting this mandate, Synod 2016 asked the committee to advise whether future synods should declare confessional status because it does not already exist. However, the committee went beyond its mandate by (1) not reflecting on and evaluating whether it would be advisable for a future synod to declare a *status confessionis*, and (2) wrongly claiming on its own authority that a *status confessionis* already exists.

2. It is factually incorrect to claim that a *status confessionis* already exists on homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Previous synodical reports dealing with homosexuality and same-sex sexual relationships (1973, 2002, 2016) have been careful to frame their recommendations as pastoral guidance, not as an interpretation of the confessions.
3. The report's claim that a *status confessionis* already exists in relation to pornography, premarital and extramarital sex, and polyamory is similarly not borne out by previous decisions of synod. For example, the CRCNA states that using pornography is a sin (crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/pornography) but the statement does not make a confessional claim.
4. The report correctly notes that Ursinus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, understood same-sex sex to be included in "unchastity / *Unkeuschheit*" (H.C., Q&A 108) in his commentary on the catechism (p. 458). However, in CRCNA church polity "a signatory [to the Covenant for Officebearers] is bound only to those doctrines that are confessed, and is not bound to the references, allusions, and remarks that are incidental to the formulation of these doctrines" (Church Order Supplement, Article 5, A, 3, "Guidelines as to the meaning of affirming the confessions by means of the Covenant for Officebearers," current Church Order, p. 15; see also network.crcna.org/elders/form-subscription). Ursinus' commentary is not part of our confessions and should not be given undue weight.

This is especially important, given that the assumption in Ursinus' day was that people engaging in same-sex sexual behavior did so against their true nature, rather than in keeping with an enduring and unchosen sexual orientation. In this regard, Ursinus' likely view contradicts the teaching of the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 1973*, also referenced several times in the current report) that same-sex orientation is not chosen and not sinful. Furthermore, historians suggest that in the 16th century, unchastity (*Unkeuschheit*) also included intentionally nonprocreative sex, masturbation, and divorce except in cases of adultery or abandonment. Any consistent argument for confessional status on the matter of same-sex marriage from H.C. Q&A 108 and Ursinus' commentary ought, therefore, to also seek confessional status to prohibit contraception, masturbation, and divorce in cases of domestic violence or emotional abuse. The committee fails to address this problem.

D. Lack of clarity

1. The argument for *status confessionis* is not sufficiently grounded or clear for synod to take such a serious step. The report fails to provide the "concise and clear" guidance required by the committee's mandate. The points that follow describe some of the report's deficiencies in this area.
2. The report suggests a false equivalency between premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex. Including these diverse topics in one sweeping claim of confessional status does not do justice to the complexity or nuance of any one of them. The report is silent on what *status confessionis* would mean in practical pastoral terms for churches dealing with situations involving these areas.

3. The report seems to contradict itself on whether teaching or practice or both would set a person outside the bounds of confessional orthodoxy. Page 458 of the report states:

It is important to remember that the question is not whether a particular action violates the confession but whether a particular teaching violates the confession. To put it another way, is it a violation of any of our current confessions to teach that it is acceptable for Christians to use pornography?

On the same page, however, the report goes on to say that action is proscribed:

According to our confessions, the church may never approve or even tolerate any form of sexual immorality, including pornography, polyamory, premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, or homosexual sex. On the contrary, the church must warn its members that those who refuse to repent of these sins—as well as of idolatry, greed, and other such sins—will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). It must discipline those who refuse to repent of such sins for the sake of their souls (1 Cor. 5-6).

4. To take the example of pornography, the report does not explain on what grounds the use of pornography is deemed to be a confessional—indeed, a salvation—issue. Pornography is a devastating and rampant evil in our culture, as the report describes. However, it is wholly unclear on what basis confessional status is being applied to pornography. The committee writes:

The biblical portion of our report is clear. Marriage between one man and one woman is the only appropriate place for sex. Anything that deviates from that teaching is contrary to Scripture. Thus premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, the use of pornography, and homosexual sex all fall under the heading of sexual immorality and are therefore morally impermissible.

(p. 459)

Is the use of pornography condemned because it typically does not depict healthy married sex? Or because the actors involved are not married? If so, the report ought logically to also warn against all depiction of sex in film and image, unless perhaps the actors involved are married to each other in the film and in real life. Or is the condemnation of porn based on the coerced, violent, degrading nature of the sex portrayed? This would be an argument based on consent, a vitally important aspect of healthy sexuality which the report does not discuss at all. The report rightly notes that many in our churches are addicted to pornography, having been introduced to its powerful erotic stimuli as young children or teens, through the marketing strategies of a multibillion-dollar industry. Those addicted to pornography may continue to struggle—with relapses and periods of sobriety—for the rest of their lives. The report makes no attempt to describe how declaring pornography to be a confessional issue would help the thousands of people in our churches who are caught up in its use, or how churches are to assess repentance or apply confessional status where pornography is an addiction.

5. It is unclear whether the committee believes that the theological sections of its own report already have confessional status. Recommendation E seems to imply this belief, since it proposes “that Church Order Article

69-c is to be interpreted in the light of the biblical evidence laid out in this report.” However, it is unwise—if not outright dangerous—for a committee to suggest that its own writing has the same authority as the historic confessions of the church. This is especially so given the serious theological problems with the report’s theology, discussed above.

6. Recommendation E, which states, “That synod declare that Church Order Article 69-c is to be interpreted in the light of the biblical evidence laid out in this report” (p. 461), is vague and unhelpful. Several overtures to Synod 2016 asked for a change to the wording of Article 69-c to state that marriage is a “monogamous, lifelong, covenant relationship between one man and one woman,” but rather than proposing such a change, the committee makes a more nebulous recommendation. Are we to understand this recommendation as referring to same-sex marriage being in conflict with the Word of God? Or remarriages after divorce? Or marriages that came after premarital sex? Or marriages where one or both spouses are or have been addicted to porn? The report simply does not discuss questions relating to Article 69-c and the implications and consequences of the proposed interpretive lens. The only mentions of Article 69-c in the report are in the mandate on page 315 and in Recommendation E on page 461. It would be irresponsible for synod to accede to a recommendation that has potentially far-reaching implications that are not even discussed in the report.
7. It is not clear to what extent dissenting views are permissible should a *status confessionis* be declared. Historically, Reformed churches only declare a *status confessionis* when they believe the integrity of the gospel is at stake and are willing to accept a schism over the issue. This report seems uncomfortable with that posture, since it states there is still room for disagreement:

Even if a teaching has confessional status, that does not mean there is no room for disagreement within the bounds of that teaching. In addition, the church sometimes allows for pastoral accommodations. For example, our confessions say that the children of believers should be baptized. Yet some congregations are willing to allow members not to baptize their children.
(p. 457)

Yet the report’s contradictory statements about the permissibility of differing views promotes confusion. For example, just two pages after the above quote, the report states:

To teach that any of these behaviors is permissible undermines the teaching and authority of Scripture. Whenever the church teaches that a form of behavior forbidden in Scripture is morally permissible, it is guilty of false teaching.
(p. 459)

Lack of clarity on this matter leaves open urgent questions regarding the salvation, membership, and status of same-sex married believers in our congregations, divorced and remarried persons, those who are cohabiting, those who have had premarital or extramarital sex, and those involved in pornography use, as well as the large number of CRCNA members who believe the CRCNA should affirm same-sex marriages.

8. The report recognizes in passing that *status confessionis* involves pressing and difficult questions regarding officebearers as well as faculty at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary who sign the Covenant for Officebearers (p. 457). However, it fails to give any guidance on a matter that concerns the employment and ministry of many brothers and sisters in the CRCNA, its churches, and its institutions. It is irresponsible to declare that a *status confessionis* already exists without consulting with the institutions that will be impacted or acknowledging the implications for people's employment and families' livelihoods.
9. The report contradicts itself in several key respects. For example . . .
 - On whether the concept of gender is valid and useful (e.g., pp. 374, 392, and 394 acknowledge that gender expression and roles are socially constructed) or an assault on biblical values (e.g., p. 378, where the very concept of gender is seen as a strategy “to undermine the traditional ethics of Western civilization”).
 - On whether science and social science are important in understanding sexuality (compare the negative view on p. 351 with the committee's own liberal—though sometimes inaccurate and misleading—use of scientific and social scientific data).
 - On whether people are choosing to be transgender (e.g., transgender identity is described in terms of radical autonomous choice on pp. 377-78, while in other places the report acknowledges that people are not choosing to experience the distress of gender dysphoria: pp. 374, 388).
 - On whether use of preferred pronouns and names is recommended. The committee urges readers to “decide what welcome and hospitality look like in regard to people's names and pronouns” and “strive to avoid giving offense as much as possible” (p. 398), noting that using preferred names and pronouns helps prevent suicides. Yet, the report itself misgenders transgender persons, shows disrespect by using birth names and pronouns, and stokes fears of trans persons as sexual predators.
 - In its tone, the report veers dizzily between harsh condemnation and pity. The negative emotional and psychological impacts of this strategy on vulnerable minorities cannot be overstated.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod not to accede to Recommendations D and E of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Grounds:

1. LGBT+ youth who are already at alarmingly high risk will be further negatively impacted by a declaration of *status confessionis*. LGBT+ youth experience high levels of bullying, internalized shame and self-loathing, self-harm, and suicidal ideation and attempt. The church is far from being the kind of community where LGBT+ youth can flourish. It is irresponsible and unloving to declare *status confessionis*, given the likelihood of increased harm to vulnerable minorities.

2. The report's assertion that male/female sexual difference constitutes the image of God in humans is unwarranted and unsubstantiated. This claim is made without reference to the range of historic and current interpretations of the *imago dei* and without recognition of the harm such an assumption permits to transgender and intersex persons, who thus fall outside of God's special human creation. The report's theology of sexuality, on which the appeal to *status confessionis* is made, appears to permit future challenges to CRCNA decisions on women in church office, the use of contraception, and the 1980 report's gracious treatment of divorce and remarriage.
3. By its insistence on sexual sin as a salvation matter, the report threatens to undermine the precious doctrine of salvation by God's grace through faith in Christ alone.
4. The report fails to adequately grapple with arguments in favor of covenanted, monogamous same-sex unions between believers in Christ, as its mandate requested. Straw-man arguments are offered instead of sustained respectful engagement with the reasoning of revisionist scholars.
5. It is factually incorrect to claim that a *status confessionis* already exists in the CRCNA on homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Previous reports dealing with homosexuality and same-sex sexual relationships (1973, 2002, 2016) have been careful to frame their guidance as pastoral advice, not as an interpretation of the confessions. In the committee's mandate, Synod 2016 asked the committee to advise whether future synods should declare confessional status because it does not already exist.
6. It is also factually incorrect to claim that a *status confessionis* already exists in the CRCNA on pornography, premarital and extramarital sex, and polyamory.
7. A subscriber to the Covenant for Officebearers is "bound only to those doctrines that are confessed, and is not bound to the references, allusions, and remarks that are incidental to the formulation of these doctrines" (Church Order Supplement, Article 5). Ursinus' commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism should not be given undue weight, especially as doing so would also involve accepting 16th-century assumptions about contraception, masturbation, and divorce.
8. The report fails to provide the "concise and clear" guidance required by its mandate. The argument for *status confessionis* is not sufficiently grounded or clear for synod to take such an important step. The report is unclear on a number of key issues, including whether teaching or practice or both set a person outside the bounds of confessional orthodoxy, whether the committee believes the theological section of its own report already has confessional status, and the extent to which dissenting views may be permissible should a *status confessionis* be declared.
9. Combining the topics of premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex creates a false equivalency. The report fails to consider what *status confessionis* would mean in practical pastoral terms in any of these areas. There is no discussion of how *status confessionis* would affect the salvation, membership, and status of same-sex married believers, divorced and remarried

persons, those who are cohabiting, those who have had premarital or extramarital sex, those involved in pornography use, and those who support the full inclusion of LGBT+ persons in the church. Interpretation of *status confessionis* could end or prevent the employment and ministry of many in CRCNA churches and institutions.

10. The report fails to discuss questions relating to Church Order Article 69-c and the implications of the proposed interpretive lens. It would be irresponsible for synod to accede to a recommendation with potentially far-reaching implications for which the current report offers no grounds or discussion.
11. Pastoral discernment of situations involving sexuality rightly belongs with the local consistory. Declaring a *status confessionis* across wide areas of human sexuality is likely to hinder wise discernment of complex and sensitive pastoral situations.
12. Drawing a confessional line in the sand has the potential to split families, churches, and the denomination, involving serious spiritual, missional, psychological, and financial consequences.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

Overture 25: Do Not Accede to Recommendations D and E of the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (Deferred from 2021)

I. Overture

Emmanuel CRC, Lantern Community CRC, River Park CRC, and The Road CRC—all in Calgary, Alberta—overture synod not to accede to recommendations D and E of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (“the report”).

II. Background

Recommendations D and E of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality report read as follows (p. 461):

D. That synod declare that the church’s teaching on premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, polyamory, pornography, and homosexual sex already has confessional status.

E. That synod declare that Church Order Article 69-c¹ is to be interpreted in the light of the biblical evidence laid out in this report.

What does *confessional status* mean? The CRC has three confessions (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort), which are “subordinate to Scripture” and accepted as “a true interpretation” of the Word of God. When a CRC member becomes an elder, deacon, commissioned pastor, or minister, they are considered “officebearers” and bound to agreement with the confessions.²

¹ Article 69-c says, “Ministers shall not solemnize marriages which would be in conflict with the Word of God.”

² See Church Order Article 5.

What are the implications of these recommendations? If recommendation D is accepted, anyone who disagrees with the report's conclusions (in part or as a whole, whether "progressive" or "traditional") could not be members in good standing in the CRC and would not be eligible to hold church office. If recommendation E is accepted, the report's conclusions on what constitutes a marriage (or remarriage) that is "in conflict with the Word of God" would be as authoritative as the Word of God itself.

Grounds:

1. Declaring that the church's teaching on sexuality "already has confessional status" ignores previous synodical decisions and processes and sidesteps the committee's mandate.
 - a. By declaring the matter "already . . . confessional," the report subverts the normative and historic process for considering matters confessional.³
 - b. Synod 1975 adopted recommendations specifically articulating the "measure of agreement expected" regarding synodical decisions. These recommendations make clear that Report 42 from 1973 does not have confessional status but rather was framed as "pastoral advice." And all following related reports (2002 and 2016) also were framed as "pastoral advice," not requiring confessional agreement. None of these decisions made by Synod 1975, which contradict this conclusion of the report to Synod 2021 on human sexuality, are addressed.⁴
 - c. Synod 2016 mandated the committee to explore questions concerning confessional status and human sexuality for "future synods" with reference to a future "team" to draft a new "statement of faith." The report disregards this prescribed process by declaring the matter "already . . . confessional."⁵

³ The Belhar Confession and Our World Belongs to God are two examples of statements that are celebrated as contemporary testimonies and yet were intentionally *not* adopted as having confessional status precisely because declaring something confessional would compel full agreement on *all* points from *all* officebearers in the CRCNA. Synod 2017 named the Belhar Confession "a dynamic statement of faith that serves the CRCNA . . . an important statement that speaks to essential matters in a given time period . . . useful for study, faith formation, teaching, and worship," while intentionally refraining from compelling agreement on all points by officebearers (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 699). The study report on human sexuality suggests that its conclusions be deemed confessional, which would, effectively, make the report a fourth confession of the CRCNA by "the back door" (i.e., without due process or consideration).

⁴ See *Acts of Synod 1975* (adoption of Report 47, pp. 44-45; full Report 47, pp. 595-604). From the full report, under the heading "The Measure of Agreement Expected," we find this: "Full agreement with the *confessions* is expected from all members of the church, and subscription to the confessions is required of all officebearers by signing the Form of Subscription. While *synodical decisions* are 'settled and binding,' subscription to synodical decisions is not required" (pp. 601-602). Reflecting on levels of expected agreement around synodical decisions in the *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary* (2020), Dr. Henry DeMoor writes, "It is significant, for example, that Synod 1973 twice framed all of its 'statements' on homosexuality, including its 'ethical stance,' as 'pastoral advice' (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 51). It intentionally avoided referring to them as an 'interpretation' of the Heidelberg Catechism's use of the term 'unchastity' in Lord's Day 41" (p. 168).

⁵ *Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 919-20, sets forth a mandate for the committee, including the following: "Reflection and evaluation of whether or not, with respect to same-sex behavior and other issues identified in the study, it will be advisable for future synods to consider

2. The report ignores, simplifies, or dismisses voices and perspectives that do not fit with its conclusions.
 - a. The report's presentation of real, personal testimonies surrounding sexuality is touching but not balanced and overlooks many marginalized voices that don't fit the report's conclusions. For example, there are no testimonies of faithfully married same-sex couples in the report.⁶
 - b. The report does not adequately engage views that differ from their conclusions in academia, the public square, or even among very significant constituents and stakeholders such as Calvin University.⁷
 - c. The structure and process of the committee tasked with creating the report inhibited the inclusion of marginalized voices. For the first time in CRCNA history a committee was formed requiring members to adhere to a singular view (Synod 1973) concerning the very topic they were tasked to study.
3. Declaring the conclusions of the report as "confessional" would harm the unity of the Christian Reformed Church.

... changing the main text of Church Order Article 69 ... declaring a *status confessionis* ... appointing a team of individuals to draft a statement of faith, perhaps in the style of the Contemporary Testimony, on human embodiment and sexuality that reflects and secures the teachings and conclusions of the report. ...” The report's recommendation effectually cuts off the process set forth by Synod 2016 with the declaration that their findings are “already ... confessional.”

⁶ Perhaps those not involved in local ministry contexts don't realize same-sex married CRC Christians actually exist! Also absent from the report are CRC members who are gay but celibate who nevertheless don't believe celibacy to be their only option; members whose gender self-identification has changed; members who attribute the church's positions and church's culture as contributing to their gender dysphoria, confused sense of sexual identity, self-loathing, depression, etc.; suicide survivors and families of suicide victims who took their lives because of real or perceived rejection from their churches or families. Also absent from the report are former members of the CRC who have left the CRC because of positions around human sexuality. Also missing from the report are the voices of friends, parents, and family members of LGBTQ persons whose perspectives on human sexuality have changed. These omissions further serve to render recommendations D and E “top down” and fail to appreciate the nuance, tension, and struggle of real people.

⁷ For example, four pages of signatures graced a public letter (see Appendix 2) sent on December 10, 2020, to President Michael LeRoy from staff and faculty of Calvin University, arguing, “The report insufficiently engages with relevant scholarship from our disciplines, leading to a biased view of the theological, scriptural, and scientific basis for the report. The discussions of gender identity and sexual orientation lack the scientific and hermeneutic rigor and accuracy of prevailing peer-reviewed scholarship and thereby have the potential to compromise Calvin's academic reputation.” Also, the report tells us they “consulted” persons widely known and read by CRC constituents such as Wendy VanderWal-Gritter, but the content of such consultations was not reported. The report references well-known speakers such as Matthew Vines and David Gushee but seems to engage on an “I watched the YouTube video but didn't read the book” level. The report is similarly nonthorough with respect to scientific engagement, most notably dismissing the biological basis for same-sex attraction by quoting Melinda Mills in *Science* stating, “The claim that attraction to the same sex has a biological cause has been seriously challenged by recent research,” while apparently unaware that Mills herself warns against this very conclusion in the study being cited (Melinda Mills, “How Do Genes Affect Same-Sex Behavior?” *Science*, Vol. 365, Iss. 6456 [Aug. 30, 2019], pp. 869-870). Again, this is an example of differing voices being marginalized and misrepresented.

- a. The conclusions of the report represent one view among many concerning human sexuality. It is not as simple as “the traditional position” versus “the progressive position.” There are many articulations, for example, of a “traditional” view of marriage that differ from the report’s particular analysis and conclusions. If recommendation D were adopted, both “traditional” and “progressive” positions that differ from the conclusions of the report would disqualify CRC members from eligibility to bear office.⁸
- b. The report does not adequately address the implications for officebearers who are not in agreement with the conclusions of the report.⁹
- c. The report’s conclusions demonstrate little interest in moving forward in unity, undercutting the many local conversations led by local leaders advocating for respectful dialogue in an age of heightened polarity.¹⁰
4. Adopting recommendation E would essentially raise the report to confessional status by binding all ministers to its conclusions in terms of which marriages they can officiate, erasing the personal discernment of which current Church Order and previous synods have afforded.

Emmanuel CRC, Calgary, Alberta
 Judy Heim, clerk
 Lantern Community CRC, Calgary, Alberta
 Layne Kilbreath, clerk
 River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta
 Dan Visser, clerk
 The Road CRC, Calgary, Alberta
 Luise Kinsman, clerk

Note: This overture was cowritten by four churches within Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan and was approved by the various councils of each church on the following dates:

⁸ *The Agenda for Synod 2016* details the 2014 survey of 700 ordained ministers in the CRCNA in which 98 of 700 ministers reported they would be in favor of same-sex marriage in the church (p. 409), while 100 of the same 700 ministers think same-sex attraction is sinful (p. 412). Both positions (and many more besides) would disqualify a person from holding office in the CRC (i.e., 28% of ordained ministers surveyed would not be eligible to hold office in the CRCNA).

⁹ For example, all four of the churches writing this overture would have officebearers that need to step down (or conceal their disagreement). As referenced above, professors at Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University are also required to be in agreement with anything named as “confessional” in the CRCNA (and have grave concerns with the report’s potential implications on Calvin University as expressed in the public letter [see Appendix 2]).

¹⁰ The human sexuality report endorses the use of the Pastor Church Resources “Challenging Conversations Toolkit” which, like the Colossian Forum, encourages honesty and growth with brothers and sisters in Christ amid deep differences in opinion. At the same time, the report undercuts the efficacy of these local conversations and the process of restorative circles by declaring that one point of view “already has confessional status” and employing language about the “true church” and “false church” (pp. 458-60).

The Road CRC: January 13, 2021
Lantern Community CRC: January 20, 2021
River Park CRC: January 21, 2021
Emmanuel CRC: January 25, 2021

Consequently, the overture was sent to Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, which met on March 12, 2020, but the overture was tabled. Therefore it is being forwarded to synod by the four councils.

Appendix 1: Introducing the Reader to our Congregations

In a season of mistrust and heightened polarity, we understand that it can be easy to dismiss one another quickly. This is harder to do face-to-face after years of connecting, which is one reason this overture is oriented to asking for local conversations. But given that most readers of this overture will not know who we are, it seemed good for us to provide brief introductions to each of our four congregations, and to introduce ourselves in a way that shows why this conversation about human sexuality and same-sex marriage matters to our local congregations as we live into the mission of God in our local contexts. We hope this small act of “embodiment” will help the reader to hear us with generosity of spirit.

Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church - Calgary, Alberta

Established in 1956, Emmanuel is a long-established part of the CRC presence in Alberta. Emmanuel members have encouraged, initiated, and invested in Christian day schools, Christian universities, the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), and Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), and we heavily support denominational ministries as well as local neighborhood efforts seeking justice, mercy, and the knowledge of the love of God in Christ.

Our current membership consists of not only newer Christians and folks in the surrounding blocks but is blessed with many families who have attended Emmanuel for generations, with great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, and children side by side in the same pew. That particular mix of new community and legacy has become an integral part of our identity, part of the strength of who we are and how we hope to model Christ’s kingdom here on earth.

But this identity has not come without struggle or cost. Emmanuel, in its 64-year history, has journeyed together as a faith community through some difficult and potentially divisive issues. The changing worship landscape, women in ecclesiastical office (the fact that it’s entirely expected and natural for women to preach, chair council, and, indeed, serve on the very synod committee that produced the current report, should not blind us to a time when these issues split churches and families apart), the literal seven-day creation narrative, and the Pentecostal/charismatic movement were key issues that shaped the Emmanuel church community. We remember the painful conflict in our membership. We remember family and friends leaving for other communities or leaving the church permanently. Those scars and the legacy of that division remain with us.

