

RULES FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Synod: What It Is and What It Does

What is synod?

The CRCNA *synod* is an ecclesiastical assembly of delegates that provides governance and leadership for the members, congregations, classes, agencies, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The term *synod* is derived from the Greek σύνοδος (*sýnodos*), meaning “assembly” or “meeting.”

What does synod do?

The CRCNA *synod* fills an essential denomination-wide governance and leadership role alongside of the regionally delegated authority of the church *classes* and the locally elected church *councils*.

A. The functions of synod include, but are not necessarily restricted to, the following primary responsibilities:

1. Elect officers to lead the synod meeting.
2. Provide a context for deliberative assembly, both in the form of advisory groups and in plenary meetings.
3. Receive reports from the various denominational agencies, ministries, and institutions and oversee their mandates, bylaws, and articles of incorporation, relying on the Council of Delegates, as specified in the COD Governance Handbook.
4. Receive and act upon the reports of study committees and task forces appointed by synod.
5. Appoint representatives to denominational boards, committees, and other working groups.
6. Appoint or ratify the appointment of certain staff and leadership positions, including seminary faculty, seminary president, and the general secretary of the denomination.
7. Provide direction and instruction for denominational administration through the office of general secretary.
8. Decide on issues of Church Order, liturgical forms, and confessional matters (cf. Church Order Art. 47).
9. Review denominational budgets and provide financial oversight to the agencies and ministries of the denomination through adoption of ministry-share formulas.
10. Receive, discuss, and process overtures, communications, and appeals from classes, congregations, and individuals.

11. Adjudicate judicial code matters and address appeals and recommendations brought before synod by way of the Judicial Code Committee.
12. Supervise and advance ecumenical relations by way of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.
13. Oversee the archival work of the denomination by way of the Historical Committee.
14. Approve candidates for ministry in the CRCNA and oversee other work of the Candidacy Committee.
15. Ratify the appointment of synodical deputies and review and approve their work.

B. Secondary functions of synod include the following:

1. Conduct orientation for all delegates and advisers.
2. Provide a denomination-wide context for worship, celebration, and fellowship.
3. Create opportunities for ministry-related learning via seminars, workshops, and discussion groups.
4. Occasionally make known, via letters or other forms of communication, the denomination's position on current issues or affairs.

(Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 807-808)

I. CONVENING AND CONSTITUTING SYNOD

A. Synod shall convene and be constituted as prescribed by the Church Order, Articles 45 and 46, and the decisions of Synods 2000 and 2019.

B. Each synod shall designate a convening church whose duty it shall be to announce the next succeeding synod in the official publications of the church, three months before the date of meeting.

C. The Sunday Synodical Worship Service shall be planned by the Synod Worship Planning Committee, using local congregations as much as possible in the planning and implementation of the service, adhering to previously adopted guidelines (e.g., including communion, reflecting our diversity, etc.). All members of synod are expected to attend this worship service.

(Amended Acts of Synod 2019, p. 803)

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

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

president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected.

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

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

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

II. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

A. The President

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

10. The president rules on all points of order. A ruling may be reversed by a majority of synod if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and makes an appeal to the floor.
11. The president shall close the synodical assembly with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

B. The Vice President

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

C. The First Clerk and Second Clerk

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

III. DUTIES OF NONDELEGATED SYNODICAL FUNCTIONARIES

A. General Secretary

The general secretary shall:

1. Make the physical arrangements for synod and function as the operations officer during the meetings of synod.

2. Serve synod with information and advice as requested regarding matters that come to the floor of synod.
3. Edit and have printed such official publications the synod or the Council of Delegates shall authorize.
4. Have the privilege of the floor at synodical meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of this office and be present during all executive sessions of synod.

B. Advisers to Synod

Synod 2014 acknowledged the importance of advisers in the work of synod and affirmed the intent to select all future faculty advisers from a pool of qualified personnel. The primary criteria for the selection of all faculty advisers shall be their knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod. In the case of ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives, the pool of selection will, at least in part, depend on recommendations received from the churches and classes.

