

Please note:

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Agenda for Synod 2026

and the

Acts of Synod 2026

in one PDF for convenient searching and file handling.

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A brief index of items featured in the Minutes of Synod is also included at the end of this document.





Christian
Reformed
Church

Agenda for Synod 2026



Agenda for Synod **2026**

May 27, 2026
June 12-18, 2026
Calvin University
Grand Rapids, Michigan, United States

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PREFACE

It is with gratitude to God that we look forward to coming together as delegates and advisers to synod for conversation and deliberation and to celebrate the continued ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

The *Agenda for Synod 2026* provides a historical snapshot of what God has continued to do in our ministries and denomination as a whole throughout the past year. The reports of the ministries, agencies, and institutions of the CRCNA, along with responses via overtures and communications, provide an important reminder of God's work among us.

Synod 2026 will begin with a virtual convening session on Wednesday, May 27, at 7:00 p.m. (EDT). Rev. Tim Blackmon, pastor of Second CRC of Grand Haven, Michigan, will serve as the president pro tem until synod is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. Synod will meet in person beginning on Friday, June 12, at 8:15 a.m. in the Calvin University Chapel on the campus of Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. A community-wide Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise will be held Sunday, June 14, at 5:00 p.m. in the Covenant Fine Arts Center on the Calvin University campus.

Prior to the convening session, all delegates and advisers to synod are encouraged to take time to attend or review the video orientations posted on the synod site—designed as a secure site for delegates and advisers only. The orientation will assist first-time delegates and advisers in understanding the nature of synod and will provide helpful reminders for returning delegates and advisers to synod. In addition, special orientations will be held for advisers to synod, as well as for advisory committee chairs and reporters and their alternates (see the proposed daily schedule in the Announcements section on the following pages for more information).

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on the Sundays of June 7 and 14. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church in unity, growth, and renewal.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:9-12,

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

May the kind of love, respect, honor, hope, and patience that is the fulfillment of God's law be made manifest among us as we pray and deliberate at

Synod 2026. And may we witness to the Spirit's activity among us during all of our conversations and decisions.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3: 20-21)

Zachary J. King
General Secretary of the CRCNA

ANNOUNCEMENTS

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2026. Whether you are a returning delegate or you are coming for the first time, we sincerely hope and pray that you will find synod to be a rewarding and blessed experience. We come together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as members of the CRC, and as delegates of the classes that appointed you to serve. Synod is more than just a gathering of church leaders or a governing body. It is a reflection of the church and a time for reflection and celebration of what God is doing in and through the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Most of all, it is a time to discern the Holy Spirit's leading by listening to God through the voices of our brothers and sisters in Christ, in prayer, and through careful application of Scripture. God has richly blessed us, and you have been given a unique privilege to serve him and his kingdom by your engagement at synod.

The synodical services staff is available to assist you as you prepare for, arrive at, and serve throughout the week of synod. Please feel free to contact Synodical Services, if you need information or have any questions, by writing synod@crcna.org or calling 800-272-5125.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Council of Delegates calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2026 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

Some sensitive matters under deliberation at Synod 2026 may be handled in executive sessions closed to the public (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, section VIII, A). Synod 1954 stated that “the very principle of executive sessions, or sessions that are not open to the public, involves the practical implication that reporters may not ‘report’” (*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 15). If reporters are not permitted to report on executive sessions of synod, it is certainly a breach of confidentiality also for delegates to the synodical assembly to report—publicly, privately, orally, or in print—on the discussions held in an executive session of synod (cf. *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 16).

III. Social media contact

Synod 2019 recognized the increased influence of social media on synodical delegates and advisers and decided that delegates and advisers shall follow “guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of social media contact with non-delegates during advisory committee meetings and plenary sessions of synod, because such use might compromise the transparency and integrity of the deliberative process” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 811-12).

IV. Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod as a way to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not recorded. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being recorded. Synod has designated that the Office of General Secretary be responsible for the use and storage of the recordings.

The following regulations were adopted by Synod 1989 concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions by media representatives and visitors:

- A. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.
- B. Visitor privileges
 1. Visitors are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided they do so unobtrusively (i.e., in no way inhibiting or disturbing either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).
 2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
 - a. Video cameras are permitted only at the entrances, not backstage or in the wings.
 - b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
 - c. Video[recording] is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).

(Acts of Synod 1989, p. 445)

V. Proposed daily schedule

Although each new assembly is free to alter the schedule, the following general schedule (all times EDT) is tentatively in place for Synod 2026:

Wednesday, May 27

7:00 -10:00 p.m.	Virtual convening session

Thursday check-in, June 11

2:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Check in
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.	Orientation during supper for advisory committee chairs and reporters
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Supper
6:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Ministry Fair
7:00 – 8:00 p.m.	Delegate orientation

Convening Friday, June 12

8:15 - 10:00 a.m.	Opening worship and plenary
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Breakout sessions; Advisory committee meetings
12:00 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.	Supper
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings

Saturday, June 13

8:15 - 10:15 a.m.	Plenary session
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
12:00 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.	President's Picnic
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings or tentative plenary session

Sunday, June 14

Morning worship at area CRC churches	
12:30 - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise
6:30 - 7:30 p.m.	Supper

Monday, June 15 – Wednesday, June 17

8:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Plenary session
12:00 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Plenary session
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.	Supper
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Plenary session

Thursday, June 18

8:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Plenary session
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.*	Final session

*Synod will adjourn no later than 3:30 p.m. on Thursday.

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2026

Alberta North

Minister – Tomas Axeland
Minister – Andrew Aukema
Elder – Jon W. Vanden Dool
Deacon – Daniel K. Harder

Alternate – Ryan Hoogerbrugge
Alternate – Ken J. Vanderploeg
Alternate – Joanne Vanderlinde
Alternate – _____

Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Minister – Gary van Leeuwen
Minister – Henry J. Veldboom
Elder – Peter F. de Jonge
Deacon – Jeremy Williamson

Alternate – Paul J. Droogers
Alternate – Matthew D. Vanden Heuvel
Alternate – Emma Deslippe
Alternate – _____

Arizona

Minister – Jose Rayas
Minister – Andrew Littleton
Elder – Samuel S. Sanchez
Deacon – Kevin Copp

Alternate – Brian P. Tarpy
Alternate – Frank Meneses
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Atlantic Northeast

Minister – Daniel J. Vos
Minister – Willard H. Barham
Elder – Jeffrey J. Harp
Elder – David E. Dill

Alternate – Michael R. Saville
Alternate – Dan R. Wolters
Alternate – Henry J. Lane
Alternate – _____

B.C. North-West

Minister – Willem J. Delleman
Minister – Michael Yang
Elder – Davi-Andrea Drummond
Deacon – Robin de Haan

Alternate – Mary-Lee Bouma
Alternate – Sungwoo Park
Alternate – Jonathan D. Christie
Alternate – _____

B.C. South-East

Minister – Shaun Jung
Minister – Justin Roukema
Elder – _____
Deacon – Winnifred D. Langelaar

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

California South

Minister – José G. Piñero
Minister – _____
Elder – Ralph E. Mack
Deacon – _____

Alternate – Ruben Aguilar
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Central California

Minister – Josiah J. Gorter
Minister – Joel Renkema
Elder – Joao Pedro Macimiano
Trabbold
Deacon – David L. Roos

Alternate – Randy A. Beumer
Alternate – Sandra L. Baerwald
Alternate – Peter Yim
Alternate – Pamela J. Collins

Central Plains

Minister – Darren C. Kornelis
Minister – Gary W. Brouwers
Elder – Drew Ryder
Deacon – Nohn E. Wheagar

Alternate – David J. Swinney
Alternate – Michael L. Bentley
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Chicago South

Minister – Derek Buikema
Minister – William R. Sytsma
Elder – Thomas L. Van Engen
Deacon – Matthew D. Ipema

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Columbia

Minister – Rob Toornstra
Minister – Benjamin E. Petersen
Elder – Renee C. Gillenwater
Deacon – _____

Alternate – John Van Schepen
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Eastern Canada

Minister – Benjamin R. Gresik
Elder – Jeff W. Bokma
Elder – Cornelis Rystenbil
Deacon – Clarence P. Dijkema

Alternate – Aaron Thompson
Alternate – James A. Kralt
Alternate – Bill Byker
Alternate – Elisabeth VandenBerg

Georgetown

Minister – David C. TenClay
Minister – Mark D. Elffers
Elder – Brandon J. Seaver
Deacon – Mason Witte

Alternate – Nate Meldrim
Alternate – Derek J. Noorman
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Grand Rapids East

Minister – Brian White
Minister – Joy D. Bonnema
Elder – Ryan J. VanderKamp
Elder – Jeffrey A. Fisher

Alternate – Brad Knetsch
Alternate – _____
Alternate – Johnny Liu
Alternate – Jay A. Carlson

Grand Rapids North

Minister – Jeremy J. Scripps
Minister – Joshua L. Grimes
Elder – Brittany A. Clark
Deacon – Diane R. Boss

