

## **Congregational Care and Justice**

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

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

#### *A. Materials*

Virtual Church Task Force Report, pp. 311-321

#### *B. Recommendations:*

1. That synod acknowledge that while churches preferably gather in person for worship, fellowship, and mission, there should be room for intentional and ongoing experimentation within the CRCNA for digital ministry.
2. That synod encourage those engaged in an exclusively digital ministry to seek, when applicable, to move those they are serving toward gathering as a hybrid or in person church.
3. That synod encourage classes and emerging church plants within the CRCNA that are experimenting with digital ministry and virtual churches to network with each other for shared learning and discernment, including continued study about the legitimacy of virtual churches including especially how they might fulfill the marks of the true church in their context.
4. That synod further encourage classes and calling churches to pray for, partner with, and offer intentional support for church planters who are navigating the unique challenges of digital ministry.
5. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to work with denominational agencies to be a resource to classes and churches that are considering how best to support virtual-church church experiments. This would include, but not be limited to, helping these classes and/or churches network with others in our denomination who are also experimenting.
6. That synod encourage those who are experimenting with virtual-church plants, along with their parent church(es), to provide a clear ministry plan to their classis, including especially how they plan to fulfill the marks of the true church in their context and how they plan to address the importance of embodiment and in-person gatherings.
7. That synod declare the mandate of the Virtual Church Task Force fulfilled and dismiss the members with thanks.

#### *Grounds:*

- a. It is premature for synod to declare strictly digital or virtual online ministries to be churches, yet also premature to categorically declare virtual churches to be theologically impermissible. Further study is needed, including biblical and confessional study on the nature of a true church.
- b. In the meantime, the reality of digital engagement provides opportunities for sharing the gospel that shouldn't be discouraged simply because we aren't ready to make theological decisions about the validity of virtual churches.

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