

CHURCH ORDER AND RELATED MATTERS

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I. Response to Actions Taken by Neland Avenue CRC

A. *Materials*: Overtures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (*deferred* from 2021) pp.454-77; Communication 2 (*deferred* from 2021) pp. 575-76; Communication 6 (*deferred* 2021) pp. 594-616. Overture 12 (a) pp. 519, 19 (recommendation d) (2022, pp. 536), COD Communication (II, A, 10; Appendix B)

B. Introduction

When Neland Avenue CRC ordained a person in a same-sex marriage, it acted outside the bounds of past synodical decisions, procedures, and guidance, and the CRCNA's interpretation of Scripture as it relates to same-sex marriage—and in so doing, has broken covenant with fellow churches. Our unity is based on bearing one another's burdens together. Acting apart from this covenant is a violation of our sacred trust. This hurts us all.

C. Recommendations:

1. That synod instruct Neland Avenue CRC to immediately rescind its decision to ordain a deacon in a same-sex marriage, thus nullifying this deacon's current term.
2. That synod instruct Neland Avenue CRC to uphold our shared denominational covenants and procedures as laid out in the Church Order and the Covenant for Officebearers.
3. That synod instruct the Executive Director to appoint a committee *in loco*:
 - a. To meet with Neland Avenue CRC to oversee its compliance to synod's rulings.
 - b. To meet with Classis Grand Rapids East to admonish them regarding their responsibility to uphold our shared denominational covenants and procedures as laid out in the Church Order and the Covenant for Officebearers.
 - c. To report to the meeting of Classis Grand Rapids East in the autumn meeting (September 15, 2022; classisgreast.org) and make pertinent recommendations for its deliberations and action.
 - d. If necessary, to invite three other classes to assist the committee in dealing with the issues regarding Neland Avenue CRC.
 - e. To report to Synod 2023 by way of the printed agenda its own actions and any classical actions taken and present its recommendations.

Grounds:

- 1) Neland Avenue CRC has taken action contradictory to the position of the CRCNA. As per Report 47, section IV, B,2 (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 603): "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). All officebearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances.”

- 2) Neland Avenue CRC willingly chose a path of non-compliance. It did not use the proper means to enact change in the CRCNA or seek clarification.
 - 3) Failing to take firm action has negative consequences on the CRCNA. It sends a message to other churches that non-compliance is acceptable in the CRCNA. It threatens our unity and undermines our witness to the world. Failure to address a publicly wayward church is to disregard the third mark of the true church (Belgic Confession, Art. 29).
 - 4) Synod can intervene in a lower assembly if the well-being of the churches in common is at stake (Church Order Art. 27-b and 28-b). According to the *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, section V, B, 12, “All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable.” Synod is free to deal with any matter that it judges to be of importance for the well-being of the denomination. Synod appointed a committee *in loco* for First CRC of Toronto while the congregation intended to ordain an officebearer living in a same-sex relationship. Neland Avenue CRC has already ordained such an officebearer, and thus a committee *in loco* is all the more warranted.
4. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (*deferred* from 2021), pp. 454-77; Communication 2 (*deferred* from 2021), pp. 575-76; Communication 6 (*deferred* 2021), pp. 594-616; Overture 12, A and D (2022, p. 519), and Overture 19 (recommendation D) (2022, p. 536); COD Communication (II, A, 10; Appendix B).

II. Response to Overture 12 (b and c): Admonish and Censure the Officebearers of Classis Grand Rapids East

A. *Materials*: Overture 12, pp. 517-19

B. *Recommendation*:

That synod not accede to Overture 12, sections b and c.