(Acts of Synod 2014, p. 537; 2015, p. 673)

1. Regulations for Advisers to Synod

- a. Advisers shall observe and honor the conditions of their appointment.
- b. Advisers shall normally be present for the duration of synod's meetings.
- c. Advisers shall normally have access only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned by the program committee. A request to speak to, or be present at, another advisory committee is to be processed through, and approval is at the discretion of, the chair and reporter of that advisory committee.
- d. Faculty advisers shall participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session to give advice and theological expertise.
- e. Ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives may participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session, representing the voice of their advisory group to the issue being addressed.
- f. Advisers may, within the normal rotation of discussion, speak to issues brought to the plenary sessions of synod by the advisory committees but must do so in an advisory capacity and as a service to the delegates of synod in their deliberations.
- g. Advisers are not allowed to vote in the advisory committees they serve nor in plenary sessions of synod.

(Acts of Synod 2014, pp. 539-40; 2015, p. 673)

h. General Considerations for Ethnic and Women Advisers and Young Adult Representatives

- 1) An attempt will be made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there

will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.

- 2) Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
- 3) In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (at a rate set by the general secretary from time to time) will be available for ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives who are financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

i. Qualification of Ethnic and Women Advisers and Young Adult Representatives

Ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives shall be members in good standing within the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

j. Appointment of Ethnic and Women Advisers and Young Adult Representatives

The Council of Delegates shall appoint the ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives each year at its February meeting. Nominations for these adviser positions shall be gathered by the general secretary from suggestions offered by the churches. Nominations for ethnic advisers shall also be suggested by the director of Race Relations.

2. Classifications of Advisers to Synod

a. *Faculty advisers* shall be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:

- 1) The general secretary shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, at the earliest possible date determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary, select faculty members with the particular expertise needed for that year. The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the general secretary of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members available to serve as advisers to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members. The number of faculty advisers shall ordinarily not be fewer than five.
- 2) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee by the Program Committee of synod as proposed by the general secretary.
- 3) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.

b. *Ethnic advisers* are representative voices of ethnic minority communities in the membership of the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven such

ethnic minority non-voting advisers may be appointed, subject to the selection rules as adopted by Synod 2005. The number of seven (or proportion of) such persons shall be appointed as long as the total number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five persons. The number of ethnic minority advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of voting delegates from ethnic-minority origin exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of ethnic minority advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of ethnic minority advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three-year rolling average of diversity presence at synod.

- 1) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the general secretary and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - 2) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- c. *Women advisers* provide gender diversity to the assembly and enrich the work of synod. Up to seven such women non-voting advisers may be appointed, per the following selection rules as instructed by Synod 2015. The number of seven (or proportion of) such advisers shall be appointed as long as the total number of women delegates is less than twenty-five persons. The number of women advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of women voting delegates exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of women advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of women advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three-year rolling average of women delegated to synod.
- 1) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the general secretary and approved by the Program Committee of synod.
 - 2) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- d. *Young adult representatives* are representative voices of the young adult membership (ages 18-26) within the CRC that are not represented in the delegations by the classes. Appointment of these representatives to synod is made according to the guidelines previously adopted by synod.
- 1) Young adult representatives shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the general secretary and approved by the Program Committee of synod.

- 2) The parameter of service of the young adult representative, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- e. *Staff consultants* are members of the executive staff of the denomination serving in association with the office of general secretary and designated by the general secretary, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, to serve the assembly of synod. The following general procedures shall be followed:
- 1) Procedural advice for all matters on synod's agenda shall be the responsibility of the general secretary or his/her designee.
 - 2) When the general secretary assigns a staff consultant to serve an advisory committee, then a faculty adviser may not need to be assigned to the same advisory committee.
 - 3) The parameter of service of the staff consultant is restricted to the particular area of their expertise. This provision shall apply to both serving in the advisory committee and in the plenary sessions of synod.
- f. *Agency board representatives* (normally the agency board presidents and the agency directors) and *presidents of the educational institutions* shall have the privilege of access to the advisory committee of synod that deals with the report of the agency or institution they represent. In addition, they shall be granted the privilege of the floor at the plenary session of synod when their respective report is discussed. The presidents of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University are designated as advisers to synod with respect to issues that affect their respective institutions.
- g. *Council of Delegates of the CRCNA (COD) representation* shall consist of the chair of the COD, at least one other member of the COD Executive Committee (ensuring representation from both Canada and the United States), the general secretary of the CRCNA, and such other members of the denominational executive staff as are needed to serve synod and its advisory committees. They shall have the privilege of meeting with the advisory committees that address Council of Delegates agenda matters as well as the privilege of the floor when Council of Delegates matters are addressed in plenary session.
- h. A *parliamentarian* shall be appointed each year by the Program Committee of synod in advance of synod. The duties of the parliamentarian shall serve synod by advising the president with regard to appropriate procedure related to Church Order and the Rules for Synodical Procedure, responding to procedural challenges from the floor, and serving with the officers of synod when complicated procedural processes arise. The person appointed should have demonstrated expertise in Church Order and meeting management, should be stationed in close proximity to the officers and other staff on the floor of synod, would have the right to challenge the chair related to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, and

