



Christian
Reformed
Church

Acts of Synod 2024



Acts of Synod 2024



Christian
Reformed
Church

May 29, June 5, and June 14-20, 2024
Calvin University
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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FOREWORD

Synod 2024 was held both virtually and in person. Synod 2024 convened virtually on Wednesday, May 29, and delegates met online in their proposed advisory committees for an introductory meeting on June 5. Then the entire assembly met in person June 14-20 in the Calvin University Chapel in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Synod's agenda was weighty both by volume and by the character of the material it contained, as occurred at Synods 2022 and 2023. And again prayer was woven into the fabric of synod. The prayer theme of Synod 2024 was "God with Us," and God was certainly present as delegates laughed and cried together through deliberations and consequential decisions. Synod 2024 also remembered and celebrated its director of synodical services, Rev. Scott DeVries, who had passed away from cancer only a month before May's convening session. When Synod 2024 completed its long and weighty agenda, it concluded with a reminder from its president, Rev. Derek Buikema, that God calls the church to seek peace, gentleness, truth, and grace as this year's synodical decisions are implemented. The contents of the following pages in the *Acts of Synod 2024* will be received in different ways throughout our denomination. Yet these pages bear witness to the Spirit-led wrestling, prayers, and difficult conversations of God's people in this small corner of his holy catholic church.

The *Acts of Synod 2024* contains the following:

- Supplementary reports of the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and of the agencies, ministries, institutions, and committees authorized to file them.
- Three overtures.
- Two communications.
- A list of five appeals.
- An updated financial report.
- A Service of Prayer and Praise.
- The minutes of Synod 2024.
- An index for both the *Acts of Synod 2024* and the *Agenda for Synod 2024*.

It is necessary for the user of the *Acts of Synod* to keep the *Agenda for Synod* readily available as a reference. The *Agenda* is not reprinted in the *Acts*. The minutes of synod often make reference to reports and overtures in the *Agenda for Synod*. The pagination continues from the *Agenda* to the *Acts*. Supplementary materials begin on page 615, following preliminary unnumbered pages, and the minutes of synod follow, beginning on page 785. The index references both the *Agenda for Synod* and the *Acts of Synod*; the page numbers in **boldface type** in the index refer to pages in the minutes of Synod 2024.

The pages that follow, as well as the referenced *Agenda for Synod*, bear continuing evidence of service by the Christian Reformed Church in response to a vision adopted by Synod 2005: “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.”

Without a doubt, there will be much discussion in the coming months about the implications of Synod 2024’s weighty decisions. In all that we do and say, may we “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness,” and as we “fight the good fight of faith,” may we always remember that our “struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 5:12; 1 Tim. 6:11-12). “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

Zachary King, general secretary
Christian Reformed Church in North America

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES SUPPLEMENT

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I. Polity matters

A. Director of Synodical Services

In March 2024 the director of Synodical Services, Rev. Scott DeVries, was diagnosed with an advanced stage of aggressive cancer. A plan was initially put in place for Scott to work in a reduced capacity and hire additional help as needed, which led to the Council of Delegates' approving Joel Vande Werken as a temporary associate director of Synodical Services from April 10 through August 31, 2024.

On April 27, 2024, Rev. Scott DeVries, passed away after a brief time in hospice care.

At the time of writing this COD Supplement report, a plan has not yet been fully worked out to fill this role permanently. A team of staff from the Office of General Secretary and CRCNA Human Resources, along with representation from the Council of Delegates, will continue to be involved in a new search process to fill this role.

B. Council of Delegates membership

Appointment of classical delegates (see Recommendations A-B)

The COD recommends that synod appoint Erik Kamp as the Classis Central Plains delegate to fill out the term of Thomas Wolthuis, to conclude June 30, 2025.

Erik Kamp serves as a pastor at First CRC of Oskaloosa, Iowa, and prior to that he served at Faith Community Fellowship in Mount Vernon, Washington.

The COD recommends that synod appoint Chris Pedersen as the Classis Chicago South delegate to a first term, to conclude June 30, 2027.

Chris Pedersen serves as pastor at Faith CRC in Tinley Park, Illinois, and he previously served two other congregations. He has served as a CMLT leader, a CIC chair, and as a church visitor in two classes. He currently serves as board president of Love Inc. of Tinley Park. He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary with a master of divinity degree and completed a doctor of ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary.

The COD recommends that synod appoint Jae Young Kim as the Classis Hanmi delegate to a first term, to conclude June 30, 2027.

Jae Young Kim is a professor of theology at International Theological Seminary. He has also served as the Korean program director and leader of Disciples Together (NPO). He has served on the reception committee of Classis Hanmi and is a member of Olympic Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, Calif.

The COD recommends that synod appoint David Spoelma as the Classis Holland delegate to a first term, to conclude June 30, 2027.

David Spoelma is the pastor at The Foundation Church in Holland, Michigan, and is a licensed mental health counselor at Peace and Progress Counseling Services. He holds a bachelor of science degree in business administration, a master of divinity degree (Calvin Theological Seminary), and a master's degree in professional mental health counseling. He presently serves as a safe church coordinator in Classis Holland and has previously served as a synodical deputy and on the Classis Holland executive committee.

The COD recommends that synod appoint Robert Drenten as the Classis Iakota delegate to a first term, to conclude June 30, 2027.

Robert Drenten is the pastor of Lebanon Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Center, Iowa. He has also served as pastor at First CRC, Os-kaloosa, Iowa; Bethel CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa; Prosper CRC, Falmouth, Michigan; and Immanuel CRC, Orange City, Iowa. He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary with a master of divinity degree in 1988. Bob has served several terms on the Dordt University Board of Trustees and two terms on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. He has served as a board guest to the COD and is currently a member of the Judicial Code Committee. He also serves as chair of the Student Affairs Committee at CTS. Bob and his wife, Jan, have been blessed with four daughters, a son, and five grandchildren.

The COD recommends that synod appoint Eric Van Dyken as the Classis Minnkota delegate to a first term, to conclude June 30, 2027.

Eric Van Dyken is a member of First CRC, Prinsburg, Minnesota, and is a zoning administrator. He has served four terms as elder, including service as clerk, vice president, and president of council. He currently serves as chair of the Vision Minnkota Committee, on multiple local and statewide professional committees, on the Abide Project Steering Committee and Education Committee, on the First CRC Global Missions Committee, and as a church visitor for Classis Minnkota.

The COD recommends that synod appoint Charles Adams as the Classis Wisconsin delegate to a first term, to conclude June 30, 2027.

Charles Adams has served as World Renew's U.S. guest delegate to the COD and is chair of the Judicial Code Review Team reporting to Synod 2024. A member of Calvin CRC, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, he is currently an emeritus member of World Renew's Board of Directors after having served several years as U.S. Board president. He has been a member of CR churches in five communities in four states. He has been a deacon delegate to synod from Classis Wisconsin, and he served six years on the Judicial Code Committee. He has also been involved in numerous committees at the classis and local church levels, including multiple

terms as deacon and a term as elder. He is also licensed to exhort by Classis Wisconsin and has practiced law for 31 years.

Note: The above nominees will be considered eligible for an additional term of three years, subject to the approval of classis and recommendation by the COD Governance Committee.

C. Corporation officers and executive committee of the Council of Delegates

At its May meeting, the COD members from their respective corporations and the full Council of Delegates elected the following to serve as officers in 2024-2025:

1. CRCNA Canada Corporation/CRCNA Canada Ministry Board

President: Greta Luimes

Vice president: Andre Van Ryk

Treasurer: Henry Eygenraam

Secretary: Peter Meerveld

2. CRCNA U.S. Corporation/ CRCNA U.S. Ministry Board

President: Michael Ten Haken

Vice president: Jill Feikema

Secretary: Christian Sebastia

Treasurer: Drew Sweetman

3. ReFrame Ministries Canada Corporation

President: Greta Luimes

Vice president: Andre Van Ryk

Treasurer: Henry Eygenraam

Secretary: Peter Meerveld

4. ReFrame Ministries U.S. Corporation

President: Michael Ten Haken

Vice president: Jill Feikema

Secretary: Christian Sebastia

Treasurer: Drew Sweetman

5. Council of Delegates executive committee and officers

Chair: Michael TenHaken

Vice chair: Greta Luimes

Secretary: Henry Eygenraam

Treasurer: Christian Sebastia

D. COD right of comment on Overtures 1, 3, 4, 10, and 45

The Council of Delegates exercises its right of comment by endorsing the responses presented in Appendices D, E, F, G, and H regarding the following overtures:

- Overture 1: Amend the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook to Clarify Their Role in the Nomination Process; Classis Quinte (Appendix D)

- Overture 3: Recommend that Ministers' Pension Trustees Increase the Final Average Salary Calculation to 100 Percent of the Average Ministers' Compensation; Classis Niagara (Appendix F)
- Overture 4: Close the Pension Fund to New Members and Create a New Retirement Fund; Classis Muskegon (Appendix G)
- Overture 10: Suspend the Work of the Dignity Team; Council of the CRC of St. Joseph, Michigan (Appendix H)
- Overture 45: Appoint a Task Force to Shape a Gentle Pathway for Those Departing the CRCNA; Council of River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta (Appendix E)

E. Synodical appointments

On behalf of synod, the COD has ratified the following classical appointments of synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies*:

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Alternate</i>	<i>Term</i>
Central Plains	Brad Bierma	Michael Bentley	2027(2)
Grand Rapids			
North	Peter Byma	Henry Admiraal	2026(1)

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

F. Judicial Code Committee

There are currently two vacancies on the Judicial Code Committee, one for a member ordained as minister of the Word and one for a nonordained member not trained in law. The COD planned to provide two other nominees in the COD Supplement report, but no names have come forward at this time. The COD anticipates two nominations at its October meeting for interim appointment and approval at Synod 2025.

G. Bible Translations Committee report

The Bible Translations Committee met on April 18, 2024, to review communications related to the "God Bless the USA Bible" and to evaluate the Easy-to-Read Version (ERV). The committee observed that while the "God Bless the USA Bible" includes an approved translation (KJV), the committee does not approve supplemental material such as study guides, commentary, or suggested applications within Bible versions. The committee will have a report on the ERV by the October 2024 meeting of the COD.

II. Program and finance matters

A. Judicial Code Review Team report

Synod 2019 initiated a plan to review the Judicial Code every five years (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 763). This was delayed in order to allow the Council of Delegates to complete a review of the appeal process, but a task force was formed in late 2022 and met twelve times to review the existing Judicial Code line by line. The Judicial Code Review Team has submitted their report with recommendations for revision. The COD presents the report in Appendix A for approval by synod (see Recommendation C).

B. CRCNA statements on social, economic, or political matters

Synod 2023 instructed “the Office of General Secretary to report directly back to Synod 2024 on how the concerns noted in Overture 3 [Refocus Ecclesiological Communication; Classis Southeast U.S.] have been addressed—namely, specifying how and when the CRCNA organization comments and/or makes statements on social, economic, or political matters that synod has not previously specifically addressed” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 926). The general secretary worked with staff from the communications department, Thrive, and the Canadian justice ministries to formulate the report, which was presented to the COD in February and is attached to this report as Appendix B (see Recommendation D).

C. Intercultural Ministries (Canada) report

Intercultural Ministries operates as a crucial national advisory committee in Canada. Collaborating closely with the senior leader for antiracism and intercultural conciliation, our mission is multifaceted. The COD has adopted the Intercultural Ministries report and includes it for information as Appendix C (see Recommendation E).

D. Global Vision Team report

After a cluster of Venezuelan congregations joined Classis California South in 2022 (see thebanner.org/news/2022/10/venezuelan-churches-affiliate-through-california-classis), the Council of Delegates instructed the general secretary to gather a group “to study the integration of international churches into the composition of the CRC” (see *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 32-33). The general secretary assembled a binational team of globally experienced and connected CRC leaders to make up the Global Vision Team (GVT), which was mandated to develop a conceptual framework for a global Christian Reformed Church and to submit a report to the COD. The GVT submitted their report with recommendations to the COD for approval at Synod 2024. The report with recommendations is included as Appendix L (see Recommendation F).

E. Bivocational pastors

The Office of General Secretary, along with Thrive, has created a number of resources for bivocational pastors, including a sample exit interview template and sample well-being check-ins, in response to the assignment from Synod 2023 to support bivocational ministry. Thrive continues to connect with bivocational pastors, regional pastors, and the Candidacy Office to develop resources. Further resources are expected to be released in fall 2024.

F. Ecclesiastical marriage

Synod 2023 instructed the Office of General Secretary to disseminate the report of the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force and a letter of warning to pastors and councils “regarding the potential legal ramifications of solemnizing an ecclesiastical marriage” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 961-62). The report and letter were distributed in spring and are available in English, Korean, and Spanish.

G. Day of Justice

Synod 2017 designated the third Sunday of August as the Annual Day of Justice (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 631). The Office of Social Justice (OSJ) had taken the lead on this annual event, in conjunction with World Renew and the Centre for Public Dialogue (Canada). The work of OSJ is now carried on through Thrive, the new agency housing nine congregational ministries. The COD recommends that synod celebrate six years of observance of the Day of Justice and recognize its continued expression in ongoing venues (see Recommendation G).

H. Code of Conduct

Synod 2023 mandated the Office of General Secretary to oversee the development of materials to orient ministry leaders to the newly approved Code of Conduct (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 993-94). Thrive staff members continue to develop resources and materials to introduce ministry leaders to the expectations established by the Code of Conduct. These resources are expected to be released in fall 2024.

I. Finance matters

1. Ministry shares

Synod 2023 directed the Office of General Secretary and the Council of Delegates to continue the Review of Ministry Shares Reimagined (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 987-88). The COD shares the report in Appendix I as its response and recommends the following (see Recommendation H).

- a. Provide a clear and basic compelling message about the ministry-share program to all the churches, recognizing that ministry shares are experienced differently on each side of the U.S.-Canada border.
- b. That synod consider this plan as completing the task assigned by Synod 2023 regarding the continued Review of Ministry Shares Reimagined.

Grounds:

- 1) This is an iterative process. Our messaging will be evaluated at least annually, and changes will be based on data collected through future surveys, conversations, and church-giving records. Staff on all levels are aware of the importance of the ministry-share program. The results are reported to the Council of Delegates on a regular basis.
- 2) This recommendation meets the following objectives:
 - acknowledging that ministry shares are experienced differently on each side of the U.S.-Canada border
 - maintaining the same basic messaging in both countries
 - avoiding unnecessary complexity
- 3) This is a change in “presentation” rather than a fundamental change to the ministry-share program. As a result, this change can be implemented without making changes to the Church Order and therefore

can begin in fall 2024 without a need to seek further approval from synod with this task.

- 4) All major tasks outlined in the synodical directives are completed.
2. Clergy couples and pension benefits
Synod 2023 instructed the Office of General Secretary to “work with the pension boards, in consultation with clergy couples, to find a just and equitable solution that recognizes the ordination of both spouses who are ministers of the Word” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 967). The COD shares the report in Appendix J as its response and recommends that the response be considered the completion of the task assigned (see Recommendation I).
3. Short-term illness insurance
Synod 2022 instructed “the executive director to curate Human Resources-related best practices and templates including short-term disability options for congregational staff” and to “study possible denominational and classical benevolence funds for congregations facing short-term disability needs” (*Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 847). Due to changes in structure and staffing, this task was given to the Office of General Secretary and delayed a year. The COD shares the report on these matters as information in Appendix K and recommends that this response be considered the completion of the tasks assigned (see Recommendation J).
4. Ministers’ pensions
 - a. The COD informs synod that it has approved the three-year final average salary to be used to determine retirement benefits beginning in 2025, noting the church and participant assessment amounts for 2025.
 - b. As part of its annual tasks related to pensions, the COD recently discovered that Church Order Supplement, Article 15 is unclear and misleading. The following changes have been proposed (indicated by ~~strike through~~ and underline; see Recommendation K):
Guidelines for Churches Whose Ministers Receive Salary Support from Other Employment
 1. The church is responsible for a total compensation package proportionate to the time spent in ministry to the church (forty-eight hours equals full time). The compensation package shall ordinarily be based on synodically stated minimum salary, fringe benefits, and housing costs.
 2. Since the compensation package includes a percentage allowance for health insurance, the minister is expected to secure adequate health insurance for the minister and the minister’s family.

3. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
4. ~~The minister shall receive pension credits in the Ministers' Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church.~~ Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured for ministers who work at least 20 hours per week as long as a if full contribution to the Ministers' Pension Plan is made.
5. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not exceed sixty hours per week.

(Acts of Synod 1987, p. 572)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2024, p.)

5. *The Banner* and ministry shares

The COD informs synod that it instructed *The Banner* to become self-sustaining through revenue and fundraising, not including support through ministry share, beginning with the fiscal year starting July 1, 2027. To achieve that goal, *The Banner* has been asked to reduce its reliance on ministry-share contribution over the next three fiscal years.

III. Recommendations

- A. That synod by way of the ballot elect Erik Kamp (Central Plains) to fill out the term of Thomas Wolthuis on the Council of Delegates (COD Supplement section I, B).
- B. That synod by way of the ballot elect Chris Pederson (Chicago South), Jae Young Kim (Hanmi), David Spoelma (Holland), Robert Drenten (Iakota), Erik Van Dyken (Minnkota), and Charles Adams (Wisconsin) to a first term on the Council of Delegates (COD Supplement section I, B).
- C. That synod receive the report of the Judicial Code Review Team and its recommendations for adoption and dismissal of the task force with gratitude for their work (COD Supplement section II, A; Appendix A).
- D. That synod receive for information the report on CRCNA statements on social, economic, or political matters in response to the task assigned by Synod 2023 regarding Overture 3: Refocus Ecclesiological Communication (COD Supplement section II, B; Appendix B).
- E. That synod receive for information the Intercultural Ministries (Canada) report (COD Supplement section II, C; Appendix C).
- F. That synod receive the report of the Global Vision Team and its recommendations for adoption (COD Supplement section II, D; Appendix L).
- G. That Synod 2024 celebrate six years of observance of the Day of Justice and recognize its continued expression in ongoing venues (COD Supplement section II, G).

- H. That synod receive the report of the COD on the continued Review of Ministry Shares Reimagined and its recommendations for adoption (COD Supplement II, I, 1; Appendix I).
- I. That synod receive for information the report of the COD regarding clergy couples and pension benefits in response to the instruction of Synod 2023 (COD Supplement II, I, 2; Appendix J).
- J. That synod receive for information the report of the COD regarding short-term illness insurance in response to the instructions of Synod 2022 (COD Supplement II, I, 3; Appendix K).
- K. That synod adopt the following proposed changes (indicated by ~~striketrough~~ and underline) to Church Order Supplement, Article 15 (COD Supplement II, I, 4, b):

Guidelines for Churches Whose Ministers Receive Salary Support from Other Employment

1. The church is responsible for a total compensation package proportionate to the time spent in ministry to the church (forty-eight hours equals full time). The compensation package shall ordinarily be based on synodically stated minimum salary, fringe benefits, and housing costs.
2. Since the compensation package includes a percentage allowance for health insurance, the minister is expected to secure adequate health insurance for the minister and the minister's family.
3. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
4. ~~The minister shall receive pension credits in the Ministers' Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church.~~ Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured for ministers who work at least 20 hours per week as long as a if full contribution to the Ministers' Pension Plan is made.
5. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not exceed sixty hours per week.

(Acts of Synod 1987, p. 572)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2024, p. ____)

Council of Delegates of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Michael L. Ten Haken, chair

Judicial Code Review Team Report

I. Introduction

A. Background and mandate

In recent years the church worldwide has been growing more aware of how some of its leaders have, at times, abused their power. The growing awareness of various abuses has led to ongoing synodical discussions about how to address and curtail abuse situations in the CRCNA. In connection with these matters Synod 2019 considered how widely the Judicial Code functions and how it also functions more particularly in cases where abuse has been alleged. From that discussion Synod 2019 adopted the following recommendation:

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.

Grounds:

- a. This allows the Judicial Code Committee and others who work with the Judicial Code to be involved in the review process.
- b. Reviewing policy is a helpful practice.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 763)

The COVID-19 pandemic and a review of the appeals process in Church Order delayed the implementation of the first review, but in 2022 the COD reported to synod that it would initiate a review. The result was the appointment of the Judicial Code Review Team, which began its work in January 2023. We have met a total of twelve times, all online, and at the time of this writing the team included the following members:

- three former members of the Judicial Code Committee (JCC), all with legal background and with JCC case experience: Charles Adams, Joel Vos, and Roberta Vriesema
- two ordained ministers of the Word: Rebecca Jordan Heys and Johannes Schouten
- a former commissioned pastor and staff member of the denominational Office of Race Relations: Rudy Gonzalez
- the professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary as an adviser: Kathy Smith
- the director of synodical services as staff support: Scott DeVries

To achieve our mandate, the team read each paragraph and section of the Judicial Code aloud together and made notes on any sections of the code that raised questions about clarity, process, or how they contributed to the goals of the Judicial Code. The members who had JCC case experience also reflected on how the sections of the code had been interpreted and applied

in prior proceedings. The proposed changes stemming from those notes were reviewed by the full team and are now ready for review by the COD and synod. Where it seems advantageous, this report provides brief explanations of some of the changes we recommend.

It is worth noting that along with including past members of the JCC and Church Order experts, the team reached out to Thrive staff (formerly Safe Church Ministry staff) to discuss some of the changes, particularly those dealing with the Safe Church Advisory Panel Process.

B. Additional mandate: Use of the Judicial Code in matters of church discipline

After the committee began working on its initial mandate, it was also tasked with an additional matter. Synod 2023 gave instructions to clarify how the Judicial Code can or cannot be used with matters of church discipline, adopting the following recommendation:

That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to assemble a task force (or similar body) to design and/or clarify an appeals process for church members under discipline. This body shall address processes for members under general discipline.

Grounds:

- a. Neither Church Order nor the Judicial Code seem to provide clear provisions for members under discipline to appeal a decision regarding their discipline.
- b. While the authority for discipline and its implementation is given to the local consistory, there should be a clearly defined process for members and officebearers to appeal a decision regarding discipline.

(Acts of Synod 2023, p. 1013)

II. Proposed changes to the Judicial Code

A. Rationale and process

The preamble to the Judicial Code includes a helpful discussion of the rationale for the Judicial Code:

The belief is that this Code “will help to insure just treatment of those who are involved in the judgment and decisions of the church” and that providing “impartial judgments among God’s people” is required by Scripture (Deut. 1:16-17; Deut. 16:18-20; Lev. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19-21). “Procedural guidelines” are needed to deal with substantive issues in an appropriate and “ecclesiastical manner” (Church Order, Article 28), and, according to synod, the Judicial Code provides this “procedural pattern within which the law of love may be fulfilled (cf. James 2:1, 8-9).”

Fundamentally, we believe that God is a God of justice and that he also commands his followers to act justly (Mic. 6:8). When disputes arise within the body of believers, as they do in this fallen world, justice requires a forum in which the dispute can be properly framed, evidence can be received

by the parties, and an impartial determination can be made regarding the merits of the dispute. Our review of the Judicial Code, in light of the experience of the committee members who have been involved in recent Judicial Code hearings, resulted in suggested revisions that we believe will facilitate the process of judging justly in proceedings under the Judicial Code.

B. Significant recommendations

The changes that are proposed are not voluminous. The work of a former Task Force to Review the Judicial Code, which reported to Synod 2014, made many good revisions to the Judicial Code, and those were followed up by a few more revisions in 2015 (*Agenda for Synod 2014*, pp. 72-84; *Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 569-70; *Agenda for Synod 2015*, pp. 107-11; *Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 627) and in 2019 (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 717-18). In that sense, our work has involved tuning rather than an overhaul. This report does not discuss every revision but calls attention to the more significant recommendations made by the committee.

1. The first significant revision is found in section 3 of the Judicial Code. The proposed addition to the text deals with the supplemental mandate “to design and/or clarify an appeals process for church members under . . . general discipline.”

In the view of the committee, because the Judicial Code deals with decisions of assemblies, it does not clearly apply at present to church members who have been suspended by a consistory. This is due to the fact that the council is defined as an assembly within the Church Order (Art. 26), while the consistory by itself is not an assembly. It was our conclusion that, if synod desires to have suspension by a consistory be subject to an appeal process, the Judicial Code would need to be amended to provide for that result.

This would thus involve a change to our existing church governance. The proposed addition to section 3 of the Judicial Code which would make that change (adding a subsection vii to section 3, a) would read as follows:

vii) a member who has been suspended by a consistory, or a person who has been excluded from membership by a consistory. Such persons may file written charges in order to obtain a review by classis of the suspension or exclusion. In the Judicial Code proceeding, the role of classis shall be as follows (cf. Supplement, Art. 78-81, d):

- 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed.
- 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person.
- 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline.

This language would make a suspension decision reviewable by a classis, conducting an original hearing that is limited to the criteria set forth in Supplement, Articles 78-81, d.

2. The next significant proposed change is in section 4 of the Judicial Code. The experience of the committee is that the Judicial Code contains procedures and requirements that are familiar to persons with legal training but not to persons without such legal training. This may include both the complaining party and the officers of the assembly who are tasked with responding to the complainant and implementing the rules contained in the Judicial Code. In order to bridge this gap in experience and training, we recommend the creation of a roster of volunteers to provide procedural advice and technical recommendations to the parties to a Judicial Code proceeding. We therefore recommend that a new subsection b be added to section 4:

b. The Office of General Secretary will maintain a roster of volunteers who are willing to provide assistance to complainants and respondents with respect to prehearing procedures. The roster will be provided to any complainant or respondent upon request. The role of these volunteer advisers is to advise a party regarding preparation of witness and exhibit lists, and any other advance disclosures or written submissions that a party may be required or choose to make in advance of a hearing. The party remains responsible for preparing all pre-hearing submissions; the volunteer is not required to do so. A volunteer is not required to give substantive advice regarding the merits of any charges. A party is not required to make use of such a volunteer, and the unavailability of a volunteer shall not be grounds for appeal of any decision rendered following a judicial hearing.

The closing sentences of this proposed change are intended to protect the volunteer so that their role remains one of providing technical advice. They are not to do the job of the party for that party.

3. The third significant change is in section 5, a, vi. This proposed addition deals with how witnesses may be questioned. It is designed to increase the flexibility of the person presiding over a Judicial Code proceeding. There may be instances in which neither party has asked a relevant question, or there may be situations where a witness is being questioned directly by a person who is accused of abusing the witness. In such situations, this revision would give the presiding officer flexibility to change the manner in which the questioning takes place:

The presiding officer shall have discretion to determine the manner in which witnesses will be questioned. As an example, the presiding officer may determine that questions will be submitted in advance of the hearing, and that the questioning of a witness will be done by a person other than the complainant or respondent.

4. In section 5, c, we propose that additional clarity be given regarding the burden of proof that applies in a Judicial Code proceeding. This language is adapted from the intermediate standard of proof in legal proceedings. It replaces the “high degree of probability” standard in the current Judicial Code. In the view of the committee, this standard was not clear to those with legal training or to those without it. The committee sensed that the use of a familiar legal standard would better quantify the burden of proof that is applicable. This intermediate standard requires more than a preponderance of the evidence but less than the criminal standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt:

- c. . . . Written charges must be proven by evidence that is clear, satisfactory, and convincing, to a reasonable certainty. Clear, satisfactory, and convincing evidence is evidence which when weighed against that opposed to it clearly has more convincing power. "Reasonable certainty" means that you are persuaded based upon a rational consideration of the evidence. Absolute certainty is not required, but a guess is not enough to meet the burden of proof.

5. The fifth proposed change is in section 6, f. It clarifies that the recusal requirements apply equally to participants in prior Judicial Code proceedings and Safe Church proceedings, when appeals from decisions of assemblies acting in their judicial capacity are filed:

- f. Persons that have voted on a matter in an assembly shall recuse themselves from participating in the appeal. In the event that the appeal is from a decision of an assembly related to a Safe Church proceeding, participants in the Safe Church panel process shall recuse themselves from participating in the appeal.

6. The sixth major change is in section 9, e. Section 9 addresses how synod processes a Judicial Code determination. The revision in this section addresses confidentiality. The Judicial Code calls for confidentiality. The revision in section 9, e clarifies what that means. In the report to synod, names of participants, other than the classis and the complainant, will be redacted:

- e. . . . These written findings of fact and recommendations shall include the names of the parties to the appeal, but shall otherwise omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.

7. The last significant revision is in section 9, where we propose the addition of a new subsection i to address how synod receives and considers a judicial matter. There is an inherent difficulty in concluding a Judicial Code proceeding by having synod decide the matter. Synod is a broad assembly that is well suited for ecclesiastical decisions. Practically, it does not have the time to do a particularized review of the facts of a Judicial Code dispute. It is also difficult to have synod deliberate in a judicial manner rather than an ecclesiastical manner. In the legal context the record of the proceedings (testimony and exhibits that are admitted into evidence) is critical, and the

court is limited to considering only properly admitted evidence. The members of synod will typically not have the time or opportunity to review what may be a record of hundreds of pages of transcript of testimony and written exhibits, which are entrusted to the Judicial Code Committee as synod's advisory committee.

Recognizing this difficulty, the new paragraph 9, i does not remove synod from its role as the ultimate decision maker regarding the recommendations of the Judicial Code Committee, but it does require a degree of deference to the prior factfinder:

- i. Unless synod conducts its own original judicial or appeal hearing, synod shall give deference to the factual findings made by the Judicial Code Committee.

III. Recommendations to Synod 2024

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Charles Adams (chair), Joel Vos (vice chair), and Kathy Smith (adviser) when the report of the Judicial Code Review Team is discussed.

B. That synod adopt the following changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures (additions underlined, deletions in ~~strike through~~):

Supplement, Article 30-c

JUDICIAL CODE OF RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES

Preamble to the Judicial Code

Synod 1977 adopted the first edition of the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures. It did so to "encourage greater uniformity of procedure throughout our denomination when charges must be adjudicated." The belief is that this Code "will help to insure just treatment of those who are involved in the judgment and decisions of the church" and that providing "impartial judgments among God's people" is required by Scripture (Deut. 1:16-17; Deut. 16:18-20; Lev. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19-21). "Procedural guidelines" are needed to deal with substantive issues in an appropriate and "ecclesiastical manner" (Church Order, Article 28), and, according to synod, the Judicial Code provides this "procedural pattern within which the law of love may be fulfilled (cf. James 2:1, 8-9)."

However, the Judicial Code should not be considered as providing a means of broad applicability for resolving disputes. Rather, the Judicial Code is intended to be a dispute-resolution mechanism of last resort because judicial hearings and subsequent decisions of assemblies will likely never fully satisfy the parties involved. Thus, complete reconciliation may not be achieved. Rather, the focus of Judicial Code hearings and of the resultant decisions made by the assemblies is not primarily on reconciliation but on some kind of final resolution. While the Judicial Code does provide rights

for all parties and a fair process toward resolution, it does not purport to restore the mutual trust that may have been lost as any given dispute may have raged and festered.

Before invoking the rights afforded under the Judicial Code, brothers and sisters in Christ should make every effort to resolve issues between them amicably, according to the teachings of Scripture. If they require external assistance to reach agreement, they should, where appropriate, seek trained facilitators or mediators to help them reach agreement. A process of mediation led by neutral parties may facilitate a more satisfactory resolution.

One of the ways in which issues can be resolved more amicably is to use restorative justice practices. Synod 2005 encouraged “the active participation of churches and church members in restorative justice efforts in order to restore and reconcile victims and offenders where possible, and to effect, as far as possible, the establishment of justice for all members of our societies.” It also urged “congregations, schools, denominational offices, other Christian institutions, and homes to employ restorative justice practices” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 761-62). These practices bring with them greater potential for true reconciliation.

On the other hand, mediation or restorative justice practices are not necessarily appropriate for charges involving physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Such charges should be dealt with in the first instance by way of the Advisory Panel Process approved by synod and associated with the denomination’s Safe Church Ministry (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 866; *Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 497-502).

Thus, even if written charges have been filed and a formal hearing has been requested, the assembly must still make a determination as to whether or not sufficient means for resolution, formal or informal, have or have not been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing the judicial hearing while further efforts are undertaken. Only after the assembly determines that sufficient means have been exhausted or that such means do not resolve the matter, should the assembly proceed to conduct a judicial hearing as set forth below.

The scope of the Judicial Code is limited to “disputes arising from allegations of offenses against the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order are subject to resolution under the Judicial Code.” While these issues may have civil or criminal legal aspects, the Judicial Code is not intended to supplant or displace the civil or criminal legal processes that may apply in these situations. Rather, the purpose of the Judicial Code is to provide a fair process for determining and adjudicating the ecclesiastical consequences of disputes which fall within its scope. Assemblies should obtain qualified legal counsel to address questions of civil or criminal liability.

Section 1: Scope of the Judicial Code

[no changes]

Section 2: Judicial Rights

- a. Both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be represented or counseled by ~~a member~~ one or two members of the CRC in any judicial hearing. The requirement of church membership may be waived at the reasonable discretion of the assembly that is hearing the case.
- b. Except when the assembly withdraws to decide the issues raised in the judicial hearing, the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be present at the judicial hearing and at the judicial hearing considering an appeal from a judicial hearing.
- c. Except as limited in Section 5, a, both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to have witnesses examined in their presence.
- d. Both the complainant and the respondent may appeal by right the decision of the assembly to the assembly next in order.
- e. The provisions of the Judicial Code shall apply to all appeals from decisions resulting from the judicial hearing on a complaint.
- f. No member or group of the CRC, nor any person connected with the matter, shall circulate, or cause to be circulated, any written or printed arguments or briefs upon any complaints before the final disposition of same, including appeals, if any.
- g. Assuring due process and natural justice shall be the guiding principle in the interpretation and application of the Judicial Code.
- h. All judicial hearings shall be conducted in a considerate and Christian manner.

Section 3: Procedures for Filing Written Charges

- a. Written charges may be filed by
 - i) a member of the CRC against another member or against an assembly;
 - ii) an assembly against another assembly or against a member;
 - iii) a person who is not a member of the CRC against a member or assembly of the CRC, provided such person has been directly affected as an individual by the charged offense;
 - iv) a member of the CRC against an agency, board, or committee;
 - v) an assembly against an agency, board, or committee;
 - vi) an employee of an agency, board, or committee against an agency, board, or committee, excluding challenges to termination of employment;
 - vii) a member who has been suspended by a consistory, or a person who has been excluded from membership by a consistory. Such persons may file written charges in order to obtain a review by classis of

the suspension or exclusion. In the Judicial Code proceeding, the role of classis shall be as follows (cf. Supplement, Art. 78-81, d):

- 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed.
- 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person.
- 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline.

b. Prerequisites:

- i) If the allegation is abuse on the part of a church leader as defined by the CRC's Safe Church Ministry's Advisory Panel Process, the complainant shall first have exhausted that process in accordance with the procedures and standards of confidentiality outlined therein and in lieu of the procedures under Sections 2-5 of this Code, to the point of obtaining a decision by the council of the church leader. Both parties have the right of appeal to classis as provided in Sections 6-7.
- ii) No written charges against an agency, board, or committee may be filed until the complainant shall first have exhausted all reasonable and direct efforts according to procedures prescribed by such agency, board, or committee to resolve the appellant's complaint or grievance internally.

c. Time limits:

- i) There is no time limit for filing a written charge of sexual abuse. Allegations of sexual abuse against a church leader shall first be made in accord with the Advisory Panel Process associated with the CRC's Safe Church Ministry.
- ii) An allegation of non-sexual abuse of a minor may be filed at any time before the complainant reaches age twenty-five (25). However, allegations of non-sexual abuse of a minor shall first be made in accord with the Advisory Panel Process associated with the CRC's Safe Church Ministry.
- iii) All other written charges must be filed within three (3) years of the date on which the offense is alleged to have occurred.

d. A person or an assembly filing a written charge shall be called the complainant, and the person or assembly against whom the written charge is filed shall be called the respondent.

e. A written charge must be filed with an assembly, must set forth the alleged offense, must specify the facts relied upon to support the written charge, including, as far as possible, the time and place of the offense, and must state whether a judicial hearing is requested.

f. A written charge shall not allege more than one offense. Several written charges against the same respondent may be presented and decided jointly, but a decision on each written charge must be made separately.

- g. The complainant shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy of the written charge to the respondent at the same time as it is filed with the assembly.
- h. Within sixty (60) days after the written charge is filed, the respondent shall file an answer with the assembly and shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy to the complainant. If the complainant did not request a judicial hearing, the respondent shall indicate in the answer whether a judicial hearing is requested.
- i. Jurisdiction of assemblies
 - i) A written charge against a member of the CRC shall be filed by the complainant with the council of the local church of which the respondent is a member.
 - ii) A written charge against an assembly, or against a consistory as provided in Section 3 a, vii shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly next in order (the order being council, classis, and synod).
 - iii) A written charge against an agency, board, or committee, including its agent or employees, shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly to which the agency, board, or committee is responsible.
 - iv) If a council or an agency, board, or committee of classis is the respondent, the judicial hearing shall be before the classis and in accordance with the hearing procedures set forth in Sections 2-5.
 - v) If a classis or an agency, board, or committee of synod is the respondent, the judicial hearing shall be before the Judicial Code Committee in accordance with the procedures set forth in Sections 2-5.

Section 4: Pre-hearing Procedures

- a. Except for good cause, the judicial hearing shall commence within six (6) months of the filing of written charges.
- b. The Office of General Secretary will maintain a roster of volunteers who are willing to provide assistance to complainants and respondents with respect to prehearing procedures. The roster will be provided to any complainant or respondent upon request. The role of these volunteer advisers is to advise a party regarding preparation of witness and exhibit lists, and any other advance disclosures or written submissions that a party may be required or choose to make in advance of a hearing. The party remains responsible for preparing all pre-hearing submissions; the volunteer is not required to do so. A volunteer is not required to give substantive advice regarding the merits of any charges. A party is not required to make use of such a volunteer, and the unavailability of a volunteer shall not be grounds for appeal of any decision rendered following a judicial hearing.
- bc. After consulting with the complainant and the respondent, the assembly shall set the time and place for the judicial hearing on the written

- charge. At least forty-five (45) days before the judicial hearing, the date must be fixed and the parties notified.
- ed. No later than thirty (30) days before the judicial hearing, the parties shall cause to be delivered to the other party and the assembly a list of witnesses to be called to testify and a copy of the exhibits to be offered at the judicial hearing. At the judicial hearing, each party shall be limited to the witnesses and the exhibits disclosed, unless the party can establish that the witness or exhibit was not discovered until after the deadline.
 - de. The assembly may, in its discretion, require further advance disclosures by the parties concerning the witnesses, documents, evidence, and arguments that they intend to present at the hearing.
 - ef. When a written charge is filed with a council or classis, that council or classis shall serve as the judicial body, which shall include all members of the assembly except those who have a conflict of interest. Any members having a conflict of interest shall recuse themselves.
 - fg. Either the complainant or the respondent may challenge the impartiality of a member on grounds of self-interest or that member's relationship with or responsibility to a participant in the judicial hearing. If the assembly decides by majority vote that the challenge has merit, the member shall be recused from the judicial hearing.
 - gh. Before the hearing, the assembly may ~~shall~~ determine whether the written charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing. This may be done by the assembly on the basis of the written charge, the answer, the proposed exhibits, and, if the assembly so desires, an informal conference with the parties and their representatives. The assembly may delegate the review of information and the informal conference to a committee, but after receiving a report from the committee, the assembly must make the determination with written grounds. This determination shall be conducted in a confidential manner to protect the reputations of the people involved and to protect the impartiality of the judicial assembly if the charge moves forward. A decision by a council or a classis that a charge is not substantial may be appealed.
 - hi. If requested by either the complainant or the respondent, or in the discretion of the assembly, the assembly may direct that the proceeding shall be kept confidential and shall not be published by any participant. All participants shall be notified on the record of the no-publication directive.

Section 5: Judicial Hearing Procedures

- a. A judicial hearing, if ordered, shall proceed as follows:
 - i) Each party may make an opening statement summarizing what that party expects to prove.

- ii) The complainant shall proceed first with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits, and may be permitted by the assembly in its discretion to present rebuttal proofs.
 - iii) The respondent shall then proceed with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits.
 - iv) The receipt of evidence shall not be controlled by formal rules of evidence. The administration of oaths shall not be required.
 - v) At the request of either party, the presiding officer may exclude any evidence if the presiding officer determines that admitting such evidence would be irrelevant, untrustworthy, or fundamentally unfair.
 - vi) Both parties are permitted to question witnesses that testify at a judicial hearing unless the parties agree in writing at least fifteen (15) days before the hearing to admit a written statement of a witness. The presiding officer shall have discretion to determine the manner in which witnesses will be questioned. As an example, the presiding officer may determine that questions will be submitted in advance of the hearing, and that the questioning of a witness will be done by a person other than the complainant or respondent.
 - vii) After all evidence has been presented to the assembly, the complainant and the respondent shall summarize their cases either orally or in writing. The complainant may be afforded the opportunity for rebuttal.
 - viii) If either party objects to irregularity in the proceedings, the objection must be entered into the record. The presiding officer may sustain or disallow the objection. If the chair's ruling is challenged, the assembly must vote on the question of sustaining the chair.
- b. The testimony shall be recorded verbatim.
 - c. The complainant has the burden to prove the written charge. Written charges must be proven by evidence that is clear, satisfactory, and convincing, to a reasonable certainty. Clear, satisfactory, and convincing evidence is evidence which when weighed against that opposed to it clearly has more convincing power. "Reasonable certainty" means that you are persuaded based upon a rational consideration of the evidence. Absolute certainty is not required, but a guess is not enough to meet the burden of proof, with a high degree of probability.
 - d. If a complainant other than an employee or an assembly has filed written charges against an agency, board, or committee, he or she must allege—and the burden remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct being challenged substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, and as an individual apart from other members of the church.
 - e. If a complainant is an employee who has filed written charges against an agency, board, or committee, he or she must allege—and the burden

- remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct being challenged substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, in his or her capacity as an employee.
- f. If a respondent fails to appear and the assembly determines that the respondent has been notified of the time and place of the judicial hearing and has had sufficient time to appear, the assembly may proceed in the respondent's absence.
 - g. During the hearing, the presiding officer shall not comment on the merits of the case. This restriction does not apply when the assembly enters its final deliberations.
 - h. The final decision on any case shall be by majority vote of the assembly of the members hearing the case. Any member that has not attended all the sessions or heard the case in its entirety may not vote unless that member reads or listens to the record before a vote is taken.
 - i. The record of all proceedings including the testimony, the exhibits, papers, evidence, and findings in the case shall be certified by the presiding officer and shall be the basis of any appeal. The parties may have reasonable access to the record.

Section 6: Appeals

- a. Appeals shall be filed with the assembly next in order.
- b. The grounds for an appeal include irregularities in the proceedings of the lower assembly; decisions on the admission or exclusion of evidence; bias or prejudice in the case; manifest injustice in the judgment; or incorrect interpretation or application of the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order; and shall be based on the record of the judicial hearing.
- c. No decision resulting from a judicial hearing shall be amended or overturned except on a showing that the procedures were manifestly unfair; that the evidence obviously did not support the decision; or that an incorrect interpretation or application of the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order was made.
- d. The reviewing assembly shall not reassess the credibility of the witnesses that testified at the hearing.
- e. Appeals to synod from decisions of assemblies of the CRC acting in their judicial capacity and appeals from a board, agency, or committee of synod when the Judicial Code has been invoked shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee.
- f. Persons that have voted on a matter in an assembly shall recuse themselves from participating in the appeal. In the event that the appeal is from a decision of an assembly related to a Safe Church proceeding, participants in the Safe Church panel process shall recuse themselves from participating in the appeal.

- g. A losing party that failed to appear at the judicial hearing either personally or by a representative shall not be permitted to file a claim of appeal.

Section 7: Appeal Procedures before a Classis following a Judicial Hearing before a Council

- a. Within ninety (90) days of the certification of the record, the losing party from a decision of a council following a judicial hearing, including a decision in a Safe Church proceeding, may file a written claim of appeal that states the grounds for the appeal with the stated clerk of classis. A copy of the claim of appeal shall also be delivered to the opposing party, the opposing party's representative, if any, and the clerk of the council that decided the case. Upon receipt of the claim of appeal, the clerk of council shall forthwith transfer the certified record to classis. If the appeal is from a Safe Church proceeding, the record ~~produced in referenced in step 12 of the~~ Advisory Panel Process shall be the record on appeal.
- b. The appeal hearing in classis shall be limited to the grounds set forth in the claim of appeal.
- c. With the claim of appeal, the losing party ~~shall may~~ file a written submission in support of the claim of appeal. Portions of certified record and any other authority that supports the grounds of appeal must be clearly cited. A copy of the submission shall also be delivered to the opposing party. Except if permission is granted by classis, the written submission shall not exceed thirty (30) pages double spaced.
- d. Within sixty (60) days, the opposing party ~~shall may~~ file a written response to the claim of appeal with the stated clerk of classis and also a written submission that cites from the record and any authority that supports the response. Copies of the response and submission shall also be delivered to the losing party. Except if permission is granted by classis, the written submission shall not exceed thirty (30) pages double spaced.
- e. In the event of the appellant's death, the assembly may proceed with and decide the appeal if it is deemed significant for the denomination, or if the appellant's representative provides proof of reasonable necessity for deciding the appeal.
- f. Classis shall schedule an appellate hearing no sooner than ninety (90) days and no later than one hundred and eighty (180) days after the date the appeal was filed and send notice of the time and date of the hearing to the parties.
- g. At the appellate hearing, each party shall have the opportunity to address classis to explain their position and to answer questions of classis. The losing party shall proceed first and may reserve time to respond after the prevailing party addresses classis. Unless permission is granted,

the oral presentation for each party shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes.

- h. After the parties' presentations are concluded, classis shall go into strict executive session, review the record, and shall immediately consider and decide the issues of the case. The final decision on any appeal shall be by majority vote of the classis as constituted.
- i. Classis may affirm or reverse in whole or in part the decision of the council, or it may return the case to the council with instructions for a new partial or complete rehearing. A decision of classis that amends or overturns the decision of the council shall be written, shall state the grounds for amending or overturning, and shall be delivered to the parties. Written decisions should be sent to the parties as soon as practicable, but not later than forty-five (45) days after the appellate hearing.
- j. Within ninety (90) days of the issuance of the written decision, claims of appeal from a decision of classis may be filed with synod according to procedures for filing claims of appeal with classis.

Section 8: The Judicial Code Committee of Synod

- a. 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. Although there are some separate regulations regarding this committee in the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.
- b. The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of twelve (12) members and shall reflect the diversity of the denomination, preferably with at least 25 percent of the members reflecting ethnic diversity and an equal balance of men and women. 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 of the CRCNA. 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 of the CRCNA 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. In addition, the general secretary serves as a procedural adviser to the

Judicial Code Committee chairperson. Any member of the Judicial Code Committee advising a given synod may be, but need not be, a delegate to that synod.

Section 9: 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. 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 include the names of the parties to the appeal, but shall otherwise omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.

Normally the report is provided to synod delegates at such time that the matter is before synod (therefore time to read the report must be provided as well). However, the Judicial Code Committee may recommend to the officers of synod release of the written report to the delegates while synod is in session, one or two days before the matter is on the schedule; rationale should relate to the degree of confidentiality needed.

Not more than 15 business days and not less than 10 business days before the convening of synod shall be the time parameters within which the complainant and respondent shall receive the written report (sent by the Office of General Secretary). Providing the written report to

- the complainant and respondent includes a required commitment not to share the report with any party other than the representative of each.
- f. Upon receipt of the written report or prior to, both the complainant and respondent may request the opportunity to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee shall make a recommendation to the officers of synod as soon as possible based on ensuring due process (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 2, g) and on the benefit synod would derive from such an address, and communicate the decision immediately to both parties (even if only one has made such a request).
 - g. The Judicial Code Committee may provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on Judicial Code matters.
 - h. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
 - i) by deciding the matter;
 - ii) by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;
 - iii) by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council; or
 - iv) by conducting its own original judicial or appeal hearing.
 - i. Unless synod conducts its own original judicial or appeal hearing, synod shall give deference to the factual findings made by the Judicial Code Committee.
 - j. If synod conducts its own judicial or appeal hearing, it shall follow Judicial Code procedures set forth herein.

(Acts of Synod 1977, pp. 48-54)
(Amended Acts of Synod 1993, p. 499)
(Amended Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 484-88)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 688-91)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2013, p. 549)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2014, p. 569)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2015, p. 627)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 717-18)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2024, pp.)

- C. That synod instruct the COD to conduct another review to begin after Synod 2027 and report to Synod 2029, per Synod 2019's instructions to review the Judicial Code every five years.
- D. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of the Judicial Code Review Team and dismiss the team with gratitude for its work.

Charles Adams (chair)
 Scott DeVries (staff)
 Rudy Gonzalez
 Rebecca Jordan Heys

Johannes Schouten
 Kathy Smith (adviser)
 Roberta Vriesema
 Joel Vos (vice chair)

CRCNA Statements on Social, Economic, or Political Matters

Executive summary

In 2023, Classis Southeast U.S. sent an overture to synod titled “Refocus Ecclesiological Communication” (Overture 3). Its basic premise was that over time the denomination had veered away from its emphasis on Scripture and strict theological orthodoxy and had begun to focus instead on orthopraxy and offering concrete advice on how the church should respond to specific social, economic, or political matters. The overture asked synod to declare that the CRCNA “take no position, make no statements, and take no actions promoting or endorsing any social, economic, or political idea or action in any way.”

Synod 2023 debated this overture and landed on a multifaceted response. While delegates and committee members agreed with many of the concerns stated in the overture, they also recognized the ongoing need for the church to be prophetic and to speak into current issues.

In response to the overture, Synod 2023 asked CRCNA staff to report to Synod 2024 about how and when the CRCNA organization comments on social, economic, or political matters. Synod also asked staff to exercise discretion when it chooses to take such actions.

The following report outlines why the CRCNA chooses to speak into such matters, the process used for making those decisions, the components that must be included in such statements, and a list of examples of such statements. The report also outlines concerns staff heard in the overture and how those have been addressed.

What is especially important to note is the difference between being “political” and being “partisan.” While the authors of the overture asked that staff refrain from making *any* statements of a political nature, this report explains that pursuing justice is in fact part of our fivefold calling in the CRCNA. However, the following report also acknowledges that there is no place within the church for staff to be partisan—that is, endorsing a specific political party, ideology, or candidate.

Since Synod 2018, when denominational statements were brought to synod’s attention for being too partisan, all of the processes for issuing such statements were updated with the necessary criteria in mind. The updated processes began being implemented in a robust way in 2020.

Since then, we have seen a reduction in the overall number of staff working in the area of social justice, the quantity of statements being made, and the number of ecumenical letters being signed. In addition, recent restructuring has meant that the former Office of Social Justice has been absorbed into Thrive. As part of this process, former OSJ staff spend less time working on issue-based public statements and are instead focused on helping churches incorporate justice into their mission as part of faith formation.

While the Centre for Public Dialogue will continue to release issue-based statements and resources for Canadian CRC members, this is always done with the guidance and oversight of the Committee for Contact with the Government.

While not all CRC members will agree with every public position taken by their denomination, we believe there is a role for the church in speaking out about social, economic, and political issues. As part of our calling to pursue justice, the CRCNA has tasked its ministries with interpreting the positions of the denomination, together with the instructions of synod, to advocate for and with people who suffer injustice and to make determinations about how to raise the CRCNA's collective voice in a nonpartisan way.

The updated processes, the checks and balances of collaboration, the thoroughness of background-assessment tools, and the guidance of advisory committees—all help ensure that this responsibility is lived out as well as possible.

I. Background

In 2023, Classis Southeast U.S. sent an overture (see Addendum 1) to synod titled "Refocus Ecclesiological Communication." The premise of this overture was that "over the past decades, we have seen the CRC veer away from focusing on profound theological principles set within the context of the day and toward promoting stances on specific economic, political, and social biases with little or weak scriptural support" (*Agenda for Synod 2023*, p. 356).

The overture asked Synod 2023 to declare that the CRCNA "take no position, make no statements, and take no actions promoting or endorsing any social, economic, or political idea or action in any way, including but not limited to, written comments made in print or on our website, or by providing links from our website" (p. 356). It also recommended the creation of an advisory committee to enforce this declaration and ensure compliance.

The synodical advisory committee's discussion of this overture during Synod 2023 was robust and often agreed with the concerns noted in the overture. However, the committee also received two communications from CRCNA staff (see Addenda 2-3) and recognized that past synods have addressed similar concerns and have always responded in a way that affirmed the need of the church to be prophetic and speak into current issues.

For example, in 2018 in response to an overture titled "Instruct CRC Agencies and Ministries to Stop Political Lobbying on Behalf of the Christian Reformed Denomination," synod said, "we need to continue engaging in the social/political/economic layers of public life," and synod encouraged the CRCNA to "continue to pray for growth in wisdom as we speak prophetically and pursue mercy and justice" (*Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 524-25).

At the same time, the 2018 advisory committee noted, "In our calling to be prophetic, we acknowledge that there will not be unanimity and single-mindedness on all political issues and that differences of opinions will arise. We are called to gospel-centered relationships that hold unity as a high

value. We are called to the preservation and restoration of unity as the body of Christ. We trust that when differences arise, our means of addressing them will give testimony to our unity in Christ” (p. 524).

With this in mind, Synod 2018 instructed “the Council of Delegates to create a U.S. committee to provide guidance and support to the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action [OSJ]” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 527-28).

Although this 2018 directive was implemented, the Synod 2023 advisory committee thought that the created committee had not done enough to oversee and guide the communications of OSJ. They further noted that broader guidance is needed for the entire CRCNA organization on how it ought to communicate on social, economic, or political matters.

In light of the ongoing restructuring in the CRCNA organization, Synod 2023 did not believe the timing was right to create a new, separate, content-management committee. Instead, the advisory committee recommended and Synod 2023 approved the following two recommendations: (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 926):

1. That synod instruct the office of General Secretary to report directly back to Synod 2024 on how the concerns noted in Overture 3 have been addressed—namely, specifying how and when the CRCNA organization comments and/or makes statements on social, economic, or political matters that synod has not previously specifically addressed.
2. That synod urge the CRCNA organization to exercise discretion when responding to social, economic, and/or political matters.

II. Role of the church

In their grounds, the writers of Overture 3 from Classis Southeast U.S. argued that the proper role of the church is to “purely preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and practice church discipline.” They remind the readers of the CRC’s tradition of relying on Scripture and biblical principles to guide our actions rather than observed reality and individual beliefs.

While there is validity in this observation, it must be balanced with the fact that as Christian Reformed people, part of our shared mission statement reminds us to “pursue God’s justice and peace in every area of life.” We reflect this mission when we acknowledge that mercy and justice (in addition to faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, and gospel proclamation and worship) are part of the fivefold calling that God expects of us individually and corporately as Christian Reformed people.

We express this part of our calling by saying, “Hearing the cries of the oppressed, forsaken, and disadvantaged, we seek to act justly and love mercy as we walk humbly with our God.”

Justice, when it is biblically based and in alignment with Scripture, is a key element of our identity as Reformed people. What’s more, since 1898 the CRCNA has recognized that pursuing God’s justice in the world requires

us to provide public witness and engagement on matters of justice, peace, and reconciliation in our society — and that this must be done from a Reformed and biblical foundation.

A review of the *Acts of Synod* for the past 130 years will show this commitment to public engagement around justice and current events (see Addendum 4). From issues about labor, war, immigration, abortion, and Christian education to concerns about nuclear weapons, pornography, world hunger, and more, the synods of the Christian Reformed Church have regularly made declarations and sent communications to governments as a means of expressing our faith and commitment to justice.

In fact, Synod 1973 felt so strongly about these denominational declarations that they mandated a committee to “compile materials for a book to contain pertinent synodical decisions on doctrinal and ethical matters” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 596; see also pp. 44-45, 595-604). As a result, a series of synods’ statements on doctrinal and ethical matters continues to be compiled and shared. These statements are available at crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements.

While it is clear that our church values being a denomination that wrestles with and speaks into current issues, it is also clear that our shared public witness must reflect the values and positions of Scripture and the church. As such, task forces and committees have researched the issues and contexts that congregations have faced, and synods have stated official positions. It is from within these positions that the staff of CRCNA agencies do their work (see Addendum 5).

III. Proper function of denominational agencies

Our past synods and their position statements do not address every nuance or situation that may come up in our societies. While CRCNA agency staff speak only into issues that they have been asked by synod to address, they must use discretion about when and how to execute the directions of synod in today’s context.

In the Classis Southeast U.S. overture, the writers cite the ease of mass communication and the influence this may have had on the CRCNA agencies’ decisions regarding events and positions to promote. They express frustration that some calls to social action seen in denominational publications have appeared to be politically motivated with minimal or weak scriptural engagement.

To respond to this critique and others like it, staff have adopted and adapted several protocols and processes to guide them when they speak into social, economic, or political matters. This report will briefly outline each of them.

It is important to understand that there are different methods by which CRCNA employees have spoken into social, economic, and political matters. Sometimes the former Office of Social Justice or the Centre for Public

Dialogue has done so in the form of communications directly with governments, by means of action alerts about specific legislation, or via requests for CRC members to get involved in advocacy.

At other times CRCNA staff have spoken into social, economic, and political matters through published statements online. These have been signed by directors of CRCNA ministries or, in some cases, issued by the executive director/general secretary alone.

In addition, CRCNA staff members may be asked to sign-on to a joint statement or letter that has been prepared by an ecumenical partner as a means of demonstrating ecumenical unity and a shared voice on a particular topic.

In each of these situations, CRCNA staff have developed specific protocols to help them discern whether or not to participate.

A. Statements by leadership

Sometimes a significant or pressing event or issue related to public justice may present a need and an opportunity for the church to speak. In such instances, leaders of CRCNA ministries may wish to make a timely public statement on behalf of their agency or on behalf of the CRCNA. This requires wisdom and discretion.

In 2020, following the death of George Floyd and the resulting public outcry, CRCNA leaders put out a statement signed by 19 denominational employees. While this statement was generally well received, some members of the CRC community felt that parts of it did not represent their views. In addition, some of the signatories later commented that while they still approved of the statement in principle, they would have suggested changes if they had had more time to review the statement.

As a result, staff adopted a new process (see Addendum 6). This process outlines the types of situations that might warrant a denominational statement, the process by which a decision about whether to make a statement would be made, what types of content should be included in each statement, and steps for review.

Since the adoption of this process in 2021, three official statements have been made by denominational leadership. All were signed only by the chief ecclesiastical officer (executive director Colin Watson, Sr., or general secretary Zachary King):

- Statement on Atlanta Shooting (crcna.org/news-and-events/news/statement-about-atlanta-shooting)
- Statement on Overturning *Roe v. Wade* (crcna.org/news-and-events/news/statement-overturning-roe-v-wade)
- Statement on Israel/Palestine conflict (crcna.org/news-and-events/news/statement-israel-palestine-conflict)

B. Ecumenical letters or statements

The CRCNA is a member of several ecumenical groups and partnerships.

CRCNA agencies such as World Renew are also members of various coalitions. From time to time, these partners may request that CRCNA leaders sign-on to a joint statement or letter.

The decision whether or not to sign such a letter or statement rests with the individual adding their name. The individual will use their knowledge of the partner, expertise on the topic being addressed, and discretion about the content to make a decision.

Generally speaking, they are also guided by these principles:

- a. Has a significant and pressing event or issue related to public justice occurred? (“Significant” will typically refer to something with a national or binational scope and/or be related to a larger movement or trend in society.)
- b. Is this event related to an issue that synod has addressed?
- c. Is our biblical/confessional witness impaired by our not speaking/participating?
- d. Is part of our community impaired by our not speaking?
- e. Is there a role for the church in responding to such events?

This process is in keeping with Synod 1937’s decision that “political, social, and economical questions are ecclesiastical matters only when doctrinal and ethical issues of sufficient moment and magnitude are involved according to the Word of God and our standards” (*Acts of Synod 1937*, p. 11).

CRCNA leaders also report to each other and the general secretary whenever they sign such a letter. They note the partner, the issue being addressed, who signed it on behalf of the CRCNA, and the date—and when possible they also provide a link to the statement.

A summary of this activity for the past ten years is available in Addendum 7. It can be noted that there has been a significant decrease in sign-ons since 2019. While expressing solidarity with our ecumenical partners and participating in a shared witness on critical issues remains a priority, there appears to be greater sensitivity to the increased polarity of our times.

Other factors may also be involved in this decrease. The political landscape has changed, for example, and the COVID-19 pandemic changed the number of advocacy opportunities available with government officials. In addition, staffing levels at the Office of Social Justice have decreased considerably over the past few years. Today only two former OSJ staff remain on staff.

In 2023 the Office of Social Justice was formally enfolded into Thrive, and its synodical mandate was discontinued. While Thrive continues to be committed to engaging in the social/political/economic layers of public life, its focus is at the congregational level rather than on encouraging people to take action on specific ethical issues. This means that Thrive staff will spend more time working with churches on appreciating the value of incorporat-

ing justice as part of faith formation, and less time on specific pieces of legislation. The decrease in participation in ecumenical statements related to justice issues reflects this reality.

Please note that this does not end the work of justice within the CRCNA. It is not a sneaky way of Thrive “getting rid” of OSJ. Instead it is a shift in the focus of the work to the congregational level, where Thrive believes it can make the biggest impact possible. Some statements about social, economic, and political issues may still be made.

C. Office of Social Justice action alerts

According to its mission statement, the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) was created to “lead and equip the CRC in carrying out its transforming mission to ‘pursue God’s justice and peace,’ as stated in its ‘Denominational Mission/Vision Statement’” (*Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 75). Its synodical mandate was to “encourage and assist the CRCNA—its leaders, agencies, institutions, and members—to better ‘live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God’ (Mic. 6:8)” (p. 75).

Throughout OSJ’s history, it carried out this mission by focusing primarily on the systemic causes of poverty, hunger, and powerlessness, as well as the social injustices to which synod or the Council of Delegates directed it. This focus and direction included the following:

- raising awareness and educating members and leaders about issues of justice that relate to root causes of poverty, hunger, and powerlessness as well as social justice issues that synod identified as priorities.
- identifying, creating, and encouraging the use of methods of worship and modes of living out our faith that express justice as a core personal and corporate value for Reformed Christians.
- raising the voice of the CRCNA in advocacy for and with those who suffer injustice, through action alerts to our members, participation in advocacy coalitions, and public statements when appropriate.

Because this work often touched on legislation or current events that would arise between synods, and because the work involved statements, letters, advocacy alerts, prayer requests, or other public-facing communications, a clear process was in place.

This included a flow chart that outlined whether an issue should be something that OSJ worked on, and an organizational process that outlined what level of communication was needed and who would be involved at each step. Each of those documents carefully considered such things as the broadness of the issue, its relation to synodical decisions, its impact on CRCNA community members, and the risks of both taking action and not taking action on the issue. Today, in Thrive, similar processes are in place.

For every action alert that was made for the attention of CRC members in the U.S. or Canada, a “backgrounder” was created (see Addendum 8). This

tool was often made public, or it might simply have guided the development of the action alert. Backgrounders were also made available to OSJ staff so that they could answer questions that might come up.

In addition, the Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice served as an informal feedback group on strategic direction (see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 45-46; *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 548, 794).

It should be noted again that, given the organizational realignment of incorporating OSJ into Thrive, we anticipate that former OSJ staff will spend a lot less time working on issue-based public statements and will instead focus their work on helping churches incorporate justice as part of faith formation. Because of these changes, the Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice officially concluded its mandate at the end of fall 2023. Committee members have since asked to be called upon should the need arise.

D. Centre for Public Dialogue

According to its mission statement, the Centre for Public Dialogue (CPD) was created to “promote a positive voice of Christian faith in Canadian public life that seeks justice, hope, and reconciliation in political dialogue and active citizenship” (crcna.org/publicdialogue).

It carries out this mission by doing the following:

- Listening deeply to the people most affected by the policies in question—CPD seeks to dialogue with marginalized communities and to amplify their voices.
- Doing careful research and engaging in conversations with church members and politicians to formulate constructive ideas and advocate for policies that promote the good of all people. CPD encourages and helps churches listen to the voices of marginalized people and advocate for the policies that research has shown worthy of support.
- Depending on the Holy Spirit—this alone gives CPD the confidence and peace to work respectfully, to keep going when progress is slow, and to recognize that they do not need to shout down the positions of others. Confidence in the Spirit allows CPD to work with the patient and persistent hope that justice is coming to Canada.

Because this work often touches on legislation or current events that arise between synods, and because the work involves statements, letters, advocacy alerts, prayer requests, or other public-facing communications, a clear process is in place.

This includes making use of OSJ’s flow chart and organizational process. CPD also follows OSJ’s protocol of producing backgrounders (Addendum 8) on the action alerts it creates.

The issues that CPD addresses are identified by close collaboration with the Committee for Contact with the Government. This committee was founded

in 1968, and its work is “rooted in a vision that the CRC in Canada has a calling to interact with Canadian society and governments ‘on the significant and pressing issues of the day’” (crcna.org/publicdialogue/connect). The committee is composed of CRCNA members from across Canada.

IV. Conclusions

In conclusion, here are the steps that have been implemented to address the overture titled “Refocus Ecclesiological Communication” (Addendum 1).

First, a review of CRCNA history and synodical decisions reminds us that the church has a role to play in speaking into political, social, and economic issues of the day. This role is well established in our Reformed tradition and in the history of our denomination. However, this review also notes that such actions must not be of a partisan nature.

Second, in response to criticism and in order to ensure proper protocols, processes have been adopted and adapted to help staff determine if, when, and how to speak into such issues. These processes refer back to synodical statements on the issues and rely on advice from guiding committees, ecumenical partners, and a review of synodical decisions and Scripture.

The processes were updated following Synod 2018 and began to be implemented in 2020 and 2021. Since then, we have seen a reduction in the overall quantity of statements being made and the number of ecumenical letters being signed. Over time, as these processes continue to be refined and lived into, we expect to see continued high levels of discernment.

Third, this work is collaborative in nature, seeking to speak into political, social, and economic issues that are important to CRCNA ministries and the people in our churches. When political, social, and economic questions are of sufficient moment and magnitude and are related to topics that previous synods have asked the church to speak into, CRCNA staff wish to provide a prophetic voice on behalf of the church. This is done across ministries and often in partnership with ecumenical partners. This collaboration adds another layer of discernment to the process.

Finally, staff listen carefully to feedback received regarding any statements made in order to inform decisions moving forward. Every effort is made to understand the areas of concern expressed by churches and individuals, to provide them with the detailed explanations included in backgrounders, and to engage with them in meaningful dialogue. Lessons are often learned on both sides.

In the end, it is also important to remember that a letter to government officials or a statement made by the denomination does not claim to speak for all members of the CRCNA. When the CRCNA articulates a view on a social or political matter (or when it is silent on those matters), it does so as an institution, not as a collection of individuals who all agree on everything. These views are voiced after a position has been formed, based on thorough study, discussion, and/or decision by synod.

Not all members will agree with every public position—statement or silence—taken by its church. That is OK. The CRCNA's ministries have not been tasked with representing the *majority* of members' views on issues. Instead, they have been tasked with interpreting the positions of the denomination, together with the instructions of synod, to advocate for and with those who suffer injustice and to make determinations about how to raise the CRCNA's collective voice in a nonpartisan way.

The processes in place, the checks and balances of collaboration, the thoroughness of backgrounders, and the guidance of advisory committees—all help to ensure that this responsibility is lived out as well as possible.

ADDENDUM 1

Overture 3: Refocus Ecclesiological Communication

(*Agenda for Synod 2023*, pp. 356-58)

I. Introduction

Over the past decades, we have seen the CRC veer away from focusing on profound theological principles set within the context of the day and toward promoting stances on specific economic, political, and social biases with little or weak scriptural support. This move has taken our focus off of the core tenets of what it means to be the true church and has left the impression with many that our denominational focus is to promote specific solutions to modern issues in lieu of biblical principles by which solutions are formulated.

Furthermore, this shift in focus has allowed a few within the denomination to promote unvetted ideas that represent themselves as the views of the entire CRCNA. The motivation behind this overture is not to censor our ministries from communicating but to, in fact, empower the CRCNA to do the opposite: to articulate issues with robust Reformed theological reflection using the voices of our neo-Calvinist past with the brilliant minds of today's theologians. We desire to restore our rich theological and historical prowess to equip not merely the CRCNA but the church worldwide.

II. Overture

Classis Southeast U.S. overtures synod to do the following:

- A. Declare that the CRCNA will take no position, make no statements, and take no actions promoting or endorsing any social, economic, or political idea or action in any way, including but not limited to, written comments made in print or on our website, or by providing links from our website.
- B. Appoint a Denominational Content Management Committee (DCMC) to act as a committee *in loco* to initially enforce this declaration and ensure compliance.

- C. Instruct the general secretary to remove all content immediately that the committee deems violates this declaration, and further instruct the general secretary to ensure that all policies and job descriptions with the denominational offices comply with this declaration.

Further, we offer the following names as recommended members for the DCMC:

- Rev. Gerrit Besteman, Bradenton (Fla.) CRC
- Rev. David Vander Meulen, Escalon (Calif.) CRC
- Rev. Andrew Zomerman, Dresden (Ont.) CRC
- Rev. Jim Hollendoner, Munster (Ind.) CRC
- Rev. Jesse Walhof, Living Water Community CRC, Orange City, Iowa

Grounds:

1. Promote the proper role of the church

- The role of the church is to purely preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and practice church discipline. Preaching can involve proclaiming biblical principles obtained from Scripture but should not include promoting specific political, social, or economic positions that stem from expertise, understanding, and biases outside of Scripture.
- The church as an institution and organization ought to remain within its "sphere" and speak only to biblical principles, and in so doing it will equip its members to be transformative agents as they serve within the other spheres to which they have been called. Abraham Kuyper discusses the dangers of a time when "the entire social life was to be covered by the wings of the Church . . . [and] . . . as a result the world corrupted the Church." Kuyper goes on to state that under Calvinism, "the Church receded in order to be neither more or less than the congregation of believers . . . [and] . . . thus domestic life regained its independence . . . set free from every ecclesiastical bond" albeit still under the dominion of God (*Stone Foundation Lectures*, p. 79).
- It needs to be presupposed that all truth stems from God's revealed Word. Scripture is not subject to our observed reality or individual spiritual beliefs (which are fallen). The trend we are observing is that current political, social, and economic reflections are prioritized above the guidance of Scripture to speak into the issue.
- Thus, if the CRC collectively, as a church, desires to speak to an issue of our day, we need to first approach Scripture and exegete, or draw out, the biblical principles that speak to that issue and seek to apply those principles to the current context as best as we can. Synod has used study committees to construct biblical theologies of various issues in the past, and this process is still available.