Alternate – Gina L. Dick
Alternate – Ben L. Gandy
Alternate – Ronald L. Karelse
Alternate – _____

Grand Rapids South

Minister – Joshua VanDrunen
Minister – Ronald G. Kool
Elder – Gary J. Bekker
Elder – Randall J. LeFebre

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Grandville

Minister – Brandon L. Haan
Minister – Jean Gomes
Elder – Mark Meyering
Deacon – Dennis R. Hughey

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Greater Los Angeles

Minister – Tae Kim
Minister – Fernando Valencia
Elder – Brian C. Hibma
Elder – Isadore LaBrosse

Alternate – Rob Golding
Alternate – _____
Alternate – Matthew Hooyenga
Alternate – _____

Hackensack

Minister – YooJeung Victor Kim
Minister – Matt Lin
Elder – Victor Piscoya
Deacon – Joe Sanderlin

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – Bethany C. Besteman
Alternate – _____

Hamilton

Minister – Mark Verbruggen
Minister – Douglas J. Nieuwstraten
Elder – Julius de Jager
Elder – Adrian Guildemon

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – John Valkenburg
Alternate – _____

Hanmi

Minister –
Elder – Joseph H. Kim
Deacon – Jeehee G. Mondragon
Deacon – Al D. Mondragon

Alternate – Sangjung Park
Alternate – David Cho
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Heartland

Minister – Brian R. Dunn
Minister – Keith A. Hoekstra
Elder – Dan Tracy
Deacon – Phil Elgersma

Alternate – Lee Khang
Alternate – Nathan Kuperus
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Holland

Minister – Chad M. Steenwyk
Minister – John R. DeVries
Elder – Aaron T. Locke
Deacon – Lucas C. tenBrink

Alternate – Jen Rozema
Alternate – _____
Alternate – Matthew Hochhalter
Alternate – _____

Hudson

Minister – Timothy McHugh
Minister – Lloyd K. Hong
Elder – _____
Deacon – _____

Alternate – Moses Kang
Alternate – Jun Mark Young Park
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Huron

Minister – Cameron W. Oegema
Minister – Jason D. Crossen
Elder – Jim A. Broekema
Elder – Wilmar J. Bakker

Alternate – Nick Bierma
Alternate – _____
Alternate – Jono Barnhoorn
Alternate – _____

Iakota

Minister – Matthew A. Haan
Minister – John R. Lee
Elder – Ben Saarlos
Elder – Nicolas R. Van Engen

Alternate – Kurt A. Monroe
Alternate – _____
Alternate – Nick J. Fanning
Alternate – _____

Illiana

Minister – Jim Hollendoner
 Minister – Cedric W. Parsels
 Elder – Joshua D. Dykstra
 Elder – Richard G. VanderWoude

Alternate – Jeremy Oosterhouse
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – Nathan R. Dykstra
 Alternate – Gary K. Dykstra

Kalamazoo

Minister – Mike D. Koetje
 Minister – Changho Ahn
 Elder – Seth Koerner
 Deacon – _____

Alternate – Simon Tuin
 Alternate – Rick L. Pinckney
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Ko-Am

Minister – Edward W. Yoon
 Minister – Kyungho Park
 Elder – _____
 Deacon – Jenny U. Yoon

Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Lake Erie

Minister – Joseph Hun-Suk Bae
 Minister – Alex D. Snider
 Elder – Robert W. Ettema
 Deacon – _____

Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Lake Superior

Minister – David M. Dick
 Minister – Marg Rekman
 Elder – Tony A. Krossman
 Deacon – Brandon C. Vaags

Alternate – David S. Huizenga
 Alternate – Gerald P. Van Smeerdijk
 Alternate – Richard E. Krasky
 Alternate – Jennifer L. Elton

Minnkota

Minister – Joshua T. Carpenter
 Minister – John A. Bothof
 Elder – Roy W. Duininck
 Elder – Richard J. Steenstra

Alternate – Ryan A. K. VanderWees
 Alternate – Shaun Furniss
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Muskegon

Minister – John S. Huyser
 Minister – Jeffery Anton Hough
 Elder – Schuyler T. Pike
 Deacon – Dennis Gene Jager

Alternate – Drew Sweetman
 Alternate – Ken Krause
 Alternate – Bonita J. Bergman
 Alternate – _____

Niagara

Minister – Ken F. Benjamins
 Minister – M. Jeff Klingenberg
 Elder – William Hoogland
 Deacon – Peter Kralt

Alternate – Robert Loerts
 Alternate – Timothy L. Raakman
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

North Cascades

Minister – Russell Kent
 Elder – Tim Buist
 Elder – Josiah B. Keen
 Deacon – Miles R. Davis

Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _ Rebecca J. Steiger

Northcentral Iowa

Minister – Stewart de Jong
 Minister – Kevin Boss
 Elder – Joel A. Copley
 Deacon – Christopher G. H. 't Hoen

Alternate – Wendell D. Davelaar
 Alternate – Rick Vollema
 Alternate – Herbert W. Schreur
 Alternate – _____

Northern Illinois

Minister – Moises Pacheco
 Minister – Ezra Jang
 Elder – Earl W. Nicodem
 Deacon – Jessica L. Brouwer

Alternate – Jeremiah Mithcell
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Northern Michigan

Minister – Mitchell J. Leach
 Minister – Ashley Bonnes
 Elder – Nate J. Beelen
 Elder – Craig A. Pollington

Alternate – Adam M. H. Barton
 Alternate – Steve Meeuwenberg
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Ontario Southwest

Minister – Harold A. Winter
 Minister – Ralph S. Wigboldus
 Elder – Margriet L. Linker
 Elder – Jack A. Van Marum

Alternate – Phil A. Apoll
 Alternate – Rafik Kamel
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Pacific Northwest

Minister – Aaron Gonzalez
 Minister – _____
 Elder – Eliot L. Blom
 Deacon – Merick A. Roragen

Alternate – _____
 Alternate – Douglas E. Fakkema
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Quinte

Minister – John VanderWindt
 Minister – Martin E. Spoelstra
 Elder – Patrick Bigelow
 Elder – Ryan Nirula

Alternate – Jana Vander Laan
 Alternate – Benjamin Ponsen
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____

Red Mesa

Minister – Caleb N. Dickson
 Elder – Jerome Sandoval
 Deacon – Mitzie Begay
 Deacon – LaVias Natewa

Alternate – Evelyn H. Bennally
 Alternate – Janelia Smiley
 Alternate – Gregory S. Morris
 Alternate – Willana J. Bennally-Johnson

Rocky Mountain

Minister – Will Brouwers
 Minister – Christian Sebastia Almenar
 Elder – Mary L. Gallegos
 Deacon – Randy L. Courduff

Alternate – Joel Schreurs
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – _____
 Alternate – Julie A. Walden

Southeast U.S.

Minister – Chris N. Cassis
 Minister – Scott Vander Ploeg
 Elder – John E. Granada
 Deacon – Diego Granada Jr

Alternate – Dylan W. Kern
 Alternate – Karlos E. Palacios
 Alternate – Michael C. Cassis
 Alternate – _____

Thornapple Valley

Minister – Robert C. Van Zanen
Elder – Ralph R. Mueller
Elder – Ren Tubergen
Deacon – Kevin P. Boss

Alternate – Paul R. DeVries
Alternate – Nicole R. Davis
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Toronto

Minister – Richard E. Grift
Minister – _____
Elder – Anders Blaauwendraat
Deacon – Madison Alexander

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Wisconsin

Minister – Jim C. Kirk
Minister – Gregory D. Schuringa
Elder – Terry A. Katsma
Elder – Zack T. Flipse

Alternate – Kurt Ritsema
Alternate – Tim Kooiman
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Yellowstone

Minister – Andrew Sytsma
Minister – _____
Elder – John Sinnema
Deacon – Caleb J. Sinnema

Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____
Alternate – _____

Zeeland

Minister – Aaron J. Vriesman
Minister – Dirk M. Koetje
Elder – Bill Lyzenga
Deacon – Andy P. Visser

Alternate – Mark A. Vande Zande
Alternate – Mark D. Timmer
Alternate – Mike J. Langerak
Alternate – _____

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES

COUNCIL OF DELEGATES REPORT

The Council of Delegates (COD) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) began its service of interim governance on behalf of the CRC's annual synods after being appointed by Synod 2017. COD delegates represent the CRC's forty-nine classes. There are also currently six at-large members. The ministry matters addressed by the COD are divided among seven committees to process the material before it. These committees are the Governance, Finance, Synodical Services, Thrive, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, and Connections committees. There are also three advisory committees: the Banner Advisory Committee, the Bible Translations Committee, and the Dignity Team.