would provide training to the officers upon their election as well as in-the-moment advice. This position could be filled by the faculty adviser for church polity. There is no limit to the number of one-year appointments the parliamentarian may serve.

(Acts of Synod 2014, pp. 537-39, 576; 2015, p. 673; 2017, p. 641; 2019, p. 810)

IV. ECUMENICAL DELEGATES AND REPORTERS OF CHURCH PERIODICALS

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

(Acts of Synod 1975, p. 39)

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

V. MATTERS LEGALLY BEFORE SYNOD

A. Definitions

1. Appeal

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

2. Communication

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

3. Overture

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

4. Report

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

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

1. Gravamina

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

2. Reports

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

3. Overtures and Communications to Synod

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Unprocessed Overtures or Communications

Overtures or communications of an individual when such a person has been unable first to present such to council and classis.

Such matters shall be received as information, provided that the general secretary receives evidence that it was impossible for the communicant to present the matter to council and classis. Synod shall decide whether to act upon such matters received as information.

8. Late Reports and Overtures

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

9. The Printed *Agenda* and Study Committee Reports

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

10. Supplementary Reports

The Council of Delegates of the CRCNA, including reports by ReFrame Ministries and Resonate Global Mission; the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary; the Board of Trustees of Calvin University; the Board of World Renew; the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee; the Historical Committee; and the Candidacy Committee are permitted to file a supplementary report after March 15. These boards and standing committees are expected to incorporate as much of their materials as possible in the printed *Agenda*, and matters for the supplementary reports must be kept to a minimum.

11. Confidential Matters

Non-printed appeals, communications, or other materials legally before synod judged by the general secretary, in consultation with the Program Committee or Council of Delegates, to be confidential in nature, will be distributed only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned. Any disclosure of names in cases where such

disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation will be removed from the document, and the matter will be dealt with by the advisory committee in executive session.

(*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 549; *2017*, p. 641)

12. Other Matters

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

13. Nondenominational Organizations

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

VI. SYNODICAL COMMITTEES

A. Program Committee

1. Members

- a. The Program Committee shall be composed of the officers of the previous synod and the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church.
- b. In case of a vacancy on this committee, the Council of Delegates shall appoint another member.

2. The Appointment of Advisory Committees

- a. The Program Committee shall meet to make tentative appointment of the various advisory committees prior to May 1.
- b. The Program Committee shall classify all the reports, overtures, and other communications into various groups, and advise which matters shall be laid directly before synod, and which shall be placed in the hands of advisory committees.
- c. In the event that a given delegate cannot attend synod, the alternate accepts the appointed assignment subject to revision by synod.

3. The General Secretary shall:

- a. Receive and tabulate the information sheet on the synodical delegates.
- b. Inform the delegates of their tentative assignments prior to May 15.
- c. Suggest to the chairs and delegates sources of background information relative to their assignment.
- d. Provide committee members with copies of background materials that are not readily available in previous *Acts of Synod*.

4. Information on Delegates

- a. The stated clerk of every classis shall forward an information sheet on each synodical delegate to the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church before March 15. Synod encourages suggestions, including biographical information, for those delegates qualified and willing to serve as an officer of synod.

b. These information sheets shall give answer to the following questions:

For the minister delegates—

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

For the elder and deacon delegates—

- 1) The same questions as listed for minister delegates.
- 2) What is your present occupation?
- 3) What have been your previous occupations, if any?