Because of our identity and history, Emmanuel is dedicated to having the difficult conversations of the day with each other led by the Holy Spirit.

Preaching, leadership training, congregational conversations, small group discussions, book studies, and two different Colossian Forums concerning sexuality are only part of Emmanuel's continuing effort to grapple with having difficult conversations about this topic in a spirit of love and unity. Our goal is to understand that our primary identity is in Christ, and that being able to disagree in love and respect on issues like gay marriage, gender identity, and homosexuality can only strengthen our witness for Christ and his kingdom. And it is not simply that our congregation, our membership, our leadership, and our council have differing, strongly held views on sexuality; it is that we ourselves are sexually diverse. For Emmanuel, it is anything but a theological or academic discussion alone.

A decision to adopt the recommendations of the committee, sweeping away as invalid any other position, would be devastating to Emmanuel—likely more so than any previous controversy. It would undermine the years of effort and growth spent trying to understand this issue and learning to disagree with compassion. It would undermine the notion that our unity and identity in Christ are primary and paramount by singling out sexual identity as having heightened importance within the CRC. There is no doubt that members of council would step down from office and perhaps leave Emmanuel, and some members and families would do the same. There is no doubt that many of our members could not or would not hold positions of leadership. It is possible that this could even extend to our pastors. But most damaging, our church family would be put in opposition to itself—one side feeling wronged, rejected and ignored; the other side feeling justified and emboldened. And this schism would reverberate throughout the community, the schools, and institutions Emmanuel supports, the neighborhoods we live in, right down to our individual witness of Christ.

Lantern Community Church - Calgary, Alberta

The Lantern got fueled and lit in the spring of 2002 with high hopes of reaching the communities of Inglewood and Ramsay in the heart of Calgary's heritage beginnings. From the beginning, the congregation regularly repeated the belief that anyone living in the community was a member of the Lantern, whether they knew it or not.

The congregants encouraged each other to provide the whole kit and caboodle to its neighbors, from music and art schools to theatre shows, from concerts to worship services, from dance exhibitions to gymnastics and special events.

Genuine partnerships were built. Everyone was welcomed to be part of it, Monday to Monday. Everyone.

And so, trusting the Holy Spirit, the Lantern received and celebrated folks from all walks of life. Rich and poor . . . crazy and normal . . . weird and wonderful. Straight and not-so-straight.

Original congregants quickly had to admit that "those" people were not so different from the very people starting the church. "Those" people became friends.

The story of the Lantern and her long walk with the gay community isn't so much about legal statements of right and wrong, verses and rules. It's pretty much all about the heart. Those not cut of the same cloth as the heterosexual norm gave The Lantern many gifts.

They became us.

For many years now, these folks are not “those folks.” They are just “simply folks.”

Through the years, the Lantern has learned to recognize the concerns of the heart and not judge the nature of attractions. That is, the Lantern realized that arguing about the traditional rules of sexuality played a secondary role to expressing the depths of one’s genuine soul.

We learned to love those different from us as they learned to accept and forgive us.

They are us.

We are heartbroken that the denomination is considering segregating us and putting the Lantern in its correct theological place. We could no sooner abandon our friends in such a manner as we could sever parts of our arm or leg.

We pursue this not in an arrogant/confrontational manner but rely on the mercy of Christ.

The Road Church - Calgary, Alberta

The Road Church launched in October 2015, as a merger between two 15-or-so-year-old Calgary church plants (Hillside Community and New Hope). Allowing for our shared identity in Christ to define us over and against the diversity we embody (on a myriad of registers) has been a huge part of our journey, joy, and struggle.

For the most part, our theological diversity, the diversity of thought around any number of issues, and the diversity of Christian traditions, experiences, and backgrounds has been incredibly life-giving and strengthening. We have learned a great deal from one another, living into the apostle Paul’s metaphor of being members of Christ’s one body whose attitude and posture toward one another should be that of curiosity, learning, and mutual encouragement.

Nevertheless, while our tolerance and acceptance of one another is a great thing, how we’ve lived it might also be a contributing factor to why our community has at some times refrained from engaging in really tough conversations (like politics, like human sexuality). Perhaps “fear of division” has kept us from really getting into the messiness of relationship and community founded on Christ’s love that transcends disagreement—even emotional, theological, tough disagreements.

Both the interim report and, more recently, the final report from this Human Sexuality Committee have been catalytic in moving The Road Church to delve into hard conversations around human sexuality. The report has prompted some of our staff and leadership to speak up and “own” their positions, which differ from the conclusions of the report. We have launched and finished a Colossian Way forum, with more planned for 2021, and we are also launching “listening circles” on the topic of human sexuality in 2021.

Engaging in these conversations, (a) we have found that we regret not having done so earlier, especially for the sake of those LGBTQ+ and allies among us; and (b) we have learned that we do, indeed, have a great diversity of opinions on this topic—so much so that we cannot fairly articulate a “church position” that represents our whole community at this time; but (c) we’ve learned that BOTH the traditionalists and progressives in our

community see our identity as brothers and sisters in Christ as far, far, far more important than where we land intellectually, theologically, and spiritually on the issues regarding human sexuality.

For this reason, the idea in the report that officebearers (present and future) would be compelled to agree that the conclusions of the human sexuality report already have confessional status if they wish to serve the church would constitute a huge denominational/synodical overreach concerning the authority and autonomy of the local church and council. In the same way, the suggestion that not agreeing with the opinions argued for in the report can undermine a person's salvation in Christ is contrary to the lived experiences of Christian unity amid diversity of many churches including The Road.

River Park Church - Calgary, Alberta

Until recently, we were named First Christian Reformed Church of Calgary. By God's grace, we have been witnessing to the death and resurrection of Jesus since we were established in 1952 as a part of the post-World War II immigration boom in the Canadian CRC. If you've read Rev. Tymen E. Hofman's *The Canadian Story of the CRC: Its First Century*, then you've read a book by one of our earliest pastors. We are glad to be a part of the Canadian CRC he depicts, including the work to develop deeply Reformed Christian organizations in Canada, to bring our best gifts to the larger CRCNA and continue to work to embody our God-given unity within diversity.

Also in Hofman's book you will hear about the charismatic movement within the CRC, noting specifically the work of Rev. Henry Wildeboer during his time as pastor at our church. If you've read Henry's book, *When God Shows Up: A Pastor's Journey*, then you've heard about a significant shaping part of our history as Henry spends five of his twelve chapters to tell the story of his ministry with us at First CRC in Calgary. That time imparted to us a strong commitment to remain open to the transformative power of the Spirit. Subsequently, under the leadership of Rev. Mike Reitsma, our church became increasingly outward focused and open to the broader community. This culminated in our church launching two church plants in the city of Calgary and being one of the key communities to catalyze with our classis the campus ministry at the University of Calgary.

This outward posture continued as our church created the annual Marda Loop Justice Film Festival, which has become a staple for good conversations about justice citywide. But this outward posture was always bolstered by spiritual practices and faith formation. One notable example of this is the work of Rev. Phil Reinders, our pastor for many years, who published *Seeking God's Face*. His book points to another way that First CRC (which changed to River Park Church during his tenure) has been shaped by the Spirit—soaking in the richness of Scripture and prayer.

Like many of our individual church histories, we've had ups and downs, times of grieving and times of growth, jubilant celebrations and soul-wrenching laments. But at the center of our story has always been the same thing: Jesus and his grace-filled invitation to join him in the mission of God by the power of the Spirit. Our current vision reminds us to continually be "reaching out, drawing in, and creating community." One senses in that

language the centeredness of it all—we reach out, draw in, and create community, all with Jesus at the center.

One recent part of our history has been to move intentionally in the direction of being a multicultural church. While we have a long way to go, we rejoice in whom God has brought into our community. And once again, as the ethnic and cultural diversity in our community increases, we've renewed our commitment to ask the Spirit to center us on Jesus, to sit at the foot of the cross, to be transformed by his death and resurrection.

But one of the pieces of work needed to retain a strong central focus is to identify what is not at the center. Given our history, it is likely no surprise that our community is diverse in terms of experiencing the charismatic gifts of the Spirit. Our community holds deeply diverse cultural norms around things like deference to authority. Like many other churches, our community is diverse around political affiliation. And, to the point of this overture, our community is diverse around how it considers same-sex marriage. But we have decided that all of this diversity is welcome, that Christians can disagree about these things, and we trust the Spirit to make us stronger because of our unity amid this diversity. But none of these topics or conversations are what define our center. What unifies us is our belief that all Christians confess with their mouths "Jesus is Lord" and wholeheartedly believe that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9).

We confess that Jesus is our center. Please do not ask us to confess the conclusions of this committee; their conclusions are not central to the gospel.

Appendix 2: Letter from members of faculty and staff at Calvin University – December 10, 2020

Dear President LeRoy and members of the Confessional Commitments and Academic Freedom (CCAF) Committee,

We, the undersigned faculty and staff of Calvin University, write to you in response to the report that was recently released by the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. We have a number of grave concerns about the report, if ultimately adopted by synod, and its potential impact on Calvin as a Christian liberal arts university as described by our Vision 2030.

Of primary concern are the report's conclusions stating that prohibitions of "homosexual sex already have confessional status," that homosexual sex "threaten[s] a person's salvation," and that the failure to call people in same-sex relationships "to repentance is . . . acting like a false church" (p. 460). The report's central claim appears to be at odds with Calvin's own Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom document, according to which "it is problematic to assert that a topic like homosexuality is either confessional or not" (p. 21). The report insufficiently engages with relevant scholarship from our disciplines, leading to a biased view of the theological, scriptural, and scientific basis for the report. The discussions of gender identity and sexual orientation lack the scientific and hermeneutic rigor and accuracy of prevailing peer-reviewed scholarship and thereby have the potential to compromise Calvin's academic reputation. In sum, the report and its potential adoption

by synod could undermine the academic freedom of faculty and our standing as a reputable academic institution in the Reformed tradition.

Also of significant concern is the matter of faculty compliance with the Covenant for Faculty Members. Faculty members who have assented to the Covenant have done so when there was no claim that views on same-sex marriage and gender identity were confessional in nature. We would not want our assent to the Covenant to suggest, retroactively, that we support such a claim. Adoption of the report's claims by synod could place many of us in noncompliance with the Covenant for Faculty Members and the Handbook for Teaching Faculty.

Adoption of the report's claims regarding confessional status would cause harm to our Reformed community by severely impairing staff and faculty's ability to care for our LGBTQ+ students in the way that our conscience dictates and the scholarship supports. While staff are not required to sign the Covenant for Faculty Members, some would consider working for an institution for whom the report was afforded confessional status a violation of conscience. Thus, it would become harder to attract and retain faculty, staff, and students.

Finally, the report's adoption and its declaration that issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are confessional and matters of salvation would be playing into the narrow culture wars' conception of orthodoxy and detract from our larger Christian mission at a time when we want to lead, not just nationally, but globally as agents of renewal.

While we understand that the potential impact of the report, if adopted by synod, will be discussed by the CCAF subcommittee of PSC, we urge you to also communicate with the Council of Delegates (COD) of the CRCNA that

- adoption of this report by synod has the potential to negatively impact Calvin University's status as an academic institution;
- adoption of the report by synod has the potential to harm Calvin University's Vision 2030 goals;
- Calvin University plans to continue to support its LGBTQ+ students by fully including them in the life of the University, and plans to continue to support staff and faculty as they care for our LGBTQ+ students in the way that their conscience dictates;
- Calvin plans to continue to protect its faculty and staff on these issues especially in their scholarship, teaching, and service.

Believing strongly in Calvin University and its mission, we offer our continued service and scholarly expertise as the discussion of this report progresses.

Sincerely,
[signed by 147 faculty and staff]

Overture 26: Appoint a New Study Committee on Human Sexuality Not Limited by the 1973 Report; or Do Not Adopt Recommendations D and E of the Current Report
(Deferred from 2021)

The council of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, overtures synod to receive the synodical report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality for information, thank the committee for its work, and take the following action:

A. That synod appoint a new study committee that is not limited in the scope of its theological inquiry by adherence to the 1973 report. This committee will actively and appreciatively engage all perspectives on human sexuality and will seek input from the wide range of experiences in the CRC in order to help give direction to churches in ways that honor diverse perspectives and maintain the unity of the church. This committee will undertake a three-step process, with each step dependent upon and accountable to the previous step.

1. First, the committee will design and coordinate a denominational listening tour to create safe spaces in which to hear the lived experiences of sexual minorities and their families within the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The committee should take seriously the confessions of our church's shortcomings and failures as outlined in the 2021 report on the biblical foundations of human sexuality, all of which conclude, "It is a sad truth that the Christian community, including our Christian Reformed denomination, has failed in its calling to empathize with, love, and bear the burdens of persons who are attracted to the same sex" (p. 407). The committee must seek to navigate this tour with wisdom and grace, creating as safe a setting as possible (in line with p. 430 of report).
2. Second, in conversation with the findings from the listening tour, and perhaps as part of it, the committee will critically examine the processes, policies, and practices of the CRC, as well as the assumptions and biases, that have led to the previous study committee's overwhelming confession that since the adoption of the 1973 report the CRC has failed to care for members who are attracted to the same sex:

The church has also harmed people who are attracted to the same sex by promoting the false expectation of orientation change, as if believers who are attracted to the same sex can expect to become attracted to the opposite sex as they are sanctified. . . . Indeed, the church has not been the supportive, grace-saturated community it is supposed to be (p. 407).

Despite repeated and strong exhortations of past study committee reports to love and care for brothers and sisters who are attracted to the same sex as equal members of the body of Christ, the church has all too often ostracized, shunned, or ignored such Jesus-followers (p. 426).

These admissions, while remarkable in their honesty, beg for a collective self-examination about why the CRC has found it so difficult to fulfill the mandates and pastoral advice given to it by synod.

3. Third, in dialogue with, and accountable to, the findings of the first two steps, and with no responsibility to adhere to the conclusions of the 1973

synodical report on pastoral care to LGBT members, the committee will produce a new report on the biblical foundations for human sexuality with a particular focus on the question of inclusion for sexual minorities. The purpose of the new report will be threefold:

- a. To dialogue with and offer constructive criticism of the 2021 report. This critique will include examination and clarification of the report's hermeneutical starting point as well as a sympathetic and appreciative engagement with alternate and thoughtful biblical interpretations.
- b. To engage more seriously and report more accurately the findings of new scientific research in the area of human sexuality.
- c. To offer pastoral care recommendations that
 - promote nonshaming expressions of loving acceptance with a desire for individual and communal flourishing.
 - foster continued unity in the church as we work through an issue that threatens to be very divisive.
 - focus on caring for congregations whose perspectives and experiences lead them to ministry practices that include full participation.

Grounds:

1. A true desire to understand viewpoints of a diverse community requires authentic and open-hearted listening. The committee struck in 2016 was not free to listen well, having been constrained by the requirement that its members agree with the 1973 report. Voices that struggle with or disagree with the 1973 stance could not be heard. This fact is relevant not only to the credibility with which the final report is received but also to pastoral care and justice concerns, where the commonly held aphorism, “nothing about us without us,” is good practice.
2. The requirement of adherence to the 1973 conclusions meant that although the committee was equipped to articulate the historical position of the CRC, it could not honestly engage alternative readings of Scripture. It was also ill-equipped to objectively perform one of its primary tasks: to engage in a “discussion outlining how a Reformed hermeneutic does or does not comport with readings of Scripture being employed to endorse what are, for the historic church, ground-breaking conclusions regarding human sexual behavior and identification” (p. 315).
3. The lived experience of congregations within the Christian Reformed Church requires an unencumbered examination of the best biblical, theological, and pastoral arguments for all perspectives regarding the inclusion of LGBT Christians in full membership before making decisions at a denominational level.
4. We in the CRC have long considered our denomination to be thoughtful, deliberative, and biblically based. Honest denominational care of all Christians on a topic regarding inclusion/exclusion of brothers and sisters requires a report capable of taking seriously all biblical and theological arguments before making recommendations. The very existence of a variety of robust biblical and theological arguments for the inclusion of celibate and married LGBT Christians

in the church signals that there is not theological consensus on this topic. An unencumbered report would display our denominational trust in God's ability to reveal truth through Scripture and the Holy Spirit, and it would prevent us from engaging and making decisions from a place of fear.

5. The pastoral guidance offered for the care of sexual minorities is confusing and potentially harmful, and better guidance is needed, particularly for churches for whom caring for LGBT brothers and sisters is more than a hypothetical reality. For example, the report acknowledges the harm done in the past when same-sex attracted Christians were encouraged to change their orientation (p. 407). The acknowledgment that a change in orientation is not a realistic expectation implies that same-sex attraction is not a choice. Yet the report also raises the point that "no 'gay gene' has yet been identified," and that "the claim that attraction to the same sex has a biological cause has been seriously challenged by recent research" (p. 405). The mixed messages are bewildering and call for a more thorough examination of the scientific research regarding gender dysphoria and same-sex attraction, with due consideration of the view that these may be core elements of one's being.

There is a dissonance in the report that leads to confusing and potentially harmful pastoral care. How can we as a church be inviting, loving, and accepting—as the report rightly calls us to be—up until the point a person or couple desires to join our congregation, when we have to tell them that they are not in fact welcome as they are but need to make changes before they can join? How could this not be devastating to both these people who have developed relationships within the church and to the elders or ministers who eventually have to have this conversation? If we are going to land where this new report lands, would it not be wiser and more kind to just be up front at the beginning of a new relationship with gender dysphoric and same-sex attracted people, and tell them as kindly and clearly as we can that they are not welcome unless they agree not to act on their natural impulses? Though the pastoral care section of the report expresses a desire to be compassionate and welcoming, in the end this desire will seem by many to be incompatible with the committee's conclusion that LGBT people who are not celibate may not participate fully in the life of the church.

6. Honest pastoral care takes into account the experiences, fears, hopes, and struggles of the individuals it is seeking to offer care to. By not taking seriously the voices of Christians who disagree with the traditional position, or feel devalued by it, the care that we offer is at risk of being more about caring for our leadership as we uphold the church's stance than it is for caring for the individuals among us who think and feel differently. It is at this point that we also risk making our churches culturally irrelevant by not engaging in the very conversations in which our young people are immersed, both within and outside the church. This is why more sincere listening, without an agenda or foregone conclusion, needs to be done at every level of the church. This is an opportunity for us to model trust in God as we engage in difficult conversations that we cannot control.

7. If we as a denomination are serious about confessing the systemic harms perpetrated against and suffered by LGBT members in our community (which the previous study rightly names), then it is our responsibility to engage in a humble and thoughtful assessment of our ecclesiastical culture, including the procedures, policies, and practices that have allowed this harm to continue. We thank the committee for naming these weighty confessions, but we disagree with their assessment that we can simply choose to be better without an honest critique of the systems that have allowed for our ongoing patterns of harm.

B. In the event that synod does not accede to the overture to embark on a new and more open process and chooses to consider the recommendations of the current report, we communicate to synod our objection to Recommendations D and E and overture synod not to adopt these two recommendations.

Grounds:

1. These recommendations close the door on further theological study and reflection and assume that there is consensus on this matter when that is clearly not the case. Many faithful Christians interpret Scripture differently and come to different conclusions. To break communion with them would be an affront to the Lord of the church, who prayed for our unity.
2. To declare that beliefs about human sexuality have confessional status when that same status was denied the Belhar Confession, which addresses core biblical themes of justice, unity, and reconciliation, is to say that those are of less importance than a contested view of human sexuality.
3. The scientific study of human sexuality is a relatively recent field of inquiry, and new discoveries are bound to deepen our understanding of same-sex attraction. We believe that the church should remain open to ongoing exploration and learning, and indeed is obliged to, as it cares for its diverse members and reaches out to others living in an ever-evolving culture. To declare confessional status would cause stagnation, irrelevance, and a disregard for the gift of science.
4. To declare that the report's beliefs about human sexuality have confessional status will have consequences for denominational agencies engaged in ecumenical partnerships as well as for officebearers engaged in ecumenical and interfaith work (e.g., campus ministers and hospital chaplains). These consequences should be considered.
5. To declare that this committee's interpretations are so thorough and reliable as to warrant confessional status is reckless and unnecessarily provocative, an attempt to draw a line in the sand foreclosing all further discussion. It is extremely divisive and will do irreparable harm to the church and its witness.

Fellowship CRC, Edmonton, Alberta

Jim Visser, chair of the pastoral committee

Note: The above overture was presented to Classis Alberta North at its winter meeting; however, the classis decided to postpone discussion of the human sexuality report and related overtures because the report is being deferred to Synod 2022.

Overture 27: Do Not Accede to Recommendations B, D, and E of the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Overture

Classis Toronto overtures synod not to accede to recommendations B, D, and E of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-Laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, because the report includes neither the voices of the LGBTQ+ community who are living in committed monogamous relationships nor those of cisgender members who hold differing biblical views regarding human sexuality. We disagree that the “heart of the gospel is the call to repentance and faith” (p. 459) but rather that love and grace are centered as the heart of the gospel.

Grounds:

1. The report, rather than offering relevant, life-affirming discourse on sexuality, further alienates, disregards, and condemns LGBTQ+ persons in its continued refusal to center the voices of those who are not called to celibacy and are seeking, or are committedly living in, monogamous relationships.
2. The report is lacking in the grace and inclusivity of a creator God from whom we have never been separated.
3. The pastoral advice given is at times ill-advised, condemnatory rather than inclusive, and contains echoes of the ex-gay mindset.
4. The report causes lament for those of us in our local church who have grown in our understanding of inclusivity, as it will result in further painful division within the CRC.

II. Foreword

Synod 2016 appointed a committee to define a biblical theology pertaining specifically to conceptions of gender and sexuality. This report has now been presented to the denomination for evaluation and response. While we recognize the great amount of work put into the writing of the report, we feel that the conclusions presented do not represent the calling that has been placed upon our local church to be a welcoming, healing, inclusive extension of Christ’s work within our community and city. We are not comfortable with the assertions therein that this is the path to the “radical new way of living” to which the apostles called the early church and to which the church is called today. We will specifically address the Preamble (Current context and Mission, pp. 318, 326), section III (Creation and the Fall, p. 327), and section XIII (Homosexuality: Pastoral care, p. 426).

III. Dissent

While we agree that God created sex to be good and to be enjoyed between two people that love each other deeply, we challenge the insistence that this only exists between a man and a woman. Our spirits are open to hearing from those who love deeply outside these strict, binary confines. In terms of “current context,” we fully agree that sex has been “tainted” by sin and can be “brutally destructive” today. However, the flow of this section implies that the changing sexual mores are *all* a result of sin, consigning

numerous mores into one category. For example, “the use of pornography by younger people is assumed” and the laws to “prohibit discrimination based on gender expression or identity” are both listed as examples. We would support the latter movement.

Regarding the church’s response as confusing and dividing, we would agree. The church has not always been silent on this subject, as many people, in decades past, were forced to publicly confess their sin, such as seeking divorce from an abusive partner, which resulted in shunning from the community that forced this repentance. Silence has felt more loving in comparison to that practice, but it has also created silence in any who needed direction and support as they wrestled with questions regarding their own sexuality, identity, or practices. As per mission, we challenge the assertion that the Christian Reformed Church “has a living tradition of deep love for the Scriptures coupled with a willingness to engage courageously with the ideas of our time” (p. 326), as this is simply not true. For many, there is a history of pain, grief, judgment, and humiliation.

In addition, when the failures of the church are listed, we believe the first failure is not our inability to help each other refrain from sinning, but that the emphasis should be on the third point: recognizing the pain we, as a church, have caused in those whom we have judged and driven from the church. Our lack of love for all, and our practice of making the church a place of privilege for the heterosexual norm, is our biggest failure.

A. Section III, B – Creation: Genesis 1-2 (p. 328)

The report’s summation of Genesis 1:28 is as follows: “Here the humans are blessed with fertility and instructed to multiply, fill, and subdue. The humans are created in the image of God for the purpose of ruling the earth. The blessing of God will enable the realization of that rule.” This analysis is not surprising as it is traditional, but it falls short of having contextual relevance for the issues all of God’s people are facing today, and for which the committee was convened.