The COD presents the following report as a summary of its work in the interim between the synods of 2025 and 2026. The report is presented in five main sections:

- The *Introduction* provides background information on the COD's role and on foundational principles that guide its work for the CRCNA, such as prayer, spiritual discipline, and diversity efforts.
- *Membership matters* notes the current makeup of the COD, its officers, ministry boards, outgoing members, and nominees for open positions. Further information on nominees is available in the Boards and Committees section of the *Agenda for Synod 2026*.
- *Program matters* addresses work that relates to the ministry programs and personnel of the denomination, as well as program work that is beyond the scope of or in addition to material in the reports of the agencies, ministries, and institutions.
- *Polity matters* covers the work of the COD as the denomination's governance board in the interim of synod.
- *Financial matters* provides synod with important information about the fiscal health of the CRCNA so that the churches and members of the denomination can assess its stewardship of the resources God has provided.

I. Introduction

A. Role of the Council of Delegates

The Council of Delegates acts on behalf of synod in an interim, advisory, and convening role.

- **Interim role:** Church Order Article 33-b: "... Synod shall appoint the Council of Delegates . . . to act for them in matters which cannot await action by [synod itself and to] . . . submit all their actions to the next meeting of [synod] . . . for approval."
- **Advisory role:** Attend to such church-polity issues as need to be addressed and render such advice to study committees as it deems necessary or as requested of it between the meetings of synod.

- **Convening role:** Make arrangements related to the convening of synod in coordination with the convening church.

The COD met in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in October 2025 and online in February 2026 and submits its report here. The COD plans to meet again in Grand Rapids in May 2026, and the actions of that meeting will be reported in the Agenda Supplement. More information on the role and responsibilities of the Council of Delegates can be found at crcna.org/welcome/governance/council-delegates.

B. Prayer and spiritual discipline

We rejoice that in recent years the Holy Spirit seems to be increasing the desire for prayer and other practices of spiritual discipline in the hearts of many CRCNA members and leaders. That desire was heard quite clearly in the many listening sessions leading up to the creation of the current ministry plan, and we see signs of it continuing to build throughout the denomination. The COD has attempted to incorporate prayer as a more intentional part of its governance practices, taking time throughout its meetings to listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to recall the privilege of this “most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 116). In addition, there has been an increasing effort in recent years to incorporate prayer and worship into the deliberations of synod (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 803) as a reminder of the fact that we gather first of all because of the salvation we share in Christ, which provides the ground for the work we do as a church. We are grateful for the work of Jon Hoekema, denominational prayer shepherd, and others who support and encourage this vital work.

C. Staff transitions

Shirley DeVries retired as chief administrative officer in January 2026 after 44 years of service to the denomination in various roles. The job description was reviewed and updated to reflect the needs of the Office of General Secretary and the denomination. A new position based on this update is titled *Director of Partnership Administration*, and, following a COD interview, this role was accepted by Roberta Vriesema, who began work in this position in November 2025.

Following the resignation of Shiao Chong as editor of *The Banner* in July 2025, and subsequent to a search by a hiring team of denominational staff and the chair of the Banner Advisory Committee, Rev. Lora Copley was appointed as interim *Banner* editor for a period not to exceed twelve months. A nominee for the permanent position of editor will be presented in the Council of Delegates Supplement report to synod.

ReFrame Ministries and Thrive are also in the process of hiring new directors. More information is available in these agencies’ respective reports to synod, and the COD plans to present new appointments for ratification in its supplemental report to synod.

II. Membership matters

A. Current membership

The members of the COD from the classes of the CRCNA are as follows: Wendy Werkman (Alberta North), Lee Himbeault (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Jeff Dykema (Arizona), Hyung-Jun Kim (B.C. North-West), Andre VanRyk (B.C. South-East), John Jansen (California South), Mark VanDyke (Central California), Erik Kamp (Central Plains), Christian Pedersen (Chicago South), Rob Toornstra (Columbia), Joan DeVries (Eastern Canada), Jeanne Kallemeyn (Georgetown), Ronald Karelse (Grand Rapids North), Willem deVries (Grand Rapids South), Rachel Bouwkamp (Grandville), Thomas Byma (Greater Los Angeles), Joyce Jackson (Hackensack), Mike Bekendam (Hamilton), Jae Young Kim (Hanmi), Loren Veldhuizen (Heartland), David Spoelma (Holland), Roy Heerema (Hudson), Peter Meerveld (Huron), Robert Drenten (Iakota), Jill Feikema (Illiana), Jeff Blamer (Kalamazoo), Jonathan Kim (Ko-Am), Alex Snider (Lake Erie), William Krahne (Lake Superior), Eric Van Dyken (Minnkota), Drew Sweetman (Muskegon), Janet deVries (Niagara), Bryan Dick (North Cascades), Herbert Schreur (Northcentral Iowa), Bonnie Zigterman (Northern Illinois), Jim Winkel (Northern Michigan), Phil Apoll (Ontario Southwest), Douglas Fakkema (Pacific Northwest), Ron VanAuken (Quinte), Tabitha Manuelito (Red Mesa), Mike Johnson (Rocky Mountain), Felix Fernandez (Southeast U.S.), Steven Hull (Thornapple Valley), Michael Irshad (Toronto), Chuck Adams (Wisconsin), Steve Bussis (Yellowstone), Lloyd Hemstreet (Zeeland).

Six at-large members currently serve the COD: Linda Van Sligtenhorst, Melissa VanDyk, Gregg Lawson, and Henry Eygenraam in Canada; and Michael Ten Haken and Christian Sebastia in the United States.

B. Officers

1. COD officers: Michael L. Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; Peter Meerveld, secretary; Drew Sweetman, treasurer.
2. Ministry board officers
 - a. CRCNA Canada Ministry Board: Andre Van Ryk, president; Joan DeVries, vice president; Henry Eygenraam, treasurer; Peter Meerveld, secretary.
 - b. CRCNA U.S. Ministry Board: Michael L. Ten Haken, president; Jill Feikema, vice president; Christian Sebastia, secretary; Drew Sweetman, treasurer.
 - c. ReFrame Ministries Canada Ministry Board: Andre Van Ryk, president; Joan DeVries, vice president; Henry Eygenraam, treasurer; Peter Meerveld, secretary.
 - d. ReFrame Ministries U.S. Ministry Board: Michael L. Ten Haken, president; Jill Feikema, vice president; Christian Sebastia, secretary; Drew Sweetman, treasurer.

3. COD Executive Committee: Michael L. Ten Haken, chair; Andre VanRyk, vice chair; Peter Meerveld; Michael Irshad; Robert Toornstra; and Drew Sweetman. Zachary J. King, Joel Vande Werken, and Roberta Vriesema serve ex officio.

C. Retiring members

A number of COD members are concluding service in June 2026 after two terms, and several others have opted not to serve a second term or have resigned from the COD in the past year. A complete list will be printed in the Agenda Supplement, and synod will be invited to express its gratitude for their service.

D. Nominations

Synod 2025 directed that the boards and committees create rubrics that would clearly identify nominees as having appropriate qualifications for service in their roles, as well as having stated their “commitment to Jesus Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76). This has created an opportunity for the Office of General Secretary to review the ways in which nominees are presented to synod. The Office of General Secretary has decided that, rather than listing nominees for appointment to the agency and institution boards in the various reports of those ministries, and with some appearing in the main *Agenda for Synod* and others in the Agenda Supplement, it will present a single, complete list of nominees in the Agenda Supplement each year. This process has been affirmed by the COD.

The Agenda Supplement will therefore include the list of all nominations for service on the COD, including first terms, interim appointments, and renewal for second terms. The Agenda Supplement will also contain the COD’s recommendations that synod appoint these nominees.

III. Program Matters

A. Ministry Plan and agency review

Synod 1990 mandated the establishment of a denominational ministries plan which would be used as the basis for management of the planning, coordinating, and integrating of the work of all CRCNA ministries and agencies (*Acts of Synod 1990*, pp. 672-76, 680; *Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 780-81). The most recent version of this ministry plan was approved by the COD in 2020 and later extended by synod through the year 2030 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 911) and can be found at crcna.org/OurJourney. The denomination, through the COD, its agencies, ministries, and institutions, continues to live into the four milestones of *Our Journey*: Prayer and Spiritual Practices, Every Generation, Unity and Diversity, and Share the Gospel. Behind these milestones continues to be a denomination-wide commitment to leadership development and renewal.

Synod 2025 adopted a schedule and process “for reviewing the implementation of the *Our Journey* ministry plan milestones in each ministry, agency,

and institution” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 601), replacing earlier versions of this review process. In alignment with this decision, the director of partnership administration has been working with World Renew to coordinate their review for Synod 2026. World Renew gave an interim report to the Connections Committee of the COD at its January meeting, and a full report is expected to be included as part of the COD Supplement report to synod.

B. Church Renewal

At Synod 2023 the CRCNA prioritized church renewal (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 975-76), leading to the creation of the Gather initiative—a cross-agency effort tasked with listening to churches and classes for feedback (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 509-25). Based on information received through that series of events, CRCNA staff have been working to develop proposals for next steps to present to synod. Recommendations will be presented in the COD Supplement report to synod.