5. Report of the Program Committee

- a. A written report of the Program Committee shall be distributed to all synodical delegates before May 25.
- b. This report shall be submitted for possible change and adoption as one of the initial items of synodical business.

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

B. The Advisory Committees

1. *Status* of these committees. Advisory committees (except for the Judicial Code Committee) serve only for the duration of synod for the purpose of facilitating the work of synod. The advisory committees shall summarize matters before them and formulate recommendations with respect to these matters.
2. *Organization and rules* governing these committees:
 - a. The person first named at the appointment of the committee shall be its chairperson, and the one named second its reporter. An alternate chairperson and an alternate reporter will be appointed for each committee except the Judicial Code Committee.
 - b. The chairperson shall call the committee together, preside at its meetings, and see that it functions properly.
 - c. Delegates and advisers shall follow guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of social media contact with nondelegates during advisory committee meetings, because such use might compromise the transparency and integrity of the deliberative process.

(Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 811-12)

- d. Any member of synod may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
- e. Committee reports shall be signed by the chairperson and the reporter of the committee. If there is both a majority and minority

report from the committee, each report must be signed by the members who favor it.

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

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

(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 58)

- g. When the report of a committee has been previously distributed to synod in printed form, and the members of synod have had sufficient time to examine it, the first reading of the report is not required. In such case the reporter, when the president calls for the report, shall state that the report has been placed in the hands of synod in printed form and shall move that the report be accepted for consideration.
- h. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily upon the chairperson and the reporter of the committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.
- i. Recommendation of a committee may be recommitted whenever the work of synod can be thus expedited.

3. *Recess of Synod for Study*

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

C. Special Committees

Besides the advisory committees, each synod should have:

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

D. Rules for Appointments to Boards and Committees

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

two-week extension will be granted and responsibility to do so will be entrusted to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional person chosen by the advisory committee from among its members.

The advisory committee shall recommend to synod the scope of the mandate and include in their recommendation one of the following designations:

a. Synodical study committee

A study committee typically includes a broad representation of the churches in its membership, has a membership of 9-12 persons, is appointed by synod per the above rules, is mandated to conduct a broad study of the matter in question, reports to synod three years after being appointed, may report to synod in the interim if instructed, and presents its final report by September 15 for distribution to the churches by November 1 preceding the synod to which it is scheduled to report. Reports submitted to synod that are longer than ten pages shall include an executive summary.

b. Synodical task force

A synodical task force is typically more limited in membership and mandate, has a membership of 7-10 persons, is appointed by synod per the above rules, has a more specific mandate limited in scope, often reports to synod two or three years after being appointed, and may report to synod in the interim if instructed. Synod should indicate whether the mandate is considered to be substantial, requiring the task force to submit its final report by September 15 for distribution to the churches by November 1 preceding the synod to which it is scheduled to report, or whether a February 15 deadline is sufficient for inclusion in the *Agenda for Synod*. Reports submitted to synod that are longer than ten pages shall include an executive summary.

By way of exception to these rules, synod may mandate a task force to report through the Council of Delegates to synod, particularly if the matter in question involves the ministries of the CRCNA and if reporting through the COD will help the work of the task force by providing frequent input/feedback. The Council of Delegates may offer comment (such as agreement with a report) or may serve synod with advice by way of its report to synod with regard to the recommendations of a synodical study committee or task force if any matters reported by such committee or task force relate to programmatic ministry matters falling under the mandate of the COD.

Synod shall limit its agenda in any given year to include no more than two major study reports so that fuller and more thoughtful discussion can take place.

(*Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 15; *1980*, p. 21; *1997*, p. 634; *2014*, p. 540; *2016*, pp. 827-28; *2017*, p. 641; *2019*, p. 803)

2. All board and committee members shall be elected from nominations presented to synod. Boards and committees in which vacancies must be filled shall normally present a slate of multiple nominees for election

to membership for a first term, with the exception of COD classical nominees. Boards and committees present a single nominee (the incumbent) for a second term. Some boards, as determined by their articles of incorporation or bylaws, may present a member for a third term (i.e., Board of Pensions).