2. Promote the proper function of the denominational agencies
 - The mission of denominational agencies is to resource the local congregation and is not intended to represent the plethora of opinions and political ideologies of CRCNA officebearers or members.
 - The CRCNA has spent significant time and effort over the years formulating and communicating official position statements—from gambling to abortion. More recently, however, the ease of mass communication has influenced what our CRCNA agencies decide to promote with little or no oversight or approval from the denomination as a whole.
 - Some of the calls to social action that are seen in our publications often seem to be politically motivated with minimal or weak scriptural engagement—or worse, exhibit sophistry that impugns basic Christian doctrine.
3. Promote proper practices and good results
 - Bad theology hurts people. Good orthopraxy only stems from good orthodoxy; however, it seems many of the statements made in our publications stem from "orthodoxy following orthopraxy" where a preferred policy becomes the basis for eisegeting Scripture.
 - The proper use of language is important. The church struggled for centuries on the language it uses to speak about God, demonstrating the importance of precise language. We need to understand that the specific words we use communicate our purpose and understanding. So, for example, when we understand that using the term "social justice" aligns the CRC with one political and social movement, it is incumbent upon us to choose language such as "biblical justice" to instead align the CRC with Scripture.
 - Adopting this overture will still allow our publications to publish opinion letters from individual readers, but the publications themselves would not be able to editorialize, since this is done in the name of the denomination. Rather, they could report on current issues with impartiality, except as has been approved by synod.
 - Any individual CRC member, whether an employee or not, can freely express their opinions about how biblical principles should be applied; however, the avenues to express those opinions should be communicated through other means like parachurch organizations rather than church as institute.

Classis Southeast U.S.
Viviana Cassis, stated clerk

ADDENDUM 2

Communication (from Thrive) Concerning Overture 3: Refocus Ecclesiological Communication

(*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 773-75)

I. Introduction

The current Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, Appendix T provides an opportunity for the leadership of CRCNA agencies and institutions to make comments on overtures to synod that would affect their work and mandate. Congregational Ministries offers this reflection to synod to assist in its deliberations. In summary, we would like to point out the following considerations and concerns related to this overture:

II. Considerations and concerns

A. This overture echoes the concerns and issues brought up at Synod 2018 in Overtures 12-14 and Communication 2. Synod 2018 responded by acknowledging the importance of having a public voice for justice and mercy issues and stating, “We need to continue engaging in the social/political/economic layers of public life.” Synod also encouraged us “to continue to pray for growth in wisdom as we speak prophetically and pursue mercy and justice” (see *Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 524-25). It is important to note that Overture 3 to Synod 2023 does not present any new evidence or grounds that would justify revising or rescinding past synodical work and endorsement on this matter. As such, it falls short of the standard for reconsideration or revision as outlined in Church Order Article 31.

B. The CRC has repeatedly affirmed that the gospel must be proclaimed in both word and deed, and that an essential part of both proclaiming and living out the good news in this world is to raise our voice to our public officials and faithfully engage in the public sphere (see *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 63; *Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 676-77). This belief and position has been reaffirmed on multiple occasions in the history of the CRC—most recently in 2018 (see *Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 524-28).

C. *Our World Belongs to God*, paragraph 53, expresses that a component of our mission is to “call on all governments to do public justice.”

D. If adopted, the recommendations proposed in Overture 3 would contradict the rich legacy of advocacy and public justice that synod itself has participated in and urged, dating back to the 1800s, and would undermine one of the five calling areas (Mercy and Justice) that synod has approved as integral to the CRC’s mission.

E. The following nonexhaustive list of examples highlights occasions in which previous synods emphasized denominational public advocacy and reaffirmation of this role. These examples serve to underscore the CRC’s historical and ongoing commitment to biblical justice and advocacy, and the vital importance of maintaining this tradition in service of the holistic witness of the gospel:

Acts of Synod 1889 (English translation), pp. 40-41

Acts of Synod 1937, p. 11

Acts of Synod 1941, pp. 131-32

Acts of Synod 1942, p. 139

Acts of Synod 1965, p. 41

Acts of Synod 1966, p. 143

Acts of Synod 1972, p. 64

Acts of Synod 1975, pp. 68-70

Acts of Synod 1978, p. 63

Acts of Synod 1982, pp. 105-6

Acts of Synod 1996, p. 40

Acts of Synod 2000, p. 621

Acts of Synod 2003, p. 687

Acts of Synod 2005, p. 778

Acts of Synod 2006, pp. 676-77

Acts of Synod 2007, p. 581

Acts of Synod 2010, pp. 878-85

Acts of Synod 2011, p. 820

Acts of Synod 2012, p. 756

Acts of Synod 2014, p. 560

Acts of Synod 2017, p. 633

Acts of Synod 2018, pp. 524-25

III. Conclusion

In summary, it is our opinion that the action requested by this overture goes against many decades of synodical decisions on the importance of the church's prophetic voice in our society.

On behalf of Congregational Ministries (Thrive),

Lesli van Milligen, director (Canada)

Chris Schoon, director (U.S.)

ADDENDUM 3

Justice and Reconciliation Team (Canada) Response concerning Overture 3: Refocus Ecclesiological Communication

(*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 775-77)

I. Introduction

The staff of the Canadian ministries of the CRCNA who are tasked with mandates related to justice and reconciliation appreciate the opportunity to speak to the contents of Overture 3.

This overture addresses matters similar to those raised in Overtures 12-14 and Communication 2 at Synod 2018 regarding ecclesiology and justice. At that time, synod reiterated that advocacy work is part of holistic justice and

gospel work. It adopted recommendations (see Articles 66 and 70, *Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 524-28) that provide a significant framework for the context and oversight of CRC public communications and engagement on matters of public justice.

It might also be of interest to Synod 2023 delegates that synod itself has instructed the majority of justice activity in the CRCNA as a result of the work of study committees. Synod 2018 provided instruction that ministries must continue to center their justice activity on sound biblical principles and theological discernment (see recommendations 7-8, *Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 528). Justice and reconciliation ministries are deliberate about honoring this instruction.

Please also note that the Ministries Leadership Council adopted a detailed protocol in 2020 regarding how it would discern, review, and approve future public statements concerning justice and reconciliation (see crcna.org/joint-crcna-leadership-statements). This protocol includes when a public statement should be considered, who can request that a public statement be made, where the request for such a statement should be sent, who will be involved in deliberation, who will be asked to sign on to such statements, and how much time signatories will receive before the statement is made public. The protocols also include standards for content and where the statements should be posted.

Overture 3 does not provide any new grounds or evidence for rescinding past synodical work or for opening up discussion on this matter now. Further, Overture 3 adds a layer of complexity that could be interpreted to circumvent Synod 2018's reflections on questions of justice and ecclesiology. In addition, the recommendations of the overture to "make no statements" or take "no actions" and, further, to remove reference to justice statements and actions of the CRCNA puts at risk the public witness of the church on core matters of public justice such as civil rights, apartheid, sanctity of life, peacebuilding, and reconciliation.

II. For the specific attention of the Canada Ministries Board of the CRCNA:

In Canada the CRCNA has a long and storied history of public-witness engagement on matters of justice, peace, and reconciliation from a Reformed and biblical foundation. Overture 3 does not engage this context in any meaningful way and suggests that social justice action is biased, based on weak scriptural support and "unvetted."

Since 1968, at the establishment of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, matters of public justice have been a frequent subject of ecclesial discernment and institutional and congregational action in Canada. This has persisted in subsequent governance structures, and most recently Synod 2022 affirmed justice and reconciliation as a core element of ministry in Canada (via approval of the Structure and Leadership Task Force report and establishing the Canadian office; *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 926-31).

The proposed directive to remove content and statements on justice (section II, C of Overture 3) could, for example, lead to the removal of CRC Canada statements related to the New Covenant with Aboriginal Peoples (1987, 2007) which has been foundational to much of our public and congregational work on truth and reconciliation and *Hearts Exchanged*.

It also bears mentioning that much of the work of justice and reconciliation work in Canada is done in responsive dialogue with partners and affected communities. These colabourers in Christ's call to justice are often a prophetic voice to the church and give shape to the public-witness activities of justice and reconciliation ministries. Ceasing public statements and removing content related to them will mute these important voices in our midst and threaten the integrity of the CRC's holistic gospel public witness in Canada. Passage of this overture in its current form would hinder the integrity of contextualized justice and reconciliation ministry in Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Hogeterp,
Justice and Reconciliation Team (Canada)

ADDENDUM 4

Examples of Denominational Advocacy from History

- **1898**—Synod adopts two overtures to approach the United States government to request a National Day of Prayer (*Acts of Synod 1898* [English text], pp. 40-41).
- **1918**—Synod sends a telegram to the president of the United States pledging support in the war effort (*Acts of Synod 1918* [English text], p. 7).
- **1937**—Synod declares that “political, social, and economic questions are ecclesiastical matters only when doctrinal and ethical issues of sufficient moment and magnitude are involved according to the Word of God and our standards” (*Acts of Synod 1937*, p. 11).
- **1941 and 1942**—Synod sends communications to the president of the United States to avoid compulsory labor, or a seven-day work week, in the defense program (*Acts of Synod 1941*, pp. 131-32; *Acts of Synod 1942*, p. 139).
- **1943**—Synod sends a letter urging the president of the United States to take more effective measures toward the prevention of the use of profanity and cursing on the part of the military officers (*Acts of Synod 1943*, pp. 24-25).
- **1960**—Stated clerk R.J. Danhof asks Rep. Gerald R. Ford to introduce a bill to address the expiration of legislation that had allowed Indonesians to immigrate to the U.S.; Ford does so and provides a copy of his proposal to the CRCNA; the bill passes (*Acts of Synod 1960*, pp. 278-80).

- **1965**—Synod expresses opposition to U.S. SB 1211, proposing national election days be on Sundays, by drafting a resolution and sending it to every U.S. senator (*Acts of Synod 1965*, p. 41).
- **1966**—Canadian classes establish the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) as the result of the work of a synodical study committee. The first item listed on its mandate was “official contact with the Canadian government” (*Acts of Synod 1966*, p. 143; *Acts of Council 1968*, CCRCC, p. 4).
- **1972**—Synod calls believers to a ringing testimony against the evils of abortion as practiced in our society and encourages the promotion of action and legislation that reflects the teaching of Scripture (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 64).
- **1975**—Synod sends a statement to the president of the U.S. about injustice in financing Christian education (*Acts of Synod 1975*, pp. 68-70).
- **1976**—Synod endorses the Human Life Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, as worded by the legal committee of the National Right to Life Organization (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 63).
- **1978**—Synod endorses the conclusion of a study committee stating that “the matter of social justice is important for the Christian Reformed Church, involving the relationship of action by the church as an organization and action by believers as individuals and as groups” (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 63).
- **1982**—Synod sends guidelines and a letter to the president of the U.S., the prime minister of Canada, and the secretary general of the U.S. expressing concerns about the use of nuclear weapons (*Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 105-6).
- **1984**—The Canadian Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) advocates with the Canadian government for pornography legislation, identifying it as “idolatry” and asking for ethical codes in media (*Pornography: Pollution of Our Culture*, CCG Pamphlet, panel 3).
- **1988**—The shared board of Christian Reformed World Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee asks synod to petition the U.S. and Canadian governments regarding U.S. involvement in Nicaragua. Synod rejects the request but does send a letter to the prime minister and parliament of Canada about impending abortion legislation (*Acts of Synod 1988*, pp. 528, 547).
- **1993**—CCG makes recommendations to the Canadian government’s Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, advocating for dialogue, mutuality, and empathy (*Acts of Council 1993*, p. 38).
- **1996**—Peter Vander Meulen is appointed by the Board of Trustees as coordinator of social justice and world hunger issues (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 40).
- **2005**—Synod urges the CRCNA and its key agencies to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic with an energetic advocacy program—

speaking to institutions, governments, and individuals to ensure that resources are made available to the world's poor and powerless victims (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 726).

- **2010**—Synod adopts an overture to instruct OSJ to boldly advocate for the church's position against abortion (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 883). This same synod urges the OSJ and CCG to engage in policy development and advocacy strategies that lead to immigration reform and the enactment of fair, just, and equitable laws regarding persons without status in Canada and the United States (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 878).
- **2011**—Synod approves a revised mandate for the OSJ “to encourage and assist the CRCNA—its leaders, agencies, institutions, and members—to better ‘live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God’ (Mic. 6:8). [OSJ] focuses primarily on the systemic causes of poverty, hunger, and powerlessness, as well as those social injustices to which synod or the [COD] has directed it . . . *raising the voice* of the CRCNA in advocacy for and with those who suffer injustice, through action alerts to our members, participation in advocacy coalitions, and public statements when appropriate” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 75).
- **2012**—Synod calls on appropriate denominational agencies to advocate with governments to take the necessary actions in an effective global framework to assist populations that are bearing the brunt of the negative effects of climate change while being the least able to cope (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 805).
- **2016**—Synod asks the OSJ to urge every congregation to participate in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church and to ensure the collection and distribution of up-to-date information about religious persecution and liberty (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 862-63).

ADDENDUM 5

Examples of Synodical Mandates for Advocacy

The following list is not comprehensive but includes a sampling of the instructions provided by synods over time to CRCNA staff in terms of advocating on specific issues of relevance to the church.

- Abortion—Synod 2010 adopted an overture to instruct the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) to boldly **advocate** for the church's position against abortion. This has been interpreted to include **political advocacy** (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 883).
- Creation care—Synod 2012 called on appropriate denominational agencies to **advocate with governments** to take the necessary actions in an effective global framework to assist populations that are bearing the brunt of the negative effects of climate change while being the least able to cope (*Acts of Synod 2012*, p. 805).

- HIV/AIDS—Synod 2005 urged the CRCNA and its key agencies to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic with an energetic advocacy program—**speaking to institutions, governments**, and individuals to ensure that resources are made available to the world’s poor and powerless victims (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 726).
- Immigrants and refugees—Synod 2010 urged the OSJ and CCG to **engage in policy development and advocacy strategies** that will lead to immigration reform and the enactment of fair, just, and equitable laws regarding those without status in Canada and the United States (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 878).
- Poverty and hunger—Synod 2011 approved a revised mandate for the OSJ “to encourage and assist the CRCNA—its leaders, agencies, institutions, and members—to better ‘live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God’ (Mic. 6:8). [OSJ] focuses primarily on the systemic causes of poverty, hunger, and powerlessness, as well as those social injustices to which synod or the [COD] has directed it . . . **raising the voice of the CRCNA in advocacy for and with those who suffer injustice**, through action alerts to our members, participation in advocacy coalitions, and public statements when appropriate” (*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 75).
- Religious persecution—While there is no advocacy mandate on this issue, Synod 2016 asked the OSJ to urge every congregation to participate in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church and to ensure the collection and distribution of up-to-date information about religious persecution and liberty (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 862-63).

ADDENDUM 6

Communication for Joint CRCNA Leadership Statements

I. Process Standards

1. We should consider drafting a statement when all of the following criteria are met:
 - a. A significant and pressing event or issue related to public justice occurs (“significant” will typically refer to something with a national or binational scope and/or be related to a larger movement or trend in society),
 - b. AND this event is related to an issue that synod has addressed,
 - c. AND our biblical/confessional witness could be impaired by our not speaking,
 - d. AND a part of our community could be impaired by our not speaking,
 - e. AND there is a role for the church in responding to such events.

- This is in keeping with Synod 1937's decision that "political, social, and economical questions are ecclesiastical matters only when doctrinal and ethical issues of sufficient moment and magnitude are involved according to the Word of God and our standards" (*Acts of Synod 1937*, p. 11).
2. A request for such a statement could arise from
 - a. brothers and sisters in faith impacted by the event,
 - b. any of our ministries whose mandates relate to the event/issue at hand,
 - c. any of our churches, classes, ecumenical partners,
 - d. ecumenical partnerships and other groups of which the CRCNA or its ministries are a part.
 3. Each CRCNA office and ministry should discern and curate carefully the public voice of the church as they consider making these requests.
 - a. There is a polarity between needing to be seen as a part of the broader ecumenical world speaking on issues, and needing to be judicial about what we ask our Christian Reformed churches to take action on. (For example, constituents experience "message fatigue" when we send statements too frequently. This can lead to their not paying attention to any of our statements.)
 - b. There are costs in speaking about an issue, and there are costs in not speaking.
 - c. There are multiple ways to speak into an issue beyond a full CRCNA leadership statement (e.g., advocacy alert, news stories, agency statement, etc.).
 4. When such a situation arises, and after discernment by the appropriate persons or agencies has been done, a request for a CRCNA leadership statement should be sent to
 - a. the executive director of the CRCNA,
 - b. the transitional executive director-Canada (if the issue is related to Canada or is binational in scope),
 - c. the director of U.S. ministries and administration (if the issue is related to the U.S. or is binational in scope),
 - d. the director of communications and marketing.
 5. This leadership group will convene a discernment meeting, which will include a representative from the group asking about this statement. The leadership group will also be intentional about ensuring a diversity of voices at the table. If the potential statement relates to an issue that impacts certain groups of people more than others (e.g., disability legislation), the leadership group will ensure that there is representation from that group in the discussion. After this discernment has been done, the leadership group will make a decision.

6. This same decision-making group should also decide, in consultation with those requesting a statement and the appropriate persons or agencies, which level of signatories should be required if a statement is warranted. They should also decide if two statements (one U.S., one Canadian) might be needed. The potential signatories could include
 - a. the general secretary alone;
 - b. U.S. senior leadership (director of U.S. ministries and administration, World Renew codirector, Resonate director, ReFrame director, Thrive codirector);
 - c. U.S. senior leadership (see above) plus Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary presidents;
 - d. Canadian senior leadership (the executive director-Canada, director of the Centre for Public Dialogue, World Renew codirector, Resonate director, director of Diaconal Ministries Canada, Thrive codirector);
 - e. binational senior leadership and general secretary.

In addition to these groups above, certain events may suggest the need for additional relevant signatories. For example, a situation involving abuse might warrant adding the safe church ministry consultant. This decision can be made on a case-by-case basis.

7. If a decision is made not to issue a CRCNA leadership statement, it does not preclude a specific ministry from issuing their own statement. A summary of all requests for statements will be reported to the Ministries Leadership Committee (MLC) each month so that all directors are aware of which requests have been considered.
8. The decision-making group will email the potential signatories as soon as possible to let them know that a decision has been made to work on a statement.
 - a. This will give them time to consider whether or not to add their name. This may include the need for signatories to consult with their boards (e.g., Calvin University Trustee Executive Committee), depending on the issue.
 - b. The potential signatories will be told who the primary authors of the draft statement will be, and the signatories will be encouraged to provide input and ideas while the statement is being drafted.
 - c. The author group will also give the potential signatories a timeline for when the draft will be ready, when edits will be needed, and when the statement will be published.
 - d. If signatories are traveling or are away on vacation, they should designate someone on their staff to make a decision on their behalf.
9. The decision-making group will appoint an author group to write the first draft of the statement. This will include the following:

- a. The appropriate agency(ies) with this issue in their mandate will be given primary responsibility for writing the first draft.
 - b. The director of communications and marketing will be consulted and included throughout the process of this initial draft.
 - c. The primary authors will also incorporate input from potential signatories and the decision-making group.
10. Once an initial draft of the statement is ready . . .
- a. All potential signatories will be given the draft statement and will have a reasonable response time under the circumstances to provide input. (Usually, feedback should be gathered and incorporated within 24 hours of the initial draft).
 - b. Edits should be related to substance more than word choice. No one should expect every word to reflect their individual position. There needs to be trust and grace in each other.
 - c. In some instances, a quick videoconference meeting may be needed to make final decisions. This can be requested by any of the signatories.
 - d. If there is disagreement (for example, about whether or not to include a specific resource or link), the final decision will be made by the general secretary or the country-specific director after consultation with the signatories and the impacted ministries.
 - e. Potential signatories will then be given the chance to decide whether or not to add their names.
11. The final statement will be posted to crcna.org. In addition . . .
- a. An email will be sent to all Council of Delegates and MLC members so that they are aware that this statement has gone out.
 - b. An email will be sent to stated clerks of classes with a note that this statement is for their information.
 - c. The statement will be linked to in *CRC News* and “For Pastors.”

II. Content Standards

1. Statements should begin by identifying the signatories. For example, “We, the U.S. leaders of the CRCNA” or “We, the leaders of the CRCNA.” This makes clear that the leadership is speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the whole denomination in the way of a synodical statement.
2. The statement should clearly state the problem/event that sparked the need for the statement.
3. The statement should emphasize the biblical/confessional reason for issuing the statement.
4. It should also emphasize our denominational positions by linking to relevant synodical statements.
5. The statement should end with a specific call to action.

6. Statements that are directed to both government and church constituency should ordinarily include (perhaps in an addendum) suggestions and tools for action (e.g., prayer, advocacy).
7. Statements should not be partisan or explicitly support or oppose specific politicians or parties (but may encourage action on specific legislation).

ADDENDUM 7

Sign-on Letters by Year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Number of Sign-ons</i>
2013	OSJ	20
2013	World Renew	1
2013	Executive director	11
2013	Disability Concerns	1
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		31
2014	OSJ	14
2014	World Renew	6
2014	Executive Director	8
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		24
2015	OSJ	25
2015	World Renew	1
2015	Executive director	13
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		38
2016	OSJ	65
2016	World Renew	6
2016	Executive director	9
Total		80
2017	OSJ	58
2017	World Renew	3
2017	Executive director	13
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		71
2018	OSJ	61
2018	World Renew	4
2018	Executive director	9
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		69
2019	OSJ	94
2019	Executive director	10
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		103
2020	OSJ	83
2020	Safe Church	1
2020	Executive director	3
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		85

2021	OSJ	51
2021	Executive director	5
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		54
2022	OSJ	29
2022	Executive director	2
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		30
2023*	Thrive	6
2023	Centre for Public Dialogue	1
Total (excluding multiple sign-ons)		6

*Amounts for 2023 were incomplete as of the time of compiling.

ADDENDUM 8

Office of Social Justice Backgrounder

For every action alert that OSJ created, a backgrounder would be produced. These documents would outline the following:

1. The background behind the issue—What is happening? Why is it a big deal?
2. Connection between this issue and our biblical call as Christians—How does this tie to Scripture?
3. Connection between this issue and the CRCNA—What has synod already said about this issue?
4. Connection between this issue and the mandate of the Office of Social Justice—How does speaking about this issue tie back to what we’ve been instructed to do?

These backgrounders may be posted online or may be made available to staff to answer questions that may arise once the action alert is distributed.

APPENDIX C

Intercultural Ministries (Canada)

I. Introduction

Intercultural Ministries operates as a crucial national advisory committee in Canada. Collaborating closely with the senior leader for antiracism and intercultural conciliation, our mission is multifaceted. We are dedicated to equipping and empowering Canadian churches, helping them to adapt to and embrace the growing diversity of ethnocultural and racial groups within their communities and congregations. The collective is steadfast in its commitment to fostering practices of hospitality and guiding churches toward evolving into vibrant, healthy intercultural communities. This transformation is deeply rooted in the principles of biblical justice and love, aiming to reflect these values in every aspect of church life.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

A. Faith formation

We recognize the complex interplay between faith and cultural identity, especially for our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) members. These individuals often encounter challenges when integrating their unique cultural experiences in some CRC spaces. To address this, our ministry provides support through a range of avenues, including personal interactions, small-group dialogues, and expansive networks. Initiatives like the BIPOC affinity group, the Diaspora Leader's Retreat, and the Canadian National Gathering are key platforms for active listening and sharing, employing diverse communication methods to cater to all voices.

Our consistent message to the community stresses that ethnocultural and racial diversity is not just a societal reality but a vital part of God's vision for humanity. We emphasize the beauty and inherent value of intercultural church communities. This message is promoted through our online platforms, our website, the One Family Conversation Initiative, preaching engagements in local churches, and appearances at regional events as we aim to make our presence felt and our message heard far and wide.

B. Mercy and justice

In our advocacy for intercultural interaction, we prioritize approaches grounded in love and justice, mirroring Christ's ethos. By engaging in multicultural cohort groups and initiatives like the One Family Conversation, we seek to foster churches and regional gatherings into inclusive environments. Here, every member, regardless of their background, is valued and empowered to contribute.

Justice, a central pillar of our mission, extends beyond the confines of individual ministries. We actively collaborate with ministry groups such as Resonate, Thrive, Diaconal Ministries Canada, and World Renew. This collaboration focuses on pursuing a comprehensive approach to justice that captures the diverse aspects of God's call and reflects our commitment to striving toward a just and equitable society.

C. Gospel proclamation and worship

We advocate for and encourage diverse preaching and worship styles. By inviting BIPOC members to lead and infuse their particular cultural heritages into worship, we aim to create a mosaic of worship styles. This vision is inspired by the imagery of intercultural worship found in Revelation 7:9-10 and 21:22-27, symbolizing the universal and inclusive nature of God's kingdom.

III. Connecting with Churches

A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

We actively listen and engage with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, learning about their unique practices of prayer, spiritual disciplines, and discernment processes. It is enlightening to discover the various

expressions of prayer and spiritual disciplines within our churches. Sharing stories and practices not only enriches individual spiritual journeys but also strengthens our collective faith experience.

B. Listening to the voices of every generation

Acknowledging the importance of generational diversity, we look for ways to bridge generational divides. By leveraging our experiences in intercultural dialogue, we enhance valuable intergenerational connections, fostering a deeper understanding and respect among different age groups within our communities.

C. Growing in diversity and unity

The senior leader for antiracism and intercultural conciliation completed training to be an Intercultural Development Inventory facilitator, a service that will benefit churches to move away from a monocultural to an intercultural mindset. This service will begin early next year. He is also involved in other inclusivity initiatives, such as being part of two Thriving Practices cohorts for the 2023-2024 season, furthering our commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

D. Sharing the gospel

Our ministry places a strong emphasis on sharing the gospel through both actions and words, rooted in deep, trusting relationships. By guiding churches in cultural humility and intercultural engagement, we empower congregations to effectively convey Christ's love across cultural boundaries. This approach enriches our collective understanding of the gospel's universal appeal, demonstrating its relevance and power in a diverse world.

Intercultural Ministries (Canada)

Pablo Kim Sun, senior leader for antiracism and intercultural conciliation

APPENDIX D

Council of Delegates Comments regarding Overture 1

MEMO

To: Synod 2024

From: CRCNA Council of Delegates

Re: Overture 1: Amend the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook to Clarify Their Role in the Nomination Process (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 413-18)

Date: March 2024

Classis Quinte has submitted an overture that requests the Council of Delegates (COD) to do a number of things, including adding footnotes to its Governance Handbook in relation to the approval of potential delegates re-

ceived from the classes and apologizing to Classis Quinte for its interpretation of its handbook and how it conducted itself when it did not acquiesce to their recommended delegate to the COD.

The question really centers on determining what role the COD itself can and should play in the appointment of delegates. It is Classis Quinte's interpretation that the role of the COD is merely administrative. That is, the COD cannot work with a classis when the COD has concerns about a nominee it has received; rather, it must accept the individual the classis submits, even if it has reservations, or (as was the case which led to this overture) if the classis presents an individual who does not meet the criteria for service on the COD as defined in the handbook.

This overture seems to set up a false dichotomy between what the overture calls "gate-keeping authority" versus "administrative function." It is not the intention nor the desire of the COD to become a "self-selecting ecosystem." In no case can the COD tell a classis whom they must nominate. Nor does the COD attempt to influence the nomination process within a classis. In fact, classes are given wide latitude in how and whom their delegate nominees will be. In that sense, the COD's role is strictly advisory and administrative. The COD does, however, need to have at least some input into the process in order to ensure the integrity and functionality of the body as a whole.

We exercise this input through the Governance Committee, which is responsible for working with classes to seek out individuals for nomination and to review and recommend those names submitted by the classes to the full COD for their approval at synod. If the Governance Committee has concerns or determines that an individual does not meet the requirements for COD service, it has the responsibility to make the classis and the COD aware of those issues so that trust and integrity are upheld.

The requirements for COD service that the Governance Committee considers are limited to the qualifications and fiduciary responsibilities as spelled out in the Member Job Description in the COD Governance Handbook, particularly the ability to sign the Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA, the Code of Conduct, and the Conflict of Interest Policy. To approve an interim COD member midyear, or to recommend a new COD member to synod who does not agree with our beliefs or our code of conduct or who has a conflict of interest would seem to put the COD in conflict with the clearly expressed desires of synod.

We also think synod will want to consider the implications that Classis Quinte's overture would have on interim appointments to synod and the COD's right to address any future violators of the standards synod has set for COD membership. An interim member serves on the COD for up to three meetings until synod can approve them as a regular member. If the COD fills merely an administrative role, then the classis essentially becomes the sole appointee of any interim members filling a vacancy that may come

up after June each year. If the COD has no right to require an interim COD nominee to sign the Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA, the Code of Conduct adopted by the COD and Synod 2023, or the Conflict of Interest policy, there would be the potential for someone to serve on the COD who conflicts with one or more of these. Likewise, any current COD member found to be clearly violating the Statement of Agreement or the Code of Conduct or having a conflict of interest would presumably remain on the COD until synod could take action.

While the COD advocates for having a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives represented in its membership, it would seem that having members who disagree with CRC beliefs, refuse to conduct themselves appropriately, or are found to be utilizing their position to pursue their own interests would not be beneficial to the welfare of our denomination.

Therefore, it is the belief of the Council of Delegates that this overture is an overcorrection in response to a very unique and specific set of circumstances (in this case, a conflict of interest) that led to our request that Classis Quinte bring forward a different nominee. Since the presenting issue has been redacted from the documentation as submitted by the classis, the COD is limited to what it can respond to. This is, of course, in the best interests of the individual involved.

This circumstance has caused us to take a more careful look at the way in which the classes of the CRCNA and the COD work together to ensure that the classes and potential nominees are made aware of the fiduciary responsibilities of all COD members as outlined in the Member Job Description section of the COD Governance Handbook. To that end, the Governance Committee of the COD is currently drafting language to help clarify governance expectations for classes and nominees and to clarify its internal process when potential issues are identified. In that way, we do indeed hope to clarify the role that the COD plays in receiving nominations from classes so as to avoid (as much as possible) future confusion or frustration for individuals, classes, the Council of Delegates, and synod.

Note: This communication is submitted to synod per the synodically approved “Right of Comment” policy in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, which states the following:

1. The COD itself (i.e., without staff initiation) may judge that synod would be well served by a formal communication in response to a matter on synod’s agenda that affects a ministry that falls under the governance of the COD.
2. If time permits, the COD may ask staff for background information.
3. The communication that emerges may be adopted or endorsed and communicated to synod via the COD’s Supplement Report.

Council of Delegates Comments regarding Overture 45**MEMO**

To: Synod 2024

From: CRCNA Council of Delegates

Re: Overture 45: Appoint a Task Force to Shape a Gentle Pathway for Those Departing the CRCNA (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 531-39)

Date: March 2024

Introduction

In its overture to Synod 2024, River Park Church of Calgary, Alberta, requests that synod “appoint a Gentle Pathway Task Force for the purpose of providing support for those departing the CRCNA, with a focus primarily on supporting both congregations and pastors who have discerned a need to leave the CRCNA” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 531). The overture goes on to make a number of specific requests to support pastors, churches, and CRCNA employees who might desire to leave the denomination.

Comments

In its consideration of Overture 45, the Council of Delegates would like to provide the following insights to synod:

1. Disaffiliation of congregations: Unlike many other denominations, the CRCNA has a fairly simple and straightforward disaffiliation process for congregations outlined in Church Order Article 38-f and its Supplement. While disaffiliation carries emotional weight for a congregation, there are *no legal impediments within Church Order* that would require special effort or study. Furthermore, the individual bylaws of each CRCNA congregation (which can be amended by congregations themselves) regulate the disposition of property of the congregation “in the event of an irreconcilable division.”
2. Minister’s pension: The CRCNA pension plans allow for continued participation only if a CRC congregation holds a minister’s credentials and the congregation or organization the minister serves contributes to the pension (see Church Order Supplement, Art. 8, D, 11; Art. 38-g and its Supplement). In one category CRC ministers themselves may contribute (Art. 13-c and its Supplement). Allowing ministers outside this category to continue active participation (actively accruing service credits and paying premiums) would require significant changes to Church Order and a complete overhaul of the pension plans. Defining the set of entities that could participate would be a key component, one that is elusive at best in the circumstances outlined in this overture. Determining the feasibility of this type of overhaul to the plans would take a significant financial investment in actuarial expertise alone. It should be noted that

upon leaving the CRC pension plan, participants do not forfeit their accrued benefit.

3. Support for congregations and ministers making difficult decisions about their affiliation with the CRCNA: Thrive, the CRCNA's agency to support congregations, has already developed proven resources to support congregations that are facing difficult decisions (see crcna.org/pcr/churches). These resources have been used successfully by churches in the midst of difficult decisions and are supported effectively by Thrive staff members.
4. Supporting CRCNA staff: If CRCNA staff members face concerns in their employment, the human resources departments in both the U.S. and Canada offer programs of professional counseling and support. The human resources departments provide as much material support to departing staff as possible under CRCNA policies in view of equity and financial realities facing our agencies and institutions.

Conclusion

As CRCNA members and leaders, we pray and long for unity. Our denomination, like many others, has experienced painful fracturing. We are hurting. When congregations and leaders choose to disaffiliate, resources and pathways already exist to make such separations as healthy as possible. The energy and resources of the agencies and institutions of our denomination are best used to further the calling, ministry, and mission of CRCNA congregations that remain. We continue to trust the Holy Spirit's capacity to do amazing things in and through the CRCNA despite our brokenness.

Note: This communication is submitted to synod per the synodically approved "Right of Comment" policy in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, which states the following:

1. The COD itself (i.e., without staff initiation) may judge that synod would be well served by a formal communication in response to a matter on synod's agenda that affects a ministry that falls under the governance of the COD.
2. If time permits, the COD may ask staff for background information.
3. The communication that emerges may be adopted or endorsed and communicated to synod via the COD's Supplement Report.

Council of Delegates Comments regarding Overture 3**MEMORANDUM****To:** Synod 2024**From:** CRCNA Council of Delegates**Re:** Right of Comment re Overture 3: Recommend that Ministers' Pension Trustees Increase the Final Average Salary Calculation to 100 Percent of the Average Ministers' Compensation**Date:** April 9, 2024

This Right of Comment seeks to provide information helpful for synod to do its work. This overture reflects a solid grasp of the pension plans and their purpose. It also correctly directs the request to the pension trustees.¹ This Right of Comment focuses on giving additional information on the Final Average Salary (FAS) calculation and summarizing the implications of implementing what this overture asks for.

The explanation of how the FAS is calculated (fifth paragraph of the overture) is accurate but lacks some details. The FAS calculation is based on the information collected related to Long Term Disability (LTD) coverage. When this information is collected, the pastors provide a single number that includes their salary and housing allowance. The total (salary plus housing) is reduced by 25 percent to determine the FAS. This percentage is based on data showing that housing allowances generally range from 20 to 35 percent of a pastor's salary. Reducing the total compensation number by 25 percent does two things. It reduces the compensation (salary plus housing) by a reasonable amount (less than average) to exclude housing. It also enables ministers to use housing allowance information to reduce the tax burden on their pension to the extent that a pastor has housing-related expenses. Pastors could find it difficult to take the housing deduction without this distinction between salary and housing. As the overture acknowledges, a pastor's retirement plan must encompass other savings than just the pension plan.

The overture proposes a significant change to the FAS calculation, suggesting that it should reflect 100 percent of the ministers' compensation (salary plus housing). This 33 percent increase to the FAS component of the benefit calculation would lead to a substantial increase in the pension benefit, a change that would have far-reaching implications for the plans. All pensions are built on the premise of contributions and investments over a long time period. The overture does not specify when this increase would take effect or which participants would be eligible for this increase in benefits. This request could only be considered if a reasonable increase in church as-

¹ Rules for Synodical Procedure, section VII (see *Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 623-24).

assessments could be implemented now, and the increase in the FAS calculation would then only apply to current and future participants retiring in three or four decades.

Any increase in benefit increases the liability on the trust funds. An increase of this magnitude could trigger Canada's solvency funding regulations, making a sustainable funding plan impossible. It also increases the complexity of the systems that support the plans (there are already three factors used for calculating a pension benefit based on the specific years when service was accrued).

The authors of the overture have wisely included the term "sustainable" in their request. However, it is crucial to recognize that creating a funding stream to accommodate a 33 percent increase in FAS would significantly burden our churches. This burden would be particularly challenging for smaller churches committed to providing for their pastors' long-term financial needs through participation in the ministers' pension plans.

Note: This communication is submitted to synod per the synodically approved "Right of Comment" policy in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, which states the following:

1. The COD itself (i.e., without staff initiation) may judge that synod would be well served by a formal communication in response to a matter on synod's agenda that affects a ministry that falls under the governance of the COD.
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APPENDIX G

Council of Delegates Comments regarding Overture 4

MEMORANDUM

To: Synod 2024

From: CRCNA Council of Delegates

Re: Right of Comment re Overture 4: Close the Pension Fund to New Members and Create a New Retirement Fund

Date: April 17, 2024

To have some understanding of the issues and concerns presented in Overture 4, it is important to recognize the following, as stated in the Rules for Synodical Procedure (section VII):

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)

Because any action taken at synod involving substantive modifications to the denomination's retirement plans requires the involvement and advice of the pension trustees, this Right of Comment addresses parts of the overture where misstatements or erroneous conclusions are drawn. This Right of Comment speaks to those issues to best serve synod in its work.

Pension Plan Background

The ministers' pension plans are "defined benefit" plans. This means that the benefits paid by the plans are defined (by formula), and the plans' funding is determined by actuarial calculations of the amount of money needed to fund the defined benefit. The plan sponsor (the denomination), through member and participant assessments, funds the "defined" pension benefit. Defined benefit plans place market and mortality risk with the plan and the sponsoring organization (the denomination). So if markets fall and members live longer than expected, the plan and the sponsor pick up the cost.

In addition to a defined retirement benefit, the Ministers' Pension Plan provides significant disability and survivor benefits in the years before retirement. Benefits are provided for a surviving spouse on the occasion of a plan participant's death while in active service, and disability benefits are paid to participants who experience permanent disability. In each case, these benefits are changed to lifelong retirement benefits when the surviving spouse or the disabled participant, as the case may be, reaches retirement age.

"Defined contribution" retirement plans (i.e., RRSPs and 301ks in Canada, and 403(b)s and 401(k)s in the U.S.) typically define the funding in terms of a percentage of compensation and allow the benefit to be determined by the amount of funds accumulated at the point of retirement. The amount available to fund retirement benefits will vary from member to member. These types of plans place market and mortality risk (and reward) in the hands of the members. So, up markets help, down markets hurt, and each member's choice of financial planners significantly affects their benefit.

Discussions have occurred for years over which of these forms is the best in general terms and for the participant plan populations. Many years ago, the

pension trustees surveyed all plan participants and asked which of these retirement plan forms they preferred. At that time, the survey results indicated that an overwhelming majority of active and retired ministers preferred the defined benefit form, and they opposed any elimination of the disability and survivor's benefits that have historically been a part of the plan's benefits structure. It was also understood that these types of plans would not lessen the impact on retirement savings for a minister taking a call to a smaller church rather than a larger, more affluent church during their years in ministry.

Overture 4 from Classis Muskegon

The overture contains several representations that are sometimes inaccurate or not fully explained. One example states that "a pastor entering ministry around 1995 has seen a reduction in projected benefits from the pension plan of 30-35 percent" on their annual pension estimate statement. In the past, the estimate statements used a projected increase in the final average salary (one of the elements in the benefit calculation). In more recent years, the estimate statements discontinued that practice and presented the estimate based on current dollars. This would give an appearance of a reduction, but in both cases, past and present, the statements were estimates. The adjustment in how the estimates were presented was explained in correspondence sent with the statements when this change was made.

The statement that "there are a number of churches not paying their assessments in the pension plan" is misdirected. Most churches that are unable to pay into the plan are vacant churches (currently without a minister). Vacant churches do not have a minister accruing benefits during the vacancy, so there is no additional financial burden on the minister and minimal impact on the plan.

Among the concerns presented in the overture is that the CRC's director of finance and administration retired last year, leaving a gap in pension plan leadership. Because John Bolt has years of knowledge and experience in the pension realm, the plan's consultants and advisors were not called on to take as strong a role as they would under staff with less pension administrative experience. John has been able to provide consulting to the pension office since his retirement. This has been helpful to staff involved in the administration of the plans. At the same time, it is important to note that the plans use excellent investment consultants who attend every trustee meeting and communicate with staff and the trustees in between meetings. At each trustee meeting, fund managers are reviewed. An established process is used to evaluate and, if necessary, replace fund managers. One hundred percent of the trust funds are under fund managers and monitored by the trustees in conjunction with the investment consultants. The sustainability of ministers' pension plans has never relied on one individual.

Plan Design Considerations

The ministers' pension plans are funded through monies held in trust (distinct from all other denominational cash holdings) and are dedicated to the payment of participant benefits only. At the last valuation at the end of 2022, the U.S. fund was 88 percent funded, while the Canadian plan was 100 percent funded. Neither plan has ever experienced any issue meeting the benefit payment demands. The overture mentions that the U.S. plan does not fall under the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation (PBGC). The benefit of not falling under PBGC is that the denomination also does not pay the significant PBGC premiums annually that an ERISA plan must cover.

The overture references concern that the last actuarial evaluation was done in 2019. Actually, the evaluation referenced was done in 2020 using December 31, 2019, data. The last evaluation was completed in 2023 using 2022 data and has been reported to synod in the *Agenda for Synod 2024* (p. 261). These evaluations are done every three years rather than annually because it was determined that the very long time horizon to pay pension benefits (for current and future retirees) along with the expense (\$30,000-\$45,000) of plan valuations, the three-year schedule is sufficient. The pension trustees use these valuation reports when setting the contribution levels. The plans' actuaries have noted no concern about an asset shortfall that would hinder benefit payments at any time in the foreseeable future. The annual contribution (assessments) has been set at a minimum level and has remained unchanged from 2011 through 2024.

The denomination and the plans are binational. In 1982 synod stated that the church's total pension obligation to ministers and their dependents is an across-the-board denominational responsibility requiring joint financing (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 50). The denomination considered the retirement needs of its ordained clergy in Canada and the United States as "one." Because one of the plans (Canadian or U.S.) may be in a somewhat better financial condition than the other at a particular point in time is not itself a reason to abandon the fundamental notion that the denomination spans all of North America and is served by clergy drawn from both Canada and the United States. The U.S. and Canadian pension plans intentionally mirror each other so that our ministers can work on either and/or both sides of the border without significant differences in the resulting benefit upon retirement. This overture's proposal requests a significant change to only one plan—affecting those ministers who have served all or part of their careers in the U.S., with no comment for those serving in Canada. This view is contrary to the intent of synod and should not be embraced.

Finally, it is also important to note that many factors affect a minister's financial situation at retirement. The pension plans were never meant to be the only way a minister prepares financially for retirement. When saving for retirement, the pension plan is referred to as being just one leg of a three-legged stool. There is the income from the employer (in this case, the

Ministers' Pension Plan), income from the government (Social Security in the U.S. / Canada Pension Plan and OAS in Canada), and personal savings. Therefore, the denominational pension plan is just one element in planning for retirement. This is true for bivocational pastors and for those serving in ministry part-time. Many other retirement savings options are available through a second employer or another provider (banks, credit unions, financial advisors, etc.).

Summary

There are many advantages to maintaining the Minister's Pension Plan (MPP) in the U.S. and Canada; among them, as described above, are the following:

- Investment risk is assigned entirely to the denomination and the plan itself, not to individual participants in the MPP.

A defined contribution plan, such as recommended in the overture, puts the risk on each individual.
- The MPP provides significant disability and survivor benefits to its participants.

Eliminating the defined benefit plan would eliminate the Long Term Disability coverage.
- The U.S. and Canadian plans mirror each other so that ministers are free to serve where called and still receive similar benefits at retirement.

It is unclear if Overture 4 is asking to apply this to both the U.S. and Canada plans or only to the U.S. plan. Synod decided that the plans are to mirror each other; synod would have to reverse that decision for this to happen (*Acts of Synod 1982*, Art. 44).
- Participants are not adversely affected whether they serve a smaller or larger church at any time during their ministry because the benefits provided are not based on individual salary levels.

A defined contribution plan will disproportionately adversely affect ministers serving smaller churches.
- The trustees of the plans utilize investment consultants, actuarial advisors, and legal professionals regularly to ensure the plans meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

A defined contribution plan requires the individual to find, manage, and pay for this type of expertise.
- The plans follow each country's pension plan rules and regulations and are held to the same governance level as qualified retirement plans.
- The overture mentions several concerns. The basis for those concerns is inaccurately presented using misunderstood, misrepresented, or missing information. Furthermore, the overture does not recognize

the importance of the connected covenantal nature of the pension plans as they currently exist.

A shift to a defined contribution plan nearly negates the underlying purposes of the current plans.

- The overture suggests that a task force be formed. This suggestion has significant issues: (1) limiting current pension trustees from serving on this task force would risk missing important historical and critical experience; (2) the data that the task force would need and the expertise it would need will come with a cost—likely over \$35,000. Where would these funds come from? There are no ministry shares for this. Funds from the trust cannot be used for this because they are to be used strictly for the benefit of the participants.

The pension trustees continually use the plans' actuarial experts, investment consultants, fund managers, and legal advisors to maintain and, as much as possible, improve "the health of the current CRCNA Pension Plan." It is part of their mission to "provide for its future funding and guard the retirement benefits of those enrolled in the plan." The trustees take their administrative responsibility for the Ministers' Pension Plan very seriously.

Note: This communication is submitted to synod per the synodically approved "Right of Comment" policy in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, which states the following:

1. The COD itself (i.e., without staff initiation) may judge that synod would be well served by a formal communication in response to a matter on synod's agenda that affects a ministry that falls under the governance of the COD.
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APPENDIX H

Council of Delegates Comments regarding Overture 10

MEMO

To: Synod 2024

From: CRCNA Council of Delegates

Re: Overture 10: Suspend the Work of the Dignity Team

Date: April 2024

Introduction

In its overture to Synod 2024, the council of St. Joseph (Mich.) CRC requests that synod “immediately suspend the work of the Dignity Team until a just process for the determination of abuse can be developed and required as part of the Dignity Team’s mandate prior to the Dignity Team becoming involved in cases of alleged abuse.” The overture grounds that request in the Heidelberg Catechism’s explanation of the ninth commandment.

Comments

In its consideration of Overture 10, the Council of Delegates (COD) would like to provide the following insights to synod:

1. The Dignity Team is very new. It arose out of a task force appointed by Synod 2018 to “bring recommendations . . . to Synod 2019 regarding how the CRCNA can best address the patterns of abuse of power at all levels of the denomination” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 523). Synod 2019 adopted a range of recommendations for the COD to implement. The COD, acting in lieu of synod, approved the Dignity Team in June 2021. The inaugural Dignity Team was subsequently appointed by the Council of Delegates in May 2022 and endorsed by Synod 2022.
2. We agree with Overture 10’s central contentions that accusations of abuse are incredibly serious and that Scripture is clear that the pursuit of justice must follow a just process. It would be ill advised for a body seeking to foster reconciliation to presume to know a priori who is the innocent and who is the culpable party. Such a framing would introduce juridical *conclusions* without first doing a juridical *process*.
3. The CRCNA has a variety of such juridical processes available to claimants: the Church Order Article 30-a appeals process and the Article 30-c Judicial Code process as well as an advisory panel process and a proposed Thrive investigations process. The Dignity Team is designed to complement but not duplicate such juridical approaches. Rather, it is to function with “moral suasion” in “nimble, less formal, pastoral ways” so as to function “in ways that promote reconciliation, healing, and restoration” (from the Dignity Team mandate, crcna.org/dignityteam; see *Agenda for Synod 2021*, pp. 63-68; *Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 935).
4. To accede to the overture’s request that the Dignity Team develop its own “just process for the determination of abuse” risks losing the unique pastoral function of the Dignity Team, confusing its role with the other synodically appointed processes named above.
5. Since its inception, the Dignity Team has been overwhelmed with requests. The volume and nature of those requests has clarified for both the COD and the Dignity Team the need to clarify aspects of its original mandate. We anticipate that the Dignity Team will present a

revised mandate to the COD by its October 2024 or February 2025 meeting cycles for eventual approval by Synod 2025.

Note: This communication is submitted to synod per the synodically approved “Right of Comment” policy in the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, which states the following:

1. The COD itself (i.e., without staff initiation) may judge that synod would be well served by a formal communication in response to a matter on synod’s agenda that affects a ministry that falls under the governance of the COD.
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APPENDIX I

Report on the Continued Review of Ministry Shares Reimagined

Synod 2023 directed the Office of General Secretary and the Council of Delegates to continue the Review of Ministry Shares Reimagined (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 987-88). The directives below are quoted from page 987; items 1-3 were addressed to the Office of General Secretary, and items 4-6 were addressed to the Council of Delegates. The COD presents the following in response to synod’s directives.

1. “Provide greater flexibility in the pledge process cycle, allowing churches to determine their pledge cycle based on their fiscal year.”
Starting in fall 2023, the message has been communicated to classes that they can determine the timeframe for their pledge; however, some classes have decided to stay with the original process and send their pledges in by January 31. Some classes have already rescheduled their classis ministry-share pledges. There is a challenge in that some churches are repledging over part of the same timeframe that was already used for pledges, and that has caused some confusion. Once we move into the next fiscal year, that challenge will pass.
This work will continue into the next fiscal year. Information regarding the flexibility of the timeframe will be included in the Church Administration and Finance Guide that goes to classis treasurers in July/August every year.
2. “Suggest to the churches what would be a reasonable amount to cover basic/core denominational operational costs as part of their pledge.”

The amount needed from churches has been identified using a sliding scale related to congregational size. Through surveys and conversations, we have noted that the churches are receptive to distinguishing between the costs of denominational governance and funds for our specific ministry/mission agencies. We have also noted that emerging and very small churches significantly resist participation in these core costs. It was clear from the research that working to engage these churches and encouraging their participation would be a better tactic than creating a requirement to pay and imposing a penalty for lack of payment.

3. “Provide to the churches and classes more information on pledges and giving results, including what comprises the basic/core denominational costs.”

Quarterly reports have begun going out in the United States and are scheduled to start in April 2024 in Canada.

Reporting to the churches was implemented in fall 2023. The quarterly reports are being sent out and have been well received by the churches in Canada and the U.S. Through these reports, some churches have realized they never shared their last pledge. They are updating their pledges for the current fiscal year and the next fiscal year.

The general recommendation outlined below includes providing churches with more specific information about what ministry shares comprise. The goal is to show transparency while not overwhelming them with minutia.

4. “Conduct a survey or make personal contacts targeted to churches that are not currently participating in the ministry-share program.”

The director of advancement in Canada contacted the approximately 35 churches that have not participated in the ministry-share program. In the U.S., the 110 churches that have not participated in the ministry-share program were sent a survey. Twenty-four responded after two requests. A third attempt may be made in April. A verbal update could be shared at the May COD meeting. Eleven participants offered to meet virtually to give additional feedback (likely in late April).

5. “Conduct a study of other similar denominations (e.g., RCA, PCA, ECO, EPC, the Alliance of Reformed Churches) to compare quotas/ministry shares/requests to work toward a new vision for future ministry funding mechanisms.”

Information has been gathered from the RCA, the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. We made initial contacts to other denominations (Presbyterian Church of Canada, Anglican Church of Canada) but have not received responses. The Alliance of Reformed Churches is mentioned in the directive from synod, but at the time of this writing, they are not at a stage in their development where they have determined how they will fund their alliance.

The research revealed that each of these denominations is struggling in similar ways. All have recently made adjustments. The RCA is recommending changes to its general synod. ECO is the most successful because they require a contractual agreement as churches enter the denomination; they are a very young denomination, and they have used this method from the start. Fundamentally each group struggles with providing a compelling reason for their churches to give. (ECO's compelling reason is membership in the denomination.) The most significant takeaway from this research is the essential requirement of providing a compelling message to the churches.

6. "Make recommendations for further changes to the ministry-share program based on the findings of the above."

Recommendations

- a. Provide a clear and basic compelling message about the ministry-share program to all the churches, recognizing that ministry shares are experienced differently on each side of the U.S.-Canada border.

Synod assigned this task because while the ministry-share program is valuable, ministry-share revenue continues to decline. In our current context, the following three objectives are important considerations: (1) ministry shares are experienced differently on each side of the U.S.-Canada border, (2) maintaining the same basic messaging on both sides is important, and (3) increased complexity does not help our churches or classes.

Conversations with other similar denominations revealed that our struggle is not unique. The most significant takeaway from this research is the essential requirement of providing a compelling message to our churches.

Through the survey and through conversational responses from our churches, there seems to be receptivity to distinguishing between funding for the elements that make us a denomination (a community of churches) and the elements that assist the congregations in fulfilling the call to spread the gospel. It is also clear that there is no appetite for making either of these elements mandatory.

Exactly what we call these two elements is still under discussion. The message that the names send is critical. Service and ministry/mission are key values that need to be conveyed. Continued use of the overarching term *ministry shares* is expected. Some options currently being considered for the distinct pieces are as follows:

- Ministry Shares: Denominational Services and Mission Services
- Ministry Shares: Denominational Community and Denominational Ministries
- Ministry Shares: Shared Community and Shared Ministry/Mission

We must define each of these and how they serve the denomination. We must also provide compelling reasons for churches to give.

It will be easier to approach churches that have not been giving by providing a compelling reason. This approach can take any number of forms. Using our data, we can suggest to these churches how they can participate in the ministry-share program and how other churches similar to them are actively participating.

This is an interactive process. As we collect more data (from other denominations, from the marketing results we plan to do this fall, etc.), we will continue to compare the results and strive to create an engaging message for our churches.

Other options were considered but were dismissed because they did not meet the objectives of (1) acknowledging that ministry shares are experienced differently on each side of the U.S.-Canada border, (2) maintaining the same basic messaging on both sides of the border, and (3) avoiding increased complexity.

The anticipated timeline:

- April-May 2024—bring to Finance Committee and COD.
- June-July 2024—make a marketing plan that will include multiple channels:
 - the Church Administration and Finance Guide
 - information specifically for classis treasurers
 - promotional materials (various formats) for use at classes and churches for the 2024 ministry year
- Roll this out in earnest at the fall classis meetings.

b. That synod consider this plan as completing the task assigned by Synod 2023 regarding the continued Review of Ministry Shares Reimagined.

Grounds:

- 1) This is an iterative process. Our messaging will be evaluated at least annually, and changes will be based on data collected through future surveys, conversations, and church-giving records. Staff on all levels are aware of the importance of the ministry-share program. The results are reported to the Council of Delegates on a regular basis.
- 2) This recommendation meets the following objectives:
 - acknowledging that ministry shares are experienced differently on each side of the U.S.-Canada border
 - maintaining the same basic messaging in both countries
 - avoiding unnecessary complexity
- 3) This is a change in “presentation” rather than fundamental changes to the ministry-share program. As a result, this change can be implemented without making changes to the Church Order and therefore

can begin in fall 2024 without a need to seek further approval from synod with this task.

- 4) All major tasks outlined in the synodical directives are completed.

APPENDIX J

Report on Clergy Couples and Pension Benefits

I. Instruction

Synod 2023 instructed the Office of General Secretary to “work with the pension boards, in consultation with clergy couples, to find a just and equitable solution that recognizes the ordination of both spouses who are ministers of the Word” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 967).

II. Response

The context of this discussion at synod is bivocational ministry (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 962-67). Although this specific request is made for ordained spouses serving in the same church, it applies to any ordained minister of the Word serving less than full-time.

The Ministers’ Pension Plans (MPP) are defined-benefit plans. An underlying component of all defined-benefit plans is that they are based on actuarial data. The actuarial data is used to determine how a plan has to be funded to produce the benefit that is promised. Actuaries use multiple sets of data—the data on the participants in a specific plan, and huge data sets of people not in the plan but with characteristics similar to those in the plan. None of the data can be based on a partial participant. This means that a defined-benefit plan provides benefits to individuals, not couples, and this explains why providing a partial benefit is fraught with a substantial negative impact on the plan because doing so would render the actuarial tools essential to managing the plan useless. Without the application of proper actuarial methods, a plan is fundamentally vulnerable and unsustainable.

The plans may appear inflexible; however, the consequences of making these changes remain insurmountable due to the need to use sound actuarial methods.

The Board of Pension Trustees receives an in-depth actuarial report once every three years, which provides the basis for determining the required contribution from the churches. The trust fund maintained to make benefit payments is created from an accumulation of the contributions from the churches, less benefit payments made to participants and adjusted for the investment returns of the assets held. None of the assets are designated to the benefit of any specific participant.

The Ministers’ Pension Plans (in Canada and the U.S.) provide for clergy couples (as well as part-time clergy and bivocational clergy) in three ways. First, each plan allows an eligible minister of the Word who works less than

full-time but at least 20 hours per week to participate when their employer (usually the local church) contributes to the plan. Once eligibility is determined, the plan does not distinguish between part-time and full-time employment. It also does not allow for a prorated contribution due to the need to manage the plan responsibly using actuarial data. One individual designated as full-time for the plan plus one required contribution produces one retirement benefit.

Second, participation also includes a Long Term Disability (LTD) benefit. The LTD coverage provider requires that a minister work at least three-quarters of full-time to be eligible for this benefit. By not distinguishing between part-time and full-time employment, everyone in the plan also participates in this benefit.

Third, at retirement, a minister of the Word who has participated in the plan is given options related to the payout of that benefit. While a single life with the five-year certain feature is the normal benefit form, most participants choose from numerous alternative annuity structures, including spousal benefit streams. All alternatives are actuarial equivalents of the single-life five-year certain annuity. A participant's spouse must approve any annuity election made.

A church can provide two pension benefits to a clergy couple; however, this may be taxing on the church's finances. Still, if a second pension is important to a clergy couple, they can negotiate salaries or other benefits in exchange for a second pension. All ministers of the Word and their spouses are treated similarly and must decide what benefit they want to receive. Since all the forms are actuarial equivalents, the reduction in the initial benefit payment to the minister of the Word coincides with the incremental potential benefit to the surviving spouse.

The following table shows the relative benefits for different scenarios:

Scenario scenarios list hrs/wk--40 hrs/wk represents full-time; any scenario that is less than full-time requires a stated expectation from the church	Qualify for participation in MPP?	MPP assessment required from church (2024)	Long-term Disability coverage?	Monthly benefit received by participant at time of retirement*	Are spouse benefit options available at retirement?	Lifetime benefit cap?
Full-time pastor (40 hrs/wk)	Yes	\$7,704	Yes	USD\$2,678 or CND\$2,878	Yes	No
Bivocational pastor (20 hrs/wk)	Yes	\$7,704	Yes (if working over 30 hrs/wk)	USD\$2,678 or CND\$2,878	Yes	No
Bivocational pastor (less than 20 hrs/wk)	No	0	---	0	---	---

Co-pastoring couple (fill a single position and each work at least 20 hrs/wk, but less than 30 hrs/wk)	Yes-both qualify	\$15,408 (if both are given a pension benefit)	No	Each receives USD\$2,678 or CND\$2,878	Yes, each can select a benefit for their spouse if both were in the plan	No
Co-pastoring couple (fill a single position and one works more than 20 hrs/wk, the other works less than 20 hrs/wk)	Yes, but only the one who works more than 20 hrs/wk	\$7,704	Yes, but only if the person works over 30 hrs/wk	USD\$2,678 or CND\$2,878	Yes	No
<p>*This estimate assumes the following: that in each scenario, all participants have 38.5 years of service credits accrued in the MPP system, that they all retire at the same age in July 2024, and they all select the same spouse benefit, etc., at the time of their retirement.</p>						

The Ministers' Pension trustees have carefully considered this situation in the past. Synod 2013 took up this question in response to an overture and responded with the recommendation not to accede (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 566). After exploring several ways in which this might work, the trustees determined that the best way would be for both spouses to become participants, with their church contributing as required. To do otherwise would put the objectives and sustainability of the plan in jeopardy. The trustees have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that the plan is sustainable.

The most beneficial solution remains to recognize all ministers of the Word who work at least 20 hours per week as being eligible for full participation in the plan upon the full contribution by their employing church.

As part of this review, ordained spouses serving in a single church were surveyed to help uncover the underlying cause(s) for the original overture. The survey revealed that most concerns centered on clarity regarding options. There are also concerns about the cost of housing and the ability to save enough for retirement. Those serving in bivocational positions would likely share the concerns identified in the survey. There are ways to help address these issues.

Primarily the concerns relate to compensation. The Ministers' Pension trustees brought similar concerns to the Council of Delegates in February 2024 about providing churches with better tools to determine appropriate compensation. The COD responded by creating a binational task force to produce a toolkit applicable to various contexts in which our churches operate. The task force anticipates completing this work no later than June 2025 to include the information/resources in the Church Administration and Finance Guide, which is updated annually in July.

In addition to providing churches with this toolkit, adjustments will be made to the presentation and information provided to seminary candidates

every spring. That information will include additional information related to bivocational positions and positions shared by married couples, issues to consider, and questions to ask when considering the compensation provided by churches.

III. Recommendation

We recommend that this response be considered the completion of the task Synod 2023 assigned regarding the copastorates shared by clergy couples and the impact on their pension benefits (in the context of bivocational ministry).

Grounds:

1. Since defined-benefit plans require the sound use of actuarial tools, a change to the Ministers' Pension Plans to accommodate this request is not possible.
2. The underlying concern regarding compensation is part of a larger conversation being addressed.
3. All major tasks outlined in the synodical directive have been completed.

APPENDIX K

Report on Short-Term Illness Insurance

I. Instructions

Synod 2022, in its response to an overture titled "Implement Insurance for Short-Term Illness," adopted the following recommendations (*Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 847):

That synod instruct the executive director to curate Human Resources-related best practices and templates including short-term disability options for congregational staff.

That synod further instruct the executive director to study possible denominational and classical benevolence funds for congregations facing short-term disability needs.

Due to the changes in structure that were approved at that same synod, these tasks were given to the newly formed Office of General Secretary. Due to retirements and staffing changes, the response to synod was delayed by a year. The following is provided to Synod 2024 as the completion of this assignment.

II. Summary

A brief survey was sent to all classical stated clerks and treasurers, asking whether their classes had such a fund. The response rate was over 84 percent from both Canadian and U.S. classes. Of the respondents, only one classis had a specific fund. Three classes commented that if there was a need, the classis could help.

Short-term insurance is not standard in small to medium organizations, such as churches and CRCNA ministry offices. The different social structures of Canada and the United States impact what is available and what is considered best practice.

No fund is set up at the denominational level to provide short-term benefits for congregational staff. Due to the denomination's structure, churches cannot be required to participate in ministry shares. The decline in general funds received from churches (ministry shares) does not enable the denomination to establish and maintain such a fund. Significant differences in the social safety nets available in Canada and the U.S. would also make setting up a fund at the denominational level challenging.

A. Resources

The following resources are available to the churches on The Network (network.crcna.org). These provide an overview of options:

- Canada Edition: A Guide to Leaves of Absence and Short-term Disability
- U.S. Edition: A Guide to Leaves of Absence and Short-term Disability

B. Practices used in the CRC ministry offices

1. The CRCNA Canada ministry office's policy for short-term salary continuation follows the best practices mentioned above. CRCNA employees must meet additional qualifications—for example, short-term illness resulting from elective surgery does not qualify. When an employee does qualify, the employee will receive 100 percent of predisability income during the first 30 calendar days of disability and 75 percent of predisability income during the remainder of the 180 days of disability. Employees receiving benefit payments from another source are not eligible for salary continuation. If an employee returns to work part-time, the employee will receive prorated salary continuation benefits for the balance of salary/wages according to the employee's regular working hours before the illness/disability.
2. The U.S. ministry office does not use an insurance policy to cover this; rather, it does it in-house. The process and benefits mirror those of the Canada ministry office.

C. The broader context

1. In the Canadian context, most charitable organizations do not purchase insurance to cover short-term illness due to the expense; instead, they make provision for it in-house. In all cases, short-term is considered to last only 180 days. Organizations that provide in-house coverage for short-term illnesses typically have policies that define the conditions. Usually, these include exhausting the use of any other paid time off (sick time or vacation time), a specified minimum number of days before the short-term illness continuation of benefits can be engaged, and the need to provide information from a health-care provider (at the start

of short-term benefits, at specified intervals during the absence, and before returning to work). The amount of salary continuation provided is also based on the policy established by the organization.

In Canada, the government provides a social safety net through Employment Insurance (canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-sickness.html). The employer and employee contribute to this insurance. If the staff/participant is provided insurance that includes long-term disability (LTD), as does the CGI plan, this LTD benefit is available after the short-term benefits terminate.

2. In the U.S., it is not uncommon for even small organizations to purchase an insurance policy, usually through the same vendor that provides life insurance options for staff. Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) provides insurance benefits for pastors and church staff. They do not offer short-term disability insurance due to the complexities involved.

Organizations that have experienced low use of short-term illness policies may find it more beneficial not to purchase one. When employees are offered this benefit by their employer (either via an insurance policy or through self-insurance), the salary compensation ranges from 50 percent to 75 percent. Short-term disability benefits usually last a maximum of 180 days, after which long-term disability becomes an option.

III. Recommendation

We recommend that this report be considered the completion of the tasks “to curate Human Resources-related best practices and templates, including short-term disability options for congregational staff” and “to study possible denominational and classical benevolence funds for congregations facing short-term disability needs.”

Ground:

All major tasks outlined in the synodical directive have been completed.

APPENDIX L

Global Vision Team Report

I. Executive summary

In the past several decades, ethnic minorities in the United States and Canada, with many immigrants among them, are responsible for new CRCNA affiliations, church plants, and congregational growth. Such developments are enhanced by international travel, the worldwide internet, and the spectacular rise of Christianity in the Global South. Together these dynamics create a historic opportunity for the CRCNA, a denomination born and nurtured through immigration, to embrace God’s vision of the church from and for all nations, tribes, and languages. Within this context, in 2022 a clus-

ter of Venezuelan congregations joined Classis California South. Subsequently, the Council of Delegates instructed the general secretary to “gather a discussion group to study the integration of international churches into the composition of the CRC.” The general secretary assembled a binational team of globally experienced and connected CRC leaders (named the Global Vision Team) to develop “a conceptual framework for a global Christian Reformed Church.” The framework would include general principles/models of partnership, shared ministry, organization, governance, and communication to respond to the Council of Delegates’ instructions. This document is the fruit of this work.

The Global Vision Team (GVT) conducted substantial research that is described further in this report. In the process, the GVT discovered that engagement between CRCNA congregations and churches outside North America has already been fruitful. Christian church leaders inside and outside North America are growing through deepened relationships and shared ministry formation. International partnerships have led to church plants and the emergence of new ministry leaders. Many are witnessing the Holy Spirit at work through these associations.

However, this opportunity also poses significant challenges, including physical distance; cultural and language differences; and uncertainties in polity and credentialing. An ever-present concern is paternalism, a legacy of Western mission influence. However, neither CRCNA congregations nor their international partners view these as insurmountable challenges. Instead, the GVT and CRCNA congregations recognize a missional opportunity. To engage it, we need an ecclesiastical framework to foster effective, shared ministry with our historical and current partners.

This partnership must be shaped by biblical values and based on preexisting relationships both between classes and international churches and between the CRCNA and its closest international ecumenical contacts. In time and with focused nurture, these relationships could bloom into a Christian Reformed ecclesiastical body made up of the CRCNA, its closest international partners, and mature groups of international congregations “incubated” in CRCNA classes.

Through its agencies, institutions, networks, and resources, the CRCNA has much to offer international churches. However, these church relationships will also benefit the CRCNA. Our international partners have tremendous strengths from which the CRCNA can learn about their experience with evangelism, community ministry engagement, and the development of young leaders. While some of our North American congregations face cultural and social obstacles, could it be God’s mysterious calling that the CRCNA invest in a more global future? This report explores the theological bases, core values, and findings from research that can lead to next-step recommendations for the CRCNA.

II. General introduction

For many decades, the Christian Reformed Church has been committed to a “Revelation 7” vision of the church—a body made up of all nations, tribes, and languages.¹ As imperfectly as our denomination has lived out that vision, CRCNA congregations and classes have understood that their *direct ministry* would happen within the national borders of our two countries (the United States and Canada)—that is, in *North America*. This vision led to the establishment of CRCNA agencies and ecumenical committees that have developed deep and fruitful relationships with churches all over the world during the past 120 years. For the most part, churches and denominations outside of North America that were established and supported during past eras of the CRC mission have been connected to the CRCNA ecumenically as churches *in cooperation* or churches *in communion*.²

However, as the CRCNA has become a more ethnically diverse body in North America, the distinction between North America and “everywhere else” has begun to disappear. CRCNA leaders and members have leveraged their deep connections in their countries of origin to plant churches and to engage in ministry outside of North America in the name of the CRCNA. Instead of the historical model of sending missionaries from the “West to the rest,” today’s CRC mission happens “to everywhere from everywhere.” In today’s global world, where ministry can happen through many different mediums and travel is convenient, national borders and geographic distinctions continue to break down, providing new opportunities for mission and ministry.

A. Background narrative: Why now? Why us? Why this project?

1. Why now?

The idea of having churches outside North America affiliated with the CRCNA is not new, but interest in it has been growing. For example, a CRCNA congregation exists in Guam, and CRCNA congregations have existed in Puerto Rico (i.e., territories of the United States). CRCNA churches on the southern border of the United States have reached into Mexico as part of their ministry. Contained in this report is an account of the relationship between Classis Pacific Northwest and a cluster of churches in Seoul, South Korea. However, the occasion for this reflection is the ecclesiastical relationship, established two years ago, between Classis California South and a growing group of congregations and pastors in Venezuela.

2. Why us?

Classis California South and the Latino networking group known as Consejo Latino have been working together to enfold the Venezuelan churches

¹ A good summary of the Christian Reformed Church’s vision may be found in the synodically approved document *God’s Diverse and Unified Family* and in the position statement on race relations found at crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/race-relations.

² For the significance of these ecumenical designations, see crcna.org/eirc/ecumenical-relations/ecumenical-charter.

into the life of the classis and the denomination. Though rewarding, this work has not been easy because the CRC is essentially structured to be a North American denomination (see section VI below). As an ecclesiastical leadership body, synod and the COD are responsible to prayerfully discern a vision to steward this organic movement in our CRCNA classes. In its May 2022 meeting, the Council of Delegates instructed the general secretary to “gather a discussion group to study the integration of international churches into the composition of the CRC” (minute COD 6206).

3. Why this project?

In its instruction, the Council of Delegates essentially requested the general secretary to put together a globally experienced and connected team of leaders to assist the COD in prayerfully discerning a *vision* for a Christian Reformed Church *not constrained by our national boundaries*. Such a vision could *guide* further discernment and practical developments. Without such a vision, it is possible that the CRCNA and its international partners could be pulled into some of the familiar pitfalls of intercultural relationships mentioned below (see sections V-VI). Conversely, without a vision, the CRCNA could entirely miss out on developing ecclesiastical relationships outside of North America and on the blessings this could represent to our North American churches and our international partners.