C. Bible Translations Committee

The Bible Translations Committee (BTC) was established as a standing committee of the COD by decision of Synod 2019 for the purpose of reviewing Bible translations for potential use in the CRCNA, per Church Order Articles 47 and 52-b (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 764). In keeping with the instructions of synod regarding committee composition, the following members currently serve on the BTC: William T. Koopmans (chair; CRC pastor representative), Susan Medendorp (English-language stylist), Benjamin Ribbens (theological faculty, Trinity Christian College), Gabriela Tijerina-Pike (theological faculty, Calvin Theological Seminary), Michael Williams (theological faculty emeritus, Calvin Theological Seminary), Wendy Werkman (COD liaison), and Joel Vande Werken (staff convener).

The BTC held its annual meeting on January 14, 2026. At that meeting, the BTC reviewed its mandate and the adopted criteria for conducting the work of evaluating translations, as well as taking note of the list of Bible translations currently approved by synod.

The BTC has not received any requests from the COD in the past year to conduct a review of any Bible translations, but the committee will continue to be available to serve the churches in this way should any requests arise.

D. Denominational survey results

At its October meeting the COD received a presentation on the results of the annual denominational survey. It was noted that 1,067 congregants completed the survey and that one-fifth of churches are invited to participate in the survey each year. The survey collects information on church health, diaconal ministry, *Our Journey 2025* milestones, church and financial involvement, and demographics about participating congregations. More information on the denominational survey and its results is available on the Network (see network.crcna.org/topic/leadership/crcna-and-synod/2025-denominational-survey).

E. Nicene Creed resources

In response to an instruction by synod, the Office of General Secretary developed a list of curated resources related to the Nicene Creed, including worship service resources, to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the creed (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 651). While the curated list is not exhaustive, it provides a starting point for churches interested in recognizing this milestone. The list of resources for use by local congregations is posted on the Network (see network.crcna.org/topic/worship/creeds-and-confessions/resources-commemorate-1700th-anniversary-nicene-creed). (See Recommendation C.)

F. Ministry Support Services and The Banner

1. Shared ministry services

The staff of Ministry Support Services (MSS) is responsible for *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and a number of professional services that support CRC ministries. These services include order and subscription processing, distribution, purchasing, design and web services, editorial services, translation, rights and permissions management, and marketing.

In the interest of consistent style, branding, and quality presentation, MSS has supported CRC communications staff in creating guides for Brand Standards and Editorial Style.

2. *The Banner*

As the official magazine of the CRC, *The Banner* currently prints and distributes more than 60,000 copies of its paper version, and pageviews of its website (thebanner.org) average about 80,000 per month. In addition, more than 16,000 people have signed up to receive the weekly *Banner* Update email newsletter. Our efforts on social media also help to ensure that *Banner* content is available to anyone in a variety of forms.

The Banner app is available for free download on iPhone and Android devices (thebanner.org/App); monthly, the app receives more than 8,000 pageviews.

The Banner's editorial staff follows guidelines provided by Synod 2004 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 197-99) and in its synodical mandate, which was revised by Synod 2025 (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 713-15). Staff have been diligently interpreting and applying the changes. The COD also follows the synodical mandate and provides editorial input into *The Banner's* work by means of a six-member *Banner* Advisory Committee. Three of the advisory committee members are COD members, and two are at-large members. The committee is currently chaired by Rev. Mark VanDyke.

The Banner is currently searching to hire a new editor in chief following the resignation of Shiao Chong. Rev. Lora Copley has been serving as interim editor of *The Banner* since December 2025.

The Banner continues to live into the COD's plan to reduce the magazine's allocation of ministry shares as a source of revenue, with FY2026-2027 being

the last year it will receive ministry shares (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 624). Some changes as a result of this decision include fewer print issues (six in 2026, down from ten per year) and less content available online, although for some time *The Banner* has published more content online than in print.

3. Faith Alive Christian Resources

Synod 2013 approved the dissolution of the board of Faith Alive Christian Resources, the publishing imprint of the CRCNA, and transitioned critical functions of Faith Alive to MSS. We continue to sell and reprint resources that were already published, support the ongoing development of *Dwell* Sunday school curriculum and the Discover Your Bible series, and publish a small number of new titles as requested by our ministries. Sales of older products continue to decline. Thrive and MSS continue to pour energy into the *Dwell* curriculum, including further development of *Dwell Flex* (for smaller churches and multi-age contexts) and *Dwell Digital* (the online version of *Dwell* leader materials).

Christian Reformed congregations continue to receive a special “CRC discount” in comparison to what churches of other denominations pay. In addition, the CRC Digital Library allows anyone attending a Christian Reformed congregation free access to most Faith Alive titles online. These initiatives aim to help Christian Reformed churches make full use of resources that they helped to publish.

4. The Network

Over the past sixteen years the Network has become one of the CRC’s most-visited websites where people involved in their local church can connect—with each other and with denominational staff—about the practical aspects of doing church ministry. Although the half-time community manager now reports to the CRC Communications office, Ministry Support Services staff continue to be involved in the technical aspects of the website. The site receives over 50,000 pageviews per month, as people across the denomination read, ask questions, and share ideas with each other about their congregation’s ministries.

5. Mailing list policy

Synod was first presented with a request for a denominational mailing list in 1963, with formal adoption of a policy for managing this list adopted in 1975 (*Acts of Synod 1963*, p. 71; *Acts of Synod 1975*, pp. 85-86) and updated several times since then. Due to changes in the nature of communication, this policy has become obsolete. Staff members continue to be guided, however, by the principles formerly established by synod as they carry out their communications with churches and individuals. The COD recommends that synod discontinue the formal use of the denominational mailing list policy and assign this matter to the general secretary’s discretion for implementation (see Recommendation D).

G. Dignity Team review

Synod 2025 reviewed the Dignity Team Charter and instructed the Council of Delegates to address concerns related to the scope of their role as a care provider and the roles of local assemblies as part of its previously mandated assessment of this initiative (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608; see also *Agenda for Synod 2021*, p. 67). The COD conducted a full review of the Dignity Team (see Appendix A) and its charter, providing a number of recommendations (see Recommendations E-I).

IV. Polity Matters

A. Synod 2027

1. Convening church

Cascade Fellowship Christian Reformed Church (Grand Rapids, Mich.) has requested to serve as the convening church of Synod 2027 as they celebrate the 75th anniversary of their church founding (see Recommendation J). Synod 2027 will be held at Calvin University, in keeping with the Synod 2019 decision that the CRCNA's annual synod meetings take place in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for three years in succession followed by a fourth-year meeting in a region elsewhere in North America where CRC congregations are clustered (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 813). Synod 2029 will be the next year outside of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and plans are under way for reserving a host site.

2. Schedule

The Office of General Secretary has proposed a revised schedule for Synod 2027 that would change the meeting times of synod to run from Saturday through Saturday rather than from Thursday through Thursday. This proposal was suggested in response to requests to make synod more accessible to elders and deacons and to include changes to reduce daily workloads and demands on delegates during synod. The COD is recommending that synod approve the proposal that in-person convening begin at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 5, 2027, and that synod adjourn no later than Saturday, June 12, 2027, at noon (see Recommendation K).

B. Advisers to synod

1. Ethnic advisers and women advisers

In keeping with decisions of past synods, the Rules for Synodical Procedure mandates the involvement of advisers to serve synod as representative voices of groups within the CRCNA who may not be adequately represented in the delegations of the classes (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, III, B). In the case of ethnic advisers and women advisers, appointments are made on the basis of a rolling average of diversity presence at the previous three synods. Because the average representation at Synods 2023-2025 exceeded the required thresholds, no ethnic advisers or women advisers will be appointed to serve Synod 2026.

2. Young adult representatives

Since 2009 synod has welcomed the engagement of youth and young adults (18- to 26-year-olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination and has sought to raise up leadership within the church through the appointment of young adult representatives to participate in the deliberations of synod. These individuals bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination by listening, engaging delegates during advisory committee meetings, and offering input on matters that arise in plenary sessions.

The COD has appointed the following persons to serve as young adult representatives to synod. We express gratitude for their commitment and gracious willingness to serve the denomination in this way.

Kenneth Gonzalez	Kaitlyn Hofsink	Nathan van der Meer
Benjamin Haan**	Cruz Menchaca	Kyle Vannus*
Kyle Hoekema**	Samantha Teran*	Corey Viss

*indicates second time serving

**indicates alternates

C. *Synodical governance matters*

1. Church Order and Its Supplements

- a. The Council of Delegates, at its October 2025 meeting, requested that CRC staff recommend edits to the Church Order in light of updates approved by Synod 2025 to reflect the new agency name Thrive, as well as to note possible discrepancies between language in the Church Order Supplement and current practices in the CRCNA. The Office of General Secretary presented various updates to the Church Order Supplement to be recommended for approval by synod (see Recommendations L-M).
- b. Synod 2024 proposed changes to Church Order Article 24 and its supplement with regard to commissioned pastors who have been formally released (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 815-16). These changes were inadvertently overlooked in the Church Order updates presented to Synod 2025. The changes to Church Order Articles 24-e and 24-f and their supplements are therefore presented here for ratification (see Recommendation N).