(Acts of Synod 1976, p. 16; updated in Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 406-407; 2015, p. 633; 2017, pp. 640-41)

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

(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 16)

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

(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 15)

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

6. Rules for Eligibility and Term of Office

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

(Acts of Synod 1966, p. 87)

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

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

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

- d. In the case of an unexpected vacancy on the Council of Delegates, the COD may appoint an interim delegate—in consultation with the classis for the classical delegates—until appointment of a new classical or at-large delegate can be made by the next synod. When a new denominational board delegate is nominated and subsequently elected by synod to replace a delegate who is unable to complete their term (e.g., due to illness, moving from the region), the new delegate shall ordinarily fill out the remaining term(s) of the previous delegate.

(Acts of Synod 2017, p. 641)

E. Rules for Committees Appointed by Previous Synods

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

1. These committees have the right of elucidating and defending their reports on the floor of synod. The spokesperson of these committees shall have the same privileges during the discussion as the chair and reporters of the advisory committees.
2. With respect to the reports submitted to synod that are given into the hands of advisory committees, the recommendations of these synodical committees shall have precedence if the recommendations of the advisory committee are substantially different.

F. Judicial Code Committee of Synod

1. Mandate

Original hearings and appellate hearings before synod shall be referred to a Judicial Code Committee appointed by synod. This committee meets between synods as frequently as its business requires and presents its recommendations to synod in writing. The committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.

2. Membership

The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of twelve (12) members and shall reflect the diversity of the denomination. Each year four (4) persons shall be elected for terms of three (3) years. At least one (1) of these four (4) persons shall be a minister of the Word or a commissioned pastor; at least one (1) shall be a person trained in the law; at least one (1) shall not be a minister of the Word or a commissioned pastor nor one trained in the law. Synod shall elect members from nominations presented by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA. The Judicial Code Committee may recommend nominees to the Council of Delegates. The terms of members shall commence July 1 following their election by synod. In the event of a vacancy on the committee because of resignation or death, the Council of Delegates shall appoint a person to fill the balance of that term. Members may be reelected but shall not serve more than six consecutive years. A former member who has been off the committee for two or more years shall be eligible for election to the committee as a new member. The Judicial Code Committee shall select a chairperson and reporter from among its membership. Any member of the Judicial Code Committee advising a given synod may be, but need not be, a delegate to that synod.

3. Hearing and Appeal Procedures before the Synod Acting in Its Judicial Capacity

- a. Written charges filed with synod shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the general secretary of the CRC to conduct an original hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.

- b. Claims of appeal from decisions of classis following a judicial hearing shall also be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the general secretary of the CRC to conduct an appeal hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.
- c. Written charges brought against an agency, board, or committee of synod and any other matters requiring formal adjudication that synod undertakes shall also be referred by the general secretary of the CRC to the Judicial Code Committee for conducting a judicial hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.
- d. Claims of appeal filed with synod following an appeal hearing before classis shall also be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the general secretary of the CRC. The Judicial Code Committee shall review the claim of appeal and make a recommendation to the Council of Delegates whether the application has sufficient merit to warrant further review. No further appeal proceedings shall be conducted unless the Council of Delegates approves. If approved, the Judicial Code Committee shall conduct an appeal hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.
- e. Individual delegates to synod shall not have the privilege of addressing the Judicial Code Committee as is normally permitted with other advisory committees.
- f. The Judicial Code Committee shall present its findings of fact and recommendations, along with grounds for its recommendations to synod in writing, and they shall be openly discussed in a plenary session of synod. These written findings of fact and recommendations shall omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.
- g. During synodical discussions, the committee shall be represented by up to two spokespersons who will have the privilege of the floor. These spokespersons shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches.
- h. Either party to the dispute may request the opportunity to address synod. Such request shall be made through the Judicial Code Committee, which shall make recommendation concerning the request to synod.
- i. If synod permits the complainant or respondent to address synod, after the reporter provides the recommendation(s) of the Judicial Code Committee (and if there are majority and minority reports/ recommendations, after both have been presented), the complainant and/or respondent shall be given opportunity for summarizing their positions, not unlike provided in the hearing (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 5, a, vii), except that no opportunity for rebuttal will be allowed. Addresses shall be no more than five (5) minutes. If both parties have requested to address synod, the complainant shall be given no more than five (5) minutes to address synod first, and then the respondent shall be given no more

than five (5) minutes to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee chair or the general secretary shall be responsible for providing these instructions to each party, stressing that the function of addressing synod is to provide their personal summaries to synod, not to retry the case. After addressing synod, neither party may provide additional comments to synod, nor may synod ask for either or both parties to return to the speaker's podium for further questions, comments, or discussion.