One can continue to read Genesis 1 and 2 as they have traditionally been interpreted. However, Adam’s first exclamation upon seeing Eve was a joyful recognition of commonality: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” This established her as a helpmate, a partner suitable for Adam. Commonality, mutuality is what is celebrated and of primary import in Genesis. They would be the same but different in a myriad of ways, as in every committed relationship. The report acknowledges that we have grossly mistreated the LGBTQ+ persons among us. Continuing to uphold a binary differentiation with the emphasis on genital difference as the only meaningful, legitimate difference, perpetuates the harm and prevents any further and fuller interpretations in a biblical text that is a living document. We believe that all are created in God’s image, as Genesis 1:27 states, regardless of how one identifies, and we desire to welcome, know, and value each individual.

Second, we believe that the continued emphasis upon marriage being ordained for the purpose of procreation is an archaic and harmful interpretation. The report states, “The point is that to be male is to possess male sexuality and to be female is to possess female sexuality, and that to exercise one or the other through procreation is essential to fulfilling God’s creation mandate.” We refute the assertion that procreation is essential in a marriage

to fulfill God's purposes for that relationship. Other biblical passages do not define marriage by procreation but by faithfulness to each other, as in Hannah and Elkanah (1 Sam. 1:8). In addition, is there no imagination or vision for those who are single and how they fulfill God's creation mandate? Or do they not?

Third, in section III, B we find problematic the continued use of biblical versions of Genesis that emphasize the calling of humanity to reflect God's image by ruling and subduing the earth. Other versions, like E. Peterson's *The Message*, translate this verse as "have responsibility for" the earth. The continued use of a ruling, subduing verbiage is related to the mindset that has allowed the gift of sexuality to become destructive and weaponized, and the gift of creation, which has revelatory value, to be destroyed; it is also related to how we view the Creator and anyone who identifies as different from us. Connotation is of great import.

Thus, section III, B is problematic for us in its narrow interpretation of marriage, which alienates, disregards, and excludes many of God's children; its focus on procreation rather than faithful, covenanted love being the call of marriage; and its domineering language used.

B. Section III, C – Fall: Genesis 3 (p. 331)

We find the language in this section on the "Fall" to come from a viewpoint of a punitive God as a judge whose primary focus is to punish the disobedience of man and woman. The focus is then on legal transactions. We prefer to begin from a different viewpoint: that of a loving God whose focus is first and foremost, and never changing in this focus, that of being *relational*.

When we read the Fall through the lens of a God who is passionate and deeply caring for those God has made in their (plural as God is trinitarian) own image, we see the Fall as something that caused a deep alienation from our very selves, and a veil over our eyes so that we can no longer see God as God is.

We would argue that the very first sign that creation has fallen from its first purpose is not a corruption of sexuality, but rather the sign that things have gone askew: Adam and Eve are afraid and anxious to be with God. No longer do they "know" God, themselves, or each other in the way they did. There is a loss of the deep intimacy that was known to them before, resulting in feeling naked for the first time. Created to be in communion, they are now fraught with being alone and disconnected.

The way paragraph three is written carries implications of the nature of God. We would offer a different viewpoint. What if God comes searching for Adam and Eve, much as a parent would, with much love and concern? Thus, God is seeking and asking, all for the sake of relationship with them. We have difficulty with the conclusion, "The connection between disordered sexuality and the curse of disobedience runs like a thread throughout this passage." Again, we contest that if you begin with "disordered sexuality" as the premise, you will indeed see it everywhere. We would offer that the trust and intimacy they had known with God and each other is broken; Adam and Eve cannot see God as God is anymore. God, committed to his children, will do everything to make sure the relationship remains and grows.

In paragraph 7 (p. 332) we find it very problematic that within the created list of various "immoralities," premarital sex or divorce or cohabitation is

somehow equated with sexual assault. Sexual assault is a form of abuse, and we would ask that you differentiate these, to respect and honor those who have suffered sexual assault. It is troubling to read that Christians are called to “flee *all such* sexual immorality” after the list is given. For example, couples that we know who have wrestled with divorce, while seeking God and trying to find their way with the mind of Christ, are categorized into walking according to the mind of the world and not the mind of Christ.

To summarize, we take issue with the views in this section on the “Fall” as it begins with the premise that God is punitive. Our understanding is that in turning from God in the garden, humanity began to lose its knowledge of communion and intimacy with God, thereby creating and suffering the effects of a different and untrue narrative of separation. In addition, the categorizing of immoralities is unacceptable.

C. Section XIII – Homosexuality: Pastoral care (p. 426)

This section begins with two personal stories. Again, for each story that may point to the good work being done in a CRC, this report could easily be including stories about those who have been hurt and have walked away from the church and/or God as a result of how they have been treated in the church. Where are those voices, and why are they not included here?

1. A word to congregations (p. 426)

We agree that the word *repentance* will need to be oft repeated and that the promotion of change from homosexual to heterosexual is erroneous and has perpetuated overwhelming harm. Under “Teaching” (p. 427), what is not written but implied is that for homosexual persons to act upon their sexual desire will always be considered wrong in the CRC as the church continues to reject LGBTQ+ monogamous relationships, thus limiting the full expression of their love. The “practical advice” encourages all members to accept one another, yet ends with the personal story of “Han,” in which it is evident that full acceptance is nowhere on the horizon.

2. A word to church leaders (p. 429)

First, we would caution instructing “healing prayer teams” to deal with the hurt and shame of sexual abuse, but would rather healing prayer would be seen as part of a treatment plan originating with professionals trained in healing the trauma. We would also suggest that the over-preponderance of stories in this report of same-sex couples living together in celibacy may be representationally inaccurate, and this in itself adds to the “weariness” of our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters.

Second, our local church is learning to be proactive, both in seeking to develop relationships with same-sex believers and in determining our response to potential scenarios. However, we would also advocate that we desperately need leadership to develop relationships with LGBTQ+ persons who are not called to celibacy and who desire a same-sex marriage.

Further, we cannot begin to explain how inappropriate it would be, in terms of inclusion, to hold a special service as suggested on page 431, in order to confess the “hypocrisy in singling out same-sex sexual practice as sinful while remaining silent about other sexual sins” such as pornography. Again, it is the combining of these acts—one possibly desiring a

consensual, monogamous, love-affirming relationship and the other built upon, as this report acknowledges, masculine domination and violence—that is inappropriate. We strongly believe that such a service would offer neither inclusion nor healing.

Finally, we would address the section titled “A word to church members who are attracted to the same sex (p. 434).”

Yes, we are all made in the image of God, and have great value just as we are. As well, God desires to free us from the guilt and shame we have inflicted upon ourselves and that has been inflicted upon us. Are the conclusions in this report enabling this? Our deepest concern in this “word” to same-sex attracted persons is the statement “Most longtime Jesus-followers also describe a lessening of the power of their same-sex attraction as they seek holiness. . . . Some also find themselves attracted to an opposite-sex friend . . . and they are able to marry” (p. 435). Again, the report has stated that we cannot encourage ex-gay ministries, and yet this mindset continues not only to be promoted but also to offer the false expectation that people can change their attractions through faith in Jesus. It also encourages marriage with opposite-sex friends as the only acceptable way forward. Frankly, this section on pastoral care exemplifies the fact that the church has not moved beyond the ex-gay mindset, which is significantly problematic for us.

IV. Conclusion

Within the pages of this report, we do not see evidence of the many LGBTQ+ persons who continue to be maligned in their desire for human intimacy. “Nothing about us, without us, is for us” has been a useful guiding principle in other spheres when composing any belief system or structure to be implemented, and it needs to be applied in studies of this kind. Despite some members’ having more theological education than others, God speaks to and is imaged in every human being. Second, while humanity’s actions have caused division and separation from our God, we would strongly argue that this is not a separation of soul and spirit from our Creator but rather a devastating misconception of division, into which enter shame and domination (among a host of other issues). We profess our belief in the grace of a God from whom none of us has ever been or can ever be separated. Finally, we lament the further division within the CRC that will result due to this report. Have we not learned from a racist history and from the “women’s issue” that long-held interpretations of Scripture must evolve to continue to speak life and grace? We lament the many voices of healing that will no longer in good conscience hold leadership positions, as well as the loss of the wisdom and beauty of those members who will continue to leave the denomination if this report is approved. Thus we oppose recommendations B, D, and E.

Classis Toronto

Richard A. Bodini, stated clerk

Overture 28: Do Not Accede to Recommendations B, D, and E of the Human Sexuality Report regarding *Status Confessionis*
(Deferred from 2021)

I. Overture

Classis Toronto overtures Synod 2021 not to accede to Recommendation D of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Grounds:

1. The report misuses and misunderstands *status confessionis*.
2. The report's interpretation of *status confessionis* overreaches the committee's authority, and their attempt to declare it offends against the denomination's tendency to affirm local church authority.

II. History

A. Introduction

We believe that the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality employs a faulty conception of *status confessionis* that makes overreaching and restrictive claims about how Scripture can be interpreted on issues of human sexuality and thereby threatens both the unity of the Christian Reformed Church and the faithful application of scriptural guidance in congregational life. The conception of *status confessionis* in the document is historically flawed, and the argument for the uniformity of the tradition fails to take account of the historical lack of consensus on such matters. We believe that in place of such an overreaching and restrictive conclusion, there ought to be a local option which allows for differing interpretations of Scripture and discernment by local church councils.

We believe that the report threatens the unity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Given First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto's experience within the denomination, we do not take that unity for granted. Such unity has been forged through charity, mutual respect, and mutual understanding. This document dismantles such hard-fought unity in favor of an imposition of uniformity where there is no clear consensus.

The document begins by delineating people within the denomination into "traditionalist" and "revisionist" camps and proceeding as if those descriptors were simply factual rather than being morally charged. The truth is that there is a wide range of positions that churches and their members take on the range of issues discussed in the document. The document represents a step back in the church's discussions and discernment of these issues because it makes an exclusive and exhaustive claim to proper biblical interpretation. It problematically asserts the report's conclusions as the "traditional" teaching of the church and then assigns to the authors the authority to declare *status confessionis*,¹ thus provoking (if passed) potential division in the church. The authors were asked to examine *if a status confessionis* should be declared *by the church*, not whether the *authors* ought to declare one. This

¹ Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, p. 458: "We conclude, then, that the church's teaching against sexual immorality, including homosexual sex, *already* has confessional status."

assignment of authority to the authors of the report is misplaced. We disagree with the material claims made in the report. The point here is not to contest the material claims, but to raise grave concerns about the methodological presumptions of the report. Thus, our conviction is that *even if* there was something approaching consensus on the material claims (and there is not), *it would still be a mistake to pass such a report*.

Furthermore, the claims presented regarding *status confessionis* rely on a historically inaccurate understanding of the term. The authors of the report on human sexuality state that they were asked to consider whether a future synod might declare a *status confessionis* regarding the church's understanding of human sexuality.² Their conclusion after such consideration is that their position on human sexuality (which they regard as the traditional teaching) *already* has confessional status since it appears in foundational documents in the Reformed tradition. However, their explanation of *status confessionis* is historically problematic at best.

B. History of *status confessionis*

Status confessionis is misunderstood by the report; it has much deeper historical meaning than simply giving something confessional status (i.e., arguing that it is a central doctrine). It is used when the church's public witness is compromised by the state (see examples below). *Status confessionis* is therefore not the right term to use when discussing human sexuality.

Status confessionis originated in the Lutheran tradition and is first mentioned in the Formula of Concord. It is first invoked in debates about *adiaphora* ("things indifferent"), which are things that attend the gospel (like rites and ceremonies) but that are not necessary for its communication. However, *status confessionis* is not the opposite of *adiaphora* (as the document implies). The *status* referred to here is not the status of the confession as if it were central as opposed to the nonessential things (*adiaphora*). In the original formulation, the word *casus* actually appears before *status*. Both of these words apply not to the confession *but to the "case" or "state" of affairs more generally*. Within the debates about *adiaphora*, the case of religious persecution was raised. The authors of the Formula of Concord held that, in *status confessionis*, the category of *adiaphora* no longer applies. That is, when the state tries to dictate matters of observance to the church, things that were previously considered *adiaphora* become essential parts of the Christian witness since the church is under attack. That is, the church was called to the stand, so to speak, to discern how the church's witness in this special situation is related to its ongoing witness. There are, the Formula concluded, "no indifferent matters when it comes to confessing the faith or giving offence." When the state or another body attempts to "use chicanery or violence" to undermine the true worship of God, Christians are "obligated according to God's Word to confess true teaching and everything that pertains to the whole of religion freely and publicly . . . not only with words but also in actions and deeds. In such a time they shall not yield to the opponents even in indifferent matters."³

While the authors of the report on human sexuality clearly hold their proposed teaching on human sexuality as confessional, it is confusing and

² Ibid., p. 457

³ Michael P. DeJonge, "Bonhoeffer, *status confessionis*, and the Lutheran Tradition" in *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3 (2), pp. 41-60.

incorrect to argue that on the basis of *status confessionis*. However, since invocations in World War II and Apartheid South Africa, *status confessionis* has had what the Reformed theologian Dirk J. Smit calls an “inflationistic” interpretation, where it amounts to “ethical protest with the volume turned up.”⁴ According to the original meaning of *status confessionis*, however, the issue of human sexuality would not constitute grounds for this, because the state is not demanding and justifying that the church hold a particular position. With respect to the global church, it could be argued that a *status confessionis* is necessary as there are still countries where, for example, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by death (since making homosexuality punishable by death would clearly interfere with the church’s heralding of God’s grace). This last observation brings us to a further point concerning the declaration of *status confessionis* more recently in World War II and Apartheid South Africa; namely, it was declared because the state dictated a certain position *and certain churches gave theological justification for that position*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer used it against the German state church in World War II precisely on the grounds that they theologically justified the mistreatment of Jews. Likewise, the pro-Apartheid church in South Africa saw the separation of church into races as God-ordained, but apartheid was judged by others to be not only a sin but a heresy.

Classis Toronto

Richard A. Bodini, stated clerk

Overture 29: Do Not Accede to Recommendations B, D, and E of the Human Sexuality Report; Recognize Different Perspectives and Convictions on Homosexuality; Support Local Option on Issues of Human Sexuality (Deferred from 2021)

Note: Classis Toronto adopted recommendation A of the following overture and submitted its overture separately (see Overture 28).

I. Overture

First CRC of Toronto, Ontario, overtures Synod 2021 to adopt the following:

- A. That synod not accede to Recommendations B, D, and E of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.
- B. That synod recognize that there are different perspectives and convictions on homosexuality, which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God as has been acknowledged concerning other issues in the past (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 731-32).
- C. That synod commit to continuing to safeguard the unity of the church by declaring their commitment to a local option for these particular issues, reaffirming the primary role of the local church council (Church Order

⁴ Dirk J. Smit, “A *Status Confessionis* in South Africa?” *JTSA* 47 (1984), pp. 21-46; cited in Paul R. Hinlicky, “*Status Confessionis*” in *The Brill Online Dictionary of Christianity*, n.p.

Art. 27), and encouraging local church councils to provide robust pastoral care on issues of human sexuality. After all, Paul tells us to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” and to “bear one another in love” (Eph. 4:2-3).

Grounds:

1. The report misuses and misunderstands *status confessionis*.
2. The report’s interpretation of *status confessionis* overreaches the committee’s authority, and their attempt to declare it offends against the denomination’s tendency to affirm local church authority.
3. The local option has proven to be an effective and biblically sound approach to maintain the unity of our church in times of intractable division and should be used in these matters.

II. History

We believe that the report on human sexuality employs a faulty conception of *status confessionis* that makes overreaching and restrictive claims about how Scripture can be interpreted on issues of human sexuality and thereby threatens both the unity of the Christian Reformed Church and the faithful application of scriptural guidance in congregational life. The conception of *status confessionis* in the document is historically flawed, and the argument for the uniformity of the tradition fails to take account of the historical lack of consensus on such matters. We believe that in place of such an overreaching and restrictive conclusion, there ought to be a local option which allows for differing interpretations of Scripture and discernment by local church councils.

We believe that the report on human sexuality threatens the unity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Given First CRC of Toronto’s experience within the denomination, we do not take that unity for granted. Such unity has been forged through charity, mutual respect, and mutual understanding. This document dismantles such hard-fought unity in favor of an imposition of uniformity where there is no clear consensus.

The document begins by delineating people within the denomination into “traditionalist” and “revisionist” camps and proceeding as if those descriptors were simply factual rather than being morally charged. The truth is that there is a wide range of positions that churches and their members take on the range of issues discussed in the document. The document represents a step back in the church’s discussions and discernment of these issues because it makes an exclusive and exhaustive claim to proper biblical interpretation. It problematically asserts the report’s conclusions as the “traditional” teaching of the church and then assigns to the authors the authority to declare *status confessionis*,¹ thus provoking (if passed) potential division in the church. The authors were asked to examine if a *status confessionis* should be declared by the church, not whether the authors ought to declare one. This assignation of authority to the authors of the report is misplaced. We disagree with the material claims made in the report. The point here is not to contest the material claims, but to raise grave concerns about the

¹ Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, p. 458: “We conclude, then, that the church’s teaching against sexual immorality, including homosexual sex, *already* has confessional status.”

methodological presumptions of the report. Thus, our conviction is that even if there was something approaching consensus on the material claims (and there is not), it would still be a mistake to pass such a report.

Furthermore, the claims presented regarding *status confessionis* rely on a historically inaccurate understanding of the term. The authors of the report on human sexuality state that they were asked to consider whether a future synod might declare a *status confessionis* regarding the church's understanding of human sexuality.² Their conclusion after such consideration is that their position on human sexuality (which they regard as the traditional teaching) already has confessional status since it appears in foundational documents in the Reformed tradition. However, their explanation of *status confessionis* is historically problematic at best.

Given that the invocation of *status confessionis* (as it is used in the report) attempts to impose doctrinal uniformity through a sweeping and universal declaration, we contend that this runs counter to the polity of the CRCNA, which emphasizes the strength of the local councils bound together in unity by denominational structures. Article 27-a of our Church Order states, "Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of councils being original, that of major assemblies being delegated." It is this original authority that is being infringed on by this report and the claims it makes in its recommendations.

We care deeply about the CRCNA and value the delegated authority which the major assemblies have. We have worked hard to maintain a unity of purpose and vision with our larger denominational family while wrestling together, for many years, with issues we know we disagree on. Appendices A, B, and C illustrate in graphic and overwhelming detail both the historical, denominational, and synodical struggles to achieve singular biblical interpretations and their ultimate resolve to preserve broader critical unity through recognition of the authority ascribed to local church councils. We need to determine who has the authority on these matters so that we can protect all levels of our church governance, and live together in unity. On these issues, as with other previous controversial issues, we see the local option as most accurately reflecting CRCNA polity, most likely to secure the unity of the church when consensus on such issues cannot be reached, and most representative of Christian love and justice.

A. History of *status confessionis*

Status confessionis is misunderstood by the report: it has much deeper historical meaning than simply giving something confessional status (i.e., arguing that it is a central doctrine). It is used when the church's public witness is compromised by the state (see examples below). *Status confessionis* is therefore not the right term to use when discussing human sexuality.

Status confessionis originated in the Lutheran tradition and is first mentioned in the Formula of Concord. It is first invoked in debates about adiaphora ("things indifferent"), which are things that attend the gospel (like rites and ceremonies) but that are not necessary for its communication. However, *status confessionis* is not the opposite of adiaphora (as the document implies). The status referred to here is not the status of the confession

² Ibid., p. 457.

as if it were central as opposed to the nonessential things (*adiaphora*). In the original formulation, the word *casus* actually appears before *status*. Both of these words apply not to the confession but to the “case” or “state” of affairs more generally. Within the debates about *adiaphora*, the case of religious persecution was raised. The authors of the Formula of Concord held that, in *status confessionis*, the category of *adiaphora* no longer applies. That is, when the state tries to dictate matters of observance to the church, things that were previously considered *adiaphora* become essential parts of the Christian witness since the church is under attack. That is, the church was called to the stand, so to speak, to discern how the church’s witness in this special situation is related to its ongoing witness. There are, the Formula concluded, “no indifferent matters when it comes to confessing the faith or giving offence.” When the state or another body attempts to “use chicanery or violence” to undermine the true worship of God, Christians are “obligated according to God’s Word to confess true teaching and everything that pertains to the whole of religion freely and publicly . . . not only with words but also in actions and deeds. In such a time they shall not yield to the opponents even in indifferent matters.”³

While the authors of the report on human sexuality clearly hold their proposed teaching on human sexuality as confessional, it is confusing and incorrect to argue that on the basis of *status confessionis*. However, since invocations in World War II and Apartheid South Africa, *status confessionis* has had what the Reformed theologian Dirk J. Smit calls an “inflationistic” interpretation where it amounts to “ethical protest with the volume turned up.”⁴ According to the original meaning of *status confessionis*, however, the issue of human sexuality would not constitute grounds for this, because the state is not demanding and justifying that the church hold a particular position. With respect to the global church, it could be argued that a *status confessionis* is necessary as there are still countries where, for example, homosexuality is illegal and punishable by death (since making homosexuality punishable by death would clearly interfere with the church’s heralding of God’s grace). This last observation brings us to a further point concerning the declaration of *status confessionis* more recently in World War II and Apartheid South Africa: namely, it was declared because the state dictated a certain position and certain churches gave theological justification for that position. Dietrich Bonhoeffer used it against the German state church in World War II precisely on the grounds that they theologically justified the mistreatment of Jews. Likewise, the pro-Apartheid church in South Africa saw the separation of church into races as God-ordained, but apartheid was judged by others to be not only a sin but a heresy.

B. *Implications of status confessionis*

The point in delving into the history of *status confessionis* is to temper the strong claims of the authors of this report. Again, they are free to argue that their teaching on human sexuality is central to the gospel, but their deployment of *status confessionis* falls prey to the modern tendency to use it as

³ Michael P. DeJonge, “Bonhoeffer, *status confessionis*, and the Lutheran Tradition” in *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3 (2), pp. 41-60.

⁴ Dirk J. Smit, “A *Status Confessionis* in South Africa?” *JTSA* 47 (1984), pp. 21–46; cited in Paul R. Hinlicky, “*Status Confessionis*,” in *The Brill Online Dictionary of Christianity*, n.p.

ethical protest “with the volume turned up.” The church in North America is not under siege; we are therefore not currently in a *status confessionis*, and as such, a document as comprehensive and tendentious⁵ as this report seems unwise to adopt for the whole of the denomination. It also seems to lend the report a kind of urgency that has not historically been characteristic of the church’s discernment on matters of human sexuality. As this is an issue in the normal and ongoing witness of the church, it seems to us best not to hastily adopt such a comprehensive report but rather to allow discernment (as we have done before) by way of the local option.

While the report deals with many different aspects of human sexuality, clearly same-sex marriage and the place of LGBTQ+ peoples bear special emphasis. In fact, treating all these topics under the heading of sexual immorality actually has the effect of obscuring relevant moral differences between them. Part of the reason that same-sex marriage and the place of LGBTQ+ people in our communities is different is that, whether we think it should be so or not, these are matters that are publicly observable. Thus, the public nature of these involves the witness of the church. Because of this, we focus our talk of the local option particularly on same-sex marriage and the role of LGBTQ+ people in the church. Other matters, such as how to properly handle a member’s confession to the (ab)use of pornography, would also be covered in the local option, but judgments about same-sex marriage and partnerships is uniquely public among these issues. This does not mean that we do not disagree with some of the treatments of the other topics and issues, but rather that our advocacy for a local option is more narrowly focused on same-sex marriage and partnerships.

