

## **Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee Supplement**

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) presents this update to its report in the *Agenda for Synod 2026* (pp. 215-22) to note three matters discussed at its April 28, 2026, meeting.

### **I. Review of relationship with Reformed Church in America**

Regarding the assignment “to conduct a five-year review of the [CRCNA’s] ecumenical relationship” with the RCA (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 711), a five-member EIRC subcommittee chaired by Rev. Chad Steenwyk is focusing on research and analysis to determine the many varied ways in which CRC and RCA ministries are intertwined in local contexts, denominational connections, and international engagement. In this supplementary report we note activities undertaken to date and some initial observations of EIRC members.

During 2025-2026 information has been gathered from various stakeholders. Most were asked to complete short surveys. Some participated in group and individual conversations. Research with the following people and institutions has been completed:

- Pastors in classes that submitted the 2024 and 2025 overtures concerning the current ecumenical relationship between the CRC and the RCA.
- CRC ministry leaders and congregations working closely with former RCA congregations that have joined the Alliance of Reformed Churches and/or the Kingdom Network.
- CRC congregations with pastors from the RCA.
- CRC pastors serving RCA congregations.
- Ministers who lead congregations with joint CRC and RCA identities through a union or dual-affiliate structure.
- CRC classes that share with RCA congregations in local ministry initiatives such as food pantries, other diaconal services, and shared faith formation ministries.
- Intertwined CRC and RCA ministries and resources at the denominational level.
- The relationship of the CRC and the RCA in Canada.

Information gathering continues. To date, the EIRC has some general observations:

- Though the historic RCA is currently undergoing significant change, there is deep loyalty among its many members and former members to their shared history as a denomination. Considering the large number of members and congregations who have left the RCA in the past five years, there are unknown dynamics yet to be settled. In addition, many pastors who have disaffiliated from the CRCNA have been received by the RCA. With that shift, hurt and pain from the CRC are being carried into the RCA.

This is a time of flux for both denominations. The RCA is in the midst of major restructuring—particularly with respect to condensing its classes and regional synods into “middle assemblies”—for which implementation is planned by the end of 2026. The CRC has a number of recently disaffiliated congregations that are still discerning their future denominational home. Both the CRC and RCA continue to have congregations and pastors disaffiliating and affiliating, though not in as large amounts as in some recent years.

- There is a general sense that day-to-day local ministry is not affected by formal ecumenical status. Existing congregational partnerships and relationships between CRC and RCA churches can continue despite many potential changes in their denominations’ ecumenical relationships. Many such local partnerships also include churches from denominations that are not in a formal ecclesiastical relationship with the CRCNA.

Other important issues that linger and raise concern:

- Pastor shortages faced by both denominations, particularly in a time when church planting is being emphasized by both denominations.
- Pension and benefits questions among pastors who may be thinking about making a change to have their ministerial credentials held by another denomination. Such questions may also affect the future of some shared programs.
- The ongoing status of union and dual-affiliated congregations.
- Complexities surrounding Church Order Article 8-b and its supplement.

It would be premature at this point for the EIRC to present specific recommendations to Synod 2026. We will have additional follow-up conversations with some of the people and institutions noted above, including continued communications with the RCA. At the invitation of the RCA, the CRC is delegating an EIRC member to represent the CRC at the RCA general synod planned for June 11-16 in Nashville, Tennessee. Because that meeting will take place at the same time as the CRCNA’s Synod 2026 in Grand Rapids, our general secretary cannot represent the CRC at the RCA general synod.

After Synod 2026, the EIRC will review its work plan in light of synod’s response this year and come up with an action plan for the coming year. In later 2026, the EIRC subcommittee reviewing the CRC’s relationship with the RCA will seek to learn more about revised RCA polity and the role of its “middle assemblies.” The EIRC will continue to inform the CRC synod annually about its learning, evaluation, and recommendations.

## **II. Toward effective engagement with ecumenical partners**

During 2026-2027, the EIRC will review priorities as it engages with bilateral and multilateral ecumenical partners in relation to its capacity to engage them effectively.

### **III. Officers for 2026-2027**

During its April 2026 meeting the EIRC confirmed officers for 2026-2027. For the coming year, the committee chair will be Shirley Roels, and the vice chair will be Rev. Marno Retief.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee  
Shirley Roels, chair  
Zachary J. King, general secretary (ex officio)