B. Committee mandate, composition, and process

The general secretary assembled a binational team of globally experienced and connected CRC leaders—the Global Vision Team (GVT). The team included a leader from Classis California South, two former mission workers, a leader of an immigrant ministry, a local church pastor, a leader of a global ministry network, the Calvin University president, and the general secretary. The general secretary mandated the team to develop “a conceptual framework for a global Christian Reformed Church. The framework would include general principles/models of partnership, shared ministry, organization, governance, and communication and report back to the Council of Delegates at its winter meeting (February 2023).”

With regard to the mandate, it is important to note what is *not* included. First, the team’s mandate does not include *specific* recommendations on governance, polity, staffing, or organizational development for a global Christian Reformed entity. If the Council of Delegates and synod desired to move in that direction, more focused work would need to be done. Second, the team’s mandate is *not ecumenical*, meaning that whatever framework it suggests to the COD, it must be of a different nature than the CRCNA’s current church-to-church relationships and denominational networks (which are managed by the Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee, a standing committee of synod).³ These relationships are essentially *networking* in nature.

³ For more information about this committee, see crcna.org/eirc.

The GVT's area of investigation includes the following: (1) interviews with two CRCNA classes, Classis California South and Classis Pacific Northwest; (2) research into synodical documents of previous conversations on this topic (especially as they relate to the "Seoul Cluster"); (3) interviews with the Venezuelan congregations and a collection of closely connected denominations outside North America in order to gauge their interest in a global CRC; (4) extensive conversations and interviews with denominations similar to the CRCNA that have global communions (for this purpose the GVT engaged a contracted researcher), with a special focus on two denominations: the Reformed Church in America and the Seventh Day Baptist denomination; (5) a fairly limited engagement with scholarly literature on this subject.

III. Theological perspective—Christians as “Body of Christ”: A biblical approach to global mission

We live in a world full of division and conflict. Now more than ever, as followers of Jesus, we need to be “salt and light” (Matt. 5:14-16). Unfortunately, children of God are not immune from fear and division; we also tend to stay within our social, spiritual, and ethnic boundaries. However, Scripture repeatedly reminds us to unite with fellow believers from all sectors of humanity.

In his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul stresses that our **unity** through faith in Christ breaks down racial, ethnic, social, and gender barriers (Gal. 3:26-28). In contrast to the world around us, Christ calls us to create communities where everyone is welcome and appreciated. By being united with Christ, we are united with each other, so we recognize that our unity is a gift of God's grace in Christ, not something we create (Eph. 4:4-6). But we realize that this unity can fade and be broken. Thus, in the same breath in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul says, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:3).

In 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4, Paul expounds on the body analogy to describe our unity, *diversity*, and *interdependence* as God's people. In his use of this analogy in his letters to the Corinthians and Romans, Paul seems to have mainly local groups of believers in mind. In his letter to the Ephesians, however, he appears to have the global church in mind as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:3-6, 16). This provides a strong basis for recognizing our interdependence as God's people—not only locally but also internationally.

Many insights regarding unity and collaboration come to expression in these passages, including the following:

- While diversity can tend to divide us, it has great potential to unite us.
- God has designed the church as the body of Christ to function interdependently; every member *needs* all the other members and *is needed by* all the other members.

- God designed his church to function synergistically, both locally and globally.
- *Mutual servanthood* fosters love, maturity, doctrinal stability, and growth as everyone uses their gifts in the faith community.
- Genuine, loving *personal relationships* provide the fertile ground needed for such mutuality.
- Serving one another through the use of our differing gifts honors God.

This spirit of unity and interdependence leads us to strive toward more visible and functional engagement with churches in other parts of the world. We need them, and they need us. This will require the *transformation* of our hearts and lives (Rom. 12:1-3) and even our church structures, and this will in turn produce transformation, especially in our relationships with the body of Christ globally. Our aim is not to resolve all of the divisions in Christ's church. But by engaging more meaningfully with Reformed groups on other continents, we envision making significant strides toward experiencing the unity Jesus has in mind for his people.

IV. Core values that guide growing ecclesiastical relationships

These core values were distilled from biblical-theological reflection and in conversation with CRCNA classes, denominations outside North America, and the Venezuelan group of churches.

Unity

In Christ we are one body with his followers all over the world. Living out that unity is not optional. God is leading us toward experiencing that unity more visibly and functionally, especially with groups outside of North America that share our Reformed faith. The increased global interaction of our times through trade, media, the internet, and migration provide opportunities for greater integration with believers in all parts of the world (see John 17:22-23; Eph. 4:3-6).

Diversity

The body of Christ is an amazing global mosaic of races, cultures, and languages. This diversity tends to place barriers between us, but embracing it through stronger engagement with groups around the world will benefit all of us. As we increase our interaction with these groups, we want to honor the uniqueness of each group, including their historical backgrounds, cultures, resources, and needs—along with the challenges and opportunities of their contexts (see Rev. 7:9-10; 21:24-26).

Personal relationships

Global partnership involves cultivating deep, genuine, personal relationships with fellow believers on other continents. It will also require structures, goals, plans, results, reporting, and regulations; but the relationships must always be prioritized, and they must be marked by mutual servanthood, learning, and respect (see 1 Cor. 13; Rom. 12:9-16).

Interdependence

The predominant metaphor for the church in the New Testament is the human body, in which every part is needed and every part needs all the others. We seek to genuinely and practically experience that interdependence with groups in other parts of the world. We and all these groups need each other in order to fulfill the mandates Christ has given us. As we share our God-given resources, we want to avoid past patterns of paternalism, self-sufficiency, and dependency through genuine partnership and multilateral cooperation (see 1 Cor. 12:14-16, 21-23; Eph. 4:15-16).

Mutual servanthood

We want to promote genuine mutuality as servants of each other in Christ and to avoid any kind of domination of one group over another or one person over another. This mutuality will be characterized by listening to and learning from one another, advocacy for equality and dignity, and accountability that will lead us toward intergenerational respect and shared leadership (see Matt. 20:25-28; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

Transformation

Embarking on greater global engagement will require much change on our part. We will need to give up things we feel are important, including some of our patterns and structures. We are entering unknown territory, and there aren't many existing patterns to follow. So we will need to be open to God doing something new—toward transformation, constantly guided by the Spirit (see Matt. 9:16-17; Rom. 7:6).

V. Research methodology and data analysis

One aspect of the Global Vision Team's research focused on other Reformed denominations with which the CRCNA has a relationship. Twenty people from eight denominations were interviewed to glean perspectives of their current level of relationships with other entities (denominations and other networks or communions) and their attitudes regarding a global Christian Reformed Church.⁴ These denominations range in size from under 1,000 members to almost a million, as shown in the table below. When compared to the CRCNA, with 1,053 congregations and 204,664 members (as of 2022), most of these denominations are smaller, with the exception of the CRC of Nigeria.

⁴ These are churches that maintain a relationship with the CRCNA and responded to our request for an interview.

Denomination / group of churches	# of congregations	Approx. # of members	# of people interviewed	WCRC member?
AFRICA				
Christian Reformed Church in Sierra Leone	62	6,000	1	No
The Christian Reformed Church in Sierra Leone developed from the work of CRWM and CRWRC missionaries, starting in the late 1970s and continuing until the early 1990s, when war disrupted most ministries. CRWM/Resonate returned in 2001 in partnership with the Reformed Church of Zambia, and later with the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria. The CRCSL is approaching 80 congregations with about 6,000 attenders. The denomination is a <i>church in cooperation</i> with the CRCNA.				
Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria	180	200,000 communicants 500,000 worshippers	2	No
The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) developed from the work of CRCNA missionaries, starting in 1919. Synod 1939 of the CRCNA officially took ownership of the work with CRWM/Resonate, later joined by CRWRC/World Renew, continuing ministry involvement to the present. The CRCN has over 284 ordained ministers, 154 congregations (most with additional preaching centers), and at least 200,000 members. The denomination is a <i>church in communion</i> with the CRCNA.				
Christian Reformed Church of Liberia	11 churches; 17 preaching stations	920*	1	No
The Christian Reformed Church of Liberia (CRCL) was organized in 2018 by several Liberians who had different connections to CRCNA ministries. The CRCL may have up to 10 congregations and 1,000 attenders. The denomination is working toward <i>church in cooperation</i> status with the CRCNA.				
Reformed Church of Christ for Nations (Nigeria)	132 local church councils	100,000	1	Yes
The Reformed Church of Christ for Nations (RCCN-Nigeria) formed in 1973 when most Kuteb-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria split away and established their own denomination. The RCCN has about 74 congregations and 100,000 members. The denomination has <i>church in communion</i> status with the CRCNA.				

Denomination / group of churches	# of congregations	Approx. # of members	# of people interviewed	WCRC member?
CARIBBEAN				
L'Église Chrétienne Reformée d'Haïti (CRC in Haiti)	60 churches; 15 mission stations	3,500	3	Yes
This denomination was founded in the late 1980s by repatriated Haitian members of the CRC of the Dominican Republic and became a partner of Christian Reformed World Missions (Resonate), which it remains currently. Members of this denomination are planting churches in the Orlando, Florida, area today. Currently this denomination has <i>church in co-operation</i> status with the CRCNA.				
Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en Cuba (CRC-Cuba)	9 established; 26 in formation	771 baptized members; 562 congregants; 261 visitors	3	No
The CRC-Cuba formed in the 1940s through the work of Bessie Vander Valk, a member of Bethel CRC in New Jersey. The church was officially established in 1951, received financial aid from LaGrave Avenue CRC in Michigan and was recognized as a CRCNA mission in 1959, shortly before the Cuban revolution. Missionaries left in 1960. Governmental opening in the 1990s allowed for North American visitors, and Resonate and World Renew partnered with the CRC-Cuba for a time, but current relationships are primarily with LaGrave Avenue CRC and Classis Alberta North. This denomination has <i>church in communion</i> status with the CRCNA.				
Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en República Dominicana (CRC in the Dominican Republic)	140 established; 55 missions	15,000	3	No
<i>Back to God Hour</i> (ReFrame) listeners in the Dominican Republic requested visits from CR World Missions (Resonate) staff in the 1970s, which led to the establishment of a denomination. The partnership has matured, and the CRC in the Dominican Republic has developed Indigenous ministries while maintaining a connection to Resonate. The denomination has <i>church in cooperation</i> status with the CRCNA.				

Denomination / group of churches	# of congregations	Approx. # of members	# of people interviewed	WCRC member?
ASIA				
Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines (CRCP)	56 organized; 42 emerging	6,371 communicants; 1,861 non-communicants	6	Yes (inactive)
The CRCP developed from the work of CRWM missionaries, starting in 1962; and the work with CRWM/Resonate and CRWRC/World Renew continued until 2012. The CRCP's 98 congregations are located on five major islands. The denomination is organized into ten classes and has <i>church in communion</i> status with the CRCNA.				

* They consider a church to be a community of 40-50 baptized believers. LTG calculation: $(11 \times 45) + (17 \times 25) = (495 + 425) = 920$

In most cases, the relationship of these denominations with the CRCNA has been through missionaries of Resonate Global Mission and World Renew. When the missionaries were no longer in the country, the lack of personal contact had a negative impact on the relationship.

Most of the churches maintain relationships with other denominations within the country and encourage local congregations to maintain local relationships. Some of the denominations also have active relationships with mission, development, and justice organizations. Seemingly in contrast, most of the churches have little involvement with the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the CRCNA, and some have had little to no awareness of it. Similarly, most of the churches are not members of the World Communion of Reformed Churches,⁵ and the leaders who were consulted have little or no awareness of its existence.

VI. Other Denominational Frameworks

(based on findings of our contracted researcher, Rev. Dan Roels)

Research was conducted to see what we could learn from denominations that have global ecclesiastical communions. The research included consulting published materials especially as it relates to the Anglican Communion and Methodism. However, the primary research focus was on interviews of denominational leaders from the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Assemblies of God, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Reformed Church in America, the Landmark Baptists, the Seventh Day Baptists, and the Reformed Church in South Africa. A leader of the World Communion of Reformed Churches was also consulted.

⁵ The World Communion of Churches is a global ecumenical body to which the CRCNA belongs and in which the CRCNA played an instrumental role in forming.

The “global communion” models used by these various denominations included aspects of the various frameworks discussed below: a single global CRC denomination, a network, a CRC global partnership, and churches outside of North America affiliating with the CRC. However, Methodism, Assemblies of God, and some Baptist groups are too unlike the CRCNA to be very helpful for our purposes (although the researcher did gain a few insights from them that he included in his report).

Special focus was given to the Reformed Church in America and Seventh Day Baptists, which are more analogous to the CRCNA but have more global engagement than we do.

The Reformed Church in America (RCA),⁶ a Dutch immigrant denomination founded in the 1600s, is now a diverse body with many congregations outside North America. The RCA has two international classes. The Classis de las Américas was founded in 1998 and now incorporates churches in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Chile, Kenya, Nepal, and other countries. It focuses on discipleship and leadership training. Rev. Andrés Serrano is the leader. The Classis de las Naciones was founded in 2020, with similar emphases, and it has a flexible polity for international groups while using the RCA polity as a template. Rev. Chad Farrand is a key leader.

The Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) World Federation has roots in seventeenth-century England, with a dash of Calvinist influence. This church is not connected with the Seventh Day Adventists. The federation was founded in 1965 and has networks around the world, the biggest of which are certain national ones in Africa. Rev. Carl Greene is the general secretary of the U.S. and Canada network.

The RCA and the SDB face five major challenges in their global relations:

- differences among the various countries in theological education and in the credentialing of ordained leaders
- difficulties in coordinating ministry globally
- negative power dynamics, especially from past patterns of paternalism and colonialism
- differences in how various cultures make decisions
- the lack of a working international polity model

Our contracted researcher outlined helpful responses to these challenges (the full report is available from the Office of General Secretary upon request).

These findings would give us serious pause in considering a single global CRC denomination. Challenges 2, 3, and 4 could also present difficulties for cooperation along the lines of our other framework options. Among the researcher’s suggested responses to challenges, the following will especially be helpful, whichever option the CRCNA chooses:

⁶ The RCA is a *church in communion* with the CRCNA, and the two denominations have had historically close relations. The CRCNA was established after an 1857 split from the RCA.

- flexibility on all accounts, especially with regard to structures, polity, and decision-making approaches
- clarification of boundaries for all entities (national, regional, local)
- setting of new precedents to reverse unhealthy patterns of the past
- constant prioritization of people and relationships (even when it's time consuming)
- setting of clear rules about financial resources and contributions
- adjustment of decision-making processes by using approaches such as side forums, recognizing the significance of silence, informal conversations, and consensus models
- being open to something new that God will do

VII. Perspectives of CRCNA classes and related churches

Classis California South

One of the principal areas of the Global Vision Team's investigation and discernment was learning from Classis California South and its engagement with the Venezuelan congregations. The connection developed by California South with the Venezuelan churches is the fruit of a long and intentional period of growth and reflection in the classis that began six years ago with a sense of unease about how the classis was functioning (characterized as "on life-support"). With the assistance of the denomination's classical renewal program, Classis California South began to dream and pray about a better future. As classis leaders asked, "What is our purpose?" they recognized the rich opportunity of its diverse composition (about half of the congregations in the classis are Caucasian, and about half are Korean, and several Latino congregations complete the body with them). Classis leaders also began to prioritize leadership training and discipleship (e.g., a commissioned pastor training program). Under the shepherding of several key leaders, the classis engaged with its key Spanish-speaking leaders who had connections in Columbia and Venezuela.

Through this critical relationship, the classis got to know a cluster of churches in Venezuela that are Reformed in persuasion and have a strong sense of community mission and outreach. This new connection energized the classis, particularly young leaders seeking evidence of God's direction. The classis voted to accept a handful of these congregations into fellowship. Then the unexpected happened—three key classis leaders departed (two died unexpectedly, and a third moved on to different employment). The remaining leaders struggled to retain the momentum that had developed around the relationship with the Venezuelan congregations.

Over the past six months, God has been helping Classis California South to recover that ministry momentum. The classis is in regular contact with twenty Venezuelan churches and is planning to receive a new cohort of its leaders as pastors this spring. The classis' Hispanic leaders (some of whom are part of the Consejo Latino networking group) have been busy training and supporting the Venezuelan leaders and their churches. There has been

some difficulty around language, complying with Church Order, and organization, but the classis is moving forward. Here are a few lessons that the classis has learned:

- Developing relationships with churches outside of North America requires vision and the availability of leaders who will prioritize it.
- Don't underestimate the cultural and organizational challenges of nurturing churches outside of North America. Videoconferencing can work well, but nothing substitutes for face-to-face relationship building.
- The global nature of ministry presents a great opportunity for a classis to reach out within and beyond its borders—we can both send and receive missionaries to and from other denominations and receive members from beyond our borders.
- With its biblical focus, Reformed doctrine is attractive where theologies that are not biblically rooted tend to hold sway—especially in parts of Latin America.
- We in the CRCNA have much to learn from other contexts that can greatly enrich us, and engagement with churches in other countries can reinvigorate us.
- A North America-based classis can provide an opportunity to support international churches, but eventually these churches outside North America need to develop as a group (possibly becoming their own classis).
- Churches outside North America don't want to be dependent (financially, theologically, etc.); rather, they want to grow and learn with North American churches.
- The progress in partnering with international churches feels slow to leaders outside North America.

The Venezuela churches

The cluster of churches in Venezuela has twelve organized churches and twenty emerging churches spread across three states. With the support of Consejo Latino (the CRCNA Latino networking group) these networked congregations are legally recognized as the Christian Reformed Church of Venezuela. They are attracted to Reformed theology and the CRCNA because of their strong alignment with a worldview that integrates faith and life, especially as it relates to "holistic mission" (the union of gospel proclamation and concrete efforts to address material needs). There is one other Reformed presence in Venezuela—a group of Presbyterian churches—but affiliation was difficult because of different perspectives related to government involvement.

This group of churches participates in multiple local fellowships, such as the Evangelical Council of Venezuela, allowing them to form working partnerships, especially related to social-justice issues. Through a relationship with Mirtha Villafane (on behalf of Classis California South), they were introduced to the educational resources from the CRCNA, which their leaders

have used to train others. Their keen desire for more training—for leaders and all members—has contributed to their desire to be part of Classis California South. They appreciate the relationship and the potential for mutual benefit but have found it difficult to navigate the complexities of classis, polity, and denomination (including agencies and offices). At the time of this writing, Classis California South aims to ordain a group of Venezuelan leaders in its winter/spring 2024 classis meeting.

Classis Pacific Northwest and the Seoul Cluster

Prior to Classis California South’s engagement with churches outside of North America, Classis Pacific Northwest (PNW) had started similar work through the Seoul Cluster, an effort toward engaging Korean pastors and congregations who had shown interest in Christian Reformed Church doctrine and polity.

In 2014, Rev. Bomsu Kim (Seattle Dream Church) shared the story of Jaehun Shim, a former student who had attended Seattle Dream Church and had since moved back to Korea. Jaehun wanted to serve a church similar to Seattle Dream Church with a Reformed doctrine and polity but could not find one in Korea. Upon consultation with the CRCNA executive director at the time and the head of the Candidacy Committee, Classis PNW decided to support Jaehun through ordination and entry into the CRC through Church Order Article 23. In fall 2014, Classis PNW decided to support this initiative, giving it the name *Seoul Cluster*, with the goal of ordaining ten pastors based in Korea serving ten CRC churches located in Korea. These pastors and their churches would be part of Classis PNW. Classis PNW did not regard the geographical distance to be a problem because they already had experience associating with multiple churches located outside of the Seattle area (Anchorage).

Along with Jaehun, two more Korean pastors were ordained through Church Order Article 23. Before long, however, the Seoul Cluster became “suspended” as a result of misunderstanding between Classis PNW, which saw the Seoul Cluster as an opportunity for church renewal, and other Korean pastors, who saw the Seoul Cluster as sending the wrong message to the Presbyterian churches in Korea, with which many of them had connections.

In spring 2023, Bomsu Kim visited the three pastors in Korea who were ordained through the Seoul Cluster. In doing so, Classis PNW confirmed its commitment to ordain ten pastors and to start ten congregations in Korea.

Some of the gleanings from the Seoul Cluster experience are as follows:

- Having churches in Anchorage (outside of the geographical vicinity of classis) allowed the classis to be more creative and to consider a Seoul Cluster.
- Classis PNW wanted to support a pastor within classis who had a vision for church renewal. Rev. Gilbert Kim, a pastor in Classis PNW (current Korean stated clerk of classis) leads Didachem Ministries, a

ministry based in Vietnam and sharing the gospel through teaching English. Even amid financial difficulties, Classis PNW continues to support this ministry both financially and in prayer. This helps to foster cross-border relations in sharing the gospel.

- Work that expands beyond the physical boundaries of the classis is built on relationships, at times taking precedence over rules. Classis PNW seeks to build on present relationships.
- In addition to language and culture differences, accountability is a challenge as communication with the Seoul Cluster churches occurs through one person (Bomsu Kim).

VIII. Potential frameworks for CRC global partnerships

In interviews with leaders of Reformed denominations outside North America (see section V) our Global Vision Team asked participants about their group's level of interest in "a newly organized global CRC, a brand-new global body."

Interviewees from all the groups expressed interest in this. Some expressed concern about maintaining local autonomy, and thus would prefer some kind of partnership that would not involve becoming a single global denomination. Others seemed to be comfortable with the concept of being one global denomination. This process creates several dynamics in seeking a design for the future, and with those dynamics in mind, we propose the four options that appear in the table below. Virtually all of these options would require greater coordination between the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee and the classes and any new entity or structure that would be developed.

Due to the mandate from COD ("study the integration of international churches into the composition of the CRC"), the Global Vision Team focused on developing "a conceptual framework for a global Christian Reformed Church." For this reason one option the GVT did not extensively consider was keeping the "status quo" (i.e., not providing any assistance in integrating international churches into CRCNA classes). While there could be some upsides to the status quo, the GVT noted that the COD and Classis California South have requested assistance in processing the opportunities and challenges in supporting churches from outside North America that want to join the CRC.

Note: By proposing potential frameworks below, there is no suggestion that the CRCNA should quickly move ahead with any one framework (or a hybrid). The process of connecting CRCNA churches and classes with congregations and denominations is one based on relationship and mutual interest. However, for those churches outside North America that have already affiliated with the CRCNA, it is necessary to discern a general direction and to begin making provisions for matters such as polity, organization, mutual

sharing, and so on in order to avoid confusion, unmet expectations, and unnecessary conflict. Finally, it is important to note that these potential frameworks are not necessarily *mutually exclusive*.

Description	Pros	Cons
<p>A. One Global CRC Denomination</p> <p>A worldwide Christian Reformed denomination with common confessions, a single polity, standard processes, integrated decision making, similar frameworks for accountability, and shared resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on missionary ties of the past. • Shared Reformed polity and theology could unify. • There is opportunity for diversity and cultural exchange between churches and classes. • Would make our unity in Christ more visible and functional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several closely related denominations are not interested in this because they feel a need for local autonomy. • Huge challenge in building contextual processes that could work for all churches (pastor credentialing, Church Order, governance, finance, etc.). • Danger of churches in one or two countries dominating.
<p>B. A Network</p> <p>A coming together of autonomous entities because of something shared. A shared history with many potential groups and shared confessions, theological convictions, and worldviews provides a basis for networking. The great diversity among potential partners provides rationale for sharing resources and learning from one another. A shared website (and possibly a shared magazine) would enhance networking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserves autonomy, less likely for one partner to dominate. • Provides paths of engagement for ministry agencies/institutions of the CRCNA and network partners. • Path for mutual sharing, learning, resources, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion with multilateral ecumenical relationships like the World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Reformed Fellowship, etc. • Relationships could become loose if structure is lacking. • May not provide the unity we aspire for.

Description	Pros	Cons
<p>C. Churches outside of North America affiliating with the CRCNA</p> <p>Reformed congregations or groups of congregations outside North America may wish to affiliate with a CRCNA classis for various reasons. Typically this develops through personal connections over time. Normally churches or groups of churches that already belong to denominations would be discouraged from joining the CRCNA. The affiliation of a group of churches in Venezuela with Clasis California South is a current example of this option. The goal of this option would be to "incubate" or support churches in a classis for a time. At some point, churches outside North America would form their own classis and perhaps eventually become a member of a Global CRC ecclesiastical body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed congregations outside of North America lacking a Reformed denomination in their context would be nurtured and strengthened. • CRCNA classes can experience enrichment and renewal through such a relationship. • Growth and multiplication of Reformed churches outside of North America. • This affirms the current direction for classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language, distance, financial, and cultural challenges of relating between the CRCNA and churches outside North America. • May be hard to coordinate with existing CRCNA agencies and institutions who might not easily connect to the churches. • Challenges to polity (credentialing, Church Order, etc.). • May inhibit affiliating churches from connecting in their own context. • Risk of confusion as global engagement becomes a purview of the classes and not just the denomination and its agencies.

Description	Pros	Cons
<p>D. CRC Global Ecclesiastical Partnership/Entity</p> <p>Denominations from various countries form a multilateral ecclesiastical partnership structure for deepening fellowship, learning from each other, sharing resources, and doing joint ministry. The CRCNA would probably play a leading role in initiating the partnership, but all partners would have equal status. This would differ from a network in that it would have some clearly defined (and limited) partnership, authority, and accountability structures. Members would maintain their individuality but would share some common identity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuality and shared identity provide a level of autonomy and collectivity for the long term. • Polity and legal issues are more manageable. • Relationships and joint ministry between agencies and institutions in the member denominations are encouraged where possible. • Opportunities for interdependence through sharing resources, with all members contributing. • The ecclesiastical entity grows in stages, possibly through engagement with classes and regional bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building cross-cultural relationships (esp. trust) is essential but takes much effort. • Developing authority and accountability structures would be time intensive. Some founding documents and procedures would be required. • Maintaining accountability would be difficult. • Challenge of resource sharing in which there is economic imbalance between members.

IX. Conclusion

The goal of this report is to cast a vision for a deeper global engagement between the CRCNA and its most significant ecumenical relationships. This research demonstrates what many in Christian leadership have observed: increased immigration/migration and global connectivity (travel, internet, communications, and media) have aligned to produce what is almost certainly an unprecedented opportunity for mission and ministry in North America and around the world. Many, if not most, other North American denominations are currently working to take advantage of this situation.

It would be easy for our committee simply to highlight the opportunities for international churches (like those in Venezuela) and denominations to benefit from the agencies, institutions, networks, and resources developed by faithful generations of CRCNA folks. But that would be only part of the story. Perhaps the greatest benefit in deepening our ecclesiastical relation-

ships would accrue to the CRCNA churches and classes themselves. Our international ecclesiastical partners have tremendous strengths in areas where our denomination has shown persistent weaknesses, such as evangelism, community ministry engagement, and developing young leaders. This report has presented a vision for a deeper global engagement that would benefit both CRCNA churches and their partners outside North America. Could it be God's mysterious calling for our denomination to invest in a global future even while our churches in North America face cultural and social obstacles?

This report does not minimize the significant challenges of charting the next steps of our global vision, however. The direction would require a significant investment of collective energy and resources in a time when many churches are stepping back from supporting our denomination. Further, this would require us as a denomination to develop new ecclesiastical procedures for credentialing pastors and for affiliation with international churches. And classes would have to commit to developing their own vision and communication pathways to accommodate and pursue global opportunities. Finally, it would take all CRC folks in the pulpits, pews, agencies, and institutions to adopt the countercultural values expressed in section III above in order to avoid mistakes from the past.

X. Recommendations

The Global Vision team thus provides the Council of Delegates with the following recommendations:

- A. That the COD endorse the revised Global Vision Team report and forward to Synod 2024 for its adoption as a guide to CRCNA classes that are in conversation with congregations outside North America desiring to affiliate with the CRCNA.
- B. That the COD recommend that synod adopt the following instruction:
The Office of General Secretary will establish a "Vision Implementation Team" made up of diverse members from the CRCNA and its international partners. The team will have the following mandate:
 1. To immediately make an inventory of resources (people, material resources, etc.) that can be mobilized and made available to classes and congregations considering affiliations outside North America.
 2. To dialogue with (a) CRCNA agencies and institutions, (b) CRCNA classes, and (c) international churches connected with the classes to identify concrete barriers and opportunities to build the mutually edifying ecclesiastical relationships described in the Global Vision Team report. The Vision Implementation Team will occasionally report to the COD results of this work, including findings and proposals and/or projects (if any).
 3. To recommend to the Council of Delegates and to synod any appropriate changes that might be needed in CRCNA polity, governance,

and structure to support such relationships in light of the work in B, 2. Recommendations would be presented to the Council of Delegates by (if not before) its winter 2027 meeting for adoption at Synod 2027.

4. To converse with CRCNA-affiliated churches outside North America and interested international denominational partners with a view toward developing a CRC Global Ecclesiastical Partnership/Entity. Such an ecclesiastical partnership/entity would have a clear and limited mandate, authority structures, and pathways of collaboration (see framework D in section VIII above). Such an ecclesiastical partnership/entity would eventually house on equal footing the CRCNA, other international denominational partners, and groups of international congregations “incubated” in CRCNA classes. A report with possible recommendations would be received by the Council of Delegates by its winter 2028 meeting and forwarded to synod for information or adoption of any relevant recommendations.
- C. That the COD recommend that synod adopt the following instruction:
With the partnership of CRCNA agencies, institutions, and ethnic ministry networks, classes are encouraged to continue developing their own connections to international churches (based on framework C described in section VIII above) and using the vision developed in this report. Classes are encouraged to periodically share challenges and opportunities related to this effort with the Office of General Secretary.
- D. That the COD recommend that synod affirm the importance of this global vision so that the financial and human resources needed for the continued work of denominational staff, leaders, and volunteers in this effort will be prioritized.
- E. That the COD recommend that synod direct the Office of General Secretary to communicate this global vision to the classes and congregations of the CRCNA and to the international partners who participated in the research of this report, on its behalf.
- F. That the COD recommend that synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the Global Vision Team when matters pertaining to this report are discussed.
- G. That the COD recommend that synod give thanks to the members of the Global Vision Team for their thoughtful and prayerful work in developing a global vision for the CRC.

Global Vision Team

Bernard Ayoola (chair)
Harold Caicedo
Leanne Geisterfer
Moses Kang

Zachary King
Stan Kruis
Shirley Roels
Calvin University president

AGENCY, INSTITUTION, AND MINISTRY SUPPLEMENTS

Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this supplement of additional matters relating to the seminary from its February and May 2024 meetings.

I. Board of Trustees

At its meeting on May 16-17, 2024, the board elected the following officers for 2024-2025: David Morren, chair; Rev. Scott Greenway, vice chair; Susan Keesen, secretary.

II. Academics

A. Graduates and new programs

This is only the second academic year that we have been able to fully use our remodeled building, which helps us to focus increasingly on community, education, and worship with the use of more technology, better flexibility, and multiple collaborative learning spaces. Synod delegates are invited to an open house the evening of June 18, 2024.

On May 18, 2024, Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) conducted its commencement ceremony to honor sixty students who completed certificate or degree programs. This number includes those graduating through the Missional Training Center, which is now working in partnership with CTS, as well as the first-ever graduate in our doctor of ministry degree program. That graduate is Colin Percival Watson, Sr., executive director emeritus of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). A viewing of the ceremony can be found at youtube.com/watch?v=Q13Zqp-aqJ8.

Calvin Theological 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 a new cohort this summer. A previous synod asked CTS to investigate this degree program as part of a continuing education report—we are glad for the ongoing support of the church (see calvin-seminary.edu/academics/doctor-of-ministry).

B. Distinguished Alumni Awards – 2024

Dr. Clifford G. Christians was recognized as a Distinguished Alumni Award recipient for 2024. He is a 1964 bachelor of divinity degree graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary. One of the world's leading scholars on ethics in media and in human dialogue, Clifford G. Christians taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign after completing his doctoral studies in 1974.

Over the course of his thirty-five-year career at the University of Illinois, Dr. Christians explored the nature and role of ethics and ethical decision making in the worlds of professional media and human dialogue. He also studied the ethical implications for journalism in democratic societies, and he

analyzed how professional programs in advertising, broadcasting, journalism, and public relations teach ethics and the process of ethical decision making to the next generation of professionals.

With graduate degrees in theology and communication, Dr. Christians worked to bring the insights from communication research into organized religion and the field of theology. He was part of both Catholic and Calvinistic groups of scholars working to integrate communication theory and research into the theological framework of their denominations.

Rev. Wilbert (Bill) M. Van Dyk was also recognized as a Distinguished Alumni Award recipient for 2024. He received his bachelor of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1955 and his master of theology degree in 1976.

We highlighted his long-term pastoral ministry at Fourth Roseland CRC, Chicago, Illinois (1955-1959); Lake Worth CRC, Florida (1959-1964); Plymouth Heights CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1964-1986); and his continuing pastoral work as academic dean at CTS from 1986 to 1995.

A generation of students will remember Rev. Van Dyk as an excellent preacher and as a primary teacher of confessional preaching known for his proficiency and clarity of thought in the written and spoken word, including a significant document titled *Belonging: An Introduction to the Faith and Life of the Christian Reformed Church*.

Two videos on the ministries and testimonies of Dr. Christians and Rev. Van Dyk are available for viewing:

- Dr. Clifford G. Christians: youtu.be/6rzPkbG4FGI
- Rev. Wilbert (Bill) M. Van Dyk: youtu.be/cHfRMbzBSWM

C. Board actions

At its two most recent meetings, the CTS Board of Trustees took the following actions or took note of the following items for information:

1. After presentation and a time of interaction, the board unanimously adopted a motion to authorize the management of Calvin Theological Seminary to proceed with a proposed Burton Street student housing project of 46 units with a current projected completion date of early summer 2025.
2. Noted the approval of the Association of Theological Schools with regard to the Missional Training Center becoming an instructional site of Calvin Theological Seminary. As part of the development and support of this site, CTS approved the following as term-contract faculty: Dr. Michael Goheen as professor of missional theology, Dr. Dave Beldman as associate professor of biblical studies, and Dr. Mark Ryan as associate professor of congregational theology and cultural apologetics.
3. Approved the appointment of Rev. Albert Strydhorst as a ministry partner professor for missions and missiology as he continues his primary ministry with Resonate Global Mission and leadership in the Timothy

- Leadership Training Institute. This appointment recognizes the prior ministry of Rev. Strydhorst at Calvin Seminary as well as the recent Lilly Endowment grant given to the seminary's Institute for Mission, Church, and Culture led by Dr. Cory Willson. The focus of this five-year grant is to support local congregations as they realign their mission and ministries to better serve God's mission in a post-COVID culture.
4. Approved the appointment of Ms. Melissa Bos (currently with Resonate Global Mission) as CTS distinguished missionary in residence for 2024-2025.
 5. Accepted with great appreciation for his ministry the retirement announcement of Dr. Ronald Feenstra as he anticipates that his final year of teaching will be the 2025-2026 academic year.
 6. Approved the formation of a search team for the positions of professor of Old Testament and professor of systematic theology. (There is an ongoing search for a professor of systematic theology in response to a previous retirement announcement from Dr. Mary Vanden Berg anticipating her final year of teaching as the 2024-2025 academic year.)
 7. Noted with appreciation the hosting at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary of the spring Calvin Studies Society colloquium on "Calvin and Global Christianity."
 8. Noted that the Kuyper Prize sponsored by Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary was awarded to Sid Jansma, Jr., in April 2024 at the Kuyper Conference. It was announced at this conference that the next Kuyper Conference will take place in Jakarta, Indonesia, March 13-15, 2025.
 9. Met with new full-time staff serving in the areas of communications and academic services. Mr. Phillip Palacios is the new director of communications, and Scott DeYoung is the new director of academic services and registrar.
 10. Heard updates from Rev. Shawn Brix, who continues his work as the Calvin Theological Seminary Canadian church relations liaison, and from Dr. Danjuma Gibson, professor of pastoral theology, care and counseling, who also serves as program director of the master of arts degree in clinical mental health counseling.
 11. Adopted a fiscal budget for 2024-2025 and reviewed plans for a capital campaign while giving thanks for support that has been received above and beyond our annual operating fund budget.
 12. Reviewed a Strategic Planning Overview and Operations document developed with the aid and expertise of Mr. Chris Bosch of Chisel Consulting and outlining significant goals related to our ongoing and deepening relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

13. Noted the appointment of Mr. Jeff Lash as theological librarian and assistant dean for seminary matters. Mr. Lash came to Calvin from Cornerstone University, where he served as director and theological librarian. He earned an MLIS degree from Valdosta State and a master of arts degree in New Testament from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. He has also served as an adjunct professor of theological research for Cornerstone Theological Seminary. He has over a decade of experience in both pastoral ministry and academic library science.
14. Noted the continued development of an arrangement for Dr. Young Ahn Kang to teach and serve students (especially in the Th.M. and Ph.D. programs) from South Korea.
15. This spring, CTS congratulated the first master of arts graduates of our competency based program called Empower. Through Empower, students develop and demonstrate proficiency in key ministry competencies through experiential learning and mentoring. Each student has a team of three mentors, including CTS faculty and ministry leaders. This team mentors the student through a customized learning path that takes into account the student's prior experience, strength and growth areas, ministry context, and vocational goals. For more information, visit calvinseminary.edu/empower/.
16. Noted the development of CTS Lifelong Learning's Adaptive Leadership Cohort, designed to support, connect, and equip leaders (see calvinseminary.edu/academics/lifelong-learning/cohorts/).
17. Noted that Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary are preparing to celebrate their 150th anniversary in the 2025-2026 academic year. Various plans are being developed for a year-long and global celebration.

D. Board appointments

The board recommends that synod appoint the following nominees to the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees as regional at-large members for a first term of three years.

Region 8 – at-large

Mr. John Wessliius, a market gardener, Sunday school teacher, elder, and council chair, became interested in theology as part of understanding history, politics, and geography. He was born in Leeuwarden, Friesland, Netherlands, and grew up attending Maranatha CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario. He became an active member in the denomination with his family by serving and teaching at Kitchener (Ont.) CRC; First CRC in Hamilton, Ontario; Bethel CRC in Dunnville, Ontario; and First CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. He taught for a year at WDCHS in Breslau, Ontario, and went on to serve as a district manager for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (6 years) and as a consultant for Premier: A School Specialty Company (12 years). For the past twenty years with his wife, Janna, he has owned and operated The Cornucopia, a market farm

following organic and sustainable practices. The farm tells the biblical story of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. John is passionate about preaching that encourages church members to seek the kingdom of God in their every calling, task, and vocation.

Region 10 – at-large

Dr. Grace Kreulen is a retired nursing professional with a research Ph.D. and a career as a university nursing faculty member, researcher, and international health program consultant with World Renew. With roots in First CRC of Artesia, California, she attended Calvin University and earned degrees from Columbia University NYC (BSN, 1970), Wayne State University (MSN, 1974), and the University of Arizona (Ph.D., 1995). She is a member of Pillar Church in Holland, Michigan. Prior to moving to Holland, she was a member of River Terrace CRC in East Lansing, Michigan, where she served as chair of the missions committee and the elder board. Dr. Kreulen is a board member of several Christian nonprofit organizations, including the Artevel Foundation, Life Focus Communications, and My House Ministry.

Region 11 – at-large

Mr. Tom Nobel is the founder, executive chair, and former president and CEO of Baruch Senior Ministries and the former president and CEO of Leisure Living Management. He is a certified public accountant who served with Ernst and Young for twenty years, the last eight years as a partner. He is a strategic leader who has translated business strategies into a faith-based belief system of dignity and respect for 60 senior communities in Michigan. He has served as a member of council, as consistory president, and as elder at his home congregation, Ada Christian Reformed Church. Among his numerous board and civic experiences, he served on the Calvin University Board of Trustees and as chair of the audit committee and as a member of the administration and finance committee as well as the executive committee. He also served as treasurer of Classis Thornapple Valley for twenty-one years.

III. Recommendation

That synod by way of the ballot appoint Mr. John Wesslius, Dr. Grace Kreulen, and Mr. Tom Nobel as regional at-large members to the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees for a first term of three years.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Susan Keesen, secretary

Calvin University Supplement

I. Introduction

The Calvin University Board of Trustees met April 26, 2024, 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 April meeting, the board thanked members whose terms are ending—Ben Ipema, Andrea Karsten, Lois Miller, and Steven Triezenberg—for their diligent work on the board and for their service to Calvin University.

II. Finance

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved the 2024-2025 budget proposal.

III. Academic

The Calvin University Board of Trustees ratified or endorsed curricular program revisions, new courses, course revisions, new faculty appointments, faculty promotions, faculty retirements, and faculty completion of service recognitions. They also approved the faculty handbook revision recommendations from the educational policy committee, the professional status committee, and the faculty senate.

IV. Board matters

The Calvin University Board of Trustees recommends that synod elect new members, reappoint for subsequent terms, and ratify the results of elections held in classes for membership on the Calvin University Board of Trustees.

A. Board membership

1. Trustee nominations
 - a. At-large trustee

Steven Triezenberg is completing his third three-year term on the board as an at-large trustee. The board recommends the following nominee to serve a three-year term:

Heather Van Vugt Ramirez is an attorney and adjunct professor of law at Marquette University Law School, where she teaches nonprofit law. Heather graduated from Calvin University with honors in political science in 2003. She earned her law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 2007. Upon graduation from law school, she practiced corporate law at Davis and Kuelthau in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She then moved to the nonprofit sector and served as executive director of Centro Legal from 2009-2016. Centro Legal is a nonprofit legal services firm that provides free and low-cost legal representation for families with limited means. In addition to teaching at Marquette University Law School, she serves in leadership roles on several nonprofit boards in the Milwaukee community. She is a member of Fox Point (Wis.) Lutheran Church.

b. Regional at-large trustees

Region 4

Ben Ipema is completing a three-year term on the board as a Region 4 at-large trustee. The board recommends the following nominee to serve a three-year term:

James Zwier is a 1990 graduate of Calvin University. He lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He earned his juris doctorate from the University of Michigan Law School in 1995. He recently retired from Wolverine Worldwide, Inc., as their executive vice president. He has prior board experience with Outdoor Foundation, Art Prize, Grand Action 2.0, and other organizations. He is a member of Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, where he has served as a member of council.

Region 4

Lois Miller is completing a three-year term on the board as a Region 4 at-large trustee. The board recommends the following nominee to serve a three-year term:

Shirley Hoogstra is a 1978 graduate of Calvin University. She earned her juris doctorate from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1986. She is the president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C., and plans to retire in December 2024. She has prior board experience on the board of Calvin University from 1995-1999, served as a deacon at Ridgefield Christian Reformed Church in New Jersey, and served as an elder at First Presbyterian Church in New Haven, Connecticut. She is currently serving on the Trinity Forum board and the National Association of Evangelicals board. She is a member of Encounter Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Region 5

Heather Van Vugt-Ramirez is completing a three-year term on the board as a Region 5 at-large trustee and is transitioning to a three-year term as an at-large trustee. The board recommends the following nominee to serve a three-year term:

Brian Boomsma is a 1979 graduate of Calvin University from Schererville, Indiana. He is the president/CEO of Dutch Farms. He currently serves on the council and vision team of Faith Church, Highland, Indiana, where he is a member. His previous board experience includes the Highland Christian School Board and the Foundation Board, The Ravines Retreat Center. He has also served as a deacon and as an elder at First Christian Reformed Church in Highland, Indiana.

2. Trustee reappointments

The board recommends the following members for reappointment for the terms noted:

- Region 6: Gary Bos, second term
- Region 6: Kevin Adams, second term
- At-large: Andy Elliot, third term
- At-large: Niala Boodhoo, additional one-year term
- At-large: Jona Eigege, additional one-year term

B. Board officers

The Calvin University Board of Trustees appointed the following officers of the board for 2024-2025: Bruce Los, chair; Mary Tuuk Kuras, vice chair; Gene Miyamoto, secretary; and Dirk Pruis, treasurer (vice president for finance and administration and chief financial officer).

V. Other

The Calvin University Board of Trustees ratified the decision authorizing President Elzinga to grant degrees, honors, and certificates upon those recommended by the faculty at the 2024 commencement ceremonies.

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved a written comment in response to the Synod 2024 overtures that name Calvin University (see Appendix).

VI. Recommendations

- A. That synod elect new members, reappoint for subsequent terms, and ratify the results of elections held in classes for membership on the Calvin University Board of Trustees.
- B. The synod ratify the decision of the Calvin University Board of Trustees to approve the written comment in response to the Synod 2024 overtures that name Calvin University (section V; Appendix).
- C. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the interim president, Greg Elzinga, and to the chair of the board, Bruce Los, when matters pertaining to education are discussed.
- D. That synod also grant the privilege of the floor to the following persons when matters pertaining to education are discussed: the provost, Noah Toly; the vice chair of the board, Mary Tuuk Kuras; and the trusteeship committee chair, Perrin Rynders.

Grounds:

1. As provost, Toly is the chief academic officer and has primary responsibility to administer expectations related to “faculty status” at Calvin University. This includes all expectations of confessional subscription by those employees who must sign the Covenant for Faculty Members.
2. Toly served as the administrator most directly responsible for administering the process for expressions of confessional difficulty,

which is outlined in section 3.5.1.1.1 of Calvin's Handbook for Teaching Faculty.

3. Tuuk Kuras and Rynders serve in roles on the board most likely to lead conversations concerning expectations of confessional subscription for trustees who, like employees with faculty status, must affirm the Covenant for Faculty Members.

Calvin University
Greg Elzinga, interim president

APPENDIX

Calvin University Response regarding Overture 44

Calvin University is grateful for the opportunity to respond to select overtures received by Synod 2024. We understand that the university's right of response is grounded in Appendix T of the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, which allows the university's Board of Trustees to initiate comment, and we appreciate the invitation that was extended by denominational staff in this case.

This year Calvin has been invited to comment on Overture 44 (Classis Minnkota; *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 529-31), which addresses expectations and practices of confessional subscription for university employees who sign the Covenant for Faculty Members. Given the aim of the overture, it is best if the comments below are read alongside our 2023 response on five overtures that sought to "clarify or revise the denomination's understanding of and approaches to confessional subscription by clarifying, changing, limiting, or eliminating the use of gravamina, or expressions of confessional difficulty" (see *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 755-58).¹ It is worth repeating here a statement from that 2023 comment, which applies in 2024 as well: "our concerns in this memo address not *whether* a given matter should be confessional, but *how* confessional matters are handled at Calvin University."²

¹ That response was considered by Advisory Committee 8 of Synod 2023. Where the work of Advisory Committee 8 touched upon the policies and practices of the university, its majority and minority reports (8D and 8E) were in agreement on one recommendation: That Calvin University should continue with its current practices for expressions of confessional difficulty. We believe the committee's recommendations for Calvin University reflected a wise path forward for the institution and were consistent with prior synodical endorsements of the university's policies and practices. Notably, Overture 21, also from Classis Minnkota, requests that these two reports be "[laid] directly before synod" as the first two items of business in 2024 (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 466).

² See footnote 1, *Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 755. As with last year's response, this year's response will leave aside serious concerns about operational impacts. We stand ready to address those issues should they arise in the course of deliberations at Synod 2024.

Comments on Overture 44

We have serious concerns with Overture 44, which asks synod to restrict recourse to confessional difficulties for Calvin University faculty. To quote the overture: “Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2024 not to allow faculty of Calvin University to take exceptions to the Covenant for Faculty Members in the particular area of our confessional definition of ‘unchastity.’” For several reasons, we believe this overture is flawed.

The university appreciates the overture’s interactions with key institutional documents, such as the Covenant for Faculty Members, Handbook for Teaching Faculty, and Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom (CCAF). These are among the foundational documents for our practice of expressions of difficulty. However, we respectfully note that Overture 44’s review of principles, policies, and practices in these documents is cursory and does not reflect adequate attention to the ways that the documents relate to each other or to Church Order. Nor does the overture consider the ways in which expressions of difficulty have historically been practiced or implemented at the university. Because of these oversights, there is a discrepancy between what the overture seems to demand and what it would actually require. Specifically, while the overture seems to require Calvin University to implement practices elaborated in its own documents, adopting its recommendations would in fact demand that Calvin University not only abandon its historical practices but revise its existing policies.

Perhaps most importantly, the overture does not consider the prior synodical endorsements of the university’s approach to confessional subscription. As noted in our 2023 response regarding five overtures (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 757-58):

Synod has previously endorsed the university’s approach to confessional commitment on at least two occasions:

- Synod 1996 declared that Church Order Article 29 “does not preclude faculty discussion, debate, or disagreement with the substance of a synodical decision or position taken.”³ This declaration was prompted by synod’s acceptance of the Calvin College Board of Trustees’ recommendation to retain a faculty member whose book was not entirely in agreement with a synodical position.
- Synod 2014 adopted the following motion concerning Calvin’s document *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom*: “That synod receive for information and commend to the churches the document *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom at Calvin College* . . . submitted in response to the instructions of Synods 2011 and 2012, as being faithful to and honoring synod’s own prior work on confessional subscription.”⁴ This 2014

³ *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 528.

⁴ *Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 542.

commendation is notable for its principal nature and broad application. **Synod not only endorsed the approach outlined in the document—an approach that explicitly differs from requirements of strict subscription or the recommendations of these five overtures—as good for the university, but synod specifically commended it to the churches as consistent with the denomination’s prior teachings on confessional subscription.**

It is worth expanding upon the 2014 commendation of CCAF. CCAF clearly states that Calvin University and the Christian Reformed Church in North America are not “strict subscriptionist” institutions.⁵ Indeed, the interpretation of confessional subscription offered in CCAF, including what it means to “[affirm] without reservation the doctrines contained in the standards of the church as being taught in the Word of God”⁶, stands in sharp contrast to the interpretation offered in Overture 44.⁷ Yet Synod 2014 specifically commended CCAF to the churches as consistent with—indeed, “faithful to and honoring”—prior synodical instruction on confessional subscription. It seems wise to note, therefore, that Overture 44 effectively asks Synod 2024 to contradict the understanding of Synod 2014.

Moreover, it is not clear whether Overture 44 intends (a) to single out for special attention the denomination’s confessional definition of unchastity or (b) to extend a principle of strict subscription to all confessional teaching. While this lack of clarity makes it difficult to interpret the overture, we do not see the wisdom in either option:

- a. We are wary of singling out the definition of “unchastity” for special limitations. Such a revision would not only elevate the definition of “unchastity” above more plainly foundational (e.g., creedal) doctrinal concerns, but the precedent could also open the denomination to a destabilizing future of arbitrary, ad hoc interventions focused on select narrow slices of either our ecumenical foundations or Reformed distinctives. Rather than reinforce confessionalism, this could undermine confessionalism by inviting the creation of standards within standards for every passing generation. Calvin desires to be robustly confessional, and we believe that robust confessionalism is better preserved by our current practices than by singling out some issues within the confessions for special treatment.⁸

⁵ See, for example, *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom*, p. 28.

⁶ Church Order Article 5.

⁷ The contrast is marked in several parts of the overture. These include: point 1, which seems to describe any disagreement as “disingenuous and . . . a violation of the ninth commandment”; point 2, which suggests that “‘without reservation’ does not allow for differing opinions”; and point 4, which suggests that “no exceptions are allowed in this particular area.”

⁸ To the extent that the overture gives a rationale for singling out sexuality/unchastity for special treatment, it seems to be in point 5, a, which reads, “The longstanding exceptions policy for faculty was often over issues such as disagreeing with the language of detesting the Anabaptists in our confessions, infant baptism, or teachings on reprobation. We should

- b. We are also wary of extending a principle of strict subscription to all confessional teaching. Such an approach is not only inconsistent with both CCAF and Synod 2014's read of prior synodical teaching on confessional subscription, but it is also inconsistent with Calvin University's generations-long practice of employing faculty who may have difficulties with, reservations about, or exceptions to some aspect of confessional teaching. Historically, these have frequently related to reprobation or the sacrament of baptism, but other confessional issues have also been raised from time to time. For example, at least one person has recently considered submitting a confessional difficulty concerning Belgic Confession Article 4, which claims that the apostle Paul wrote Hebrews. Generalizing the approach that Overture 44 suggests would exclude people who struggle with reprobation, paedo-baptism, or Pauline authorship of Hebrews. We do not believe that this approach to confessional subscription is necessary or helpful for the preservation of our identity as a vibrantly Christian and seriously Reformed institution.

Our concerns with Overture 44 notwithstanding, Calvin University genuinely desires to have a close relationship with the denomination, to be teachable, and to submit to synodical authority. Over the past two years, these commitments have been reflected in clarification and promulgation of the university's position on sexuality, strengthening of our hiring process, and reinforcement of our policies and practices for expressions of difficulty, among other developments.

Furthermore, the decision of Synod 2022 to classify select denominational teachings on human sexuality as interpretations of the confessions has changed how we treat the issue. When the denominational position on sexuality was classified as pastoral guidance, disagreement with it was not subject to the confessional-difficulty processes required by the Covenant for Faculty Members and elaborated in our Handbook for Teaching Faculty. Now the teachings that have been classified as interpretations of the confessions are subject to those requirements and processes. Those processes require any who disagree to share their difficulties with our Board of Trustees (through the Professional Status Committee) and submit to guidelines for teaching, scholarship, and conduct related to sexuality.

not allow exceptions for matters of sin that would endanger someone's salvation (1 Cor. 6:9-10), whether that is a private or publicly held belief." While we acknowledge and appreciate the attempt to provide a rationale for singling out this issue, we believe that the one provided reflects an inadequate theology of sin and salvation. Sin is not only behavior but includes every way in which we fall short, and Scripture also suggests that other sins put salvation at risk. A proper understanding of those matters would require either a more expansive application of Overture 44's logic or a different rationale for singling out this particular issue.

It is clear that Synod 2024 will continue Synod 2023's work of wrestling with the approach to confessional subscription taken by the churches, classes, agencies, and educational institutions of the denomination. As we did last year, we welcome the opportunity to inform those discussions with our understanding that Calvin University's current practices are both within the bounds of institutional and denominational precedent and consistent with approaches that have previously received synodical endorsement. We understand that this matter may require further conversation with an advisory committee or additional study. We stand ready to supply further information or perspective upon request and will keep the Synod 2024 deliberations in prayer over the coming weeks.

The Calvin University Board of Trustees
Bruce Los, chair

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., Supplement

I. Board of directors update

Howard Van Den Heuvel is concluding his second term on the board and is not eligible for reappointment. Layla Kuhl has been hired as the new Loan Fund director, so a replacement is needed for her position.

The board requests that synod appoint two board members from the following slate of four nominees to serve a term of three years with eligibility for reappointment to a second term.

Andrew Storteboom is a member of Immanuel CRC in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he has served as an elder and as a deacon. He has served as part of the Family Selection Committee for Habitat for Humanity for the past 17 years, and he also served on the local Neighbor to Neighbor organization. Andrew earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and political science from Calvin University and is employed at Fairway Independent Mortgage as senior vice president area manager.

Jeffrey DeYoung is a member of Bethel CRC in Lansing, Illinois, where he has served as an elder and as a deacon. He also served as a Sunday school teacher for seventh graders for 15 years, and he has served as a Cadet counselor for the past 18 years. Jeffrey has served his community as a board member for Illiana Christian Schools, the PASS Pregnancy Centers, and the Illiana Christian School Foundation. He earned a bachelor of science degree from Indiana University in business administration and a graduate certificate from the University of Wisconsin Graduate School of Banking. He is employed at Grand Ridge National Bank as chief operations officer.

Sharon Visbeen is a member of Rockpoint Community CRC in North Haledon, New Jersey, where she has served as church treasurer, as head of the finance team, as head of discipleship, as Sunday school superintendent, and as a catechism teacher. Sharon has also served her community as the assistant teaching director of Community Bible School, as a core group leader in Community Bible Study, and as the PTO president for Eastern Christian Schools. She is a graduate of Calvin University and works as a controller for KV Builders.

Michael Westra is a member of Restore Church in Midland Park, New Jersey, where he has served as an elder, a deacon, and a part of the praise team. He has also served on the Eastern Home Mission Board as part of Classis Hackensack, and on the boards of Holland Christian Homes and New City Kids. In addition, Michael has served the greater community on the boards of the Atlantic Stewardship Bank and the Columbia Bank Foundation. He graduated from Calvin University and is employed as president of Wayne Tile Company.

II. Recommendation

That synod appoint two board members from the slate of four nominees provided to a first term of three years, effective July 1, 2024.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Layla Kuhl, director

World Renew Supplement

I. Board matters

A. Canadian Board of Delegates

The board reports the following additional members to the Canadian Board of Delegates:

Member at large

Gordon Van Vliet is a member of Emmanuel CRC, Calgary, Alberta (Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan), where he served as a deacon for two terms, including on its executive committee. He works as a barrister and solicitor and has an interest in board governance. He loves the idea of expressing his faith, albeit indirectly, through the work of picking people up when their lives are upended by factors beyond human control, and to support communities who want to better their lives but may lack the skills or resources to put those desires into action.

Pastoral advisor

Cari Fydirchuk serves as a pastor of River Park Church in Calgary, Alberta (Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan). She served on two church-plant leadership teams as a young adult and graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary as part of the first master of divinity distance-learning program cohort. She is the founder of Reclaim-App, a ministry that focuses on integrating Christian spirituality with mental health practices, sharing the love of God as she creates safe spaces of connection with God and her neighbors.

B. Canadian Board of Directors

Jeff Adams, president (Alberta South/Saskatchewan)

Harry Bergshoeff, vice president (Toronto)

Darryl Back, treasurer (Niagara)

Margaret Hoogland, secretary (Alberta North)

Cari Fydirchuk, pastoral advisor (Alberta South/Saskatchewan)

Gordon Van Vliet, board director (Alberta South/Saskatchewan)

Echo MacLeod, board director (Eastern Canada)

Andrew Geisterfer, emeritus (Alberta North)

C. U.S. Board of Delegates

The board reports that the following will serve as U.S. delegates for a first term of three years:

Member at large

Donn Hansum is an active member of Highlands Church in Denver, Colorado, where he and his family are deeply involved in ministry activities. As a devoted Christian, Donn is passionate about the mission of World Renew and is eager to leverage his professional experience and skills to support the organization in any way he can. Donn brings the dedication of a seasoned professional who is committed to engaging,

promoting, and fostering the goals, objectives, and mission of World Renew. With 33 years of experience as director of Volunteers in Action in Denver, Donn has extensive experience working with various boards, providing diaconal training, and fostering partnerships with other nonprofits, ministries, and government social service organizations. Donn's skills include developing strong working relationships, nonprofit management, leadership, training facilitation, and promoting asset-based community development. He is committed to justice, mercy, humility, and prayer, aligning closely with the values of World Renew.

Member at large

Graham Seel is a dedicated member of Creekside Church in Martinez, California, and is actively involved in ministry and a nonprofit youth program offering choral opportunities to low-income families. His connection with World Renew began at Walnut Creek (Calif.) CRC and through his daughter's attendance at Calvin University. With a former career at Bank of America, he has valuable experience in financial services and strategic planning. Over the past decade he has volunteered extensively in economic livelihoods, contributing to Baker Fund reports, research papers, partner evaluations, and training sessions in Kenya and Uganda. He has a rich background in worship leading, lay preaching, Bible teaching, and children's ministry. He served nine years on a local Christian school board, including four as president. Currently he substitute teaches, leads chapels, and accompanies choirs. He is also president of Cantare, an Oakland-based choral nonprofit focused on justice and equity in underserved schools. He is committed to serving in God's name, using his gifts and experiences to support World Renew's mission of justice, compassion, and hope.

Classis Central Plains

Jason DeBruin is a lifelong member of the CRC and currently resides in Urbandale, Iowa. He works for Pioneer Seeds in Des Moines, Iowa, and is passionate about serving through his work and supporting organizations focused on eliminating hunger. Jason and his wife, an educator, are committed to their community and church. He has connected with World Renew through volunteering with Disaster Response Services. Jason also serves as an elder at Crossroads Fellowship CRC. His dedication to ministry and his professional expertise make him a valuable addition to the board. Jason is eager to contribute to World Renew's mission and to support its goals with his skills and experience.

Classis Georgetown

James Roskam is an active member of Georgetown CRC and Classis Georgetown. He brings a wealth of experience from his career in management and administration. Now retired, he is passionate about helping "underdogs," and he has strong gifts in discernment and leadership. Throughout his church and ministry experiences, he has chaired the

council for two churches, served on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board, and served as a member of the Council of Delegates. He has also chaired several community organizations and served as a delegate to synod five times. He is eager to bring his skills in process management, collaboration, enthusiasm, and leadership to the World Renew Board of Delegates.

Classis Kalamazoo

Bill Fernhout is a pastor with a robust background in youth ministry and evangelism. For the past 35 years, he has dedicated his life to guiding and mentoring young people, spending 15 years as a volunteer and 20 years in vocational youth ministry. He also directed a drop-in center known as The DOCK Ministry, offering a safe haven for youth in need. Currently he serves as the lead pastor of The PIER, a dynamic church plant focused on community outreach and spiritual growth. Bill's personal journey is a testament to his resilience and faith. Born to a single mother and adopted at six weeks old, he was introduced to Jesus by his adoptive parents. However, he struggled with his identity and faced an 18-year addiction to pornography. At the age of 15, amidst a turbulent period marked by lust and drugs, Bill experienced a transformative encounter with the Lord, which set him on a path to recovery and spiritual renewal. Married at 21, he is now a proud father of three and a grandfather of 15. Bill is passionate about cold call work to network and develop relationships, leveraging his skills to engage and support ministry activities. His authenticity and openness about his past struggles highlight the strength found in vulnerability, making him relatable and inspiring. Bill's extensive experience and unwavering commitment to evangelism, youth, and education clearly contribute to fostering the mission and objectives of World Renew.

Classis Minnkota

Rick Fey is a lifelong member of the CRC, and he and his wife are deeply committed to their church and community. With a diverse career background, Rick transitioned from running his family's local newspaper business to working in computer sales and later in procurement within the food industry. He has five children and maintains a strong connection to global development work through his son, who lived in South Africa and now works for Business Connect, a ministry led by Lou Haveman. Rick utilizes his procurement skills as a volunteer with the American Red Cross, while his wife is active in the church's Hispanic ministry. He has also served on his CRC council and his city council, bringing a wealth of experience and dedication to his community and beyond.

Classis Wisconsin

Dr. Christine Jeske is deeply engaged in exploring the moral and cultural questions behind economic development, especially what North Americans can learn from the global South regarding finance and well-being.

Her research focuses on how people envision achieving a “good life,” particularly those who are unemployed or in low-wage jobs. She has extensive experience in microfinance, refugee resettlement, community development, and teaching, having lived and worked in Nicaragua, northwestern China, and South Africa. As an author of three books, including *The Laziness Myth*, she examines what makes work desirable, the impact of racism on work, and how people find hope in challenging working conditions. She combines research, teaching, hospitality, parenting, and farming in her own life, striving to live out a good life. She resides in an old Wisconsin farmhouse named the Sanctuary, complete with chickens, pigs, weeds, two children, and her wonderful husband. She admires the World Renew approach and has connected with their work through Wheaton's Humanitarian Disaster Institute. She is eager to contribute her insights and experiences to the board.

The board reports that the following will serve as U.S. directors for a first two-year term:

Bev Abma, Classis Grandville
Graham Seel, member at large

The board reports that the following will serve as U.S. directors for an additional one-year term:

Bonny Mulder-Behnia, member at large
Charles Udeh, member at large
Jeff Banaszak, member at large
Shanti Jost, Classis Hudson
Thomas Christian, Classis Grand Rapids South

D. U.S. Board of Directors

Jeff Banaszak, president (Holland, Michigan)
Shanti Jost, vice president (North Haledon, New Jersey)
Ken MacBain, treasurer (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
Rudy Gonzalez, secretary (Moreno Valley, California)
Bonny Mulder-Behnia, pastoral advisor (Bellflower, California)
Thomas Christian, board director (Grandville, Michigan)
Bev Abma, board director (Byron Center, Michigan)
Charles Udeh, board director (Kentwood, Michigan)
Graham Seel, board director (Concord, California)

E. U.S. Board members completing terms

World Renew would like to recognize and thank the following board members for completing service on the board:

Rev. Carl Bergman (Classis Muskegon)
Charles Adams, emeritus

II. Recommendation

That synod receive for information the list of new members of the Canadian and U.S. Boards of Delegates.

World Renew

Carol Bremer-Bennett, executive director, World Renew-U.S.

Jamie McIntosh, executive director, World Renew-Canada

STANDING COMMITTEES

Candidacy Committee Supplement

I. Candidates for minister of the Word

A. Candidates for ministry

Each year it is a privilege to meet and interview the applicants for candidacy. The interviews for these candidates were conducted this year by teams of four persons. The Candidacy Committee is pleased to recommend for candidacy the twenty-five individuals listed below. These persons include those who graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and from other accredited seminaries. Those attending seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary have completed the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy. Biographical details for each of the candidates can be found in the candidate booklet available for download at crcna.org/candidacy.

The following motion will allow their names to be approved by synod:

That synod declare the following twenty-five individuals as candidates for ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, subject to completion of all remaining (if any) requirements (the list of candidates eligible for call is available on the Candidacy Committee website: crcna.org/candidacy).

Jeremiah Basuric	Yohan Lee	Jonathan Sturru
William Brouwers	Young Geol (Jon)	Matthew Timms
Melissa Burmaster	Lee	Daniel Unterkofler
Robert Golding	Daniel Le Forestier	Nick Vander Ploeg
Caleb Harper	Patrick Lin	Lorinda
Keith Hoekstra	Michelle Oh	Vanderwerp
Josiah Huisman	Jeremiah Mitchell	Micah VanDyken
Austin Kammeraad	Kevin Moxon	Sarah VerMerris
David Kerkstra	Charles Mutinga	Yanyan (Ruth) Xing

B. Extension of candidacy

The rules of synod require that a person who is declared a candidate by one synod must request an extension of candidacy status at the following synod if a call has not been accepted. The Candidacy Committee communicates with such persons in order to determine the validity of the request and to offer words of encouragement.

The Candidacy Committee recommends the following eight persons for approval of candidacy extension.

Rebecca Bokma	Kennedy Muli Kailiti
Yoon Chul Choi	Sung Su Lee
Carol Hulin	Matthew Mulder
Jake (Minho) Jeong	Micah Ringelberg

II. Article 8 candidates approved

Our process for guiding pastors ordained in other denominations who wish to become ordained in the CRC is described in Church Order Article 8.

Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E directs the Candidacy Committee to be intimately involved in this process and to submit for synod's review the names of those approved for Article 8 process. The Candidacy Committee has concurred on the need for the following persons in the past year. In each case the appropriate documents are on file with the director of the Office of Candidacy.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Ordination Denomination</i>
10/19/2023	Jun (Mark) Park	Hudson	Korean American Presbyterian
11/2/2023	Lloyd Hong	Hudson	Presbyterian Church of Korea
1/16/2024	Jose Pinero	Calif. South	Reformed Church of Venezuela
2/5/2024	Michael Johnson	Hudson	Reformed Church in America

III. Expectations about signing the Covenant for Officebearers

Since candidacy applicants have always been asked, as part of their candidacy interview, whether they can in good conscience sign the Covenant for Officebearers, the committee has fielded many questions in recent years about how the decision of Synod 2022 (to add an interpretation of the word “unchastity” to Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108) would affect this expectation for candidacy applicants. The paragraph below, included in communications to candidacy applicants in 2023-2024, explains how the committee has handled this matter:

Although the covenant for officebearers uses the word “wholehearted” in several places, the committee has always allowed candidates to express some measure of wrestling with points of doctrine which they find challenging, as long as they are comfortable agreeing to teach, preach, and guide their congregation in ways that are consistent with the confessions. The committee desires to remain consistent in this practice. If a potential candidate indicates that they are wrestling with this interpretation in the catechism (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108), but they can still “in good conscience” teach, preach, and pastorally guide a congregation in a manner consistent with it, this will be acceptable to the committee.

IV. Comments regarding learning plans for commissioned pastors

Following a review of the survey that was recently completed (included in the Candidacy Committee's report in the *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 299-311), in which the steady increase of the use of the office of commissioned pastor was observed, the committee believes that the following should become a focus in the coming years:

- development of more consistent approaches to contextual individualized learning plans for commissioned pastors

- development and prioritization of pathways that provide a helpful bridge between commissioned pastor learning plans and the theological education required for candidacy as minister of the Word.

The Candidacy Committee is willing to explore these matters in conversation with any others who may desire to engage in this work, if synod should so direct.

V. Nominations

Rev. Andrew Beunk and Pastor Caleb Dickson are completing their first term on the committee and are willing to serve a second term. Pastor Deb Chee is completing her second term and is not available for reappointment. The Candidacy Committee therefore presents to synod the following slate of nominees for appointment to fill one vacant position:

Rev. Mirtha Villafane, an ordained minister of the Word and a CRC pastor, earned a master of divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary and a bachelor of arts degree from the Evangelical Seminary in Caracas, Venezuela. She served as the pastor of the Latin American CRC in Anaheim, California, from 2008 to 2021. During this time she successfully revitalized the church facing a steep decline. In her current role as a local mission leader in the Eastern region for Resonate Global Mission, she identifies, recruits, and trains church planters within the CRC. Nationally she is a leader in Consejo Latino, contributing to its executive team. In this capacity she communicates vision and plays a key role in developing strategies to mobilize and coach new Hispanic pastors. Since 2022 she has been the Latino coach network developer, focusing on equipping Hispanic pastors and leaders for effective service in local churches by providing coaching and mentoring. Her overarching goal is to empower individuals for service in the extension of the kingdom of God.

Rev. Michelle Kool is the pastor at Covenant CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. Before going into pastoral ministry she worked in a bank as a financial planner. She received her undergraduate degree at The King's University, then studied at Taylor Seminary, earning a master of divinity degree, and completed the requirements of the EPMC program at Calvin Theological Seminary. She is currently working toward a doctor of ministry degree in church renewal with Western Theological Seminary. She has served the denomination on the Council of Delegates as well as at the classis level as part of the classis interim committee. She currently serves on the student support committee for Classis Alberta North.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod declare those persons listed in section I, A as candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

B. That synod approve the extensions of candidacy as recommended in section I, B.

C. That synod approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of need for those persons listed in section II for affiliation under Church Order Article 8.

D. That synod elect one of the nominees in section V to fill the open position on the Candidacy Committee.

Candidacy Committee
Susan LaClear, director

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee Supplement

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) presents this supplement of additional matters related to ecumenical relationships and interfaith interactions.

I. Nominations for membership

In keeping with the synodical guidelines and requirements for diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and ordination among the membership of the committee, the EIRC presents nominees for two Canada East positions, as follows, as well as nominees for the Canada West position.