- j. The Judicial Code Committee may provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on Judicial Code matters.
- k. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
 - 1) by deciding the matter;
 - 2) by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;
 - 3) by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council; or
 - 4) by conducting its own original judicial or appeal hearing.
- l. Synod should accept the findings of fact as presented by the Judicial Code Committee unless synod is persuaded that
 - 1) One or more parties were not given the opportunity by the hearing body to present important and relevant evidence, or
 - 2) After the Judicial Code Committee hearing new evidence which is important and relevant has been discovered by one or more parties.
- m. If synod conducts its own judicial or appeal hearing, it shall follow Judicial Code procedures set forth herein.
- n. Synod may decide to refer the matter back to the Judicial Code Committee for a rehearing before the initial hearing body.
- o. Procedure for requesting rehearing under sections k through m above
 - 1) Any party who seeks to have synod conduct its own hearing or refer the matter back for a rehearing should submit such request in writing to the general secretary for distribution to the delegates of synod with a copy to the Judicial Code Committee. The writing should include a summary of the evidence which that party was not allowed to present at the evidentiary hearing and a short statement of how this opportunity was denied, or the statement should include a summary of the newly discovered evidence and an explanation of why it was not discovered earlier.
 - 2) All parties and the Judicial Code Committee representative(s) should be allowed a very brief time to address synod on such request.
- p. When recommendations involve interpretations and applications of governing principles, such as the Church Order, to the facts involved in the matter, synod should allow the parties and representatives of

the Judicial Code Committee a reasonable amount of time, set by the president of synod upon recommendation of the Judicial Code Committee, to argue for or against such interpretations and applications.

(Acts of Synod 1993, pp. 500-501)

(Acts of Synod 2014, p. 569)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2019, p. 718)

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

VII. PENSION MATTERS AT SYNOD

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

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

VIII. RULES OF ORDER

Our ecclesiastical assemblies "shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner," as Article 28 of our Church Order stipulates. Our synods should therefore be allowed some measure of freedom in discussion and action. However, agreed-upon general rules of order serve a good purpose and are to be observed, as contained in this document, particularly in the following section regarding Rules of Order.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 804)

A. Closed Sessions of Synod

1. *Executive Session:* Synod may enter an executive session in unusual or delicate situations. In such sessions, only the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary advisers, the president and one other member of the executive committee of the Council of Delegates, and such others as determined by synod upon the recommendation of the general secretary, shall be present. If delegates from fully recognized churches in ecclesiastical fellowship are at synod, they also may remain in this session.
2. *Strict Executive Session:* Synod may enter a strict executive session in very unusual situations when such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honor or for the welfare of the church. In such sessions, only the delegates, any staff consultant that may be needed upon the recommendation of the general secretary, the seminary advisers, and the president and one other member of the executive committee of the Council of Delegates shall be present. If any of the above mentioned

persons are personally involved in the matter under discussion, they will absent themselves voluntarily or by synodical ruling.

3. Any report and decision addressed in executive or strict executive session should include a recommendation regarding what is to be included in the public record, subject to approval by the body.

(Acts of Synod 2015, p. 627; amended 2017, p. 641; 2019, p. 804)

B. A Main Motion

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

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

C. A Motion to Amend

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

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
2. A motion to amend is not a proper motion if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.
3. A motion to amend is permissible and is called a secondary motion. (Only one motion to amend a pending amendment is in order at one time.)
4. A motion to amend must be recognized as acceptable by the chair and seconded by a member of synod. Such a motion is open to debate.
5. If a minor amendment is judged properly before the assembly by the chair, is acceptable to the maker of the main motion, and finds no objections from any delegates, the chair may declare the amendment adopted (sometimes referred to as a “friendly amendment”). If the amendment is not acceptable to all, it shall be subject to debate and vote.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 804)

D. A Motion to Defer or Withhold Action

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

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 804-805)

