

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES

Chair: Willem J. Delleman
Reporter: Michael J. Kooy

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report – *deferred from 2020* (section II, A, 19), pp. 139-40
2. Council of Delegates Supplement – *deferred from 2020* (section I, I, including Appendix A), p. 204, 206-16
3. Council of Delegates (sections II, A, 17, a and c; B, 5-6, including Appendix G), pp. 41-42, 47-48, 90-114
4. Council of Delegates Supplement (sections I, G and K, including Appendices C1, C2, and E)

B. Privilege of the Floor: Mr. Andy DeRuyter, chair of the Council of Delegates; Rev. Michael TenHaken, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Mr. Colin P. Watson, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod appoint a study committee to more fully answer the questions: What is an ecclesiastical matter? What are the criteria for determining whether a matter is ecclesiastical? What does it mean to deal with an ecclesiastical matter in an ecclesiastical manner?

The task will include the following:

- a. Explore what “ecclesiastical matters” meant when it first appeared in the Church Order, and what it means to deal with such in “an ecclesiastical manner.”
- b. Conduct historical research on past synodical decisions with political and/or justice overtones and identify the criteria by which they were determined to be (or not to be) ecclesiastical matters.
- c. Considering the original intent of the Church Order, as well as the acts of previous synods, how should "ecclesiastical matters" be defined moving forward?
- d. Determine whether the findings could lead to serve as a supplement to Article 28 on ecclesiastical matters.

Grounds:

- 1) Article 28-a of the Church Order states, “These assemblies shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner.”
- 2) Synod 2019 instructed the Council of Delegates to do historical research on synodical decisions and the defining rationale for making those decisions in dealing with political and/or justice matters, and to report through one of the COD committees and/or an ad hoc group. [Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 821-822]
- 3) The Council of Delegates noted this deserves a more complete study than the COD is equipped to make, and recommended synod appoint a study committee to address this issue.

- 4) The issues raised in Article 77 of the Acts of Synod 2019 (pp. 820-22) are important to the identity and future of our church. Due to the gravity of this issue, the importance of connecting with the church broadly, and the timetable necessary to do the work well, a synodical study committee would be a more appropriate means to address this issue.
 - 5) Due to our denomination's use at different times in its history both a 'two-kingdoms' approach to defining 'ecclesiastical matters' and a neo-Calvinist approach, we recognize that there is no longer widespread agreement over how to interpret the term "ecclesiastical matters" in Church Order, Art. 28-a.
2. That synod that approve the following names for the Study Committee, should it be approved in the previous recommendation.

The following have indicated willingness to serve:

Nate Baelen
 Jordan Ballor
 Josh Christoffels
 Lee Khang
 William K. Krahnke
 Cedric W. Parsels
 Doreen Sylversmith
 Dr. Yudha Thianto
 Doug Vande Griend
 Charles Veenstra

The following have not yet been asked to serve:

Kyle Dieleman
 John Hiemstra
 Wayne Kobes
 Kathy Vandergrift

3. That synod approve the evaluation reports with regard to Mercy and Justice from the following ministries: Antiracism and Intercultural Conciliation, Centre for Public Dialogue, Disability Concerns, Indigenous Ministries, Race Relations, Office of Social Justice, Safe Church Ministry, and World Renew (II, B, 5; Appendix G).
4. That synod take note of the COD's ratification of Lindsay Wieland Capel as director of Disability Concerns, welcome her in her new role, and express gratitude on behalf of the denomination to Mark Stephenson for his work as the previous director of Disability Concerns and for his ongoing service as interim director of Social Justice/Race Relations (II, B, 6, a-b).
5. That synod take note that COD made the following appointments to the inaugural Dignity Team (*Agenda for Synod 2022*, p. 41). The staff of Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources will meet with the new team, help them to establish a working relationship, and orient them to the work.

Sherry Fakkema
 Carel Geleynse
 Lee Hollaar
 Sheila, Holmes

Cecil Van Niejenhuis.

6. That synod approve the COD review and approval of a separation agreement template (as found in Appendix E) for use by churches in addressing a pastor's departure. This sample document removes nondisclosure-agreement language suggested in earlier guidelines adopted by synod (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-94). Pastor Church Resources will recommend use of this template in its work with churches.
7. That synod take note that the search team, appointed by COD to fill the vacancy for the Social Justice/Race Relations director position in 2021, reported that it is not appropriate to hire for the position. Mark Stephenson agreed at that time to extend his interim term as director, and the COD is grateful for his willingness to do so.

II. Safe Church Ministries

- A. *Materials: Safe Church Ministry Report (section III as indicated), pp. 217-18*
- B. *Recommendation*

That synod ask the Council of Delegates to instruct Safe Church Ministry to carry on their task of gathering the data and reporting the current number of churches and classes with Safe Church teams and coordinators.

III. Response to Overture 11 (*deferred from 2020*): Curtail Clergy Use of Pornography, from Judy De Wit, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

- A. *Materials: Overture 11 (Deferred Agenda), p. 452*
- B. *Background*

The committee deeply appreciates the sentiment and intention that led to this overture. We recognize that this is a serious issue for ministry and throughout society. We will preface our recommendation with comments from one of our committee members, Dave Bosscher.

- C. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to overture 11.

Grounds:

1. Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources have resources available to assist addressing this issue. Other resources such as Covenant Eyes may be used as appropriate.
2. We did not find the proposed action likely to be successful in resolving the issue; it will not address the underlying issue. Given the presence of personal electronic devices, monitoring church devices will not likely address the issue or solve the problem.
3. This method may create an environment of distrust.
4. The problem requires action that can be dealt with on the local level.
5. The Human Sexuality Report and its pastoral advice concerning pornography provide insight and guidance.