C. *The local option as a way to preserve unity amid disagreement*

The report’s overreaching and restrictive judgments, encapsulated in its invocation of *status confessionis*, also run counter to the polity of the Christian Reformed Church. Not only do the authors of the report overstep the authority allotted to a committee, but they also betray the CRC’s commitment to strong local councils by seeking theological uniformity on a divisive issue. The CRC hierarchy binds together local congregations, whose councils retain authority over most of the matters in the congregation. The strength of such a model is that it allows for unity in the midst of theological disagreement. Some attribute to Augustine the quote: “In essentials unity, in nonessentials liberty, and in all things charity.” The structures of the Reformed church allow for both liberty and charity in ways that the authors of the report do not. Appendices A and B to this overture list a series of synodical decisions on issues regarding marriage and sexuality that upheld the authority of local councils.

Moreover, the inability of the church, with over 45 years of study, to reach a resolution that unifies the church on the issue of inclusion of people who are gay renders unintelligible the claim that the report’s conclusions on human sexuality have confessional status (a different claim from *status confessionis*) and support a different resolution. The mere fact that a report on such matters was commissioned demonstrates that the conclusions of the

⁵ The authors assume the mantle of “tradition” for their own case while labeling any who might oppose as “revisionist” and simply use these terms as though they were fact and that any case other than their own must inherently break somehow with tradition.

report do not have the kind of foundational status that the authors argue. In fact, disagreement on such issues has persisted for over 50 years. In 1970 the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada approved of the “legislative changes related to homosexual acts” and asked for synodical approval as well.⁶ Synod instead recommended “that synod appoint a study committee to study the problem of homosexuality and to delineate the church’s position on this matter.”⁷ The 1973 report brought the matter before synod. Like the issue of women in office, the issue of same-sex relationships has been studied and debated, without clear theological resolution since 1973.

The split majority and minority reports from the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage only enhance the unresolved tension regarding “the problem of homosexuality.”⁸ Further delay only makes the issue more divisive and hurtful. The majority report frequently urges local discretion and discernment. As with Synod 1995, where the local option was allowed for the ordination of women, “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.”⁹

In short, this argument is about authority, faithfulness to the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, and church polity. While we dissent from many of the conclusions reached in the report, the danger we see in passing such a report is that such action strikes against the practices of our church that secure our unity. It is the domain of synod to declare *status confessionis* on behalf of the church; this is not in the purview of a committee. And, as with previous controversial issues, our polity binds us together in some instances by acknowledging the strength of the local congregation in discernment on issues where different interpretations of Scripture are faithful and valid.

Council of First CRC, Toronto, Ontario
Margaret Nott, clerk

Note: The council of First (Toronto) CRC submitted the above overture to Classis Toronto, which discussed it at its meeting on March 11, 2021, and adopted only recommendation A (not recommendations B and C). Classis Toronto also submitted a variation of this original overture to reflect the section it adopted (re *status confessionis*; see Overture 28).

⁶ *Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 540.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁸ Report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage, *Agenda for Synod 2016*, p. 403.

⁹ Report of the Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000, *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 351.

Appendix A: Divorce and Remarriage

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Overture 30: Do Not Adopt Recommendations B, D, E, or F of the Report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (Deferred from 2021)

I. Background

In November 2020 the council of the Ann Arbor (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church received notification that the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality had been posted. Despite not knowing if Synod 2021 would be able to meet, our council leadership immediately laid out a plan for council review, and two of our pastors took the denomination's Challenging Conversations Toolkit training. In January our council invested in three full evenings listening, learning, and discerning together. We were faithful in a timeline that, at best, served to confuse, complicate, and constrain our review of this report. While we appreciate that human sexuality is being addressed, we do not agree that what is outlined in the report holds confessional status in the CRCNA, nor that it should be given such status.

II. Overture

The council of Ann Arbor CRC overtures synod not to adopt Recommendations B, D, E, or F in the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Grounds:

1. The report's claim that its teaching on human sexuality already has confessional status is opportunistic and unfounded.
2. The report does not adequately represent Reformed scholarship on the issues of human sexuality.
3. The report does not adequately represent the diversity of voices within the CRCNA.
4. The report relies on incomplete and even faulty scientific and medical claims.
5. The report's tone often failed to reflect the grace necessary for such a sensitive conversation.

The following points provide an elaboration of the grounds:

1. The report's claim that its teaching on human sexuality already has confessional status is opportunistic and unfounded.
 - a. This section of the report is problematic for at least three reasons. First, this statement violates the CRC's statement on how items receive confessional status: "the consideration of *status confessionis* is a weighty matter that requires extended and careful deliberation" (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 926-27; Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality Report, p. 315). Second, the report states, "To raise the question of confessional status is to wonder whether some teaching or ecclesiastical practice, if adopted, would violate the teachings of the confessions of the church" (p. 456). But it is not true that a simple lack of explicit conflict results in confessional status. If this were true, *Our World Belongs to God* would have confessional status; instead,

the CRC has given it the designation of *contemporary testimony*, as it has been deemed true and helpful while not rising to the level of a confession. Third, the section states, “Even if a teaching has confessional status, that does not mean there is no room for disagreement within the bounds of that teaching” (p. 457). This is a misleading statement that at best undersells—and at worst undermines—the way the confessions function in the CRCNA.

- b. We recognize and lament that the binding and retroactive status recommended by this report, if adopted, may force many current and future officebearers to choose whether to continue serving in violation of their conscience, or to resign in personal integrity. In addition, this binding status will affect current and future membership for the local church.
2. The report does not adequately represent Reformed scholarship on the issues of human sexuality.

We found the report’s overall handling of Scripture to be undergirded by theologies best described as fundamentalist. This insufficiently Reformed engagement is evident in the report’s treatment of individual texts as well as the whole arc of Scripture. The report routinely interprets Scripture through noncovenantal frameworks. Further, significant voices within the Reformed tradition were either incorrectly dismissed as “novel” or simply ignored within the report.

3. The report does not adequately represent the diversity of voices within the CRCNA.

Affirming the CRC’s 1973 Statement on Homosexuality was a prerequisite to serving on the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. This foreclosed the possibility of a comprehensive treatment of the subject matter and limited the probability of a minority report for the denomination’s consideration.

4. The report relies on incomplete and even faulty scientific and medical claims.

a. Scientific method—There is no description of the literature review process used in the report, which casts doubt on the reliability of the scientific evidence cited in the report. It would have been prudent to involve a medical adviser on matters of human sexuality, but there is no mention of this type of consultation occurring.

b. Opinions seeking data—The report repeatedly presents incomplete analysis leading to claims that are oversimplified or simply incorrect. In one example, the report asserts that “a child who is given hormones to block puberty and who then later takes hormones to change their sex will become sterile” (p. 383). However, the issues around fertility and hormone treatment are complex, and not all treatments cause sterility. Elsewhere the report says, “The claim that attraction to the same sex has a biological cause has been seriously challenged by recent research” (p. 405). The study cited is weak and inconclusive, and its use is apparently designed to reinforce a predetermined conclusion. Incorrect use of the medical literature can increase fear and stigmatization, and it impairs the church’s discernment.

- c. Resources—The report includes pastoral resources, such as kelseycoalition.org, which offer highly biased and medically inaccurate information. It is unacceptable to recommend resources that do not present a balanced, compassionate, and medically accurate review of complex issues such as gender dysphoria. While pastoral care involves much more than balance and medical accuracy, it does not involve less. The resources go beyond being merely unhelpful; in several instances, the guidance offered may actually induce harm to individuals and families.
5. The report's tone often failed to reflect the grace necessary for such a sensitive conversation.

We found the report to lack sufficient pastoral sensitivity and relational wisdom, especially as it wrote off positions that seemed to disagree with the report's conclusions. Our council struggled with the definitive statements that were directed to people we love and with whom we desire to live a life of faith.

Council of Ann Arbor CRC, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Paul Steen, clerk of council

Note: The above overture was presented to Classis Lake Erie at its March 6, 2021, meeting; however, the classis decided to postpone discussion of the human sexuality report and related overtures because the report is being deferred to Synod 2022.

COMMUNICATIONS (DEFERRED FROM 2020)

Communication 1: Classis Zeeland (*Deferred from 2020*)

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3)

As this passage in Amos highlights, for people, organizations, churches, and denominations to function together, there has to be a shared vision and understanding. We must be agreed on major issues. Each church cannot be doing its own thing with no accountability to the other. It is not that a denomination must be cookie-cutter, with each church and council working in absolute uniformity, but there must be unity on matters of substance.

From the first missionary journeys to the Gentiles, a critical core of teachings and practices emerged, which every believer must hold. Believing Gentiles did not need to be circumcised, but they were to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, strangled animals, and the drinking of blood (Acts 15:20). It is impossible to follow Christ and continue worshipping other gods. The sexual immorality so prevalent in the Gentile world was an unqualified sin, and to disregard it was to disregard God who gives his Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:7-8). It is this sexual immorality and impurity that are not even fit to be named among people of God (Eph. 5:3). On these core matters, there is no room for divergent opinions.

In the Reformed tradition, we have been well served by our three creeds and Three Forms of Unity. These have given us a shared understanding of God’s Word and world that has helped us work well together and accomplish much for the kingdom. These faithful summaries of God’s Word have long been the boundaries of how we live, work, and serve together.

We cannot ignore the growing noise and confusion of our day. People, families, churches, and denominations are struggling with the issues of sexuality. This is not an area where a local option is viable. The Bible has not changed on this matter. Scripture and our confessions clearly teach that marriage is between one man and one woman, and that all sexual activity, outside of that union, is sin. In saying this, we stand with the historic Christian church, declaring that any who lust for or engage in homosexual relations are living in sin and are called to repent and find forgiveness in the cross. We declare that those who refuse to repent, flee, and fight against such sin are outside this church body, and we cannot walk together.

We must also say that there can be no union among those who have signed our Covenant for Officebearers and those who would publicly deny this teaching, live contrary to it, or violate it in their official duties (for example, performing a same-sex wedding ceremony). Though there are many minor issues of Christian liberty, God’s Word is specific on sexuality and the

use of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. Disunity on these matters is unsustainable for the Christian church and effective gospel ministry.

Classis Zeeland

Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis B.C. North-West *(Deferred from 2020)*

Classis B.C. North-West and Classis B.C. South-East have both received correspondence from Classis British Columbia – Reformed Church in America (BC [RCA]) requesting dialogue on the possibility of joining with our two classes and encouraging broader conversation on a “realignment” of churches/classes within the CRC and RCA denominations.

For more than a decade the Reformed Church in America (RCA) has been dealing with the matter of same-sex marriage and human sexuality at their general synod. Understandably these discussions have become quite polarizing within their denomination. Some years ago, a vision team was formed in order to make recommendations about what a possible future might look like for the RCA. At their 2020 General Synod they will be considering three options: (1) staying together, (2) reorganization, or (3) grace-filled separation (see rca.org/rca-vision-2020-team).

In 2018 Classis BC (RCA) formed a Five-Year Plan Ad Hoc Team, tasked to propose options for the classis to consider for its future, realizing that to remain in the RCA was becoming less and less likely, given the more “progressive/liberal” direction the denomination was moving toward. This concern of Classis BC (RCA) is shared by numerous classes and congregations within the RCA. General Synod 2020 will be a key moment in the history of the RCA. Though speculative, it is believed that the denomination will adopt an affirming position on same-sex marriage and pursue a “big tent” model that tries to allow for divergent views.

Concurrent to all this in the RCA is what is happening in our own denomination. Our Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality will submit its report to Synod 2021. Their mandate is to present a biblical view on marriage and human sexuality that maintains the traditional views. There is a strong concern held by a number of pastors and congregations that, even if our denomination adopts their report and maintains the traditional view, there will continue to be ongoing pressure to embrace/accept a “revisionist”/“affirming” position, resulting in ongoing “dialogue, debate, conversation, and listening.”

The congregations of Classis BC (RCA) are genuinely open to the possibility of leaving the RCA and affiliating with the CRC, but of course they would want to avoid being in a denomination in which the debate continues well after 2021.

In spring 2019 a conversation was initiated between several RCA and CRC pastors to imagine a way forward through this difficult issue that might result in an orderly realignment of churches and/or classes within our two denominations. Believing that we are at a kind of “impasse” between those who adopt a traditional reading and those who adopt a revisionist reading of Scripture, might there be a way forward that would bring an end to the

impasse and allow for each “side” to move forward in their mission without the need for ongoing, fractious debate?

If the RCA in 2020 adopts an affirming position and the CRC in 2021 maintains the current position, might our two denominations encourage/allow for a realignment of churches, or a “grace-filled separation”—to use the language of the RCA Vision 2020 report—so that painful schism and splintered denominations can be avoided? For the foreseeable future this would bring the debate in each of our denominations to a close. As a classis, we believe this to be a viable and wise option. Perhaps our two denominations, in a unique kind of way, can model a kind of separation that at the same time seeks to preserve unity; a unity that agrees to disagree in order to release one another to serve the kingdom in a way that each believes to be biblically faithful.

We understand this communication to be a next step in bringing this conversation to more churches to allow for broader discernment.

We think it will be helpful for synod to encourage the CRCNA senior staff from both Canada and the United States to conduct meaningful conversations and discernment with their counterparts in the denominational office of the RCA on discerning a path moving forward on re-alignment options in light of varying responses from local churches to human sexuality in both denominations. The goal of the conversations would be to make recommendations for action for local churches in each denomination.

Classis B.C. North-West
Kathy N. Smith, stated clerk

Communication 3: Classis Minnkota (*Deferred from 2020*)

Classis Minnkota wishes to communicate to Synod 2020 its gratitude that the synodical Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality has advised our churches to study the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 437-44). We find the Great Lakes Catechism to be biblical, pastoral, gospel-driven, and coupled with grace and truth applications for singles, marrieds, families, the family of God, disciples of Christ, and those not yet disciples of Christ. We pray that all churches will read it, be shaped by it, and be blessed by it for the strengthening of Christ’s churches and the advancement of his gospel.

Classis Minnkota
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk . . .

COMMUNICATIONS (DEFERRED FROM 2021)

Communication 1: Classis Grand Rapids East (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Introduction

The agenda for the February 25, 2021, meeting of Classis Grand Rapids East included several overtures requesting that synod delay consideration of the recommendations of the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. These overtures were developed within a context of respect for the efforts behind the report and concern for the well-being of congregations, classes, and the denomination.

II. Rationale to delay consideration

A. *Why delay consideration of the report?*

One of the overtures puts it this way:

A comprehensive 176-page report that took four years to write demands a longer period of time for churches and classes to study and prayerfully reflect on its contents. Deferring discussion and voting allows us to deal with this report as carefully, respectfully, and lovingly as possible. It acknowledges and respects the immense time, effort, and work that went into this report. It acknowledges and respects the stories and the lives represented in this report and allows us to treat them as carefully, respectfully, and as lovingly as they deserve.

A request for delay may be moot, given the decision to cancel Synod 2021, but the rationale behind the request remains worthy of consideration.

The reason to delay consideration of the report is that the report's weighty recommendations and the attendant implications demand extended prayer, reflection, and discussion before any action is taken.

To hastily accept the report's recommendations as they stand (i.e., to condemn same-sex marriage as sin and to give that position confessional status) would be deeply divisive for councils, congregations, classes, and denominational institutions (e.g., Calvin University).

To delay consideration of the report, however, would allow us to respect the spirit of Paul's plea to the church in Ephesus, when he wrote "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3, NRSV).

B. *Areas of concern*

In several areas, the report warrants extended discussion and perhaps significant amendment. That would require more time, particularly in connection with the following areas of concern:

1. Pastoral guidance

The report contains little pastoral guidance for congregations who encompass differences in approach. Will we lose the mutual respect and love we share as we come to terms with an approach that makes no room for difference? Will we lose our young people over an issue that some do not believe to be central to salvation? How can we care for all those who are touched so personally by questions regarding same-sex orientation and transgender identity? Will the pastoral guidance given in the report be accepted? We have grave concerns about this.

2. Living lovingly with difference

It is not just the unity in our own congregation that is threatened by this report. The report has implications for the unity of the denomination. There are differences across the denomination in theology, biblical interpretation, and moral approach. Although some of these differences are discussed and dismissed in the report, the fact is that differences remain among serious and devoted Christians within our church. How can we live lovingly with our differences? The report does not address this, although it acknowledges that difficulty and division may follow. Because we all belong to our faithful God through salvation in Jesus Christ, and we all strive to abide by the law of love, as commanded by Jesus (Matt. 22) and amplified by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 13), we trust that it is possible to practice love, justice, and hospitality in this contested arena. The report fails to address how we may live lovingly with differences of interpretation with regard to the many complexities of human sexuality.

3. Confessional status

The report states that its answers to the questions raised in the report have confessional status. This is a momentous claim, backed with little evidence in the report. This claim has profound implications for our pastors, elders, deacons, and members who are faculty at our denominational university and seminary. At one point the report refers to its conclusions as a matter of salvation. That is a far more serious claim than the “pastoral guidance” that has marked previous synodical statements about sexuality. We would like to see more discussion of the claim of confessional status in the report, given its momentous implications for the church.

III. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

In addition to the above, plans for when to consider the report ought to take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on congregations and classes. Not only did COVID-19 prevent Synod 2020 and Synod 2021 from gathering, it has also hindered, and for some time will continue to hinder, shared prayer and reflection, and even conversation, on the congregational and classical levels. Zoom is no substitute for face-to-face gatherings.

One of the overtures makes the case this way:

[Zoom and other online platforms] make meaningful discussion difficult and imperfect; they inhibit trust, empathy, and understanding and are mentally wearing. Any discussion held over video chat would be significantly less effective than one held face-to-face. Deferring discussion and vote will allow for more meaningful and effective in-person discussion at the local, classical, and synodical levels. Studies show that video chat inhibits trust between people,

and limits their ability to connect and to empathize with one another.¹ It has also been found to be mentally and emotionally straining, resulting in the so-called “Zoom Gloom.”²

In conclusion, a prudent delay to consideration of the report, for all of the reasons outlined above, would demonstrate humility (understanding the limitations of technology and human nature), gentleness (acknowledging the difficulties of this pandemic), patience (delaying our impulse for action for the greater good of the church body), and love (demonstrating our desire for deeper understanding in disagreement). It is one of the “efforts” we can make “to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Northcentral Iowa (*Deferred from 2021*)

The churches of Classis Northcentral Iowa are writing to share our deep concerns regarding the actions taken by Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The council at Neland Avenue CRC has seated a deacon who is LGBTQ+ and is currently in a same-sex marriage. Classis Minnkota expressed their concern with the actions taken by the council of Neland Avenue CRC and the actions or lack thereof by Classis Grand Rapids East in letters to the council, to the classis, and to the Council of Delegates. These letters are well written and straightforward. We do not wish to restate what has been said but want to add our voice to the concern over the actions taken by Neland Avenue CRC. We also do not want the letters or their representatives to be silenced or forgotten.

As individuals, churches, and a denomination, we must recognize and repent from past failings of behavior regarding sexual immorality. In section XI, B of the report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, the committee makes the need for this repentance clear:

It is a sad truth that the Christian community, including our Christian Reformed denomination, has failed in its calling to empathize with, love, and bear the burdens of persons who are attracted to the same sex, making it very difficult for them to live a life of holiness.

The sin of homosexual practice is often singled out for condemnation while other sexual sins are ignored or minimized. For example, many people in our churches engage in premarital sex, use pornography, commit adultery, or divorce their spouses without a legitimate cause, but they are not disciplined in any way.

(p. 407)

If we are to move forward with grace and claim to serve a just God, we must recognize and repent of our old ways. We must move forward using church

¹ Kate Murphy, “Why Zoom Is Terrible,” *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 2020; nytimes.com/2020/04/29/sunday-review/zoom-video-conference.html.

² Julia Sklar, “‘Zoom fatigue’ is taxing the brain. Here’s why that happens,” *National Geographic*, 24 Apr. 2020; nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/04/coronavirus-zoom-fatigue-is-taxing-the-brain-here-is-why-that-happens/.

discipline to condemn all sexual immorality and live under the clear teaching of Scripture.

To live under the clear teaching of Scripture, we must recognize the authority of Scripture. The authority of Scripture is attested to in the creeds and confessions of our denomination. The Belgic Confession, Article 5, states, “We receive all these books and these only as holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding, and establishing of our faith . . . because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God.” Scripture is our only rule of faith. Article 7 goes on to say, “We believe that this Holy Scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently taught in it.” Many challenges to the traditional understanding of same-sex sexual activity have been raised. We defer to the report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality and the in-depth study and explanation of Scripture that is given in section XII. To stray from this rule of our faith is to build our house on the sand. We must recognize and conform to the Word of God.

The denomination has in place avenues for handling disagreements. We must use the existing system available for change in the church and honor those changes. By not using this system, Neland Avenue CRC and other churches break covenant with the denomination. Doing this makes it appear that Church Order is only binding when it works in their favor. Otherwise, Church Order is not recognized or honored. Behavior like this runs against foundational systems that have served the denomination for generations. Churches and classes need to comply with the system and the decisions or move to a denomination that aligns with their choices more closely. Working within an existing system can seem ponderous and slow; however, this is the means to do the work of the church and the denomination decently and in good order. When we use the system as it is designed, then we honor each other with the ability to discuss and confront those issues that face the church in a way that honors God.

We can and must do better. As individuals, churches, and a denomination, we must rededicate ourselves to doing better in our interactions, we must do better in submitting ourselves to the clear teaching of Scripture, and we must do better with our disagreements. We must avoid using poor hermeneutics and exegesis of partial Scriptures and cultural influences to justify our life choices, and we must return to a life that gives honor and glory to God. We must rededicate ourselves to being the city on a hill—a beacon of truth and hope in this dark world.

Classis Northcentral Iowa
Brian M. Hofman, stated clerk

Communication 3: Classis Northern Michigan (*Deferred from 2021*)

We send this letter as a communication to Synod 2021 from Classis Northern Michigan regarding the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

We recognize that the many issues discussed in this report are potentially divisive in our denomination. We are grateful to synod for commissioning

this report in 2016 and for shepherding the study committee through subsequent synods so that it is ready to present to Synod 2021. We are grateful for a clear and solid biblical discussion to guide the Christian Reformed Church through these potentially contentious issues in our denomination and culture. We encourage synod to continue to shepherd this process well and avoid any unnecessary delays in taking a clear and decisive position regarding this report and its recommendations.

In addition to affirming the mandate of this study committee, we commend their process, particularly in dealing with a breadth of contemporary issues related to human sexuality, but also for their excellent use of the tools and principles of Reformed hermeneutics. We find this report and its recommendations to be well grounded in a proper exegesis of Scripture.

Accordingly, we send this communication as an expression of support for report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (2021). We encourage synod to adopt it and all its recommendations. We draw special attention to the recommendation that acknowledges this interpretation already has confessional status under Lord's Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism. We affirm that interpreting Scripture is best done as a church and not as individual believers or congregations. In our tradition this interpretation happens through synod as informed by our confessional statements. By acknowledging confessional status for this report's interpretation of *unchastity* as expressed in the Catechism, it gives us a way forward as a denomination to deal with disagreements regarding human sexuality.

We are praying as well for God's blessing, wisdom, and guidance for synod this year.

Classis Northern Michigan
Roger Hoeksema, stated clerk . . .

Communication 5: River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta (*Deferred from 2021*)

I. Preamble from the Council of River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta

This is a communication submitted by the council of River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta. Our council submitted this to the March meeting of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan, but the classis did not adopt it.

This is not a communication of the council's collective agreements; rather, it is primarily a communication from one member of our congregation that we believe is important material to be included in the discussion on the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

II. Overview

This communication is intended to honor the process of discernment as a denomination. It seems that asking the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Theology of Human Sexuality (the committee) to perform the significant work of assembling this human sexuality report (the report) is the first part of the process. Once the CRCNA has received the report, the expectation is on us as a denomination to wrestle with the report. This

writing is intended to faithfully follow that expectation and participate in the process.