Canada East – Position 1

Ms. Eleanor (Elly) Boersma Sarkany is a commissioned pastor and serves as pastor of worship at Covenant Church, St. Catharines, Ontario. She has a master of arts degree in worship from Calvin Theological Seminary, and a bachelor of science degree in biomedical physiology and kinesiology from Simon Fraser University. Elly has served on the CRC Worship Ministries Advisory Board (as chair), the Canadian Restructuring Team, and the search team for the interim Canadian ministries director. She is currently serving on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Writing Team (assigned by the EIRC), the leadership development team of Classis Niagara, and the Serve Niagara host team of Classis Niagara. In June 2019 she led worship for a Resonate conference in Montreal based on Muslim-Christian relations, and that piqued her interest in interfaith relations. She has thoroughly enjoyed her time serving on the writing team for WPCU and the many deep conversations she has had with other worship planners from across many denominations in Canada.

Canada East – Position 2

Rev. Anthony Elenbaas is a pastor at Immanuel CRC in Hamilton, Ontario. He has a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary. He has previously served the EIRC (2013-19), including one year as chair; as a CRCNA delegate to the Canadian Council of Churches Governing Board; as part of the synodical Ad-Hoc Committee on Categories of Affiliation; as part of the Nominations Committee of the Canadian Council of Churches; and as a CRCNA Delegate to the World Communion of Reformed Churches General Council in 2017. He is currently serving on the Reformed Church of America's Commission on Christian Unity, as chair of the Classis Hamilton Campus Ministry Committee, and as chair of the TrueCity Hamilton Leadership Team (local missional ecumenical network).

Rev. Ryan Braam serves as lead pastor at Fellowship CRC in Brighton, Ontario. He has a bachelor of arts degree from Redeemer University and

a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary. Ryan has served in the following roles: Grace Welland CRC: council, worship committee, outreach, education teams; Classical Safe Church Team: board member (Niagara) 2009-2015; Celebrate Recovery, an ecumenical, city-wide ministry: board member (Welland, Ont.) 2012- 2015; Classical Home Missions: board member (Quinte) 2016-2021; Synod 2023 Advisory Committee 2: Church Order and Related matters: reporter. He currently serves on the council, worship, and outreach teams at Fellowship CRC, as a board member for Geneva House Campus Ministries (Queen's University), and as vice chair of the Classis Quinte Interim Committee.

Canada West

Rev. Roy Berkenbosch is retired from King's University, where he taught in the theology program, directed the interdisciplinary studies program, and founded and directed the Micah Centre. He has served as a pastoral/theological advisor for World Renew, both in Canada and the United States, as reporter for the task force to study the role of deacons at major assemblies, on the CICW advisory committee, on the EPMC committee, and as a member of the ecumenical Edmonton-based Social Justice Institute for 20 years. He currently serves on the Bangladesh/ India transitional team for World Renew. He is one of several ordained members who share in leadership roles at his church, Fellowship CRC, Edmonton, Alberta. He has served as chair of the coordinating committee, as a member of the pastoral committee, as a special advisor to council with respect to classis meetings, and as a team leader for preaching and pulpit supply. He has a longstanding commitment to and interest in the global church, especially regarding the relationship between the North American churches and those in the global South and its missional implications.

Rev. Marno Retief is the lead pastor at Emo (Ont.) CRC. He has a Ph.D. in homiletics (North-West University, South Africa, 2012-2016). He served on the Distance Learning Steering Committee of the Full Gospel Church of God, Peninsula Region, while a member in the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa. He also served on the board of Wheels for God's Word. While serving as an assistant pastor at AFM Bellville (South Africa), he served on the missions committee and welfare committees. He served on a steering committee of Cornerstone Institute (based in Cape Town, South Africa) that sought to develop a new certificate in Christian ministry program. He served on the board of Metswalle Outreach in South Africa. He also served on the board of Veritas Christi Evangelistic Association (as founder). He later founded and served on the board of Marno Retief Gospel Alliance, a media ministry. He served on the church council of Friend of God Goodwood (AFM Goodwood) in South Africa and as the campus pastor of Friend of God Goodwood. He

currently serves on the council and the worship and education committees at Emo CRC. He has a passion for ecumenical dialogue.

II. Right of comment on Overture 15 in the *Agenda for Synod 2024*

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee exercises its right of comment by endorsing the response presented in the following appendix regarding Overture 15: Reexamine Ecumenical Relations with the Reformed Church in America (Classis Iakota).

III. Recommendation

That synod by way of the ballot elect three new members from among the nominees presented to serve on the EIRC for a first term of three years, effective July 1, 2024.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
William T. Koopmans, chair
Zachary J. King, general secretary (ex officio)

APPENDIX

EIRC Comments regarding Overture 15

MEMO

To: Synod 2024

From: The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC)

Re: Overture 15: Reexamine Ecumenical Relations with the Reformed Church in America

Date: April 2024

At its meeting on April 25, 2024, the EIRC took note of an overture from Classis Iakota (Overture 15: Reexamine Ecumenical Relations with the Reformed Church in America, *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 450-54). While acknowledging that it was within the guidelines of the Church Order and synodical procedure for Classis Iakota to make this overture, the EIRC finds it regrettable that the classis made no preliminary correspondence or communication with the EIRC regarding implications of the overture if it were adopted by synod. Therefore, as a standing committee of the CRCNA, the EIRC has decided to follow the “Right of Comment” guidelines of our denomination, calling attention to several principles and practical implications related to the recommendations of this overture:

1. If the overture were adopted, the CRC would be going against its Ecumenical Charter.

The preface to the CRC’s 2019 Ecumenical Charter reads, in part, as follows:

Historically, ecumenical contacts of the CRC were exclusively with denominations in the Reformed tradition who shared the viewpoint

that ecumenical partners assume responsibility for keeping each other confessionally Reformed. Not only did synods consult each other on important theological issues, but the one partner could hold the other partner accountable for deviations or practices that were considered to be objectionable.

The CRC has learned that requiring such uniformity for ecumenical relationships is no longer a meaningful option. The requirement that ecumenical partners think biblically, theologically, and confessionally like the CRC can soon make the circle of ecumenical relationships very small. Furthermore, such a demand for similar perspectives exposes the risk of being perceived as theologically arrogant. . . .

These changes in ecumenical relationships prompted Synod 2006 to revise its Ecumenical Charter. The Charter was revised again in 2010. The CRC is less insistent than it once was that our ecumenical partners understand issues in the same way as those issues are understood in the CRC. The CRC does not endorse every position taken by ecumenical partners; nor do we need to (cf. Church Order Art. 50-c). Rather, the present understanding in ecumenical circles is that churches learn from each other and discuss differing perspectives. Ecumenical relationship can be built on common interests and commitments to the ministry of the gospel and the mission to which that gospel calls the whole Christian church. . . .

Were Overture 15 to be adopted, the EIRC would have to operate contrary to this stance in the Ecumenical Charter, which would itself be a violation of Church Order 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” (emphasis added).

2. If the overture were adopted, the CRC would be violating the 2014 Pella Accord with the RCA.

The CRCNA and the RCA share a common confessional heritage in the three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort), and both denominations affirm the value of the Belhar Confession as a contemporary statement of faith. As the overture notes, this common commitment culminated in 2014 with the RCA and CRC synods agreeing in the so-called Pella Accord to “act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately” (*Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 504). This agreement is based on the Lund Principle, a standard that has guided ecumenical relations between Christian churches since 1952 and has been affirmed by the CRC. The Pella Accord is a significant statement of shared commitment and agreement for our two branches of

the Reformed Christian family. In those areas where we can work together with the RCA, we should continue to do so. We thus bear witness to bringing churches in the same theological tradition together in unity with a bond of peace.

3. The overture misunderstands RCA church polity.

The overture states that the RCA has in many cases failed to address “*practices* by [RCA] congregations and classes which do not align with the *positions* of the RCA General Synod that are shared by the CRC” (p. 451). Not only does the overture not present evidence in support of this claim, but it also reflects a misunderstanding of RCA church polity. According to the unpublished paper “Thirty Differences between the RCA and the CRC” (9/26/23), by Dr. Daniel Meeter, probably the RCA’s foremost expert on RCA history and polity, RCA polity differs from that of the CRC in some significant ways:

2. The RCA has a *Constitution*, [which] consists of the Doctrinal Standards, the Government, and the Liturgy. . . .

4. Compared with the CRC, the RCA Constitution *limits the authority of synods*, and the RCA has no equivalent of the CRC’s Article 29—no RCA synod can make any ruling that is “settled and binding.” Only the Constitution is settled and binding. No synod has the authority to force an interpretation of the Standards (or Scripture) on the classes or congregations. The firm backbone of the Constitution allows for greater local discretion in the RCA and therefore more diversity. For example, the General Synod has a policy against same-sex marriage, and this policy is observed by General Synod staff and its specific agencies, but this policy does not bind the next General Synod, nor does it bind regional synods, classes, or consistories, which are free to follow that policy or not, provided they are satisfied that they observe the Constitution. . . .

9. The RCA has more *judicial restraint* than the CRC, and there is no cross-judicatory discipline. Ministers, consistories, and boards of elders may not be charged by anyone outside the membership of their own congregations and classes. The synods are strictly courts of appeal. In the RCA, synods have no authority to intervene in the discipline of classes and consistories—no RCA synod could tell a classis how to discipline one of its consistories, nor try to discipline the consistory itself. (This judicial restraint was a frustration of some leaders who have subsequently seceded from the RCA.)

So the implications in the overture that certain RCA congregations are being disobedient by engaging in unaddressed practices that do not align with the positions of the General Synod and that the General Synod is being remiss in not calling these congregations to account or punishing them misunderstands how the RCA General Synod, classes, and congregations function in relation to each other.

4. Adoption of the overture would have some unfortunate practical consequences.

In addition to matters related to the CRCNA's ecumenical mandate and practices, Overture 15 also raises some important practical considerations. First, even if synod were to suspend or eliminate Church Order Article 8-b (including Supplement, Article 8, D), the Church Order would continue to permit RCA ministers to serve according to Article 8-c and -d (including Supplement, Article 8, E-F), which govern the calling of non-CRC ministers. However, RCA ministers and CRC congregations in this scenario would find the calling process more cumbersome.

Second, the rules governing the orderly exchange of ministers already require that an RCA minister respect and submit to the polity, theology, and traditions of the CRCNA. Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, section 4 states that "such a person [i.e., RCA minister] would preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in a manner consistent with the polity of the inviting church." Furthermore, the Supplement states that "orderly exchange is always . . . subject to that church's polity" (section 5) and that an RCA minister serving a CRC congregation will "demonstrate . . . a knowledge of and appreciation for the theological and liturgical identity, history, polity, and discipline of the [CRC] church" (section 6). Therefore, Church Order Article 8 already requires RCA ministers to be aligned with the CRCNA's convictions.

Third, it is important to note that it is quite common for RCA pastors to serve in the CRC and vice versa. In fact, there are currently 20 CRC ministers in the RCA and 46 RCA ministers in the CRC. Additionally, the CRC and RCA have nine "union" congregations, in which denominational affiliation is shared (Art. 38-g and Supplement). Suspension or removal of Article 8-c (including Supplement, Art. 8, D) would be very disruptive at a time when the CRCNA is experiencing a shortage of ordained ministers. Moreover, such a change could affect shared services like the Reformed Benefits Association (health insurance for ministers and denominational employees) and other collaborative ministry projects between the two denominations.

Therefore, based on the CRC's Ecumenical Charter, the Pella Accord with the RCA, the overture's misunderstanding of RCA polity, and several practical considerations, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee requests that Synod 2024 not accede to Overture 15.

OVERTURES, COMMUNICATIONS, APPEALS

Do Not Adopt Proposed Changes to Church Order Articles 5 and 13

I. Background

The Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders, as adopted by Synod 2023, contains a number of important assertions about the proper use of authority and influence within the church. As such, it is a helpful resource for councils, classes, and ministry leaders across the denomination as they consider how to model Christlike conduct in carrying out the work of the church. The Code of Conduct recognizes that instances of abuse and manipulation of power undermine the credibility of the gospel and the testimony of the transforming power of Christ's work within us.

However, the proposed addition of the Code of Conduct to the requirements of Church Order Article 5 does not adequately consider the nature of the relationship between conduct and doctrine in the life of a church's leaders and may, in fact, obscure the relationship in an unhelpful way by placing the Code of Conduct alongside the Covenant for Officebearers. The Covenant for Officebearers has two purposes: it states the beliefs that unite us as a denomination, and it holds officebearers to compliance with those standards in (among other things) their serving and living.

The Code of Conduct, by contrast, has as its only function to call church leaders (including but not limited to officebearers) to certain standards of behavior in serving and living. But the placement of the Code of Conduct in Article 5 would suggest that our unity as a denomination rests not in our testimony about God but in our conduct as church leaders. While it is true that doctrine and life go hand-in-hand, the adoption of a second document creates the impression of two distinct poles (doctrine and life) and creates greater opportunity to emphasize one pole over the other. This is a subtle but important shift, and one whose theological premises bear more attention, especially in light of Synod 2023's reminder that the Code of Conduct "is subservient to Scripture and our confessions and must be interpreted and utilized accordingly" (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 992). And there is no evidence that such placement would actually help prevent instances of abuse that result from the sins of church leaders.

In addition, because the Code of Conduct is intended as a guideline for *all* ministry leaders (not just officebearers), the proposed additions to Articles 5 and 13 of the Church Order actually work against the purposes for which the code has been adopted. The provisions of Articles 5 and 13 apply only to officebearers, which creates the impression that the code is primarily about the work done by the council—when in fact the code's greatest impact will likely be in the practical, everyday ministry realities carried out by unordained staff and volunteers. This is an important oversight which, when combined with the theological implications of placing the Code of Conduct alongside the Covenant for Officebearers, suggests that synod

should seek a different placement if the code is indeed to be referenced in Church Order.

Further, the proposed Church Order Article 5-b is vague in its requirement that officebearers “shall uphold the standards of behavior summarized in the CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 993). Since Church Order itself does not propose a mechanism for implementing the Code of Conduct, it seems better to utilize it as a specific listing of the kinds of ungodly conduct which constitute “abuse of office” or deviation from the way of living called for in the Scriptures and the confessions, matters already covered clearly in Article 83, and to reference the Code of Conduct in supplemental material rather than in the Church Order itself. The CRC has intentionally kept its Church Order general and to avoid multiplying documents and policies to cover increasing numbers of specific situations. And while detailed examples can be helpful in naming the kinds of behaviors expected of church leaders, subscription to the Covenant for Officebearers, with its simple commitment to “[conform] . . . our living” to the Scriptures and confessional standards of the Christian Reformed Church, actually provides a more flexible tool for addressing abuses of power or sinful behavior in officebearers than do the specifics of the Code of Conduct.

II. Overture

For these reasons, Classis Atlantic Northeast overtures synod not to adopt the proposed amendments to Church Order Articles 5 and 13. We note as well the irony of trying to use a kind of power structure to create a culture of godly love and authority within the church. But recognizing that sometimes we need imperfect structures to help us move toward a goal of Christlikeness, if indeed the church believes that responsible implementation of the Code of Conduct requires its inclusion in the Church Order, we suggest the following changes to the Church Order Supplement instead (indicated by underlined text):

Supplement, Article 5

Guidelines and Regulations re Conduct of Officebearers

The Covenant for Officebearers speaks of “conforming . . . our living” to the Scriptures and the confessional standards of the CRCNA. Synod reminds the churches that Christian doctrine and Christian living are intertwined realities, and declares that our Covenant for Officebearers calls all signatories to nurture a culture of dignity and respect by providing Christlike leadership through their behavior as well as their teaching. The model CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders provides a helpful summary of the standards of behavior which can be expected of all officebearers.

Supplement, Article 35-a

The council is responsible for preparing the annual budget . . . for its approval.

The council is also encouraged to clearly identify expectations for Christlike behavior by officebearers, staff, and volunteers by seeking to uphold the standards of behavior summarized in the model CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders.

Supplement, Article 83

One of the key dynamics in considering abuse of office is the imbalance and misuse of power. The power inherent in the role of officebearer represents a sacred trust and must not be misused. Officebearers should conduct themselves with integrity and godly conduct, in line with the expectations set forth in the model CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders and other policies adopted by synod.

Grounds:

1. Placing the Code of Conduct, which deals only with behavior, alongside the Covenant for Officebearers (which deals with both doctrine and conduct) in the context of Church Order Article 5, introduces an unnecessary division between doctrine and life into the work of the church and undermines the statement of synod that the Code of Conduct be utilized in a way that is subservient to Scripture and the confessions (cf. *Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 992).
2. This overture's proposed Supplements to Articles 5 and 83 make clear that the behavior of church leaders reflects our doctrinal commitments, and these proposed supplements strengthen the function of the Covenant for Officebearers as a robust call to Christian discipleship for those in ordained leadership.
3. Adding a reference to the Code of Conduct in the Supplement to Article 35-a provides an opportunity for the CRCNA to address the subject of ministry by unordained staff and volunteers, which is a major focus of the implementation process requested by synod (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 993).
4. Including references to the Code of Conduct in the Supplements to the Church Order demonstrates the priority given by the church to address concerns about abuse of power while recognizing that no list of behavioral standards can exhaustively name or prevent the sinful behaviors by which ministry leaders may compromise our collective witness to Christ (cf. Canons of Dort, Fifth Main Point, Art. 4-5).

Classis Atlantic Northeast
David D. Poolman, stated clerk

Note: This overture was adopted by Classis Atlantic Northeast in October 2023 but was inadvertently omitted from submission prior to the March 15 deadline.

Declare Members and Churches in Protest Disaffiliated

I. Background

A small number of CRCNA members and churches have submitted communications (see Communications 15-26, *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 587-614) that demonstrate a continuing pattern of insubordination and refusal to accept properly deliberated, settled, and binding synodical decisions. These communications give no indication that these churches or members are methodically and faithfully working their way through difficult doctrines and just need a bit more time to get it right. Unfortunately, these signatories have not demonstrated any indications that they wish to remain faithful to our covenant on matters of human sexuality.

These communications are the result of ongoing insubordination. They are the result of efforts that began well over six years ago to manipulate CRC doctrine and polity to favor a fully affirming stance toward LGBTQ+ affirming ethics using what has been referred to as the “judicial” strategy.¹ Now, after years of difficult discussion, these signatories have formally communicated that they will not listen to the wisdom of their fellow members and refuse to honor and submit to the church’s authority.

It may seem preferable to either ignore these communications or simply send a strongly worded rejection, but these communications have precluded that possibility. These communications are not asking for synod’s approval to be members in protest, rather they’ve already declared themselves as such. Ignoring or even rejecting these communications will not change what they already consider themselves to be, or their intentions to continue divisive and sinful actions.

Synod must forcefully and definitively respond to this schismatic insubordination; otherwise it will not matter how strong our confessional subscription is or how much we tighten our gravamen process. The message will have been sent that individual CRC’s can believe, act upon, teach, and preach anything they like, no matter how much it conflicts with Scripture as long as they put an asterisk behind their name.

Paul writes, “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them” (Titus 3:10).

The time has come for synod to recognize that these churches, by their ongoing divisive words and actions, have disaffiliated themselves from the CRCNA.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2024 to do the following:

¹ network.crcna.org/topic/leadership/crcna-and-synod/turning-crc-lgbtq-ally

- A. Receive Communications 15-26 (in which various church members and councils seek to declare themselves “in protest” or qualify their membership) as being *de facto* declarations of disaffiliation from the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. There is no category in Church Order for members, officebearers, councils, or classes to be “under protest” regarding settled and binding synodical decisions concerning confessional matters, or to add “metaphorical asterisks” by their names. Future inception or tacit acceptance of such categories would be existentially detrimental to the CRCNA and to the integrity of its confessional subscription.
2. Allowing members and/or churches to publicly consider themselves “in protest,” to qualify their membership, or to make public statements against these types of settled and binding decisions sets a precedent in which any member or officebearer of the church could declare themselves to be exempted from any particular doctrine or decision.
3. These communications disregard the proper procedures Church Order prescribes for reconsidering deliberative decisions or confessional language: presenting sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration. Church Order declares that “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” (Art. 29). Therefore these communications demonstrate insubordination amounting to schismatic activity.
4. The self-designations made in these communications, whether officially recognized or not, are incompatible with the membership and/or ordination vows of the signatories (see Appendix A).
5. The signatories on these protests have communicated self-designations that are not contingent upon an assembly receiving or acceding to their communication. These members and officebearers have publicly declared themselves to be “in protest,” or to have qualified memberships. Simply ignoring or rejecting these communications will not change how these signatories consider their status.
6. Many of these protests make significant claims that preclude any desire to fulfill membership or ordination vows moving forward. Many of them, using language that appears to be borrowed from a document prepared by the Better Together organization, declare “that the *only way* we can remain a Christian Reformed Church with integrity, given Synod 2022’s confessional declaration, is ‘under protest’” (emphasis added).²

² bettertogether.church/blog/churches-in-protest-a-communication-to-synod-2024. The cited quotation is repeated in many of the referenced communications (see Communications 18-20; 22-24; 26, II, III, V, and VI).

7. Given the following . . .
- it is not possible for members, officebearers, councils, or classes to consider themselves in “protest” of settled and binding synodical decisions;
 - the signatories are not asking for synod’s approval to be members in protest (they have already declared it to be the case; ignoring or even rejecting these communications will not change what they already consider themselves to be);
 - many of the signatories have indicated that there is no other way for them to remain in the CRCNA;
- therefore these communications must be received as declarations of disaffiliation from the CRCNA.
- B. Accede to these declarations for disaffiliation and instruct the Office of General Secretary to do the following:
1. Issue a written communication to the signatories explaining synod’s decision and imploring these members, councils, and classes to reconsider their decision. Such reconsideration would be recognized by a signed letter of repentance committing themselves to once again heartily believe, promote, and defend all of the doctrines confessed by the CRCNA.
 2. Begin the following procedures for signatories who do not communicate in writing such a repentance and recommitment by August 1, 2024:
 - a. In the case of individual signatories not currently serving in church office, and who belong to churches whose consistory has not joined their communication, their consistory shall be instructed to initiate Church Order Article 81 disciplinary procedures.
 - b. In the case of individual officebearers who have signed a communication but whose council has not joined in their communication, their consistory shall be instructed to initiate Church Order Article 83 disciplinary procedures.
 - c. In the case in which entire church councils have signed a communication, the church will be considered to have initiated Church Order Article 38-f procedures.
 - 1) The Office of General Secretary will inform the classis that synod considers the church to have met the requirements of paragraph a in Church Order Supplement, Article 38-f.
 - 2) If the council is dissuaded from continuing the disaffiliation process, they will indicate their decision by repenting of their

protest and committing themselves to once again heartily believe, promote, and defend all of the doctrines confessed by the CRCNA.

- 3) If the congregation rejects the council's proposal to disaffiliate, the council must repent of their protest as described in the preceding paragraph or have Article 83 disciplinary procedures enacted against them by their classis.
3. Keep the Council of Delegates and subsequent synods informed of developments related to these instructions.

Classis Minnkota
LeRoy G. Christoffels, stated clerk

APPENDIX A

Further Explanation of Grounds Related to Membership and/or Ordination Vows

"The self-designations made in these communications, whether officially recognized or not, are incompatible with the membership and/or ordination vows of the signatories."

1. Members made one of these vows, depending on the form used at the time of their profession of faith:
 - a. "to accept the spiritual guidance of the church" (2016)
 - b. "to walk in a spirit of Christian love with this congregation; and to seek those things which make for unity, purity, and peace" (2013)
 - c. to "allow us, your church family, to encourage you in your faith and hold you responsible to your commitment to Jesus and his church" and to "allow us, as your church family, to call you back to a strong relationship with Jesus and his church" (1989)
 - d. to "honor and submit to the church's authority" (1976)
 - e. that "if you should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life, to submit to its admonition and discipline" (1932)
2. Officebearers made even more robust promises when they signed the Covenant for Officebearers:
 - a. that our confessions, "whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God . . . 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," and that "we promise to be formed and governed by them." When synod clarifies the church's understanding of a particular confessional aspect, such decisions must be considered to "fully agree with the Word of God," unless by using the prescribed procedures sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented.

- b. to “present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship.” Publicly refusing to accept a properly deliberated, settled, and binding synodical decision can hardly be considered loving or promoting of fellowship.
- c. to “heartily believe and . . . promote and defend [the confessions’] doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.” Officebearers cannot fulfill such a promise when they publicly protest the doctrines that the church, after years of careful deliberation, has attested to be true.

APPENDIX B

The Significant and Substantial Difference between Minnkota’s Annual Synodical Protest and Protests Encouraged by Better Together

Better Together cites the protests that Classis Minnkota has filed in the background information preceding their protest template as rationale for why “the category of ‘protest’ is fitting ecclesiastical language used within the Christian Reformed Church.” They state that “protest” is a term and category used in our Church Order and its Supplements and can be found within the Rules for Synodical Procedure.³

Such a citation reflects a deep misunderstanding of Minnkota’s protests and the concept of “protest” as reflected in Church Order.

In registering its annual protest against the seating of women delegates at synod meetings, Minnkota is exercising a right to do so that is expressed in the Supplement to Church Order Article 45 (and also the Supplement to Article 40-a, which conveys the same right at the classis level). The Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a gives classes the right to hold biblical convictions contrary to synodical decisions opening up church offices to women.

Additionally, the synodical decisions underlying the women in church office issue are not interpretations of a confession, as are the decisions made by Synod 2022 regarding chastity, so they are not doctrines that officebearers are covenantally bound to heartily believe, promote, and defend.

The only other place where the Church Order uses the word “protest” is in the Supplement to Article 38-g, which sets provisions for forming union churches.

³ bettertogether.church/blog/churches-in-protest-a-communication-to-synod-2024

Reject the Better Together Style Protest Communications

I. Introduction

In fall 2023, the “Better Together Church” organization published a “Church In Protest Communication Template,”¹ which they then publicized and promoted. In January 2024 they reported that they were aware of at least 18 congregations, representing 13 different classes, who were considering adopting such a communication.² While every CRC classis, council, or member is free to send a communication to synod through the proper channels, declaring oneself in “protest” of the decisions of synod is a different matter. Further, these issues have specifically been recognized as confessional by two consecutive synods. Those who covenant with their fellow officebearers by signing the Covenant for Officebearers cannot make such declarations, as there is no such provision in Church Order for them to do so.

Therefore, these protest communications from Classis Grand Rapids East (Communication 26), as well as from the councils of First CRC Vancouver, British Columbia (Communication 17); Church of the Savior, South Bend, Indiana (Communication 18); Ann Arbor (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church (Communication 19); Waterloo (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church (Communication 20); Community CRC, Wyoming, Michigan (Communication 22); Fellowship Church, Edmonton, Alberta (Communication 23); Avenue CRC, Edmonton, Alberta (Communication 24); and Bethany CRC, Muskegon, Michigan (Communication 25) represent a serious breach of covenant. *They are declaring themselves out of order and out of fellowship with the denomination.*

II. Biblical and confessional grounds

Our Belgic Confession, in Article 28,³ summarizes Scripture's expectations that all people are compelled to “join and unite with” the church, and keep “the unity of the church.” Further, it instructs that this unity is maintained “by [their] submitting to its instruction and discipline.” If this obligation is laid upon every believer, how much more are the leaders of the church, the officebearers, to “set an example” (1 Tim. 4:12) of preserving such a unity through submission to the rulings of our broadest body?

Some might argue, “It would not be Protestant to just blindly submit to the rulings of synods or councils.” Our Church Order agrees with such a claim in that it never holds the rulings of synod nor the content of our confessions above Holy Scripture. However, in accordance with Article 5 of our Church Order, if an officebearer is convicted that synod has erred on a confessional matter, they are to submit a confessional-revision gravamen and make their

¹ bettertogether.church/blog/churches-in-protest-a-communication-to-synod-2024; see also Appendix.

² bettertogether.church/blog/update-churches-in-protest

³ crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession#toc-article-28-the-obligations-of-church-members

case from God's Word. This is the legitimate means by which one can make their case to change a confession or a confessional ruling of synod. But what protesting churches and classes have proposed is completely foreign to our Church Order, wars against the unity of the church, and is schismatic behavior (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10).

III. Historical precedent

In their template, Better Together cites the "Communication of Protest from Classis Minnkota - Regarding the Seating of Female Delegates to Synod 2023."⁴ However, there are two serious errors in pointing to this as grounds for their "protests." First, synod has never made a declaration that the seating of female delegates at synod is a confessional matter and thus must be accepted by all. Instead, when Synod 1995 made its ruling on women in church office, it declared that there are two different perspectives and convictions on this issue, both of which "honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731). Second, on the matter of female delegates to synod, Synod 2007 specifically declared that those who object have a right to declare their protest of this issue.⁵ Synods 2022 and 2023 did not make any such declaration, but in contrast both declared and then reaffirmed that this matter has confessional status and therefore is binding in the CRCNA.

IV. Overture

Therefore, Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2024 to do the following:

- A. Reject the Protest Communications 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 as violations of our Church Order.

Ground:

Our Church Order does not provide a means for officebearers to send communications of protest upon confessional matters.

- B. Declare that all officebearers from classes and councils that have adopted such communications, unless they personally have filed an appeal of this decision to the next ecclesial body in line, are not currently capable of affirming the Covenant for Officebearers, and thus must be unseated from serving at Synod 2024.

Ground:

One cannot both declare themselves in "protest" of our confessions while at the same time "fully affirming" our confessions. Also, even if they personally voted against a decision of their council or classis, they still share in that decision unless they personally have appealed the decision to the next body (either classis or synod).

Classis Zeeland
Ronald Meyer, stated clerk

⁴ See Appendix.

⁵ *Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 612.

APPENDIX

Church in Protest: A Communication Template to Send to Synod 2024

Background

In the wake of Synods 2022 and 2023, Better Together recognizes that many CRC congregations are struggling with the serious impasse that now exists between their congregation and the denomination, resulting from the declarations about same-sex relationships that have been given “confessional status.”

For some churches, the heart of the difficulty is differing understandings of marriage and human sexuality that arise from different interpretations of Scripture. These differences have been highlighted by Synod 2022's declaration that all same-sex sexual activity is sinful, including same-sex sexual activity within a faithful, lifelong, and legal marriage.

For other churches, the heart of the impasse is Synod 2022's decision to give “confessional status” to this declaration, thereby putting it on the same level as all doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. Conferring confessional status requires all CRC members to agree with this teaching and all officebearers to explicitly bind themselves to this teaching when they sign the Covenant for Officebearers.

For other churches, the greatest challenge is not just the confessional status of the declaration, but the push to search out any violations of confessional orthodoxy and purge the denomination of any dissenting voices. Instead of allowing space for honest differences of biblical interpretation, synod has instructed classes to find, and “guide into compliance,” churches and officebearers with convictions that differ from the synodical declaration. This general approach raises concerns about the direction and spirit of the denomination as a whole.

Provision is made in the Church Order of the CRCNA for officebearers to give expression to their conscientious objection, not only to this new synodical declaration, but also to a variety of other possible areas of difficulty with the confessions of the CRCNA. Submitting what is called a “gravamen” allows officebearers to express their difficulty or doubt while still signing the Covenant for Officebearers with integrity and remaining members in good standing in their churches. However, there is now a strong push to functionally eliminate this provision—a matter to be taken up at Synod 2024.

If adopted, the restrictions to the gravamen process proposed at Synod 2023 (but deferred to Synod 2024) would leave many local churches with very few people eligible to serve as officebearers and thereby seriously impede their ability to function. Beyond synod's recent declaration about same-sex sexual activity, these sweeping changes would affect all potential officebearers who have difficulties or doubts about any of a number of doctrines, such as infant baptism, predestination, eternal security, etc., resulting in

barring them from service as elder, deacon, minister of the Word, or commissioned pastor. It would leave local churches bewildered and confused to have saints and lifelong leaders suddenly disqualified from church leadership because of a decision made by those wholly unknown to their congregation or its leaders.

Most disheartening of all, more and more CRC congregations and members have lost trust in synod's ability to serve as a deliberative body. Overtures to synod that raise significant biblical and theological matters that the church must engage have been summarily ignored (including confessional-revision gravamina that synod is required to adjudicate). Instead, synod has bundled together scores of such overtures and summarily declared sweeping decisions to be its answer to all of them, disregarding the fact that the answers provided often fail to adequately engage the actual concerns within the overtures themselves. This breakdown in synodical deliberation, combined with the seemingly overwhelming margin of support for this new direction in the church, leaves more and more churches feeling voiceless and helpless.

Given Synod 2023's unequivocal reaffirmation of Synod 2022's confessional declaration, there are now fewer options to address synod with these concerns. Yet churches who share these concerns feel deeply they must speak into the current crisis in the CRC. To that end, churches are invited to submit the communication below to Synod 2024 by way of their classis. This communication serves to identify such a church as a "Church in Protest" in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

While some may question the use of this term, the category of "Protest" is fitting ecclesiastical language used within the Christian Reformed Church. Protest is a term and category used in our Church Order and its supplements and can be found within the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

Additionally, a protest is an appropriate form of communication to synod. In fact, Classis Minnkota has submitted communications to synod for years as a classis participating under protest due to the seating of female delegates at the synodical level.

Therefore Better Together invites congregations to sign the following communication and to individually submit it to synod, by way of their classes. We desire and pray that the broader church and Synod 2024 will receive protests such as this as cries of the heart from congregations that love the Christian Reformed Church.

For those with questions regarding the process for submitting this communication to synod or for other questions of clarification, feel free to reach out to Better Together (info@thirdwav.church). Finally, if you, your congregation, or your classis decide to submit a communication along these lines to Synod 2024, please be sure to alert Better Together by way of email.

Churches in Protest Communication

We, (Insert Church Name Here) declare ourselves to be a “church in protest” within the Christian Reformed Church in North America. By this declaration,

1. We express our disagreement with Synod 2022's use of “confessional status” to require all members of the CRC to agree with Synod 2022's confessional declaration that all same-sex sexual activity is sinful, including same-sex sexual activity within a faithful, lifelong, and legal marriage (hereafter referred to as “Synod 2022's confessional declaration”). We consider church members and officebearers in our church who disagree with that declaration for sound biblical and theological reasons to still be members in good standing. We disagree with Synod 2023's decision that they must be “guided into compliance.”
2. We qualify our status as a Christian Reformed Church, given that the “confessional status” attached to Synod 2022's confessional declaration assumes uniform agreement of all CRC members. We lament that we now are forced to have a metaphorical asterisk by our church name: “Yes, we are Christian Reformed, but we must clarify that many in our church do not agree with Synod 2022's confessional declaration.”
3. We declare that any restrictions upon the use of confessional-difficulty gravamina, by which officebearers can currently declare their conscientious objections to the interpretations of the confessions, including Synod 2022's confessional declaration, and sign the Covenant for Officebearers, will seriously impede the ability of many churches to function, especially at the council level. We judge that it is neither right, feasible, nor morally necessary for any church's ministry leadership to be limited only to the people who unreservedly agree with all of the confessional interpretations, including Synod 2022's confessional declaration.
4. We desire to be transparent with synod that the disagreements of many of our church's members with Synod 2022's confessional declaration, as expressed above, are settled. While all members of the church must at all times be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, it would be disingenuous for us as a church to deny, minimize, or hide a fundamental and intractable disagreement between a significant number of members in good standing in our church and the CRC's official teaching on this matter.
5. We declare that the only way we can remain a Christian Reformed Church with integrity, given Synod 2022's confessional declaration, is “under protest.” Though under protest, we continue to participate because we love the CRCNA and seek God's blessing upon our denomination.

Finally, the Council of (Insert Church Name Here) adopts this protest as its own and forwards it as a communication to classis, requesting that classis adopt it and forward it as a communication to Synod 2024.

Date: _____

(Authorized Signatory for Council)

Additional Note Regarding Submitting Communications on Behalf of Individual Members or Groups of Members from a CRC Congregation:

The communication above is designed to be sent by a local church council to its respective classis. It includes a request that the classis adopt the communication as its own and then send it to Synod 2024. If the regional classis chooses not to adopt the communication, the local church council can choose to send it on to Synod 2024 as its own communication.

In a similar vein, individual members or groups of members are also eligible to send communications forward to synod. If an individual member or group of members of a particular congregation desires to communicate in this way, the proper pathway requires such a communication to first be presented to that individual member or group of members' local church council. This must include a request that the local council adopt the communication as its own and then send it on to classis and subsequently to Synod 2024. If a local council refuses to adopt such a communication the individual member or group of members can choose to submit the communication to classis without the local council's approval. If the regional classis refuses to adopt the communication, the individual member or group of members can submit the communication to synod.

In the case of an individual member or group of members submitting a similar communication, changes to the template document will be required so as to accurately represent the submitting party.

For More on the Approved Process for Submitting Communications to Synod:

How Can I Communicate My Views to Synod? by Kathy Smith

[thebanner.org/columns/2023/01 how-can-i-communicate-mv-views-to-synod](https://thebanner.org/columns/2023/01/how-can-i-communicate-mv-views-to-synod)

Synodical Rules of Procedure Process for Communications to be Legally Before Synod

crcna.org/sites/default/files/2022_rules_for_synodical_procedure.pdf
(pp. 9-12)

For FAQs See Educational Resources regarding a Church in Protest Communication:

Better Together recognizes that congregations may have questions regarding the use of this kind of communication and its contents. To help provide both greater background and context, below are several additional resources organized according to topic.

Source Material from Synod 2023 sent on to Synod 2024 which Calls for the Restrictions of Gravamina Going Forward:

Synod 2023 - Advisory Committee 8 - Church Order II - Majority Report 8E

crcna.org/sites/default/files/Advisory%20Committee%208E%20Majority%20-%20Synod%202023.pdf

More Information on the History and Use of Gravamina:

Summary of the History behind the Guidelines for Gravamina by Kathy Smith

www.crcna.org/news-and-events/news/summary-history-behind-guidelines-gravamina

Gravamen: What It Is and How to Use It by Kathy Smith

crcna.org/news-and-events/news/gravamen-what-it-and-how-use-it

Example of a Past Letter of Protest Received by Synod 2023:

Communication of Protest from Classis Minnkota - Regarding the Seating of Female Delegates to Synod 2023

crcna.org/sites/default/files/2023_agenda.pdf (pp. 599-600)

COMMUNICATION 27

**Consistory of the Christian Reformed Church of
St. Joseph, Michigan**

We are writing regarding the following proposed amendments to the Judicial Code that will be presented to synod this year.

Amendments to Judicial Code Proposed to Synod 2024 (with new text indicated by underline)

Section 3, a, vii:

vii) a member who has been suspended by a consistory, or a person who has been excluded from membership by a consistory. Such persons may file written charges in order to obtain a review by classis of the suspension or exclusion. In the Judicial Code proceeding, the role of classis shall be as follows (cf. Supplement, Art. 78-81, d):

- 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed.
- 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person.
- 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline.

Section 3, i, ii:

- ii) A written charge against an assembly, or against a consistory as provided in Section 3, a, vii, shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly next in order (the order being council, classis, and synod).

We have significant concerns with these proposals and the way in which they are making their way to synod. We ask you to consider the following points.

1. Article 29 of the Church Order requires that “decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon due consideration.”

Though we know that this is technically a change to only the Supplement of Article 30-c, we are concerned that this recommendation will not be receiving due consideration.

- It was not in the agenda.
- It is essentially unknown to the broader church.

- It is likely to get lost in the shadow of Human Sexuality Report debates.
 - It will not require ratification by the following synod.
 - It represents a significant change to our church polity.
2. This change is effectively a “substantial alteration” (Art. 47 and its Supplement) to our church polity and yet is being processed as a simple adjustment to a Supplement of the Church Order. This does not seem appropriate or helpful to the church.
 - To our knowledge, our church polity has not included a provision for appeal of general discipline actions by a consistory since its inception. There must be a reason worth discussing in some depth. It seems substantial.
 - This alteration effectively takes the exclusive role of the consistory in matters of discipline (Art. 25-b, 80-81) and makes it the role of the broader assemblies of the church, which includes deacons. This puts individuals who have not been ordained for this work in a position to judge it.
 - The proposal makes it possible for members to use the Judicial Code to “obtain a review” of the disciplinary actions taken, which seems different from the processes with other types of appeals in the Judicial Code. Whereas other appeals through the Judicial Code (Art. 30-c, section 3, e) require specific charges to be put forward, and adjudicated narrowly on their merits (section 3, f), this addition to the Judicial Code seems rather open-ended. If it is believed that some kind of review is needed, it does not seem to fit with the items the Judicial Code was designed to adjudicate.
 3. The proposed alteration seems hastily done and somewhat clumsy, risking the need to undo what would be done by this alteration.
 - Though the alteration is intended to bring clarification, it runs counter to language already in the Judicial Code (section 1, b) that indicates the Judicial Code is not intended to be used in cases of general discipline. The alteration does not even address this current language, nor argue against the rationale behind it, nor ask that the language be removed so as not to be in conflict with the contents of the alteration. If there should be situations of general discipline wherein the Judicial Code is to be used, those situations should be clearly described here, which they are not.
 - Along with situations where members have been suspended, the recommendation also includes situations where members have been excluded from membership as situations open to appeal, stating, “Such persons may file written charges in order to obtain a review by classis of the suspension or exclusion.” This seems redundant, as a situation of exclusion already requires a review by classis before it can proceed to exclusion. Is this an oversight? This, again, indicates to the reader that this proposed alteration has been hastily done.

- The proposed alteration of Section 3, I, ii does not seem to agree with that of Section 3, a, vii. For 3, I, ii calls for the appeal to be filed with the assembly next in order, which would be the council. But Section 3, a, vii says that they are to file it with the classis for review. Is this a mistake?

We are not philosophically opposed to setting up a process wherein decisions of general discipline might be appealed. But given the seriousness of the topic, church discipline being one of the three marks of the true church, and considering the significant change that this proposal would make to not only our polity but also Reformed church polity in general, we ask that rather than making this clumsy alteration to the Judicial Code, a study committee be established that can craft a more thoughtful mechanism for that work—one that respects the distinction between the offices of elder and deacon, and brings greater clarity to the Church Order without utilizing the Judicial Code for such matters when it seems clearly not designed to function in that capacity.

Given the current circumstances in the denomination regarding the debate and resistance to our formal position regarding human sexuality, it would seem to us that now is the time to take the time to make sure that any appeal process for situations of general discipline be thoroughly examined, clearly written, and open to the whole church. We are greatly concerned that simply adopting this alteration to the Judicial Code would do more harm than good.

Consistory of the Christian Reformed Church of St. Joseph, Michigan
Rev. John R. DeVries, chair
Brent DeWeerd, vice-chair

COMMUNICATION 28

Classis Grand Rapids East

Greetings, delegates to Synod 2024:

We have noted with surprise and concern the presence of Overture 26 on the agenda for Synod 2024. The overture asks synod to require a letter of repentance from the consistory of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, for defying the decisions of Synods 2022 and 2023. The action in question is the baptism of an infant brought before the congregation by the child's parents, who are legally married within a homosexual union.

While we do not dispute the occurrence of the action, we were surprised, and then we were concerned, to learn the following:

- that Eastern Avenue CRC had received no communication from the congregation in Classis Georgetown which originated the overture,

- that Classis Georgetown endorsed this overture and forwarded it to the Synodical Services Office knowing that no communication had taken place, and, further,
- that Classis Georgetown itself did not directly inform or communicate with the council of Eastern Avenue CRC.

This lacks the mutuality expected both by Matthew 18:15-17 and Church Order Article 80.

In addition, we note that local consistories are responsible for worship and the sacraments (Church Order Art. 52), that children of confessing members ought to be baptized (Art. 56), that confessing members in good standing (not under discipline) have the right to present children for baptism (Art. 59-c), and that discipline of members is the responsibility of the local consistory (Art. 81).

With the foregoing in mind, we respectfully request that Classis Georgetown rescind the overture. In the event that the overture remains on the synodical agenda, we commend the observations above for consideration by synod in its deliberations.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert Arbogast, stated clerk

APPEALS

1. Immanuel CRC, Burbank, Illinois
2. Covenant CRC, Calgary, Alberta, and Granum (Alta.) CRC
3. Trinity CRC, Fremont, Michigan
4. Member of Grace CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
5. Moline (Mich.) CRC

FINANCIAL REPORT

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA Ministry Share Allocation History

Ministry Share Allocation Summary Fiscal 2024-25	Budget Combined (US\$)		0.75			Budget USA (US\$)	
			Budget				
	Cda (Cdn\$)	Cda (US\$)					
Office of General Secretary	\$ 3,413,500	20.8%	\$ 820,000	\$ 615,000	12.6%	\$ 2,798,500	24.3%
Ministry Office	\$ 3,155,500	19.3%	\$ 2,130,000	\$ 1,597,500	32.8%	\$ 1,558,000	13.5%
Thrive	\$ 4,100,000	25.0%	\$ 1,200,000	\$ 900,000	18.5%	\$ 3,200,000	27.8%
Resonate Global Missions	\$ 2,600,000	15.9%	\$ 1,310,000	\$ 982,500	20.2%	\$ 1,617,500	14.1%
ReFrame Ministries	\$ 1,206,000	7.4%	\$ 520,000	\$ 390,000	8.0%	\$ 816,000	7.1%
Calvin Seminary	\$ 1,100,000	6.7%	\$ 520,000	\$ 390,000	8.0%	\$ 710,000	6.2%
Calvin University	\$ 800,000	4.9%	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 800,000	7.0%
Special Assistance Fund	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	0.0%
	\$ 16,375,000	100.0%	\$ 6,500,000	\$ 4,875,000	100.0%	\$ 11,500,000	100.0%

Ministry Share Allocation Summary Fiscal 2023-2024	Budget		0.75 Budget			Budget	
	Combined (US\$)		Cda (Cdn\$)	Cda (US\$)		USA (US\$)	
Office of General Secretary	\$ 2,474,044	15.1%	\$ 650,000	\$ 487,500	10.0%	\$ 1,986,544	17.3%
Ministry Office	\$ 2,558,456	15.6%	\$ 1,920,000	\$ 1,440,000	29.5%	\$ 1,118,456	9.7%
Thrive	\$ 4,220,000	25.8%	\$ 1,200,000	\$ 900,000	18.5%	\$ 3,320,000	28.9%
Resonate Global Missions	\$ 3,192,500	19.5%	\$ 1,430,000	\$ 1,072,500	22.0%	\$ 2,120,000	18.4%
ReFrame Ministries	\$ 1,555,750	9.5%	\$ 715,000	\$ 536,250	11.0%	\$ 1,019,500	8.9%
Calvin Seminary	\$ 1,391,750	8.5%	\$ 585,000	\$ 438,750	9.0%	\$ 953,000	8.3%
Calvin University	\$ 982,500	6.0%	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 982,500	8.5%
Special Assistance Fund	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	0.0%
	\$ 16,375,000	100.0%	\$ 6,500,000	\$ 4,875,000	100.0%	\$ 11,500,000	100.0%

Ministry Share Allocation Summary Fiscal 2022-2023	Actual		0.74 Actual			Actual	
	Combined (US\$)		Cda (Cdn\$)	Cda (US\$)		USA (US\$)	
CRC Office of General Secretary	3,103,456	17.9%	971,891	722,115	15.3%	2,381,341	18.8%
Congregational & Justice Ministries	5,382,799	31.0%	2,088,723	1,551,921	32.9%	3,830,878	30.3%
ReFrame Ministries	1,966,771	11.3%	773,000	574,339	12.2%	1,392,432	11.0%
Resonate Global Missions	3,742,402	21.6%	1,778,204	1,321,206	28.0%	2,421,196	19.1%
Calvin Seminary	1,952,231	11.2%	710,166	527,653	11.2%	1,424,578	11.3%
Calvin University	1,196,135	6.9%	11,848	8,803	0.2%	1,187,332	9.4%
Special Assistance Fund	10,825	0.1%	6,396	4,752	0.1%	6,073	0.0%
	17,354,619	100.0%	6,340,228	4,710,789	100.00%	12,643,830	100.00%

Ministry Share Allocation Summary Fiscal 2021-2022			0.7888				
	Actual		Actual			Actual	
	Combined (US\$)		Cda (Cdn\$)	Cda (US\$)		USA (US\$)	
Synodical Administrative Services	2,656,565	13.9%	1,100,259	867,884	15.3%	1,788,681	13.3%
Congregational & Justice Ministries	5,224,312	27.4%	2,216,452	1,748,337	30.9%	3,475,975	25.9%
ReFrame Ministries	2,180,349	11.4%	894,434	705,530	12.5%	1,474,819	11.0%
Resonate Global Mission	5,225,442	27.4%	2,071,164	1,633,734	28.8%	3,591,708	26.8%
Calvin Seminary	1,920,527	10.1%	833,932	657,806	11.6%	1,262,721	9.4%
Calvin University	1,849,329	9.7%	61,269	48,329	0.9%	1,801,000	13.4%
Special Assistance Fund	30,990	0.2%	2,269	1,790	0.0%	29,200	0.2%
	19,087,514	100.0%	7,179,779	5,663,410	100.0%	13,424,104	100.00%

This report shows the history of ministry shares collected for the last 2 completed fiscal years. The Actual Combined columns represent the total ministry shares in US dollars and the percent of the total collected that was given to each agency. The next columns show the ministry shares collected in Canada in Canadian and US dollars along with the percentages to each agency. The last columns represent the ministry shared collected in US in US dollars along with the percentages to each agency.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH - CANADA
INCOME AND EXPENSE SUMMARY (in 000s of CAD\$)
CALENDAR YEAR ENDING IN DECEMBER 31, 2023

	Employer Contributions	Participant Contributions	Investment Earnings	Total Income	Distributions	Support Services	Total Expenses	Net Revenue (Expense)
Ministers Pension Fund Canada	0	0	10,634	10,634	3,460	799	4,259	6,375
Special Assistance Fund Canada	7	2,077	25	2,109	39	703	742	1,367

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH - US
INCOME AND EXPENSE SUMMARY (in 000s of USD\$)
CALENDAR YEAR ENDING IN DECEMBER 31, 2023

	Employer Contributions	Participant Contributions	Investment Earnings	Total Income	Distributions	Support Services	Total Expenses	Net Revenue (Expense)
Ministers Pension Fund US	4,682	0	14,851	19,533	11,212	1,213	12,425	7,108
Special Assistance Fund US	3	0	18	21	68	1	69	(48)

The Ministers pension plan is 2 separate trusts to comply with each countries retirement laws. The plans are administered as much the same as is legally possible. The Canadian plan is recorded in Canadian dollars and the US plan is in US dollars.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET SUMMARY (in 000s of U.S.\$)
FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023

	Assets	Liabilities	Restricted* Equity	Unrestricted Equity
Calvin Theological Seminary	88,012	2,677	56,815	28,520
Calvin University	601,585	124,110	173,080	304,395
#Christian Reformed Church (Canada Min Office, Cdn Ministries, US Min Office)	15,600	3,131	1,481	10,988
Loan Fund (US Only)	17,265	11,514	-	5,751
ReFrame Ministries	14,305	661	1,768	11,875
Resonate Global Mission	21,618	2,770	8,738	10,110
World Renew	43,041	4,534	12,706	25,801
Total	801,426	149,397	254,588	397,440

* These are funds received by donors for specific programs/projects

The Christian Reformed Church balance sheet was not broken down into separate reporting entities until July 1, 2023.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
INCOME AND EXPENSE SUMMARY (in 000s of U.S.\$)
FISCAL YEAR ENDING IN JUNE 30, 2023

	Ministry Share	Gift Income	Other Income	Total Income	Program Services	Support Services	Total Expenses	Net Revenue (Expense)
Calvin Theological Seminary	1,952 28.6%	1,881 27.5%	2,996 43.9%	6,829 100.0%	3,282 44.0%	4,182 56.0%	7,464 100.0%	(635)
Calvin University	1,196 1.4%	3,292 3.9%	80,917 84.7%	85,405 100.0%	76,264 82.8%	15,887 17.2%	92,151 100.0%	(6,746)
*Christian Reformed Church	3,103 72.3%	595 13.9%	596 13.9%	4,294 100.0%	1,480 32.8%	3,036 67.2%	4,516 100.0%	(222)
Loan Fund (US only)	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	550 100.0%	550 100.0%	261 54.5%	218 45.5%	479 100.0%	71
ReFrame Ministries	1,967 23.4%	5,660 67.3%	786 9.3%	8,413 100.0%	5,231 69.7%	2,275 30.3%	7,506 100.0%	907
Resonate Global Mission	3,742 18.2%	14,671 71.2%	2,181 10.6%	20,594 100.0%	16,507 76.2%	5,156 23.8%	21,663 100.0%	(1,069)
Special Assistance Funds	11 100.0%	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	11 100.0%	104 100.0%	- 0.0%	104 100.0%	(93)
Thrive	5,383 72.4%	738 9.9%	1,318 17.7%	7,439 100.0%	5,772 85.1%	1,013 14.9%	6,785 100.0%	654
#Lilly Grants	-	-	375	375	1,070	-	1,070	(695)
World Renew	- 0.0%	26,757 60.8%	17,252 39.2%	44,009 100.0%	35,736 82.6%	7,540 17.4%	43,336 100.0%	673
Total	11,971 7.0%	52,856 31.00%	105,653 61.97%	170,480 100.00%	139,995 78.5%	38,294 21.5%	178,289 100.0%	(7,809)

• This represents the Office of General Secretary, Ministry Offices and Candian Only Ministries

Lilly Grants are funds received in advance to fund specific projects/programs that are managed by Thrive staff but could include staff from other agency's as well.

- 1) These sheets are divided into two sections. The first four columns on the left are income, three columns to the right of that are expenses with the difference shown in the right-most column.
2) The numbers in the right-most column that are negative are in parenthesis. Note that these represent planned spend down of funds.
3) On these sheets you will see a lot of % in small print. These refer to the % that the item right above it represents relative to the whole in that entity (row).

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
CONSOLIDATED BUDGET SUMMARY (in 000s of U.S.\$)
FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

	Ministry Share	Gift Income	Other Income	Total Income	Program Services	Support Services	Total Expenses	Net Revenue (Expense)
Calvin Theological Seminary	1,392 19.2%	1,950 26.9%	3,899 53.8%	7,241 100.0%	5,046 68.6%	2,309 31.4%	7,355 100.0%	(114)
Calvin University	983 1.2%	4,002 4.8%	78,663 94.0%	83,648 100.0%	74,968 78.8%	20,180 21.2%	95,148 100.0%	(11,500)
Loan Fund (US Only)	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	723 100.0%	723 100.0%	261 37.8%	429 62.2%	690 100.0%	33
Ministry Offices (Canada Min Office, Cdn Only Ministries, US Min Office)	2,558 70.3%	202 5.6%	879 24.2%	3,639 100.0%	1,880 46.3%	2,180 53.7%	4,060 100.0%	(421)
Office of General Secretary	2,474 73.1%	435 12.9%	475 14.0%	3,384 100.0%	1,127 35.1%	2,087 64.9%	3,214 100.0%	170
ReFrame Ministries	1,556 24.8%	3,725 59.3%	1,004 16.0%	6,285 100.0%	5,785 70.0%	2,474 30.0%	8,259 100.0%	(1,974)
Resonate Global Mission	3,192 2.0%	11,637 66.9%	2,555 14.7%	17,384 100.0%	17,559 74.2%	6,098 25.8%	23,657 100.0%	(6,273)
Thrive	4,220 88.0%	686 14.0%	- 0.0%	4,906 100.0%	2,824 56.8%	2,144 43.2%	4,968 100.0%	(62)
World Renew	- 0.0%	27,884 89.8%	11,987 30.1%	39,871 100.0%	29,697 79.7%	7,581 20.3%	37,278 100.0%	2,593
Total	16,375 9.8%	50,521 30.24%	100,185 59.96%	167,081 100.00%	139,147 75.4%	45,482 24.5%	184,629 100.0%	(17,548.00)

This summary is the budgets for each agency for 23-24. The Net Revenue column shows whether the agency is planning on a balanced budget and if the number is negative the agency is planning on using some of their restricted equity or unrestricted equity to balance the budget for 23-24.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
CONSOLIDATED BUDGET SUMMARY (in 000s of U.S.\$)
FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

	Ministry Share	Gift Income	Other Income	Total Income	Program Services	Support Services	Total Expenses	Net Revenue (Expense)
Calvin Theological Seminary	1,100 14.7%	1,975 26.5%	4,389 58.8%	7,464 100.0%	5,152 68.5%	2,370 31.5%	7,522 100.0%	(58)
Calvin University	800 0.9%	4,386 4.7%	87,784 94.4%	92,970 100.0%	77,057 78.3%	21,417 21.7%	98,474 100.0%	(5,504)
Ministry Office (Canada Min Office, US Min Office)	3,156 74.4%	205 4.8%	880 20.7%	4,241 100.0%	791 19.1%	3,343 80.9%	4,134 100.0%	107
Office of General Secretary	3,414 77.9%	501 11.4%	468 10.7%	4,383 100.0%	1,397 31.9%	2,985 68.1%	4,382 100.0%	1
Loan Fund (US Only)	- 0.0%	- 0.0%	750 100.0%	750 100.0%	330 45.6%	394 54.4%	724 100.0%	26
ReFrame Ministries	1,206 20.8%	4,195 72.3%	400 6.9%	5,801 100.0%	5,425 88.7%	2,470 31.3%	7,895 100.0%	(2,094)
Resonate Global Mission	2,600 18.1%	10,024 69.7%	1,749 12.2%	14,373 100.0%	15,616 75.3%	5,132 24.7%	20,748 100.0%	(6,375)
Thrive	4,100 86.7%	605 12.8%	25 0.5%	4,730 100.0%	2,991 63.2%	1,743 36.8%	4,734 100.0%	(4)
World Renew	- 0.0%	29,923 69.8%	12,935 30.2%	42,858 100.0%	33,053 77.7%	9,494 22.3%	42,547 100.0%	311
Total	16,376 9.2%	51,814 29.18%	109,380 61.80%	177,570 100.00%	141,812 74.2%	49,348 25.8%	191,160 100.0%	(13,590.00)

This summary is the budgets for each agency for 24-25. The Net Revenue column shows whether the agency is planning on a balanced budget and if the number is negative the agency is planning on using some of their restricted equity or unrestricted equity to balance the budget for 24-25.

Summary of Denominational Investments and Compliance with Investment Policy

Synod 1998 approved a number of measures dealing with investment guidelines and disclosures. Two of these appear on page 440 of the *Acts of Synod 1998* as follows:

That the [COD] annually provide synod and classical treasurers with a summary of all investments owned by the agencies and institutions of the CRCNA. The summary is to include groupings of investments listed in the investment policy.

That the [COD] annually provide synod with a statement that the agencies and institutions are in compliance with the investment policy; any exception to the policy will be reported.

The accompanying summary and related footnotes constitute the Council of Delegates' response to the first of these requests. In response to the second request, the Council of Delegates reports that on December 31, 2023, all of the agencies and institutions are in compliance with the denomination's investment policy, including the guidance it provides for assets received as a result of gifts or gift-related transactions.

The Council of Delegates' discussions regarding these matters included the following:

1. As requested by synod, the investment summary contains information regarding assets held by the agencies and institutions of the denomination. In addition to these investments, the denomination is responsible for the administration of investments held by various benefit plans, including retirement plans. The COD reports that assets held by benefit plans also are in compliance with the denomination's investment guidelines.
2. As requested, the summary includes investments only. It tells nothing of the commitments, restrictions, and purposes attached to the investments. Persons interested in a full understanding of these aspects are encouraged to refer to the audited or reviewed financial statements posted on the CRCNA website.

MPF -CA Asset Allocation – Total Plan

	Canadian Equities	U.S. Equities	International Equities	Fixed Income	Real Estate	Private Equity	Cash & Short Term	Total Market Value
<i>Guardian Capital</i>								
Canadian Equity	16,370,458	177,160					406,118	16,953,737
% of Mandate	96.6%	1.0%					2.4%	
% of Total Fund	19.9%	0.2%					0.5%	20.6%
<i>Various Managers</i>								
U.S. Equity	539,526	23,902,863	1,769,783				674,335	26,886,507
% of Mandate	2.1%	91.2%	6.8%				2.6%	
% of Total Fund	0.7%	29.1%	2.2%				0.8%	32.7%
<i>Fiera Capital</i>								
International Equity and Real Estate			16,635,010		3,511,481		-	20,146,492
% of Mandate			82.6%		17.4%		0.0%	
% of Total Fund			20.2%		4.3%		0.0%	24.5%
<i>Fidelity</i>								
Fixed Income				12,369,803			0.0%	12,369,803
% of Mandate				100.0%			0.0%	
% of Total Fund				15.1%			0.0%	15.1%
<i>Custom Private Equity</i>								
Private Equity						5,821,786		5,821,786
% of Mandate						100.0%		
% of Total Fund						7.1%		7.1%
<i>Other</i>							5,419	5,419
Total Fund	16,909,984	24,080,023	18,404,794	12,369,803	3,511,481	5,821,786	1,085,872	82,183,744
% of Total Fund	20.6%	29.3%	22.4%	15.1%	4.3%	7.1%	1.3%	100.0%
Investment Policy (Target)	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	30.0%	30.0%	10.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Investment Policy (Minimum)	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Investment Policy (Maximum)	30.0%	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%	40.0%	15.0%	20.0%	100.0%



Christian Reformed Church Retirement Plan for U.S. Ministers

ASSET ALLOCATION ANALYSIS AND GUIDELINES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023

Investment Policy: 40% Domestic Equity, 20% International Equity, 30% Fixed Income/Real Estate, 10% Private Equity, 0% Cash

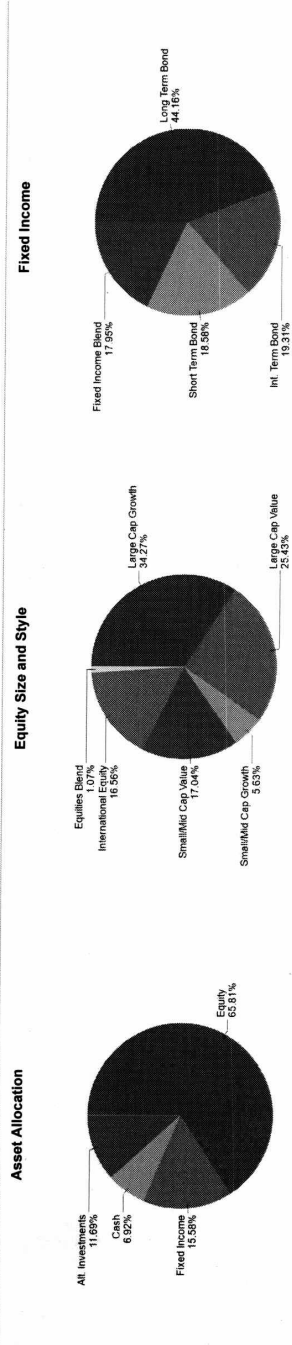
Manager(s)	Asset Class	Balances as of 12/31/2023	11/30/2023 Balances	Difference from 11/30/2023	Current Percentages	Policy Ranges		
						Lower	Benchmark Policy	Upper
Boston Partners	Large Cap Domestic Value Equities	\$13,204,567	\$13,006,734	1.5%	10.6%			
Baird & Gaynor	Large Cap Domestic Core Equities	\$13,165,867	\$12,561,395	4.8%	10.5%			
Edgewood	Large Cap Domestic Growth Equities	\$13,279,724	\$13,710,246	-3.1%	10.6%			
Principal	Mid Cap Domestic Core Equities	\$5,943,548	\$5,648,003	5.2%	4.8%			
PIER	Small/Mid Cap Domestic Growth Equities	\$5,439,338	\$4,947,472	9.9%	4.4%			
Earnest Partners	Small/Mid Cap Domestic Value Equities	\$6,244,402	\$5,992,984	4.2%	5.0%			
	Total Domestic Equities	\$57,277,445	\$55,866,834	2.5%	45.8%	30.0%	40.0%	50.0%
Capital Group	International Foreign	\$9,920,232	\$9,508,013	4.3%	7.9%			
Scholar Cullen	International High Dividend Value	\$8,723,976	\$8,225,435	6.1%	7.0%			
William Blair	International Growth	\$7,017,551	\$6,608,339	6.2%	5.6%			
	Total International Equities	\$25,661,758	\$24,341,787	5.4%	20.5%	10.0%	20.0%	30.0%
	Total Equities	\$82,939,203	\$80,208,621	3.4%	66.4%	45.0%	60.0%	75.0%
Fidelity Institutional Asset Management	Core Plus Fixed Income	\$9,913,911	\$9,544,662	3.9%	7.9%			
Fidelity Institutional Asset Management	High Yield Fixed Income	\$6,763,227	\$6,543,504	3.4%	5.4%			
Blackstone	Direct Private Real Estate	\$7,218,758	\$7,334,394	-1.6%	5.8%			
Brookfield (as of December 31, 2023)	Direct Private Real Estate (Beginning Capital \$5MM)	\$5,831,870	\$6,168,629	-5.5%	4.7%			
	Total Fixed Income / Real Estate	\$29,727,767	\$29,591,189	0.5%	23.8%	20.0%	30.0%	40.0%
The Endowment Fund	Private Equity	\$747,671	\$754,408	-0.9%	0.6%			
KKR	Private Equity (Commitment \$2MM - Contributions \$2MM)	\$2,082,885	\$2,164,557	-3.8%	1.7%			
Carlyle Buyout VII	Private Equity (Commitment \$2MM - Contributions \$2MM)	\$2,349,093	\$2,349,093	0.0%	1.9%			
Blackstone BCP VIII	Private Equity (Commitment \$2MM - Contributions \$1.36MM)	\$1,468,476	\$1,468,476	0.0%	1.2%			
TPG	Private Equity (Commitment \$2MM - Contributions \$1.96MM)	\$2,142,332	\$2,324,612	-7.8%	1.7%			
Carlyle Buyout VIII	Private Equity (Commitment \$2MM - Contributions \$1.11MM)	\$982,479	\$762,479	28.9%	0.8%			
	Total Private Equity	\$9,772,936	\$9,823,625	-0.5%	7.8%	2.5%	10.0%	15.0%
Cash @ ML	Cash	\$2,556,653	\$1,039,415	146.0%	2.0%			
	Total Cash	\$2,556,653	\$1,039,415	146.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
	Totals	\$124,996,559	\$120,442,851	3.6%	100.0%			

This information is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an offer of insurance. The information is based on the information provided by the client and is not guaranteed. The client is responsible for reviewing, monitoring, and adhering to their investment Policy Statement. Merrill Lynch Statement as of month end 11/30/2023 and Policy Statement as of 11/30/2023.



Asset Allocation Overview

As of Close of Business: 04/30/2024



Asset Class	Market Value(\$)	% of Total	Size & Style	Market Value(\$)	% of Total	Maturity	Market Value(\$)	% of Total
Equity	38,222,746	65.81	Large Cap Growth	13,099,387	34.27	Long Term Bond	3,996,980	44.16
Fixed Income	9,051,254	15.58	Large Cap Value	9,719,846	25.43	Int. Term Bond	1,747,432	19.31
Cash	4,017,683	6.92	Small/Mid Cap Growth	2,151,352	5.63	Short Term Bond	1,681,797	18.58
All Investments	6,789,073	11.69	Small/Mid Cap Value	6,512,761	17.04	Fixed Income Blend	1,625,064	17.95
Subtotal	58,080,757	100.00	International Equity	6,330,113	16.56	Total	9,051,254	100.00
Other	3,726		Equities Blend	409,288	1.07			
Total	58,084,483		Total	38,222,746	100.00			

Account Summary				Top Holdings (Based on Market Value)			
Account	Type/Manager	Market Value(\$)	% of Total	Security Description	Quantity	Price(\$)	Market Value(\$)
XXX-XX439 "CIO Inc and Growth"	CIO/EQUITY ETF SECTOR US INCOME & GROWTH	7,715,787	13.28	BLACKSTONE REAL ESTATE INCOME TRUST INC	246,852	14.18	3,500,065
XXX-XX432 "Earnest Pts SMCC"	EARNEST PARTNERS SMID CAP CORE SMA	7,444,682	12.82	CLASS S BROKERAGE CLASS PARTNERS GROUP	409,871	8.02	3,289,008
XXX-XX436 "Loomis Sayles LCG"	LOOMIS SAYLES LARGE CAP GROWTH SMA	6,873,914	11.83	PRIMOR FUND I LLC CLASS A MASTER FUND	2,627,937	1.00	2,627,937
XXX-XX440 "Partners Blackstone"	ENDOWMENT	6,789,526	11.69	BLF FEDFUND	3,467	494.73	1,715,229
XXX-XX437 "Baird and Gaynor IG"	BAIRD & GAYNOR INCOME GROWTH SMA	6,569,477	11.31	VANGUARD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	183,572	5.93	1,088,582
XXX-XX435 "Capital Group Int'l"	CAPITAL GROUP INTERNATIONAL FOREIGN ORD	6,008,473	10.34	WESTERN ASSET SMH SERIES COTL OMFO CL SINGLE	996,511	1.00	996,511
XXX-XX438 "MFS LCV"	MFS LARGE CAP VALUE SMA	4,785,500	8.24	ML BANK DEPOSIT PROGRAM	9,486	97.66	926,403
XXX-XX434 "BlackRock Core Fixed"	BLACKROCK FUNDAMENTAL CORE SMA	4,272,967	7.36	VANGUARD FINANCIALS ETF	6,206	140.33	870,888
XXX-XX433 "Western Core Fixed"	WESTERN ASSET MULTI CORE PLUS SMA	4,039,344	6.95	HEALTH CARE SELECT SPDR	102,776	8.02	824,262
XXX-XX422 "Cash Gift Account"	ENDOWMENT	2,629,028	4.53	BLACKROCK ALLOCATION			
XXX-XX672 "Cohen and Steers"	COHEN & STEERS PREFERRED SMA	955,786	1.65	TARGET SHARES SERIES M			
Total		58,084,483	100.00	Total			15,838,885

Accounts included in this report. Please refer to the Account List for accounts included in this report. External Asset information is included if in the Account List. Merrill does not independently verify the accuracy of assets not held in a Merrill account.