E. Objection to a Ruling of the President

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the president, the matter is referred to synod for decision. An objection to a ruling of the chair must be seconded in order to be considered and debated. The person presiding at the time of the challenge shall relinquish the chair until the body votes whether to sustain the ruling in question.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 805)

F. Right of Protest

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

G. Call for a Division of the Question

At the request of one or more members of synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless synod decides that this is not necessary. A call for division of a question must be seconded to be considered, and is not open to debate.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 805)

H. Procedural Inquiry

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

I. Motions to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod

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

1. A motion may be offered to *reconsider* the matter. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. (The motion must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side when the decision was made.) A motion to reconsider must be seconded to be considered, can be debated, cannot be amended, and requires a simple majority to pass.
2. A motion may be made to rescind a previous decision. The purpose of this motion is to annul or reverse a previous decision. (Rescinding applies to decisions taken by the synod in session; it does not apply to decisions taken by previous synods. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod; it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.) A motion to rescind a previous decision made by the same assembly must be made and seconded by delegates who voted previously with the prevailing side. It can be debated and amended, and it requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 805-806)

J. Discussion

1. A speaker to obtain the floor must be recognized by the president.
2. The length of speeches during plenary deliberation and debate shall be limited to a maximum of three minutes per person.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 815)

3. If a member having the floor should fail to adhere to the point under discussion, the president shall call attention to this fault and insist that the main point be made and that brevity be achieved.
4. If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall ordinarily be given priority by the president.
5. The officers of synod may assign a time limit for debate on issues they think will be debated longer than one hour. This time limit will be announced prior to the presentation of the report. The delegates may vote to extend debate for half-hour intervals when the time limit has been reached.
6. When it is believed that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, the president may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of synod sustains this proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken. No further speakers will be allowed.
7. When any member of synod deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, that delegate, without speaking for or against the main motion, may move to cease debate (also known as "calling the question"). Those who move to cease debate shall be recognized in the same manner as others who gain the floor of synod, that is, by taking their turn on the list of those who have requested the privilege of the floor. The vote on the motion to cease debate is not debatable and shall be taken at once. Should a majority be in favor of ceasing debate, the vote on the matter before synod shall be taken only after those who had previously requested the floor have had the opportunity to

address the motion that is being discussed. However, once the motion to cease debate has been adopted by synod, no motion to amend the main motion will be permitted.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 806)

K. Delegates and advisers shall follow guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of social media contact with nondelegates during plenary sessions of synod, because such use might compromise the transparency and integrity of the deliberative process.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 811-12)

L. Precedence and Procedures for Addressing Reports

1. When there is a substantial difference between the recommendations in a report from a synodical study committee or task force and those of the advisory committee, the recommendations of the original committee report receive precedence for consideration by the assembly (cf. section VI, E, 2).
2. When there is a majority report and a minority report from the same advisory committee, the recommendations from the majority report are presented first, followed by a for-information reading of the recommendations from the minority report. Precedence for consideration is given to the majority report. A motion to table the majority report, or a defeat of the majority report's recommendations, would be required in order to move to a consideration of the minority report (cf. section VI, B, 2, e).

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 806)

M. Voting

The various methods of voting are:

1. *By voice* (Yes or No). This is a frequent method of voting.
2. *By electronic balloting*.
 - a. Whenever the president is unable to determine from the yes and no votes which opinion has prevailed, or if the president's judgment is questioned by any member of synod, the president shall request the delegates to re-vote electronically. The outcome of the electronic vote shall constitute the official decision of synod on the matter.
 - b. This method may be used for any vote and at any time, but it is advisable that electronic voting be used in delicate cases of discipline and other matters that are of a critical nature and of great importance.

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

Updated in 2022

**Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs
of the Christian Reformed Church in North America**

We are assembled as delegates to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to deliberate and decide on the issues here presented as synod's agenda. We promise to do this work in obedience to the revealed will of our Lord Jesus Christ and in full agreement with what the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America confess.

We believe that the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and life. We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. We also 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.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, adopted by synod as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith.

As we deliberate and make decisions consistent with these beliefs, to the best of our ability and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we promise to seek the unity and well-being of the church of Jesus Christ, who prayed that all his own may be one in him (John 17:20-23).

[After the reading of these words, delegates are asked to indicate their agreement with the beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.]

Adopted by Synod 2013