A handful of initial notes may be helpful. First, I want to express gratitude for the time and energy put into the report by the committee. It is a monumental task. Second, I want to express thanks for the denominational process, notably for the invitation to wrestle with the content of the report. Third, much of this communication is shaped around potential concerns raised by engaging with the report. While there is much in the report that is appreciated, this report necessitates faithful engagement, including hearing strong critiques when these critiques are made in good faith. Fourth, there was not significant enough time to engage the full report. So please consider this communication simply a highlighting of concerns that I had the time and capacity to address. And again, *please receive this communication in the spirit with which it is intended: as a part of the faithful work of the church to thoughtfully participate in the discernment around a foundation-laying theology of human sexuality.* I too anticipate concerns with what I have written. To me, this is the good discerning work we do as a community, iron sharpening iron.

III. The report deems its conclusions to have the highest significance: true versus false church

Throughout this human sexuality report, choices are made: exegetical and hermeneutical choices, selection choices on what to include and what not to include, choices on how to summarize the science of the day and how much to trust its conclusions, choices on whom to consult along the way toward making conclusions. Making choices in these matters is common as researchers work toward and finally articulate their conclusions.

What is not common is the level of significance applied to the conclusions of this report. Our denomination has a long history with study committees, and with committees bringing their conclusions to be considered by the CRCNA. Rarely, though, do those study committees assert their conclusions in a way that *intends to speak for the universal church, the church of all times and places.*¹ It seems that this one does.

It is important to pause here for a moment. The committee writes about various “levels of authority of doctrinal and moral teaching,” mentioning Scripture, creed, confession, Church Order, and synodical decision, among other things.² And in the recommendations, the committee clearly asserts their conclusions regarding confessional status. But does the committee request that their conclusions be understood to have *merely* the confessional level of authority? No, the committee believes their conclusions are more significant than merely confessional authority. This can be seen in how the committee speaks about our confessions. The committee writes that our “confessions are statements that identify who we are within the larger body of the universal church.”³ They mention that Baptists and Lutherans, though

¹ Perhaps some recent examples of such significant conclusions are found in some recent declarations of heresy. Recently, the CRCNA synod has declared both the Doctrine of Discovery and Kinism as heresies. It seems to us that declaring something a heresy is speaking on behalf of the universal church, and declaring something to be a heresy is declaring something to be false teaching.

² Human Sexuality Report (HSR), p. 457.

³ HSR, p. 457.

having significant doctrinal differences, are still sisters and brothers in the universal church. So if this was a report on infant baptism, with conclusions that match our Reformed confessions, the CRCNA might acknowledge that believing the conclusions around infant baptism is important to being an officebearer in the CRCNA. But the CRCNA would not call the Baptist denomination a “false church.” Our different beliefs around baptism give us our *distinct identities within the universal church*.

But the conclusions of the committee around human sexuality are held with a drastically higher significance. They do not see their conclusions as *merely* about confessional differences between one denomination and another denomination, all within the universal church. Rather, the committee assesses that teaching anything other than its own conclusions about human sexuality would be “false teaching” by “false teachers” acting like the “false church.”⁴

To be honest, I am not aware of any denomination that clearly and wholeheartedly affirms adultery, premarital sex, extramarital sex, polyamory, or the use of pornography. But there are denominations that clearly and wholeheartedly affirm covenantal, lifelong, monogamous marriage between two persons of the same sex. There are denominations that would not ask a same-sex married couple to repent because these denominations do not believe that faithful same-sex marriage is a “[sin that threatens] a person’s salvation.”⁵ This report condemns those that affirm same-sex marriage, in essence saying that these denominations are “acting like the false church.”⁶ This committee, it seems, asserts that their conclusions speak for the universal church, the true church—since to conclude anything different than this committee does is to act like the false church.

To accuse existing denominations to be acting like the false church is a very significant claim. And from that significant claim would follow a significant result. *If we as the CRCNA affirm this report, and this significant claim, then we should not be asking pastors and churches who affirm same-sex marriage to simply find a more suitable denomination, one that affirms same-sex marriage. Why? Because if we truly affirm this report, we would be encouraging them to join a denomination that acts like the false church. If we affirm this report as written, we cannot faithfully ask for a reorganizing of denominations around theological conclusions regarding same-sex marriage.⁷ If we affirm this report wholeheartedly, we cannot head toward “a gracious separation.”⁸ If we*

⁴ HSR, pp. 459-60, where the phrases “false teaching,” “false teacher,” “false church” are used.

⁵ HSR, p. 460.

⁶ HSR, p. 460.

⁷ For instance, there has been a fairly common proposal that one solution to our denominational disagreement around same-sex marriage is to realign churches with denominations that agree with their perspective on same-sex marriage. One clear articulation of this involves two CRC pastors and two RCA pastors interviewed by a third CRC pastor, where they suggest that the RCA and CRC simply realign around these two different conclusions regarding same-sex marriage: [youtube.com/watch?v=JkxeYktqVaM&t=5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkxeYktqVaM&t=5s). We would suggest that adopting a proposal like this one would mean we would need to reject this report’s conclusions as being as clear and significant as the report itself sees them.

⁸ Here is an example of a CRC pastor asking for a “gracious separation”: thebanner.org/columns/2020/02/lgbtq-incompatible-means-gracious-separation-is-the-church-s-best-option.

agree with this report, we cannot critique an affirming theology primarily by articulating that it misuses the “Reformed hermeneutic.”⁹ All three of these regular talking points are moot if we accept this report. Rather, if we wholeheartedly affirm this report, it behooves us to head in the direction of what this report calls “the grace of church discipline.”¹⁰ If affirming same-sex marriage is so grievous as to be a “false teaching” in the body of Christ (not merely a significantly different opinion), then we need to lean into the third mark of the true church and enact discipline on our churches, pastors, elders, deacons, and members that hold to this false teaching.

To many of us, such a path feels significantly too radical. That in itself may need to give us pause. Are we that certain about this committee’s conclusions? Are we as certain about this committee’s conclusions as this committee is about their own conclusions? This committee sees their biblical evidence and conclusions as having the highest significance possible within the body of Christ. This committee asserts that perspectives on same-sex marriage separate true teaching from false teaching; they separate those acting as the true church from those acting as the false church. *If the CRCNA desires to adopt this report and affirm these exceptional conclusions, it behooves us to evaluate their biblical research carefully and meticulously. Their conclusions need to be indisputable. And as you will see, I do not find it to be so.*

IV. Concerns regarding interpretations of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2

Due to both the length of the report and the short timeline, I am unable to evaluate all the sections of this report. Instead, I chose to take a closer look at what is some of the most significant exegetical work of the report—namely, its interpretation of Genesis 1, Genesis 2, and Matthew 19. The committee not only begins its section “A biblical theology of human sexuality” with this exegetical work, but it also continues to refer to these three passages as foundational throughout their report. In many senses, the conclusions around these three passages underlie their entire report. Since I did not have time to consider every section of the report, I have chosen to spend time to evaluate their exegetical work on these “foundation-laying” passages.

A. Disagreement about interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 as “one interdependent unit”

The report begins its section articulating a biblical theology of human sexuality by interpreting Matthew 19, Genesis 1, and Genesis 2. In that section, the committee sees Jesus’ use in Matthew 19 of quotes from Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 as demonstrating that “Jesus explicitly treats [Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Genesis 2:4-25] as one interdependent unit.”¹¹ Later, it says again that Jesus appeals to these two passages as one unit.¹² And then, throughout the report, it speaks of this section of Scripture as “Genesis 1-2,” as if these two sections

⁹ It seems to me that one of the central critiques of the 2016 communication from Classis Grand Rapids East (GRE) by Dr. John Cooper was that the GRE study on same-sex marriage did not properly use “Reformed hermeneutics.” Whether Dr. Cooper is correct is up for discussion, but our point here is that this current human sexuality report is raising the significance far beyond hermeneutical rules within a particular denominational tradition.

¹⁰ HSR, p. 433.

¹¹ HSR, p. 328.

¹² HSR, p. 329.

are actually one unit. I would suggest that using phrases from two separate units does not mean that Jesus is treating these two units as one; such an interpretation is overreaching eisegesis. This conclusion is not “read out” of Matthew 19; rather, it is “read into” Matthew 19.¹³ In addition, it is clear that these two units are separate units in the book of Genesis. To understand this critique, let us begin by looking at Genesis itself.

Astute readers of the book of Genesis have noted the division of the book through observing the ten uses of the Hebrew word *tōledōt*. Notably, the first occurrence of *tōledōt* is in Genesis 2:4, setting Genesis 1:1-2:3 apart from the rest of the book. In fact, one of those astute readers is Dr. Albert Wolters (a member of the committee that produced this report). In his book, *Creation Regained*, Dr. Wolters separates Genesis 1:1-2:3 off from the rest of Genesis. He speaks about this opening creation story as “setting the stage” for what follows:

The drama itself begins in Genesis 2, opening with the words, “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created” (KJV). This is the first of ten sections in Genesis introduced by the phrase “these are the generations of . . .” in which the term *generations* (Hebrew *tōledōt*, literally “begettings”) seems to mean something like “historical developments arising out of.” . . .¹⁴

We would agree that seeing the distinction between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 is deeply significant to a good reading of Genesis, and that a close observation of the text would suggest that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, though being connected, are far from being “one interdependent unit.”

Rather than seeing Genesis 1 and 2 as one interdependent unit, a much better interpretation of their connection is precisely as Dr. Wolters notes. Genesis 1 sets the stage with a grand introduction which includes the introduction of humanity (in general) as being made in the image of God, male and female, followed by Genesis 2 as an “on the ground” moment in history where a specific man (Adam) encounters his specific partner (Eve). Notably, Adam and Eve are not mentioned in Genesis 1. This “one flesh” connection between Adam and Eve begins the drama of humanity’s “development of the created earth. . . . In a single word, the task ahead is *civilization*.”¹⁵ Thus, the movement is *from* Genesis 1 as a broad introduction with a creation mandate given generally to all humanity *to* Genesis 2 as a particular *working out* of the creation mandate in a particular couple. Indeed, rather than connecting Genesis 1 to Genesis 2, the author of Genesis interconnects Genesis 2, 3 and 4. These three chapters are all in the first *tōledōt* section (the second use of *tōledōt* is in Gen. 5:1). The first “historical development” of the creation shows the reader an entire movement: Adam and Eve are put in the garden of Eden, together they fall and receive the curses from God, and then Adam and Eve begin to “multiply” by giving birth to Cain and Abel—and sin begins to ‘multiply’ as seen in Cain’s murder of Abel and Lamech’s desire to “one up” Cain. Indeed, that first *tōledōt* section gives the reader an initial

¹³ “Reading out” is one way to talk about “exegesis,” while “reading into” is one way to talk about “eisegesis.” A faithful interpreter’s job is never to “read into” a text more than what it intends; rather, we are called to discern what is in the text itself, and “read it out” of the text.

¹⁴ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), p. 37.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

glimpse into the development of civilization. In one interconnected section defined by the use of *tōledōt* (Gen. 2-4), we move from the perfect garden into a devastating avalanche of sin so quickly that the reader echoes the people at the end of that interconnected section who “call on the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26), and the narrator quickly moves us to the second *tōledōt*, focusing on Adam and Eve’s third son, Seth, and the historical development of that genetic line.

If Genesis itself makes clear that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are not “one interdependent unit,” then what are we to make of Jesus’ use of quotes from both chapters so quickly in succession? To me, it seems that there is no need to “make anything” out of Jesus’ use of these two quotes from Scripture. Jesus is responding to a specific situation. He is asked about divorce, and he responds to that specific question, referencing both Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, and in this particular occasion, connecting those two quotes together. Indeed, the movement even follows the natural movement of Genesis—from a general introduction (Gen. 1) to the specific situation of Adam and Eve’s “one fleshness” (Gen. 2) as a response to this specific question about the divorce of a man from a woman. What a beautiful and articulate response! But why should that response of Jesus in Matthew 19 force us as readers to ignore what is clear about the unit division in Genesis?

Jesus often quotes Scripture. Later in this same chapter, Jesus quotes five of the ten commandments (Matt. 19:18-19). But Jesus quotes them in a different order than either Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5. What should we “make of” Jesus’ reordering the commandments, when he puts honoring father and mother at the end? Maybe an astute reader of Matthew 19 sees a reason for this reordering, and would bring that out in a sermon on Matthew 19. But even if we can discern a reason for Jesus’ reordering as he responds in this particular situation, does that mean we should rearrange the order of the commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 because of the way Jesus quotes them in Matthew 19? We hope not. The committee’s decision to ignore the natural divisions of Genesis because of the way Jesus quotes from Genesis 1 and 2 seems just as overreaching.

Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are clearly distinct units in the book of Genesis. Indeed, many astute readers of Genesis see Genesis 2-4 as a literary section, and Genesis 1 as an introduction to the whole book, drawing an even stronger line between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. For this committee to continually treat Genesis 1 and 2 as “one unit” is a concern.

B. More carefully listening to the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28

One may ask, Why does it matter if Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are seen as separate units? It seems to us that understanding the shape of Genesis, and specifically the way in which Genesis 1 functions, is important in understanding the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28.

Genesis 1 has a distinct quality from the rest of the book of Genesis. As seen above, Dr. Wolters frames it as “setting the stage.” Some might say that Genesis 1 offers us the 30,000-foot view. This contrasts with the whole rest of the book of Genesis, which offers us an “on the ground” perspective. Genesis 1 functions as a general introduction; the rest of Genesis follows as it works out the historical developments.

So how are we to hear Genesis 1:28? First of all, we need to hear it as part of the introduction. It is not a mandate given to specific individuals. Adam and Eve have not yet entered the stage. It is part of the introduction, given generally to “all humanity.” And this matters, because we North Americans have a habit: individualism. We tend to hear things as individuals. So it is not surprising that we hear the creation mandate as asking each and every individual one of us to “be fruitful and multiply.” But that’s not the best way to understand it. *We* fulfill this mandate, not just *I*. So is it permissible for a married couple to decide not to have children? Yes, because together *we* fulfill this mandate as a community, and each individual married couple does not need to fulfill it on their own. This makes sense given the “collective” mindset of the ancient Near East. Here we have a general introduction given from 30,000 feet that comes with a corporate mandate. We cannot even yet see every individual “on the ground”; we have not even met any named individuals yet.

Second, our Reformed tradition has a long history of seeing in this creation mandate so much more than simple biological reproduction. We have a habit of calling Genesis 1:28 not only the “creation mandate,” but also the “cultural mandate.”¹⁶ We call it that because we are fruitful in *many ways*. Hear again the phrase, “the fruits of your labor.” That old phrase has a double meaning. It has a connection not only to a woman’s labor in giving birth, but is more commonly used about any human laboring in our vocational fields. Like God, we too create. We build. We grow things. As Dr. Wolters discusses, the creation mandate itself is just as much about forming creation, “filling the earth” not simply with humans, but with human-created culture and cultural artifacts.¹⁷ And once again, there are many ways to collectively fulfill this corporate mandate as each of us sees our particular life and work connected corporately to the whole.

Once we see that Genesis 1 is a general introduction, that the creation mandate is a corporate mandate, and that cultural formation is also a part of the mandate, we are able to recognize that it is not essential for every single human to use their biological capacity for reproduction in order to be faithful to God’s mandate in Genesis 1:28. It is easier to see that, already from the beginning, singleness easily fits within a corporate understanding of the creation mandate. Historically, our Reformed community has also recognized that, given this corporate mandate, contraceptives also become a possible choice. And people participate in the mandate not only through biological reproduction but also through many other forms of human creativity.

Given all of this, it is a challenge to understand or agree with the committee’s statement that to exercise our male or female sexuality through procreation “is essential to fulfilling God’s creation mandate.”¹⁸ This statement seems potentially at odds with a careful reading of the creation mandate as seen above. If we want to affirm such a statement, it becomes very important

¹⁶ See, for example, Richard J. Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 16; and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 32.

¹⁷ *Creation Regained*, pp. 35-41.

¹⁸ HSR, p. 329.

that we do so by *noticing the collective nature of the creation mandate*. Applying this statement from the committee to each and every individual would be a misinterpretation and a misapplication of the creation mandate. But applying this statement to the church as a community, as a corporate reality, is appropriate to how Genesis situates it. I wish the report was more careful to attend to this important distinction, as noting this distinction has significant impact on how we are called to embody our human sexuality.

V. Concerns regarding the overreaching use of the creation-fall-redemption framework

What follows is a whole set of thoughts, including concerns, about how the committee uses the creation-fall-redemption framework as they lay the foundations of their report. Indeed, the very first paragraph of the section titled “A biblical theology of human sexuality” begins with the following:

Reformed theology reminds us that a good biblical theology follows the outline of the great moments of redemptive history: creation, fall, redemption, consummation. Our Lord himself took this approach when the Pharisees asked him about what in their day was one of the divisive questions of sexual ethics.

With such a beginning, we are quickly alerted not only that the committee sees this creation-fall-redemption-consummation approach in Jesus’ response to the Pharisees, but also that this committee holds this approach or framework up as an example of good process for good theology. As you will see below, there are many good ways in which the CRCNA has enjoyed and been blessed by this framework, but this framework has also created some problems.

A. Enjoying the creation-fall-redemption framework in the CRCNA

The CRCNA has long utilized the frame of “creation-fall-redemption” (and consummation or “new creation”) in two ways. We have often used the creation-fall-redemption framework as a way to provide a glimpse of the narrative movement of Scripture itself. And we also have used this creation-fall-redemption framework as a way to see all of life as people in God’s great story. That second way, our “Reformed worldview,” helps us to understand much about the created world around us, our sense of vocation, and how the gospel calls us into a whole-life response. For a moment, let’s enjoy these two particular ways that the creation-fall-redemption framework has supported the CRCNA.

Seeing the movement of Scripture through the frame of creation-fall-redemption is so clear to many of us that it sometimes goes without mentioning. Though we are not alone in this, the Reformed community has long noticed that the large narrative arc of Scripture begins with a good creation. We soon hear about the original sin of Adam and Eve, followed by the curses brought on this good creation by their fall into sin. And then, already seeded in God’s response to that sin, in the midst of articulating the curses, we hear hints of God’s intervention in a redemptive way (“he will crush your head”). The majority of the pages of Scripture articulate the large movement of God’s redemptive work, finding its center in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. But even in that center in Jesus, we find the first fruit of the end, the “new creation,” as Jesus’ resurrection is the “new creation” breaking in, guaranteeing that all things will be made new. The whole story of Scripture

concludes by painting for us a picture of that new creation in Revelation 21 and 22. Indeed, our Reformed tradition has long enjoyed this grand narrative arc as a way to see the biblical revelation of God.

But the Reformed tradition does not only use this creation-fall-redemption framework to help us see the narrative arc of Scripture. We also use that same framework as a lens to help us see our own lives, indeed our whole world. As such, we have called it a “Reformed world-and-life view” or “Reformed worldview.” While many church communities may use this creation-fall-redemption framework for Scripture, its application as a lens to see all things, as a worldview, is a bit more distinctive to our Reformed tradition. So we will pause a little longer to enjoy the way we have been served by this gift.

We have been shaped by this creation-fall-redemption worldview in our liturgical and confessional life. Consider this document we have called *A Contemporary Testimony: Our World Belongs to God*. This Reformed expression of the Christian faith originated within the CRCNA and continues to be used in our worship life and as a guide for our faith. After a preamble, it notably begins with three separate sections titled “creation,” “fall,” and “redemption.” After including other sections, it concludes with “new creation.” And while this testimony covers the narrative arc of Scripture, it is not simply or only a summary of Scripture. It is also an extension of this framework into aspects of our life together as the people of God: education and community, rest and leisure, science and technology, government and public justice.

Indeed, we have enjoyed letting this Reformed worldview shape our vision of vocation. This creation-fall-redemption framework has become a staple in many of our Christian day schools, and notably in the universities shaped by the Reformed tradition. Assigned readings in those universities include books like the one mentioned above, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, by Dr. Albert M. Wolters. In this book, Wolters helpfully translates the work of someone earlier in our Reformed tradition, Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd. With chapter titles of “creation,” “fall,” and “redemption” (among others), Wolters treads out for us a worldview that refuses to accept any division between sacred and secular. A second book commonly used in our Reformed universities is *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* by Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. In both of these books, we hear clearly that all of life, in all of its created variety, falls under the lordship and leadership of our God, and so all of our life is part of our vocation of responding to God.

Together, through these three resources and many more, the CRCNA has made certain that we recognize how education, politics, science, family, church, and more all fall under our human vocation to follow Christ (again, with this in mind, some have referenced Gen. 1:28 as the “cultural mandate”¹⁹). All of these cultural domains are already embedded in creation, awaiting the unfolding work of humanity. All of this is already a part of the good creation. But then again, all of these cultural domains are also affected by the fall and in deep need of redemption. As Wolters writes, “Nothing is

¹⁹ Though it is notable that while Wolters acknowledges this, he prefers “creation mandate.” *Creation Regained*, p. 36.

‘neutral’ in the sense that sin fails to affect it or that redemption fails to hold out the promise of deliverance.”²⁰

B. How “significant” should we find Jesus’ use of this framework?

While I want to acknowledge the goodness of this creation-fall-redemption framework in the history of CRCNA, I was struck by what felt like *an inappropriate weightiness with which the committee spoke about this framework*.

Let us first notice the significance this committee gives to the shape of Jesus’ response in Matthew 19. The committee notes that, in responding to the Pharisees’ question about divorce, Jesus does not point first to humanity in its fallen state. “Rather, he grounds the ethic of marriage in the purposes of God from creation. It is just as significant that Jesus does not immediately point his hearers to the nature of human sexuality in the new creation. He understands sexuality in creational terms.”²¹

We would agree that this is what Jesus does, and we appreciate the fact that the committee puts on display for us the movement of Jesus from *creation* through the *fall* and into *redemption*. This is a good observation and true of this particular response from Jesus.

The trouble comes, in my opinion, when this choice of Jesus for this one particular situation seems to be given a bit of an exalted or enshrined status by the committee. You will notice above that the committee seems to find it significant that Jesus, when he is responding to a question about marriage, does not start with the fall. And that it is “just as significant” that Jesus does not start with the new creation. Again, I am not sure why this committee seems intent to give this *weightiness* to Jesus’ choice, but it seems fully inappropriate once we look at a couple of other passages.

First, in another question about marriage, Jesus seems to start with the new creation in his response (Matt. 22:23-33). The opening line of this unit says, “That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to [Jesus] with a question” and they go on to ask a question about a woman who marries seven brothers who die in succession, and then she herself dies. Jesus responds by saying, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.” We would suggest Jesus moves quite directly to “the nature of human sexuality in the new creation,” the very thing the committee says it is “significant” that Jesus does not do in Matthew 19.

Second, it seems that Mark 10 tells the same story about Jesus that Matthew tells in chapter 19. In Mark 10, the Pharisees come to Jesus and ask him the same question. How does Mark record Jesus’ response? In Mark, does Jesus start with creation, move through the fall, and then say, “I tell you” as a way to assert his messianic authority as the Lord of redemption? In short, does Jesus follow the “significant” order the committee sees in Matthew 19? Not at all. In fact, a brief glimpse at Mark 10:1-10 with this report in mind would suggest that Jesus *starts with the fall, moves to creation, and never gets to redemption*.

²⁰ *Creation Regained*, p. 67.

²¹ HSR, p. 327.

Does the shape of Jesus' response in Matthew 19 carry "significance," but not the shape of his response in either Matthew 22 or Mark 10? It seems to me an exceptionally arbitrary choice to ascribe significance to one while not even mentioning the others. We feel this committee "reads into" this particular passage more than it is intended to articulate, giving it more methodological weight than it was meant to bear.

For me as a reader, the rhetorical effect of statements like "it is just as significant" is powerful. Phrases like that may give the reader the (false) impression that Jesus was consistent in using this creation-fall-redemption framework, that recognizing this framework in Matthew 19 is undoubtedly important, and therefore that if we want to follow Jesus, we also should use this creation-fall-redemption framework. This would be a dangerous conclusion.

Further, in talking about the "significance" of this creation-fall-redemption movement of Jesus' response, it feels to us that the committee (intentionally or unintentionally) translates that "significance" to their own choice to shape their theological response using the creation-fall-redemption.

