Church Order II

Chair: Jason Ruis
Reporter: Todd Kuperus

Appeal

I. Response to Appeal 2: Neland Ave CRC
   A. Materials: Agenda for Synod 2023, Appeal 2, pp. 622-27
   B. Introduction

      The council of Neland Avenue CRC submitted an appeal in response to
      Synod 2022’s instruction “to immediately rescind its decision to ordain a deacon
      in a same sex marriage, thus nullifying this deacon’s current term.” In its appeal,
      the council noted that it “does not agree that Neland’s decision to ordain a
      deacon in a same-sex marriage constitutes breaking covenant with the
      denomination we love.” It also noted it “feels a strong covenantal relationship with
      the CRC” and believes that “God himself is calling this deacon to this holy office.”

      We carefully reviewed the documents submitted, and invited
      representatives of Neland and of the In Loco Committee to (separately) offer brief
      verbal presentations and respond to questions from our committee; we are
      grateful for their sincere and thoughtful responses.

      After prayerful deliberation, Committee 8 has determined the following
      recommendation.

   C. Recommendation

      That synod not sustain Neland Avenue CRC’s appeal.

      Grounds:

      1. Neither the Church Order, nor Acts of Synod 1980, provide the
         necessary grounds for Neland’s appeal. The Church Order clearly
         stipulates that only those “who meet the biblical requirements”
         (Church Order Article 3) are eligible to serve as officebearers in
         the Christian Reformed Church. Thus, while local congregations
         have the responsibility to elect their own officebearers, they do not
         have the right to elect anyone who does not meet biblical
         requirements: “No one is free to decide for oneself or for the
         church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the
         standards.” (Church Order, Supplement, 5, A, 3). Synod has the
         authority to declare the biblical requirements for officebearers.

      2. “The Synod of 1980 declared that it is indeed proper according to
         Reformed Church polity for either classis or synod to intervene in
         the affairs of a local congregation, if the welfare of that
         congregation is at stake” (Acts of Synod, 1982, p. 55). Synod also
         has the authority to intervene in a lower assembly if the well-being
         of the churches in common is at stake (Church Order, Article 27-b
         and 28-b).
3. According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, section V, B, 12, “All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable.”