For Informational Purposes Only - Account Statement is Official Record of Holdings, Balances and Security Values

Asset Class Analysis - Account Summary CTS

As of Close of Business: 04/30/2024

Accounts Held at Merrill

Account	Equity(\$)	Fixed Income(\$)	Cash(\$)	Alternative Investments(\$)	Subtotal(\$)	Net Debt Balance(\$)	Hard Assets(\$)	Other(\$)	Market Value(\$)	% of Total Assets
XXX-XX422 "Cash Gift Account"	0	0	2,629,026	0	2,629,026	0	0	0	2,629,026	4.53
XXX-XX432 "Earnest Pits SMCC"	7,116,704	0	327,978	0	7,444,682	0	0	0	7,444,682	12.82
XXX-XX433 "Western Core Fixed"	0	3,901,850	137,495	0	4,039,344	0	0	0	4,039,344	6.95
XXX-XX434 "BlackRock Core Fixed"	0	4,203,523	65,718	0	4,269,241	0	0	3,726	4,272,967	7.36
XXX-XX435 "Capital Group Intl"	5,737,730	0	270,743	0	6,008,473	0	0	0	6,008,473	10.34
XXX-XX436 "Loomis Sayles LCG"	6,659,083	0	214,831	0	6,873,914	0	0	0	6,873,914	11.83
XXX-XX437 "Bahl and Gaynor IG"	6,511,065	0	58,412	0	6,569,477	0	0	0	6,569,477	11.31
XXX-XX438 "MFS LCV"	4,605,515	0	179,985	0	4,785,500	0	0	0	4,785,500	8.24
XXX-XX439 "CIO Inc and Growth"	7,592,649	0	123,139	0	7,715,787	0	0	0	7,715,787	13.28
XXX-XX440 "Partners Blackstone"	0	0	453	6,789,073	6,789,526	0	0	0	6,789,526	11.69
XXX-XX672 "Cohen and Steers"	0	945,882	9,904	0	955,786	0	0	0	955,786	1.65
Total Assets	38,222,746	9,051,254	4,017,683	6,789,073	58,080,757	0	0	3,726	58,084,483	100.00
% of Total Assets	65.81	15.58	6.92	11.69	100.00					

CALVIN UNIVESITY
Investment Policy Review
As of December 31, 2023

	12/31/2023
	Calvin
	University
Categories Specified by Investment Policy:	
A. SHORT TERM CASH	
Bank Balance	-
Money Market	30,095,040
CDs	
B. EXCESS SEASONAL FUND	
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	-
C. INTERMEDIATE-TERM FUNDS	
CRCNA LLC Liquidity Fund	-
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	-
D. LONG-TERM FUNDS	
CRCNA LLC Balanced Fund	-
Publicly traded common, preferred, and convertible preferred stock	-
Equity mutual funds	143,103,996
U.S. treasuries or Canadian gov't bonds	79,129,720
Publicly traded bonds and notes	-
(investment grade, at least A-rated)	-
Bond mutual funds	28,337,980
CIBC / TAL overdraft accounts	-
Real Estate	-
Common stock - non-listed	5,445,000
Other Alternatives	-
Private equity/hedge funds	54,361,314
Life Insurance cash value	-
E. FUNDS HELD FOR SPECIFIC DENOMINATIONAL PROGRAMS (i.e., Barnabus Foundation, grants)	
Beneficial Interest	-
Interagency Investments (Obligations):	
Loans to CRCNA (Denom. Services)	-
Total	\$ 340,473,050



CRCNA Funds, LLC

Asset Allocation Analysis and Guidelines as of March 31, 2024

Investment Policy: 55% Domestic Equity, 5% International Equity, 40% Fixed Income, 0% Cash

Manager(s)	Asset Class	Policy Ranges				Current Target Allocation %	Current Target Allocation \$	Target Changes (+/-)
		Lower	Benchmark Policy	Upper	Current Percentages			
BlackRock	Large Cap Domestic Growth Equities	17.5%	20.0%	25.0%	15.5%	OW	\$5,061,310	\$1,316,623
BlackRock	Large Cap Domestic Value Equities	17.5%	20.0%	25.0%	12.2%	OW	\$5,061,310	\$2,128,053
BlackRock	Small/Mid Cap Domestic Growth Equities	0.0%	5.0%	10.0%	2.8%	EW	\$1,205,074	\$535,676
BlackRock	Small/Mid Cap Domestic Value Equities	0.0%	7.5%	10.0%	7.3%	OW	\$1,928,118	\$161,214
BlackRock	International Equities	0.0%	7.5%	10.0%	4.0%	UW	\$1,205,074	\$239,680
BlackRock	Equities Blend	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	EW	\$0	(\$324,323)
Total Equities		50.0%	60.0%	80.0%	43.2%	EW	\$14,460,886	\$4,056,923
BlackRock	Long Term Bond	5.0%	10.0%	35.0%	8.3%	EW	\$2,410,148	\$419,592
BlackRock	Intermediate Term Bond	5.0%	10.0%	35.0%	11.8%	EW	\$2,410,148	(\$441,050)
BlackRock	Short Term Bond	5.0%	20.0%	20.0%	31.8%	EW	\$4,820,295	(\$2,855,136)
BlackRock	Fixed Income Blend	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	EW	\$0	(\$64,127)
Total Fixed Income		20.0%	40.0%	50.0%	52.2%	EW	\$9,640,591	(\$2,940,721)
Cash and Short Term Funds		0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	4.6%	EW	\$0	(\$1,116,203)
Totals		100.0%			100.0%	100.0%	\$24,101,477	

This information set forth herein was obtained from sources which we believe reliable, but we do not guarantee its accuracy. The callout statements received by mail are the official records of your accounts. Policy Ranges are noted for informational purposes only and are from latest Investment Policy Statement.

**World Renew
Investment Summary in US\$
As of December 31, 2023**

	World Renew
<u>Categories Specified by Investment Policy:</u>	
A. SHORT TERM CASH	
Bank Balance	14,065,498
~ Money Market CDs	285
B. EXCESS SEASONAL FUND	
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	
C. INTERMEDIATE-TERM FUNDS	
CRCNA LLC Liquidity Fund	
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	
D. LONG-TERM FUNDS	
CRCNA LLC Balanced Fund	
Publicly traded common, preferred, and convertible preferred stock	
Equity mutual funds	10,669,701
U.S. treasuries or Canadian gov't bonds	
Publicly traded bonds and notes (investment grade, at least A-rated)	
Bond mutual funds	7,223,781
CIBC / TAL overdraft accounts	
Real Estate	
Common stock - non-listed	
Other Alternatives	
Private equity/hedge funds	
Life Insurance cash value	-
E. FUNDS HELD FOR SPECIFIC DENOMINATIONAL PROGRAMS (i.e., Barnabus Foundation, grants)	
Beneficial Interest	5,765,817
<u>Interagency Investments (Obligations):</u>	
Loans to CRCNA (Denom. Services)	1,509,800
Total	<u>\$ 39,234,882</u>

REPORT OF SYNOD 2024

SYNOD 2024

SERVICE OF PRAYER AND PRAISE

Lee Street CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
June 16, 2024
6:30 p.m.

(Asterisk [] indicates worshipers may rise in body or in spirit.)*

Gathering and Praise

Prelude
Welcome and Prayer
Call to Worship: Hebrews 13:15
*Songs: "Somos El Cuerpo de Cristo," "Si Tuvieras Fe,"
"Every Praise/Toda Alabanza"
*God's Greeting and Mutual Greeting

Confession and Renewal

Confession: Hebrews 4:12-16
Prayer
Assurance: Hebrews 10:19-23
*Song: "Hallelujah, Salvation, and Glory"

Thankfulness

Prayers of the People
Announcements
Offering: Thrive—Diversity Leadership Ministry

God's Word

Scripture: Hebrews 11:8-13
Message: "Got Faith?"

Sending

*Song: "The Church's One Foundation"
Celebration of the Lord's Supper
*Blessing: Hebrews 13:20-21
*Song: "Agnus Dei/Aleluya"
Postlude

Preacher: Rev. Steve DeVries

Liturgists: Yordanys Diaz, Jonatan Gonzalez, Kevin Secundino, Rev. Joel Van Dyke

Greeting: Dave Bouwkamp (Dutch), Tito Ramos (Quiche), Carlos Poma (Q'eqchi), Andrew Borgyos (Hungarian), Madelyn Sofía Chinchilla (Spanish), Steve DeVries (Creole), Joel Van Dyke (English)

Prayer readers: Corwin and Judah Carnes, Josue and Valeria Alvarez

Gospel choir: Ingrid Alvarez, Jacky Gomez, Maharai Gonzalez, Kayla Leppink, Naomi Mendez, Kevin Secundino

Piano: Lori Nagelkirk

Keyboard: Yudier Soca

Organ: Marcia VanderPloeg

Clarinet: Wendy VanDoeselaar

Violin: Chuck Jansen

Guitar: Fredy Mendez, Jr.

Bass: Joshua Verburgge

Instrumentalist: Dan Ensing

Percussion: Jonatan Gonzalez, Kelvin Jackson, Maribel Secundino

Gospel choir director: Kevin Secundino

Band director: Dan Ensing

Worship director: Rachel Bouwkamp

Translation: Geoff Kooistra

MINUTES OF SYNOD 2024

WEDNESDAY EVENING, May 29, 2024

First Session

ARTICLE 1

Synod 2024 convenes at 7:00 p.m. (EDT) via videoconference. Ashley Medendorp, synodical services administrative coordinator, provides announcements regarding the use of interpretation and technology.

Jon Hoekema, prayer shepherd for the CRCNA, and Katie Roelofs, consultant with Thrive, lead the assembly in opening prayer and a time of worship. The greeting “The Lord be with you, and also with you” is exchanged in English, Spanish, and Korean. The Synod 2024 worship theme, “God with us,” is introduced as serving to remind, refocus, and reorient the assembly toward God. Rev. Hoekema leads a prayer time patterned after the Lord’s Prayer, and a recorded version of the doxology “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow” is played to accompany singing.

Rev. Hoekema welcomes the president pro tem, Rev. Steve DeVries.

ARTICLE 2

The president pro tem calls the assembly to order and welcomes the delegates, advisers, ecumenical guests, staff, and guests to Synod 2024.

ARTICLE 3

The president pro tem asks the general secretary, Rev. Zachary J. King, to call the roll of delegates listed on the credentials of the forty-nine classes:

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2024

Classis

Delegates

Alberta North

Minister	Henry P. Kranenburg
Minister	Ken G. Douma
Elder	Art VanLoo
Deacon	Daniel K. Harder

Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Minister	Paul W. T. Verhoef
Elder	Judith L. Heim
Deacon	Grace Miedema
Minister	David J. Swinney

Arizona

Minister	Anthony R. DeKorte
Minister	Jose Rayas
Elder	Rodney J. Hugen
Elder	Philip G. Fritschle

Atlantic Northeast

Minister	Willard H. Barham
Minister	Matthew D. Burns
Elder	Clyde H. Williams
Deacon	Adrian L. VandenBout

B.C. North-West

Minister	Michelle R. Ellis
Minister	Paul D. DeWeerd
Elder	Shelley K. Hempstead
Deacon	Robin de Haan

B.C. South-East

Minister	Christopher W. deWinter
Minister	Seok Won Jung
Elder	Sonya J. Grypma

California South

Minister	Jeffery A. Kempton
Minister	Ralph E. Mack

Central California

Minister	Patrick D. Anthony
Minister	Aleah N. Marsden
Elder	Titus E. Davis
Deacon	Luann D. Sankey

Central Plains

Minister	Mark J. Jicinisky
Minister	Michael Bentley
Deacon	Robert T. Vander Veen

Chicago South

Minister	Derek Buikema
Minister	Israel Ledee
Elder	Richard J. DeJong
Deacon	Elizabeth R. Koning

Columbia

Minister	Joel J. Sheeres
Minister	Jelmer P. Groenewold
Elder	Leonel Rodriguez
Deacon	Jeffrey A. Cutter

Eastern Canada

Minister	Aaron M. Thompson
Minister	C. Gregg Lawson
Elder	Aaron Helleman
Elder	Karen L. Bastian

Georgetown

Minister	Cory J. Nederveld
Minister	Samuel J. Krikke
Elder	Herb Kraker
Deacon	Eli Martiradoni

Grand Rapids East

Minister	Ryan Schreiber
Elder	Cindy M. VanderKodde
Elder	Patricia L. Borgdorff
Deacon	Eric Walstra

Grand Rapids North

Minister	John M. Mondi
Minister	Benjamin L. Gandy
Elder	Steven B. Den Besten
Deacon	Todd A. Ritzema

Grand Rapids South

Minister	Ronald G. Kool
Minister	Peter M. Jonker
Elder	Sidney J. Jansma, Jr.
Elder	John S. Dekker

Grandville

Minister	Rodolfo Galindo
Minister	Joseph Vanden Akker
Elder	Ruth M. Carr
Deacon	James P. Heyboer

Greater Los Angeles

Minister	Joel D. Van Soelen
Minister	Erick D. Westra
Elder	Gene J. Van Essen
Deacon	Lucinda L. Fleming

Hackensack

Minister	Petr Kornilov
Minister	Gabriel Wang-Herrera
Elder	Glenn P. Palmer
Deacon	Patricia A. Bushouse

Hamilton

Minister	Doug J. Nieuwstraten
Minister	Hayden W. Regeling
Elder	Herb Grootenboer
Deacon	Eric Tisch

Hanmi

Minister	Jeong Ha Chun
Minister	Cheon Seon Lee
Elder	BooHwan Kwak
Deacon	In Chul Shin

Heartland

Minister	Jesse L. Walhof
Minister	Aaron Greydanus
Elder	Daniel P. Tracy
Deacon	Gary K. Hibma

Holland

Minister
Minister
Elder
Deacon

Christopher J. De Vos
Matthew Hochhalter
Jason Bruxvoort
Dwayne L. Nienhuis

Hudson

Minister
Minister

Sam Han
Jason Chung

Huron

Minister
Minister
Elder
Elder

Sidney Couperus
Thomas W. Bomhof
John A. Tamming
Jeroen Oosterom

Iakota

Minister
Minister
Elder
Deacon

Kurt A. Monroe
Drew D. Hoekema
Stan L. Wynia
Jevon Groenewold

Illiana

Minister
Elder
Deacon
Minister

Joshua M. Christoffels
Joshua Dykstra
Nathan R. Dykstra
Blake I. Campbell

Kalamazoo

Minister
Minister
Elder
Elder

Maria L. Bowater
Simon Tuin
Craig Lubben
Bartel J. Huizenga

Ko-Am

Minister
Minister
Elder
Deacon

Kyung Ho Park
Edward Yoon
Jenny Yoon
Yong Soo Kim

Lake Erie

Minister
Minister
Elder
Deacon

Gerald W. Vander Hoek
Harry R. Winters, Jr.
James H. Brownlee
Leslie Hayden

Lake Superior

Minister
Minister
Elder
Deacon

Daniel S. De Graff
David M. Dick
Rob R. Braun
Samuel J. van Huizen

Minnkota

Minister	Chad Werkhoven
Minister	C.J. Den Dulk
Elder	David Bosma
Deacon	John M. Meinders

Muskegon

Minister	Arthur J. Van Wolde
Minister	Drew Sweetman
Elder	Luke A. Eising
Elder	David A. Zoller

Niagara

Minister	Robert J. Loerts
Minister	Colin Vander Ploeg
Elder	Blair C. Schiebel
Elder	Gabrielle Veldboom

North Cascades

Minister	Jonathan Young
Elder	Michael Jager
Deacon	Rob Hilverda

Northcentral Iowa

Minister	Stewart J. DeJong
Minister	Lora Copley
Elder	Herbert W. Schreur
Elder	Duane VanderPloeg

Northern Illinois

Minister	Diego B. Flores
Minister	Matthew Lanser
Elder	Craig Buma
Deacon	Marv Tazelaar

Northern Michigan

Minister	Steven J. Datema
Minister	Mark A. Bonnes
Elder	Scott J. Chandler
Elder	Jared Yapple

Ontario Southwest

Minister	Michael G. Borgert
Minister	Andrew Zomerman
Elder	Ronald Middel
Deacon	James R. Poelman

Pacific Northwest

Minister	Douglas E. Fakkema
Minister	Mark Mohrlang
Elder	Jonathan Westra
Elder	Leroy Vanden Bosch

Quinte

Minister	Joshua C. Tuininga
Minister	Elizabeth A. Guillaume-Koene
Elder	Donald G. Harnden
Deacon	Cherri L. Le Forestier

Red Mesa

Minister	James H. Kuiper
Minister	Omar Tsosie
Elder	Sherry TenClay
Deacon	Julia Alonzo

Rocky Mountain

Minister	Greg Brady
Minister	George N. Den Oudsten
Elder	Ronald J. Nydam
Deacon	Patrick A. Bredenberg

Southeast U.S.

Minister	Kristin J. Vos
Elder	Jesus Bayona
Deacon	Erik Pluemer

Thornapple Valley

Minister	R. Scott Greenway
Minister	David J. Bosscher
Elder	Ren Tubergen
Deacon	Kevin Bos

Toronto

Minister	Ruth Hofman
Minister	David Salverda
Elder	Phyllis Alberts-Meijers
Elder	Anita VanZeumeren

Wisconsin

Minister	Evan Tinklenberg
Minister	Joshua Van Engen
Elder	Ben Van Weelden
Deacon	Kevin Riemersma

Yellowstone

Minister	Andrew R. Sytsma
Minister	Steve Bussis
Elder	James L. Reed
Deacon	Robert A. Kincaid

Zeeland

Minister	Stephen F. Terpstra
Minister	Lloyd H. Hemstreet
Elder	Steven J. Schrottenboer
Deacon	Andrew Visser

The roll indicates that the following delegates are absent: Ren Tubergen (Thornapple Valley), Grace Miedema (Alberta South/Saskatchewan),

Leonel Rodriguez (Columbia), John M. Mondi (Grand Rapids North), Jeong Ha Chun (Hanmi), Jason Chung (Hudson), Bartel J. Huizenga (Kalamazoo), Kyung Ho Park (KoAm), Edward Yoon (KoAm), Jenny Yoon (KoAm), and Yong Soo Kim (KoAm).

The general secretary makes note of the recent death of Scott DeVries, who served as director of synodical services, and of Scott's vision for synod as a community of spiritual discernment. Scott will be deeply missed, and his family continues to be held in the prayers of the Office of General Secretary.

The president pro tem declares that a quorum of the membership is present and that the assembly of Synod 2024 is duly constituted.

ARTICLE 4

After participating in a practice election, the assembly proceeds to elect officers. The following are elected:

President: Derek Buikema

Vice president: Stephen F. Terpstra

First clerk: Joshua M. Christoffels

Second clerk: Daniel De Graff

Rev. DeVries offers congratulations and a prayer for the newly elected officers.

ARTICLE 5

President Buikema expresses appreciation to synod for the confidence placed in him, and gratitude to be able to serve in this way. He notes that we do all our work in the presence of God, to the glory of God alone, and in prayer, that we might walk in step with the Spirit of God and that our work at synod might demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit of God.

ARTICLE 6

The general secretary presents the general schedule for information and calls the attention of delegates and visitors to the following matters:

Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Council of Delegates calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2024 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

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

Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod as a way to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. Although the general sessions of

synod are recorded, executive sessions are not recorded. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being recorded. Synod has designated that the office of general secretary be responsible for the use and storage of the recordings.

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

- A. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.
- B. Visitor privileges
 - 1. [Visitors] are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided it is done unobtrusively (i.e., that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons . . .).
 - 2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
 - a. Video cameras are permitted only at the entrances . . . not backstage or in the wings.
 - b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
 - c. Video [recording] is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons . . .).

(Acts of Synod 1989, p. 445)

ARTICLE 7

The general secretary presents the report of the Program Committee and notes the following within the report:

- A. The report will be approved in the June 14 session of synod.
- B. The following advisory committees are recommended for Synod 2024.

Committee 1 — Synodical Services and Structure I

Chair: Drew Sweetman; **reporter:** Joseph Vanden Akker; **ministers:** Joshua Christoffels, Jason Chung, Henry Kranenburg, Matthew Lanser, Kurt Monroe, Stephen Terpstra, Aaron Thompson, Simon Tuin, Joshua Van Engen, Gerald Vander Hoek; **elders:** Scott Chandler, John Dekker, Herb Kraker, BooHwan Kwak, Herbert Schreur, Ren Tubergen; **deacons:** Jeffrey Cutter, Elizabeth Koning, Grace Miedema, Adrian VandenBout, Eric Walstra; **young adult representative:** Lain Martinez Vasquez; **ethnic adviser:** Joao Pedro Macimiano Trabbold; **staff consultant:** Dan DeKam.

Committee 2—Synodical Services and Structure II

Chair: Jose Rayas; **reporter:** Cory Nederveld; **ministers:** Stewart de Jong, Paul DeWeerd, Rod Galindo, Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene, C. Gregg Lawson, Aleah Marsden, Doug Nieuwstraten, Colin Vander Ploeg, Gabriel Wang-Herrera, Erick Westra; **elders:** Sidney J. Jansma, James Reed, Steve Schrotenboer, Daniel Tracy, Clyde Williams, Jared Yapple; **deacons:** Patrick Bredenberg, Jim Poelman, Todd Ritzema; **young adult representative:** Ireland Bosworth; **staff consultant:** Joel Vande Werken.

Committee 3—Church Order and Related Matters

Chair: Douglas Fakkema; **reporter:** Michael Bogert; **ministers:** Greg Brady, Derek Buikema, Steven Datema, Matthew Hochhalter, Ronald Kool, Evan Tinklenberg, Arthur Van Wolde; **elders:** Rob Braun, Titus Davis, Donald Harnden, William Henry, Erik Pluemer, John Tamming, Cindy VanderKodde; **deacons:** Jevon Groenewold, Daniel Harder, John Meinders, Eric Tisch; **young adult representative:** Iain Monroe; **faculty adviser:** Kathy S. Smith.

Committee 4—Education and Candidacy

Chair: Chris DeVos; **reporter:** Chris DeWinter; **ministers:** Will Barham, Daniel De Graff, George Den Oudsten, Michelle Ellis, Samuel Han, Drew Hoekema, John Mondt, Ryan Schreiber, Paul Verhoef, Edward Yoon, Jonathan Young; **elders:** Phyllis Alberts-Meijers, James Brownlee, Richard DeJong, Josh Dykstra, Herb Grootenboer, Bartel Huizenga, Ronald Middel, Art van Loo; **deacons:** Julia Alonzo, Kevin Riemersma, In Chul Shin, Andrew Visser; **young adult representative:** Verity Johnston; **staff consultants:** Susan E. LaClear, Jul Medenblik, Greg Elzinga.

Committee 5—Congregational Care and Justice

Chair: Peter Jonker; **reporter:** Anthony DeKorte; **ministers:** Michael Bentley, Matthew Burns, Sid Couperus, Ken Douma, Ruth Hofman, Jeff Kempton, Hayden Regeling, Omar Tsosie, Joel Van Soelen, Chad Werkhoven, Andrew Zomerman; **elders:** Patricia Borgdorff, Gabrielle Veldboom, David Zoller; **deacons:** Kevin Bos, Patricia Bushouse, Rob Hilverda, Yong Kim, Sam Vanhuizen; **faculty adviser:** Mary Vanden Berg; **staff consultants:** Chris Schoon, Lesli van Milligen.

Committee 6—Global Mission and Ecumenical Matters

Chair: Michael Jager; **reporter:** Aaron Greydanus; **ministers:** David Bosscher, Jeong Ha Chun, C.J. den Dulk, Jelmer Groenewold, Lloyd Hemstreet, Sam Krikke, Mark Mohrlang, David Swinney, Kris Vos, Harry Winters; **elders:** Luke Eising, Ronald Nydam, Jeroen Oosterom, Glenn Palmer, Duane Vanderploeg, Jenny Yoon; **deacons:** Lucinda Fleming, Dwayne Nienhuis; **young adult representative:** Eric Katerburg; **faculty adviser:** David Rylaarsdam; **staff consultants:** Carol Bremer-Bennett, Kevin DeRaaf, Joel Huyser, Jamie McIntosh, Kurt Selles.

Committee 7—Financial and Administrative Matters

Chair: Joel Sheeres; **reporter:** Jonathan Westra; **ministers:** Steve Bussis, Blake Campbell, Israel Ledee; **elders:** Jesus Bayona, David Bosma, Jason Bruxvoort, Shelley Hempstead, Craig Lubben, Blair Schiebel, Gene Van Essen, Ben Van Weelden, Anita Van Zeumeren, Stan Wynia; **deacons:** Leslie Hayden, James Heyboer, Cherri Le Forestier, Eli Martiradoni, Marvin Tazelaar; **staff consultant:** Shirley DeVries.

Committee 8—Discipline Matters

Chair: Thomas Bomhof; **reporter:** Lora Copley; **ministers:** Mark Bonnes, Maria Bowater, Diego Flores, Ben Gandy, Robert Loerts, Ralph Mack, Josh Tuininga, Jesse Walhof; **elders:** Aaron Helleman, Rodney Hugen, Shaun Jung, , Leonel Rodriguez, Sherry TenClay, Leroy Vanden Bosch; **deacons:** Robert Kincaid, Luann Sankey, Robert Vander Veen; **young adult representative:** Samantha Sebastia; **adviser:** Danny Daley; **staff consultant:** Al Postma.

Committee 9—Gravamen Matters

Chair: Andy Sytsma; **reporter:** Petr Kornilov; **ministers:** Patrick Anthony, David Dick, R. Scott Greenway, Mark Jicinisky, James Kuiper, Cheon Lee, Kyungho Park, David Salverda; **elders:** Craig Buma, Ruth Carr, Steven Den Besten, Philip Fritschle, Sonya Grypma, Judith Heim; **deacons:** Karen Bastian, Robin de Haan, Nathan Dykstra, Gary Hibma; **young adult representative:** Gavin Schaefer; **ethnic adviser:** Patrick Lin; **faculty advisers:** Wilson de Angelo Cunha; **staff consultant:** Zachary King.

C. The general secretary also notes where advisory committee materials are located and where room assignments can be found.

ARTICLE 8

The general secretary notes that the Synod 2024 Agenda Supplement will be available soon, and an alphabetical list of delegates and advisers is now posted online.

ARTICLE 9

The general secretary notes that all committees will convene June 5 at 7:00 p.m. EDT for introductions only, as the final committee rosters will be approved at the June 14 session of synod. The general secretary also calls attention to all the prayer opportunities and resources for prayer leading up to and during synod.

ARTICLE 10

President Buikema leads in closing prayer. Synod recesses at 9:12 p.m. The assembly will reconvene Friday, June 14, at 8:15 a.m.

Second Session

ARTICLE 11

Delegates and members of Lee Street CRC's worship team lead in singing the songs "Unidos" and "Come, Thou Fount" in Spanish and English. Delegates recite a greeting in English, Spanish, and Korean and are called to worship with the words of Psalm 117. The assembly sings "Praise the Lord / Alabad al Señor" and "I Depend Upon Your Faithfulness / Tu fidelidad es grande" and responds by reading Lord's Day 21 responsively.

Rev. Steve DeVries, pastor of Lee Street CRC, provides a message on Lord's Day 21 and Romans 8:38-39 titled "The Holy Catholic Church." He shares that being Christian Reformed is in his family history. The apostle Paul also knew what it felt like to be an insider but considered it a loss. In Christ we have an identity that is unchangeable and unshakeable. We begin with worship and conversations with the most basic truths of who we are, and the catechism reminds us that we share in Christ in all his treasures and gifts. They are not our gifts alone. We are commanded also to share Jesus and his gifts with each other in the body. Rev. DeVries notes that the delegates at synod are people whom others have recognized as having gifts, and he encourages them to discern their gifts wisely and use them well.

The assembly responds by singing "O Christ the Great Foundation" and receives a blessing.

ARTICLE 12

President Buikema thanks Lee Street CRC and the Worship Planning Committee for leading synod in worship. He welcomes delegates and advisers to the first in-person synod session and asks delegates to complete the roll call.

Alternate minister Mark Vande Zande (Zeeland) replaces Lloyd Hemstreet. Alternate elder Roger Dykstra (Georgetown) will replace Eli Martiradoni but is absent this morning.

ARTICLE 13

President Buikema introduces Mr. Greg Elzinga, interim president of Calvin University, who welcomes delegates to the Calvin University campus.

ARTICLE 14

The general secretary, Rev. Zachary J. King, welcomes and introduces the ecumenical guests who are present or will be arriving later in the week: Rev. Dr. Isaiah Jirapye Magaji, president for the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria; Rev. Laura Osborne, coordinator for interreligious relations for the Reformed Church in America; Rev. Dr. Luka Ariko Ekitala, general secretary for the Reformed Church of East Africa; and Rev. Patrick Jok, general secretary, Synod of the Sudanese Reformed Churches.

The general secretary welcomes and introduces the faculty advisers who are present: Dr. Danny Daley, Rev. Scott Hoezee, Dr. Wilson Cunha, Dr. Mary Vanden Berg, Dr. David Rylaarsdam, and Rev. Kathy Smith.

The general secretary welcomes and introduces to synod the ethnic advisers who are present: Patrick Lin and Joao Pedro Macimiano Trabbold.

The general secretary also welcomes and introduces to synod the young adult representatives who are present: Ireland Bosworth, Verity Johnston, Eric Katerberg, Lain Martinez Vasquez, Iain Monroe, Gavin Schaefer, and Samantha Sebastia.

The general secretary introduces the president of Calvin Theological Seminary, the parliamentarian, the synod news staff, the *Banner* staff, the synod office staff, the prayer shepherd, the IT staff, the worship committee convener, the transportation coordinator, the Calvin University events staff, the denominational executive staff, the Council of Delegates chair and vice-chair, interpreters, standing committee chairs, and directors of agencies and ministries who are present.

ARTICLE 15

The president introduces Julia Rathbun, Rev. Sean Baker, and Rev. Reggie Smith, who lead the assembly in a power and privilege training, as adopted by Synod 2019.

ARTICLE 16

The president notes that the work of synod is challenging and hard. He is thankful for all who are present to engage in the work of the church. He reminds delegates that they are not representatives of a church or classis but of the interest of the Lord God and of Jesus Christ. He encourages delegates to let their words and actions flow from the Word of God. He states that the ever-present Savior of the church is with them always, quoting Matthew 28:20. He pledges to do his best in his role at Synod 2024, and he invites the body to challenge him when necessary.

ARTICLE 17

The president notes that there are overtures regarding the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The chair rules that these overtures need to be processed in advisory committees instead of on the floor.

ARTICLE 18

The president proceeds with the reading of the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The president asks delegates to rise to show their assent.

ARTICLE 19

The general secretary presents the following schedule for information: morning session, 8:15-11:45 a.m.; afternoon session, 1:15-5:00 p.m.; evening session, 7:00-9:00 p.m.; breaks at 9:45 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

ARTICLE 20

The general secretary reminds the delegates of the confidentiality and audio/video recording policies, and he reads the social media guidelines:

Social media contact

Synod 2019 recognized the increased influence of social media on synodical delegates and advisers and decided that delegates and advisers shall follow “guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of social media contact with non-delegates during advisory committee meetings and plenary sessions of synod, because such use might compromise the transparency and integrity of the deliberative process” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 811-12).

ARTICLE 21

The president announces the following on behalf of the officers of synod:

A. The officers have ruled that the unprocessed communication (Communication 27) from the consistory of St. Joseph (Michigan) CRC is admitted as a communication legally before synod.

B. The officers have ruled that the overtures submitted from Classis Holland (see Communication 5), from the council of Fourteenth Street CRC, Holland, Michigan (see Communication 9), and from members of Fourteenth Street CRC, Holland, Michigan (see Communication 7) have been received as communications only.

Ground:

These overtures fail to present new and sufficient grounds for reconsideration of past synodical decisions (Church Order Art. 31).

ARTICLE 22

The general secretary presents the report of the Program Committee and notes the following within the report:

A. The names of the directors assigned to advisory committees.

B. The name of Scott DeVries on the report, and gratitude for Joel Vande Werken’s participation as interim associate director of synodical services.

C. Room assignments to be found at the top of each committee listing.

D. Updates to the report—delegates should refer to the most current electronic version, the details of which supersede those presented in session 1. The following advisory committees are recommended for Synod 2024:

Committee 1—Synodical Services and Structure I

Chair: Drew Sweetman; **reporter:** Joseph Vanden Akker; **ministers:** Joshua Christoffels, Jason Chung, Henry Kranenburg, Matthew Lanser, Kurt Monroe, Stephen Terpstra, Aaron Thompson, Simon Tuin, Joshua Van Engen, Gerald Vander Hoek; **elders:** Scott Chandler, John Dekker, Herb Kraker, BooHwan Kwak, Herbert Schreur, Ren Tubergen; **deacons:** Jeffrey Cutter, Elizabeth Koning, Grace Miedema, Adrian VandenBout, Eric Walstra; **young adult representative:** Lain Martinez Vasquez; **ethnic adviser:** Joao Pedro Macimiano Trabbold; **staff consultant:** Dan DeKam.

Committee 2—Synodical Services and Structure II

Chair: Jose Rayas; **reporter:** Cory Nederveld; **ministers:** Stewart de Jong, Paul DeWeerd, Rod Galindo, Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene, C. Gregg Lawson, Aleah Marsden, Doug Nieuwstraten, Colin Vander Ploeg, Gabriel Wang-Herrera, Erick Westra; **elders:** Sidney J. Jansma, James Reed, Steve Schrotenboer, Daniel Tracy, Clyde Williams, Jared Yaple; **deacons:** Patrick Bredenberg, Jim Poelman, Todd Ritzema, **young adult representative:** Ireland Bosworth; **staff consultant:** Joel Vande Werken.

Committee 3—Church Order and Related Matters

Chair: Douglas Fakkema; **reporter:** Michael Borgert; **ministers:** Greg Brady, Derek Buikema, Steven Datema, Matthew Hochhalter, Ronald Kool, Evan Tinklenberg, Arthur Van Wolde; **elders:** Rob Braun, Titus Davis, Donald Harnden, William Henry, Erik Pluemer, John Tamming, Cindy VanderKodde; **deacons:** Jevon Groenewold, Daniel Harder, John Meinders, Eric Tisch; **young adult representative:** Iain Monroe; **faculty adviser:** Kathy S. Smith.

Committee 4—Education and Candidacy

Chair: Chris DeVos; **reporter:** Chris DeWinter; **ministers:** Will Barham, Daniel De Graff, George Den Oudsten, Michelle Ellis, Samuel Han, Drew Hoekema, John Mondt, Ryan Schreiber, Paul Verhoef, Edward Yoon, Jonathan Young; **elders:** Phyllis Alberts-Meijers, James Brownlee, Richard DeJong, Josh Dykstra, Herb Grootenboer, Bartel Huizenga, Ronald Middel, Art van Loo; **deacons:** Julia Alonzo, Kevin Riemersma, In Chul Shin, Andrew Visser; **young adult representative:** Verity Johnston; **staff consultants:** Susan E. LaClear, Jul Medenblik, Greg Elzinga.

Committee 5—Congregational Care and Justice

Chair: Peter Jonker; **reporter:** Anthony DeKorte; **ministers:** Michael Bentley, Matthew Burns, Sid Couperus, Ken Douma, Ruth Hofman, Jeff Kempton, Hayden Regeling, Omar Tsosie, Joel Van Soelen, Chad Werkhoven, Andrew Zomerman; **elders:** Patricia Borgdorff, Gabrielle Veldboom, David Zoller; **deacons:** Kevin Bos, Patricia Bushouse, Rob Hilverda, Yong Kim, Sam Vanhuizen; **faculty adviser:** Mary Vanden Berg; **staff consultants:** Chris Schoon, Lesli van Milligen.

Committee 6—Global Mission and Ecumenical Matters

Chair: Michael Jager; **reporter:** Aaron Greydanus; **ministers:** David Bosscher, Jeong Ha Chun, C.J. den Dulk, Jelmer Groenewold, Sam Krikke, Mark Mohrlang, David Swinney, Mark Vande Zande, Kris Vos, Harry Winters; **elders:** Luke Eising, Ronald Nydam, Jeroen Oosterom, Glenn Palmer, Duane Vanderploeg, Jenny Yoon; **deacons:** Lucinda Fleming, Dwayne Nienhuis; **young adult representative:** Eric Katerburg; **faculty adviser:** David Rylaarsdam; **staff consultants:** Carol Bremer-Bennett, Kevin DeRaaf, Joel Huyser, Jamie McIntosh, Kurt Selles.

Committee 7—Financial and Administrative Matters

Chair: Joel Sheeres; **reporter:** Jonathan Westra; **ministers:** Steve Bussis, Blake Campbell, Israel Ledee; **elders:** Jesus Bayona, David Bosma, Jason Bruxvoort, Roger Dykstra, Shelley Hempstead, Craig Lubben, Blair Schiebel, Gene Van Essen, Ben Van Weelden, Anita Van Zeumeren, Stan Wynia; **deacons:** Leslie Hayden, James Heyboer, Cherri Le Forestier, Marvin Tazelaar; **staff consultant:** Shirley DeVries.

Committee 8—Discipline Matters

Chair: Thomas Bomhof; **reporter:** Lora Copley; **ministers:** Mark Bonnes, Maria Bowater, Diego Flores, Ben Gandy, Robert Loerts, Ralph Mack, Josh Tuininga, Jesse Walhof; **elders:** Aaron Helleman, Rodney Hugen, Shaun Jung, Leonel Rodriguez, Sherry TenClay, Leroy Vanden Bosch; **deacons:** Robert Kincaid, Luann Sankey, Robert Vander Veen; **young adult representative:** Samantha Sebastia; **adviser:** Danny Daley; **staff consultant:** Al Postma.

Committee 9—Gravamen Matters

Chair: Andy Sytsma; **reporter:** Petr Kornilov; **ministers:** Patrick Anthony, David Dick, R. Scott Greenway, Mark Jicinisky, James Kuiper, Cheon Lee, Kyungho Park, David Salverda; **elders:** Craig Buma, Ruth Carr, Steven Den Besten, Philip Fritschle, Sonya Grypma, Judith Heim; **deacons:** Karen Bastian, Robin de Haan, Nathan Dykstra, Gary Hibma; **young adult representative:** Gavin Schaefer; **ethnic adviser:** Patrick Lin; **faculty advisers:** Wilson de Angelo Cunha; **staff consultant:** Zachary King.

The president presents the following recommendation on behalf of the officers of synod:

That synod approve the report of the Program Committee as presented.

—*Adopted*

E. Rev. Kathy Smith is serving as parliamentarian, and Rev. William Koopmans is available as an alternate, if needed.

ARTICLE 23

The president announces the following appointments on behalf of the officers of synod:

Minutes Review Committee:

Rev. Joshua Christoffels
Rev. Daniel DeGraff
Rev. Henry Kranenburg
Deacon delegate Luann Sankey

Worship Planning Committee:

Rev. Matthew Burns
Deacon delegate Patricia Bushouse
Rev. John Mondt

Sergeant at Arms:

Elder delegate Sidney Jansma, Jr.

Hospitality Committee:

Dr. Lyle Bierma

Rev. William T. Koopmans

Dr. Shirley Roels

ARTICLE 24

The general secretary presents the following on behalf of the officers of synod:

A. That if any matter is to be removed from the consent agenda, the specific matter and page numbers should be brought to the attention of the officers *this morning*. Voting on the consent agenda will take place on Saturday morning. The Program Committee (officers of Synod 2023) designated the following as consent agenda items:

- revisions to the COD Governance Handbook
- the Financial Reserve Policy
- the Cash Holding Policy
- the Fundraising Ethical Guidelines Policy
- the Investment Policy
- the condensed financial statements of the agencies and institutions

ARTICLE 25

The president makes the following announcements on behalf of the officers of synod:

A. That if a request to record a negative vote is received, the delegate's name, classis, and grounds will be read by the clerks, and only the name and classis will be included in the minutes.

B. According to the decision of Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 925), we note that the delegates from Classis Minnkota (Chad Werkhoven, C.J. Den Dulk, David Bosma, and John Meinders) protest the seating of women delegates, and we read the following statement:

We, as delegates, acknowledge that there are a multitude of perspectives and opinions represented among us. We recognize that on the issue of allowing women to serve in the offices of deacon, elder, minister, or commissioned pastor that "there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731). Some object that there are women seated as delegates; others lament that there are not more women among us. We choose to work together despite these differences.

C. Ballots for denominational board and committee elections will be presented later in the week. If delegates wish to voice a concern regarding the inclusion of any individual whose name is currently on the ballot, they should approach the officers before Saturday evening at 5:00 p.m. This will

ensure enough time to address any concerns and to prepare for an executive session (if necessary) when the ballot is presented.

D. Anyone who wishes to voice a concern about any individual throughout the sessions of synod should inform the officers so that we can handle the matter with sensitivity to the individual named.

E. Synod will be implementing a 20-minute delay on all synod livestreaming, with the exception of the Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday.

F. In response to Synod 2019's instruction to make prayer "a more intentional feature of synod's work sessions" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 803), the president will announce regular prayer breaks during plenary sessions. The president also notes the presence and availability of 30 prayer intercessors from thirteen classes in both the United States and Canada.

G. Delegates are encouraged to speak slowly, even if the statement is available in print, to aid interpretation.

H. With regard to attendance: "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" (Rules for Synodical Procedure, section I, E).

ARTICLE 26

The general secretary notes that all committees will convene immediately. The assembly will reconvene at 8:15 a.m. on Saturday morning in the Calvin University Chapel.

ARTICLE 27

The president leads in closing prayer. The session recesses at 10:28 a.m.

SATURDAY MORNING, June 15, 2024

Third Session

ARTICLE 28

Delegates gather for worship, singing, "God Himself Is with Us" (organ: Stephen Terpstra), and greetings are offered in English, Spanish, and Korean. Rev. Al Postma, Rev. Lesli van Milligen, and Pastor Katie Roelofs serve as liturgists. The worship team (cajon: Michael Bentley; guitar: Aaron Thompson and David Salverda; bass: Kevin Riemersma; piano: Melody Van Arragon) leads delegates in singing "God Is Here" and "God with Us."

After being encouraged to remember their baptism, God's promises to them, and God's saving acts in history, delegates respond by coming forward to dip their hands in the font, and receive a stone. The assembly sings "Christ, Our Hope in Life and Death."

Several staff members, positioned around the room, offer a blessing, and delegates respond, singing “May the Peace.”

The president welcomes delegates, advisers, ecumenical guests, other guests, staff, and people viewing online. He thanks Woodlawn CRC (which regularly meets in the Calvin University Chapel) for making room for synod to be held in the chapel by moving their worship location for Sunday morning.

The roll indicates that the following delegates are absent:

Jeff Kempton (California South) and Ron Nydam (Rocky Mountain). In addition, Clyde Williams (Atlantic Northeast) is departing synod due to illness.

The president offers a prayer for delegates who are ill.

ARTICLE 29

The president presents the following on behalf of the officers of synod:

A. That the gallery will remain open to the general public unless executive session is declared. People seated in the gallery are expected to maintain the same decorum as delegates.

B. That all requests for privilege of the floor by the Council of Delegates, CRC agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, task forces, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to synod are granted.

C. For all appeals, the officers have ruled the following:

1. Delegates may not vote on a matter in which they or their church is particularly involved (Church Order Art. 34). The officers therefore rule that when a classis is party to an appeal, the delegates from that classis will not vote on the matter. The same would apply to any action on an overture or communication in which a particular congregation is named.
2. Because the Church Order supplement dealing with appeals (Supplement, Art. 30-a, C, 4) provides that each appellant and respondent are provided a single representative to present their case, the officers have ruled that delegates from a classis that is party to an *appeal* should recuse themselves from the discussion of the appeal as well. The same would not apply to synod’s discussions about overtures or communications of named congregations.

D. That synod approve the following requests for special offerings contained within the reports to Synod 2024:

1. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, encourage all Christian Reformed congregations to recognize the following Sundays as significant opportunities to pray for and to receive an offering for Resonate Global Mission: Easter, Pentecost, the second Sunday in September, and the fourth Sunday in November.

2. 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.
3. That synod ratify the following denominational agencies and institutions recommended to the churches for one or more offerings: Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, Centre for Public Dialogue, Indigenous Ministries (Canada), ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, Thrive, and World Renew.

—Adopted

Rod Huguen (Arizona) offers a prayer for the agencies and institutions.

ARTICLE 30

The president presents the report of the Program Committee.

A. The Program Committee (officers of Synod 2023) designated the following as consent agenda items:

- revisions to the COD Governance Handbook
- the Financial Reserve Policy
- the Cash Holding Policy
- the Fundraising Ethical Guidelines Policy
- the Investment Policy
- the condensed financial statements of the agencies and institutions

B. That synod receive as information all agenda items designated as “consent agenda” by the Program Committee of synod.

—Received as information

ARTICLE 31

The president presents the following on behalf of the officers of synod:

A. To facilitate our times of prayer during this week, it is asked that each classis nominate a prayer person. The president will call on various classes to lead prayer during these breaks.

B. The time limit for speeches is three minutes (Rules for Synodical Procedure, VIII, J, 2). Officers will be utilizing a clock, but the timer will not be visible to delegates.

ARTICLE 32

The morning session recesses at 8:49 a.m. so that delegates can work in advisory committees. Andrew Zomerman (Ontario Southwest) leads in closing prayer. The assembly will reconvene in the evening at 7:00 p.m.

SATURDAY EVENING, June 15, 2024

Fourth Session

ARTICLE 33

Art Van Loo (Alberta North) opens in prayer for the session.

ARTICLE 34

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services and Structure I, Rev. Joseph Vanden Akker reporting, presents the following:

I. Resolution regarding Scott DeVries

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Supplement Report (section I, A)

B. Recommendation

That synod adopt the following resolution:

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in session on June 15, 2024, conveys to the family of Rev. Scott DeVries the following resolution of appreciation and encouragement. Scott DeVries served the CRCNA faithfully at congregational, classical, and synodical levels over the years of his ministry. The confidence of God's people in his leadership was publicly affirmed often during the different opportunities of service he accepted. Through his hard work, wise counsel, and compassionate spirit, he earned our trust and respect. His integrity of character and humble strength set a standard of service that has inspired and challenged all who knew him. We also know that even above his work in the CRCNA, he was more importantly a husband and a dad. First and last, he was a faithful servant of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Scott knew how great his sin and misery were. Scott knew how and who saved him. Scott strove to glorify God through a life of gratitude and service.

We trust that the heavenly Father who guided Scott throughout his ministry and life will hold you as a family gently and firmly and securely through the joys and sorrows of the new road you now walk. May the God of all comfort surround you with the grace you need in this difficult time. We were honored to have been able to know Scott as a brother, a mentor, and a friend in Christ. Thank you for sharing him with us.

—*Adopted*

The general secretary offers a prayer for the family of Scott DeVries.

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 39.)

ARTICLE 35

Zachary J. King, general secretary, addresses the delegates on the State of the Church. He begins by sharing how he learned about farming and many of its challenges and elements through visits to relatives' farms as a child.

Since last June, he says, the text of John 12:23-25 has been on his heart as his theme for this ministry year: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." In this text, Jesus is inviting us

to recognize that by dying he has planted a seed that will yield immeasurably for the kingdom of God. Rev. King states that in his travels and conversations he has seen that God is at work planting seeds throughout the Christian Reformed Church. He shares four examples of seeds that he has observed, with challenges and opportunities related to each one:

- an increasing awareness of God's Spirit at work in governance
- renewal and revival in Christian Reformed congregations
- pastoral approaches to difficult moral issues facing our cultures and our churches
- a global vision in the Christian Reformed Church

Rev. King concludes by sharing the vision from Scripture that Jesus' victory came through his death, not through adoring crowds or deliverance from the Romans. Delegates are encouraged to hold their hopes, dreams, and expectations loosely, and maybe even to allow some of them to die, that God might surprise us all with new life.

President Buikema gives thanks for Rev. King and his work as general secretary.

ARTICLE 36

The president introduces Rev. Michael Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates (COD), who addresses delegates on the work of the COD. He gives recognition to Ms. Greta Luimes, vice chair of the COD.

Rev. Ten Haken offers thanks for the fifty-six individuals who serve on the COD and encourages delegates to thank and pray for their COD members. He then shares the following highlights of the COD's work in the past year:

- establishment and work with a new committee structure
- focus on prayer
- commitment to binationality
- approval of the sale of the 1700 28th Street SE property in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and of the purchase of the property at 300 East Beltline NE in Grand Rapids
- approval of the Global Vision Team report

Rev. Ten Haken concludes by thanking the staff of the CRCNA and specifically the general secretary. He closes with the words of Ephesians 3:20-21.

President Buikema gives thanks for the service of Rev. Ten Haken as chair of the COD and for the COD's work.

ARTICLE 37

Mark Vande Zande (Zeeland) closes in prayer. The assembly adjourns at 8:00 p.m., and will reconvene on Monday, June 17, at 8:15 a.m.

MONDAY MORNING, June 17, 2024

Fifth Session

ARTICLE 38

The delegates assemble and sing “When Morning Gilds the Sky,” led by Stephen Terpstra on the organ.

Elaine May (Thrive) leads the assembly in the practice of *lectio divina* and notes that the focus for morning worship this week will be the Psalms. She reads Psalm 100 and leads delegates through a rhythm of reading, reflection, and silent prayer, closing with a final prayer.

Roger Dykstra (Georgetown) rises to indicate his assent to the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

ARTICLE 39

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 34.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services and Structure I, Rev. Joseph Vanden Akker reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overtures 5 and 6—Transfer of All Nations Church, Bakersfield, California, from Classis Ko-Am to Classis Greater Los Angeles

A. Materials

Overtures 5-6, pp. 426-27

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overtures 5 and 6.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Communication 14: Classis Minnkota

A. Materials

Communication 14, pp. 585-87

B. Recommendation

That synod receive Communication 14 from Classis Minnkota for information.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 40

Advisory Committee 6, Global Mission and Ecumenical Matters, Rev. Aaron Greydanus reporting, presents the following:

I. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

A. Materials

1. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee report, pp. 316-22
2. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee Supplement

B. Privilege of the floor

William T. Koopmans, chair, and Zachary J. King (ex officio)

C. Recommendations

1. That synod express its gratitude to William T. Koopmans, James Joosse, and Ruth Hofman for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod reappoint Joy Engelsman to a second three-year term.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod approve the Christian Reformed Church in Liberia as a church in cooperation.

—*Adopted*

Herb Scheur (Northcentral Iowa) offers prayer.

4. That synod take note of the EIRC's progress report regarding the relationship with the Alliance of Reformed Churches as a church in cooperation, with a view toward its transitioning to the status of church in communion in the future (see *Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 321).

—*Adopted*

II. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (section III, B, 2), pp. 32-33

2. Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, D; including Appendix L)

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the Global Vision Team when matters pertaining to this report are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod adopt the revised Global Vision Team report as a guide to CRCNA classes that are in conversation with congregations outside North America desiring to affiliate with the CRCNA.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod adopt the following instruction:

The Office of General Secretary will establish a Vision Implementation Team made up of diverse members from the CRCNA and its international partners. The team will have the following mandate:

- a. To immediately make an inventory of resources (people, material resources, etc.) that can be mobilized and made available to classes and congregations considering affiliations outside North America.
- b. To dialogue with (a) CRCNA agencies and institutions, (b) CRCNA classes, and (c) international churches connected with the classes to identify concrete barriers and opportunities to build the mutually edifying ecclesiastical relationships described in the Global Vision Team report. The Vision Implementation Team will report to the COD at its winter meeting the results of this work, including findings and proposals and/or projects, if any.
- c. To recommend to the Council of Delegates and to synod any appropriate changes that might be needed in CRCNA polity, governance, and structure to support such relationships in light of the work in section B, 2 of the COD report. Recommendations would be presented to the Council of Delegates by the time of its winter 2027 meeting, if not before, for adoption at Synod 2027.
- d. To converse with CRCNA-affiliated churches outside North America and interested international denominational partners with a view toward developing a CRC global ecclesiastical partnership/entity. Recommendations would be presented to the Council of Delegates by the time of its winter 2027 meeting, if not before, for adoption at Synod 2027.

— Adopted

The general secretary offers prayer.

4. That synod adopt the following instruction:

With the partnership of CRCNA agencies, institutions, and ethnic ministry networks, classes are encouraged to continue developing their own connections to international churches (based on framework C described in section VIII of the Global Vision Team report) and using the vision developed in this report. Classes are encouraged to periodically share challenges and opportunities related to this effort with the Office of General Secretary.

— Adopted

5. That synod affirm the importance of this global vision so that the financial and human resources needed for the continued work of denominational staff, leaders, and volunteers in this effort will be prioritized.

— Adopted

6. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to communicate this global vision to the classes and congregations of the CRCNA and to the international partners who participated in the research of this report, on its behalf.

— Adopted

7. That synod thank the members of the Global Vision Team for their thoughtful and prayerful work in developing a global vision for the CRC.

—*Adopted*

8. That synod take note of the COD's communication regarding the Report of the Team on Alliance of Reformed Churches Matters.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 41

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services and Structure II, Rev. Cory Nederveld reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 21: First Order of Business for Synod 2024

A. Materials

Overture 21, p. 466

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 21.

Ground: We have an advisory committee that is already working on the work of Synod 2023 reports 8D and 8E.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 42

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Christopher deWinter reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Materials

1. Calvin Theological Seminary report, pp. 223-37
2. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement

B. Privilege of the floor

Dave Morren, chair, and Julius Medenblik, president

C. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of the report from Calvin Theological Seminary with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of “preparing individuals for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 223).
2. That synod take note of the “Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty” from the Calvin Theological Seminary report (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 226) serving as a good faith response to the deferred instruction of the 2023 Advisory Committee 8E report (majority), C, 11.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 continues in Article 45.)

ARTICLE 43

Advisory Committee 7, Financial and Administrative Matters, Rev. Jonathan Westra reporting, presents the following:

I. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

A. Materials

1. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., report pp. 254-56
2. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., Supplement

B. Privilege of the floor

Layla Kuhl, director of the CRC Loan Fund; Brian Van Doeselaar, interim director, or any members of the board of directors of the CRC Loan Fund

C. Recommendation

That synod receive the report of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund as information.

—*Adopted*

II. Pensions and Insurance

A. Materials

Pensions and Insurance report, pp. 260-64

B. Privilege of the floor

Members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and the U.S. Pension Trustees

C. Recommendations

1. That synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2024 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 synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of an ordained pastor's distributions from their CRC 403(b)(9) Retirement Income Plan in 2024 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1), but only to the extent that those funds are used to rent or provide a home.

—*Adopted*

III. Historical Committee

A. Materials

Historical Committee report, pp. 323-31

B. Privilege of the floor

Janet Sheeres, chair, and James A. De Jong, secretary

C. Recommendations

1. That synod also grant privilege of the floor to Jul Medenblik.

—*Granted*

2. That synod take note of the activities on which the committee has embarked and encourage leaders and churches to offer the committee suggestions and information related to them.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod recognize with appreciation the service of retiring member James A. De Jong, who has served as secretary for his two terms on the committee, and of curator William Katerberg and the Heritage Hall staff and volunteers.

—*Adopted*

Joel Sheeres (Columbia) offers a prayer for the work of the Historical Committee and for James A. De Jong and William Katerburg.

IV. Response to Overtures 3 and 4—Ministers' Pension

A. Materials: Overtures 3-4, pp. 420-25

B. Recommendations

1. That synod affirm the following values that have shaped and guided our current pension plans: (1) to enable ministers to serve in Canada and the United States while maintaining consistent retirement benefits, (2) to mitigate the impact of serving a smaller congregation, (3) to honor the covenant of the denomination to care for pastors with long-term disability and life insurance.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod, rather than changing the average salary calculation or terminating the Ministers' Pension Plan, recognize some of the risks and concerns expressed in Overtures 3-4 and instruct the pension trustees to explore a broader retirement benefit that may include a blend of defined-contribution plans along with the defined-benefit plans.

—*Adopted*

The following motion is presented from the floor:

That, while recognizing that in recent years the Ministers' Pension Plan trustees have made a priority of low increases to church assessments while also increasing the fund balances of the U.S. and Canada Pension Funds, synod urge the trustees to make it a priority to work toward increasing the accrual of benefits for ministers of the Word such as restoring the 1.46 percent multiplier in the pension calculation and looking to introduce indexing for retirees' pension benefits.

Grounds:

- a. Since the recommendation of Synod 2008, the inflation-adjusted pension assessment for churches in the U.S. has been reduced by 17 percent and for churches in Canada by 38.5 percent.
- b. The current transfer ratio for the Canadian Pension Plan is in significant excess at 119.5 percent, while the transfer ratio for the U.S. plan is approximately 92 percent.

- c. Since 2010, the accrual of pension benefits for ministers of the Word has been effectively reduced by 11 percent per year of service with the reduction of the multiplier from 1.46 percent to 1.3 percent.

—*Defeated*

3. That synod instruct the pension plan trustees to consult with a group of U.S. and Canadian pastors, including bivocational and recently ordained (10 years or less) pastors, for feedback and recommendations regarding Recommendation 2 above.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod instruct the pension boards, along with the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary, to educate pastors and churches about (1) the current defined pension plan and (2) the fact that defined-contribution plans are currently available to them in the form of the Envoy Financial 403(b)9 in the U.S. and the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) in Canada.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod declare the above recommendations to be its response to Overtures 3-4.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 82.)

Matthew Hochalter (Holland) offers prayer.

ARTICLE 44

Synod enters into executive session. During the executive session, Advisory Committee 3, Church Order and Related Matters, Rev. Michael Borgert reporting, presented the report of the committee.

I. Response to Appeal 2: Covenant CRC and Granum CRC and Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan

The following actions are adopted for the public record:

A. Preamble

At the March 8, 2024, meeting of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan a motion was made that all delegates would be required to (re)sign the Covenant for Officebearers before the meeting could proceed. This would be an exception to the normal procedure. The motion was defeated. Granum CRC and Covenant CRC have appealed the decision of the classis to Synod 2024.

As an advisory committee, we are concerned about the state of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan as described in the appeal. We acknowledge the pain experienced by the appellant councils and their respective congregations, and we would hope that all parties involved would take the initiative to reestablish communication and work toward healthier relationships within the classis.

B. Decision

That synod not sustain the appeal of Granum (Alta.) CRC and Covenant CRC, Calgary, Alberta, regarding the decision of Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan on March 8, 2024.

Grounds:

1. The classis followed the rules of procedure and the normal practice of classis, which is the basis of the appeal.
2. The appeal requests action that is beyond the scope of an appeal of a decision of classis, thus not meeting the commonly accepted definition of an appeal.
3. Overtures 17, 18, 19, 30, 31, 34, and deferred Overtures 51, 55, 62, and 66 (2023) dealing with unseating delegates to assemblies for noncompliance with the Covenant for Officebearers will be dealt with at Synod 2024.

— *Adopted*

II. Response to Appeal 3: Trinity CRC and Classis Muskegon

The following actions are adopted for the public record:

A. Preamble

At the meeting of Classis Muskegon on February 22, 2024, Trinity CRC of Fremont challenged the seating of delegates from Bethany CRC of Muskegon on the grounds that the delegates violated the Covenant for Officebearers by affirming and teaching the validity of same-sex relationships. Classis Muskegon put the matter of seating the delegates from Bethany to a vote of the classis, and the classis voted to seat the delegates from Bethany CRC.

On March 15, 2024, Trinity CRC appealed to Synod 2024 the decision of Classis Muskegon to seat the delegates from Bethany CRC. They argued that the decision of Classis Muskegon to seat the delegates from Bethany CRC violated the decisions of Synods 2022 and 2023. The interim committee of Classis Muskegon responded that, in light of Bethany CRC's proposed communication to synod, the interim committee had assigned three church visitors to go to Bethany CRC "to discuss matters related to the decisions of Synods 2022 and 2023 and then report to the fall meeting of Classis Muskegon." They stated that they are still in the process of determining how they will bring into alignment churches who are out of alignment with synodical decisions.

B. Decision

That synod not sustain the appeal of Trinity CRC, Fremont, Michigan, regarding the decision of Classis Muskegon on February 22, 2024.

Grounds:

1. Classis Muskegon properly followed the procedure that was in place at the time of the classis meeting, especially given the late introduction of the evidence to the classis meeting.
2. Classis Muskegon has continued to follow proper procedure with regard to the matters under review. Classis Muskegon has made and has continued to implement substantive changes by reinvigorating the practice of church visiting in response to the synodical direction that classes guide councils and congregations into compliance, in particular by engaging in ongoing conversations with Bethany CRC, Muskegon, Michigan.
3. The concern of Trinity CRC about the seating of delegates who are in violation of the Covenant for Officebearers is being dealt with at Synod 2024 by its response to Overtures 17, 18, 19, 30, 31, 34, and deferred Overtures 51, 55, 62, and 66 (2023).

— *Adopted*

The following negative votes were recorded: Herb Scheur (Northcentral Iowa), Chad Werkhoven (Classis Minnkota), Cory Nederveld (Georgetown), Josh Dykstra (Illiana).

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 66.)

ARTICLE 45

Synod returns to open session.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 42.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Christopher deWinter reporting, presents the following:

I. Candidacy Committee

A. Materials

1. Candidacy Committee report, pp. 299-315
2. Candidacy Committee Supplement

B. Privilege of the floor

Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy, and an additional member of the Candidacy Committee if one is present

C. Recommendations

1. That synod commend to the churches the report of the Candidacy Committee highlighting the importance of leadership development as an aspect of sustaining membership growth (see *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 302-4).

Ground: Synod 2023 directed the Office of General Secretary to develop “a comprehensive unified strategy and plan to arrest and reverse the trend of decline and bring about a positive trend of membership growth to our denomination” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 976).

— *Adopted*

2. That synod encourage councils and Classis Ministry Leadership Teams of all classes to identify potential leaders; and, in consultation with the Candidacy Committee, to develop and strengthen the current and alternate pathways for leadership development and further training and formation.

Grounds:

- a. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Luke 10:2).
- b. The Leadership Landscape of the CRCNA survey results discussed in section III of the report demonstrate the need for this work.
- c. There are diverse ways in which seminary training and other ministerial experiences contribute to ministry development within local and classical contexts.
- d. Strategic conversations about leadership development are a necessary component of Synod 2023’s directives to work toward developing “a comprehensive unified strategy and plan to arrest and reverse the trend of decline and bring about a positive trend of membership growth to our denomination” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 976).

— *Adopted*

3. That synod instruct the Candidacy Committee to explore the development of more consistent approaches to contextual individualized learning plans for commissioned pastors and to explore the development and prioritization of pathways that provide a helpful bridge between commissioned pastor learning plans and the theological education required for candidacy as a minister of the Word.

Grounds:

- a. The increasing use of Article 23 commissioned pastors to serve local contexts.
- b. The increasing use of Article 24 as a bridge ordination process necessitates a shared standard for theological education.
- c. The Christian Reformed Church has always placed a high priority on theological education for clergy. A shared learning plan would create stackable opportunities for persons who desire to move toward ordination as a minister of the Word.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod propose to Synod 2025 the following additions to Church Order Article 24 and its Supplement for adoption:

Proposed Article 24-e

A former commissioned pastor who was released from office must receive approval of the classis by which such action was taken in order to be reexamined for commissioned-pastor ordination by the classis of the calling church.

Grounds:

- a. The Church Order and the Commissioned Pastor Handbook currently present no clear pathway for the reordination of a commissioned pastor who was released from office (for reasons other than to accept another call).
- b. This process parallels the process outlined in Church Order Article 14-e.
- c. This proposal is made in response to the requests of classis leadership teams and individuals going through such situations.

Proposed Supplement, Article 24-e

In the following cases, the former classis shall also conduct an interview that examines the circumstances surrounding the release and the renewed desire to serve in ministry:

- if the commissioned pastor was released to enter a nonministerial vocation or to serve in ministry outside the denomination
- if a substantial amount of time has passed since the individual served as a commissioned pastor
- if the former classis deems further conversation with the individual helpful or necessary to their discernment regarding approval
- if there are reasons for release other than the pursuit of another call

Upon approval of the former classis, followed by approval of the position with synodical deputy concurrence, the individual shall complete any additional candidacy requirements not in place when last ordained; then, after a successful examination in the classis of the calling church, the individual may be reordained.

Note: Synodical deputy approval is not stipulated in the proposed reentry process for commissioned pastors because the synodical deputies are tasked only to weigh in on the appropriateness of the job description for commissioned pastor, not to assess the individual's qualifications for ministry, which are evaluated at a classis level only.

Grounds:

- a. This follows the structure of Article 14-e and its Supplement.
- b. This allows for further clarity and stipulations for implementation.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod propose to Synod 2025 that the current Church Order Article 24-e become 24-f.

Ground: Keeping the article about retirement and emeritus status at the end is chronologically appropriate.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod declare those persons listed in Candidacy Committee Supplement, section I, A as candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Their names are as follows: Jeremiah Basuric, William Brouwers, Melissa Burmaster, Robert Golding, Caleb Harper, Keith Hoekstra, Josiah Huisman, Austin Kammeraad, David Kerkstra, Yohan Lee, Young Geol (Jon) Lee, Daniel Le Forestier, Patrick Lin, Michelle Oh, Jeremiah Mitchell, Kevin Moxon, Charles Mutinga, Jonathan Sturru, Matthew Timms, Daniel Unterkofler, Nick Vander Ploeg, Lorinda Vanderwerp, Micah VanDyken, Sarah VerMerris, and Yanyan (Ruth) Xing.

— Adopted

7. That synod approve the extensions of candidacy as recommended in Candidacy Committee Supplement section I, B. Their names are as follows: Rebecca Bokma, Yoon Chul Choi, Carol Hulin, Jake (Minho) Jeong, Kennedy Muli Kailiti, Sung Su Lee, Matthew Mulder, Erik Pluemer, and Micah Ringelberg.

Note: Erik Pluemer's name was inadvertently omitted in the Candidacy Committee Supplement. The advisory committee was made aware of that and added this name to the list for approval.

— Adopted

8. That synod approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of need for those persons listed in section II for affiliation under Church Order Article 8. Their names are as follows: Jun (Mark) Park, Lloyd Hong, Jose Pinero, and Michael Johnson.

— Adopted

ARTICLE 46

The morning session recesses at 11:44 a.m. Cindy Vander Kodde (Grand Rapids East) leads in closing prayer.

MONDAY AFTERNOON, June 17, 2024

Sixth Session

ARTICLE 47

The worship team—Katie Ritsema Roelofs (piano), Matthew Burns (cajon), Mark Mohrlang (guitar), Rob Braun (guitar), and Jeroen Oosterom (bass)—leads delegates in singing “God with Us” and “Great Are You, Lord.”

Greetings are exchanged in English, Spanish, and Korean. Carol Bremer-Bennett (World Renew) and Jamie McIntosh (World Renew) serve as liturgists, leading delegates in a responsive prayer based on Psalm 136. The assembly responds by singing “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” Multiple staff members offer the blessing from various places around the room.

ARTICLE 48

A delegate presents the following motion:

That synod instruct the office of Pensions and Insurance to provide Synod 2026 and the churches with a more detailed (understandable to churches and ministers) summary of the actuarial reports for the U.S. and Canadian pension plans, and to do this every three years as the actuarial reports are completed.

Ground:

This matter has to do with education and communication for the ministers and churches. This will help them become more knowledgeable about the health and state of the pension plans.

— *Adopted*

ARTICLE 49

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 45.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Christopher deWinter reporting, presents the following:

Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Report (sections IV, C, 4), pp. 44-45

B. Privilege of the Floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed

C. Recommendation

That synod approve Jack Beeksma (Region 1) and Adam Ramirez (Region 5 at-large) as board members to the Calvin University Board of Trustees, previously approved by the COD as interim members, each to a first term ending June 30, 2026, with eligibility for a second three-year term (biographical sketches are presented in the *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 44-45).

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 continues in Article 68.)

ARTICLE 50

Advisory Committee 8, Discipline Matters, Rev. Lora Copley reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 74 (*Deferred from 2020*): Adopt an Additional Supplement to Church Order Articles 82-84

A. Materials

Overture 74 (*deferred from 2020*), pp. 403-7

B. Recommendation

That Synod not accede to Overture 74.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2018 dealt with a similar matter, using these grounds:
“Church Order Article 30-a defines a process for making appeals ‘to the assembly next in order’” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 516). The overture is asking for a Supplement addition that is contrary to Church Order Article 30-a.
2. “Councils and classes are already free to communicate matters of common concern with one another” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 516).

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Mark Vande Zande (Zeeland), Dan De Graff (Lake Superior), and Josh Christoffels (Illiana).

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 continues in Article 76.)

ARTICLE 51

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 39.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services and Structure I, Rev. Joseph Vanden Akker reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 1: Amend the Council of Delegates Governance Handbook to Clarify Their Role in the Nomination Process

A. Materials

Overture 1, pp. 413-18

B. Recommendations

1. That synod not accede to the request of Overture 1 to designate the role of the COD as “administrative and advisory only” in the nomination process.

Ground: The COD has been given the responsibility by synod to apply the standards for COD membership. The current process is appropriate.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod decline the request to instruct the COD to apologize to the nominee for its interpretation and application of the guidelines.

Ground: While we acknowledge the hurt that has occurred in this situation, synod has not been asked to litigate the matter, which would be necessary to determine if any apology is in order.

—*Adopted*

3. That this be synod’s response to Overture 1.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 2: Grant Permission for Consejo Latino to Report on Its Work and Share Resources at Synod

A. Materials

Overture 2, pp. 418-20

B. Recommendations

1. That synod recognize the good work done by Consejo Latino and commend their ministry to the churches.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod encourage Resonate Global Mission to work with Consejo Latino with regard to reporting to synod in 2025.

Grounds:

a. This will offer Consejo Latino encouragement and provide an avenue for accountability.

b. Consejo Latino has existing ties to Resonate Global Mission.

— *Adopted*

3. That this be synod's response to Overture 2.

— *Adopted*

III. Ministerial and commissioned pastor retirements

A. Ministers of the Word

Synod has received notice of the following ministerial retirements:

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Effective Date</i>
Bruce Adema	Quinte	January 29, 2024
James Boer	Grand Rapids South	March 10, 2024
Robert Boersma	Grand Rapids South	January 19, 2024
Russell Boersma	Northcentral Iowa	January 1, 2024
Steven Boersma	Heartland	December 31, 2023
James Busscher	Illiana	August 16, 2023
Donald Cowart	Central California	May 31, 2024
Larry Doornbos	Holland	February 11, 2024
Willem du Plessis	Toronto	August 30, 2023
John Dykhuis	Red Mesa	September 30, 2023
Maged Fayez	Greater Los Angeles	March 1, 2024
Edward Jager	Huron	August 31, 2023
Neil Jasperse	Grand Rapids North	September 30, 2023
Stanley Jim	Red Mesa	September 1, 2023
John Bokjin Kim	Hanmi	September 12, 2023
Stanley Kruis	Pacific Northwest	June 30, 2023
Heung Rok (James) Lee	Greater Los Angeles	May 7, 2024
Won Chol Ma	Greater Los Angeles	May 7, 2024
Henry Nanninga	Eastern Canada	September 3, 2023
Darren Roorda	Niagara	October 25, 2023
Steven Rusticus	Holland	October 5, 2023
Paula Seales	Grand Rapids East	March 1, 2024

Lambert Sikkema	Central California	December 1, 2023
Stephen Tamming	Huron	September 1, 2023
Andrew Turkstra	B.C. North-West	November 29, 2023
Dirk van der Vorst	Rocky Mountain	September 11, 2023
John Van Sloten	Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	March 1, 2024
Peter VanderBeek	B.C. North-West	June 24, 2023
Andrew Vander Leek	B.C. South-East	July 15, 2023
Harry Zantingh	Alberta North	June 30, 2023

B. Commissioned pastors

Synod has received notice of the following commissioned pastor retirements under Church Order Article 24 (emeritus status noted).