C. Concerns when the framework is used to discern "creational order" or "norms"

Again, we may be asking, Why does all of this actually matter? Let me try to point in a few directions where I have concerns, places where I think it actually does matter whether we are holding out methodologies with humility or with certainty.

As noted above, the Reformed community has been enriched by and has deeply enjoyed the creation-fall-redemption framework, both as a way to see Scripture and as a lens through which we view our life and our world. Included in that Reformed worldview is that we have a strong sense of the goodness of creation. And we have a sense that, already at creation, God embedded ways in which to understand and unfold these aspects of creation faithfully. This is part of why the Reformed tradition has cherished chapters like Psalm 19 and 119.²² We trust that there are faithful ways to do education, good ways to shape a family, and redemptive ways to shape our political life and such a thing as normative aesthetics. We often talk about discerning those faithful ways as trying to understand "creational norms" or the "creation order."

We talk about it this way because of our deep trust in the original goodness of creation. But one question always arises: How can we discern God's original intent embedded in the goodness of creation? It gets complicated both because we and the rest of creation are affected by our fall into sin and exhibit not only goodness but also brokenness. So, as Paul says, "we see through a glass darkly." I would not be surprised if the Reformed tradition, perhaps especially in some philosophical wing, has a whole history of discussion and debate around this question, attempting to answer *how* we discern God's creational norms. I myself catch a glimpse of those conversations through the writings of Dr. Calvin Seerveld for aesthetics, through my former engineering professor, Dr. Charles Adams, as it came to technology, and from Dr. David Smith in terms of education, just to name a few.

²² For instance, see "The Good News of Psalm 19," the introduction to Calvin G. Seerveld's *Rainbows for the Fallen World* (Toronto: Toronto Tuppence Press, 1980).

It seems to me that all of these people have gently and deliberately held together God's revelation in Scripture and God's revelation in creation (including culture and our experiences of it), listened carefully and in community, and humbly offered their conclusions as part of a hermeneutical spiral, hoping to come closer to embodying God's *shalom* in these cultural domains. When I moved to Canada, there seemed a whole network of organizations humbly working in various cultural domains, for example, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, as they discern God's "norms" for labor relations.

But it is important that while we note some of our successes, we should also note deep failures in discerning creation norms. It was the Reformed church that interpreted God's revelation in Scripture and creation and, out of their interpretation of that dual revelation, *shaped apartheid, believing it to be a faithful political response*. And it is not just the Reformed church that has gone too far in "reading into" Scripture and creation. Christians over much of history have read Scripture and creation in tandem *to support slavery and to minimize the participation of women in society*.

In this context, let me wonder aloud about this creation-fall-redemption framework. As said above, we love how that framework helps us to see the narrative arc of Scripture. And we have used that framework as a lens to shape a Reformed worldview. But I wonder if sometimes we hold that framework as a philosophical lens through which we examine Scripture. It is this third way that, in my mind, has at times overlapped with the deep problems noted above. Rather than listening to Scripture speak as we normally would, using a Reformed hermeneutic that clearly asks how the original audience would have heard the text, it feels to me that we have sometimes "mined" passages of Scripture for "hidden gems" which the original audience may not have heard and the original author may not have intended. This is notably a concern when we are seeking out "creational norms" by "mining" the creation passages of Genesis. Indeed, to me, this philosophical overlay is an underlying reason why the committee needs to improperly connect Genesis 1 with Genesis 2. This connection, as shown above, is most definitely not "read out of" the text and form of Genesis. Instead, it is "read into" Genesis, imposed from above, not at all sensitive to the text itself.

I imagine there is a history of conversation around this of which I am simply not fully aware. I have heard some CRCNA pastors say things like, "But if God is the author, he can have intended things that the original audience would not have known." I believe this is true. And for me, the place where we lean into that the most is when we preach Christ in the Old Testament. We see the story more clearly now that we have seen Christ and Christ crucified. I am not so certain that we are called to "more clearly see" creational norms. And, as noted above, one thing is clear: we have a history of mistakes when we have tried.

This history should serve as a clear caution about reading too much when we are discerning God's revelation in Scripture and creation together, seeking to discern "creational norms." In some very painful ways, it seems that we as Christians, indeed Reformed Christians, have a habit of looking around us, deciding on what is "normal," and then looking for Scripture passages that might affirm what we already want to see as "normal"—and then we call it a "creational norm." The choice made by this committee to

rely on creational norms raises questions and potential concerns, especially given the places in our past that have brought painful lament and repentance (apartheid, slavery, mistreatment of women).

D. Concerns when the framework mutes the messiness of Scripture and our stories

If “overinterpreting” creational norms is one potential concern, there is a second concern as well. The second concern is that sometimes, given the tandem application of a more philosophical overlay of the creation-fall-redemption hermeneutic and the desire to discern creation norms, we simply miss telling “the whole story.” With these two powerful forces operating together, we have the strong potential of wrongly sanitizing the story of Scripture and sanitizing the story of our lives. We easily “read over” pieces that do not fit our decided narrative and our discerned normative conclusions. The creation-fall-redemption framework and the application of creational norms can wrongly “erase” parts of reality. In other words, the complexity we encounter in Scripture and in our lives sometimes gets simplified in ways that may stretch the evidence to fit the predetermined conclusions.

Take, for example, this report’s lack of engagement with the story of Tamar (Gen. 38). While the report engages with much of the polygamy in Scripture (and even that engagement sometimes looks too “neat” to us²³), the story of Tamar is an exceptionally messy story. Tamar plans to have sex with her father-in-law, Judah. She dresses up, picks a location, and conceals herself enough that he will not know who she is. Judah and Tamar have sex, and Tamar gets pregnant. This sexual act is clearly “out of bounds.” And yet, does Scripture show Tamar to be repentant? Not at all. Judah commands that she be brought before him to be burned to death. Before she arrives, she sends a message, “I am pregnant by the man who owns these” and she sends along Judah’s seal, cord, and staff. What is the response? The community does not ask both Judah and Tamar to repent. Instead, Judah says, “She is more righteous than I.” How does this story fit in the neat delineations of this report? I would note that this messy story, and others like it, simply are not mentioned in this report. But where does this story come up again in Scripture? It shows up when Tamar is mentioned in the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:3). Scripture did not mute the messiness.

This story of Tamar is a Scriptural example—and perhaps there are all sorts of sensible reasons for not including it, although honestly, I wonder how it would fit in the tidiness of the report. But how about stories from

²³ For instance, on pp. 447-48, the report makes sure to distinguish between “descriptive” and “prescriptive” ways of talking about things that Scripture records. They are clear that all the occasions of polygamy in the Old Testament (noting, “over forty key individuals in the Old Testament were married to more than one woman,” including Abraham, David, and Solomon) are “descriptive.” The report then goes on to say, “In fact, in the case of many Old Testament figures the Bible describes the pain, division, and strife that emerged within these polygamous relationships, thereby implying significant disapproval.” While we fully agree that monogamy is the faithful path of following Christ, this back-to-back interpretation seems deeply biased. Why is it that telling stories about polygamy without noting the pain and strife is considered “descriptive,” but then when telling stories including the pain, division, and strife, the narrator is implying significant disapproval? Why is one story of polygamy “descriptive” and the next “prescriptive”? It seems to us that the only answer is that this committee is coming to these texts not to listen to their messiness but to “read out” of these texts what they wish these texts were saying.

today? Are there stories from today that a report hoping to make a very clear decision might avoid? Are there stories in our communities that a report like this one before us simply ignores or “erases”? Did you notice, in reading the report, that it tells more than 30 stories? Did you notice, in reading the report, that there is one very significant, and fairly common, story that is simply never told? I wonder why the report simply never includes any stories of a couple in a same-sex marriage that seems by all accounts to be flourishing in faith, in marriage, and in their community. It is precisely the multitude of these stories that is bringing about the very questions this report is intended to address. And yet never once, in all of its over 30 stories, does this report wrestle with the reality that many of us are confronted with: a seemingly faithful, flourishing same-sex marriage. Is such a story missing because it does not fit the normed narrative that this report desires to present?

It seems to me that this committee has overlooked some stories that would add a messiness to their conclusions, both stories in Scripture and stories in our churches. To me, these omissions weaken any conclusions of the report.

VI. Concerns regarding oversimplifying and bracketing out complexity

In this section, I will highlight what feels like *oversimplified engagement*. This comes as a disappointment to me because I have usually experienced the CRCNA study committees to faithfully wrestle with what are sometimes very complex situations, and to articulate conclusions in a way that is careful and nuanced while still firm in conviction. In the examples below, I was disappointed with what felt like overstated conclusions made without careful nuance.

A. Oversimplified reporting of the Reformed Church in America decision

As this committee considers whether their conclusions on human sexuality should have confessional status, they look at a particular decision of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and share the following:

By the word “unchastity” the catechism intends to encompass all sexual immorality, including homosexual activity. The Reformed Church in America acknowledged this in 2017, affirming that in the catechism “God condemns ‘all unchastity,’ which includes same-sex sexual activity.”²⁴

This certainly happened, and the committee uses this decision to strongly assert that their conclusions are *already confessional*. But pointing to the RCA’s decision raises more questions than it answers.

A first set of questions might simply wonder if there was overwhelming agreement on this conclusion: Was this motion deeply contested? Did the vote barely pass? If so, what does that mean about how we should hear it?

A second set of questions might wonder how the CRC and RCA differ in how they hold the confessions: What significance did this vote have in the RCA? Does the RCA adhere to their confessions in the same way the CRC does? Does an officebearer in the RCA now need to wholeheartedly believe this statement or step down from office? If the RCA holds their confessions with a different degree of significance, what might that mean for how this decision should be imported into the CRCNA?

²⁴ HSR, p. 458.

Finally, a third set of questions around the very fact that the RCA had to vote to decide on this conclusion: If the RCA had to vote on this decision, doesn't that mean that up until this point, it had not officially affirmed this conclusion? Wouldn't that mean that the parallel may be true in the CRCNA—that until we vote to affirm the same, it likely is not affirmed in the CRCNA? And, since the RCA had to vote to affirm this, would that mean that since the CRCNA has not yet voted to affirm this, this teaching does *not already* have confessional status?

To us, these questions come quickly when just reading the report's statement. In addition, the use of this one quote feels highly selective—as if this one quote was used *only because it affirmed the committee's conclusions*. One might ask if the committee more deeply engaged with the RCA, as they too are having similar conversations about human sexuality. In a quick search, it seemed to me that there are other decisions made by the RCA that this committee would find complicating for their conclusions, but did not quote.²⁵ But thinking further, if the RCA's decision about an interpretation of the Heidelberg Catechism is deemed so significant, did the committee research other denominations about their interpretation of the word *unchastity*? Did the committee ask for a collective response from the World Communion of Reformed Churches? If they did, what was the collective response? If not, why did the committee just look for this decision from one denomination?

B. Oversimplified statement about the global church

Near the end of the report, the committee states, "The global church finds the Western church's challenges to biblical teaching on human sexuality incomprehensible and offensive."²⁶ This is a bold statement. I thought it wise to research it a bit further. As there was no clear link to follow in the report, I decided to assume that one of the teachings found offensive by the global church is an affirmation of same-sex marriage. So I will focus on that.

First, I followed the footnote of the committee. While there is no direct link, the footnote mentions "various statements by non-Western bishops in the United Methodist Church at their 2019 General Assembly."²⁷ Here are the regional titles used by the United Methodist Church (UMC) that I imagine would be considered non-Western: Africa Central, Congo, Philippines, West Africa. I wondered about same-sex marriage in those countries represented at the UMC gathering: Is same-sex marriage even legal in those countries? I looked up the legality of same-sex marriage in the Congo, the Philippines, and several of the countries in the regions of Africa noted. In none of the ones I investigated was same-sex marriage legal. This begs the question: Is it possible that these communities have no experiences with what seem to be happily married, faithful, and flourishing Christian same-sex couples? Indeed, this is likely the case, since same-sex marriage is illegal. So perhaps

²⁵ In a search for other notable decisions by the RCA that would seemingly relate to this report, we found the work of the RCA's Commission on Theology to be notable. In 2018, the commission was asked to evaluate the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality. In 2019, they came back with their brief report, which did not recommend the catechism for acceptance in the RCA. Notably, one of their concerns was the catechism's reference to "creation order" (images.rca.org/docs/synod/2019Workbook.pdf#page=283, p. 284).

²⁶ HSR, p. 460.

²⁷ HSR, p. 460.

there has been no reason to engage Scripture more deeply on these matters, as these non-Western Christians have not experienced the dissonance encountered by many of us in the West—a dissonance between our traditional interpretation of Scripture regarding same-sex marriage and our experience within God’s community of same-sex married couples.

Second, I spent just a little bit of time looking elsewhere in the global church. What I found surprised me. For instance, the National Council of Churches in India has a very affirming statement and a published book around same-sex marriage, transgender identities, and much more. This is not the work of a single denomination, but multiple ones all connected in this national network, and together they agreed to a posture of inclusion that seems well beyond what was proposed at the UMC gathering.²⁸ So clearly, the global church does not all speak with the same voice.

Third, I wondered if the committee had reached out to any of our CRCNA agencies that have global connections. In December, I happened to be on a Zoom call with several CRCNA global missional leaders. I asked them if they were consulted; they said they had not been consulted directly. Second, I asked what they thought of this statement by the committee about the global church. Their response was mixed. Generally, their response was that a traditional view of marriage was held by most global church bodies of which they were aware. But *they also noted* that in very many of the places to which they were connected, there is unrest about that traditional position and it felt like conversation was starting to bubble up.

Fourth, it seems to me that one of the assumptions that often comes alongside this conversation is that the Western church has been deeply impacted by its culture. The connected conclusion is often that because Western culture affirms same-sex marriage, the church is simply parroting its culture and not following Scripture. But a quick review of perspectives on same-sex marriage around the globe seems to suggest that *almost every church feels the same way as their culture*.²⁹ What does this mean about our assumption that the Western church, because it parallels its culture, is not following Scripture? Would this also mean that the non-Western church, because it parallels its culture, is *also* not following Scripture? It seems wrong to conclude the first, but not the second.

Fifth, as noted above, the committee seems to select one decision of the RCA that matches their conclusions, but does not reference other decisions of the RCA that are more complicated for their conclusions. In this global church quote, I wondered if the committee has done the same thing. Is it

²⁸ R. Christopher Rajkumar, ed., *Family and Human Sexuality: A Theological Reader* (Nagpur India: National Council of Churches in India, 2016). Also, “An Ecumenical Document on Human Sexuality,” National Council of Churches in India (Nagpur India: Inside Creation, 2012).

²⁹ Consider these two pages from the PEW research website. On this page, you will find a chart titled “Acceptance of homosexuality varies across the globe,” with more than 30 countries listed: [pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/). On this second page, you will find a graphic depicting the acceptance of gay marriage by Catholics and a second graph depicting the Catholic perspective on homosexuality, again divided by country: [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/02/how-catholics-around-the-world-see-same-sex-marriage-homosexuality/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/02/how-catholics-around-the-world-see-same-sex-marriage-homosexuality/). It seems to us that at least in this brief comparison, almost all countries found on both pages demonstrate that the church-specific and the public perspective on homosexuality is very similar.

possible that the concern raised by Soong-Chan Rah fits our situation in the CRCNA as seen in this report? He says: "To make a blanket statement that we should follow the Global South only on one particular matter actually dishonors them," Rah says. "If we're picking and choosing when to listen, we're not actually listening. We're just using them to suit our purposes."³⁰

Further, given the history of colonialism and the power imbalances in our global history, we may fail to notice that "the 'perspectives of the Global South' are often the imposed perspectives of the Global North. Sometimes when we think we are listening to 'them,' we may only be hearing the echoes of our own voices."³¹

The committee's quote around the voice of the global church raises many questions. But it also highlights the unique situation of North America and the CRCNA. Perhaps it is worth wondering: Does our experience of legalized same-sex marriage in Canada (and more recently, in the U.S.) give us the capacity to witness something not yet available to be seen in many other countries? Do we have the opportunity, because of the legalization of same-sex marriage, to listen more carefully, more kindly, more generously to same-sex married couples than Christians in other countries? If God has given us access to stories of same-sex married Christians in such abundance, what is our responsibility to steward these stories in a way that serves and equips the global church for a conversation that is, in some places, just beginning? And what if we turned around our inquiry to the global body of Christ and sought out those places that have listened to LGBTQ Christians better than we have, that have a history of a flourishing connection with LGBTQ Christians? What might we find if we intentionally sought out LGBTQ Christians around the world and asked them, "What's working in your Christian community?"

VII. Summary

While there has not been sufficient time to consider the whole of the human sexuality report, I submit my work here as a part of the discernment process. It seems to me that this committee holds its conclusions with a level of certainty that few study committees in our CRCNA history have asserted.

In this communication I have expressed some significant concerns around a portion of the theological work of this report by evaluating a few interpretive decisions made. Given more time, more concerns may arise. But I would consider the committee's work on Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 to be central to their argument, and it is the work specifically on these passages that I investigated, concluding that *at least* there are other viable, and perhaps better, interpretive options.

Second, I have spent some time considering how the creation-fall-redemption framework is adopted for this report. The CRCNA has benefited deeply from the use of this framework as a way to summarize the movement of Scripture and to shape our holistic Reformed worldview. But there are ways in which this framework has also caused pain and muted complexity, and I

³⁰ [washingtonpost.com/national/religion/evangelicals-want-to-follow-the-global-south-on-gays-they-should-be-careful-what-they-ask-for-commentary/2015/05/08/8bb45344-f5c9-11e4-bca5-21b51bbdf93e_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/evangelicals-want-to-follow-the-global-south-on-gays-they-should-be-careful-what-they-ask-for-commentary/2015/05/08/8bb45344-f5c9-11e4-bca5-21b51bbdf93e_story.html)

³¹ Ibid.

have articulated some concerns that this report might lean into those more problematic pathways.

Finally, I delved into two situations where it seems to me that this committee oversimplifies the situation. Why and how would a decision made in the RCA impinge upon us? We do not know, but the committee asserts that this one decision matters. And how should we understand the voice of the global church, and, notably, which voice of the global church should we listen to? Again, this committee makes an exceptionally strong assertion that, to me, looks at least worth nuancing if we want to listen well.

To me, the concerns raised give us no choice but to at least consider whether the certainty with which the committee holds their conclusions is appropriate. I feel it is not.

I trust that other overtures and communications will delve into other places of concern and places where this report is helpful. But for now, this is all I can do, and I pray that it is helpful in the deliberations of synod regarding the human sexuality report.

Submitted on behalf of a member of River Park CRC as communication,
Council of River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta
Dan Visser, clerk

Note: The council of River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta, forwarded the above communication to the March meeting of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan for its consideration, but the classis did not consider overtures or communications due to the cancellation of Synod 2021, so the council decided to forward the communication to synod.

Communication 6: Classis Grand Rapids East *(Deferred from 2021)*

Note: At its May 20, 2021, meeting, Classis Grand Rapids East adopted the following communication to Synod 2021 for inclusion in the supplemental agenda. The communication originated with Neland Avenue CRC and has not been edited. Classis affirms this communication from Neland Avenue and is deeply grateful for it.

In May 2020, Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church (Neland Church) elected to the office of deacon one of our members who is married to a person of the same sex. By this communication to Synod 2021, Neland Church seeks to more fully explain how we came to this decision and to address some of the questions, concerns, and charges expressed in synodical overtures and in direct communications we have received.

I. Background

Neland Church has made its home on the corner of Neland and Watkins on the southeast side of Grand Rapids, Michigan, for 105 years. In the early years, this corner was on the outskirts of the city, the closest CRC congregation to the former campus of “Calvin College and Seminary.” In addition to that distinction, which brought many students and professors to its membership and helped solidify its ties to the denomination, Neland Church was also distinctive for its English-language worship services—meeting

a growing need for the second generation of Dutch immigrants. From the beginning, these twin values—denominational commitment and serving the needs of the community—have been a part of our DNA, guiding Neland Church through a century of changing physical, social, and cultural landscapes.

In the 1960s and '70s Neland was faced with a choice: move to the suburbs where most of its members lived, or commit to being part of the changing neighborhood. When Neland chose to stay put, a new motto was adopted: "There is a place for you at Neland." It has been on our welcome sign ever since. And it has shaped our aspirations ever since. No matter your age, ethnicity, race, marital status, gender, political persuasion, socioeconomic status, personal history . . . there is a place for you here. A place that goes beyond the pews and programs, a place for you to discover and use your God-given gifts, a place for God to work in you and through you. Welcome and inclusion in the name of Christ are at the heart of who we are, as our newest mission statement reflects: *Neland Church seeks to be a community of hope where all will experience and extend the deep welcome of Christ.*

While we own this ideal as part of our identity, we cannot claim that we've always succeeded, or that it's always been easy. In many ways, engaging various tensions has also been a part of our DNA. In the '60s and '70s, Neland's geography placed it in the middle of racial tensions. In the '80s and '90s Neland Church engaged the debates about women in office, with church members advocating both for and against. Professors who were Neland members, like Allen Verhey and Harold Dekker, made Neland privy to the details of doctrinal controversies within the denomination. Neland has often wrestled with disagreement and experienced the pain that frequently accompanies it, but we have also sought to embrace the tensions rather than avoid them—to persevere in a way that produces character and hope (Rom. 5:4). Somewhere along the way, we started referring to ourselves as a "faith family"—and, like any family, we have hurt and offended each other, loved and cared for each other. As we've navigated the friction and continued to "stay put" with each other, we've experienced the gift of growing in our understanding of what it means to say that we are bound together in Christ alone. Those bonds run deeper than agreement. Those bonds make Neland a family that deeply loves and trusts one another, and truly enjoys serving God together the best way we know how in this place. Those bonds continue to stretch us as we aspire to show each other and our community what the "deep welcome of Christ" looks like.

At Neland, experiencing and extending that deep welcome looks like a lot of different things. We have ongoing Bible study groups and catechism classes. Our Wednesday evenings are filled with the noise of GEMS and Cadets, as they finish projects in the woodshop and play games in the gym. Our Sunday evening worship includes prayer about our community's joy and sorrow, occasional teaching series on the Heidelberg, and special intergenerational "WE" events using the curriculum offered by Faith Alive Christian Resources. Our high school group, dubbed TNG (The Next Generation), goes cross-country skiing and makes visuals for our worship space and invites the congregation to join them for board game nights. Our Children in Worship leaders encourage our young ones to wonder about the stories of the Bible. Our Pastoral Care Assistants bring our fellowship out the doors of

our building and into people's homes, holding wrinkled hands and rocking newborn babies and supporting those who are in crisis. The Anti-Racism Team helps us recognize and work against the ways that racism affects our church and community. The Missions Committee coordinates our support of and communication with Resonate, World Renew, and a dozen missionaries across the country and around the globe. The Creation Care Team helps us to be better stewards of God's world. We have formed a close connection with a school and orphanage in Haiti, which has welcomed our painters and doctors and sewers and dentists into their community. We participate in a partnership of local churches who take turns hosting homeless families for a week at a time. We have a knitting group, a Tuesday walking group, and monthly book and movie clubs. We have sponsored refugee families. We love to sing together—from the ancient hymn to the new worship song to the "Hallelujah Chorus" every Christmas. We love to eat together—during household potlucks every Sunday and during baby showers for the newest members of the family. For the past year, we have tried to figure out what family life looks like when we can't be together—and have come up with "Fire Pit Fridays," cookie decorating via Zoom, a gigantic car parade for a staff retirement, the sewing and distribution of thousands of masks, and "Camp to Go" for kids during the summer.

Family life provides lots of opportunities to practice and experience the truth of Colossians 3:12-14—"Holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience . . . bear with each another and forgive one another . . . and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Family life is joyful and messy. We are a collection of our best and worst impulses, intentions, desires, efforts, and actions. We make mistakes. We try to forgive each other. We celebrate the highs together; we bring food to each other during the lows. We take a long time making decisions. We rush to offer help when needs arise. We occasionally pause to assess and evaluate and refocus what we're doing. We disagree and discuss and deliberate. We try to understand one another. Sometimes we do; other times we don't. Yet Christ holds us together as we "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," trusting that "it is God who works in us to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12-13).

