

Church Order

Chair: Mr. Michael Santarosa
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I. Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice

A. Materials

Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice Report, pp. 322-332

B. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of the challenge of maintaining trust in the churches in our present cultural context, recognize the inadequacy of administrative categories to maintain harmony in our collective ministry as a church, and encourage all churches, officebearers, and individual members to seek those things which lead to peace and mutual edification (Zech. 8:16; Rom. 14:19).
2. That synod adopt the following recommendation from the report of the Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice as revised by the advisory committee:

Recognize four broad categories of confessional interpretations, doctrinal affirmations, adjudicatory decisions, and doctrinal applications as defined below and encourage future synods to utilize these categories:

i. Confessional Interpretations: An official statement or declaration made by synod, which clarifies which doctrines are contained in the creeds and confessions of the church. By definition, confessional interpretations require officebearers to agree that the doctrine fully agrees with the Word of God, or file a gravamen.

ii. Doctrinal Affirmations: Doctrinal affirmations (sometimes called pronouncements, positions, decisions, and deliverances): An official statement or declaration made by synod, which expresses decisions on matters of doctrine, ethics, church policy, or other important issues. Doctrinal affirmations are authoritative and are meant to guide the beliefs and practices of the church community.

iii. Adjudicatory Decisions: Decisions that arise from particular disputes coming from the churches in response to appeals or protests or when the Judicial Code is invoked. Synod may decide that an adjudicatory decision has a universal and binding application.

iv. Doctrinal Applications: (includes what synod has called guidelines for further study, contemporary testimonies, or pastoral advice): Decisions that apply Scripture and the confessions to contemporary contexts or situations. Doctrinal applications are ways of further expressing the faith of the church but are not considered additions to the confessions. They are settled and binding but allow for discernment in the way they are applied in local contexts.

3. That synod receive this report and its definitions, commend these items to the churches as a faithful explication of the various categories of synodical pronouncements, and dismiss the team with thanks.

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