<i>Name</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Effective Date</i>
Robert Grussing, emeritus	Grand Rapids South	September 1, 2023
Michael Gulotta, emeritus	Columbia	November 30, 2023
Liz Tolkamp, emerita	B.C. South-East	October 17, 2023
Norman Viss, emeritus	Hackensack	November 5, 2023
Clay Warren	Pacific Northwest	May 31, 2023
Robert Zoerman, emeritus	Thornapple Valley	February 1, 2024

C. Recommendations

1. That synod recognize with gratitude the faithful gospel ministry of the 30 ministers of the Word listed above.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod recognize with gratitude the faithful ministry of the six commissioned pastors listed above.

—*Adopted*

Michael Bentley (Central Plains) offers prayer.

IV. Work of the synodical deputies

A. Ministers from other denominations, Church Order Article 8

1. Synodical deputies S. Muilenburg (Minnkota), C. Hoekstra (Iakota), and R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Rev. Jordan Helming**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on March 9, 2024, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is First Christian Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa.

2. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), P. Kornilov (Hackensack), and J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Rev. Lloyd Hong**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommen-

dation of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on March 21, 2024, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Deep-Rooted Tree of Life Christian Reformed Church of Englewood, New Jersey.

3. Synodical deputies P. Kornilov (Hackensack), J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Rev. Michael Johnson**, 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 16, 2024, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Cedar Hill Christian Reformed Church of Wyckoff, New Jersey.

4. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), T. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and L. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Rev. Hyon Joong Lim**, 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 March 2, 2024, 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.

5. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), P. Kornilov (Hackensack), and J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Rev. Jun (Mark) Park**, 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 March 21, 2024, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Love Global Vision Christian Reformed Church of Clifton, New Jersey.

6. Synodical deputies P. Vander Klay (Central California), E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), and J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Rev. Jose Pinero**, 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 March 14, 2024, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Iglesia Cristiana El Sembrador CRC of Fontana, California.

7. Synodical deputies J. Van Schepen (Columbia), B. Lanting (North Cascades), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of **Rev. D’Vante Rolle**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having received the favorable recommendation

of the Candidacy Committee, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on October 23, 2023, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is Kelsey Creek Christian Reformed Church of Bellevue, Washington.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

B. Classical examination of candidates, Church Order Article 10

1. Synodical deputies A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), and D. Swinney (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session October 13, 2023, to admit candidate **Tomas Axeland** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

2. Synodical deputies W. Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), P. Westra (Heartland), and C. Hoekstra (Iakota), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Minnkota, in session September 14, 2023, to admit candidate **Joshua Carpenter** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

3. Synodical deputies M. Bouma (B.C. North-West), D. Recker (North Cascades), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session October 5, 2023, to admit candidate **Bradley Diekema** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

4. Synodical deputies M. Bouma (B.C. North-West), D. Recker (North Cascades), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session October 5, 2023, to admit candidate **Jeremy Engbers** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

5. Synodical deputies D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and W. Brouwer (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 8, 2024, to admit candidate **Cathy Ferchau** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

6. Synodical deputies B. Hofman (Heartland), C. Hoekstra (Iakota), R. 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 September 19, 2023, to admit

candidate **Matthew Guichelaar** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

7. Synodical deputies E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), and D. Yi (Ko-Am), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session March 5, 2024, to admit candidate **Dylan Harper** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

8. Synodical deputies M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and B. Lanting (North Cascades), 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 17, 2023, to admit candidate **Jonathan Hwang** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

9. Synodical deputies P. Westra (Heartland), R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), and C. Hoekstra (Iakota), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Superior, in session October 23, 2023, to admit candidate **Joseph Hwang** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

10. Synodical deputies J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session October 3, 2023, to admit candidate **Eunice Kim** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

11. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), P. Sausser (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 August 10, 2023, to admit candidate **Kevin Kornelis** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

12. Synodical deputies S. Couperus (Huron), D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton), and R. Grift (Toronto), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Ontario Southwest, in session October 10, 2023, to admit candidate **William Jones** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

13. Synodical deputies S. Cooper (Toronto), S. Couperus (Huron), and J. Ryzebol (Niagara), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Ontario Southwest, in session February 3, 2024, to admit candidate **Daniel Meyers** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

14. Synodical deputies R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), B. Hofman (Heartland), and R. Sparks (Minnkota), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central Plains, in session February 24, 2024, to admit candidate **Brandon Mick** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
15. Synodical deputies R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), C. Hoekstra (Iakota), and J. Hollendoner (Illiana), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session March 6, 2024, to admit candidate **Robert Moore III** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
16. Synodical deputies C. Walters (Georgetown), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and L. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids South, in session February 1, 2024, to admit candidate **Anastaze Nzabonimpa** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
17. Synodical deputies P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest), J. Tuininga (Quinte), and M. Bootsma (Hamilton), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Huron, in session October 16, 2023, to admit candidate **Cameron Oegema** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
18. Synodical deputies P. Van Dyken (Hackensack), G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), and R. Sparks (Minnkota), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session November 10, 2023, to admit candidate **Blake Phillips** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
19. Synodical deputies P. Vander Klay (Central California), M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), and D. Recker (North Cascades), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Columbia, in session February 24, 2024, to admit candidate **Ryan Poelman** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
20. Synodical deputies D. Recker (North Cascades), D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), and N. de Koning (Alberta North), 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 17, 2023, to admit candidate **Jenn Richards** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

21. Synodical deputies D. Roeda (Chicago South), P. Westra (Heartland), W. Sytsma (Illiana), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session September 26, 2023, to admit candidate **Kurtis Ritsema** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
22. Synodical deputies L. Van Dyke (Muskegon), J. Scripps (Georgetown), and S. Terpstra (Zeeland), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Holland, in session October 5, 2023, to admit candidate **Benjamin Snoek** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
23. Synodical deputies D. Roeda (Chicago South), P. Westra (Heartland), and J. Hollendoner (Illiana), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session February 17, 2024, to admit candidate **Evan Tinklenberg** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
24. Synodical deputies J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session October 3, 2023, to admit candidate **Zachary Toth** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
25. Synodical deputies S. Couperus (Huron), J. Klingenberg (Niagara), and R. Grift (Toronto), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Quinte, in session September 26, 2023, to admit candidate **John VanderWindt** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
26. Synodical deputies S. Couperus (Huron), R. Grift (Toronto), and M. Bootsma (Hamilton), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Niagara, in session February 28, 2024, to admit candidate **Jolene Veenstra** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
27. Synodical deputies W. Sytsma (Illiana), M. Pluimer (Wisconsin), and J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session July 25, 2023, to admit candidate **Peter Vos** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
28. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), L. Van Dyke (Muskegon), 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 January 16, 2024, to admit candidate **Marissa Walters** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

29. Synodical deputies P. De Vries (Thornapple Valley), D. Sarkipato (Kalamazoo), and P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session January 18, 2024, to admit candidate **Zhengfei "Stone" Wang** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

30. Synodical deputies A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), and D. Swinney (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session October 13, 2023, to admit candidate **Wendy Werkman** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

31. Synodical deputies D. Recker (North Cascades), D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), and N. de Koning (Alberta North), 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 17, 2023, to admit candidate **Josephine Wong** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

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

1. Synodical deputies D. Roeda (Chicago South), J. Hollendonner (Illiana), and M. Pluimer (Wisconsin), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Loop Church/L'arche Oak Park of Chicago, 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 20, 2023, to approve the position of executive director and community leader as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Michael Altena**.

2. Synodical deputies D. Fauble (Grandville), D. Spoelma (Holland), and T. Slachter (Zeeland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Heritage Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, 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 Kalamazoo, in session on March 12, 2024, to approve the position of missionary president, LEMA, as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Joshua Amaezechi**.

3. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), T. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and L. Mensink (Grandville), having reviewed the evidence supplied

by the council of River Terrace 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 April 2, 2024, to approve the position of manager of spiritual care with Henry Ford Jackson Hospital as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Kenneth Bieber**.

4. Synodical deputies J. Blom (Grand Rapids North), L. Mensink (Grandville), and D. Spoelma (Holland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Madison Square 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 August 15, 2023, to approve the position of assistant regional leader and chaplain as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Darrell Delaney**.

5. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), H. Admiraal (Grand Rapids North), and D. Spoelma (Holland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Vogel Center CRC of Vogel Center, 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 Northern Michigan, in session on September 26, 2023, to approve the position of workplace chaplain as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. James DeZeeuw**.

6. Synodical deputies J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Christ's Community Christian Reformed Church of Hayward, 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 October 3, 2023, to approve the position of chaplain as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Eunice Kim**.

7. Synodical deputies R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), B. Hofman (Heartland), and R. Sparks (Minnkota), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Calvary Christian Reformed Church of Pella, 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 24, 2024, to approve the position of chaplain as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Brandon Mick**.

8. Synodical deputies J. Klingenberg (Niagara), S. Couperus (Huron), and R. Grift (Toronto), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Hope Christian Reformed Church of Brantford, 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 Hamilton, in

session on May 28, 2024, to approve the position of executive director-Canada as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Albert Postma**.

9. Synodical deputies L. Van Dyke (Muskegon), J. Scripps (Georgetown), and S. Terpstra (Zeeland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Calvary 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 5, 2023, to approve the position of campus pastor as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Benjamin Snoek**.

10. Synodical deputies P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest), J. Tuininga (Quinte), and M. Bootsma (Hamilton), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Exeter Christian Reformed Church of Exeter, 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 Huron, in session on September 16, 2023, not to approve the position of director of planned gifts and investments as consistent with the ministry of the Word.

11. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), D. Fauble (Grandville), and H. De Vries (Kalamazoo), 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 May 16, 2024, to approve the position of discipleship pastor at Calvin University as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **candidate Sarah VerMerris**.

12. Synodical deputies R. Engle (Lake Erie), L. Mensink (Grandville), and D. Spoelma (Holland), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Church of the Servant 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 July 5, 2023, to approve the position of chaplain as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Jan Anthony (Tony) Westrate**.

13. Synodical deputies P. Vander Klay (Central California), D. Recker (North Cascades), and M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), having reviewed the evidence supplied by the council of Sunrise Christian Reformed Church of McMinnville, Oregon, and having been satisfied that lines of accountability have been established, according to Church Order Article 12-c, concur in the decision of Classis Columbia, in session on February 24, 2024, to approve the position of executive director of ITEM as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. William Wilton**.

14. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), D. Fauble (Grandville), and H. De Vries (Kalamazoo), 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, in session on May 16, 2024, to approve the position of superintendent of Grand Rapids Christian Schools as consistent with the ministry of the Word. This position is to be filled by **Rev. Aaron Winkle**.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

D. Loaning a minister to a congregation outside the CRCNA according to Church Order Article 13-c

1. Synodical deputies J. Blom (Grand Rapids North), L. Mensink (Grandville), and D. Spoelma (Holland), 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 June 2, 2023, to approve loaning **Rev. Eunchong (David) Shin** to serve Cornerstone Community Church of Redwood City, California.

2. Synodical deputies P. De Vries (Thornapple Valley), D. Sarkipato (Kalamazoo), and P. Sausser (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 January 18, 2024, to approve loaning **Rev. Zhengfei "Stone" Wang** to serve Chinese Christian Church of Rochester, New York.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

E. Extension of loan of a minister to another congregation outside the CRCNA according to Church Order Article 13-c

1. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), D. Spoelma (Holland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), 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 January 18, 2024, to approve the extension of loaning **Rev. Timothy Holwerda** to serve Heliopolis Community Church of Cairo, Egypt.

2. Synodical deputies D. Spoelma (Holland), P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), 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 21, 2023, to approve the extension of loaning **Rev. Anthony (Tony) Meyer** to serve Mountainview International Church of Madrid, Spain.

3. Synodical deputies J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), 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 3, 2023, to approve the extension of loaning **Rev. Zeke Nelson** to serve Antwerp International Protestant Church of Antwerp, Belgium.

4. Synodical deputies J. Blom (Grand Rapids North), L. Mensink (Grandville), and D. Spoelma (Holland), 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 August 15, 2023, to approve the extension of loaning **Rev. Dawei (David) Shao** to serve Detroit Chinese Bible Church of Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Recommendation: That 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 R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), B. Hofman (Heartland), and R. Sparks (Minnkota), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Richard Admiraal** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Central Plains, in session on February 24, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Richard Admiraal** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

2. Synodical deputies C. Van Niejenhuis (Alberta North), G. van Leeuwen (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), and W. Tuininga (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Kelli Berkner** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on February 6, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Kelli Berkner** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

3. Synodical deputies D. Fauble (Grandville), H. Admiraal (Grand Rapids North), and P. De Vries (Thornapple Valley), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Trenton Elders** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on February 29, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Trenton Elders** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

4. Synodical deputies P. Van Dyken (Hackensack), G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), and M. Stegink (Hudson), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Christopher A. Fluit** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on March 7, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Christopher A. Fluit** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

5. Synodical deputies P. Vander Klay (Central California), E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), and J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Yun Jin Kim** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on March 14, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Yun Jin Kim** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
6. Synodical deputies P. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and J. Sideco (Hudson), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Mark Knetsch** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Southeast U.S., in session on March 4, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Mark Knetsch** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
7. Synodical deputies C. Van Niejenhuis (Alberta North), G. van Leeuwen (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), and W. Tuininga (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Janina Krabbe** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on February 6, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Janina Krabbe** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
8. Synodical deputies M. Bouma (B.C. North-West), D. Recker (North Cascades), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Jongpil Oh** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on October 5, 2023, to declare that **Rev. Jongpil Oh** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
9. Synodical deputies D. Roeda (Chicago South), P. Westra (Heartland), and W. Sytsma (Illiana), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Mark Pluimer** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session on September 26, 2023, to declare that **Rev. Mark Pluimer** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
10. Synodical deputies M. Bouma (B.C. North-West), D. Recker (North Cascades), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Kyle Sanford** in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on October 5, 2023, to declare that **Rev. Kyle Sanford** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
11. Synodical deputies P. Kornilov (Hackensack), J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Rev. Mary Stegink** in accordance with

Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on May 15, 2024, to declare that **Rev. Mary Stegink** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That 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 J. Scripps (Georgetown), D. Spoelma (Holland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussion of Classis Grandville, in session on January 18, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Anthony J. Gretz** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.

2. Synodical deputies J. Blom (Grand Rapids North), L. Mensink (Grandville), and D. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 21, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Ryan Hoekstra** 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 M. Bouma (B.C. North-West), D. Recker (North Cascades), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussion of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on October 5, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Brian Turnbull** 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 J. Blom (Grand Rapids North), L. Mensink (Grandville), and D. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 21, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Ki Cheol Yu** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.

5. Synodical deputies R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), B. Hofman (Heartland), and R. Sparks (Minnkota), having heard the discussion of Classis Central Plains, in session on February 24, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. Justin Van Zee** 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 synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.
— *Adopted*

H. Release from office of one whose vocation is judged to be nonministerial under Church Order Article 14-d

Synodical deputies D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussion of Classis Alberta North, in session on March 8, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Rev. David Seok Hwan Joo** 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 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 M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and B. Lanting (North Cascades), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on May 29, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. S. Nicholas Bierma** is released from ministerial service in Kelowna Christian Reformed Church of Kelowna, British Columbia.

2. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), D. Fauble (Grandville), and R. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Muskegon, in session on April 25, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Richard Britton III** is released from ministerial service in Trinity Christian Reformed Church of Fremont, Michigan.

3. Synodical deputies D. Fauble (Grandville), R. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on September 19, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Peter Byma** is released from ministerial service in Westview Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

4. Synodical deputies S. Couperus (Huron), S. Cooper (Toronto), and M. Bootsma (Hamilton), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Niagara, in session on October 25, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Woodrow P. Dixon** is released from ministerial service in Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of St. Catharines, Ontario.

5. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and D. Dykstra (Red Mesa), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October

13, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Ruth Folkerts** is released from ministerial service in Connections Church of Highland Ranch, Colorado.

6. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), J. Scripps (Georgetown), L. Mensink (Grandville), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on May 21, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Kevin Heeres** is released from ministerial service in Oakwood Christian Reformed Church of Belding, Michigan.

7. Synodical deputies J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Central California, in session on October 3, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Marc Holland** is released from ministerial service in Sacramento City Life Christian Reformed Church of Sacramento, California.

8. Synodical deputies D. Roeda (Chicago South), J. Sideco (Hudson), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Hackensack, in session on June 4, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Petr Kornilov** is released from ministerial service in Ocean View Christian Reformed Church of Norfolk, Virginia.

9. Synodical deputies M. Stegink (Hudson), C. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Hackensack, in session on January 22, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Margaret (Meg) Jenista Kuykendall** is released from ministerial service in Washington DC Christian Reformed Church in Washington, District of Columbia.

10. Synodical deputies J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Central California, in session on October 3, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Kiseok (Daniel) Kang** is released from ministerial service in Korean United Church of Modesto, California.

11. Synodical deputies D. Fauble (Grandville), H. Admiraal (Grand Rapids North), and P. De Vries (Thornapple Valley), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on February 29, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Eric Kas** is released from ministerial service in Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

12. Synodical deputies M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), B. Lanting (North Cascades), and P. Vander Klay (Central California), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Columbia, in session on September 23, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Thomas Kok** is released from ministerial service in Family of Faith Christian Reformed Church of Kennewick, Washington.

13. Synodical deputies P. VanderKlay (Central California), J. Dykema (Arizona), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 26, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Sung Chul Lee** is released from ministerial service in All Nations Church of Bakersfield, California.

14. Synodical deputies S. Muilenberg (Minnkota), C. Hoekstra (Iakota), and R. Boersma (Northcentral Iowa), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Heartland, in session on March 9, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Garry Nyenhuis** is released from ministerial service in Living Water Community Christian Reformed Church of Orange City, Iowa.

15. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), D. Spoelma (Holland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Grandville, in session on January 18, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Cedric Parsels** is released from ministerial service in Dorr Christian Reformed Church of Dorr, Michigan.

16. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and D. Dykstra (Red Mesa), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on October 13, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. George Saylor** is released from ministerial service in Connections Church of Highland Ranch, Colorado.

17. Synodical deputies S. Cooper (Toronto), S. Couperus (Huron), and J. Ryzebol (Niagara), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Ontario Southwest, in session on February 3, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. David Van Berkel** is released from ministerial service in First Christian Reformed Church of Sarnia, Ontario.

18. Synodical deputies M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and B. Lanting (North Cascades), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on March 6, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Grant Vander Hoek** is released from

ministerial service in Mission Hills Community Church of Mission, British Columbia.

19. Synodical deputies A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Alberta North, in session on March 8, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Jeremy Vandermeer** is released from ministerial service in Centrepointhe Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta.

20. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and D. Spoelma (Holland), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Grandville, in session on May 16, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Mark Van Drunen** is released from ministerial service in Calvary Christian Reformed Church of Wyoming, Michigan.

21. Synodical deputies V. Laarman (Huron), D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton), and R. Grift (Toronto), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Ontario Southwest, in session on December 12, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Steven Vandyk** is released from ministerial service in Essex Christian Reformed Church of Essex, Ontario.

22. Synodical deputies D. Spoelma (Holland), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Georgetown, in session on February 29, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Jason Vermeulen** is released from ministerial service in Evergreen Ministries of Hudsonville, Michigan.

23. Synodical deputies D. Fauble (Grandville), R. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and E. Visser (Grand Rapids South), having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on May 21, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Derek Zeyl** is released from ministerial service in Third Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

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

1. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), D. Fauble (Grandville), and H. De Vries (Kalamazoo), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on May 16, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Aminah M. Al-Attas Bradford's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

2. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), D. Fauble (Grandville), and H. De Vries (Kalamazoo), having heard the discussion of Classis

Grand Rapids East, in session on May 16, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Nathaniel M. Al-Attas Bradford's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

3. Synodical deputies D. Fauble (Grandville), D. Spoelma (Holland), and T. Slachter (Zeeland), having heard the discussion of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on March 12, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Joshua Amaezechi's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

4. Synodical deputies M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and B. Lanting (North Cascades), having heard the discussion of Classis B.C. South-East, in session on May 29, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Jeffrey Janssen's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

5. Synodical deputies S. Couperus (Huron), D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton), and R. Grift (Toronto), having heard the discussion of Classis Ontario Southwest, in session on October 10, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Marcel Kuiper's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

6. Synodical deputies P. Sausser (Grand Rapids South), D. Spoelma (Holland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having heard the discussion of Classis Georgetown, in session on May 9, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Marc Nelesen's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

7. Synodical deputies P. Vander Klay (Central California), R. De Young (Rocky Mountain), and C. Hoekstra (Iakota), having heard the discussion of Classis Yellowstone, in session on March 1, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Brian Tebben's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

8. Synodical deputies P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest), D. Brown (Quinte), and M. Bootsma (Hamilton), having heard the discussion of Classis Huron, in session on February 21, 2024, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Kevin teBrake's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

9. Synodical deputies P. Van Dyken (Hackensack), M. Stegink (Hudson), and G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), having heard the discussion of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on October 5, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Daniel Vos's** eligibility for call is extended for one year.

Recommendation: That 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 S. Couperus (Huron), D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton), and R. Grift (Toronto), having heard the discussion of Classis Ontario Southwest, in session on October 10, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Daryl Meijer** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

2. Synodical deputies D. Swinney (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having heard the discussion of Classis Alberta North, in session on June 4, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Dayna Vreeken** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That 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. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), and D. Yi (Ko-Am), 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 March 5, 2024, that the position of bivocational lead pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Mark Allen**.

2. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), T. Leunk (Grand Rapids East), and L. Mensink (Grandville), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Ann Arbor Hope Christian Reformed Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on March 2, 2024, that the position of youth pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. David Beck**.

3. Synodical deputies J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), M. Stegink (Hudson), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Silver Spring Christian Reformed Church of Silver Spring, Maryland, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Hackensack, in session on September 19, 2023, that the position of commissioned pastor of worship and discipleship is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Bethany Besteman**.

4. Synodical deputies A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), R. Goudzwaard (Thornapple Valley), and L. Mensink (Grandville), having examined the

written materials submitted by the council of LaGrave Avenue 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 South, in session on October 12, 2023, that the position of global mission pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Chad Boorsma**.

5. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and D. Dykstra (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of New Life Christian Reformed Church/Kadosh Emmanuel of Houston, 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 13, 2023, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Ana Carranza**.

6. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and D. Dykstra (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of New Life Christian Reformed Church/Kadosh Emmanuel of Houston, 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 13, 2023, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Fernando Carranza**.

7. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and D. Dykstra (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of New Life Christian Reformed Church/Kadosh Emmanuel of Houston, 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 13, 2023, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Guadalupe Carranza**.

8. Synodical deputies D. Recker (North Cascades), D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), and N. de Koning (Alberta North), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Richmond, British Columbia, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on October 17, 2023, that the position of English minister pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Victor Chua**.

9. Synodical deputies S. Elgersma (California South), C. Hoekstra (Iakota), and R. DeYoung (Rocky Mountain), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Bozeman Christian Reformed Church of Bozeman, Montana, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Yellowstone, in session on September 15, 2023, that the position of pastor of

worship and discipleship is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Joe Espinosa**.

10. Synodical deputies D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and W. Brouwer (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 8, 2024, that the position of associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Raymond Evans**.

11. Synodical deputies P. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and J. Sideco (Hudson), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Iglesia Vida Nueva of Miami, 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 March 4, 2024, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Richard Garcia**.

12. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Vander Neut (Yellowstone), and D. Dykstra (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Hope Church/Houston Methodist Hospital of Houston, 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 13, 2023, that the position of staff chaplain is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Paul Hannemann**.

13. Synodical deputies G. van Leeuwen (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), N. de Koning (Alberta North), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of The Tapestry Christian Reformed Church of Richmond, British Columbia, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on May 28, 2024, that the position of pastor of family life is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Rennie Hernandez**.

14. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), and P. Kornilov (Hackensack), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Sunlight Community 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 September 20, 2023, that the position of pastor of deacons is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Jeff Huntley**.

15. Synodical deputies B. Bierma (Central Plains), C. Fluit (Atlantic Northeast), and P. Kornilov (Hackensack), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Bradenton Christian Reformed Church of Bradenton, 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 20, 2023, that the position of associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Dylan Kern**.

16. Synodical deputies P. VanderKlay (Central California), S. Elgersma (California South), and J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of TtoKamsa Mission Church of Los Angeles, 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 October 24, 2023, that the position of global mission pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Sang Gyoo Kim**.

17. Synodical deputies P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest), M. Bootsma (Hamilton), and J. Tuininga (Quinte), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Maitland River Community Church of Wingham, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Huron, in session on May 15, 2024, that the position of youth/associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Tyler Kirkbride**.

18. Synodical deputies D. Roeda (Chicago South), T. Douma (Northern Illinois), and M. Pluimer (Wisconsin) having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Crown Point Christian Reformed Church of Crown Point, Indiana, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Illinois, in session on September 20, 2023, that the position of associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Bryce Langley**.

19. Synodical deputies P. Van Dyken (Hackensack), G. Besteman (Southeast U.S.), and R. Sparks (Minnesota), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of East Palmyra Christian Reformed Church of Palmyra, New York, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on November 10, 2023, that the position of commissioned pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. David Lian**.

20. Synodical deputies P. VanderKlay (Central California), S. Elgersma (California South), and J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Iglesia Christiana de Camarillo of Bakersfield, 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 October 24, 2023, that the position of church planting pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Mike Nava**.

21. Synodical deputies P. VanderKlay (Central California), S. Elgersma (California South), and J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Iglesia Misionera Renacer of Los Angeles, 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 7, 2024, that the position of parish pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Sergio Paz**.

22. Synodical deputies J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), M. Stegink (Hudson), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Paterson, 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 19, 2023, that the position of lead pastor for Madison Avenue en Espanol is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Victor Piscoya**.

23. Synodical deputies P. Westra (Heartland), C. Hoekstra (Iakota), and W. Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Faith Community Christian Reformed Church of Colton, South Dakota, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Minnkota, in session on September 14, 2023, that the position of pastor of missions is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Adam Ramirez**.

24. Synodical deputies D. Spoelma (Holland), R. Engle (Lake Erie), and L. Mensink (Grandville), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Canvas Church-Sherman Street of Wyoming, 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 February 2, 2023, that the position of commissioned pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Carrie Rodgers**.

25. Synodical deputies M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and B. Lanting (North Cascades), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church of Surrey, 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 March 6, 2024, that the position of commissioned

pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Justin Roukema**.

26. Synodical deputies P. Van Dyken (Hackensack), J. Vande Werken (Atlantic Northeast), and J. Sideco (Hudson), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Iglesia Vida Nueva of Miami, 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 March 4, 2024, that the position of church planter is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Andres D. Sancho**.

27. Synodical deputies C. Walters (Georgetown), A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), and L. Mensink (Grandville), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of inSpirit 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 South, in session on February 1, 2024, that the position of regional mission leader - Great Lakes with Resonate Global Mission is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mrs. Amy Schenkel**.

28. Synodical deputies S. Elgersma (California South), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), 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 3, 2023, that the position of associate pastor of children and youth is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. David Shen**.

29. Synodical deputies D. Recker (North Cascades), D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), and N. de Koning (Alberta North), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Richmond, British Columbia, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on October 17, 2023, that the position of Mandarin minister pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Luke Shi**.

30. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), L. Mensink (Grandville), and D. Spoelma (Holland), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Rusk Christian Reformed Church of Allendale, Michigan, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Zeeland, in session on February 1, 2024, that the position of chaplain with ReFrame Media is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Amie Spriensma**.

31. Synodical deputies P. Westra (Heartland), W. Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), and H. Newhouse (Lake Superior), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Faith Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Iakota, in session on September 19, 2023, that the position of church planting missionary is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. Mark Tiemersma**.

32. Synodical deputies J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), D. Yi (Ko-Am), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Ripon, 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 3, 2023, that the position of worship pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Mr. João Pedro (J. P.) Macimiano Trabbold**.

33. Synodical deputies S. Cooper (Toronto), S. Couperus (Huron), and J. Ryzebol (Niagara), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of Grace Christian Reformed Church of Chatham, Ontario, and having compared them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur with the decision of Classis Ontario Southwest, in session on February 3, 2024, that the position of director of faith formation and worship is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors. The position is to be filled by **Ms. Stephanie Van Rooyen**.

34. Synodical deputies M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), A. Beunk (B.C. Northwest), and W. Brouwer (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 19, 2023, that the position of associate pastor is in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

— *Adopted*

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

1. Synodical deputies E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), J. Greydanus (Red Mesa), and D. Yi (Ko-Am), having examined the request submitted by the council of Napa Valley Community Church of Napa, California, concur with the decision of Classis Central California, in session on March 5, 2024, that **Mr. David Buurma** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.

2. Synodical deputies J. Scripps (Georgetown), T. Slachter (Zeeland), and A. Gelder (Grand Rapids East), having examined the request submitted by

the council of Covenant Life Church of Grand Haven, Michigan, concur with the decision of Classis Muskegon, in session on September 28, 2023, that **Mr. Mike Gafa** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its copastor.

3. Synodical deputies W. Sytsma (Illiana), M. Pluimer (Wisconsin), and J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois), having examined the request submitted by the council of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Burbank, Illinois, concur with the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session on July 25, 2023, that **Mr. Israel Ledee** (commissioned pastor) may serve the congregation as its solo pastor.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

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

1. Synodical deputies P. Westra (Heartland), W. Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), and H. Newhouse (Lake Superior), having examined the request submitted by the council of Bridge of Hope Ministries of Sioux Center, Iowa, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Iakota, in session on September 19, 2023, to call **Ms. Gail Ashmore** to a specified term.

2. Synodical deputies P. Westra (Heartland), W. Davelaar (Northcentral Iowa), and H. Newhouse (Lake Superior), having examined the request submitted by the council of Bridge of Hope Ministries of Sioux Center, Iowa, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Iakota, in session on September 19, 2023, to call **Mr. Sam Ashmore** to a specified term.

3. Synodical deputies P. Vander Klay (Central California), D. Recker (North Cascades), and M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), having examined the request submitted by the council of New Hope Christian Reformed Church of Spokane, Washington, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Columbia, in session on February 24, 2024, to call **Mr. Michael Brummel** to a specified term.

4. Synodical deputies M. Borst (Pacific Northwest), B. Lanting (North Cascades), and P. Vander Klay (Central California), having examined the request submitted by the council of Quincy Christian Reformed Church of Quincy, Washington, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Columbia, in session on September 23, 2023, to call **Mr. Benjamin Buckley** to a specified term.

5. Synodical deputies B. Lanting (North Cascades), A. Beunk (B.C. North-West), and W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East), having examined the request submitted by the council of Tacoma Christian Reformed Community

Church of Tacoma, Washington, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on March 7, 2024, to call **Mr. Frank Quijada** to a specified term.

6. Synodical deputies W. Sytsma (Illiana), M. Pluimer (Wisconsin), and J. Huizenga (Northern Illinois), having examined the request submitted by the council of Palos Heights Christian Reformed Church of Palos Heights, Illinois, the terms proposed, and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan, concur with the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session on July 25, 2023, to call **Mr. Micah Van Dyken** to a specified term.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

O. 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:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Effective Date</i>	<i>Reason</i>
Chris Avery	California South	September 28, 2023	Honorably released
Jason Botbyl	Grand Rapids East	May 18, 2023	Honorably released
Brian Boucek	Georgetown	February 29, 2024	Honorably released
Fred De Young	Kalamazoo	March 12, 2024	Honorably released
Douglas Kennedy	Rocky Mountain	October 13, 2023	Honorably released
Sean Taylor	North Cascades	October 19, 2023	Dismissed

Recommendation: That synod take note that these commissioned pastors have concluded service in the classes indicated.

—*Adopted*

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

Synodical deputies P. VanderKlay (Central California), J. Dykema (Arizona), and E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Ye-Eun Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles, California, and the discussion of Classis Ko-Am, in session on September 26, 2023, concur in the decision of classis to approve, in accordance with Church Order Articles 82 and 83, the deposition of **Rev. In Ho Jang** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

Joseph Vanden Akker (Grandville) offers prayer.

V. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section III, D, 5; including Appendix D), pp. 36, 170-75

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed

C. Recommendation

That synod not pursue establishing a conflict of interest policy for delegates to synod (cf. *Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 931).

Grounds:

- a. The potential conflicts of interest for synodical delegates and COD delegates are considerably different, so a simple adaptation of the COD Conflict of Interest Policy is not possible.
- b. The Code of Conduct already includes the following commitment under Pastoral Leadership: "I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest."
- c. The Draft Conflict of Interest Policy for Delegates to Synod contains language regarding loyalty to the institution or organization that is more appropriate to the corporate world than to the church of Jesus Christ.
- d. The COD recommended that synod reassess the necessity for this policy.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 continues in Article 81.)

ARTICLE 52

Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte) offers prayer.

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services and Structure II, Rev. Cory Nederveld reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Communication 5

A. Materials

Communication 5, pp. 551-52

B. Recommendation

That synod instruct Classis Holland to meet with the council of Church of the Savior CRC of South Bend, Indiana, to review their issue in the spirit of love and fellowship.

Ground: The matter was never resolved in the minor assembly (Church Order Article 28-b).

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Communications 7 and 9

A. Materials

1. Communication 7, pp. 553-62
2. Communication 9, pp. 565-72

B. Recommendation

That synod receive Communications 7 and 9 for information.

Grounds:

- a. We see that much good thought has gone into both of these communications.
- b. Synods 2022 and 2023 have made their decisions.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Communication 11

A. Materials

Communication 11, pp. 576-83

B. Recommendation

That synod recognize Communication 11, celebrating the author's courage in its creation and the thoughtfulness in its expression. We appreciate the desire for unity within the body of Christ, and we share in its lament amid current challenges within the CRCNA.

—*Adopted*

The vice president assumes the chair.

IV. Response to Appeal 1: Immanuel CRC and Classis Chicago South

A. Summary

Hessel Park CRC of Champaign, Illinois, submitted three documents for the March 2, 2024, meeting of Classis Chicago South: a "Church in Protest" resolution, a policy on human sexuality, and an accompanying letter explaining their process of wrestling and having reached "settled" positions. The positions are summarized in their letter, which concludes, "... We are united in opposition to the decisions of Synods 2022 and 2023 with regard to human sexuality."

The documents were sent as a communication for information to the classis and were distributed in the classis agenda. No action was requested, such as asking the classical interim committee to process this for adoption by the classis. Hessel Park CRC also did not intend to send the communication on to synod from their council.

Immanuel CRC of Burbank, Illinois, requested that it would be "out of order" for this communication to go before classis on the ground that the decision to place it on the agenda conflicted "with the Word of God [and] the Church Order" (Church Order Art. 29-30). That request was denied. Immanuel is appealing the decision of Classis Chicago South.

B. Recommendation

That synod not sustain the appeal by Immanuel CRC.

Ground: The Hessel Park CRC communication was legally placed before Classis Chicago South according to the classis Rules for Procedure 9.4 (p. 17).

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 86.)

ARTICLE 53

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order and Related Matters, Rev. Michael Borgert reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Report (II, D, 3; III, B, 1; including Appendix B), pp. 30, 32, 53-57, 63-166

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed; Joel Vande Werken, chair of the Church Order Review Task Force; and Rita Klein-Geltink, reporter for the Church Order Review Task Force

C. Recommendations

1. That synod adopt the proposed changes to Church Order Articles 14, 15, and 23 and their Supplements as proposed by Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 962-66) in support of bivocational pastors and as amended below (with underline indicating additions, ~~striketrough~~ indicating deletions, and **bold text** indicating the recommended amendment).

Proposed Article 14-d

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

Proposed Article 15

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

"Proper Support" Defined

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

To "attend to" proper support does not imply that the calling church is responsible to provide all of these items of support. Rather, the calling church is responsible to ensure that the minister has a plan that addresses these items. In many ministries the local church itself accepts these responsibilities in order to facilitate full-time or part-time ministerial service. In other settings—such as church planting, various forms of chaplaincy, bivocational arrangements, multipoint ministries, and so on—the financial plan will include income and benefits provided by a variety of potential sources. The financial plan should be carefully reviewed and signed by the classical counselor when a call to ministry is made or when a pastor and church decide to change their financial arrangement.

~~Guidelines for Churches Whose Ministers Receive Salary Support from Other Employment in Conversations with Pastors about "Proper Support"~~

- ~~1. The church is responsible for a total compensation package proportionate to the time spent in ministry to the church (forty-eight hours equals full time). The compensation package shall ordinarily be based on synodically stated minimum salary, fringe benefits, and housing costs.~~
- ~~2. Since the compensation package includes a percentage allowance for health insurance, the minister is expected to secure adequate health insurance for the minister and the minister's family.~~
- ~~31. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.~~
- ~~42. The minister shall receive pension credits in the Ministers' Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church. Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured if full contribution to the Ministers' Pension Plan is made.~~
- ~~53. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified shall be mutually discerned by minister(s) and the supervising council. The support plan in the letter of call, including the financial plan, shall be specified in writing, approved by the classical counselor, and normally reviewed annually by the supervising council. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not normally exceed sixty hours per week.~~

4. The supervising council shall annually attend to nonfinancial support of ministers, including but not limited to physical, emotional, and spiritual support.

Note: Synod 2024 adopted further changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 15 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 902). Both sets of changes to Supplement, Article 15 will be reviewed by Synod 2025 for adoption before being included in the published Church Order and Its Supplements.

Proposed Article 23-d

Each church through its council shall attend to the proper support of its commissioned pastor.

Proposed Supplement, Article 23-d

“Proper Support” Defined

Proper support of a commissioned pastor is to include **as appropriate** an adequate salary, medical insurance, disability insurance, a housing provision, payment to an appropriate pension or retirement plan, a continuing education stipend, and other employment-related items.

To “attend to” proper support does not imply that the calling church is responsible to provide all of these items of support. Rather, the calling church is responsible to ensure that the commissioned pastor has a plan that addresses these items. In many ministries the local church itself accepts these responsibilities in order to facilitate full-time or part-time ministry service. In other settings—such as church planting, various forms of chaplaincy, bivocational arrangements, multipoint ministries, and so on—the financial plan will include income and benefits provided by a variety of potential sources. The calling church’s support of the financial plan should be carefully reviewed at the time classis approves the commissioned pastor’s position. This includes a call to bivocational ministry or when a pastor and church decide to change their financial arrangement.

Guidelines for Churches in Conversations with Pastors about “Proper Support”

1. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
2. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) shall be mutually discerned by the commissioned pastor(s) and the supervising council. The support plan, including the financial plan, shall be specified in writing, approved by classis along with the position description, and normally reviewed annually by the supervising council. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and non-ministerial tasks shall not normally exceed sixty hours per week.

3. The supervising council shall annually attend to nonfinancial support of commissioned pastors, including but not limited to physical, emotional, and spiritual support.

—Adopted

2. That synod adopt all of the proposed recommendations in the Church Order Review Task Force report, including the proposed changes to the Church Order and the report's Addenda A-F (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 130-66).

—Adopted

Note: The recommended changes to the Church Order as found in the Church Order Review Task Force report are as follows (with proposed additions indicated by underline and deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~):

Article 12

a. *[unchanged]*

b. A minister of the Word who (1) accepts a position endorsed by the CRC related to ~~enters into the work of~~ missions, chaplaincy, or specialized transitional ministry; or (2) is appointed directly by synod; or (3) accepts an appointment that 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 to ensure that provisions for accountability to the calling church are in place.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 12

c. A minister of the Word may also serve the church in other positions that relate ~~work which relates~~ directly to the calling of a minister. Such ministers shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, but only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, that the said work is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word, that provisions for accountability to the calling church are in place, and that the duties of the position do not conflict with the minister's commitment to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 12-e

[The following proposed Article 12-d has been moved and adapted from the previous Article 13-c.]

de. A minister of the Word may be loaned temporarily by the calling church to serve as pastor of a congregation outside the Christian Reformed Church, provided that the duties of the position do not conflict with the minister's commitment to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church. Such ministers shall also be called in the regular manner by a local church, but only with the approval of classis, the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations, including the concurring advice of the

~~synodical deputies when necessary. Although the specific duties may be regulated in cooperation with the other congregation, the supervision of doctrine and life rests with the calling church.~~

~~—Cf. Supplement, Article 12~~

Article 13

a. *[unchanged]*

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

—Cf. Supplement, Article 13-b

[Article 13-c has been moved and adapted to become the proposed Article 12-d.]

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

~~—Cf. Supplement, Article 13-c~~

Supplement, Article 12-e

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

A. To be “called in the regular manner” means that a minister of the Word, whether called to serve a congregation or to serve in a noncongregational ministry, requires the following (see Church Order Articles 4, 9-10) in addition to the fulfillment of any other synodical regulations or classical approvals:

1. Nomination by the council and election by the congregation
2. An extension of a call by the council
3. Approval of the counselor who acts on behalf of classis
4. Ordination or installation in a public worship service

The requirement for a separate installation service during a CRC worship service is optional in the case of a minister serving on loan to a congregation in another denomination.

Noncongregational positions “consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word” are those in which a minister serves beyond a local CRC congregation to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture under the authority of and as a public representative of the church, in a way that the members of the church may be gathered in and built up in Christ.

B. Positions that do not require concurrence of the synodical deputies

1. Types of ministry positions

a. Positions regulated by Articles 9-10 of the Church Order. This includes congregational positions, whether solo-pastor positions or additional staff ministry positions; or also those of pastors serving multiple CRC congregations or in multiple vocational settings.

b. Positions regulated by Article 12-b of the Church Order. These include positions that have the endorsement of a synodically authorized body, such as those of chaplains, missionaries, and specialized transition ministers endorsed or accredited by the CRC denomination; or positions whose appointees are approved by or ratified by synod itself (such as professors of theology or other CRC executive staff positions requiring ratification by synod). Classis minutes should note that the position is deemed consistent with the ministry of the Word.

c. Calls regulated by Article 8-b of the Church Order and its supplemental rules. These include ministers who participate in the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers between the CRC and the Reformed Church in America. Classis minutes should indicate the concurrence of the sending body (cf. Supplement, Art. 8, D, 7).

2. Prior to calling a minister of the Word to any noncongregational position ~~chaplaincy ministry~~, the calling church is required to ensure that the minister has secured any necessary endorsements from accrediting institutions within or outside the Christian Reformed Church, and that all synodical regulations have been followed. A Covenant of Joint Supervision shall be mutually agreed to and signed by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization (cf. Supplement, Art. 8, Section D; Supplement, Art. 13-b). ~~obtain the endorsement of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church (Acts of Synod 1973, p. 56; amended Acts of Synod 1998, p. 391).~~

C. Positions that require specific approval of the classis and concurrence of synodical deputies

1. In all other cases of noncongregational positions, ~~t~~The calling church shall secure the prior approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, for each new ministerial position, by providing classis with the following information:

- a. The description of the official position (purposes, duties, qualifications, etc.) as determined by the calling church in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.
 - b. The demonstration that the position will be consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word.
 - c. A Covenant of Joint Supervision that shall be mutually agreed to and signed by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization (cf. Supplement, Art. 13-b).~~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.~~
 - d. When any position having been declared by a classis to be “spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling” . . . becomes vacant, this position shall be reviewed by the classis and synodical deputies in light of Articles 11-14 of the Church Order before another call is issued.
 - e. When a new ministry opportunity can be met only by immediate action, the calling church (and the appropriate denominational agency) may obtain provisional approval from the classical interim committee, subject to subsequent approval by classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. The letter of call must indicate the provisional nature of this call if such approval has not yet been granted. In the event that the provisional approval is not sustained and the minister desires to continue in the position, the minister may be ~~honorably~~ released from office and may be readmitted according to the regulations of the Church Order. (Cf. Article 14-e.)
2. Ministers ~~A minister~~ whose service is requested by a congregation outside the Christian Reformed Church may be loaned temporarily to serve such a church while still retaining ministerial status in the Christian Reformed Church in keeping with the following regulations:
- a. The congregation seeking the services of the Christian Reformed minister recognizes the value of a Reformed witness and allows the minister to serve in a way consistent with the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church, ordinarily articulated through statements of faith in harmony with those of the Christian Reformed denomination. ~~is desirous of the Reformed faith and seriously contemplates affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church or some other Reformed denomination, or is already in a Reformed denomination and seeks to be strengthened in the Reformed faith.~~

~~b. The minister contemplating service in a nondenominational church acknowledges this as an opportunity to encourage such a church to affiliate with either the Christian Reformed Church or a Reformed denomination similar to the Christian Reformed Church.~~

b. The loaning of such ministerial services may be for a period of time not to exceed two years. Extension of not more than two years each may be granted if circumstances warrant, with the approval of classis and the synodical deputies.

c. These regulations also apply when pastors whose credentials are held in the CRC receive a request to serve simultaneously in an additional congregation outside the CRC.

d. If the requested service is in the Reformed Church in America, calls shall be processed in keeping with the regulations for the Orderly Exchange of Ministers (cf. Supplement, Art. 8, D).

D. In all cases, the minister shall be called in the regular manner, and the council and the counselor shall render to classis an account of all matters processed. Classis minutes should reflect the work of the counselor in accordance with Church Order Article 42-c.

E. Where it is possible and feasible, ministers of the Word should ordinarily be called by a local church in close geographic proximity to the congregation, institution, or agency being served, and the pastor's membership should normally reside with the calling church. If the ministry position congregation to be served is in close proximity to a Christian Reformed congregation of another is located in a classis other than that of the calling church, the approval of that classis shall be required, in addition to the approval of the classis of the minister's calling church, and the synodical deputies.

F. Continuation under the Christian Reformed Church Pension Plan shall require that the minister, or the congregation, institution, or agency ~~non-Christian Reformed church~~ which is being served, shall contribute to the ministers' pension fund the amount which is determined annually by the Ministers' Pension Funds committees for ministers serving in ~~noncongregational~~ extraordinary positions ~~outside of our denomination~~.

G. Supervision of a minister in noncongregational ~~specialized~~ ministry may be transferred, at the request of the minister or of the calling church, to another church. Such a tTransfer of ministerial credentials requires the regular calling process of the local church and must be approved by both councils and classes.

H. If a noncongregational ministry position is eliminated, the minister should be formally released according to the regulations of the Church Order appropriate to the situation.

Supplement, Article 13-b

A. ~~Provisions for cooperative supervision of ministers of the Word working for agencies and institutions not directly under the authority of the synod of the CRCNA are to be formulated and processed according to the regulations contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c and the provisions regarding chaplains adopted by Synod 1998 (see Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 391-92, 457-60). 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 Joint 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 Joint Supervision, as soon as they are known, shall be submitted to all parties for review and concurrence.~~

B. Situations requiring a change in status of a CRC minister in a noncongregational setting

1. 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.
2. ~~Should a the minister serving a non-CRC congregation or noncongregational ministry become subject to discipline, the supervising institution non-Christian Reformed congregation which is being served shall have the right to suspend the minister from service-serving that church, but suspension from office and deposition may be applied only by the calling church council that is part of the Christian Reformed Church. A similar communication is requested when a minister's status is altered, whether due to a change in the job description or at a time of downsizing or position elimination.~~
3. In all cases of discipline or other changes in status regarding a ministry position, the minister should be formally released from the call or issued a new call according to the appropriate provisions of the Church Order.

C. The church visitors of classis shall inquire annually into the supervision of the calling church toward said minister(s) as well as the reporting of said minister(s) to the calling church. The church visitors shall inform classis of departure from the approved provisions for supervision and reporting.

Note: The change at the end of the following subsection D has already been proposed to Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 993). (See *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 904.)

D. All pastors serving in noncongregational positions remain bound to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church as required by one's signature to the Covenant for Officebearers and as articulated in the Code of Conduct.

Proposed Article 14

- a. A minister of the Word shall not leave the call ~~the congregation~~ with which the minister is connected for another position ~~church~~ without the consent of the council which issued the call.
- b. *[unchanged]*
- c. A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, may not forsake the office. A minister may, however, be released from office to enter upon a non-ministerial vocation for such valid ~~weighty~~ reasons as shall receive the approval of the classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 14-c

Note: The change in Article 14-d has already been proposed to Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 962-63). (See *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 850.)

- d. A minister of the Word who has entered upon a vocation which classis judges to be non-ministerial and forsakes the calling of a minister of the Word shall be released from office within one year of that judgment. The concurring advice of the synodical deputies shall be obtained at the time of the judgment.
- e. A former minister of the Word who was released from office may be declared eligible for call upon approval of the classis by which such action was taken, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. The classis, in the presence of the deputies, shall conduct an interview that examines the circumstances surrounding the release and the renewed desire to serve in ministry, and shall ensure that all synodical regulations have been met. Upon acceptance of a call, the person shall be reordained.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 14-e

Proposed Article 16

A minister who for valid reasons desires a temporary leave of absence from service to the congregation must have the approval of the council, which shall continue to have supervision over the minister. A council may also, in consultation with the minister, initiate the process of granting a temporary leave of absence when it believes that the situation warrants such an arrangement. In all cases of a temporary leave of absence

the intention shall be that the minister shall return to service in that congregation.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 16

Proposed Article 17

- a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may for valid ~~weighty~~ reasons be released from active ministerial service in a position to which they have been called by a congregation, through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 17-a

b. *[unchanged]*

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

d. *[unchanged]*

Proposed Article 42-b

- b. The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of office-bearers chosen for their experience and counsel. Team composition shall include a minister of the Word and at least one other office-bearer. Their task shall be 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. Churches are ~~free~~ to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis a written report of their work.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 42-b

Proposed Supplement, Article 8, D, 7

7. Approval for extended service must be done in consultation with and with the concurrence of the sending body. (In the CRC, the sending body is the calling church council; in the RCA, it is the classis holding the pastor's membership.) The minister remains accountable to the sending body for continuation of ministerial status. In the event of termination of a call, the polity of the calling

church shall be followed, in consultation with the sending church and in accordance with synodically established procedures.

(*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 564-65)

Proposed Supplement, Article 14-b, a-b

Changes are proposed to sections a and b; sections c and d of Supplement, Article 14-b would remain unchanged.

- a. ~~Synod directed the churches and classes dealing with ministers who depart from the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) in order to seek ordination in the ministry of the Word in another church to take note of the statement made by Synod 1978 that “Synod has instructed “all our churches and classes that in all cases of resignation a proper resolution of dismissal must be adopted with the concurring advice of synodical deputies.” and to realize that this~~ This resolution statement allows for a broad degree of flexibility in responding to such situations (cf. *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 73).
- b. ~~In making such a resolution, Synod directed the churches and classes~~ should ~~to~~ take into account the manner and spirit in which a minister has acted during the time leading up to and including departure from office when determining what action to take. (Some situations may require a deposition; others may require only a simple release from office.)

Proposed Supplement, Article 14-e

Process for reentry into CRC ministry after a release from office via Article 14 or 17:

1. A former minister who was released through the provisions of Article 14-b, 14-c, or 14-d or Article 17-c or 17-d and desires readmission to CRCNA ministry should be interviewed by the classis in which the original action was taken. The interview should examine the following:
 - a. the circumstances surrounding the release
 - b. the applicant’s theological and ministerial journey since the release
 - c. the sense of call and renewed commitment to service in the CRC

The classis, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, shall then make a decision regarding whether to endorse the request to begin the process for readmission.
2. If approval is given to proceed, the classis shall notify the Candidacy Committee to guide the applicant through the completion of any requirements for ministry imposed by synod subsequent to

the original ordination. If the applicant has served in ministry outside the CRC, the Candidacy Committee should also receive and review recommendations from the church and regional body last served by the minister.

3. The Candidacy Committee shall notify the releasing classis once all requirements are complete and favorable recommendations have been received.
4. Upon completion of all requirements, the releasing classis shall declare the former minister eligible for call. A former minister shall not be nominated for a call until the releasing classis and the Candidacy Committee have approved the applicant's eligibility for call. Eligibility for call shall be for a period of two years. An individual who has not received and accepted a call within that time and who desires to continue eligibility for call, must request an extension through the classis that approved the request for eligibility for call.
5. The ordination and installation of a former minister who has been declared eligible for call shall require the approval of the calling church's classis counselor or the calling church's classis interim committee, which shall see that all synodical requirements have been met.
6. The provisions of Supplement, Article 84 related to reinstatement of ministers who have been deposed also apply to ministers who resign under discipline or to avoid discipline and later seek reordination by way of Article 14-e.

(Acts of Synod 2016, p. 866)

Proposed Supplement, Article 16

A council may initiate the process of granting a leave of absence only after seeking the advice of the church visitors, who should inform the classis of the situation when a written report is provided to the assembly (Church Order Art. 42-b). An initial leave of absence should be granted for no more than six weeks, with any extension of this time requiring additional advice of the church visitors. In no case may a leave of absence initiated by the council extend for a period of longer than twelve weeks.

Proposed Supplement, Article 17-a

A new section a is proposed; the current sections a and b would become sections b and c, respectively, and their content would remain unchanged, except as where indicated in subsection c, 2. The current *Note* at the end of Supplement, Article 17-a would be moved to section a, 4, as shown.

Provisions regulating release from ministerial service in a congregation

a. General Provisions

- 1) All Article 17 separations, even those requested by a pastor or those jointly initiated by a pastor and council, are formally a request of the calling council and shall be handled as such by the classis.
- 2) Pastors, churches, and classes are encouraged to take note of denominational resources available that provide assistance in the process of Article 17 separations, and to call upon outside resources or mediators when necessary (in addition to the involvement of classis representatives).
- 3) In all situations, councils and pastors shall utilize a formal separation agreement that identifies the publicly stated reason(s) for the separation, the effective date of the separation, the financial arrangements agreed upon by all parties, and other relevant information. This document shall be submitted to classis for its approval when the council formally requests the Article 17 separation. If the pastor and council disagree on specific matters, the areas of disagreement shall be clearly identified, and classis shall adjudicate those matters separately.
- 4) Classis minutes will concisely record the grounds for the separation—for example, family situation, conflict, continuing education, church closure, etc. Article 17 separations will be processed according to the guidelines set forth by synod and the appropriate denominational agencies. Councils and classes should take note of the regulations regarding “release from ministerial service” adopted by Synod 2024 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 859-64) and Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96) and as amended by Synod 2010 (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 915-16).
- 5) Releases from calls issued jointly between a CRC council and a congregation in another denomination should be processed in accordance with the principles established by Synod 2024 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 859-64).
- 6) If a separation does occur, it is important to recognize that there are continuing needs. The members of the congregation require continued support, opportunity to grieve, and guidance for future planning. The separated pastor and his/her family should not be forgotten as they leave the congregation and seek another call. The congregation and classis should covenant to provide continuing ministry and care for them, assisting in any way possible to encourage personal healing and further opportunities for ministry.

ba. *[unchanged]*

~~cb.~~ *[unchanged]* . . .

- 2) In conjunction with the church council, the committee shall secure interim pastoral leadership, preferably a specialized interim pastor, and set goals. (~~Thrive~~~~Pastor Church Relations~~ is able to assist with securing pastoral leadership.)

- 3) *[unchanged]* . . .

~~Note: Councils and classes should take note of the regulations regarding “release from ministerial service” adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96) and as amended by Synod 2010 (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 915-16).~~

Joel Vande Werken, chair of the Church Order Review Task Force, offers prayer.

II. Response to Overture 13: Do Not Adopt Proposed Addition of Church Order Article 23-d and Its Supplement

A. Materials

Overture 13, pp. 437-39

B. Preamble

Overture 13 raises a matter related to the report of the Study of Bivocationality Task Force that is recommended by Synod 2023 to Synod 2024 for adoption. The overture specifically asks that Synod 2024 not adopt the task force’s proposed addition of Church Order Article 23-d and its Supplement. The primary concern raised in Overture 13 is that the wording related to “proper support” is the exact same for commissioned pastors (Article 23-d) as it is for ministers of the Word (Article 15). The overture writers believe that this may result in diminishing the distinction between the offices and may place undue burdens on churches in nontraditional settings within the CRCNA.

While Advisory Committee 3 believes that it would be unwise not to adopt the proposed addition of Church Order Article 23-d and its Supplement, we recognize the potential for confusion in Article 23-d. For this reason, we recommend that synod adopt the changes to the Church Order recommended by Synod 2023, with one amendment to Article 23-d. (*Note: The amendment referred to here has already been proposed to and adopted by Synod 2024; see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 852-53.*)

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 13.

Grounds:

1. The amendment to include “as appropriate” in the proposed Supplement, Article 23-d largely addresses the concern(s) raised by Overture 13.

2. The amendment takes into consideration the vastness of potential ministries that a commissioned pastor may be called to.
3. We recognize that there are many good recommendations in the proposed Church Order Article 23-d that benefit both commissioned pastors and churches and provide helpful guidelines for establishing a strong, healthy foundation for faithful, fruitful ministry.
4. Church Order Article 23-d is not establishing a parity between the offices of commissioned pastor and minister of the Word for expectations of proper support.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 90.)

ARTICLE 54

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 40.)

Advisory Committee 6, Global Mission and Ecumenical Matters, Rev. Aaron Greydanus reporting, presents the following:

I. World Renew

A. Materials

1. World Renew report, pp. 283-95
2. World Renew Supplement

B. Privilege of the floor

Thomas Christian, president of World Renew-U.S.; Andrew Geisterfer, president of World Renew-Canada; Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S.; and Jamie McIntosh, director of World Renew-Canada

C. Recommendation

That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew and encourage the churches of the CRCNA to pray for the safety of the staff and partners who are often working in harm's way.

—Adopted

Daniel Tracy (Heartland) offers prayer.

II. ReFrame Ministries

A. Materials

ReFrame Ministries report, pp. 265-71

B. Privilege of the floor

Kurt Selles, director of ReFrame Ministries

C. Recommendation

That synod commend the work carried on by ReFrame ministries and take note of their 85th anniversary.

—Adopted

Mark Bonnes (Northern Michigan) offers prayer.

III. Resonate Global Mission

A. Materials

Resonate Global Mission report, pp. 272-76

B. Privilege of the floor

Jill Feikema, chair of the Council of Delegates Global Missions Ministries Committee; Kevin DeRaaf, director of Resonate Global Mission

C. Recommendation

That synod commend the work of Resonate Global Mission and celebrate the 33 anticipated church plants in the coming year.

—*Adopted*

Kris Vos (Southeast U.S.) offers prayer.

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 73.)

ARTICLE 55

Advisory Committee 5, Congregational Care and Justice, Rev. Anthony DeKorte reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 17: Articulate What Is Expected of Confessing Members When Agreeing with the Confessions

A. Materials

Overture 17, pp. 456-58

B. Background

Synod 1975 noted that “full agreement with the confessions is expected from all members of the church,” and Church Order Article 59 indicates that “public profession of faith includes a commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church.”

We understand that when a person makes profession of faith, they have not fully comprehended all the nuances of the creeds and confessions. Sanctification is a continual process of growth.

“Full agreement” and “commitment” to the creeds and confessions is understood to mean increasing submission to the spiritual guidance of the church in a spirit of Christian love during the sanctification process.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod task the Office of General Secretary to provide theological reflection and advice on the historical, biblical, and theological aspects of membership. After receiving thoughts from Calvin Theological Seminary and appropriate CRCNA agencies regarding the differences in confessional subscription for members and officebearers, report back to Synod 2026.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod encourage councils to work out situations under the principle of original authority (Church Order Article 27) within their context and in submission to our creeds and confessions.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 17.

Ground: The difference in the relative commitment to the confessions between a member and an officebearer needs clarification.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Joshua Dykstra (Illiana).

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 83.)

ARTICLE 56

The afternoon session recesses at 4:45 p.m. George Den Oudsten (Rocky Mountain) leads in closing prayer. The assembly will reconvene at 7:15 p.m.

MONDAY EVENING, June 17, 2024

Seventh Session

ARTICLE 57

The evening session convenes at 7:15 p.m. The delegates assemble and sing “Yet Not I, but through Christ in Me.” Rev. Jon Hoekema shares that the evening worship times at synod will refocus and reorient participants on God, using Phillipians 4:4-7. After a time of prayer, delegates respond by singing “May the Peace of the Lord Go with You.”

ARTICLE 58

The president of synod resumes the chair.

President Buikema asks Advisory Committee 1 to read aloud the names of the ministers and commissioned pastors who are entering retirement. Rev. Joseph Vanden Akker, reporter, shares the names, and delegates express their appreciation. President Buikema offers a prayer of thanksgiving for these retired ministers and commissioned pastors.

ARTICLE 59

Advisory Committee 9, Gravamen Matters, Rev. Petr Kornilov reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overtures 49-51, 53-55, 58, 60, 62-64 (*Deferred from 2023*); Overtures 20 (Rec. 1), 22, 27, 35-43; Communications 2-4, 6

A. Materials

1. Overtures 49-51 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 351-66
2. Overtures 53-55 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 367-74
3. Overture 58 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 377-80
4. Overture 60 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 381-82
5. Overtures 62-64 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 384-87
6. Overture 20 (Rec. 1), p. 465
7. Overture 22, pp. 466-71

8. Overture 27, pp. 481-89
9. Overtures 35-43, pp. 506-29
10. Communications 2-4, pp. 540-50
11. Communication 6, pp. 552-53

B. Preamble

Officebearers in the CRCNA covenant together in submission to God's Word "in all matters of faith and life"; they "affirm" the creeds and confessions; they "heartily believe" that these creeds and confessions "fully agree with the Word of God"; they vow to "promote and defend [these] doctrines faithfully, conforming [their] preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them" (Covenant for Officebearers, Church Order Supplement, Art. 5). While it may appear this is a high bar, we believe that Scripture intends this bar and that thus God will help us.

Scripture assumes there are doctrines one must know to become a Christian and grow in faith (Jude 4; Gal. 1:9; Heb. 6:1-2; 2 John 9-11). Scripture is clear that pastors and elders must know and be able to teach these doctrines (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:2). Scripture urges Christians to live by and keep these doctrines (1 Tim. 4:16). These are the doctrines the church recognizes and summarizes in its creeds and confessions. We don't draw doctrinal borders in the same place as other Christian traditions; however, these are the doctrines that "locate us within the larger body of Christ" (Covenant for Officebearers). Therefore, these are the doctrines officebearers must affirm and heartily believe without reservation, "God, helping us." In the history of the church this is called "confessional subscription."

Christian Reformed history shows the church wrestling with how to maintain confessional subscription while recognizing that officebearers may at times develop doubts or difficulties with the doctrines they have sworn to heartily believe, promote, and defend. In light of this tension Synod 1976 helpfully distinguished between two types of gravamina. A *confessional-difficulty gravamen* is to be used when an officebearer has a difficulty with a doctrine, while a *confessional-revision gravamen* is to be used when an officebearer believes the confessions are in error.

As we considered the overtures and communications regarding confessional-difficulty gravamina, we noticed two different understandings concerning their nature and use:

- 1) In one understanding, an officebearer uses a confessional-difficulty gravamen to express a personal difficulty to a council. The council would then judge whether they could tolerate the officebearer's disagreement with the confessions. If so, the officebearer could continue to serve with the gravamen submitted to their local council.
- 2) In the other understanding, an officebearer uses a gravamen to express a personal difficulty to a council. However, the purpose of expressing the difficulty is to determine whether the officebearer's gravamen is in line with the doctrines of our confessions, and if not, to help the officebearer

pursue a path toward alignment—enlisting the help of the classis and synod if necessary.

Currently, both understandings of the confessional-difficulty gravamen have some merit because the current wording of the Church Order is not sufficiently clear. It is our desire to provide that clarity.

C. Background

Synod 1976 declared that Dr. Harry Boer's communication to Synod in 1975 was a confessional-difficulty gravamen, thus retroactively creating the first-ever confessional-difficulty gravamen. What Synod 1976 did not declare and what no synod has ever said is that this type of gravamen is a way for someone to take exception to the church's creeds and confessions. In fact, what synod did say to Dr. Boer helps clarify the intended nature and use of this type of gravamen. Synod appointed a committee to discuss these matters with Dr. Boer and to report back to Synod 1977. If the committee were not able to resolve Dr. Boer's difficulty, he could then submit a confessional-revision gravamen (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 75). Thus the first-ever confessional-difficulty gravamen was timebound (since Dr. Boer had until Synod 1977) and started a process that would escalate into a confessional-revision gravamen if not resolved within that time frame. Therefore Synod 1976 understood the confessional-difficulty gravamen as a personal request for help in resolving the officebearer's doubts. The way a council, classis, or synod was to do that was by providing the officebearer with the "information and/or clarification" of the confessions (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5, B, 2).

D. Introduction

According to Synod 1976 and the Church Order, a confessional-difficulty gravamen occurs when "a subscriber [i.e., an officebearer] expresses personal difficulty with the confession but does not call for a revision" (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5, 1). This kind of gravamen is submitted by an officebearer to a church council for "examination and judgment" as "a personal request for information and/or clarification of the confession" (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5, B, 1-2).

When an assembly examines and judges a confessional-difficulty gravamen, it must do so according to Church Order, which also clearly states that (1) "no one is free to decide for oneself or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the standards" (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5, A, 3) and (2) the person signing the Covenant for Officebearers must affirm "without reservation all the doctrines contained in the standards of the church as being doctrines that are taught in the Word of God" (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5, A, 1). This means that an officebearer must affirm all the doctrines contained in our confessions without reservation upon ordination and must make a confessional-difficulty gravamen for those occasions when a difficulty develops after ordination has taken place. It is, therefore, an opportunity for discipleship. This also means that an assembly

cannot tolerate an officebearer's disagreement with the confessions because that would be, *de facto*, taking an exception (or holding a settled conviction contrary) to the confessions. The confessional-difficulty gravamen is a temporary tool for discipleship to help an officebearer once again affirm that the doctrines in the creeds and confessions "fully agree with the Word of God" and promise to "be formed and governed by them" and to "heartily believe and . . . promote and defend [these] doctrines . . ." (Covenant for Officebearers). If an officebearer cannot resolve their difficulty or develops a settled conviction contrary to the confessions, the confessional-difficulty would reveal that the officebearer is, at the very least, located elsewhere in the body of Christ or that our confessions are wrong. The officebearer would then bear the burden of proof to establish that through a confessional-revision gravamen.

With all of this in mind, "examination" of a confessional-difficulty gravamen occurs when the assembly addressed discerns the nature and extent of the officebearer's difficulty and then provides the information and/or clarification being sought. "Judgment" of a confessional-difficulty gravamen occurs when the assembly determines whether the officebearer's difficulty is within or outside of confessional subscription. "Examination and judgment" cannot mean determining whether or not the officebearer's difficulty is a tolerable disagreement with the confessions because that would contradict the church's understanding of confessional subscription.

While the creeds and confessions of the church are neither inerrant nor exhaustive, they are a comprehensive summary of everything deemed essential for the faith and life of our denomination.

Since discipleship is personal and pastoral, working through a confessional-difficulty gravamen must begin locally. The church council provides the best context for trust, encouragement, and support. However, if the local council cannot examine and judge the confessional-difficulty gravamen, they can appeal to the broader assemblies for help toward a resolution. Our intent is to provide a flexible and contextual plan of action while also clarifying the temporary nature of a confessional-difficulty gravamen. In doing so, we honor the personal and pastoral nature of the gravamen process while also bringing integrity to its use and function.

Moreover, since the council would know about the difficulty but the broader assemblies would not, officebearers who are working through a confessional-difficulty should recuse themselves from delegation to any broader assemblies so as to focus on working through their difficulty.

This process not only aims to resolve the officebearer's confessional-difficulty with grace and truth but also provides support and accountability in such a way that leads toward resolution.

May God be glorified, and may the church strengthened through these recommendations:

E. Recommendations

1. That synod affirm that a confessional-difficulty gravamen is not meant to be, nor should be, used as an exception to the confessions.

Grounds:

- a. There is not, nor has there ever been, a provision in the Church Order allowing an officebearer to maintain a settled conviction contrary to (i.e., an exception to) the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions. Officebearers are expected to hold to the creeds and confessions without reservation upon becoming officebearers.
- b. Holding a settled conviction contrary to the confessions in perpetuity would contradict the Covenant for Officebearers.

Rev. Stephen Terpstra, vice president of synod, offers prayer.

— Adopted

The following negative votes are registered: Patricia Borgdorff (Grand Rapids East), Luke Eising (Muskegon), Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte), Aaron Helleman (Eastern Canada), Elizabeth Koning (Chicago South), Maria Leys-Bowater (Kalamazoo), and Paul Verhoef (Alberta South/Saskatchewan).

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 continues in Article 69.)

ARTICLE 60

The evening session recesses at 10:00 p.m. Sonya Grypma (B.C. South-East) closes in prayer. Synod will reconvene Tuesday morning at 8:45 a.m.

TUESDAY MORNING, June 18, 2024

Eighth Session

ARTICLE 61

The delegates assemble and sing “O God, Our Help in Ages Past,” led by Vice President Stephen Terpstra on the organ.

Dave Den Haan (Thrive) leads the assembly in the practice of *lectio divina*. He reads Psalm 46:1-3, 10-11 and leads delegates through a rhythm of reading, reflection, and silent prayer. He closes with prayer.

The roll indicates that all delegates are present.

ARTICLE 62

Rev. Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy, presents a report on the work of the Candidacy Office. She acknowledges the work of the Candidacy Committee and gives thanks for their faithfulness. She notes the reasons leaders have shared for pursuing ordination or leadership credentials in the CRC. She shares responses to a recent survey on candidacy topics, including leadership development, cultural shifts, and learning pathways. She concludes

by sharing encouraging stories of candidates and suggests ways in which delegates can plant seeds of leadership in their communities.

ARTICLE 63

The president of synod welcomes the candidates for ministry to Synod 2024. Rev. Susan E. LaClear, director of Candidacy, presents the 2024 candidates for ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. (Names in bold print indicate those present at Synod 2024). Jeremiah Basuric, William Brouwers, **Melissa Burmaster**, Robert Golding, Caleb Harper, Keith Hoekstra, **Josiah Huisman**, **Austin Kammeraad**, **David Kerkstra**, **Yohan Lee**, **Young Geol (Jon) Lee**, **Daniel Le Forestier**, **Patrick Lin**, **Jeremiah Mitchell**, Kevin Moxon, **Charles Mutinga**, Michelle Oh, **Jonathan Sturru**s, Matthew Timms, Daniel Unterkofler, Nick Vander Ploeg, **Lorinda Vanderwerp**, Micah VanDyken, **Sarah VerMerris**, and **Yanyan (Ruth) Xing**.

Rev. LaClear acknowledges guests and delegates who have provided support and encouragement for the candidates. The assembly responds by singing "There Is One Gospel." Rev. LaClear, Rev. Lora Copley, Rev. Andy Sytsma, Rev. Henry Kranenburg, and Rev. Zachary King lead the candidates in a Litany of Celebration and Dedication from 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; and Ephesians 3:7-21.