2. Rules for Synodical Procedure

Synod 2025 approved a review of the Rules for Synodical Procedure due to “shifts in the nature of study committees, the role of the convening church of synod, the duties of officers, and issues of consistency between the Rules for Synodical Procedure and other governance documents” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608). The Office of General Secretary worked with a variety of leaders and experts for input on updates to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, including changes to the following: the role of parliamentarian, study committee report deadlines (Dec. 1 instead of Nov. 1), additional staff on the Program Committee, and that synod specify the membership and reporting

timeline for each committee it appoints to study a matter, rather than distinguishing between study committees and task forces (see *Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 827-29). The COD also recommends that the Judicial Code (in part) no longer be included in both the Rules for Synodical Procedure and the Church Order Supplement (Art. 30-c; see *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 55) but rather in the Church Order Supplement only (see Appendix B and Recommendation O).

3. Limited Suspension

Following the Synod 2024 decision to place officebearers in churches not complying with synod's decisions about unchastity under limited suspension, the Office of General Secretary was instructed to develop resources to help classes and churches navigate toward repentance and restoration or toward disaffiliation. Classes were also to report their progress in biannual reports to the Office of General Secretary (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 891-93). All classes have been alerted that resources are available at crcna.org/limited-suspension. While the process of limited suspension is still available as an approach to such situations, the COD recommends that synod declare the mandate to prioritize resources complete and to remove the requirement that classes report on the progress of conversations (see Recommendation P).

4. Resources to Support the Supervision and Release of Pastors

Synod 2024 instructed the Office of General Secretary to develop materials to guide churches and classes through issues related to the supervision and release of CRCNA pastors, especially those in noncongregational ministry, in light of recommendations from the task force reviewing Church Order Articles 12-17 (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 137-39). This task was completed in coordination with Thrive staff after synod ratified the proposed changes to Church Order Articles 12-17 (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 677-88). Many of the materials are now available on the denomination's website (crcna.org). In connection with this matter, we ask that synod approve related changes to the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting*. (See Recommendations Q-R.)

5. Publications

a. Updating official publications

The Office of General Secretary is responsible for all official publications authorized by synod and the COD. In some cases, it is unclear whether synod has simply commissioned these documents or whether synod must approve the precise text of (as well as text updates to) these documents. To clarify this matter, the COD recommends that synod grant the general secretary authority in the future to update the introduction to the Church Order, as well as the Commissioned Pastor Handbook, the Journey Toward Ordination, the doctrinal and ethical position statements, the Affiliation Process and Procedure, the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Ministry Leader, and the Manual for Synodical Deputies, in keeping

with any changes in synodical regulations and to report those changes to synod for information rather than requesting synod's approval (see Recommendation S).

b. *Index of Synodical Decisions*

Synod 1956 assigned a committee "the task of preparing an adequate index of past synodical decisions, with ample cross-references." It was also intended that, when the index was complete, "provision be made to bring the index up to date at [regular] intervals" (*Acts of Synod 1956*, pp. 18-19), a project that was indeed completed a number of times over the years (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 696; crcna.org/synodresources, "Indices of Synodical Decisions"). With today's digital technology and powerful research tools, the ability to search through electronic copies of the *Agenda for Synod* and the *Acts of Synod* has become much simpler and easier than in past decades. We therefore recommend that synod note the suspension of the published index of synodical decisions, considering that the original intention of this mandate can be accomplished today in ways that make better use of staff time and financial resources (see Recommendation T).

c. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook* serves as a denominational directory and as a resource for statistical information. Starting in 2016, the print *Yearbook* was made leaner, and much of what was included in previous annual editions became accessible online at crcna.org/Yearbook. The online content is updated continuously as new information is received by the *Yearbook* office. A review is under way to consider the future of this print publication.

D. *Governance Handbook*

At its online meeting in February 2026, the COD received a number of updates to the COD Governance Handbook (see Appendix C), following a deep review by staff. Initially adopted in 2017, the COD Governance Handbook was significantly revised after the adoption of the Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT) report in 2021. A draft of the revised handbook was presented to Synod 2023 for information, with the recognition that the materials were still in draft form and would require additional updating due to continued implementation of a planned revision to the organizational concept and structure of the COD (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 633-34, 913, 982).

Subsequent to the 2023 draft presentation of the COD Governance Handbook, the COD made additional changes to portions of the document dealing with internal workings of the COD (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 803; *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 607). The Office of General Secretary had also begun work on updates to sections of the handbook dealing with the work of the ministry boards, and those updates were still largely incomplete in the 2023 draft. In

the midst of this process, however, it became clear that the introduction to the COD Governance Handbook required a clearer mandate for the work of the COD and that the entire handbook suffered from a lack of clarity about which portions needed synodical approval and which portions represented internal COD procedures.

It should also be noted that the handbook does not simply represent the operations of the COD but includes sections that address the functions of the ministry boards. This fact has contributed to a growing awareness within the COD that the handbook should more properly be named the “CRCNA Governance Handbook,” with the understanding that synod has limited authority over some sections of the handbook that address the organization and function of the legal entities governing the CRC ministries. The COD has adopted the proposed changes to the portions of the handbook under its authority (Section II), and the COD here recommends that synod approve proposed changes to the portions of the Governance Handbook over which synod has authority (see Recommendations U-X).

E. Ministries Leadership Council Charter

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC), the gathering of senior leaders of CRCNA agencies and institutions, is going through a mandate update to clarify its accountability to the COD and to synod (*Acts of Synod 1990*, pp. 675-76; *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 352). The MLC serves the COD by ensuring that the agencies, institutions, and ministries are following synodical mandates and directives and supporting the Ministry Plan. The MLC is accountable to the COD through the Synodical Services Committee. Zachary King, general secretary, also reports to the COD on behalf of the MLC. The updated charter is presented in Appendix D for information.

F. Task Force to Reduce Governance Costs

The Council of Delegates, at its February 2025 meeting, approved the creation of a COD task force to consider ways to reduce governance costs, fund synod, and use time wisely. The task force is made up of members from the COD Finance Committee and the Synodical Services Committee, along with relevant staff. The task force report is included in Appendix E (see Recommendations Y-Z).

V. Financial Matters

A. Consolidated financial statements

The condensed financial statements of the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the CRCNA are shared for information in Appendix F. Additional financial information will be included in the Council of Delegates Supplement report to synod.

B. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod (*Acts of Synod 1983*, pp. 701-2), the COD reports the following salaries for senior CRCNA staff in the Office of General Secretary, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, and *The Banner*:

<i>Job level</i>	<i># of positions</i>	<i># below target</i>	<i># at target</i>
E1	1	1	0
E2	4	3	1
E3	5	5	0

The current salary administration system reflects decisions made initially by Synod 2014 and subsequently updated by the COD (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 436, 552; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 29). Salary ranges for the current fiscal year are as follows (unchanged from 2024):

2025-2026 Salary Grade and Range Structure

<i>Level</i>	<i>U.S. Range</i>		<i>Canadian Range</i>	
	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Target</i>
E1	\$163,294	\$204,117		
E2	\$147,361	\$184,201	\$141,762	\$177,202
E3	\$124,881	\$156,103	\$124,220	\$155,275
H	\$105,833	\$132,290	\$106,471	\$133,089
I	\$89,688	\$112,110	\$91,258	\$114,073
J	\$76,007	\$95,008	\$78,219	\$97,774
K	\$64,413	\$80,516	\$67,043	\$83,804
L	\$54,587	\$68,233	\$57,464	\$71,830
M	\$46,260	\$57,825	\$49,253	\$61,567
N	\$39,204	\$49,004	\$42,216	\$52,770
O	\$33,224	\$41,530	\$36,184	\$45,230

C. Employee benefit programs

Oversight of the denomination's nonretirement employee benefit programs is provided by the Council of Delegates, in coordination with the Canadian Pension Trustees and the U.S. Pension Trustees. Information on these programs is available in the Pensions and Insurance report to synod.

D. Offering schedule

Each year synod is asked to approve a schedule for one or more above-ministry-share offerings for the ministries of the denomination and a quarterly offering for World Renew in lieu of ministry-share support. These offerings go directly to support the work of the agencies (see Recommendation AA).

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Andre Van Ryk, 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, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, Thrive, or other ministries of the CRCNA are discussed.

- B. That synod grant all requests for privilege of the floor by the COD, agencies, ministries, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2026.
- C. That synod take note of the fulfillment of synod's instruction to provide curated resources related to the Nicene Creed, including worship service resources, to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the creed (III, E).
- D. That synod discontinue the formal use of the denominational mailing list policy and assign this matter to the general secretary's discretion for implementation in keeping with the principles expressed in past directives regarding the sharing of contact information for individual members within the CRCNA (III, F, 5).