II. Neland's engagement with LGBTQ+ matters

For almost ten years now, Neland's family life has included deep dialogue about how to love our LGBTQ+ family and friends both within Neland and beyond—dialogue that has reflected our commitment to Scripture as well as our varying perspectives. As with many other things in our history, the dialogue came to us in the form of names and faces, members over the years whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose gender identity is not cisgender (when one's sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex). For Neland, LGBTQ+ is not an "issue" but has a name, many names, beloved children of God in our congregation, some young, some old, some single, some married, some out of the closet, some not, and some in between.

For many LGBTQ+ people, the church has not been an easy place to be. The stories of LGBTQ+ people in the church (even when their actions do

not conflict with the official position of the church), more often than not, include fear, rejection, shame, self-loathing, grief, doubt. That has been true at Neland Church. In many ways and like many churches, Neland has not been a safe place for those who are LGBTQ+. But Neland Church has been safe enough that gradually, especially over the past ten years, some LGBTQ+ members and their families have taken more risks than ever before. As they shared their experiences, Neland began to better understand the deep pain of those who are not heterosexual and cisgender. And all of us—including those in our congregation who disagree with same-sex marriage (SSM)—began to ask serious questions about how we could better follow synod’s pastoral guidance in 1973 to care for LGBTQ+ people and incorporate them in the life of our congregation.

Over the past ten years Neland has been learning and listening related to LGBTQ+ matters; but it was in 2015 that the council recognized the urgent need to foster intentional dialogue among the congregation. That spring, council supported the nomination to deacon of a member who was in a committed same-sex relationship, and then retracted that nomination a couple of weeks later. It was obvious that we needed to create space for having difficult conversations—conversations that would be grounded in Scripture and in our love for Christ and for each other; conversations that would help us listen to and understand one another; conversations that would acknowledge a growing diversity of viewpoints among our members. As a result, council approved the formation of a Generous Spaciousness Committee, comprising people who reflect the variety of perspectives at Neland, “to help facilitate discussion, study, and discernment on the ways Neland ministers with, uses the gifts of, and includes those who are LGBTQ+.”

Under the prayerful guidance of Council, the committee has sought to foster such discussion, study, and discernment. Adult education sessions have regularly brought in biblical scholars and scientific experts who speak from a variety of viewpoints. Council retreats have dedicated time to learning, listening, and restorative circles. Several Colossian Way small groups have discussed sexuality and gender. Synodical reports, the Classis Grand Rapids East report on SSM from 2016, and the pastoral guidelines of synod have been carefully studied. We have listened to each other’s stories, and we have studied Scripture together. We have wondered together whether the Spirit is prompting new interpretations of Scripture that are God-honoring. We have spent much time in prayer, seeking God’s will and the Spirit’s leading. And in the process, what has become clear to us more than anything else is the assurance that Christ is both our sure foundation (Matt. 7:25) and our “only comfort in life and in death” (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 1).

III. Responding to Synod 2016

One year after the formation of the Generous Spaciousness Committee, a congregational survey revealed a broad range of views on same-sex relationships, from traditional (40%) to affirming (40%) and in between (20%). The survey also showed us that many were hurting within the dialogue. Those who held the CRC’s traditional view reported feeling less safe to voice their opinion during discussion, and council recognized its pastoral responsibility to provide safety for these members. Another portion of our congregation felt hurt and vulnerable as a result of the pastoral guidance of Synod

2016 (including that SSM members could or should be disciplined), and some feared that because they or a loved one are part of the LGBTQ+ community, they might no longer be welcome at Neland or in any CRC. Council recognized its pastoral responsibility to care for these members too.

In a letter to the Neland congregation in the fall of 2016, council named its pastoral responsibility to all members and pledged to continue to reflect upon Synod 2016's pastoral recommendations. The letter concluded:

But Council also wishes to state clearly that this congregation's motto is still "There is a place for you at Neland." Even when we disagree, Neland Church will continue to be a place where all who seek God are welcome to experience God's love in our worship, to experience God's grace at the communion table, and to serve God together with the gifts God has given them.

Council was responding to Synod 2016's pastoral advice—namely, that SSM members should be disciplined, which includes the possibility of withholding the sacrament and even excommunication. (See *Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 440-443, esp. the reference to Church Order Article 81-a on p. 442.) Despite a broad range of opinion about SSM within our membership, council made it clear that SSM members of Neland were not objects of discipline and were members in good standing.

IV. Members in good standing and eligibility for office

Neland's nomination process for elders and deacons, for as long as most of us today can recall, has been to provide the congregation with a list of eligible members and to request that all members prayerfully submit nominations; after nominations have been received, council carefully considers the nominations and finalizes a slate of elders and deacons that is presented to the congregation for approval at the annual congregational meeting. Up until 2020, Neland's council did not include SSM members on the final slate, despite their status as members in good standing and despite the congregation's frequent and numerous nominations of SSM members in the yearly process. Each year many on council found it increasingly difficult to justify the functional, though not official, exclusion of SSM members from consideration for office. In 2019 council received the report of an ad hoc committee appointed to assess the congregation's varying perspectives about these difficulties. Neland also sought the counsel of advisors from Classis Grand Rapids East, with the counsel given focusing on Neland's process for nominating elders and deacons. After prayerful consideration and many months of careful conversation, council's decision was that it could no longer justify excluding SSM members from the final slate to be approved by the congregation, since they had never been placed under discipline.

One important factor in that decision was council's efforts to understand past decisions of synod, which led to the realization that the CRC position on homosexuality and same-sex marriage is based on synodical decisions given as pastoral guidance—a category synod itself identified as different from decisions of confessional interpretation (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44). This means that synod's pastoral guidance is of a somewhat different weight and authority than synodical decisions considered to be interpretations of the confessions. And it displays synod's confidence that local congregations are communities of integrity who are uniquely positioned to care for the body both individually and as a whole.

In the spring of 2020 the nomination process again indicated that many members supported a Neland SSM member for the office of deacon. When council selected her to be on the final slate of deacons for congregational ratification, the congregation overwhelmingly voted to select her as deacon. This individual, in the years prior to her marriage in 2016, served as a deacon twice before, including as chair of the deacons, and has been a key leader in Neland's overall ministry for decades. She is spiritually gifted and mature. Christ's light is evident in her life. In spite of the pain she has experienced within the church and the vulnerability she now experiences from being in the spotlight and being condemned by many who do not know her, she continues to be a testimony of the fruit of the Spirit that can grow in the soil of God's unconditional acceptance embodied and made incarnate in the Christian community.

V. Neland's ongoing journey

We continue to be a congregation with differing points of view on LGBTQ+ matters. We grieve the loss of members who needed to find a different church to call home (both those who believe Neland has been too progressive and those who believe Neland has been too conservative), and we know that grief has accompanied their decisions. Disagreement causes pain and sorrow. But we also possess a deep mutual respect and love for one another, and a commitment to a common mission to love God and our neighbor because Christ loves us. We can testify to a unity that is deeper than agreement, to the mysterious truth that "in Christ all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). Neland knows that it is Reformed and always reforming, on a lifelong journey, seeking to be faithful to God's Word while we continue to learn from God's world. As we rely on the Spirit and search Scripture for God's will in our community, we hold to Jesus' promise that the Spirit is continually working to "lead us into all truth" (John 16:13).

VI. Engaging our denomination

Neland's journey of ongoing listening and learning now includes our engagement with the denomination we have loved and valued from the beginning. In recent months, Neland Church has received many communications regarding our ordination of a SSM deacon. To date, Neland has received in writing

- 25 communications from church councils, 22 of which disapproved and three of which supported Neland's ordination of a SSM member to the office of deacon.
- one communication from a classis which disapproved of Neland's ordination of a SSM member to the office of deacon.
- 16 written communications from individuals, two of which disapproved and 14 of which supported Neland's ordination of a SSM member to the office of deacon.
- a letter from the Council of Delegates expressing its concern regarding Neland's actions.

Neland's action has also been the subject of eight overtures and one communication included in the *Agenda for Synod 2021* (Overtures 4-11 and

Communication 2; in response, this communication is offered for the Supplement to the *Agenda for Synod 2021*).

Though the tone and scope of these communications vary widely, Neland sincerely appreciates the concerns that lie behind these communications and believes that every writer of every communication earnestly seeks God's will in these matters as well as God's will for Neland Church. In the Question and Answer section below, we seek to concisely answer many questions, concerns, and charges Neland has received.

A. Why did Neland install a SSM deacon when that is contrary to synod's pastoral advice?

Neland found itself caught—between growing differences about biblical convictions, and loving and caring for all of its members, and adherence to denominational pastoral advice. We take no joy in disagreeing with the pastoral advice recommended by synod in 2016 (to discipline SSM members), especially on such a controversial issue. Yet we are also grateful for the space this pastoral advice afforded, allowing us to find a way forward that emphasizes the true nature of our unity as a body of believers.

Many have suggested that Neland is splitting hairs to distinguish between synodical decisions that are in the category of pastoral advice and ones that are interpretations of the confessions. That distinction comes from Synod 1975, which considered the nature of various types of synodical decisions and their relationship to the confessions. This occurred in the wake of several very significant issues that were addressed in the early 1970s, including office and ordination, neo-Pentecostalism, women's ordination, and homosexuality. The report to Synod 1975 (p. 426) said,

All synodical decisions "shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order" (Art. 29). But there is an obvious difference between the use and function of a pronouncement as interpretation of the confessions and a decision involving "guidelines" or "pastoral advice." It is the wording of synod's decision which usually indicates the precise character of its decision, and this wording of the decision determines its use and function. No synodical decision involving doctrinal or ethical pronouncements is to be considered on a par with the confessions.

Synod itself has made this distinction and has instructed the church to look at the wording within each synodical decision to understand its use and function. The fact is that all synodical pronouncements on homosexuality to date have been in the category of pastoral guidance—a reality that is now being reinforced by the efforts of some in the denomination to change the status of these pronouncements to that of a confessional interpretation.

B. Why couldn't Neland have waited until Synod 2021 and its addressing of the Human Sexuality Report (HSR)?

Our primary focus has been navigating the tension over whether SSM members in good standing should be excluded from eligibility for office—tension that exists both within our congregation and between Neland and the denomination. When Synod 2016 adopted as pastoral advice a portion of the minority report and appointed a study committee, Neland had already been wrestling with these questions for nearly five years, and hoped for similar wrestling on the denominational level that would lead to pastorally sensitive guidance in these matters. However, the committee's composition

of only those who adhered to synod's position statement in 1973 indicated little desire to engage the full scope of the conversation. And the committee's interim report in 2019 offered no indication that Synod 2021 would change the CRC's position stated in 1973, nor that it would offer any real answers for the questions with which we had been wrestling. Therefore we assumed that these conversations and tensions would be ongoing beyond Synod 2021, and the majority of Council felt that it was incumbent upon Neland to find a way forward that would allow our congregation to find its unity within the tension.

C. What makes Neland think it has the right to pick and choose which pastoral advice of synod it will follow?

Synod 1975 made clear that according to the Church Order, "All synodical decisions 'shall be considered settled and binding,'" which places Neland or any other church under a burden to "abide by" all synodical decisions, not just the ones it likes. Neland's actions raise the question of how and whether the denomination has mechanisms for making accommodations for a congregation's biblical conscience. Does the CRC have any room for a church's biblical convictions that may differ from a denominational position?

The Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a says that "every classis shall respect the prerogative of its constituent churches to call and ordain office-bearers *according to their own biblical convictions*." Neland finds it significant that the CRC has a mechanism for respecting a church's "biblical convictions" and allowing for different views and practices regarding the selection of officebearers. While the context of the Supplement, Article 3-a was the issue of women in office, and the envisioned biblical convictions were ones judged acceptable by synod, that issue is not the only one that Christians have biblical convictions about. As outlined in our answer to section J below, there are serious biblical scholars and theologians who have sound biblical convictions about the permissibility of same-sex marriage. And Neland is not the only congregation with members who are expressing biblical convictions that differ on this issue, prompting requests for reexamining these pastorally agonizing situations. Certainly this is one of the challenges of living together in an increasingly diverse denomination and world. While Neland members do not agree about the clarity of the Bible on this issue, we do agree about the foundational truth that the Bible is God's infallible Word, God's story of grace and love made clear to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—and that we have been called to participate in that story as it unfolds here and now.

D. What right does Neland think it has to change our denomination's settled position on marriage and homosexuality?

Neland does not have the right to change our denomination's position on marriage and homosexuality and is not seeking to do so. We understand and keenly appreciate the denomination's resistance to such change and the pain such a change would cause the denomination. We also do not expect synod to agree with our decision, but we hope that synod, by taking no action in response to overtures that ask synod to intervene in a local church's matters in ways denominational polity has not allowed, will in effect acknowledge that Neland's decisions have been undertaken in good faith, seeking to hold in tension denominational loyalty, biblical conscience, and provision of pastoral care for our congregation. Neland is asking the denomination for its

trust, not for agreement with our actions or a change in the denominational position.

E. Doesn't Neland see how installing a SSM deacon is going to split our denomination?

This is an extremely important question—a question frequently asked in the communications Neland received, and a question asked with deep pain and agony.

In short, we believe that it is simply not true that people with different positions on SSM cannot coexist in the same denomination. We believe it because we have lived it.

Consider any number of married couples who disagree on this issue: John believes the Bible without question forbids all same-sex marriage, while Susan believes the Bible permits same-sex marriage. John is grieved that Susan doesn't see how she is disobeying Scripture in holding her position; Susan is grieved that John doesn't see how Scripture prioritizes love in service to one another. Do they get a divorce over this disagreement? Of course not. What binds them together in marriage is deeper and stronger than their disagreement on this issue. Anyone who is happily married knows that one key to a happy marriage is figuring out how to “agree to disagree,” especially on weighty matters. Healthy married couples do it all the time.

Although Neland Church has lost some members (both those who think Neland has been too progressive and those who think Neland has been too conservative on this issue), we still have many people who strongly disagree about these things. But our unity in Christ, our mutual respect and deep love for one another, and our commitment to our common mission as the church are bonds that run deeper than agreement on this issue. For the most part, we're a joyful bunch of people gratefully serving the Lord.

We will not deny that this issue is a divisive one. But we believe there is nothing inherent in Neland's actions that is splitting the denomination. The CRC and its Church Order are strong in their judgments about schismatic activity, and Neland has no interest in schism or division of any kind. We believe that as a denomination we can, as with women in office, “agree to disagree.” And Neland, along with countless other churches throughout the denomination, fervently prays that we will.

F. If you, Neland Church, disagree with the CRC on this issue, why don't you just leave the CRC?

Because Neland Church loves the CRC too much and Neland Church loves LGBTQ+ people too much.

Neland Avenue CRC is self-consciously, and at its core, Christian Reformed in its identity, its theology, its worship, and its ministry. For the past 105 years and still today, it has been actively committed to the leadership and mission of our denomination. Our members work and serve in the denomination in a variety of positions. Our resources support CRC missionaries and fund ministry shares. We are committed to the mission and vision of this unique body of churches. Neland views its relationship with the CRC with appreciation and does not concede that its decision constitutes “breaking covenant” with the CRC. On the contrary, Neland acted out of the hope that our denomination's understanding of covenant is stronger and deeper

than any one issue. We love the Christian Reformed Church. We are a Christian Reformed Church in every way.

We also love LGBTQ+ people too much to simply abandon this conversation within the denomination. We know that there are LGBTQ+ people in our congregations who suffer under the weight of the current denominational position and the Human Sexuality Report. We are grateful for God's LGBTQ+ children in our congregation who have bravely come out, trusting their church to love them and not harm them. And we grieve that their decisions to do so are fraught with fear and uncertainty and pain. It is very likely that every CRC congregation has LGBTQ+ children of God, children loved by God and seeking to be loved by their church. Neland desires to do what synod has been calling the denomination to do since 1973—namely, create a more loving and safe place for LGBTQ+ people to flourish in the CRC. We feel a strong calling to abide by and live into that important part of the CRC's position on LGBTQ+ matters. And we are hopeful that synod's acknowledgment of our intent in good faith could help the denomination offer a witness to the strength and depth of unity in Christ.

G. In 2005 First CRC of Toronto was threatened with disaffiliation if it did what Neland has done. Why should synod not declare Neland Avenue CRC to be disaffiliated from the Christian Reformed Church?

In 2002 First Toronto CRC announced that it was going to declare people living in same-sex committed relationships eligible for ecclesiastical office. The church's decision was appealed to classis and synod, and synod appointed a "committee in loco" to deal with this matter. The committee was given power by synod to act as if it were synod (and even to call a "synod in loco" of four classes in the region) to ensure that First Toronto CRC was in compliance with the CRC position on homosexuality. Before even calling a synod in loco, the committee told the Toronto church that it (the committee) interpreted not abiding within the pastoral guidelines of 1973 and 2002 as effectively disaffiliating from the denomination, and recommended that Classis Toronto give the church one month to indicate its compliance with the CRC position. Before classis acted upon that recommendation, the church agreed to stay within the denominational guidelines as far as council membership.

Neland suggests that there were two major flaws in the denominational committee's actions with First CRC of Toronto. First, the "committee in loco" did not follow our denomination's synodical decisions and polity when it proposed such a disproportionate action against a congregation disagreeing with synod's *pastoral advice*. (The nature of pastoral advice has been explicated above, see answer in section A.) Second, the committee's logic that a church can so easily disaffiliate itself from the denomination goes against our most basic ecclesiological and Church Order principles in the CRC, as well as our understanding of the church as the body of Christ. The CRC has a rich and beautiful ecclesiology—a theology of *the church as the body of Christ*. When we partake of communion, we partake of the body of Christ as the body of Christ. The unity of the body of Christ is a sacred mystery, far deeper than honest disagreement of well-meaning Christians on a complex ethical matter. It's also significant that our Church Order makes no provisions for such precipitous acts of forced disaffiliation. The Church Order only

has provisions for a church that *seeks* disaffiliation, and that is a complicated and lengthy process because disaffiliation is so contrary to what it means to be the body of Christ. Disaffiliation is tantamount to dismemberment of the body, to extend Paul's 1 Corinthians 12 metaphor of the church as one body with many parts. The silence of the Church Order on any mechanism to disaffiliate an entire congregation against its own will is theologically significant.

Finally, it's very significant and unfortunate that the "committee in loco's" radical concept of forced disaffiliation was never tested by the assemblies in a way that arguably would have altered its proposal. In fact, Classis Toronto *withheld action* on the committee's recommendation "that Classis Toronto regretfully inform the Council of First CRC that if it does not accept the current position of the Christian Reformed denomination with respect to guidelines pertaining to homosexuality, council in effect removes the congregation of First CRC from the denomination." While the matter was dropped because First CRC Toronto agreed to stay within the denominational guidelines, the radical concept of forced disaffiliation was never endorsed by any assembly of the CRC.

H. In the history of the CRC, there have been times when the broader assemblies (classis, synod) did impose discipline on officebearers when their councils would not. Why shouldn't synod do that with Neland's council members?

This has been clarified and tested several times in recent years, but it's a very important question that deserves a detailed answer here.

In CRC polity, discipline is the responsibility of the local church, and assemblies cannot reach in to impose discipline except upon appeal (and then only if the welfare of the church is at stake). This concept has been tested several times, most recently in 2015, when Classis Minnkota overruled synod "(1) to instruct the consistories of Eastern Avenue CRC (Grand Rapids) and Calvin CRC (Grand Rapids) to exercise discipline with respect to those in their congregations who are publicly advocating homosexual practice through their membership in All One Body, in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 81-a; and (2) to admonish the consistories of Eastern Avenue CRC and Calvin CRC for hosting meetings of a group whose goals and purpose promote behavior that synod has declared to be sinful" (*Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 427).

Synod 2015 did not accede to the overture for the reasons stated in the grounds—that "synod cannot instruct a classis or a council to exercise discipline, except upon appeal" and that "the discipline of church members is the responsibility of the local council" (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 674). Those points are applicable to this discussion as well. Synod 2015 cited the *Acts of Synod 1988* (p. 613; also quoted in the *Manual of CRC Government*, p. 278) in saying that if a council is concerned about the views of an officebearer in another church or classis, it can communicate its concerns to that officebearer's council, but if his or her council does not take any action regarding those concerns, the matter ends. The exact quote from Synod 1988 follows:

When a *consistory* judges that it has sufficient grounds of suspicion against an officebearer not under its supervision, it may communicate such to that officebearer's consistory or the synodical board under which the officebearer serves. If the officebearer's consistory and/or synodical board then judges that

the grounds of suspicion are insufficient to require further explanation, the procedure ends. If the suspicions are judged to be sufficient, the consistory must follow the regulations of the Church Order.

Following Synod 2015, Classis Minnkota did send letters of concern to the churches named in its overture; likewise, Neland Church has received letters of concern from a number of churches and classes, as noted above. But, as also noted above, Neland's council has not disciplined any of its officebearers, and to date its decisions have not been appealed. In the absence of an appeal to the next assembly in order (per Church Order Article 30), classis and synod do not have the right to reach in to the local church to impose discipline. If the council's decision were appealed by a member of Neland to classis and to synod, then synod might be asked to judge whether the welfare of a local church is at risk due to noncompliance on this issue of pastoral guidance.

I. Article 29 of the Church Order says, "The decisions of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order," so it requires that Neland prove the denomination's current position on homosexuality disagrees with the Word of God or the Church Order. Why hasn't Neland done so?

Neland has taken its cue from how the denomination navigated women's ordination. When synod made it possible for women to be ordained to all the offices in 1995, synod didn't say that the historical interpretation was wrong, but that it was not the only interpretation that could be reached through a Reformed approach to Scripture. In the same way, Neland is not trying to prove the denomination's position is wrong or change the denomination's official position. It is seeking the denomination's acknowledgment of differing interpretations.

J. How does Neland biblically defend its ordination of SSM members?

Neland realizes that many fellow members of the CRC find it incomprehensible that one could read the Bible in a way that would lead one to favor the full participation of SSM people in the life of the church. We understand this, because that viewpoint is very much present at Neland and because we have been doing our best to listen to each other over the course of our decade-long dialogue. In answering this question, our purpose is not to judge the traditional view, but rather to offer a brief explanation of the decision process that many at Neland have made in affirming SSM.

For many, the first prompt to reconsider the traditional position is getting to know and love LGBTQ+ people or realizing that people they already know and love are LGBTQ+. When people learn through personal relationships how painful the church's position has been for LGBTQ+ people, it often leads them to look again at what the Bible says. A key "aha" moment for many who are reexamining their position is encountering in a new way the absolute centrality of Jesus' love command, the truth that "love does no harm to a neighbor" (Rom. 13:10), and the reality of Jesus' radical compassion for the outsider, the ones cast out by society and the church. The unconditional love of God in Christ becomes the overarching lens through which Scripture is read, as they seek to understand the redemptive revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Those reevaluating their position also reexamine the Scripture passages that explicitly condemn homosexual acts. A key realization for many is learning more about the sexual perversions that lie behind those condemnations, like temple prostitution, slave-sex, sex with young boys, and sexual excess that was demeaning and exploitative. One quickly appreciates Scripture's radical condemnation of those things and totally understands Paul's righteous indignation in Romans 1! Another realization is that these passages are not talking about faithful, same-sex attracted, Christian believers—couples who love each other and desire to make a lifelong commitment that would enable them to enjoy all the graces and spiritual disciplines of Christian marriage.

While not everyone at Neland agrees with these conclusions, this brief description illustrates some typical factors that lead people to affirm SSM. It certainly does not answer every exegetical question; it merely attempts to demonstrate the seriousness with which many people approach their interpretation of Scripture regarding this issue. Those wishing to read more on Christian arguments for SSM can refer to a number of books—from very accessible ones like *A Letter to my Congregation* by Ken Wilson, *Changing Our Mind* by David Gushee, and *The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage* by Mark Achtemeier; to more in-depth studies like *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* by James Brownson and Classis Grand Rapids East's *Report on Biblical and Theological Support Currently Offered by Christian Proponents of Same-Sex Marriage*.

