

Congregational Care and Justice

Chair: Rev. Rob Toornstra
Reporter: Rev. Richard Grift

I. Canadian Justice Ministries

A. Materials

Canadian Justice Ministries Report, pp. 174-180

B. Recommendation

That synod note the work of the Canadian Justice Ministry to help churches in Canada live out God's call for justice, reconciliation, and belonging.

II. Council of Delegates Report

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report, Section IV. G. c&e, pp. 33-34
2. Council of Delegates Report, Section IV. H, p. 36
3. Council of Delegates Supplement Report, Section III. F, including Appendix I

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 are discussed.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod note, with appreciation the ongoing work of the Office of the General Secretary to address the growing number of Art. 17 releases and concerns regarding the stigma of Art. 17 releases (IV. G. 1. c).
2. That synod note with appreciation the work done by the Office of General Secretary regarding the translation of the Church Order and its Supplements (IV. G. 1. e).
3. That synod note with appreciation the work done by the Office of General Secretary regarding providing resources for disaffiliating churches and of classes who are supporting them (IV. H.).
4. That synod note with appreciation the work of the Dignity Team to help create a culture in which all members are respected and called to mutual service (III. F.; Appendix I).
5. That synod note with appreciation, the work of the Bible Translation Committee to review the Easy-to-Read Version.

III. Assisted Suicide Task Force

A. Materials

Assisted Suicide Task Force Report, pp. 281-310

B. Recommendation:

1. That synod approve the recommendations of the Assisted Suicide Task Force and commend this report to the churches as helpful information and guidance:
 - A. That synod affirm the value of human life as a gift from God, intrinsic and enduring, recognizing that, as Christians, we are to honor and care for all lives—our own and others—especially in suffering and despair.
 - B. That synod remind CRC members, churches, and classes, in accordance with prior synodical reflections, that the appropriate Christian response to suffering, disability,

and/or dying people (and their families) is pastoral, including compassionate palliative care instead of acting to cause death (Acts of Synod 2000, pp. 686, 707-8).

C. That synod instruct all CRC members to make every effort to ensure that meeting spaces and programming are accessible so that our churches are prophetic witnesses that disability, disease, and deformity do not diminish the value and dignity of every human (Acts of Synod 1985, pp. 348-52, 490, 702-3, 825; Acts of Synod 1993, pp. 381-405, 539, 542-43; Acts of Synod 2011, p. 817).

D. That synod encourage classes to occasionally provide workshops and training on end-of-life issues such as palliative/hospice care, estate planning, and communicating one's values for care to their health-care proxy.

E. That synod recommend the list of resources appended to this report as helpful resources for members and leaders navigating suffering and/or the end of life.

F. That synod encourage pastors and church leadership teams to develop and share with local CRC churches a list of reputable local palliative/hospice-care organizations so that they can better support the members in their community in the dying process.

G. That synod encourage the churches to provide training and resources to people involved in pastoral care for congregations and communities, such as found in Appendix B of this report.

H. That synod remind CRC members to give generously of their time, treasure, and talents to work that supports people who are vulnerable and suffering, and to support the work of civil government to provide compassionate care so that those who are suffering and vulnerable do not feel pressured to end their lives.

I. That synod recommit to engagement with public policy makers in advocating for hospice and palliative care that is readily available for every person in their jurisdiction.

J. That synod commend to the churches the report of this task force as a faithful response to the reality of medically assisted suicide in our time.

Grounds:

- a. This report can help the church offer positive gospel alternative approaches to the very real issues of suffering, despair, and loneliness.
- b. This report offers practical guidance for ministering directly to those needing palliative and/or pastoral care.

2. That synod deplore the legalization and practice of medically assisted suicide as well as the efforts to expand it to include minors, and those suffering solely from psychological disabilities.

Grounds:

- a. There is urgency for being clear and prophetic on this issue because of the speed at which society is accepting and expanding the availability of medically assisted suicide.
- b. This condemnation is rooted in biblical teaching as summarized in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 107's exposition of the Sixth Commandment and in the Imago Dei as a core tenet of the Reformed Faith.

3. That synod declare the mandate of the Assisted Suicide Task Force fulfilled and dismiss its members with thanks.