Grounds:

1. Changes in the nature of communication, as well as in the collaboration among CRCNA agencies, have rendered this policy obsolete since it was first developed and even last updated, and synod no longer needs to be directly involved in managing such a policy.
2. The mailing list policy requires revision regardless of its official status because of changes in charitable law in several jurisdictions in which the CRC operates.

E. That synod thank those who have served on the Dignity Team and affirm its work by extending its mandate for another five years, with a particular goal during that time for the Dignity Team to identify ways of strengthening the work of church assemblies and their functionaries to respond more effectively to issues of abuse and systemic hurt which the Dignity Team was formed to address (III, G and Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. There is a continued need for this kind of a structure within our system, where victims of abuse and systemic hurt can simply be heard in a pastoral way.
2. This approach recognizes the proper role of the assemblies to provide leadership in bringing healing to situations of abuse and systemic hurt. Although some assemblies do this well, other assemblies are uncertain about how best to address these issues. This review period gives the assemblies time to take greater responsibility for these matters so that the work of the Dignity Team may be assumed by these assemblies.
3. The Dignity Team can be a resource for training and support of church assemblies in practices such as restorative justice and reconciliation.

F. That synod commission another review of the Dignity Team beginning in the fall of 2029, and reporting to Synod 2031, to continue the discussion about issues identified in this report and especially the work of equipping

assemblies for more faithful ministry, as well as other matters related to the team's charter (III, G and Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. This provides an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the Dignity Team in equipping the church assemblies to address situations of acute pastoral care and deep hurt.
2. Regular review of denominational structures is an important part of the stewardship of our collective resources.

G. That synod approve the following changes to the charter of the Dignity Team (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~strike-through~~) (III, G and Appendix A):

Changes to section f. Team Procedure:

- 2) Meeting locations: Meetings will ordinarily be held virtually. Once a year, ~~in conjunction with the fall COD meeting,~~ an in-person meeting of the Dignity Team may be held to welcome new members, build relationships together, and meet with parties whose case(s) would especially benefit from meeting in person. In special circumstances, at the approval of the general secretary or the director of ecclesiastical governance *where cost is involved*, other in-person meetings may be held.
- 3) While recognizing the value of a "nimble" approach, the team will also keep in mind the appropriate role of consistories and church assemblies (Church Order, Art. 25-b, 78-81) and will attempt to work with these bodies when possible to bring about resolution to cooperatively ensure a faithful application of biblical principles (cf. Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2). Where there is a disagreement about the appropriateness of the Dignity Team's involvement, a concerned assembly may bring the matter to the assembly next in line.

Grounds:

1. The instruction to meet in conjunction with a specific COD meeting is overly specific.
2. The added subpoint recognizes the Dignity Team's understanding of its role relative to the authority of the church assemblies and responds to concerns expressed about this relationship (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608).

H. That synod remind all our church assemblies, committees, and boards of the principles of responsible use of authority that ought to shape our ministry and actions, especially as they relate to shaping a culture of dignity and respect, and to take greater responsibility for these matters so that the work of the Dignity Team may increasingly be assumed by these assemblies (III, G and Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. The assemblies are the rightful place for such leadership in the denomination, as embodied in the ideals for godly use of authority identified in our Covenant for Officebearers and our Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders.
 2. Where these biblical ideals truly shape our ministry, the need for additional bodies which duplicate the functions of other denominational groups is reduced.
- I. That synod receive for information the COD's instruction regarding the Dignity Team's funding, and dismiss the Dignity Team review team with thanks, noting that issues related to terms of service, reporting structure, recordkeeping, relationship to the assemblies, and funding have been addressed as instructed by previous synods (III, G and Appendix A).
- J. That synod approve Cascade Fellowship CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.) as the convening church of Synod 2027 (IV, A, 1).
- K. That synod approve the following meeting schedule for Synod 2027: convene for the initial in-person session at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 5, 2027, and adjourn no later than Saturday, June 12, 2027, at noon (IV, A, 2).

Grounds:

1. This schedule allows delegates to reduce the amount of time away from work and family.
 2. These adjustments provide a definite conclusion to the time available for advisory committee meetings, as well as a recess for delegates to reflect on these committees' recommendations to synod, thus helping to facilitate the deliberative process at synod.
- L. That synod approve the following updates to the Church Order Supplement (IV, C, 1, a). (Additions are indicated by underline, and deletions are indicated by ~~striketrough~~.)

1. Supplement, Article 8

[sections A-D unchanged]

E. Calling Ministers Ordained Outside of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

1. *[unchanged]*
2. A minister ordained outside of the CRCNA desiring to be declared eligible for a call to a Christian Reformed church shall make application to the Candidacy Committee, which shall work with the candidate and the classis to ensure that~~Once the application has been filed, the procedures prescribed by the Candidacy Committee~~ synod in the Journey Toward Ordination document shall be followed.
3. A council shall not nominate a minister ordained outside of the CRCNA for a call without the approval of its classis and

the Candidacy Committee. ~~Key elements of the discussion are to involve the “need” criteria included previously in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E, 4, and now presented in the Journey Toward Ordination document in the section on Article 8. Synod directs all parties to take specific and special note of the requirement to establish a “need” when calling ministers ordained outside the CRCNA or in declaring ministers ordained outside the CRCNA eligible for call in the Christian Reformed Church at their own request. Once the council, pastor, classis, and Candidacy Committee all agree to the proposed call, the affiliation process and procedures prescribed by synod in the Journey Toward Ordination document shall be followed.~~

4. *[unchanged]*
5. *[unchanged]*

F. Determination of Need

- ~~1. Synod directs the Candidacy Committee to take specific and special note of the “need” factor when requested to give their advice to the councils and/or classes in the calling of ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA and in declaring ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA available for call in the Christian Reformed Church at their own request.~~
- ~~2. Synod calls all parties concerned to review the criteria for “need” offered in the Journey Toward Ordination document (section III, C, 1).~~

[Section G will become section F but will not otherwise be changed.]

Grounds:

- a. The inclusion of specific documents by name in the Supplement makes it appear that the administrative procedures shared in those documents have the same authority as synodical regulations, and that can foster confusion if and when the names of such documents may change.
- b. Although Supplement, Article 8, E was originally authorized as a “revised supplement to Article 8,” synod’s intention was sufficiently unclear that this text was included in the Supplement as an additional item alongside previously existing instructions to synodical deputies regarding the “need” criteria (*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 641-42; see *Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 74). As the responsibility for approving the “need” criteria has shifted in recent years to the Candidacy Committee, Section F of the Supplement has become largely redundant.
- c. The Candidacy Committee has been consulted on this proposal and is in agreement with it.

2. Supplement, Article 30-a

A. Appeal by a Member (Appellant) from a Decision or Action of a Council (Respondent)

1. *[unchanged]*

2. *[unchanged]*

3. *Appeal Process in Situations of Abuse That Are Appealed to Classis*

[first paragraph unchanged]

Orientation and Training. Before handling an appeal involving abuse allegations against a church leader ~~that have been taken up by an advisory panel process~~, classis delegates will participate in a 60-minute safe church orientation and training from Thrive on due process, abuse awareness, and response.

[remainder of this supplement unchanged]

Ground: This process has been changed so that our current practice with regard to safe church training during appeals processes is more general. Training is no longer limited to situations in which the advisory panel process has been formally invoked.

3. Supplement, Article 30-c

Note: The entire Judicial Code document appears in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, and sections 8-9 of the Judicial Code (in a different form) appear in the Rules for Synodical Procedure. The text in the Church Order Supplement should be amended to harmonize the two versions, as reflected below. Pursuant to a full review of the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the COD is also recommending the removal of the Judicial Code text from that document (see section IV, C, 2 of this report, Appendix B, and Recommendation N below).

Sections 1-7 [unchanged]

Section 8: The Judicial Code Committee of Synod

- a. Original hearings and appellate hearings before synod shall be referred to a Judicial Code Committee appointed by synod. This committee meets between synods as frequently as its business requires and presents its recommendations to synod in writing. ~~Although there are some separate regulations regarding this committee in the Rules for Synodical Procedure, Except as noted here,~~ the committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.

b. *[unchanged]*

Section 9: Hearing and Appeal Procedures before the Synod Acting in Its Judicial Capacity

[subsections a-d unchanged]

- e. Individual delegates to synod shall not have the privilege of addressing the Judicial Code Committee as is normally permitted with other advisory committees.