VII. Conclusion

In 1973, when synod formulated the position on homosexuality that guides our denomination still today, an important piece of its work was an admonition to the churches to extend loving support and encouragement to our homosexual members, recognizing that they “are, like all Christians, called to discipleship and to the employment of their gifts in the cause of the kingdom” (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 632).

More than two decades later, in 1999, the synodically appointed Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care to Homosexual Members found that our churches had largely failed this part of our faith family. The committee identified synod's guidelines for “whole-hearted embrace . . . patient understanding . . . and the loving support and encouragement of the church . . . to include homosexuals in its fellowship,” and concluded that “over the years, the church at large has not attempted to create these kinds of conditions on anything like a broad scale. For this reason alone, it would be fitting for the CRC to seek God's forgiveness” (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 244).

Another two decades later, the church needs to come to terms with the fact that we are still in need of that forgiveness. Neland Church is in need of that forgiveness. The church has largely still failed to provide care for our LGBTQ+ members in such a way that they feel safe and valued, lovingly supported and encouraged. In our listening and learning together at Neland, we have lamented the ways in which we have contributed to the pain of our family members, and we have searched Scripture and sought the Spirit's leading for ways in which we can do better.

We believe that a willingness to have these difficult conversations is a good way to do better. As we have surrendered ourselves (our needs, opin-

ions, desires, preferences) to God and to each other, we have found ourselves witnessing the amazing ways that God is faithful, “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Eph. 3:20). It is precisely because of the difficult nature of these conversations that we can see how the Spirit is at work; the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23) that we have experienced through each other have certainly not been products of our own ability, but rather, obvious gifts of the Spirit.

Our willingness to listen to and learn from each other has also brought us another gift: the honest and vulnerable stories offered by a few members who now feel they can better trust us, and the stories of a few others outside our church who are looking for someone to trust. One of those stories came from someone we call “Michael”—a CRC member who anonymously reached out to Neland to share his story. (Not knowing his identity, we chose the name *Michael* because the author of this letter told us he’s in his sixties, and Michael is the most popular name for men of that age.) Michael tells a story of living for decades within the CRC while adhering to the denomination’s admonition to live a celibate life. It is a story of deep pain and sadness; a story of being part of a wonderful church family yet unable to share all of himself with them; a story of the fear of being fully known, rather than receiving assurance from the church that he is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14). We do not know Michael’s true identity, yet we recognize in his story many pieces of the stories we’ve heard over the past decade; Michael’s lived experience is indicative of the profound need to better minister to and enfold the CRC’s LGBTQ+ members. Thus, while the decision to include his (unaltered) letter as an appendix to this communication (see Appendix A) was a difficult one for council, because there are many at Neland who would not agree with all of Michael’s statements about the HSR, we believe his letter reflects the stories of our own members who are longing for a church that offers the deep welcome of Christ.

These are the stories that pastoral guidance must engage. And synod, time and again, has recognized that its guidance is offered into specific stories, into specific communities who can be trusted to honor our covenants with each other while responding to the particular situations and needs of our faith families. We are grateful for the foresight of past synods, who, rather than setting rigid boundaries, created space for us to engage the tensions in a way that has allowed us to discover anew that we are bound together by Christ alone. And we are hopeful that synod will once again proclaim the church’s source of unity rather than its uniformity, declaring with confidence that disagreement on these ethical issues does not undermine our unity in Christ.

We at Neland Church are committed to continuing to talk about these things together. We expect and hope that our denomination will do the same. We don’t know a lot of things, including where this conversation will lead our congregation or the CRC. But a couple of things we do know: First, unity in the church is important enough that Jesus himself prayed for it, because our unity is one way in which the world will come to know the love of God (John 17:20-23). Second, LGBTQ+ people are in our congregations. And whether we know who they are or not, they have been hurting for a very long time.

In the face of tension and divisive issues, we don't always know exactly how to find that unity, but we are convinced that it begins with a deep conviction of Christ as our center. Neland's willingness to wrestle with each other and with this issue has given us the gift of solidifying our bonds in Christ—and if we “have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,” then our joy will be made complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind, doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, in humility valuing others above ourselves, not looking to our own interests but each of us to the interests of the others, and in our relationships with one another, having “the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:1-5).

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert A. Arbogast, stated clerk

Appendix A

Letter from “Michael”

As referenced in section VII. Conclusion, we received the following anonymous letter from a member of the CRC. (Not knowing his identity, we chose to call the author of the letter “Michael” because he told us he’s in his sixties, and Michael is the most popular name for men of that age.) Michael attempted to submit his letter to denominational officials for inclusion in the *Agenda for Synod*, but learned that individuals cannot be heard at the synodical level unless they go through a local congregation and classis. Having heard about Neland’s decision, and fearful about the ramifications of approaching his own council, Michael asked if Neland could bring his letter to synod. While the decision to include his (unaltered) letter as an appendix to this communication was a difficult one for council, because there are many at Neland who would not agree with all of Michael’s statements about the HSR, we believe his letter reflects the stories of our own members who are longing for a church that offers the deep welcome of Christ. We do not know Michael’s true identity, yet we recognize in his story many pieces of the stories we’ve heard over the past decade; Michael’s lived experience is indicative of the profound need to better minister to and enfold the CRC’s LGBTQ+ members.

February, 2021

Dear Committee of the Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality Report,

I am sad, frustrated, disillusioned and exhausted, maybe weary is the best word. Not the reaction I expected when I thought about reading the latest report on sexuality from my church. It seemed like we were moving in a direction of more nuance and compassion when it came to dealing with sexual issues like homosexuality and the broader range of LGBTQ issues. After all, many articles and reports, along with letters to editors in church publications over the past decade or so suggested movement toward a better understanding of gay matters and therefore a “deeper dive” into the church’s outlook in this area would produce

more a meaningful response for LGBTQ Christians in the CRC. I see now, that is not the case.

I grew up in the CRC, born and baptized. I am now in my sixties. I have been a Christian my whole life. Like most Christians, I have had moments of intense joy and fulfillment in my relationship with God, and times when my faith was weaker.

I have struggled with my homosexuality since my earliest moments of sexual awareness. I loathed that fact that I was gay. I can say that in my case, (and I believe most) I never chose to be gay. I was born this way, just like straight people are born attracted to the opposite sex. I literally spent years trying to change my sexual orientation. Spent years praying for this to be taken from me. Spent years denying it, suppressing it, keeping it secret, all in an effort to not have this ruin my life. I failed, and God never answered my countless prayers for change.

I feel shame in being gay, so much so that I am still “in the closet.” The massive stigma around homosexuality as I grew up, both in my family’s eyes and the church, meant that openly acknowledging my orientation was not possible, at least in my mind. However one thing I could do was shelter my family from this brokenness. I am grateful that my parents were able to pass without the trial of having to deal with a son who is gay.

I have built a life where friends, family and co-workers view me as single. I enjoy and am edified by my relationships with them, and I know I am appreciated by them in turn. But I also know that “coming out” would change the relationship. I can tell by the views they express both overtly and subtly that is the case.

For many years I sought a more content life where my homosexuality would not represent a constant struggle. I witnessed how secular society opened up and learned to welcome and accept the LGBTQ community, at first by removing prejudices (can’t be kicked out of your apartment or lose your job for being gay) to creating actual inclusion where secular marriage is recognized. Strangely, even as a Christian, these sweeping changes helped ease my burden. At least I did not feel as stigmatized by the world around me. I did not feel as alone, seeing gay people on popular media and even in the workplace. It is ironic that secular society provides LGBTQ persons more unconditional acceptance and affirmation than does the church. Even for someone in the closet, this societal acceptance does help, and I’m fortunate to have lived long enough to get to the point where I feel I am no longer judged by both society and the church.

The primary blessing I have received from all my years of membership and participation in the Christian Reformed Church has been the joy of worship each Sunday and meeting God. The church has instructed me in the doctrine of my faith and been a place where I have been a blessing in ministries to others in our community.

That said, church has not been a place I ever felt deep community. I know how our members feel about gay persons. They have no reason to be guarded or careful around me, so I do know. It’s not born out of malice, it’s just how they feel. But that is enough to ensure a gay person never feels truly included. It’s not that the congregants are bad people. They aren’t. They are loving, compassionate people, genuinely looking to live Christian lives of love and discipleship, like me. I do

love them. Yet with that, I have a hard time experiencing real community. Oh I can participate in all the ministries, (babysit, Sunday School, serve as elder and deacon, programs for the homeless, senior ministries, etc., etc.); there is always a place to serve. But church life / community, has always revolved around married people and their children. My church does not even effectively provide community for singles. I know there is negligible talent to accommodate anyone gay. This is not a criticism, just reality. Indeed I am not certain every congregation can be all things for everybody. Therefore I glean from church what I can ... worship with other saints and a place to receive instruction in my walk with the Lord. And that is a blessing.

I am not, nor have ever been, sexually active. Put simply, I am in obedience with the 1973 CRC opinion on homosexuality where the sex act is the sin, not the orientation. I always felt that if I couldn't eliminate the orientation, I could at least be celibate as that is what the church taught. But obedience to abstaining from sex has brought me no happiness. This has deeply troubled me, as the Bible suggests this is God's will. Why then is it so burdensome and joyless?

Feeling this lack of fulfillment is driven in large part from the realization I may not fall in love with another person. The Bible, as I have been taught, makes that clear. Oh sure, I can have close friendships and loving family relationships, but not "true love" . . . that love where you commit your life exclusively to another person and vow to share all life brings together as a couple. That love where you know that you will never leave that person and he will never leave you. That love that creates a family of your own. That love that shares an intimacy that you can only have with one other person.

Finding that life partner is not for us. This is a profound reality that I think straight people simply don't appreciate. Just think that the love songs on popular radio, numerous TV shows, even silly "rom-com" movies; all deal with this "wonderful thing called love" that is denied to gay Christians. It's inescapable, we're saturated with it. Indeed going a step further we are effectively cut off from physical contact, other than a hand shake or occasional (awkward) hug. Because of our homosexuality, many gay Christians experience the sorrow of knowing they will be childless, perhaps similar to a married couple who find they are not fertile, and we can't even share that grief with a spouse.

I am always struck by the first thing people say as they reflect on their life after a close call, a milestone moment, or serious illness: What are they most thankful for and what was the most cherished thing they experienced on this earth? They mention their family, their spouse, all of the time. Any theology that denies gay Christians this most precious of things, must effectively deal with the magnitude of that, or it is of dubious value.

I honestly thought the church was gaining sympathy regarding these issues. As I mentioned, Banner articles and letters to the editor, along with other commentary led me to believe that my church may be moving to a place where we rethink homosexuality, as the current approach has not worked for so many. And then I read the report.

It plunged me into despair. It threw me back to reliving the struggles of my twenties and thirties where I so desperately wanted to purge myself of homosexuality. I have not had those feelings for years and it's been agony reliving them. I realize

now I was naïve and had been living with the real hope things would get better for gay CRC Christians, but this report has made clear there is no change for us. A hard truth indeed.

My despair does not come merely from the report's assertion that gay sex is a grave sin. It comes from the inadequacy of the report's response in framing how a gay Christian must then live. Remember I have been living a celibate life and participating meaningfully in my church and yet I am not fulfilled. I am following what our theology has taught and for over 50 years it has brought me no peace. I'm obedient but not happy. I may not be a theologian, but I have been in relationship with my loving Father my whole life and I have a hard time concluding this has been His will for my life. The report spends an inordinate amount of time on the creation account and in it God says it is "not good for the man to be alone" and that made me wonder, so why is it good for me to be alone?

It would be helpful if the report would answer why my God denies me the joy of finding the person with whom I could fall in love and share my life. On a very simplistic level I can discern the consequences for all other sins. I can appreciate why they are sins and why our loving Father wants us to avoid them. Sin hurts our relationship with God, others and ourselves. Adultery betrays the commitment of marriage. Lying destroys trust and community. Gossip and slander damage relationships and good fellowship. Pre-marital sex spoils exclusive intimacy and runs the real risk of crisis pregnancies. I could go on with dozens . . . all are obvious. In all these sins, God's love is evident in why we are to obey His law. Indeed following God's law leads to joy for us as Christians. I have experienced that. Our Father does not create arbitrary and cruel commands for us to follow. So why can't I see God's love in the prohibition for same sex love? The sinful consequence of "marital" gay sex is not clear to me. But I do clearly experience the consequence of celibacy, as acutely as the consequence of any transgression. I have been unable to discern any "fruit" from my obedience and the love in this theology is simply not evident.

I know I fall short and must rely on God's grace in my life. I am tempted by sinful desires. I must avoid pride, but often fail. I frequently lack compassion or am short with someone. I put my needs before those of the Lord. I am not always truthful. I repent of these sins and genuinely experience God's love and forgiveness. But with my same sex attraction there is never a redemptive moment. Consider this; routinely walking down the street, a straight Christian may see an attractive person of the opposite sex and, while not crossing the line to lust, can acknowledge the sexual appreciation. As the report so thoroughly covers, this affirms that they are in alignment with God's natural order. Conversely, as a gay person, my same experience of walking down a street and noticing an attractive same sex person becomes a reminder I am unnatural, not in alignment. I may not have sinned, but experience the admonition nonetheless.

Perhaps we need to acknowledge that gay Christians must expect to experience a diminished life. It's possible Jesus' reference to "poor in spirit" reflects our state. I do know we are not promised lives free from sadness and suffering. We live in a sinful broken world. As such gay Christians may need to accept they are commanded to miss out on the joys most people will experience. This would be a more logical conclusion from the theology promoted in the report. If true, the report must make this clear to us as gay Christians. At least that would be honest.

The report however, does not do that, and instead proposes gay Christians can find fulfillment in any number of alternative relationship models. Let me offer an example: One suggestion offered is that gay Christians could have close relationships with married couples, even sharing their living space. I have been on trips with married people. I have shared accommodations with them and their kids. I have stayed with family and friends with their children for days at a time. While I enjoyed all those occasions, they also left me with a sense of how incomplete my life was. I could witness firsthand what I was missing and felt my loneliness even more acutely. Promoting a situation where a gay Christian observes daily what they can't have, may not be a solution.

Another section references celibate partnerships. What precisely is that? Is it a relationship where a same sex couple could perhaps enjoy a secular marriage to gain civic benefits, legal rights and support each other even if they are not married before God? While sex is not involved, all the other advantages of commitment and intimacy could be realized, at least to some extent. Would this adhere to the theology's commands? No practical details are provided in the report, yet this is the type of nuance I was hoping would be addressed.

One of the suggestions for congregational ministry to gay persons in actual relationships with each other is to welcome them in the church service but then over time, as they presumably grow in faith, they will be convicted of their sin and stop any sexual behaviors, ultimately ending their relationships. What do we do if they continue to enjoy attending, but never feel the call to terminate their relationship? To what degree may they participate in the congregational life of the church? Must we ask them to leave at some point?

The report spends time suggesting congregants regularly visit and invite gay brothers and sisters over for meals and holidays. It encourages participation in small groups and inclusion in ministries. While this is nice and good in and of itself, how is this helpful? Many gay persons are not necessarily lacking in social contacts. The problem is we do not have permission to access a deep committed relationship. To suggest a holiday meal and regular visits can somehow provide a substitute for that, is frankly insulting and demonstrates a deep lack of comprehension. It's the drive home from that meal or small group meeting where the isolation and loneliness can set in. The notion that fostering a more robust and inclusive church community can somehow be a substitute for exclusive relationship is deeply flawed. For those of you who are married, can you imagine doing without your spouse and family and feeling confident the CRC church community could effectively meet your physical and emotional needs for love and intimacy?

The report alludes to a series of living arrangements and relationship types, such as "live in a community of believers," "intimate friendships," "communal housing," and even opposite sex marriage as long as both partners know about the same sex attraction. It seems the report is simply throwing out any number of one-off scenarios and rather odd living structures that may have occurred, presumably sound good and might work. Yet I would consider these marriages "high risk" and the other examples as untested at best. Are these to be considered pervasive, sustaining models? What evidence does the CRC have to support that these living arrangements and ministry suggestions described in the report, will indeed be edifying? This has echoes of the well-intentioned, but ultimately

misguided, program efforts (e.g. Exodus, Homosexuals Anonymous) of the past; and it seems the CRC is in real danger of doing more harm than good by hinting at these unvetted suggestions.

Are we positive this report is accurately reflecting the Spirit's will? I am not. After a 60 odd year journey with my Lord, I supposedly have gained some measure of wisdom and discernment and the last thing I'd want to do is lead those younger than I astray. I am certain we are missing something. Any opinion can seem good, logical, Biblical. Yet what if there has been no fruit? Have we learned nothing? My fear is after another generation we will find that we are still hurting people, leading to incomplete melancholy lives. And we will need to re-examine this yet again.

I know it is "too late" for me, I will never have a life partner. Realistically, my life will not change no matter what this report concludes. But my despair is born out of the fear I have for those twenty year old gay Christians facing the prospect of sad, diminished lives in a church that is not responding to them in a practical loving way that helps them discover God's will for their own full life. The CRC has followed this theology for the past fifty years. If it truly reflects God's will, surely we would have had ample evidence by now of joyous, fulfilled gay Christians thriving in the CRC. While I may not know the answer, I also know when I am not hearing the answer. This is one of those times.

*In Christ,
A Gay CRC Christian Brother*

Appendix B

Neland Congregational Letter, August 2020

August 2020

Dear Neland Congregation,

Earlier this summer we marked our usual transition of leadership, installing gifted members to serve in our council. But we note the significance that for the first time this year one of our newly appointed deacons is a member of a same sex marriage (SSM). This has caused us to be reflective on Neland's identity and mission, and the journey that has brought us to this point. We hope these reflections help to clarify things, and shed more light than heat on this matter.

As a church, Neland has been through many challenging chapters, and faced many challenging issues over its history – from the racial tensions of the 1960's-70's, to the debates over women in church office in the 1980's and '90's, to the church's relationship with LGBT+ persons in recent years. These periods have been times of much pain and disagreement, but also of learning to live in tension, with more grace and humility and truth. And so, while we acknowledge that Neland's journey toward LGBT+ inclusion has resulted in another period of strain, we trust in God's promise that *"in Christ all things hold together."* (Col 1:17)



Our Journey Together

- Over a decade of active dialogue in our congregation, under the prayerful guidance of Council and a Generous Spaciousness Committee.
- Both biblical and scientific experts consulted. Many educational events and speakers from a variety of viewpoints.
- Much time spent in prayer, seeking God's will and the Spirit's leading.
- Several specific council retreats on LGBT+ concerns, and restorative circles.
- Great patience from our SSM members, and participation from many congregants of various viewpoints.
- Thoughtful engagement with the Classis GR East report, synodical reports, and pastoral guidelines of Synod.
- A 2016 survey of positions in the congregation, revealing a broad range of views from traditional (40%) to affirming (40%), and in between (20%).
- Several *Colossian Way* small groups on Sexuality and Gender, and a Sunday evening series on navigating adaptive challenges/ change.
- An extensive study and report by our Nominations Committee in 2019.
- Requested and received assistance from church advisors from Classis GR East.
- Lament over the gradual departure of some of our members who felt we needed to nail down either more 'traditionalist' or more 'affirming' positions.
- An increasing number of nominations for SSM members from the congregation each year.
- Much greater congregational participation in the selection and election of office-bearers this year (2020), and a very strong affirmation vote of all nominees (each received over 87%).

Where We Stand Today

1. **Identity:** Neland is a 100+ year old intergenerational Christian Reformed Church.
 - We are reformed and always reforming. We believe Christ sent us the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. No church has ever "arrived."
 - We are a people on a journey, seeking to remain faithful to God's *Word* as we also learn more from God's *world*. This includes matters of gender and sexuality.
2. **Mission:** Neland seeks to be a place where all will experience the deep welcome of Christ, especially in these divisive times. We lament that so often the church has pushed away LGBT+ persons or refused to incorporate their gifts.
3. **Gifts:** We are a place where all members may fully use the gifts God has given them for the common good, and receive God's means of grace. We see the Spirit at work in our SSM members as much as any other.
4. **Unity:** We don't all agree on SSM, or on having a SSM member in leadership. However, we also don't believe that having a uniform position on this matter is necessary to maintain unity as a body of Christ. The gospel runs deeper. In opening a space for dialogue on this issue over the past decade Neland members have grown to appreciate the important commitments that each holds dear, and to realize that "all things hold together *in*

Christ,” and not in our hard-fought opinions. In Christ, our default position should be one of gracious inclusion and hospitality; our differences need not divide.

- 5. Humility and Gratitude:** Thus, although we are humbled that we could not come to complete agreement on this issue, we are grateful that *there is a place at Neland for all God’s children to serve with all their gifts.*

Q & A

1. Is Neland “getting out ahead” of Synod, or breaking the rules of our denomination?

- a. Neland remains strongly committed to the CRC, its theology, its mission. We are hardly a “rebel” congregation, but remain deeply invested in denominational ministries, including Calvin University, Calvin Seminary, and our mission agencies.
- b. While Neland continues to work hard to follow the pastoral advice on LGBT+ inclusion of Synod 1973 and 2002, our council found it could not do what Synod 2016 advised: namely, consider SSM persons deserving of church discipline. The SSM person we have elected and affirmed as deacon is clearly gifted and spiritually mature. She has been a deacon twice before, and on our Admin Committee as chair of deacons, in the years prior to her marriage. She was nominated by many in the congregation. Although some in our council are not in favor of SSM, none would make a motion to put her under discipline. So Council concluded that as a member in good standing she should be eligible for office just like any other adult confessing member. The congregation overwhelmingly voted to affirm her nomination.
- c. Our understanding is that all synodical reports and decisions related to homosexuality have been *pastoral advice* given to the churches (1973, 2002, and 2016). According to Calvin Seminary’s Adjunct Professor of Church Polity, Kathy Smith, who spoke with our congregation in several educational sessions, this is of a less binding nature than confessional or church order matters (Synod 1975). Unlike the women-in-office issue, there are no church order articles that explicitly regulate what congregations may or may not do with respect to LGBT+ and SSM members. So we do not believe we have crossed any line of orthodoxy, only pastoral advice.

2. Does this decision mean that Neland is an “affirming” church?

That depends on what is meant by the word “affirming.” . . . Affirming of LGBT+ persons and that all members may use their gifts to serve God? *Yes! Certainly.* Affirming in the sense that all Neland members support a particular stance on SSM? *No.* We will continue to be a community with diverse opinions on that.

3. Does Neland still believe in the authority of Scripture?

Absolutely! We continue to rely on God’s Word as our only rule in faith and life. However, not all of us believe that scripture is as clear on the question of SSM as many of us once believed. Our classis (Classis GR

East) submitted to Synod a very thorough report in 2016 that shows a wide range of biblical interpretations one can support with a reformed view of scripture. Many respected reformed/evangelical scholars now support the full participation of LGBT+ persons in the life of the church, including those who are SSM. We also await the report of our denominational study committee on human sexuality, though we regret that they were not given full freedom to consider questions of biblical interpretation.

Thus, given the present reality of a range of opinions within the CRC and the church at large, we do not believe it is right to bind all consciences in our congregation to one position. Could the Spirit be leading Christ's church into more truth? Challenging as it may be, we must be open to taking that journey together.

Family in Christ, it is difficult to live in tension on these important matters, but we firmly believe "There is a place for you at Neland" – that's not just a motto. We believe that God has the strength to maintain our unity, in the midst of our differences, because "all things hold together in Christ."

Please let us know if you have any questions, comments, or would like to talk more about this letter. Our journey is certainly not done! And pray with us that God will work in us together just what is pleasing to him: more and more of Christ's perfect love.

Yours in Christ,
Neland's Council and Pastors