Rev. Julius Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, offers words of encouragement to the candidates, thanking them for their responses to God's call. Candidates, delegates, and guests respond by saying the Lord's Prayer. Families and supporting churches of candidates are invited to come forward to lay hands on the candidates as President Buikema leads in a time of prayer. The assembly responds by singing "The Cause of Christ."

President Buikema offers a closing blessing.

ARTICLE 64

Rev. William T. Koopmans, chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, expresses joy that several ecumenical guests have been able to attend Synod 2024.

Rev. Koopmans introduces Dr. Isaiah Jirapye Magaji, president of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, who addresses synod. Rev. Koopmans offers prayer.

Rev. Koopmans introduces Dr. Laura Osborne, coordinator for interreligious relations for the Reformed Church in America, who addresses synod. Rev. Koopmans offers prayer.

The general secretary introduces Dr. Luka Ariko Ekitala, general secretary of the Reformed Church of East Africa, who addresses synod. The general secretary offers prayer.

The general secretary introduces Rev. Patrick Jok, general secretary of the Sudanese Reformed Church, who addresses synod. The general secretary

offers prayer and gives thanks for William Koopmans and his many years of service on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.

President Buikema thanks Rev. Koopmans and the ecumenical guests for their presentations and the written reports they have submitted.

ARTICLE 65

Rev. Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, presents a report covering academic offerings, a profile of the student body, the upcoming 150th-anniversary celebration with Calvin University, the hiring of the first full-time communications director at the seminary, a new strategic plan, and plans for a new student residence.

ARTICLE 66

The morning session recesses at 12:02 p.m. Scott Greenway (Thornapple Valley) leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, June 18, 2024

Ninth Session

ARTICLE 67

Erik Pluemer (Southeast U.S.) opens in prayer.

ARTICLE 68

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 49.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Christopher deWinter reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin University

A. Materials

1. Calvin University report, pp. 238-50
2. Calvin University Supplement

B. Privilege of the Floor

Bruce Los, chair; Greg Elzinga, interim president; Mary Tuuk Kurus, vice chair of Trustee Committee; and Perrin Rynders, chair of Trustee Committee

C. Recommendation

1. That synod take note of the report from Calvin University with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of “equipping students to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as Christ’s agents of renewal” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 238).

—*Adopted*

2. That synod take note of the recent announcement from the Board of Trustees of Calvin University on June 13, 2024, which reads, in full, “The Board

of Calvin University and Wiebe and Joanna Boer write this joint statement to bring closure to Dr. Boer's term as president of Calvin University. Out of a shared desire for the future well-being of Calvin University and all related individuals, the board and the Boers have resolved the matter, and the Boers have dropped their legal actions. The parties are grateful for God's grace and wish each other well."

Chris DeWinter offers prayer.

— *Adopted*

II. Dordt University

A. Materials

Dordt University report, pp. 335-36

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Dordt University with gratitude to God for their ongoing work "to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of life" (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 336).

— *Adopted*

III. Institute for Christian Studies

A. Materials

Institute for Christian Studies report, pp. 337-39

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the Institute for Christian Studies report with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of offering "distinctively Christian educational programs to M.A. and Ph.D. graduate students, K-12 teachers and principals desiring meaningful professional development, and spiritually seeking lifelong learners" (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 339).

— *Adopted*

IV. The King's University

A. Materials

The King's University report, pp. 340-41

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from The King's University with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of offering "a university degree grounded in the Christian faith" (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 341).

— *Adopted*

V. Kuyper College

A. Materials

Kuyper College report, pp. 342-44

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Kuyper College with gratitude to God for their ongoing work "to live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God's good world" (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 344).

— *Adopted*

VI. Redeemer University

A. Materials

Redeemer University report, pp. 345-46

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Redeemer University with gratitude to God for the “mission of Redeemer where, through the power of Christ, minds are renewed, lives are transformed, and the world is redeemed” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 346).

—*Adopted*

VII. Trinity Christian College

A. Materials

Trinity Christian College report, pp. 347-48

B. Recommendation

That synod take note of the report from Trinity Christian College with gratitude to God for their ongoing work of “seeing students thrive and encounter the love of Christ as they pursue their academic and professional callings” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 348).

—*Adopted*

Chris DeVos (Holland) offers prayer.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 continues in Article 72.)

ARTICLE 69

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 59).

Advisory Committee 9, Gravamen Matters, Rev. Petr Kornilov reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overtures 49-51, 53-55, 58, 60, 62-64 (*Deferred from 2023*); Overtures 20 (Rec. 1), 22, 27, 35-43; Communications 2-4, 6

E. Recommendations:

2. That synod amend the Church Order Supplement to clarify the definition and proper use of a confessional-difficulty gravamen (with additions indicated by underline and deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~).

Amend Church Order Supplement, Article 5, 1-2

1. A *confessional-difficulty gravamen*: a temporary gravamen in which an officebearer ~~a subscriber~~, subsequent to their ordination, develops and then expresses a personal difficulty with a point of doctrine/teaching contained in the confessions but does not have a settled conviction contrary to and does not call for a revision of the confessions, ~~and~~
2. A *confessional-revision gravamen*: a gravamen in which an officebearer ~~a subscriber~~ makes a specific recommendation for revision of the confessions.

Amend Church Order Supplement, Article 5, A, 1

1. The person signing the Covenant for Officebearers affirms without reservation all the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions standards of the church as being doctrines ~~that are~~ taught in the Word of God. “Without reservation” means that an officebearer does not have a difficulty or hold a settled conviction contrary to any of the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions. This includes what synod has declared to have confessional status.

Grounds:

- a. There is confusion regarding the definition of a confessional-difficulty gravamen.
- b. If one believes that a doctrine is in error, one may submit a confessional-revision gravamen, making the case to the broader body. However, the purpose of a confessional-difficulty gravamen is to express and then work through a difficulty. It is not to be used to hold an unresolved difficulty in perpetuity.
- c. Although the creeds and confessions of the CRCNA are neither inerrant nor exhaustive, they are a comprehensive summary of everything deemed essential for the faith and life of our denomination.
- d. There is not, nor has there ever been, a provision in the Church Order allowing an officebearer to take an exception to the creeds and confessions. Officebearers are expected to hold to the creeds and confessions without reservation upon becoming officebearers.

— Adopted

Patrick Anthony (Central California) offers prayer.

The following negative votes are recorded: Ryan Schreiber (Grand Rapids East), Thomas Bomhof (Huron), Elizabeth Koning (Chicago South), Paul Verhoef (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Sherry Ten Clay (Red Mesa), and Eric Walstra (Grand Rapids East).

Amend Church Order Supplement, Article 5, B, 1

1. ~~Ministers (whether missionaries, professors, or others not serving congregations as pastors), elders, or deacons~~ Officebearers shall submit their “difficulties” to their councils for counsel, examination, and judgment. [Note: The rest of subpoint 1 becomes subpoint 6 below.] Upon receiving a confessional-difficulty gravamen, the council shall begin a process of discipleship and discernment toward the officebearer’s full alignment with the confessions. The council is responsible for providing time, encouragement, and counsel so that all parties work to resolve the confessional-difficulty in a spirit of love, humility, and fellowship.

Add the following new sections to Church Order Supplement, Article 5, B, 2-5:

2. As part of this process, the council shall do the following:
 - a) Examine and judge the nature and extent of the difficulty in question and discern whether an officebearer has a sincere difficulty or a settled conviction contrary to the confessions better served by filing a confessional-revision gravamen.
 - b) Develop a concrete course of action to resolve the confessional difficulty. The course of action will include counsel and discipleship for the officebearer, providing them the information and/or clarification being sought.
 - c) Set a reasonable timeline for the resolution of the confessional difficulty. The total timeline shall not exceed three years from the time the difficulty is received by a council.
 3. As part of this process, the officebearer shall do as follows:
 - a) Refrain from teaching that is contrary to or disparaging of the church's confessions or what synod has declared to have confessional status when instructing, discipling, caring for, and counseling others.
 - b) Recuse oneself from being delegated to broader assemblies while the confessional difficulty remains unresolved.
 - c) Work in good faith toward full alignment with the confessions.
 4. The confessional-difficulty gravamen is resolved when the officebearer . . .
 - a) affirms the creeds and confessions without reservation, or
 - b) submits a confessional-revision gravamen, or
 - c) resigns from office.

Note: If applicable, ministers and commissioned pastors may be honorably released at the conclusion of the confessional-difficulty gravamen process. Officebearers who leave office with an unresolved confessional-difficulty gravamen shall resolve their difficulty prior to being reordained.
 5. During the process of discipleship and discernment, either the council or the officebearer with the confessional-difficulty gravamen may seek help from church visitors. Should a council be unable to resolve the gravamen submitted, they shall seek advice from church visitors.
- Note: The wording for subpoint 6 was originally part of Church Order Supplement Article 5, B, 1.*
6. If the ~~Should a council decide still cannot that it is not able to judge~~ resolve the gravamen submitted to it, it shall submit the matter to

classis for examination and judgment. If the classis, after examination, ~~cannot judge that it is unable to decide~~ resolve the matter, it ~~may~~ shall submit it the matter to synod, in accordance with the principles of Church Order Article 28-b.

Change the former subpoint 2 to become subpoint 7, as follows:

~~27.~~ In all instances of confessional-difficulty gravamina, the matter shall be handled with grace and truth. It shall not be open for discussion by the whole church, since this type of gravamen is a personal request for information and/or clarification of the confession. A confessional-difficulty gravamen is not a settled conviction contrary to the confessions themselves or to anything that holds confessional status. Therefore an assembly may not merely acknowledge an officebearer's reservation regarding a confession—it must work toward resolving it. ~~Hence—~~ This type of gravamen should be dealt with pastorally and personally by the assembly addressed. Likewise, this process may not be used to coerce conformity or resignation—the assembly must provide due pastoral care. This care includes, but is not limited to, offering instruction and clarification regarding the confession in question.

Grounds:

- a. It is necessary to have a delineated process that guides churches, classes, and synod according to the purposes of gravamina.
- b. These amendments resolve confessional difficulties in a spirit of grace and truth.
- c. These amendments clarify the confessional-difficulty gravamen process to prevent potential misuse and to ensure that it serves its intended purpose effectively, which is to bring the process to a resolution.
- d. Another purpose of this process is to restore an officebearer to doctrinal unity or reveal where our standards may be in error. This process may also reveal that an officebearer is doctrinally located elsewhere in the larger body of Christ.
- e. These amendments ensure a more pastoral approach to resolving confessional difficulties, allowing sufficient time for thoughtful discernment and fostering a nurturing space that prioritizes pastoral care and mutual understanding.
- f. These provisions provide support and accountability by utilizing church visitors, ensuring that the resolution process adheres to the church's confessional standards while embracing a spirit of love and fellowship.
- g. These amendments acknowledge that experiencing confessional difficulties may be part of one's discipleship and spiritual growth that

requires nurturing spaces for honest wrestling with regard to one's confessional-difficulty gravamen.

- h. These amendments enable officebearers to maintain their active roles in the local church while honoring the church's understanding of its confessions.

Gary Hibma (Heartland) offers prayer.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Ryan Schreiber (Grand Rapids East), Thomas Bomhof (Huron), Sam Krikke (Georgetown), Gabrielle Veldboom (Niagara), Paul Verhoef (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte), Patricia Borgdorff (Grand Rapids East), Eric Walstra (Grand Rapids East), and Michelle Ellis (B.C. North-West).

Rob Braun (Lake Superior) offers prayer.

3. That synod instruct those who have submitted a confessional-difficulty gravamen that is still unresolved to use the process as outlined above in the changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 5.

Grounds:

- a. Since the gravamen process has been amended, gravamina submitted before this amendment remain unresolved.
- b. This brings clarity and resolution to current unresolved gravamina within the parameters of the timeline included in the amended Church Order Supplement, Article 5.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte) and Eric Walstra (Grand Rapids East).

4. That synod call to the attention of the churches the need to continually equip their members regarding our confessions, and their officebearers regarding Church Order.

Ground:

The changing nature of our church demographic means that there are emerging churches and members who have not had much education regarding creeds and confessions.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte) and Eric Walstra (Grand Rapids East).

5. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to withdraw the Synod 2022 FAQ Questions 7-11 and develop a new FAQ statement in light of the decisions of Synod 2024.

Ground:

The materials provided in 2022 have been superseded by decisions made by Synod 2024.

Jim Kuipers (Red Mesa) offers prayer.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte) and Eric Walstra (Grand Rapids East).

6. That synod instruct the boards of the denominational agencies and institutions and the Council of Delegates to review and revise, as needed, their gravamina policies (e.g., exceptions) related to the decisions of Synod 2024 and report on their actions to Synod 2025.

Ground:

Implementing a consistent approach to handling gravamina provides clarity and safeguards fidelity to the creeds and confessions in the denomination's agencies and institutions.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte) and Eric Walstra (Grand Rapids East).

7. That synod defer Overture 42 from 14th Street CRC in Holland to Synod 2025.

Ground:

Due to the broader scope of Overture 42, the church will be better served if Synod 2025 devotes time to examining it.

Craig Buma (Northern Illinois) offers prayer.

—*Defeated*

The following negative votes are recorded: Sam Krikke (Georgetown), Gabrielle Veldboom (Niagara), Hayden Regeling (Hamilton), Michelle Ellis (B.C. North-West), and Paul DeWeerd (B.C. North-West).

8. That synod consider this to be its response to deferred Overtures 49-51, 53-55, 58, 60, 62-64; Overtures 20 (Rec. 1), 22, 27, 35-43; Communications 2-4, 6.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Ryan Schrieber (Grand Rapids East) and Shelley Hempstead (B.C. North-West).

Andy Sytsma (Yellowstone) offers prayer.

ARTICLE 70

The afternoon session recesses at 4:55 p.m. Israel Ledee (Chicago South) leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY EVENING, June 18, 2024

Tenth Session

ARTICLE 71

The evening session convenes at 7:00 p.m. Delegates assemble and sing “Come, Holy Ghost.” Rev. Jon Hoekema again uses Philippians 4:4-7, read by Rev. Ruth Hofman (Toronto), to reorient participants toward God in prayer and in Scripture reflection. After a time of prayer, delegates respond by singing “May the Peace of the Lord Go with You.”

After reading the negative votes from the afternoon session, minister delegate Shaun Jung (B.C. South-East) offers prayer.

ARTICLE 72

The vice president assumes the chair.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 68.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Christopher deWinter reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 61 (*Deferred from 2023*): Withhold Denominational Funding from Calvin University until Faculty and Staff Adhere to CRCNA Covenantal Standards

A. Materials

Overture 61, pp. 382-83

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 61.

Grounds:

- a. The inclusion of “staff members of Calvin University” in the overture includes people who are not required to submit to the doctrines and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in the current application of Church Order Article 5 and the Calvin Covenant for Faculty Members.
- b. This overture asks for corrective action (“to withhold all denominational funding”) without an accounting for the distinct processes of Calvin University already in place and their commitment to walk in step with the church.

— *Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 44: Do Not Allow Calvin University Faculty to Take Exceptions to the Covenant for Faculty Members

A. Materials

Overture 44, pp. 529-31

B. Preamble

Our committee recognizes that a breakdown of trust has occurred between Calvin University and some of our church members, especially around a shared covenant regarding the definition of “unchastity” in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108. This has led to suspicion and polarization.

Our committee also recognizes that synod has led the way in providing Calvin University direction as it pertains to confessional commitment. For example, Synod 2014 received the document “*Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom at Calvin College . . .* submitted in response to the instructions of Synods 2011 and 2012, as being faithful to and honoring synod’s own prior work on confessional subscription” (*Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 542; see *Agenda for Synod 2014*, pp. 136-76).

Responding to the leading of synod, Calvin University states in its Faculty Handbook, “When the synod of the Christian Reformed Church has issued a formal interpretation of the confessions, that interpretation shall be binding for Calvin University” (3.5.1.1, 44).

Synod continues to lead the way, allowing the opportunity for Calvin University to manage itself as an institution of the CRCNA.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of Calvin University's efforts to be faithful to the Reformed confessions in the context of academic inquiry.

Grounds:

- a. Synod has affirmed Calvin University’s understanding of confessional subscription as “faithful to and honoring synod’s own prior work on confessional subscription” (*Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 542).
- b. “Under the authority of synod, the Church assigns authority for the life of the University to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees, in turn, assigns authority within the University’s governance system, in which decisions about personnel and confessional interpretation are assigned to the Professional Status Committee (PSC)” (Calvin University Faculty Handbook, 3.5.1.1).
- c. There are considerations of academic freedom and tenure that do not apply in a church setting. “The Faculty member shall be judged only by the confessional standards of CU, and by the professional standards appropriate to his or her role and discipline” (Calvin University Faculty Handbook, 3.5.4).

—*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the Calvin University Board of Trustees to define the differences in Calvin’s use of “confessional difficulties” in relation to the decisions of synod concerning gravamina and to develop language and processes in alignment with those in the CRC in order to build trust in its relationships with CRC churches, and to report back to Synod 2025 on its progress.

Grounds:

- a. Calvin University has declared that “Calvin desires to be robustly confessional . . .” (Calvin University Supplement). This would provide shared accountability to such a declaration.

- b. Calvin University recognizes that “authority to make binding judgments about the meaning and implications of the confessions is assigned to synod” (*Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom*, p. 41; see *Agenda for Synod 2014*, pp. 166 and 170).

— *Adopted*

3. That synod consider this to be its answer to Overture 44.

— *Adopted*

Minister delegate Chris DeVos (Holland), chair of Advisory Committee 4, offers prayer.

ARTICLE 73

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 54.)

Advisory Committee 6, Global Mission and Ecumenical Matters, Rev. Aaron Greydanus reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 15: Reexamine Ecumenical Relations with the Reformed Church in America

A. Materials

- 1. Overture 15, pp. 450-54
- 2. EIRC Supplement (including Appendix A)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) to communicate with the Reformed Church in America general secretary and Commission on Christian Unity on the following points and to report to Synod 2025 regarding the responses received:

- a. A desire for shared commitment to our shared confessional Reformed heritage, doctrine, and practice.
- b. A concern regarding the nature of churches that have disaffiliated with the RCA as being in alignment with CRCNA positions.
- c. A request for clarification on the RCA’s ongoing commitment in faith and practice to Heidelberg Catechism Q&A’s 108 and 109, specifically in relation to the forbidding of unchastity, which encompasses homosexual sex.
- d. A request for clarification on whether RCA clergy have been, or are being, permitted to solemnize same-sex marriages, or to themselves remain in same-sex marriages or romantic partnerships, while remaining ministers in good standing.
- e. The report of the EIRC shall be submitted by March 15, 2025, and will be considered by Synod 2025.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod temporarily pause the new acceptance of ordained ministers through Church Order Article 8-b, along with its Supplement, Article 8, D. This pause will remain in place pending a vote from synod to resume. Such

a pause will not affect any existing relationships with ministers serving under the provisions of the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers (Supplement, Art. 8, D, 1), nor prevent ordained ministers in the RCA from entering ministry in the CRC through Church Order Article 8-c.

Note: The chair observes during discussion that this motion is in conflict with Church Order Article 47 because a temporary “pause” would require opportunity for the churches “to consider the advisability of proposed . . . changes.”

—*Ruled out of order*

3. That synod propose that the EIRC provide a recommendation to Synod 2025 regarding the ecumenical relationship of the RCA as a *church in communion* with the CRCNA.

Grounds:

- a. Since the RCA report to Synod 2024 stated that “the RCA is going through a season of change and restructure” and that in 2021 the RCA general synod “reckoned with deep divisions in the RCA,” we acknowledge that the RCA is no longer the same denomination as the one with whom the CRCNA formed the Pella Accord in 2014 (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 503-4).
- b. Our faithfulness as a church in communion requires encouragement toward faithful statements and faithful practices related to our common Reformed confession.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 15.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 7: Appoint a Task Force on Multisite Churches

A. Materials

Overture 7, pp. 427-28

B. Recommendations

1. That synod appoint a task force to study multisite churches with a mandate to research multisite churches and provide the following by Synod 2026:

- direction, advice, and guidance on what models best fit Reformed theology and polity
- direction, advice, and guidance on what models should not be employed in Reformed churches
- a roadmap for how churches might become a multisite campus or enfold a church as part of a campus
- recommended changes to Church Order supplements to facilitate such arrangements and provide clarity for how such churches should properly function in relation to each other, the classis, and synod

—*Adopted*

2. That synod task the officers of synod and the advisory committee chair and reporter and one other advisory committee member, per the Rules for Synodical Procedure, to complete the appointment of the Task Force on Multisite Churches within two weeks following the adjournment of synod. This task force should include at least two pastors from multisite congregations, at least one biblical or systematic Reformed theologian, a Church Order expert, and a young adult representative.

Grounds:

- a. CRCNA Church Order does not envision such an arrangement at present.
- b. Multisite arrangements are currently employed within the North American church context and may provide missional opportunities for CRCNA congregations.
- c. This provides time to ensure that the development of multisite congregations within the CRCNA is done in good order and in accordance with Reformed theological principles.

—*Tabled*

(The report from Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 100.)

ARTICLE 74

The evening session recesses at 9:03 p.m. Adrian VandenBout (Atlantic Northeast) closes in prayer. Synod will reconvene Wednesday morning at 8:15 a.m.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, June 19, 2024

Eleventh Session

ARTICLE 75

The morning session convenes at 8:18 a.m. The delegates assemble and sing “Ten Thousand Reasons,” led by Katie Ritsema Roelofs.

Rev. Chris Schoon (Thrive) leads the assembly in the practice of *lectio divina*, reading Psalm 121 and leading delegates through a rhythm of reading, reflection, and silent prayer. He closes with a spoken prayer.

The president of synod resumes the chair.

The roll indicates that all delegates are present.

Doug Nieuwstraten (Hamilton) offers prayer.

ARTICLE 76

Advisory Committee 8, Discipline Matters, Rev. Lora Copley reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 67 (*Deferred from 2023*); Overtures 23, 25-26, 30-31, 33-34; Communications 8, 12, 28 (majority report)

A. Materials

1. Overture 67 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 388-89
2. Overture 23, pp. 472-74
3. Overtures 25-26, pp. 476-81
4. Overtures 30-31, pp. 495-98
5. Overtures 33-34, pp. 501-5
6. Communication 8, pp. 562-65
7. Communication 12, pp. 583-84
8. Communication 28, Supplement

B. Background

As a committee, we recognize that recent decisions by synod have been received with difficulty in many of our churches. One way in which some churches have dealt with the difficulty has been to write public statements that conflict with the confessions of the CRCNA. Previous synods express our committee's primary desire—namely, a path of repentance and restoration for those churches in public opposition.

By these recommendations we want to speak with love and faithfulness, in grace and truth.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct churches who have made public statements, by their actions or in any form of media, that directly contradict synod's decision regarding chastity to repent and to honor their covenant commitments to the CRCNA. Actions demonstrating this repentance would include the following:
 - A statement to classis indicating repentance.
 - A removal of any public statements opposed to the teaching of the CRCNA regarding chastity, including materials designed to teach against or otherwise contradict the denomination's position.
 - A commitment not to ordain as officebearers individuals who are in a same-sex marriage or in a same-sex relationship not in keeping with a holy Christian sexual life.
 - A commitment not to publicly instruct against the denomination's position in "preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living," as promised in the Covenant for Officebearers.
 - A commitment not to recognize same-sex marriage as ecclesiastically valid, either in officiation or any manner of blessing a wedding rite or a baptismal rite (see Church Order Art. 56, 69-c; Supplement, Art. 69-c; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A's 82, 85).
 - A commitment that officebearers not serve in any organization designed to specifically advocate against the teachings and confessions of the CRCNA.

Grounds:

- a. Our desire is for the restoration of noncompliant churches under the truth of God's Word and our shared confession (1 John 1:9-10; Gal. 6:1).
 - b. When synod declares an interpretation of a confession, that interpretation is "settled and binding."
2. That after the conclusion of Synod 2024 all officebearers from churches in noncompliance, by actions or in any form of media, be placed on a limited suspension. That suspension would include a loss of ability to send delegates to classis, synod, the COD, or the CRCNA agencies. Officebearers under limited suspension may attend classis with the privilege of the floor but not as a seated delegate.

Grounds:

- a. Our desire is for people to be in a place where they can act with integrity.
 - b. Churches who wish to remain in covenant with the CRCNA must follow the expectations of our shared covenant or release the privileges of the covenant.
3. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to prioritize the development of resources to help classes and churches navigate the process toward repentance and restoration or toward disaffiliation. These resources and the defined process should be in the hands of classes by November 29, 2024.

Churches may continue in the process, provided there is continued momentum toward repentance and restoration through the measurable benchmarks listed in Recommendation 1 above, or toward the disaffiliation process as outlined in Church Order Article 38-f. The classis will submit a biannual report to the Office of General Secretary and to the Council of Delegates on the progress made.

This process is intended to be completed in one year from the beginning of the limited suspension. A classis may lengthen the suspension for up to one additional year, provided the church is participating in the process. The entire process may not exceed two years.

Ground:

We desire to provide a uniform and clear process for all the classes of the CRCNA.

4. If a church refuses to engage in the process or prevents the process from moving forward in a timely manner, the classis shall initiate special discipline of the council.

Grounds:

- a. We recognize that currently we are not in unity.

- b. We want to take churches at their word when they say that their convictions are settled according to the proper order and discipline of our church confessions (cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 32; Church Order Art. 78-84).
5. If neither restoration nor disaffiliation is completed after the defined limited suspension, classis is to remove the council and revert the church to an emerging status, placing the church under the authority of a neighboring council.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1926 asserted the right for ecclesiastical assemblies to take decisive disciplinary action even if the Church Order does not stipulate an exact process of action (*Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 329-30). It also made clear that a consistory worthy of discipline had “placed itself outside of the church relationship” (*Acts of Synod 1926*, p. 139).
 - b. Classis Hudson in 1992 recognized that one of the churches in its classis had “broken the bonds of fellowship with the denomination and therefore [had] placed themselves outside the fellowship of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 610). Synod itself said that the church that was no longer in fellowship with the denomination would be allowed to participate in synod’s process of appeals if it would “bring itself into conformity with the standards from which it was declared to have deviated” (p. 610).
 - c. Although the council’s authority to discipline is original, the CRCNA has long recognized that broader assemblies have delegated authority to discipline narrower assemblies.
6. That this be synod’s response to Overture 67 (*deferred from 2023*); Overtures 23, 25-26, 30-31, 33-34; and Communications 8, 12, and 28.

According to the Rules of Synodical Procedure, the recommendations of the minority report are presented by delegate Rev. Maria Leys-Bowater.

Response to Overture 67 (*Deferred from 2023*); Overtures 23, 25-26, 30-31, 33-34; Communications 8, 12, 28 (minority report)

A. Materials

- 1. Overture 67 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 388-89
- 2. Overture 23, pp. 472-74
- 3. Overtures 25-26, pp. 476-81
- 4. Overtures 30-31, pp. 495-98
- 5. Overtures 33-34, pp. 501-5
- 6. Communication 8, pp. 562-65
- 7. Communication 12, pp. 583-84
- 8. Communication 28, Supplement

B. Background

As a committee, we recognize that recent decisions regarding same sex relationships have been received with difficulty in many of our churches. To many, it seems that the decision to accept a synodical interpretation of “unchastity” in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 as confessional has been done in haste. One way in which some churches have dealt with the difficulty has been to write public statements that conflict with the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church of North America.

By these recommendations we want to speak in love, grace, and truth. We want to work with churches who are in conflict with the confessions of the CRCNA rather than speaking to them or for them. We are seeking to rebuild trust where trust has been lost.

We offer a path toward restoration or disaffiliation.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct churches who have made public statements, by their actions or in media, that directly contradict synod’s decision regarding unchastity to repent of their failure to submit to the authority of the church. This would include the following:
 - A statement to classis indicating repentance for these public statements.
 - A removal of any public statements, declarations, or creeds opposed to the teaching of the church, including materials designed to teach against or contradict the denomination’s position.
 - A commitment not to ordain as officebearers individuals who are in a same-sex marriage, nor any who are in a noncelibate, same-sex relationship.
 - A commitment not to instruct publicly against the denomination’s position in “preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living,” as promised in the Covenant for Officebearers.
 - A commitment not to officiate a marriage of a same-sex couple.

Grounds:

- a. Because our unity is our greatest witness to unbelievers, our desire is for restoration and reconciliation (John 17:23; 1 John 1:9-10; Gal. 6:1).
 - b. When synod declares an interpretation of a confession, that interpretation is “settled and binding.”
2. That after the conclusion of Synod 2024 all officebearers from churches in noncompliance, by actions or in any form of media, be placed on a limited suspension. That suspension would include a loss of the ability to be delegated to classis, synod, the Council of Delegates, or the CRCNA agencies. Officebearers under limited suspension may serve classis, the Council of Delegates, and the CRCNA agencies as an advisor or consultant with privilege of the floor but not as a voting delegate.

Ground:

We want to create an environment where people can think, act, and speak with integrity, and where in the CRCNA we continue to demonstrate our desire for restoration with our invitation for their voices to be heard on matters where they are in compliance with the positions of the CRCNA.

3. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to prioritize the development of a process with resources to help classes and churches navigate a way toward restoration or disaffiliation. This defined process and the resources should be in the hands of classes by November 29, 2024.

Churches will continue in the process as long as there is continued momentum toward restoration through the measurable expectations listed in Recommendation 1 above or toward disaffiliation. Classes will submit biannual reports to the Office of General Secretary on the progress made. These classical reports should be submitted to the Office of General Secretary by March 15 and October 15 each year.

This process is intended to be completed in one year from the beginning of the limited suspension. A classis can lengthen the suspension for an additional year as long as the church is participating in the process. The entire process cannot exceed two years. Classes must provide grounds for the extension in their report to the Office of General Secretary.

Ground:

A clearly defined process with resources to support will allow a uniform, predictable, and just process that works with the churches and classes of the CRCNA.

4. If a church refuses to engage in the process or prevents the process from moving forward in a timely manner, the classis shall initiate special discipline of the council.

Grounds:

- a. We recognize that we are not in unity and do not interpret “guiding into compliance” in a uniform way.
 - b. Refusal to engage in the process indicates a settled conviction and necessitates implementing special discipline.
5. If neither restoration nor disaffiliation is completed after the year of limited suspension (possibly extended by classis), classis is to remove the council, revert the church to emerging status, and place the church under the authority of a neighboring council.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1926 asserted the right for ecclesiastical assemblies to take decisive disciplinary action even if the Church Order does not stipulate an exact process of action (*Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 329-30). It also

made clear that a consistory worthy of discipline had “placed itself outside of the church relationship” (*Acts of Synod 1926*, p. 139).

- b. Classis Hudson in 1992 recognized that one of the churches in its classis had “broken the bonds of fellowship with the denomination and therefore [had] placed themselves outside the fellowship of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 610). Synod itself said that the church that was no longer in fellowship with the denomination would be allowed to participate in synod’s process of appeals if it would “bring itself into conformity with the standards from which it was declared to have deviated” (p. 610).
 - c. Although the council’s authority to discipline is original, the CRCNA has long recognized that broader assemblies have delegated authority to discipline narrower assemblies.
6. That this be synod’s response to Overture 67 (*deferred from 2023*); Overtures 23, 25-26, 30-31, 33-34; and Communications 8, 12, and 28.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee’s majority report.

Response to Overture 67 (*Deferred from 2023*); Overtures 23, 25-26, 30-31, 33-34; Communications 8, 12, 28 (majority report)

C. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct churches who have made public statements, by their actions or in any form of media, that directly contradict synod’s decision regarding unchastity to repent and to honor their covenant commitments to the CRCNA. Actions demonstrating this repentance would include the following:
 - A statement to classis indicating repentance.
 - A removal of any public statements opposed to the teaching of the CRCNA regarding chastity, including materials designed to teach against or otherwise contradict the denomination’s position.
 - A commitment not to ordain as officebearers individuals who are in a same-sex marriage or in a same-sex relationship not in keeping with a holy Christian sexual life.
 - A commitment not to publicly instruct against the denomination’s position in “preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living,” as promised in the Covenant for Officebearers.
 - A commitment not to recognize same-sex marriage as ecclesiastically valid, either in officiation or any manner of blessing a wedding rite or a baptismal rite (see Church Order Art. 56, 69-c; Supplement, Art. 69-c; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A’s 82, 85).
 - A commitment that officebearers not serve in any organization designed to specifically advocate against the teachings and confessions of the CRCNA.

Grounds:

- a. Our desire is for the restoration of noncompliant churches under the truth of God's Word and our shared confession (1 John 1:9-10; Gal. 6:1).
- b. When synod declares an interpretation of a confession, that interpretation is "settled and binding."

—Adopted

2. That after the conclusion of Synod 2024 all officebearers from churches in noncompliance, by actions or in any form of media, be placed on a limited suspension. That suspension would include a loss of ability to be delegated to classis, synod, the COD, or the CRCNA agencies. Officebearers under limited suspension may attend classis with the privilege of the floor but not as a seated delegate.

Grounds:

- a. Our desire is for people to be in a place where they can act with integrity.
- b. Churches who wish to remain in covenant with the CRCNA must follow the expectations of our shared covenant or release the privileges of the covenant.

—Adopted

3. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to prioritize the development of resources to help classes and churches navigate the process toward repentance and restoration or toward disaffiliation. These resources and the defined process should be in the hands of classes by November 29, 2024.

Churches may continue in the process, provided there is continued momentum toward repentance and restoration through the measurable benchmarks listed under Recommendation 1 above, or toward the disaffiliation process as outlined in Church Order Article 38-f. The classis will submit a biannual report to the Office of General Secretary and to the Council of Delegates on the progress made.

This process is intended to be completed in one year from the beginning of the limited suspension. A classis may lengthen the suspension for up to one additional year provided the church is participating in the process. The entire process may not exceed two years.

Ground:

We desire to provide a uniform and clear process for all the classes of the CRCNA.

—Adopted

4. If a church refuses to engage in the process or prevents the process from moving forward in a timely manner, the classis shall initiate special discipline of the council.

Grounds:

- a. We recognize that currently we are not in unity.
- b. We want to take churches at their word when they say that their convictions are settled according to the proper order and discipline of our church confessions (cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 32; Church Order Art. 78-84.)

—*Adopted*

5. If neither restoration nor disaffiliation is completed after the defined limited suspension, classis is to remove the council and revert the church to an emerging status, placing the church under the authority of a neighboring council.

—*Adopted*

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1926 asserted the right for ecclesiastical assemblies to take decisive disciplinary action even if the Church Order does not stipulate an exact process of action (*Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 329-30). It also made clear that a consistory worthy of discipline had “placed itself outside of the church relationship” (*Acts of Synod 1926*, p. 139).
- b. Classis Hudson in 1992 recognized that one of the churches in its classis had “broken the bonds of fellowship with the denomination and therefore [had] placed themselves outside the fellowship of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 610). Synod itself said that the church that was no longer in fellowship with the denomination would be allowed to participate in synod’s process of appeals if it would “bring itself into conformity with the standards from which it was declared to have deviated” (p. 610).
- c. Although the council’s authority to discipline is original, the CRCNA has long recognized that broader assemblies have delegated authority to discipline narrower assemblies.

—*Adopted*

6. That this be synod’s response to Overture 67 (*deferred from 2023*); Overtures 23, 25-26, 30-31, 33-34; and Communications 8, 12, and 28.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte), Ryan Schreiber (Grand Rapids East), Anita Van Zeumeren (Toronto), Gregg Lawson (Eastern Canada), Gabrielle Veldboom (Niagara), Paul Verhoef (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Phyllis Alberts-Meijers (Toronto), Thomas W. Bomhof (Huron), Maria Leys-Bowater (Kalamazoo), Patricia Ann Bushouse (Hackensack), Michelle Ellis (B.C. North-West), Karen Bastian (Classis Eastern Canada), Robert Loerts (Niagara), Matthew Burns (Atlantic Northeast), Erik Pluemer (Southeast U.S.), Ruth M. Hofman (Toronto), Elizabeth Koning (Chicago South), and Richard DeJong (Chicago South).

The president notes that today is Juneteenth (U.S. holiday commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States) and offers a prayer.

ARTICLE 77

Synod enters into executive session to discuss appeals.

BooHwan Kwak (Hanmi) offers a prayer to begin the session.

Josh Christoffels (Illiana) offers a prayer to close the session.

ARTICLE 78

The morning session recesses at 12:04 p.m. Synod will reconvene in executive session. Vice President Stephen Terpstra (Zeeland) leads in a closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, June 19, 2024

Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 79

The afternoon session convenes at 1:00 p.m.

The president notes that in the interest of time, worship will now include prayer only. He thanks Thrive, the worship convener, and the musicians for their work and offers a prayer.

ARTICLE 80

Synod enters again into executive session to discuss appeals.

During the executive session, Advisory Committee 8, Discipline Matters, Rev. Lora Copley reporting, presented the majority and minority reports of the committee.

The vice president assumes the chair.

I. Response to Appeal 4: Member of Grace CRC and Classis Grand Rapids East (minority report)

The following actions are adopted for the public record:

A. Summary

In fall 2022, Grace CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.) adopted a statement affirming same-sex marriage. Later the council announced that they would not require or process gravamina. In January 2023 a member of Grace CRC appealed to Classis Grand Rapids East to instruct Grace CRC to (1) rescind its affirming statement and policies; (2) express its commitment to CRC confessional teaching; and (3) require officebearers to submit to a gravamen process. In September 2023, Classis Grand Rapids East informed the appellant that the appeal was sustained.

Classis informed the appellant in January 2024 that its response was to form an alignment committee “to listen to churches of classis, to describe where each church is on sexuality issues, and to discuss with each church ways to follow synodical guidelines, given their position and their desire to minister faithfully with all.”

In March 2024 the appellant requested that synod take action, judging that classis' actions were an insufficient response to its sustaining of the appeal. Classis responded that the charge of inaction was incorrect, given (1) the sustaining of the appeal, (2) the formation and actions of an alignment committee, and (3) Grace CRC's reinstatement of the gravamen process.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod sustain Appeal 4.

—*Adopted*

Grounds:

- a. There is a substantive disconnect between the request of the appeal and the response of the classis.
- b. The alignment committee, intended to be the primary evidence of sustaining the appeal, has a mandate insufficient to address the appeal. The mandate of the alignment committee—to listen, to describe, and to discuss ways to follow synodical guidelines, given their position—privileges the church's oppositional position over synodical directives.
- c. There has been an increase of publicly affirming or protesting churches within Classis Grand Rapids East every year since 2020, even within this present year. This underscores the appellant's concern about noncompliance and the alignment committee's ability to address it, as well as concerns about conflicts of interest. The appellant is striving to fulfill biblical and covenantal mandates for discipline (Heb. 12:10-11; Covenant for Officebearers).
- d. The appellant's concern is not isolated. It is preceded by the *in loco* committee's report of 2023, which observed that Classis Grand Rapids East "did not meaningfully engage with, or respond to, the substance of the admonishment that calls out a failure to hold [a church] accountable to the larger body, thereby disrespecting our shared covenants and procedures for how to bring change within the CRCNA" (*Agenda for Synod 2023*, p. 322). The work and report of the *in loco* committee was adopted by synod (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 1027).
- e. The respondent's objection that the appeal is out of order because of an expired time limit is deemed illegitimate, as the respondent created the conditions of ambiguity that made for a late submission.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct Grace CRC to rescind their decisions about same-sex marriage and instruct Classis Grand Rapids East to use the previous decision of Synod 2024 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 891-93) as they come into compliance as a classis.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte), Thomas Bomhof (Huron), Paul Verhoef (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Maria Leys-Bowater (Kalamazoo), Gabrielle Veldboom (Niagara), and Israel Ledee (Chicago South).

The president assumes the chair.

Advisory Committee 8, Discipline Matters, Rev. Lora Copley reporting, presents the following:

II. Response to Appeal 5: Moline CRC and Classis Grand Rapids South

The following actions are adopted for the public record:

A. Summary

In its March 7, 2024, meeting, Moline CRC overtured Classis Grand Rapids South, asking it to “take immediate steps to fully align with synod’s decisions regarding the Human Sexuality Report.”

The church’s overture consisted of two parts:

1. asking for an acknowledgment of inaction regarding “clear and stated noncompliance”
2. requesting specific action steps to promote full alignment with synodical decisions

These steps would involve the reinstating of the practice of church visitation to urge noncompliant officebearers/churches toward repentance, and the beginning of special discipline of officebearers who remained “knowingly noncompliant.”

Moline CRC referenced the following as instances of noncompliance:

1. overtures submitted to reverse the decision of 2022
2. classis delegates to Synod 2023 walking out of Synod 2023 in protest
3. no classical discussions about what “guiding into compliance” means
4. a church’s taking of a vote to change bylaws to become an affirming church (the vote was unsuccessful)

The overture to Classis Grand Rapids South was not adopted. Because it was an overture requesting a specific action of the classis, it is not possible for Moline CRC to bring their overture forward to synod.

In this appeal to synod, Moline CRC appeals the decision of Classis Grand Rapids South not to adopt its overture, seeing that as further evidence of the classis’ failure to guide its churches into compliance. The appeal requests “that synod take immediate and specific steps to help Grand Rapids South” fully align with synod’s decisions, steps of acknowledgment, admonishment, oversight, and possible discipline.

Classis Grand Rapids South responded to the appeal, arguing that Moline CRC is (1) failing to “acknowledge accepted procedures and practices of the CRCNA,” (2) not exhibiting “compassionate patience encouraged by synod

and the general secretary,” and (3) not presenting “an accurate picture of churches in Classis Grand Rapids South.” No churches or officebearers are “promoting same-sex marriage,” stated the classis; rather, there is a conflation of “perceived inaction” for “subtle approval.”

Both appellant and respondent met with Advisory Committee 8, each for the same amount of time, giving statements and answering questions.

B. Decision

That synod not sustain Appeal 5.

Grounds:

- a. Failure to adopt Moline CRC’s overture does not demonstrate actionable, public noncompliance. Instances cited by Moline CRC do not rise to the level of noncompliance.
- b. Classis Grand Rapids South demonstrated sufficient consideration, given the lack of clarity within our current context.
- c. The concerns of Moline CRC will be more clearly addressed at Synod 2024 by its responses to its overtures.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote is recorded: Cory Nederveld (Georgetown).

ARTICLE 81

Synod returns to open session.

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 51.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services and Structure I, Rev. Joseph Vanden Akker reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overtures 28-29 (majority report)

A. Materials

Overtures 28-29, pp. 489-95

B. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that any and all unrepented sin, including all sin addressed by Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87 and Q&A 108, is a salvation issue.

Ground: The Scriptures and confessional standards (particularly Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87) make clear that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 does address a salvation issue and that unchastity and sexual ethics are salvation issues.

2. That synod declare that it is a serious deviation from Scripture and the teachings of the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church to teach that unrepented sin is not a salvation issue, including the sins addressed in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87 and Q&A 108.

Grounds:

- a. Officebearers in the CRCNA are denying that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 (and implicitly Q&A 87) are salvation issues.

- b. It is a serious deviation from the teachings of the CRCNA to reclassify that which is a matter of salvation as a disputable or questionable issue or some other classification; such serious deviations from the clear teachings of Scripture and our confessions endanger the unity of the flock entrusted to the officebearers' care.
 - c. This action is in keeping with the established guidance of Synod 2022 (see *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 897-98).
3. That this be synod's answer to Overtures 28-29.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report regarding the response to Overtures 28-29 is presented as information, Rev. Henry Kranenburg reporting:

Response to Overtures 28-29 (minority report)

A. Materials

Overtures 28-29, pp. 489-95

B. Recommendations

1. That synod not accede to Overture 29.

Grounds:

- a. Scripture is already clear that all sin, including unrepented sin, is a "salvation issue" (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21), as is reflected in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87, and therefore does not need a statement to declare that.
- b. The term "salvation issue" is not clearly defined. When linked to a particular "unrepented sin," it is understood by some to mean that such sin is equally in need of the saving grace of Christ (hence "any and all"). Others hear it as saying that this particular unrepented sin is more worthy of eternal damnation than other unrepented sins. This lack of clarity is unhelpful and open to misinterpretation, especially to persons struggling with sin.
- c. The Covenant for Officebearers already makes clear that officebearers will be formed by, governed by, and shaped by the confessions and that confessional-difficulty gravamina do not give permission to teach or deny what has been subscribed to.
- d. Synod has already addressed classes and church visitors on matters of bringing officebearers into compliance and is currently working through matters of discipline and gravamina, and therefore does not need an additional statement of compliance and discipline.
- e. Synod in its decisions of 2022 and 2023 clearly defined "unchastity" and declared that definition to have confessional status, calling churches to minister to persons who wrestle with that decision or the ethics it addresses; it is not pastorally helpful or necessary to declare again what is already clear while churches are ministering to their members, including officebearers.

- f. Overture 29, while wanting to affirm and apply decisions the denomination has already made, does not consider how dealing with sin might incorporate scriptural instruction—such as Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:15ff. dealing with a brother or sister who sins, or the instruction of Galatians 6:1 to “gently restore” the sinner—which needs to be considered in the discussion.
2. That synod not accede to Overture 28.

Grounds:

- a. Overture 28, as presented, does not meet the high standards of definition and articulation needed for declaring a heresy as outlined in the *Acts of Synod 2022* (pp. 843-44).
- b. This is consistent with the majority report recommendation regarding Overture 28.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to the consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee’s majority report.

A motion is made to move to the minority report.

—*Defeated*

Response to Overtures 28-29 (majority report)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that any and all unrepented sin, including all sin addressed by Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87 and Q&A 108, is a salvation issue.

Ground: The Scriptures and confessional standards (particularly unrepented sin) make clear that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 does address a salvation issue and that unchastity and sexual ethics are salvation issues.

2. That synod declare that it is a serious deviation from Scripture and the teachings of the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church to teach that unrepented sin is not a salvation issue, including the sins addressed in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87 and Q&A 108.

Grounds:

- a. Officebearers in the CRCNA are denying that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 (and implicitly Q&A 87) are salvation issues.
 - b. It is a serious deviation from the teachings of the CRCNA to reclassify that which is a matter of salvation as a disputable or questionable issue or some other classification; such serious deviations from the clear teachings of Scripture and our confessions endanger the unity of the flock entrusted to the officebearers’ care.
 - c. This action is in keeping with the established guidance of Synod 2022 (see *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 897-98).
3. That this be synod’s answer to Overtures 28-29.
- Luann Sankey (Central California) offers prayer.

—*Defeated*

A motion is made to move to the minority report.

—*Adopted*

Response to Overtures 28-29 (minority report)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod not accede to Overture 29.

Grounds:

- a. Scripture is already clear that all sin, including unrepented sin, is a “salvation issue” (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21), as is reflected in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 87, and therefore does not need a statement to declare that.
- b. The term “salvation issue” is not clearly defined. When linked to a particular “unrepented sin,” it is understood by some to mean that such sin is equally in need of the saving grace of Christ (hence “any and all”). Others hear it saying that this particular unrepented sin is more worthy of eternal damnation than other unrepented sins. This lack of clarity is unhelpful and open to misinterpretation, especially to persons struggling with sin.
- c. The Covenant for Officebearers already makes clear that officebearers will be formed by, governed by, and shaped by the confessions and that confessional-difficulty gravamina do not give permission to teach or deny what has been subscribed to.
- d. Synod has already addressed classes and church visitors on matters of bringing officebearers into compliance and is currently working through matters of discipline and gravamina, and therefore does not need an additional statement of compliance and discipline.
- e. Synod in its decisions of 2022 and 2023 clearly defined “unchastity” and declared that definition to have confessional status, calling churches to minister to those who wrestle with that decision or the ethics it addresses; it is not pastorally helpful or necessary to declare again what is already clear while churches are ministering to their members, including officebearers.
- f. Overture 29, while wanting to affirm and apply decisions the denomination has already made, does not consider how dealing with sin might incorporate scriptural instruction—such as Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:15ff. dealing with a brother or sister who sins, or the instruction of Galatians 6:1 to “gently restore” the sinner—which needs to be considered in the discussion.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod not accede to Overture 28.

Grounds:

- a. Overture 28, as presented, does not meet the high standards of definition and articulation needed for declaring a heresy as outlined in the *Acts of Synod 2022* (pp. 843-44).

- b. This is consistent with the majority report recommendation regarding Overture 28.

— *Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Chad Werkhoven (Minnkota), Herb Kraker (Georgetown), Herb Schreur (Northcentral Iowa), David Bosma (Minnkota), John Meinders (Minnkota), David Dick (Lake Superior), and Samuel van Huizen (Lake Superior).

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 continues in Article 84.)

ARTICLE 82

Mark Mohrlang (Pacific Northwest) offers a prayer.

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 43.)

Advisory Committee 7, Financial and Administrative Matters, Rev. Jonathan Westra reporting, presents the following:

Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (sections IV, D-E, including Appendix I), pp. 46-48, 193-220
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (sections I, D; II, I, 1-5; including Appendices F, G, I, J, and K)

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements of the agencies and educational institutions (IV, E, 5; Appendix I).

— *Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to ensure that the updated financial report be published in the supplement to the *Agenda for Synod*.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary provide a clear mandate to the synodical finance and administration advisory committee about its role with respect to the denominational financial reports.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod receive the report of the COD on the continued Review of Ministry Shares Reimagined and its recommendations for adoption and consider this report as completing the task assigned by Synod 2023 regarding this continued review (IV, E, 2, b; COD Supplement II, I, 1; Appendix I).

— *Adopted*

5. That synod receive for information the report of the COD regarding clergy couples and pension benefits in response to the instruction of Synod 2023 (COD Supplement II, I, 2; Appendix J).

— *Adopted*

6. That synod receive for information the report of the COD regarding short-term illness insurance in response to the instructions of Synod 2022 (COD Supplement II, I, 3; Appendix K).

— *Adopted*

7. That synod adopt the following proposed changes (indicated by strikethrough and underline) to Church Order Supplement, Article 15 (COD Supplement II, I, 4, b):

Guidelines for Churches Whose Ministers Receive Salary Support from Other Employment

1. The church is responsible for a total compensation package proportionate to the time spent in ministry to the church (forty-eight hours equals full time). The compensation package shall ordinarily be based on synodically stated minimum salary, fringe benefits, and housing costs.
2. Since the compensation package includes a percentage allowance for health insurance, the minister is expected to secure adequate health insurance for the minister and the minister's family.
3. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
4. ~~The minister shall receive pension credits in the Ministers' Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church.~~ Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured for ministers who work at least 20 hours per week as long as a ~~if~~ full contribution to the Ministers' Pension Plan is made.
5. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not exceed sixty hours per week.

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

(*Amended Acts of Synod 2024*, p. _____)

— *Adopted*

Note: Synod 2024 adopted further changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 15 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 852). Both sets of changes to Supplement, Article 15 will be reviewed by Synod 2025 for adoption before being included in the published Church Order and Its Supplements.

ARTICLE 83

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 55.)

Advisory Committee 5, Congregational Care and Justice, Rev. Anthony DeKorte reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (sections II, C, 4-5; II, D, 1-2; III, D, 4; including Appendix A), pp. 28-30, 34-35, 61-62
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (sections I, D; II, B-C, E-H; including Appendices B, C, E, and H)
3. Overture 46 (Agenda Supplement)

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of the COD's report on "Gather" events as general secretary Zachary King presents highlights about "Gather" to synod delegates (section II, D, 1 and Appendix A, pp. 61-62).

— *Adopted*

Synod views a video highlighting a recent "Gather" event that brings together Christian Reformed leaders from across North America in the spirit of fellowship, encouragement, and renewal. The video includes examples of ways in which CRC leaders can learn from each other and celebrate how God is working in their communities.

2. That synod note that the mandate of the "Report on Virtual Churches" is limited to virtual churches and not online permutations of traditional in-person churches.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod encourage the Virtual Church Team to highlight the portions of their work related to online portions of traditional in-person churches or hybrid churches (section II, D, 2, pp. 29-30).

— *Adopted*

4. That synod receive for information the report on CRCNA statements on social, economic, or political matters in response to the task assigned by Synod 2023 regarding Overture 3: Refocus Ecclesiological Communication (COD Supplement, section II, B; Appendix B).

— *Adopted*

5. That synod receive for information the Intercultural Ministries (Canada) report (COD Supplement section II, C; Appendix C).

— *Adopted*

6. That synod celebrate six years of observance of the Day of Justice and recognize its continued expression in ongoing venues (COD Supplement section II, G).

—*Adopted*

7. That synod take note of the COD's updates toward addressing Synod 2019's directives regarding abuse of power (section III, D, 4).

—*Adopted*

8. That synod adopt the following changes to the Church Order proposed by Synod 2023 in relation to the Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders (section III, D, 4, d, 2).

Proposed changes to Article 5 and its Supplement

Add the following new Article 5-b and Supplement, Article 5-b to the current Church Order Article 5 and its Supplement (the existing Article 5 and its Supplement would become Article 5-a and Supplement, Article 5-a; additions are indicated by underline).

Article 5-b

All officebearers shall uphold the standards of behavior summarized in the CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 5-b

Supplement, Article 5-b

[The full text of the CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders, as presented in the Acts of Synod 2023, pp. 998-1002, would become the text of Church Order Supplement, Article 5-b.]

Proposed change to Church Order Supplement, Article 13-c, section c (addition indicated by underline)

The duties of the minister are spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling, and such duties do not conflict with the minister's commitment to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church as required by one's signature to the Covenant for Officebearers and as articulated in the Code of Conduct.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Cory Nederveld (Georgetown) and Herbert Scheur (Northcentral Iowa).

9. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 46.

—*Adopted*

II. Committee for Contact with the Government/Centre for Public Dialogue

A. Materials

Report of the Committee for Contact with the Government/Centre for Public Dialogue, pp. 251-53

B. Recommendations

1. That synod acknowledge and thank Mike Hogeterp, director of the Centre for Public Dialogue (CPD), for his 21 years of service to this ministry.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod receive the CCG/CPD report for information.

— *Adopted*

III. Indigenous Ministry (Canada)

A. Materials

Indigenous Ministry Canada report, pp. 257-59

B. Recommendations

1. That synod thank Adrian Jacobs for his ongoing work as senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod receive the Indigenous Ministry (Canada) report for information.

— *Adopted*

Karen Bastian (Eastern Canada) offers prayer in French.

IV. Thrive

A. Materials

Thrive report, pp. 277-82

B. Recommendations

1. That synod receive the report from Thrive for information.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod note an increase in the time churches are searching for ministers. The average length of time without a minister has increased to more than three years. Thrive is in conversation to help address the shortage of available ministers. Thrive is also providing tools to help churches without ministers.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod note the increased amount of requests that Thrive has received (particularly the work formerly done by Pastor Church Resources and Safe Church Ministry) to engage in conflict resolution among church leaders. These conflicts are between pastors and councils as well as between pastors serving at the same church.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod commend codirectors Lesli van Milligen and Chris Schoon for their work leading Thrive.

— *Adopted*

Anthony DeKorte (Arizona) offers prayer.

V. Response to Overture 68 (*Deferred from 2023*) and Overture 45

A. Materials

1. Overture 68 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 390-91
2. Overture 45, pp. 531-39
3. Communication 1, p. 540

B. Recommendations

1. That synod remind classes of the support that Thrive offers for churches that are seeking to disaffiliate from the CRC.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod encourage classis leaders to familiarize themselves with their responsibility to offer support through a church's disaffiliation process.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to pay particular attention to the needs of disaffiliating churches and of classes who are supporting them to ensure that the proper support is available.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod declare this to be its response to deferred Overture 68 and Overture 45.

Grounds:

- a. These overtures do not recognize the resources already available.
- b. Thrive is already prepared to offer sufficient resources to churches who are going through the discernment process about leaving the denomination.
- c. Thrive is prepared to give guidance and advice should churches eventually deem it wise for them to leave the denomination.
- d. The current process is not punitive when congregations are helpfully guided to this end.

—*Adopted*

VI. Response to Overture 69 (*Deferred from 2023*): Enable Listening to Facilitate Discernment

A. Materials

Overture 69 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 392-401

B. Recommendations

1. That synod remind officebearers that they are already permitted to collaborate with others on confessional-revision gravamina to be individually submitted.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod not accede to Overture 69.

Grounds:

- a. The request of the overture is already consistent with Church Order.

- b. Thrive is already providing such resources—specifically, the *Cross-roads Discernment Toolkit* and *Challenging Conversations: Next Steps Discernment*.
 - c. The practicality of a survey, as proposed in the overture, would likely generate a limited response. Also, many churches have already found others with similar outlooks through informal networks.
 - d. The CRCNA ministries are already using direct pathways to articulate their challenges through appropriate channels under the COD and the ministry boards.
 - e. Matters of discipline (specifically as noted in Overture 69, Recommendation E) are under the purview of Advisory Committee 8.
- Adopted

VII. Response to Overtures 8-9

A. Materials

Overtures 8-9, pp. 429-31

B. Background

We lament that racism continues to be present in our world. We wish to build on the work of previous synods. We recognize that churches are already encouraged to engage in racial reconciliation and must continue in that work.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod ask the Office of General Secretary to continue to encourage churches' and individuals' growth in this vital area, including the use of *God's Diverse and Unified Family* as well as related programs such as Hearts Exchanged.
- Adopted
2. That synod encourage churches to utilize the resources mentioned in recommendation 1 for confession and lament in worship services.
- Adopted
3. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 8 and 9.

Grounds:

- a. The truth of the statement from Synod 1996 has not changed. We need to be reminded of the necessity for reconciliation.
- b. The report *God's Diverse and Unified Family* "demonstrates that the Bible declares this reconciled community to be God's will" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 513).
- c. "The confessions declare that the catholicity of the church means that Christ 'gathers, protects, and preserves' the church 'out of the whole human race' (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21)" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 513).

- d. Hebrews 12:14 says: “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy.”
- e. Church Order Article 79-a states, “The members of the church are accountable to one another in their doctrine and life and have the responsibility to encourage and admonish one another in love.”
- f. The requests of Synod 1996 to classes (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 514) have not been fully and universally implemented by the classes of the CRCNA.

— *Adopted*

VIII. Response to Overture 10: Suspend the Work of the Dignity Team

A. Materials

Overture 10, pp. 431-33

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to this overture.

Grounds:

- a. The Dignity Team is very new. To accede to the overture’s request that the Dignity Team develop its own “just process for the determination of abuse” risks losing the unique pastoral function of the Dignity Team, confusing its role with the other synodically appointed processes.
- b. The CRCNA has a variety of such juridical processes available to claimants: the Church Order Article 30-a appeals process and the Article 30-c Judicial Code process as well as an advisory panel process and a proposed Thrive investigations process. The Dignity Team is designed to complement but not duplicate such juridical approaches.
- c. Since its inception, the Dignity Team has been overwhelmed with requests. The volume and nature of those requests has clarified for both the COD and the Dignity Team the need to clarify aspects of its original mandate. We anticipate that the Dignity Team will present a revised mandate to the COD by its October 2024 or February 2025 meeting cycles for eventual approval by Synod 2025.

— *Adopted*

IX. Response to Overture 11: Appoint a Committee to Explore the Need for a CRCNA Licensing Board for CRCNA Pastors

A. Materials

Overture 11, pp. 434-36

B. Recommendations

- 1. That synod thank Judy De Wit for the overture.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to look at the issues of accountability mentioned within Overture 11 and report to Synod 2026 on how to address them within Reformed polity.

Grounds:

- a. Having a CRCNA licensing board that would exist outside of existing CRCNA structures would conflict with CRCNA church polity.
- b. Classis positions and procedures, including the roles of church visitors and Safe Church representatives, exist to address the abuse issues mentioned in this overture.
- c. The Safe Church ministry already exists to listen to victims of abuse and to help councils address abuse situations.
- d. The Safe Church ministry has seen an increase in its workload of addressing abuse in recent years.
- e. The Dignity Team has been created recently and has started to do work similar to what this overture seeks.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 11.

—*Adopted*

X. Response to Overture 12: Ensure that Advisory Committees Review and Present All Pertinent Information When Synod Receives Overtures or Appeals on Abuse

A. Materials

Overture 12, pp. 436-37

B. Recommendation

1. That synod thank Judy De Wit for the overture and recognize the need of people who have been abused to be heard.
2. That synod not accede to this overture.

Ground: There are necessary limitations to the amount and type of information that a synod can process.

—*Adopted*

XI. Response to Overture 14: Regarding Belgic Confession Article 36

A. Materials

Overture 14, pp. 439-50

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to this overture.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1985 moved the final paragraph of Belgic Confession Article 36 to a footnote (*Acts of Synod 1985*, pp. 788-89). The footnote is still available in denominationally provided resources for discussion if churches or individuals want to use it.

2. A change to a confession requires a high bar and substantial effort.

— Adopted

XII. Response to Overture 16: Solicit Resources for LGBTQ Ministry from the Churches

A. Materials

Overture 16, pp. 454-56

B. Recommendations

1. That synod recognize the work of Thrive in providing resources for use by CRCNA churches and of the Office of General Secretary in promoting the official position of the CRCNA on the denominational website.

— Adopted

2. That synod encourage churches to avail themselves of the resources mentioned in the grounds below (see Recommendation 4).

— Adopted

3. That synod encourage churches in agreement with the CRC's position on human sexuality that are engaged with the LGBTQ+ community to share their work with the Office of General Secretary to be considered for inclusion on the CRCNA website page that is continually being developed.

— Adopted

4. That synod not accede to Overture 16.

Grounds:

- a. At the request of the Office of General Secretary following Synod 2023, Thrive began gathering information on resources being utilized by churches. They provided a basic level of vetting of the material. The resources are available at crcna.org/SexualityResources.
- b. Thrive offers funding to help create new cohorts and offers a level of accountability. A group of CRC churches in Toronto exercised their option to create a group called the LGBTQ+ Hospitality Cohort. They have made their learnings available to the denomination. Any churches can avail themselves of the opportunity to join a cohort.
- c. Surveys typically lead to limited responses. The more proactive approach being used by Thrive is more likely to be successful.

— Adopted

XIII. Response to Communication 10

A. Materials

Communication 10, pp. 572-76

B. Recommendation

That synod thank Lain Martinez Vasquez for the pastoral heart displayed in Communication 10 and that it be received for information. Sharing stories like this requires courage.

— Adopted

ARTICLE 84

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 81.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services and Structure I, Rev. Joseph Vanden Akker reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (sections I; II, A-B; II, C, 1-3; III, A; III, D, 1-3, 6; III, E; IV, A-B; IV, C, 1-3, 5-8; IV, E-J; including Appendix D), pp. 23-24, 26-28, 31, 33-34, 36-46; 48-53; 170-75
2. Council of Delegates Supplement report (sections I, A-F; II, A; including Appendices A and D)

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Council of Delegates, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod extend the *Our Journey 2025* Ministry Plan to 2030 with the appropriate evaluation and updated communications strategy (section II).

Grounds:

- a. The *Our Journey 2025* Ministry Plan was developed with feedback from the congregations and classes during 2018 and 2019. It was approved by the Council of Delegates on behalf of synod at its special meeting in June 2020 (*Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates 2020*, pp. 421-23). However, implementation of the ministry plan in its early years was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b. In significant ways, the milestones of *Our Journey 2025* still represent a timely, critical, and ongoing call for CRCNA congregations, classes, agencies, and institutions.
- c. Now is not an opportune time to develop an entirely new ministry plan while the current one largely fits well in the present context. Staff time would better be spent evaluating and strengthening the current ministry plan.
- d. Recent synodical directives such as developing a plan to reverse membership decline (Synod 2023) call for a ministry plan that is oriented toward congregational renewal like *Our Journey 2025*.
- e. The Ministry Leadership Council has made this recommendation.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the COD as part of the “appropriate evaluation and update” process to review the wording and intent of pillar three (Grow in

Diversity) and underlying materials in light of concerns that the emphasis of this pillar should be on the virtue of hospitality rather than on the fulfillment of ethnicity quotas, and to report back to synod 2025.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod express gratitude to Edward Bosveld, Cindy de Jong, and Kim Rhodes for their years of service to the denomination on the Judicial Code Committee (section III, D, 1, a).

—*Adopted*

4. That synod approve the work of the COD regarding the interim appointment of Sally Larsen as the Classis Chicago South delegate. Her term ends June 30, 2024, and she decided not to pursue a second term (section IV, B, 1).

—*Adopted*

5. That synod thank COD members who are retiring from or concluding service on the Council of Delegates for their faithful service and significant contributions to the denomination (section IV, B, 2).

—*Adopted*

Doug Fakkema (Pacific Northwest) offers prayer.

6. That synod approve the work of the COD in securing Redeemer University in Ancaster, Ontario, as the location for Synod 2025 (section IV, C, 2, a).

Grounds:

- a. Due to a construction project, Dordt University is no longer able to host Synod 2025, as approved by Synod 2022 (*Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 940).
- b. Planning and contracts with the venue needed to begin immediately to ensure a successful synod in 2025; therefore this change of plans fit into the COD's mandate to make decisions that cannot await action by the next synod.
- c. This change aligns with the request of First CRC in Chatham, Ontario, to be the convening church of Synod 2025 in anticipation of celebrating 100 years of the Christian Reformed Church in Ontario.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod accept the invitation of First CRC in Chatham, Ontario, to serve as the convening church of Synod 2025, to be held in Ancaster, Ontario, on the campus of Redeemer University (section IV, C, 2, a).

Ground:

First CRC of Chatham will celebrate 100 years in 2026. This marks not only 100 years for First CRC but also 100 years of the Christian Reformed Church in Ontario.

One hundred years ago Classis Grand Rapids East and Oakdale Park CRC took an interest in a small group of immigrants in Chatham and

provided them with financial and spiritual support. First CRC was established in 1926. In the late 1940s and early 1950s First CRC sent representatives to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to greet new Dutch immigrants and help them find work and land.

Since then CRC members, many of whom spent time at First CRC in Chatham or had relatives who did, established Christian Reformed churches and Christian schools throughout Ontario.

We would like to celebrate not only our 100-year anniversary but also 100 years of God's faithfulness to the CRC and its members in Ontario.

—*Adopted*

8. That synod approve Calvin University as the location for Synod 2026 (section IV, C, 2, b).

Grounds:

- a. Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary started as one school in 1876. They have asked to host synod as a way to cap off their joint celebration of 150 years.
- b. This request aligns with the decision of Synod 2019 to have no more than one in four synods outside of Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- c. The estimated savings of having Synod 2026 meet at Calvin University would exceed \$150,000.

—*Adopted*

9. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the COD for synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies (section IV, C, 5).

—*Adopted*

10. That synod update the Rules for Synodical Procedure, section V, B, 10 ("Supplementary Reports"), to include Thrive among the agencies reporting to synod through the COD (additions in underline, deletions in ~~striketrough~~) (section IV, C, 8).

The Council of Delegates of the CRCNA, including reports by ReFrame Ministries, ~~and~~ Resonate Global Mission, and Thrive; 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.

—*Adopted*

11. 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 2024 (section IV, E, 1).

—*Adopted*

II. Judicial Code Review Team

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, A; Appendix A)
2. Communication 27, Agenda Supplement

B. Recommendations

1. That synod receive the report of the Judicial Code Review Team, adopt its recommended changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures, and approve the revised text of Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c.

Note: The changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures, are as follows (additions underlined, deletions in ~~strikethrough~~):

Supplement, Article 30-c

JUDICIAL CODE OF RIGHTS AND PROCEDURES

Preamble to the Judicial Code

Synod 1977 adopted the first edition of the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures. It did so to “encourage greater uniformity of procedure throughout our denomination when charges must be adjudicated.” The belief is that this Code “will help to insure just treatment of those who are involved in the judgment and decisions of the church” and that providing “impartial judgments among God’s people” is required by Scripture (Deut. 1:16-17; Deut. 16:18-20; Lev. 19:15; 1 Tim. 5:19-21). “Procedural guidelines” are needed to deal with substantive issues in an appropriate and “ecclesiastical manner” (Church Order, Article 28), and, according to synod, the Judicial Code provides this “procedural pattern within which the law of love may be fulfilled (cf. James 2:1, 8-9).”

However, the Judicial Code should not be considered as providing a means of broad applicability for resolving disputes. Rather, the Judicial Code is intended to be a dispute-resolution mechanism of last resort because judicial hearings and subsequent decisions of assemblies will likely never fully satisfy the parties involved. Thus, complete reconciliation may not be achieved. Rather, the focus of Judicial Code hearings and of the resultant decisions made by the assemblies is not primarily on reconciliation but on some kind of final resolution. While the Judicial Code does provide rights for all parties and a fair process toward resolution, it does not purport to restore the mutual trust that may have been lost as any given dispute may have raged and festered.

Before invoking the rights afforded under the Judicial Code, brothers and sisters in Christ should make every effort to resolve issues between them amicably, according to the teachings of Scripture. If they require external assistance to reach agreement, they should, where appropriate, seek trained facilitators or mediators to help them reach agreement. A

process of mediation led by neutral parties may facilitate a more satisfactory resolution.

One of the ways in which issues can be resolved more amicably is to use restorative justice practices. Synod 2005 encouraged “the active participation of churches and church members in restorative justice efforts in order to restore and reconcile victims and offenders where possible, and to effect, as far as possible, the establishment of justice for all members of our societies.” It also urged “congregations, schools, denominational offices, other Christian institutions, and homes to employ restorative justice practices” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 761-62). These practices bring with them greater potential for true reconciliation.

On the other hand, mediation or restorative justice practices are not necessarily appropriate for charges involving physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Such charges should be dealt with in the first instance by way of the Advisory Panel Process approved by synod and associated with the denomination’s Safe Church Ministry (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 866; *Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 497-502).

Thus, even if written charges have been filed and a formal hearing has been requested, the assembly must still make a determination as to whether or not sufficient means for resolution, formal or informal, have or have not been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing the judicial hearing while further efforts are undertaken. Only after the assembly determines that sufficient means have been exhausted or that such means do not resolve the matter, should the assembly proceed to conduct a judicial hearing as set forth below.

The scope of the Judicial Code is limited to “disputes arising from allegations of offenses against the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order are subject to resolution under the Judicial Code.” While these issues may have civil or criminal legal aspects, the Judicial Code is not intended to supplant or displace the civil or criminal legal processes that may apply in these situations. Rather, the purpose of the Judicial Code is to provide a fair process for determining and adjudicating the ecclesiastical consequences of disputes which fall within its scope. Assemblies should obtain qualified legal counsel to address questions of civil or criminal liability.

Section 1: Scope of the Judicial Code
[no changes]

Section 2: Judicial Rights

- a. Both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be represented or counseled by ~~a member~~ one or two members of the CRC in any judicial hearing. The requirement of church membership

may be waived at the reasonable discretion of the assembly that is hearing the case.