[current subsection e becomes subsection f but text is unchanged]

- g. During synodical discussions, the committee shall be represented by up to two spokespersons who will have the privilege of the floor. These spokespersons shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches.
- fh. Upon receipt of the written report or prior to, both the complainant and respondent may request the opportunity to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee shall make a recommendation to the officers of synod as soon as possible based on ensuring due process (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 2, g) and on the benefit synod would derive from such an address, and communicate the decision immediately to both parties (even if only one has made such a request).
- i. If synod permits the complainant or respondent to address synod, after the reporter provides the recommendation(s) of the Judicial Code Committee (and if there are majority and minority reports/recommendations, after both have been presented), the complainant and/or respondent shall be given opportunity for summarizing their positions, not unlike provided in the hearing (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 5, a, vii), except that no opportunity for rebuttal will be allowed. Addresses shall be no more than five (5) minutes. If both parties have requested to address synod, the complainant shall be given no more than five (5) minutes to address synod first, and then the respondent shall be given no more than five (5) minutes to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee chair or the general secretary shall be responsible for providing these instructions to each party, stressing that the function of addressing synod is to provide their personal summaries to synod, not to retry the case. After addressing synod, neither party may provide additional comments to synod, nor may synod ask for either or both parties to return to the speaker's podium for further questions, comments, or discussion.
- gj. The Judicial Code Committee may provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on Judicial Code matters.
- hk. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
 - i) by deciding the matter;
 - ii) by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;

- iii) by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council; ~~or~~
 - iv) by referring the matter back to the Judicial Code Committee for a rehearing before the initial hearing body; or
 - iv) by conducting its own original judicial or appeal hearing.
- il. Unless synod conducts its own original judicial or appeal hearing, synod shall give deference to the factual findings made by the Judicial Code Committee. Synod should accept the findings of fact as presented by the Judicial Code Committee unless synod conducts its own original judicial or appeal hearing because it is persuaded that
 - i) one or more parties were not given the opportunity by the hearing body to present important and relevant evidence, or
 - ii) after the Judicial Code Committee hearing, new evidence which is important and relevant has been discovered by one or more parties.
- jm. If synod conducts its own judicial or appeal hearing, it shall follow Judicial Code procedures set forth herein.
- n. Procedure for requesting rehearing under sections k through m above
 - i) Any party who seeks to have synod conduct its own hearing or refer the matter back for a rehearing should submit such request in writing to the general secretary for distribution to the delegates of synod with a copy to the Judicial Code Committee. The writing should include a summary of the evidence which that party was not allowed to present at the evidentiary hearing and a short statement of how this opportunity was denied, or the statement should include a summary of the newly discovered evidence and an explanation of why it was not discovered earlier.
 - ii) All parties and the Judicial Code Committee representative(s) should be allowed a very brief time to address synod on such request.
- o. When recommendations involve interpretations and applications of governing principles, such as the Church Order, to the facts involved in the matter, synod should allow the parties and representatives of the Judicial Code Committee a reasonable amount of time, set by the president of synod upon recommendation of the Judicial Code Committee, to argue for or against such interpretations and applications.

Grounds:

- a. This harmonizing update reduces potential for misunderstanding or confusion among differing versions of the Judicial Code,

the full text of which is presented in the Supplement, Church Order Article 30-c.

- b. The Judicial Code Committee has been notified of this proposal and has registered no objection to the changes.

4. Supplement, Article 52-b

- *[first paragraph unchanged]*
- **Liturgical forms, songs, and elements of worship** approved by synod are contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination's hymnal *Psalter Hymnal*. Forms, subsequent revisions of forms that are synodically approved, and other such resources are made available on the denomination's website (crcna.org) under "Synod Resources."
- Synodical guidelines pertaining to the **adaptation of liturgical forms** are found in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, pages 493-94, and in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*.
- Materials on the **principles of, elements of, and guidelines for worship and music** are found in the "Introduction to the Psalms, Bible Songs, and Hymns" contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination's *Psalter Hymnal*, pages 11-13; in the *Acts of Synod 1997*, pages 664-68.; and in the 1997 Committee to Study Worship Report available on the denomination's website (crcna.org) under "Synod Resources."

Ground: The locations and availability of these materials have changed over time, so the most reliable way to indicate their location is to point to decisions of synod rather than to specific documents or other named resources.

M. That synod remove the following portions of the Church Order Supplement (IV, C, 1, a).

1. Supplement, Article 32-d, section D

~~*D. Model General Operating Bylaw Number 1 for Churches in Canada*~~
A model bylaw for churches in Canada has been prepared and approved by synod. A copy may be obtained from the Office of General Secretary or from the CRC website—crcna.org and search "Bylaw Canada."

Ground: The model bylaw approved by synod (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 596) has been rendered obsolete in recent years by Canadian federal legislation and some provincial legislation.

2. Supplement, Article 38-c

~~Synod 2016 endorsed a revised Affiliation Process and Procedure for congregations that desire to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The process and procedure document for such affiliation as described in the Candidacy Committee's "Journey~~

~~Toward Ordination” document is included in the “Manual for Synodical Deputies” and has been provided for every stated clerk of classis.~~

Ground: The location of these materials and the names of various documents is subject to change over time, and a Supplement that merely points to the potential location of synodical regulations is unnecessary.

N. That synod ratify the following changes proposed by Synod 2024 to Church Order Articles 24-e and 24-f and their supplements (IV, C, 1, b).

Article 24

[The following new Article 24-e and its supplement are proposed. The current Article 24-e will become Article 24-f, and the current Supplement, Article 24-e will become Supplement, Article 24-f.]

e. A former commissioned pastor who was released from office must receive approval of the classis by which such action was taken in order to be reexamined for commissioned-pastor ordination by the classis of the calling church.

— Cf. Supplement, Article 24-e

Supplement, Article 24-e

In the following cases, the former classis shall also conduct an interview that examines the circumstances surrounding the release and the renewed desire to serve in ministry:

- if the commissioned pastor was released to enter a nonministerial vocation or to serve in ministry outside the denomination
- if a substantial amount of time has passed since the individual served as a commissioned pastor
- if the former classis deems further conversation with the individual helpful or necessary to their discernment regarding approval
- if there are reasons for release other than the pursuit of another call

Upon approval of the former classis, followed by approval of the position with synodical deputy concurrence, the individual shall complete any additional candidacy requirements not in place when last ordained; then, after a successful examination in the classis of the calling church, the individual may be reordained.

Note: Synodical deputy approval is not stipulated in the proposed reentry process for commissioned pastors because the synodical deputies are tasked only to weigh in on the appropriateness of the job description for commissioned pastor, not to assess the individual’s qualifications for ministry, which are evaluated at a classis level only.

O. That synod adopt the revised Rules for Synodical Procedure as presented in Appendix B, noting that these changes effectively alter earlier synodical decisions for the reasons indicated there (IV, C, 2):

1. That synod no longer be served by a parliamentarian appointed each year (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 810).
 2. That the deadline for distribution of study committee reports be December 1 rather than November 1 (see *Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 444).
 3. That the director of ecclesiastical governance be added to the Program Committee, revising the earlier decision that the general secretary be the only denominational staff member on that committee (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 433).
 4. That synod clarify the nature of the Program Committee report in keeping with recent practice regarding its use as a confidential document prior to its consideration by synod. This change would protect the deliberative nature of synod in line with concerns about pressure on delegates in the forms of outside lobbying and social media (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 811, 816).
 5. That synod no longer distinguish between study committees and task forces but, rather, specify the nature of each study committee membership and timeline (see *Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 827-29).
 6. That the text of the Judicial Code that currently appears in the Rules for Synodical Procedure be removed. The complete Judicial Code is included in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c (see *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 55).
- P. That synod declare complete the Office of General Secretary mandate to prioritize resources to help classes and churches navigate the process of limited suspension (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 892), and that synod remove the requirement that classes report on the progress of such conversations (IV, C, 3.).
- Ground:* Continuing to maintain the practice of “limited suspension” beyond the time frames set out by Synod 2024 would needlessly complicate the procedures of discipline available in the existing categories of suspension and deposition.
- Q. That synod note the work done by the Office of General Secretary (in coordination with Thrive) to develop materials to guide churches and classes through issues related to the supervision and release of CRCNA pastors, as noted in recommendations from the task force reviewing Church Order Articles 12-17 (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 137-39), and acknowledge these tasks as complete (IV, C, 4).
- R. That synod approve the addition of the following paragraph to section III, G of the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting* to help identify the church visitors’ role in situations where conflict is present (IV, C, 4).
- G. When conflict is present, Church Order Article 42-b urges that churches call on the church visitors “whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice.” While church visitors do not have the authority to require that councils take certain courses of action, they

should recognize the importance of providing wise advice and supportive guidance for councils walking through a season of crisis. Likewise, churches should recognize the value and importance of having the wisdom and guidance available to them through the church visitors, as they address serious challenges.

Grounds:

1. Such a resource makes clear that church visitors have a mandate to identify and work through conflict between churches and pastors (see *Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 138).
2. The text of the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting* has prior synodical approval (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 633).

S. That synod grant the general secretary authority in the future to update the introduction to the Church Order, as well as the Commissioned Pastor Handbook, the Journey Toward Ordination, the doctrinal and ethical position statements, the Affiliation Process and Procedure, the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Ministry Leader, and the Manual for Synodical Deputies, in keeping with any changes in synodical regulations and to report those changes to synod for information rather than requesting synod's approval (IV, C, 5, a).

