

## **Congregational Care and Justice**

Chair: Rev. Aaron Solomon-Mills  
Reporter: Rev. Brandon Seaver

### **IV. Virtual Church Task Force**

#### *A. Materials*

Virtual Church Task Force Report, pp. 311-321

#### *B. Preamble*

We endorse several of the majority recommendations from our committee. First, we wholeheartedly affirm that synod should encourage churches to consider digital-based ministries to supplement (or add to) current in-person ministries and worship, including experimenting with hybrid church models. Secondly, we affirm that synod should encourage classes and churches to network and collaborate together for shared learning and discernment regarding digital ministry practices. Lastly, we agree that Synod should direct the Office of General Secretary to coordinate with denominational agencies to be a resource for churches in how they might utilize new or ongoing digital ministries.

#### *Recommendations*

1. That synod not recognize virtual-only/digital churches as meeting the definition of a true church, according to the standards of our confessions and Church Order.

#### *Grounds:*

- a. Belgic Confession Article 29 identifies the three marks of the true church (pure preaching of the gospel, pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them, and the practice of church discipline). While the Virtual Church Task Force suggests that the pure preaching of the gospel is possible to do in a digital (only) church, they go on to indicate that there are more complexities to the administration of the sacraments, and that the “practice of discipline is more fraught with additional challenges and dynamics...” (Agenda for Synod 2025, pg. 315).
- b. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 103 explains that “God’s will... in the fourth commandment” is “that... I diligently attend the assembly of God’s people to learn what God’s word teaches, to participate in the sacraments, to pray to the Lord publicly, and to bring Christian offerings to the poor.” Given the concerns about the proper administration of the sacraments in the task force report - we echo that concern and do not see a fully reliable way to, “fence the table,” of the Lord’s Supper in a fully online church - which is an utmost responsibility of elders and pastors (Church Order, Article 25b).
- c. In accordance with CRCNA Church Order Article 39, a classis is a group of (CRC) churches that come together to... “find ways to live out a collective calling within their region.” Additionally, “A classis shall consist of a group of neighboring churches.” A

virtual-only/digital church, as we understand it, does not have a physical location, therefore making the aspects of belonging to a region or neighborhood untenable.

- d. While digital and virtual ministry tools have been effective for outreach, evangelism, and for supporting the early development of ministry connections—and while they may serve as helpful supplements or temporary alternatives in extraordinary circumstances—they are not sufficient for administering the ordinary means of grace or for maturing into an established congregation governed by the Church Order.

2. That synod acknowledge there should be room for intentional and ongoing experimentation within the CRCNA for digital ministry by local churches for the purpose of evangelism and mission, preaching and teaching, prayer, community building, pastoral care, church planting, and other such means of service to Christ and his kingdom.

3. That synod encourage those engaged in an exclusively digital ministry, to seek to move those they are serving toward a hybrid ministry and/or toward in-person gathering as a true church.

*Note: The Minority Report shares in Recommendations 3-7 of the Majority Report, but without the grounds which summarize the Majority Report's recommendations.*

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