- b. Except when the assembly withdraws to decide the issues raised in the judicial hearing, the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to be present at the judicial hearing and at the judicial hearing considering an appeal from a judicial hearing.
- c. Except as limited in Section 5, a, both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to have witnesses examined in their presence.
- d. Both the complainant and the respondent may appeal by right the decision of the assembly to the assembly next in order.
- e. The provisions of the Judicial Code shall apply to all appeals from decisions resulting from the judicial hearing on a complaint.
- f. No member or group of the CRC, nor any person connected with the matter, shall circulate, or cause to be circulated, any written or printed arguments or briefs upon any complaints before the final disposition of same, including appeals, if any.
- g. Assuring due process and natural justice shall be the guiding principle in the interpretation and application of the Judicial Code.
- h. All judicial hearings shall be conducted in a considerate and Christian manner.

Section 3: Procedures for Filing Written Charges

- a. Written charges may be filed by
 - i) a member of the CRC against another member or against an assembly;
 - ii) an assembly against another assembly or against a member;
 - iii) a person who is not a member of the CRC against a member or assembly of the CRC, provided such person has been directly affected as an individual by the charged offense;
 - iv) a member of the CRC against an agency, board, or committee;
 - v) an assembly against an agency, board, or committee;
 - vi) an employee of an agency, board, or committee against an agency, board, or committee, excluding challenges to termination of employment;
 - vii) a member who has been suspended by a consistory, or a person who has been excluded from membership by a consistory. Such persons may file written charges in order to obtain a review by classis of the suspension or exclusion. In the Judicial Code proceeding, the role of classis shall be as follows (cf. Supplement, Art. 78-81, d):
 - 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed.

- 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person.
- 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline.

b. Prerequisites:

- i) If the allegation is abuse on the part of a church leader as defined by the CRC's Safe Church Ministry's Advisory Panel Process, the complainant shall first have exhausted that process in accordance with the procedures and standards of confidentiality outlined therein and in lieu of the procedures under Sections 2-5 of this Code, to the point of obtaining a decision by the council of the church leader. Both parties have the right of appeal to classis as provided in Sections 6-7.
- ii) No written charges against an agency, board, or committee may be filed until the complainant shall first have exhausted all reasonable and direct efforts according to procedures prescribed by such agency, board, or committee to resolve the appellant's complaint or grievance internally.

c. Time limits:

- i) There is no time limit for filing a written charge of sexual abuse. Allegations of sexual abuse against a church leader shall first be made in accord with the Advisory Panel Process associated with the CRC's Safe Church Ministry.
- ii) An allegation of non-sexual abuse of a minor may be filed at any time before the complainant reaches age twenty-five (25). However, allegations of non-sexual abuse of a minor shall first be made in accord with the Advisory Panel Process associated with the CRC's Safe Church Ministry.
- iii) All other written charges must be filed within three (3) years of the date on which the offense is alleged to have occurred.

- d. A person or an assembly filing a written charge shall be called the complainant, and the person or assembly against whom the written charge is filed shall be called the respondent.
- e. A written charge must be filed with an assembly, must set forth the alleged offense, must specify the facts relied upon to support the written charge, including, as far as possible, the time and place of the offense, and must state whether a judicial hearing is requested.
- f. A written charge shall not allege more than one offense. Several written charges against the same respondent may be presented and decided jointly, but a decision on each written charge must be made separately.

- g. The complainant shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy of the written charge to the respondent at the same time as it is filed with the assembly.
- h. Within sixty (60) days after the written charge is filed, the respondent shall file an answer with the assembly and shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy to the complainant. If the complainant did not request a judicial hearing, the respondent shall indicate in the answer whether a judicial hearing is requested.
- i. Jurisdiction of assemblies
 - i) A written charge against a member of the CRC shall be filed by the complainant with the council of the local church of which the respondent is a member.
 - ii) A written charge against an assembly, or against a consistory as provided in Section 3 a, vii shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly next in order (the order being council, classis, and synod).
 - iii) A written charge against an agency, board, or committee, including its agent or employees, shall be filed by the complainant with the assembly to which the agency, board, or committee is responsible.
 - iv) If a council or an agency, board, or committee of classis is the respondent, the judicial hearing shall be before the classis and in accordance with the hearing procedures set forth in Sections 2-5.
 - v) If a classis or an agency, board, or committee of synod is the respondent, the judicial hearing shall be before the Judicial Code Committee in accordance with the procedures set forth in Sections 2-5.

Section 4: Pre-hearing Procedures

- a. Except for good cause, the judicial hearing shall commence within six (6) months of the filing of written charges.
- b. The Office of General Secretary will maintain a roster of volunteers who are willing to provide assistance to complainants and respondents with respect to pre-hearing procedures. The roster will be provided to any complainant or respondent upon request. The role of these volunteer advisers is to advise a party regarding preparation of witness and exhibit lists, and any other advance disclosures or written submissions that a party may be required or choose to make in advance of a hearing. The party remains responsible for preparing all pre-hearing submissions; the volunteer is not required to do so. A volunteer is not required to give substantive advice regarding the merits of any charges. A party is not required to make use of such a volunteer, and the unavailability of a volunteer shall not be grounds for appeal of any decision rendered following a judicial hearing.

- bc. After consulting with the complainant and the respondent, the assembly shall set the time and place for the judicial hearing on the written charge. At least forty-five (45) days before the judicial hearing, the date must be fixed and the parties notified.
- ed. No later than thirty (30) days before the judicial hearing, the parties shall cause to be delivered to the other party and the assembly a list of witnesses to be called to testify and a copy of the exhibits to be offered at the judicial hearing. At the judicial hearing, each party shall be limited to the witnesses and the exhibits disclosed, unless the party can establish that the witness or exhibit was not discovered until after the deadline.
- de. The assembly may, in its discretion, require further advance disclosures by the parties concerning the witnesses, documents, evidence, and arguments that they intend to present at the hearing.
- ef. When a written charge is filed with a council or classis, that council or classis shall serve as the judicial body, which shall include all members of the assembly except those who have a conflict of interest. Any members having a conflict of interest shall recuse themselves.
- fg. Either the complainant or the respondent may challenge the impartiality of a member on grounds of self-interest or that member's relationship with or responsibility to a participant in the judicial hearing. If the assembly decides by majority vote that the challenge has merit, the member shall be recused from the judicial hearing.
- gh. Before the hearing, the assembly may ~~shall~~ determine whether the written charges are substantial enough to warrant a hearing. This may be done by the assembly on the basis of the written charge, the answer, the proposed exhibits, and, if the assembly so desires, an informal conference with the parties and their representatives. The assembly may delegate the review of information and the informal conference to a committee, but after receiving a report from the committee, the assembly must make the determination with written grounds. This determination shall be conducted in a confidential manner to protect the reputations of the people involved and to protect the impartiality of the judicial assembly if the charge moves forward. A decision by a council or a classis that a charge is not substantial may be appealed.
- hi. If requested by either the complainant or the respondent, or in the discretion of the assembly, the assembly may direct that the proceeding shall be kept confidential and shall not be published by any participant. All participants shall be notified on the record of the non-publication directive.

Section 5: Judicial Hearing Procedures

- a. A judicial hearing, if ordered, shall proceed as follows:
 - i) Each party may make an opening statement summarizing what that party expects to prove.
 - ii) The complainant shall proceed first with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits, and may be permitted by the assembly in its discretion to present rebuttal proofs.
 - iii) The respondent shall then proceed with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits.
 - iv) The receipt of evidence shall not be controlled by formal rules of evidence. The administration of oaths shall not be required.
 - v) At the request of either party, the presiding officer may exclude any evidence if the presiding officer determines that admitting such evidence would be irrelevant, untrustworthy, or fundamentally unfair.
 - vi) Both parties are permitted to question witnesses that testify at a judicial hearing unless the parties agree in writing at least fifteen (15) days before the hearing to admit a written statement of a witness. The presiding officer shall have discretion to determine the manner in which witnesses will be questioned. As an example, the presiding officer may determine that questions will be submitted in advance of the hearing, and that the questioning of a witness will be done by a person other than the complainant or respondent.
 - vii) After all evidence has been presented to the assembly, the complainant and the respondent shall summarize their cases either orally or in writing. The complainant may be afforded the opportunity for rebuttal.
 - viii) If either party objects to irregularity in the proceedings, the objection must be entered into the record. The presiding officer may sustain or disallow the objection. If the chair's ruling is challenged, the assembly must vote on the question of sustaining the chair.
- b. The testimony shall be recorded verbatim.
- c. The complainant has the burden to prove the written charge. Written charges must be proven by evidence that is clear, satisfactory, and convincing, to a reasonable certainty. Clear, satisfactory, and convincing evidence is evidence which when weighed against that opposed to it clearly has more convincing power. "Reasonable certainty" means that you are persuaded based upon a rational consideration of the evidence. Absolute certainty is not required, but a guess is not enough to meet the burden of proof. ~~with a high degree of probability.~~

- d. If a complainant other than an employee or an assembly has filed written charges against an agency, board, or committee, he or she must allege—and the burden remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct being challenged substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, and as an individual apart from other members of the church.
- e. If a complainant is an employee who has filed written charges against an agency, board, or committee, he or she must allege—and the burden remains on him or her to show in any hearing—that the decision, act, or course of conduct being challenged substantially affects him or her directly, either materially or personally, in his or her capacity as an employee.
- f. If a respondent fails to appear and the assembly determines that the respondent has been notified of the time and place of the judicial hearing and has had sufficient time to appear, the assembly may proceed in the respondent's absence.
- g. During the hearing, the presiding officer shall not comment on the merits of the case. This restriction does not apply when the assembly enters its final deliberations.
- h. The final decision on any case shall be by majority vote of the assembly of the members hearing the case. Any member that has not attended all the sessions or heard the case in its entirety may not vote unless that member reads or listens to the record before a vote is taken.
- i. The record of all proceedings including the testimony, the exhibits, papers, evidence, and findings in the case shall be certified by the presiding officer and shall be the basis of any appeal. The parties may have reasonable access to the record.

Section 6: Appeals

- a. Appeals shall be filed with the assembly next in order.
- b. The grounds for an appeal include irregularities in the proceedings of the lower assembly; decisions on the admission or exclusion of evidence; bias or prejudice in the case; manifest injustice in the judgment; or incorrect interpretation or application of the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order; and shall be based on the record of the judicial hearing.
- c. No decision resulting from a judicial hearing shall be amended or overturned except on a showing that the procedures were manifestly unfair; that the evidence obviously did not support the decision; or that an incorrect interpretation or application of the Word of God, doctrinal standards, or Church Order was made.

- d. The reviewing assembly shall not reassess the credibility of the witnesses that testified at the hearing.
- e. Appeals to synod from decisions of assemblies of the CRC acting in their judicial capacity and appeals from a board, agency, or committee of synod when the Judicial Code has been invoked shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee.
- f. Persons that have voted on a matter in an assembly shall recuse themselves from participating in the appeal. In the event that the appeal is from a decision of an assembly related to a Safe Church proceeding, participants in the Safe Church panel process shall recuse themselves from participating in the appeal.
- g. A losing party that failed to appear at the judicial hearing either personally or by a representative shall not be permitted to file a claim of appeal.

Section 7: Appeal Procedures before a Classis following a Judicial Hearing before a Council

- a. Within ninety (90) days of the certification of the record, the losing party from a decision of a council following a judicial hearing, including a decision in a Safe Church proceeding, may file a written claim of appeal that states the grounds for the appeal with the stated clerk of classis. A copy of the claim of appeal shall also be delivered to the opposing party, the opposing party's representative, if any, and the clerk of the council that decided the case. Upon receipt of the claim of appeal, the clerk of council shall forthwith transfer the certified record to classis. If the appeal is from a Safe Church proceeding, the record produced in referenced in step 12 of the ~~Advisory Panel~~ Process shall be the record on appeal.
- b. The appeal hearing in classis shall be limited to the grounds set forth in the claim of appeal.
- c. With the claim of appeal, the losing party ~~shall~~ may file a written submission in support of the claim of appeal. Portions of certified record and any other authority that supports the grounds of appeal must be clearly cited. A copy of the submission shall also be delivered to the opposing party. Except if permission is granted by classis, the written submission shall not exceed thirty (30) pages double spaced.
- d. Within sixty (60) days, the opposing party ~~shall~~ may file a written response to the claim of appeal with the stated clerk of classis and also a written submission that cites from the record and any authority that supports the response. Copies of the response and submission shall also be delivered to the losing party. Except if permission is granted by classis, the written submission shall not exceed thirty (30) pages double spaced.

- e. In the event of the appellant's death, the assembly may proceed with and decide the appeal if it is deemed significant for the denomination, or if the appellant's representative provides proof of reasonable necessity for deciding the appeal.
- f. Classis shall schedule an appellate hearing no sooner than ninety (90) days and no later than one hundred and eighty (180) days after the date the appeal was filed and send notice of the time and date of the hearing to the parties.
- g. At the appellate hearing, each party shall have the opportunity to address classis to explain their position and to answer questions of classis. The losing party shall proceed first and may reserve time to respond after the prevailing party addresses classis. Unless permission is granted, the oral presentation for each party shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes.
- h. After the parties' presentations are concluded, classis shall go into strict executive session, review the record, and shall immediately consider and decide the issues of the case. The final decision on any appeal shall be by majority vote of the classis as constituted.
- i. Classis may affirm or reverse in whole or in part the decision of the council, or it may return the case to the council with instructions for a new partial or complete rehearing. A decision of classis that amends or overturns the decision of the council shall be written, shall state the grounds for amending or overturning, and shall be delivered to the parties. Written decisions should be sent to the parties as soon as practicable, but not later than forty-five (45) days after the appellate hearing.
- j. Within ninety (90) days of the issuance of the written decision, claims of appeal from a decision of classis may be filed with synod according to procedures for filing claims of appeal with classis.

Section 8: The Judicial Code Committee of Synod

- a. 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. Although there are some separate regulations regarding this committee in the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.
- b. The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of twelve (12) members and shall reflect the diversity of the denomination, preferably with at least 25 percent of the members reflecting ethnic diversity and an equal balance of men and women. 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 of the CRCNA. 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 of the CRCNA 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. In addition, the general secretary serves as a procedural adviser to the Judicial Code Committee chairperson. Any member of the Judicial Code Committee advising a given synod may be, but need not be, a delegate to that synod.

Section 9: 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. 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 include the names of the parties to the appeal, but shall otherwise omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.

Normally the report is provided to synod delegates at such time that the matter is before synod (therefore time to read the report must be provided as well). However, the Judicial Code Committee may recommend to the officers of synod release of the written report to the delegates while synod is in session, one or two days before the matter is on the schedule; rationale should relate to the degree of confidentiality needed.

Not more than 15 business days and not less than 10 business days before the convening of synod shall be the time parameters within which the complainant and respondent shall receive the written report (sent by the Office of General Secretary). Providing the written report to the complainant and respondent includes a required commitment not to share the report with any party other than the representative of each.

- f. Upon receipt of the written report or prior to, both the complainant and respondent may request the opportunity to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee shall make a recommendation to the officers of synod as soon as possible based on ensuring due process (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 2, g) and on the benefit synod would derive from such an address, and communicate the decision immediately to both parties (even if only one has made such a request).
- g. The Judicial Code Committee may provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on Judicial Code matters.
- h. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
 - i) by deciding the matter;
 - ii) by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;
 - iii) by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council;
or
 - iv) by conducting its own original judicial or appeal hearing.
- i. Unless synod conducts its own original judicial or appeal hearing, synod shall give deference to the factual findings made by the Judicial Code Committee.
- j. If synod conducts its own judicial or appeal hearing, it shall follow Judicial Code procedures set forth herein.

(Acts of Synod 1977, pp. 48-54)
(Amended Acts of Synod 1993, p. 499)
(Amended Acts of Synod 1996, pp. 484-88)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2003, pp. 688-91)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2013, p. 549)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2014, p. 569)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2015, p. 627)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 717-18)
(Amended Acts of Synod 2024, pp. ____)

2. That synod instruct the COD to conduct another review to begin after Synod 2027 and report to Synod 2029, per Synod 2019's instructions to review the Judicial Code every five years.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of the Judicial Code Review Team and dismiss the team with gratitude for its work.

—*Adopted*

4. That this be synod's response to Communication 27.

—*Adopted*

Joseph Vanden Akker (Grandville) offers prayer.

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 91.)

ARTICLE 85

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 80.)

Advisory Committee 8, Discipline Matters, Rev. Lora Copley reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 24: Clarify Church Order Supplement, Articles 82-84

A. Materials

Overture 24, pp. 475-76

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 24.

Grounds:

- a. The definition of "extraordinary circumstances" is not clear.
- b. Articles 82-84 deal with special discipline within a church body. This overture does not clarify the definition of special discipline but expands the powers of a broader assembly to enact discipline.
- c. The action requested by Overture 24 calls for a new Church Order article rather than a supplement.
- d. Church Order does not allow the relationship between broader assemblies as requested by Overture 24.
- e. The unintended consequences of making changes to the Church Order and its Supplements prevent us from acting on this overture without further study.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 86

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 52.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services and Structure II, Rev. Cory Nederveld reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 57 (*Deferred from 2023*): Require Council of Delegates to Reverse the Process of Members' Taking Exception to the Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA

A. Materials

Overture 57 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 375-77

B. Recommendations

1. That synod encourage the classes (in the case of classically nominated delegates) and the Council of Delegates (in the case of at-large delegates) to be mindful of whom they delegate (see COD Handbook 1.2—At-Large Members).

Ground: Authority lies with synod to confirm the nominees who come from the churches and classes.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod consider this its response to Overture 57.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Communication 13

A. Materials

Communication 13, pp. 584-85

B. Recommendation

That, although a confessional-difficulty gravamen is not ordinarily public in nature (Church Order Art. 5, Supplement, B, 2), synod take note of the concerns in Communication 13.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 continues in Article 89.)

ARTICLE 87

The afternoon session recesses at 5:14 p.m. John Mondt (Grand Rapids North) leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 19, 2024

Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 88

The evening session convenes at 7:01 p.m. Minister delegate David Swinney (Alberta South/Saskatchewan) opens in prayer.

ARTICLE 89

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 86.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services and Structure II, Rev. Cory Nederveld reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 66 (*Deferred from 2023*) and Overture 19

A. Materials

1. Overture 66 (*deferred from 2023*), pp. 387-88
2. Overture 19, p. 464

B. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct all classes to re-sign the Covenant for Officebearers on a yearly basis.

Ground: There is an advantage for having a written declaration because it confirms and is a witness.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod continue its current practice of standing in agreement with the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod consider this to be its response to Overture 66 (*deferred from 2023*) and Overture 19.

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 97.)

ARTICLE 90

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 53.)

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order and Related Matters, Rev. Michael Borgert reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 75 (*Deferred from 2023*): Evaluate Polity to Clarify Relationship of Assemblies

A. Materials

Overture 75, pp. 407-8

B. Preamble

Advisory Committee 3 agrees with the heart of Overture 75, that the deep confusion over the relationships among assemblies in the Christian Reformed Church merits a careful biblical and theological study of Reformed polity with the goal of clarifying these relationships, especially with regard to church discipline.

We wrestled with two overlapping approaches to this challenge: the Overture 76 request for a task force and the Overture 75 request for a study committee. While these approaches are both needed, we felt (1) that Overture 76 better addressed the urgent need for Church Order guidelines to assist

councils, classes, and synod, and (2) that Overture 75 could build on Overture 76 (see ground 6 below).

In addition, recognizing the limited resources and time available for task forces and study committees, Advisory Committee 3 decided to propose the appointment of just one such group this year, recommending that synod defer Overture 75 to a subsequent synod.

C. Recommendation

That synod defer Overture 75 to Synod 2025.

Grounds:

1. There is considerable confusion over the nature and authority of church assemblies today. This is causing chaos in the church and must be addressed.
2. These difficulties are deep and serious and can only be appropriately addressed first by agreement at the biblical and theological levels and then applied to our polity, Church Order, and practice.
3. Local churches and classes lack the time and resources to handle such an extensive biblical, theological, and historical task. It involves all our churches, so it must be addressed at the synodical level.
4. The task is significant in both weight, content, and impact, and it requires a full study committee to do it justice.
5. There is considerable overlap between this overture and Overture 76 with respect to the application of church discipline and disaffiliation. These two overtures reflect the urgent need for guidelines (the task force approach) as well as the need for a careful, deep-dive into the relationship among council, classis, and synod (the study committee approach). Given time, energy, and resource limitations, Advisory Committee 3 has chosen to address the urgent need first and to recommend that Synod 2024 defer the appointment of a study committee to a future synod.
6. A study committee will benefit from the work of a task force to address discipline and disaffiliation and from the opportunity to observe how intervening synods apply the Church Order in these cases.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 76 (*Deferred from 2022*): Appoint a Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, Including Disaffiliation Initiated by a Major Assembly

A. Materials

Overture 76, pp. 408-10

B. Preamble

Overture 76 notes that CRC church polity has provisions for accountability at the level of individual membership (Church Order Art. 81) and at the officebearer level (Art. 82-84). However, the overture goes on to explain that these principles are “opaque” for consistory, classis, or individuals appointed as synodical or classical functionaries. Also unclear is the process of discipline by a broader assembly. Previous synods have affirmed the principle that a classis has some authority over a council, but our Church Order does not offer clear guidance (see Overture 76 for examples).

In addition, our Church Order does not address the disaffiliation of a classis by synod. Without this Church Order guidance, what the overture calls a “uniform standard,” broader assemblies are open to the charge of inconsistencies or injustice (Church Order Art. 85).

The overture acknowledges that ecclesial authority is original to the local council and that the authority of broader assemblies is delegated (Church Order Art. 27). However, the Church Order lacks guidance for how these broader assemblies are to initiate church discipline.

The goal of church discipline is always to bring back people who wander from the truth (James 5:19-20). Clear discipline and disaffiliation procedures would equip officebearers to follow synod’s decision to “admonish councils and classes to promote confessional fidelity and mutuality to pursue special discipline” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 818-19).

A proposed mandate for such a task force follows, including a suggested timeline:

1. Engage in a biblical and theological study of church discipline in order to develop principles for application of biblical church discipline.
2. Suggest Church Order changes to provide councils, classes, and synod with guidelines for biblical church discipline.
3. The proposed makeup of the task force should include a Church Order parliamentarian, at least one seasoned church visitor, at least one experienced synodical deputy, a stated clerk, and John Tamming.
4. Report to Synod 2026.

C. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overture 76.

Grounds:

1. There is confusion in our churches and classes over the application of discipline, one of the marks of the true church (Belgic Confession Art. 29). This confusion leads to serious difficulties that can be addressed only by developing biblical principles of church discipline and Reformed polity, then applying these principles to our Church Order.

2. The Church Order lacks a clear mechanism for discipline and disaffiliation initiated by a broader assembly. Such a mechanism would assist churches, classes, and synod to respond to error. This lack is significant enough to merit the attention of a task force.
3. The practice of the church and past synodical decisions affirm the authority of broader assemblies to depose officebearers or councils (see Overture 76 for examples).
4. The authority of church visitors, counselors, and those appointed to advisory roles by synod is not delineated in our Church Order.
5. Clear guidelines would protect classes, councils, and officebearers from inconsistent application of discipline.
6. Such a task force and the report it would produce was something requested by the Neland Avenue CRC *In Loco* Committee appointed by Synod 2022 (*Agenda for Synod 2023*, Rec. E, p. 325-26).

— *Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 18: Appoint a Task Force to Review the Covenant for Officebearers

A. Materials

Overture 18, pp. 459-64

B. Preamble

Overture 18, brought by Classis Eastern Canada, asks synod to appoint a task force to review the Covenant for Officebearers and Church Order Article 5, which grounds it. The proposed task force would do the following:

- Clarify the extent to which serving in church leadership should be contingent on interpretations of specific provisions in a confession.
- Clarify how the Covenant for Officebearers is to be implemented at all levels of church assemblies.
- Promote greater respect for the role of the local church as it deliberates together and provides guidance on how to apply specific provisions in the confessions to specific situations in local contexts.
- Promote greater respect for thoughtful, prayerful, conscientious decision making within the local church community.

After extensive discussion and consideration, our committee voted not to adopt this overture. While we are sensitive to the circumstances that prompted the classis to bring the overture, we were not convinced that it presented new grounds to justify the appointment of a task force.

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 18.

Grounds:

1. No new information about concerns regarding the Covenant for Officebearers is included in this overture (Church Order Art. 31).

2. Church Order Supplement, Article 5, A, 3 is clear about how gravamina work and states, "However, no one is free to decide for one-self or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the standards."
3. The overture does not clarify how Church Order Article 5, with its Supplement on gravamina, is insufficient to deal with the process of conscientious decision making.
4. Synod 2023—in Overtures 20-23, 40, and 47 (see *Agenda for Synod 2023*, pp. 418-36, 493-97, 515-17); the Neland Avenue CRC appeal (pp. 622-27); and Communication 4 from the Council of Fellowship CRC, Toronto, Ontario (p. 611)—dealt with virtually all the areas of concern as mentioned in Overture 18 of the *Agenda for Synod 2024*.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 91

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 84.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services and Structure I, Rev. Henry Kranenburg reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 73 (*Deferred from 2021*): Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Decisions (majority report)

A. Materials

Overture 73 (*deferred from 2021*), pp. 401-2

B. Recommendations

1. That synod appoint a small group to report to Synod 2025 to clarify the distinctions in categories of synodical pronouncements, decisions, reports, positions, and advice and the nature and extent to which each is “settled and binding” on members, officebearers, and churches.

Grounds:

- a. Interpretations made with respect to the extent to which the “pastoral advice” set forth in the 1973 report on homosexuality is binding have led to turmoil and questions about the actual status of such advice.
- b. In 1995, Overture 2 from Classis Wisconsin asked for clarification of the meaning of the phrase “settled and binding.” Synod 1995 defeated the majority report’s recommendation on what the phrase means but did not further respond to Overture 2’s request for clarification (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 749-751, 753).
- c. The statements adopted by Synod 1975 (Report 47: Synodical Decisions and the Confessions) “expressing the use and function of synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters and their relation to the confessions” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44) are not uniformly interpreted by those who read them.

- d. The potential impact of how the above statements are understood is too important at this time in our denomination's history to seek a quick answer even from an advisory committee of twenty-six very competent people.
 - e. Recent decisions of synod have led to uncertainty and "angst" about how to interpret pronouncements of synod.
 - f. The decisions to be made by Synod 2024 may have significant influence on how the statements of Synod 1975 are understood, so there is wisdom in waiting for these decisions.
2. That synod declare the above recommendation and grounds to be the mandate for the task force.
 3. That synod appoint members to the team, possibly from the following categories: a church polity person, one or more members of Advisory Committee 1, a pastor, and/or a person knowledgeable in the area of synod history.
 4. That this be synod's response to Overture 73.

According to the Rules of Synodical Procedure, the minority report regarding the response to Overture 73 is presented as information by Rev. Joseph Vanden Akker:

Response to Overture 73 (*Deferred from 2021*): Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Decisions (minority report)

A. Materials

Overture 73, pp. 401-2

B. Background

Synod 1975 received a report on "the use and function of synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters and their relation to the confessions." The report researched past synodical pronouncements and identified six main categories into which synodical pronouncements have tended to fall (see *Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44). One of the six is "pastoral advice."

Noting recent confusion in churches with respect to what "settled and binding" entails, specifically in the case of synodical pronouncements identified as "pastoral advice," Classis Chatham overtured Synod 2021 to provide clarification on the meaning of "settled and binding" with respect to the confessions and various synodical pronouncements.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod provide the desired clarification without further delay.

Grounds:

- a. Classes and churches have desired and requested this clarification going back at least as far as 1995, yet it has not been provided.

- b. It is understandable but lamentable that Overture 73 has been deferred since 2021. Some of the decisions Synod 2024 has been asked to make this year directly relate to the manner and extent to which confessions and various types of synodical pronouncements will be considered “binding” in the future. The delegates to Synod 2024 should have a clear understanding of the statements adopted by Synod 1975 (which are currently “settled and binding”) before considering requested changes.
2. That synod clarify that synodical pronouncements, deliverances, and decisions (synonymous terms) are “settled and binding” by Church Order Article 29 but that the complete contents of study committee reports are not “settled and binding.” Only the study committee recommendations that synod adopts and other statements from within the report that synod adopts are considered to be “settled and binding” synodical pronouncements.
3. That synod accept the following explanation as resolving the apparent tension between three assertions that were adopted in a single recommendation by Synod 1975 (see *Acts of Synod 1975*, Article 46, 2, b and c, p. 44).
- a. The first assertion: “Synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters . . . ‘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).”
 - b. A second assertion: “The confessions and synodical pronouncements have nuances of differences. They differ . . . in *the measure of agreement* expected . . .” (emphasis added).

Explanation:

- 1) The Covenant for Officebearers defines the measure of agreement required for a **confession** as full and unreserved *agreement* with its teachings and a commitment to *abide by* them, as expressed in the commitment to “promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.”
- 2) **Synodical pronouncements** (with the exception, per Synod 2022, of interpretations of confessions) require a lesser measure of agreement than confessions in that they are subordinate in authority to the confessions, no subscription (i.e., signed statement of agreement) is required for synodical pronouncements, and officebearers are permitted to disagree with a synodical pronouncement (as indicated by permission to register a negative vote) (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 602). Officebearers are permitted to disagree so long as they **acquiesce** to the decision and (as discussed in Recommendation 3, c below) commit to “**abide by**” the decision.

- 3) Synodical pronouncements remain binding (though more loosely) in the sense that officebearers and members have a responsibility (i.e., they are duty bound) to respectfully receive synodical pronouncements as bearing the weighty authority of synod, to seriously reconsider their initial position of disagreement in light of the weighty authority of synod, and to recognize that “the well-being of the church is fostered when there is substantial unity with respect to all the decisions of synod” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 602).
 - c. A third assertion: “All officebearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances” (emphasis added). This assertion further explains how synodical pronouncements are “settled and binding” in that synodical pronouncements require officebearers and members to **abide by** these pronouncements (i.e., to conform their teaching, preaching, writing, serving and living to these pronouncements).
 - d. In conclusion, to declare that synodical pronouncements are “settled and binding” means that officebearers and members are expected (1) to acquiesce to these decisions even when not fully agreeing with them, and (2) to abide by these pronouncements by conforming their teaching, preaching, writing, serving, and living to these pronouncements.
4. That synod declare that the nature and extent to which synodical statements of pastoral advice are “binding” on officebearers and members goes well beyond the common characterization of advice as merely “strong recommendations” in the following ways:
- a. Comprehensive synodical deliverances presented under the umbrella heading of “pastoral advice” frequently include the biblical/confessional basis for the advice given.
 - b. Some synodical pronouncements presented as “pastoral advice” have not provided “wise suggestions for providing pastoral care” but, rather, have addressed a pastoral concern to avert “the crises and divisive tendencies” arising out of unbiblical teachings that have been circulating. This “pastoral advice” provided strong, authoritative statements of scriptural and confessional teaching out of pastoral concern (see *Acts of Synod 1972*, Report 44: The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority, and the points of “pastoral advice” adopted; pp. 66-69).
 - c. Pastoral advice that serves the churches with recommendations for providing pastoral care (for example, in cases of marital divorce or regarding appropriate treatment of members who are same-sex attracted) also should not be received merely as “strong recommendations.” Pastoral advice from synod “binds” councils and members to receive the advice presented with weighty respect as supported by

the teaching of Scripture and the confessions, and clothed with synodical authority. Therefore, churches and members are to act in conformity to it, or to ask synod to revise its pastoral advice for the scriptural reasons that they believe compel making this change.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee's majority report.

Response to Overture 73 (*Deferred from 2021*): Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Decisions (majority report)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod appoint a small group to report to Synod 2025 to clarify the distinctions in categories of synodical pronouncements, decisions, reports, positions, and advice and the nature and extent to which each is "settled and binding" on members, officebearers, and churches.

Grounds:

- a. Interpretations made with respect to the extent to which the "pastoral advice" set forth in the 1973 report on homosexuality is binding have led to turmoil and questions about the actual status of such advice.
- b. In 1995, Overture 2 from Classis Wisconsin asked for clarification of the meaning of the phrase "settled and binding." Synod 1995 defeated the majority report's recommendation on what the phrase means but did not further respond to Overture 2's request for clarification (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 749-751, 753).
- c. The statements adopted by Synod 1975 (Report 47: Synodical Decisions and the Confessions) "expressing the use and function of synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters and their relation to the confessions" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44) are not uniformly interpreted by those who read them.
- d. The potential impact of how the above statements are understood is too important at this time in our denomination's history to seek a quick answer even from an advisory committee of twenty-six very competent people.
- e. Recent decisions of synod have led to uncertainty and "angst" about how to interpret pronouncements of synod.
- f. The decisions to be made by Synod 2024 may have significant influence on how the statements of Synod 1975 are understood, so there is wisdom in waiting for these decisions.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod declare the above recommendation and grounds to be the mandate for the task force.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod appoint members to the team, possibly from the following categories: a church polity person, one or more members of Advisory Committee 1, a pastor, and/or a person knowledgeable in the area of synod history.

— Adopted

4. That this be synod's response to Overture 73.

— Adopted

ARTICLE 92

The general secretary presents the ballot for denominational board and committee elections, and the delegates vote electronically. The ballot results (boards and committees lists) will be presented for ratification by synod prior to the adjournment of synod.

ARTICLE 93

The evening session recesses at 9:10 p.m. Gabriel Wang-Herrera (Hackensack) closes in prayer. Synod will reconvene Thursday morning at 8:15 p.m.

THURSDAY MORNING, June 20, 2024

Fourteenth Session

ARTICLE 94

The assembly convenes at 8:15 a.m. Katie Ritsema Roelofs leads the assembly in singing "Your Labor Is Not in Vain."

ARTICLE 95

The president notes the confidentiality of advisory committee discussions and encourages delegates to confine their discussions of synod to what is in the public record.

Stan Wynia (Iakota) offers prayer.

ARTICLE 96

The president reads into the public record the actions of the executive sessions.

ARTICLE 97

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 89.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services and Structure II, Rev. Cory Nederveld reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overtures 47-48 and Communications 15-26 (majority report)

A. Materials

1. Overtures 47-48, Agenda Supplement
2. Communications 15-26, pp. 587-614

B. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that churches, members, and officebearers who have declared themselves to be in the status of one in protest with ecclesiastical intent have entered into the process of discipline according to the procedures set by Synod 2024 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 891-93) and existing Church Order.

Grounds:

- a. There is no category in Church Order for members, officebearers, councils, or classes to be “in protest” regarding settled and binding synodical decisions concerning confessional matters, or to add “metaphorical asterisks” by their names. Future inception or tacit acceptance of such categories would be a threat to the existence of the CRCNA and to the integrity of its confessional subscription.
 - b. As a matter of consistency in discipline, there is no need to elaborate a separate path of discipline and repentance in accordance to Synod 2024 and existing Church Order.
2. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 47-48 and Communications 15-26.

According to the Rules of Synodical Procedure, the minority report is presented as information by Rev. Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene.

Response to Overtures 47-48 and Communications 15-26 (minority report)

A. Materials

1. Overtures 47-48, Agenda Supplement
2. Communications 15-26, pp. 587-614

B. Background

Both Synod 2022 and Synod 2023 encouraged their decisions to be starting places for discussions. The churches, communities, and members who wrote letters of protest have expressed a desire to communicate with their councils, classes, synod, and the whole church body. We need to honor their transparency.

C. Recommendation

1. That synod receive Communications 15-26, understanding that they were written with much prayer, wrestling, and lament.
2. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 47-48 and Communications 15-26.

Grounds:

- a. It is important that these laments are heard by the whole church body as we fulfill the biblical instruction “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another” (Rom. 12:15-16).

- b. When issues go this deep and affect lives greatly, it is important to ensure that we are not ignoring the issue but set up our conversations to be fair and helpful and to have the possibility of meeting the goal of being able to stay in covenant community.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee's majority report.

Response to Overtures 47-48 and Communications 15-26 (majority report)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that churches, members, and officebearers who have declared themselves to be in the status of one in protest with ecclesiastical intent shall be entered into the process of discipline according to the procedures set by Synod 2024 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 891-93) and existing Church Order.

Grounds:

- a. There is no category in Church Order for members, officebearers, councils, or classes to be "in protest" regarding settled and binding synodical decisions concerning confessional matters, or to add "metaphorical asterisks" by their names. Future inception or tacit acceptance of such categories would be a threat to the existence of the CRCNA and to the integrity of its confessional subscription.
- b. As a matter of consistency in discipline, there is no need to elaborate a separate path of discipline and repentance in accordance to Synod 2024 and existing Church Order.

The general secretary, Zachary King, offers prayer.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 47-48 and Communications 15-26.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Ryan Schreiber (Grand Rapids East), Anita Van Zeumeren (Toronto), Thomas Bomhof (Huron), Patricia Ann Bushouse (Hackensack), Michael Borgert (Ontario Southwest), Paul Verhoef (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), James Poelman (Ontario Southwest), Phyllis Alberts-Meijers (Toronto), Michelle Ellis (B.C. North-West), Ruth Hofman (Toronto), Maria Leys-Bowater (Kalamazoo), Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene (Quinte).

Jelmer Groenewold (Columbia) offers prayer.

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 99.)

ARTICLE 98

Mark Bonnes (Northern Michigan) and Luke Eising (Muskegon) offer prayers recognizing the weightiness of the matters synod has been discussing.

Patricia Borgdorff (Grand Rapids East) reads a statement of farewell, acknowledging the potential that some congregations will be seeking a new denominational home.

Matthew Burns (Atlantic Northeast) responds with a prayer for God's grace for all who are wrestling with the implications of synod's decisions.

ARTICLE 99

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 97.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services and Structure II, Rev. Doug Nieuwstraten reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 20, Recommendation 2: Seek Classis Nominations for Parliamentarian (majority report)

A. Materials

Overture 20, Recommendation 2, p. 465

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 20, Recommendation 2.

Ground: The Program Committee already has the authority to select anyone they deem.

According to the Rules of Synodical Procedure, the minority report is presented as information by Rev. Cory Nederveld.

Response to Overture 20, Recommendation 2: Seek Classis Nominations for Parliamentarian (minority report)

A. Materials

Overture 20, Recommendation 2, p. 465

B. Recommendation

1. That synod institute the following procedure to elect the parliamentarian:

- a. Starting at Synod 2024, each delegate shall nominate one person for the next synod's parliamentarian. This will take place at the earliest available plenary session.
- b. The officers will produce a list of the eight most-named nominees who are willing to serve. At the conclusion of Synod 2024 and at the end of each future synod, this vote for the next synod's parliamentarian will take place as one of the last matters of business before the conclusion of synod.
- c. The nominee with the second-most votes shall serve as the alternate parliamentarian.
- d. Instruct the Office of General Secretary to effect the necessary changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure. The changes shall be reviewed and ratified by Synod 2025.

Grounds:

- 1) This encourages attention to the often neglected matters of Church Order. In recent years there has been a growing interest and even excitement toward matters of Church Order. This will foster increased participation and attention in matters of church governance.
- 2) A synodical parliamentarian is an expert in the meeting procedures of synod (Rules for Synodical Procedure, Church Order) as well as Robert's Rules of Order. As such, it is not deemed to be an official denominational position nor a teaching position. Thus the synodical parliamentarian is a purely advisory role at synod and may be called to assist in that capacity, holding office only during the proceedings of synod.
- 3) The synodical rules only state that this position "could be filled by the faculty advisor for church polity," not that it must be (Rules for Synodical Procedure, III, B, 2, h). Thus the parliamentarian position may be filled by any appropriate candidate with the knowledge and experience required for the proceedings of synod in the CRCNA.

If the parliamentarian is a member of the assembly (a delegate), that person has the same rights as other members but should strive to maintain impartiality, similar to the impartiality that is required of the chair. In other words, the parliamentarian should ordinarily not be making motions, speaking in debate, or voting.

2. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 20, Recommendation 2.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendation of the advisory committee's majority report.

Response to Overture 20, Recommendation 2: Seek Classis Nominations for Parliamentarian (majority report)

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 20, Recommendation 2.

Ground: The Program Committee already has the authority to select anyone they deem.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 100

(The work of Advisory Committee 6 continues from Article 73.)

Advisory Committee 6, Global Mission and Ecumenical Matters, Rev. Aaron Greydanus reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 32: Clarify Decisions Concerning "Unchastity" in Q&A 108 and How This Definition Functions in the Life of the CRC

A. Materials

Overture 32, pp. 498-501

B. Preamble

Advisory Committee 6 spent several hours discussing Overture 32 and its implications on the life of CRC members and officebearers. This was a healthy discussion. We recognize the importance of the issues that Classis Alberta North raises, and we had originally intended to present several recommendations for synod's consideration. However, due to the overlapping nature of many overtures and communications addressed to this synod, we believe that synod has sufficiently addressed the issues here in its response to Overture 17.

C. Recommendation

That synod declare its response to Overture 17: Articulate What Is Expected of Confessing Members When Agreeing with the Confessions to be its response to Overture 32 as well.

Ground: Synod has already tasked the Office of General Secretary to provide theological reflection and advice on the historical, biblical, and theological aspects of membership, and synod has encouraged councils to work out situations in their own context and in submission to our creeds and confessions (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 866).

—*Adopted*

The matter tabled in Article 73 is now taken up, and synod returns to the recommendations of Advisory Committee 6.

II. Response to Overture 7: Appoint a Task Force on Multisite Churches

A. Materials

Overture 7, pp. 427-28

B. Recommendations

2. That synod appoint to this task force at least two pastors from multisite congregations, at least one biblical or systematic Reformed theologian, a Church Order expert, and a young adult representative.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod instruct the task force to submit their report before February 15, 2026, for consideration at Synod 2026.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 7.

—*Adopted*

Synod reviews a draft membership list of the task force and provides feedback.

5. That synod, in keeping with synodical regulations and guidelines, defer to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional member of the advisory committee the appointments to the Task Force to Study Multisite Churches.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 101

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 90.)

Response to Overture 76 (*Deferred from 2022*): Appoint a Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, Including Disaffiliation Initiated by a Major Assembly

Synod reviews a draft membership list of the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers and provides feedback.

Recommendation

That synod, in keeping with synodical regulations and guidelines, defer to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional member of the advisory committee the appointments to the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 102

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 91.)

Response to Overture 73 (*Deferred from 2021*): Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Decisions

Synod reviews a draft membership list of the task force and provides feedback.

Recommendation

That synod, in keeping with synodical regulations and guidelines, defer to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional member of the advisory committee the appointments to the Team to Clarify Distinctions in Categories of Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 103

Appointments, officers, and functionaries that follow are presented by the general secretary for review and ratification. This listing reflects the results of the synodical elections and appointments by way of the Denominational Boards and Committees Ballot on Wednesday evening and includes the current study committees synodically approved.

I. Officers, functionaries, and convening church for Synod 2025

A. Officers

1. General secretary: Zachary J. King
2. Chief administrative officer: Shirley DeVries
3. Director of synodical services: Vacant

B. Functionaries

Arrangements for Synod 2025: Heather Boeke and Yolanda Bax, Campus Services, Redeemer University

C. Convening church

Convening church for Synod 2025: First CRC, Chatham, Ontario

II. Synodical deputies

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Deputy</i>	<i>Alternate</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Alberta North	Rev. Kornelis(Neil) De Koning	Rev. Cecil Van Nijenhuis	2027(2)
Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Rev. Gary van Leeuwen	Rev. David J. Swinney	2027(2)
Arizona	Rev. Jeffrey A. Dykema	Vacant	2025(2)
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. Sam Sutter	Rev. Patrick Guarracino	2027(1)
B.C. North-West	Rev. Andrew E. Beunk	Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma	2027(2)
B.C. South-East	Rev. Wout Brouwer	Rev. William C. Tuininga	2025(1)
California South	Rev. Scott Elgersma	Vacant	2025(1)
Central California	Rev. Bruce Persenaire	Rev. Al Schaap	2027(1)
Central Plains	Rev. Brad Bierma	Rev. Michael Bentley	2027(2)
Chicago South	Rev. Daniel J. Roeda	Rev. Michael J. Kooy	2025(1)
Columbia	Rev. John Van Schepen	Rev. Virgil L. Michael	2026(1)
Eastern Canada	Rev. David A. Vroege	Rev. Charles Gregg Lawson	2027(2)
Georgetown	Rev. Jeffrey W. Scripps	Rev. Curtis A. Walters	2026(2)
Grand Rapids East	Rev. Thea N. Leunk	Rev. Alvern Gelder	2027(1)
Grand Rapids North	Rev. Peter Byma	Rev. Henry Admiraal	2026(2)
Grand Rapids South	Rev. Paul Sausser	Rev. Edward C. Visser	2026(1)
Grandville	Rev. L. Bryce Mensink	Rev. Douglas R. Fauble	2025(2)
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. Erick D. Westra	Rev. David R. Koll	2025(2)
Hackensack	Rev. Petr Kornilov	Rev. Paul J. Van Dyken	2027(2)
Hamilton	Rev. Michael W. Bootsma	Rev. Doug Nieuwstraten	2025(1)
Hanmi	Rev. Tukoon Timothy Jung	Rev. Jeong Ha Chun	2026(2)
Heartland	Rev. Phillip T. Westra	Rev. Brian M. Hofman	2027(2)
Holland	Rev. Darwin Glassford	Vacant	2027(1)
Hudson	Vacant	Rev. Albert (John) Sideco, Jr.	2026(2)
Huron	Rev. Sidney Couperus	Rev. Victor Laarman	2025(2)
Iakota	Rev. Clifford D. Hoekstra	Rev. Daniel W. De Groot	2027(2)
Illiana	Rev. James C. Hollendonner	Rev. Josh Christoffels	2025(2)
Kalamazoo	Rev. Hendrick De Vries	Rev. Daniel S. Sarkipato	2026(2)
Ko-Am	Rev. Daniel Duyoung Yi	Vacant	2025(1)
Lake Erie	Rev. Randall D. Engle	Rev. Christopher B. Lanham	2026(2)
Lake Superior	Rev. Harrison A. Newhouse	Rev. Jack Van Marion	2026(2)
Minnkota	Rev. Roger W. Sparks	Rev. Scott M. Muilenburg	2027(2)
Muskegon	Rev. Leslie D. Van Dyke	Rev. John C. Medendorp	2027(2)
Niagara	Rev. M. Jeff Klingenberg	Rev. Janet A. Ryzebol	2026(2)
North Cascades	Pastor Bryan Lanting (CP)	Rev. Donald L. Recker	2025(1)
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. Steve Mulder	Rev. Stewart DeJong	2027(1)
Northern Illinois	Rev. Timothy H. Douma	Rev. John R. Huizinga	2026(3)
Northern Michigan	Rev. Steven J. Datema	Rev. Todd Kuperus	2027(2)
Ontario Southwest	Rev. Philip A. Apoll	Rev. Norman J. Visser	2027(2)
Pacific Northwest	Rev. Matthew J. Borst	Rev. Douglas E. Fakkema	2025(2)
Quinte	Rev. Joshua C. Tuininga	Vacant	2025(2)
Red Mesa	Rev. John J. Greydanus	Rev. David J. Dykstra	2027(2)
Rocky Mountain	Rev. Roger De Young	Vacant	2025(2)
Southeast U.S.	Rev. Gerrit Besteman	Rev. Scott A. Vander Ploeg	2025(2)
Thornapple Valley	Rev. Ronald D. Goudzwaard	Rev. Paul R. De Vries	2025(2)
Toronto	Rev. Richard E. Grift	Rev. Samuel Cooper	2027(2)
Wisconsin	Rev. Mark J. Pluimer	Rev. Greg Schuringa	2025(2)
Yellowstone	Rev. Gilbert J. Kamps	Rev. Clair Vander Neut	2027(1)
Zeeland	Rev. Terry D. Slachter	Rev. Stephen Terpstra	2026(1)

III. Denominational boards

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

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term ends</i>
Alberta North	Amy Nydam	2025(1)
Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Debbie Karambowich	2025(1)
Arizona	Jeff Dykema	2026(1)
Atlantic Northeast	Anthony T. Selvaggio	2025(1)
B.C. North-West	Hyung-Jun Kim	2026(1)
B.C. South-East	Andre VanRyk	2026(1)
California South	H. John Jansen	2026(1)
Central California	Mark VanDyke	2027(2)
Central Plains	Erik Kamp	2025(1)
Chicago South	Chris Pedersen	2027(1)
Columbia	Rob J. Toornstra	2027(2)
Eastern Canada	Vacant	
Georgetown	Jeanne Kallemeyn	2027(2)
Grand Rapids East	Thea Leunk	2026(1)
Grand Rapids North	Ronald L. Karelse	2026(1)
Grand Rapids South	Jessica R. Maddox	2025(1)
Grandville	Rachel Bouwkamp	2026(2)
Greater Los Angeles	Thomas Byma	2026(2)
Hackensack	Joyce G. Jackson	2026(1)
Hamilton	William T. Koopmans	2025(2)
Hanmi	Jae Young Kim	2027(1)
Heartland	Loren Veldhuizen	2025(1)
Holland	David Spoelma	2027(1)
Hudson	Roy G. Heerema	2027(2)
Huron	Peter Meerveld	2027(2)
Iakota	Robert Drenten	2027(1)
Illiana	Jill Feikema	2026(2)
Kalamazoo	Michael D. Koetje	2025(2)
Ko-Am	Jonathan J. Kim	2026(2)
Lake Erie	Matthew Ackerman	2025(1)
Lake Superior	Willy Krahne	2026(1)
Minnkota	Eric Van Dyken	2027(1)
Muskegon	Drew Sweetman	2026(2)
Niagara	Janet deVries	2026(1)
North Cascades	Arie A. Vander Zouwen	2025(2)
Northcentral Iowa	Herbert W. Schreur	2025(1)
Northern Illinois	Bonnie Zigterman	2026(1)
Northern Michigan	Jim Winkel	2025(1)
Ontario Southwest	Phillip Apoll	2026(1)
Pacific Northwest	Douglas Fakkema	2027(1)
Quinte	Ronald Van Auken	2026(1)
Red Mesa	Tabitha D. Manuelito	2026(2)
Rocky Mountain	Mike Johnson	2025(1)
Southeast U.S.	Jesus Bayona	2025(2)
Thornapple Valley	Steven Hull	2027(1)
Toronto	Michael Irshad	2027(2)
Wisconsin	Charles Adams	2027(1)
Yellowstone	Steve Bussis	2025(1)
Zeeland	Lloyd Hemstreet	2027(1)

Canada at-large	A. Henry Eygenraam	2027(2)
	Greta Luimes	2025(2)
	Melissa Van Dyk	2026(2)
	Roberta Vriesema	2025(1)
United States at-large	Christian Sebastia	2026(1)
	Michael Ten Haken	2026(2)
Ex officio	Zachary J. King, general secretary	

B. Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees

<i>Region</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Region 1	E. Alan van der Woerd	2025(1)
Region 2	Cecil Van Niejenhuis	2026(1)
Region 3	Louise Boutin	2025(1)
Region 4	Mark Verbruggen	2025(1)
Region 5	Sue Imig	2025(1)
Region 6	Julius Umawing	2027(2)
Region 7	Daniel Bud	2027(1)
Region 8	John Lee	2027(1)
Region 9	Derek Buikema	2027(1)
Region 10	Arthur J. Van Wolde	2027(2)
Region 11	Scott Greenway	2026(2)
Region 12	Kristin (Kris) J. Vos	2025(1)
Regional at-large (eligible for two three-year terms)		
Region 4	Brian Verheul	2027(2)
Region 8	John Wesselius	2027(1)
Region 10	Grace Kreulen	2027(1)
Region 11	Tom Nobel	2027(1)
At-large	David Morren	2025(3)
	James Jones	2025(1)
	Susan Keesen	2026(2)
	Hessel Kielstra	2025(2)
	Christian Oh	2026(2)

C. Calvin University Board of Trustees

<i>Region</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Region 1	Jack Beeksma	2026(1)
Region 2	Rosanne Lopers-Sweetman	2025(2)
Region 3	Edward Wayne Coleman	2026(2)
Region 4	Tyler Wagenmaker	2027(1)
Region 5	Kathleen Ridder	2025(1)
Region 6	Gary D. Bos	2027(2)
Regional at-large (up to ten total)		
Region 2	Lambert (Tony) Kamphuis	2025(1)
Region 4	Eugene (Gene) Miyamoto	2025(1)
	Carolyn Van Allen	2025(1)
	Nate DeJong McCarron	2026(2)
	James Zwier	2027(1)
	Shirley Hoogstra	2027(1)
Region 5	Adam Ramirez	2026(1)
	Brian Boomsma	2027(1)
Region 6	Kevin Adams	2027(2)
	Bryan Dik	2025(2)
Alumni	Alice Klammer	2025(2)
	Perrin Rynders	2026(2)
	James Valk	2026(1)

At-large	Niala Boodhoo*	2025(2)
	Jonathan (Jona) Eigege*	2025(2)
	Andrew Elliot	2027(3)
	Heather Van Vugt Ramirez	2027(3)
	Lambert Kamp	2026(3)
	Bruce Los	2025(3)
	Carl Triemstra	2026(3)
	Mary Tuuk-Kuras	2025(2)
	Mindy Vanden Bosch	2025(1)
	Rachel Vander Veen	2025(3)
	Tony Brookhouse	2026(1)
	Moses Chung	2026(1)

*Niala Boodhoo and Jonathan (Jona) Eigege have agreed to a modified one-year term and will be eligible for up to two more years of service.

D. World Renew Board

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Alberta North	Margaret Hoogland*	2027(2)
Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Jeffrey Adams*	2026(1)
Arizona	Marv Faber	2025(2)
Atlantic Northeast	Emily Boldenow Fortuna	2025(1)
B.C. North-West	Vacant	
B.C. South-East	Vacant	
California South	Vacant	
Central California	Ron Schrotenboer	2025(1)
Central Plains	Jason DeBruin	2027(1)
Chicago South	Donald Waterlander	2026(1)
Columbia	John VanSchepen	2026(1)
Eastern Canada	Echo Macloed*	2027(2)
Georgetown	James Roskam	2027(1)
Grand Rapids East	Vacant	
Grand Rapids North	Vacant	
Grand Rapids South	Thomas Christian	2025(1)
Grandville	Bev Abma*	2026(1)
Greater Los Angeles	Vacant	
Hackensack	Ken McBain*	2025(1)
Hanmi	Vacant	
Hamilton	Vacant	
Heartland	Kimberly Starkenburg	2026(1)
Holland	Albertena Praamsma	2026(1)
Hudson	Shanti Jost*	2025(2)
Huron	Mary Blydorp	2025(2)
Iakota	Ronald Vos	2026(1)
Illiana	James Groen	2026(2)
Kalamazoo	Bill Fernhout	2027(1)
Ko-Am	Sungjin Kim	2025(2)
Lake Erie	Gerald Van Wyk	2026(2)
Lake Superior (Canada)	Ron VanHeyst	2026(1)
Lake Superior (U.S.)	Paul Vliem	2026(1)
Minnkota	Rick Fey	2027(1)
Muskegon	Vacant	
Niagara	Linda German	2026(2)
North Cascades	Vacant	
Northcentral Iowa	Doug Kallemyn	2025(2)

Northern Illinois	Vacant	
Northern Michigan	Jared Yaple	2026(1)
Ontario Southwest	Nell Vrolyk	2026(1)
Pacific Northwest	Vacant	
Quinte	John Batterink	2026(2)
Red Mesa	James Zwier	2026(2)
Rocky Mountain	Vacant	
Southeast U.S.	Winouze Jean-Louis	2025(2)
Thornapple Valley	James Boldenow	2025(2)
Toronto	Vacant	
Wisconsin	Christine Jeske	2027(1)
Yellowstone	Vacant	
Zeeland	Vacant	
Pastoral adviser (U.S.)	Bonny Mulder-Behnia*	2026(2)
Pastoral adviser (Can.)	Cari Fydirchuk*	2027(1)
At-large Canada	Darryl Beck*	2027(2)
	Harry Bergshoeff*	2025(1)
	Gordon Van Vliet*	2027(1)
	Jane Vander Velden	2026(2)
At-large U.S.	Jeff Banaszak*	2026(2)
	Rudy Gonzalez*	2026(1)
	Donn Hansum	2027(1)
	Graham Seel*	2027(1)
	Charles Udeh*	2026(2)
Board member emeritus	Andrew Geisterfer*	(to 2025)**

*Also a member of the Board of Directors

Joint Ministry Council = 7 members from U.S. Board, 8 members from Canada Board

IV. Service committees

A. Candidacy Committee

Andrew Beunk (2027/2), Judy Cook (2025/2), Lora Copley (2026/1), Caleb Dickson (2027/2), Felix Fernandez (2025/2), Moon Kim (2026/2), Michelle Kool (2027/1), Henry Kranenburg (2025/1), Andy Sytsma (2025/1), Susan LaClear (staff), Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), and Zachary King (ex officio, as general secretary)

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

Dale Burghgraef (2026/1), Jeffrey DeYoung (2027/1), Jeffrey Feikens (2025/2), Carl Kromminga (2025/1), Wayne Postma (2026/1), Michael Westra (2027/1), and Layla Kuhl (ex officio member)

C. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

Jake Bentum (2025/1), Roy Berkenbosch (2027/1), Lyle Bierma (2025/2), Eleanor Boersma Sarkany (2027/1), Ryan Braam (2027/1), Joy Engelsman (2027/2), William Krahne (2026/1), John Lee (2026/1), Shirley Roels (2025/1), and Yvonne Schenk (2026/2), Zachary King (ex officio, as general secretary), and Al Postma (ex officio, as executive director-Canada)

D. Historical Committee

Herman DeVries Jr. (2025/2), Stanley Jim (2026/1), Tony Maan (2025/2), Christian Oh (2026/1), Janet Sheeres (2026/1), and Donald Sinnema (2027/1)

E. Judicial Code Committee

Richard Bodini (2027/2), Arlyn Bossenbrook (2027/1), Deloris Carter (2026/2), Heidi de Vries (2026/1), Robert D. Drenten (2025/1), Bomsu Kim (2026/2), Sarita Vandernaalt (2025/1), Amy Vander Vliet (2025/2), Gerritt Wieringa (2026/1), Dexter W. Young (2025/2), Zachary J. King (adviser)

F. Ministers' Pension Funds committees

Canadian Pension Trustees

Daryl DeKlerk (2025/1), Hessel Kielstra (2027/2), Jacob Vanden Pol (2027/2), Dick Vreugdenhil (2025/2), Kathy Wassink (2025/3)

U.S. Pension Trustees

John H. Bolt (2025/1), Lloyd Bierma (2026/3), Darrel Raih (2027/3), Drew Sweetman (2025/1), Alan Van Dyke (2025/2)

V. Synodical task forces

A. Assisted Suicide Task Force (scheduled to report to Synod 2025)

Sarah Albers, Brian Dijkema, Deb Fennema, David Shin, Caroline Short (reporter), Doug Vande Griend, Stephen Vander Klippe (chair), David van der Woerd, Zachary King (ex officio).

B. Task Force to Study Multisite Churches (scheduled to report to Synod 2026)
Membership to be determined by the officers of Synod 2024.

C. Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers (scheduled to report to Synod 2026)

Membership to be determined by the officers of Synod 2024.

D. Team to Clarify Distinctions in Categories of Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice (scheduled to report to Synod 2025)
Membership to be determined by the officers of Synod 2024.

VI. Recommendation

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

— *Adopted*

ARTICLE 104

Delegates express appreciation to the officers for a well-run meeting.

The general secretary notes that the Office of General Secretary will be working on the *Acts of Synod* and an FAQ document that will explain the decisions synod has made. He asks for patience while awaiting those items and encourages delegates to converse about synod using the public record of synod.

ARTICLE 105

The president of synod, Rev. Derek Buikema, expresses thanks to the general secretary and to the Office of General Secretary staff. He thanks the Calvin University staff for the arrangements and hospitality provided throughout synod. He also expresses thanks and appreciation to the Korean and Spanish interpreters for their assistance to delegates. The president expresses appreciation for the faculty advisers, parliamentarians, ethnic advisers, young adult representatives, ecumenical guests, interim president of Calvin University, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, Council of Delegates chair and vice chair, and staff consultants. The president also thanks the transportation coordinator, the volunteers, the prayer intercessors, and the technology staff.

The general secretary, Rev. Zachary J. King, expresses the gratitude and thanks of synod to the four officers and presents them with gifts.

ARTICLE 106

Delegates participate in an exchange of greetings in English, Spanish, and Korean led by Katie Ritsema Roelofs. The assembly sings "In Christ Alone." Rev. Michael Ten Haken reads Isaiah 43:1-3 and offers God's greeting. The assembly responds by singing "How Firm a Foundation." Rev. Kevin DeRaaf offers a prayer based on Philippians 4. The president of synod, Rev. Derek Buikema, reads 1 Timothy 6:11-12 and Ephesians 6:12 and offers a message. He encourages delegates to be gentle with each other and with the church, because gentleness is strong. He closes with singing a hymn based on Psalm 84: "O Lord of Hosts, How Lovely." The assembly receives a blessing and responds by singing the doxology "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow."

ARTICLE 107

Synod 2024 adjourns at 11:49 a.m.

DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARE SYSTEM

Ministry Shares Annual Cycle

- 1 Pledging Package**
You'll receive a helpful package by mail to guide your church in determining your annual pledge amount. (Expect this in August!)
- 2 Determine Your Pledge**
As a member of the CRCNA, your church's pledge towards denominational ministry shares is crucial for budget decisions and supporting our shared ministries. Please ensure your council prioritizes pledging to ministry shares as part of your budget discussion.
- 3 Discuss Your Pledge**
Ministry shares are a part of our covenant relationship with other CRC congregations. As part of this commitment to each other, classes will discuss ministry share pledges and giving at their fall meetings. Regardless of your congregation's budget cycle, expect to participate in a discussion about why ministry shares matter and what your church's participation will be.
- 4 Submit Your Pledge**
Please submit your church's pledge to the stated clerk or treasurer of your classis. Kindly ensure that the denominational Director of Advancement is included in your communication.
- 5 New This Year**
While the denomination operates on a fiscal year from July to June, your church may have a different fiscal year. The specific dates are not significant. Just remember to pledge for a 12-month cycle.
- 6 Honor Your Pledge**
Your pledged amount has been communicated to the denomination and used to create budgets for ministries in the coming year. Now it is time for your church to give and support our shared ministries. If you need videos or other resources to encourage your congregation, visit crcna.org/MinistryShares.
- 7 Ministry Share Allocations**
The Council of Delegates meets every May to approve ministry budgets and allocations. This will be communicated to synod in June. All ministry shares received from July onwards will be put towards the approved budgets of that fiscal year.



crcna.org/MinistryShares



ORGANIZATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN 2025

Denominational agencies, institutions, and ministries recommended to the churches for one or more offerings

Synod 2024 recommends the following denominational agencies and institutions for one or more offerings (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 802-3, 913).

	Canadian Business Number
1. <i>The Banner</i>	856901285 RR0002
2. Calvin Theological Seminary	(per Schedule VIII)
3. Calvin University—above ministry-share needs.....	(per Schedule VIII)
4. Thrive	856901285 RR0002
5. Centre for Public Dialogue (Canada).....	856901285 RR0002
6. Indigenous Ministries (Canada)	856901285 RR0002
7. ReFrame Ministries	13240 2090 RR0001
8. Resonate Global Mission—two offerings per year	856901285 RR0002
9. World Renew—four offerings per year because the agency receives no ministry-share support.....	118857366 RR0001

Note about Recommended Organizations

Synod 2023 decided to discontinue the practice and policy of reviewing and recommending charitable organizations to CRC churches for offerings (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 986). The Church Administration and Finance Guide (crcna.org/resources/church-resources/church-administration-finance) includes guidelines from the Office of General Secretary to assist churches in considering charitable organizations for offerings.

INDEX

(Page numbers in **boldface type** refer to the minutes of synod; page numbers in regular type refer to agenda and supplementary materials.)

Abbreviations and acronyms

in the *Agenda for Synod 2024* and the *Acts of Synod 2024*

BIPOC – Black/Indigenous/people of color
BOT – Board of Trustees (of the CRC)
BTGMI – Back to God Ministries International
CAD – Canadian dollars
CAO – chief administrative officer
CCG – Committee for Contact with the Government
CDG – confessional-difficulty gravamen
CDN – Canadian (currency)
CEO – chief executive officer
CFGFB – Canadian Foodgrains Bank
CIC – classis interim committee
CICW – Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
CIMC – Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee
CMLT – classis ministerial leadership team
COD – Council of Delegates
CORTF – Church Order Review Task Force
COVID-19 – Coronavirus Disease 2019
CP – commissioned pastor
CRA – Canada Revenue Agency
CRC – Christian Reformed Church
CRCNA – Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRG – confessional-revision gravamen
CRWRC – Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
CTS – Calvin Theological Seminary
CU – Calvin University
CWP – Climate Witness Project
DCM – director of communications and marketing
DRS – Disaster Response Services
DSS – director of Synodical Services
ECO – Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians
EIRC – Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
EPC – Evangelical Presbyterian Church
EPMC – Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy
FAQ – frequently asked questions
FTE – full-time equivalent

FY – fiscal year
 GVT – Global Vision Team
 HR – Human Resources
 HSR – Human Sexuality Report
 ICS – Institute for Christian Studies
 IRS – Internal Revenue Service (U.S.)
 IT – information technology
 JCC – Judicial Code Committee
 JMC – Joint Ministry Council
 KJV – King James Version
 LDN – Leadership Development Network
 LGBTQ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer
 MEPMC – Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy
 MLC – Ministries Leadership Council
 MPP – Ministers’ Pension Plans
 MSS – Ministry Support Services
 MW – minister of the Word
 NAPARC – North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
 NIV – New International Version
 OGS – Office of General Secretary
 OPC – Orthodox Presbyterian Church
 OSJ – Office of Social Justice
 PCA – Presbyterian Church in America
 PCUSA – Presbyterian Church (USA)
 PDF – portable document format
 RBA – Reformed Benefits Association
 RCA – Reformed Church in America
 SALT – Structure and Leadership Task Force
 SEAPI – South East Asian and Pacific Islander
 STM – specialized transitional minister
 TBD – to be determined
 USD – U.S. dollars

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 49. Amend Church Order Supplement, Article 5, B: 351-58, **867-71, 875-80**
 50. Establish a Time of Discipleship for Officebearers with a Confessional-Difficulty Gravamen, 358-63, **867-71, 875-80**

51. Hold Officebearers to Biblical and Confessional Standards, 364-66, **867-71, 875-80**
 53. Require Confessional-Revision Gravamina on the Occasion of Clear Disagreement with the Confessions, 367-68, **867-71, 875-80**
 54. Prohibit Exceptions and Gravamina in All Agencies, Ministries, Boards, Broader Assemblies, and Other Entities of the CRCNA, 368-71, **867-71, 875-80**
 55. Do Not Accept Confessional Difficulties That Would Allow What the Church Confesses to Be Sin; Officebearers Who Cannot Agree with Our Beliefs Are to Resign or Be Released, 372-74, **867-71, 875-80**
 57. Require Council of Delegates to Reverse the Process of Members' Taking Exception to the Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA, 375-77, **927**
 58. Clarify the Usage of Confessional-Difficulty Gravamina, 377-80, **867-71, 875-80**
 60. Amend Church Order to Define *Gravamina*, 381-82, **867-71, 875-80**
 61. Withhold Denominational Funding from Calvin University until Faculty and Staff Adhere to CRCNA Covenantal Standards, 382-83, **881**
 62. Restrict Delegates Who Have Not Signed the Covenant for Officebearers without Exception or Reservation, 384, **867-71, 875-80**
 63. Prohibit Officebearers Who Have Submitted Confessional-Difficulty Gravamina from Being Delegated to Higher Governing Bodies, 384-85, **867-71, 875-80**
 64. Remind and Instruct Churches and Institutions about Rules for Confessional-Difficulty Gravamen, 385-87, **867-71, 875-80**
 66. Require All Delegates to Synod 2023 to Sign the Covenant for Officebearers, 387-88, **928**
 67. Amend Rules for Synodical Procedure to Suspend Delegates Whose Classes Have Not Adequately Implemented Discipline, 388-89, **886-93**
 68. Shepherd Congregations into Another Denomination, 390-91, **906**
 69. Enable Listening to Facilitate Discernment, 392-401, **906-7**
 73. Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Decisions (*Deferred from 2021*), 401-2, **932-37**
 74. Adopt an Additional Supplement to Church Order Articles 82-84 (*Deferred from 2020*), 403-7, **818-19**
 75. Evaluate Polity to Clarify Relationship of Assemblies, 407-8, **928-29**
 76. Appoint a Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, Including Disaffiliation Initiated by a Major Assembly (*Deferred from 2022*), 408-10, **929-31**
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 02. Grant Permission for Consejo Latino to Report on Its Work and Share Resources at Synod, 418-20, **820**

3. Recommend that Ministers' Pension Trustees Increase the Final Average Salary Calculation to 100 Percent of the Average Ministers' Compensation, 420-21, **811-12**
4. Close the Pension Fund to New Members and Create a New Retirement Fund, 421-25, **811-12**
5. Allow Transfer of All Nations Church, Bakersfield, California from Classis Ko-Am to Classis Greater Los Angeles, 426, **806**
6. Permit the Transfer of All Nations Church of Bakersfield, California, from Classis Ko-Am to Classis Greater Los Angeles, 426-27, **806**
7. Appoint a Task Force on Multisite Churches, 427-28, **884-85, 942**
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9. Encourage Observance of the 1996 Declaration on Racial Reconciliation, 431, **907-8**
10. Suspend the Work of the Dignity Team, 431-33, **908**
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12. Ensure that Advisory Committees Review and Present All Pertinent Information When Synod Receives Overtures or Appeals on Abuse, 436-37, **909**
13. Do Not Adopt Proposed Addition of Church Order Article 23-d and Its Supplement, 437-39, **864-65**
14. Regarding Belgic Confession, Article 36: 439-50, **909-10**
15. Reexamine Ecumenical Relations with the Reformed Church in America, 450-54, **883-84**
16. Solicit Resources for LGBTQ Ministry from the Churches, 454-56, **910**
17. Articulate What Is Expected of Confessing Members When Agreeing with the Confessions, 456-58, **866-67, 942**
18. Appoint a Task Force to Review the Covenant for Officebearers, 459-64, **931-32**
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29. Declare that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 Addresses a Salvation Issue, 493-95, **897-901**
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31. Ensure Accountability regarding Synodical Decisions and Instructions, 497-98, **886-93**
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37. Maintain Local Council Authority over Timelines for the Confessional-Difficulty Gravamen Process, 510-11, **867-71, 875-80**
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39. Clarify the Use of a Confessional-Difficulty Gravamen, 512-13, **867-71, 875-80**
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41. Refrain from Making the Confessional-Difficulty Gravamen Time-Bound, 516-17, **867-71, 875-80**
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