Grounds:

1. There is not a regular process for updating these materials, which means that the materials can become outdated and sometimes even in conflict with current synodical regulations. (A current example is the lack of references to the Code of Conduct in the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting*.)
2. Some of these documents have been presented in the past in a form that suggests that synodical approval is required for the entire text of the document (see *Agenda for Synod 2006*, pp. 318-61; *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 912-15; *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 267-305).
3. These materials are collections of and applications of synodical regulations, not the regulations themselves. Synod still retains final authority over such regulations and has the right to instruct denominational staff and the minor assemblies should it believe that the collections of material or advice given in staff documents conflicts with the intention of synodical regulations.

T. That synod note the suspension of the published index of synodical decisions, considering that, due to technological advances, the original intention of the mandate to make synodical decisions readily available (*Acts of Synod 1956*, pp. 18-19; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 696) can be accomplished today in ways that make better use of staff time and financial resources (IV, C, 5, b).

U. That synod adopt the name "CRC Governance Handbook," replacing the title of the current Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, and recognize the distinction between portions under the authority of synod

and aspects of the handbook that describe the work of the ministry boards or that of the COD itself (IV, D).

Grounds:

1. The COD Governance Handbook was previously adopted in its entirety by synod (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 641).
2. The Governance Handbook contains significant elements concerning the operation of the ministry boards, which are technically distinct from the work of the COD (see *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 926-31).

V. That synod adopt proposed changes to the portions of the Governance Handbook that represent synod's mandate to the Council of Delegates (chap. 1, II, B) in keeping with Church Order Article 33-b, and other portions requiring synod's approval as indicated in Appendix C; and that synod acknowledge those portions of the mandate that reflect the legal and organizational structure of the ministry boards and related organizations (chap. 1, II, C and D) (IV, D).

Grounds:

1. This builds on the work done in the 2017 edition of the Governance Handbook by incorporating material from the mandate given by synod to the CRC's Board of Trustees (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 536, 620-33), which has been done in practice but has never been formally incorporated into a mandate for the COD.
2. Church Order requires that committees of the assemblies (such as the COD) "shall be given well-defined mandates and shall submit all their actions to the next meeting of the assembly for approval" (Art. 33-b).
3. This clarifies the status of materials related to the COD Governance Handbook that were presented in draft form (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 633-634, 913, 982), with multiple revisions approved by synod (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 803; *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 607), though not formally adopted with the handbook in its entirety.
4. Although not all portions of the CRC Governance Manual are directly tied to synodical regulation (and some functions are restricted by national laws), ministry board members and the entire denomination would benefit from synod's formal acknowledgment of the primary responsibilities and work of a ministry board.

W. That synod note for information the list of changes adopted by the COD in the portions of the Governance Handbook under its authority (see Appendix C and section IV, D of this report).

X. That synod note that the section of the CRC Governance Handbook relating to the organization and function of the ministry boards is still under development and will be presented to synod for information upon completion (IV, D).

Y. That synod, in light of recommendations from the COD Task Force to Reduce Governance Costs (Appendix E), establish a one-year task force, working in close coordination with the classes, to review the current classis structure and make recommendations to Synod 2027 for classis consolidations and/or overall restructuring. This task force should consist of at least nine members, including someone from each of the six classical regions, classis leaders, someone with extensive synodical experience, someone with experience in organizational leadership, someone with a legal and/or financial background, a member of the COD Synodical Services Committee, and appropriate CRCNA staff while also honoring the diversity of the denomination (age, gender, ethnicity) (IV, F).

Grounds:

1. At this point in the life of our denomination, classis restructuring is necessary; however, it will require an additional task force to work through how that restructuring should take place.
2. Reducing the number of classes will result in additional cost savings due to the reduction in the number of delegates to synod and the COD.
3. Many classes are currently struggling to fill important roles and to engage in new ministry opportunities. Having fewer classes would increase the pool of resources (people and financial) for those roles and ministries, such as church planting and leadership development.
4. Having fewer classes would reduce the staff time needed for interacting with the classes, allowing time to focus on other denominational priorities.
5. Synod has previously utilized such a committee to manage the process of redistricting the classes (*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 37-38; *Acts of Synod 1937*, pp. 64, 104-5).

Z. That synod meet on a biennial basis after 2027, and that synod direct the COD to provide specific recommendations to Synod 2027 about the changes to the candidacy process, the process for approving key denominational leadership, and other matters that are currently handled by synod annually (IV, F). This will require the following change to Church Order Article 46-a (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

Synod shall meet ~~annually~~ biennially, at a time and place determined by the previous synod. Each synod shall designate a church to convene the following synod.

Grounds:

1. This change would result in significant cost savings.
2. This change would allow for additional time to work on assigned tasks and for churches/classes to absorb/process synodical decisions.

3. The annual work of synod will still need to be processed. The specifics of how to do that are beyond the scope of the present task force and can be best addressed by the COD.

AA. That synod, in addition to approving the requests for special offerings contained in the Resonate Global Mission and World Renew reports, recommend that the churches receive one or more offerings for the following denominational agencies, institutions, and ministries: Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, Canadian Justice Ministries, ReFrame Ministries, and Thrive (V, D).

Council of Delegates of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Michael L. Ten Haken, chair

APPENDIX A

Dignity Team Review

I. Background and methodology

The Council of Delegates, at its special meeting in lieu of Synod 2021, approved the purpose and composition of the Dignity Team as a group tasked with offering a pastoral response to abuse-of-power situations within the CRCNA (*Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates 2021*, pp. 636-37; see *Agenda for Synod 2021*, pp. 63-71). Within the original resolutions adopted by the COD (and affirmed by synod; see *Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 932) was the instruction that “after three years, the COD would conduct a 360-degree evaluation, including some contact with users of this team, to determine its effectiveness and whether it is still needed. Continuation would depend on that assessment” (*Agenda for Synod 2021*, p. 67). This review, which has been delayed somewhat due to some initial hurdles in beginning the Dignity Team’s operation, is intended to fulfill synod’s instruction.

Because synod did not mandate a specific pattern for the review, this team decided to use the present methodology for evaluating the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the CRCNA (see *Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 453-56) as a template for the conversation about the Dignity Team’s effectiveness. The review was conducted by a panel consisting of two COD members (Rob Toornstra and Wendy Werkman), one non-COD member of the Dignity Team (Carel Geleynse), one representative from Thrive (Julia Rathbun), and one staff member from the Office of General Secretary (Joel Vande Werken). Roberta Vriesema was also part of this process in her role as director of partnership administration. Due to issues of confidentiality with persons who had approached the Dignity Team for support, it was not possible to conduct a true 360-degree evaluation, but the review team attempted to take into account the impacts of the Dignity Team on the people it served.

The review team met four times online during December 2025 and January 2026, including one meeting with the full Dignity Team, aiming to fulfill the request for an evaluation about the need to continue the work of this team as well as to address specific issues identified by synod about the ways in which this team would do its work.

II. General ministry evaluation

As part of the evaluation process for ministry effectiveness, synod has suggested that an assessment involve a review of the synodical mandate for a particular ministry, of the range of the team's activities in light of the CRC's ministry milestones, and of metrics that can be helpful indicators of the team's progress (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 454). This section of the report will briefly address these matters before making a preliminary recommendation about the value of the Dignity Team's continued work.

A. Review of synodical mandate

The Dignity Team's mandate is summarized most clearly in its charter, approved by the COD and presented to Synod 2025: "to offer direction that ultimately encourages, builds up, and transforms the life of those persons who approach the Dignity Team because they feel they have been victimized by abuse of power in the CRCNA" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 466). It is the review team's assessment that this statement accurately reflects the Dignity Team's work.

B. Range of Dignity Team activities and coordination

The Dignity Team normally meets monthly via Zoom, and once a year in person (though not necessarily in conjunction with the fall COD meeting as the team's charter indicates). It often deals with cases involving abuse of power arising from a wide variety of original concerns. In some situations, the team finds itself addressing historic wrongs that for one reason or another have come to the surface again now. Most of the time, claimants have exhausted other ecclesiastical avenues and come to the Dignity Team as a last resort. The team sees itself first of all as a listening body, willing to acknowledge pain and hurt and only then to suggest potential avenues for resolution. They use the word "nimble" to describe their work (note its use in the Dignity Team Charter, *Acts of Synod 2025* p. 466), recognizing that the body has very limited formal authority but that their existence grants them the opportunity to speak to the official structures of the denomination in ways that advocate for persons who have been hurt.

The Dignity Team sees itself primarily as a kind of "ombudsman" whose role is to investigate concerns about systemic injustices and to suggest potential solutions to the persons who are affected. Its value, thus far, has been in its ability to stand somewhat outside the official systems and to speak to that system while simultaneously seeking to affirm the systemic goals of godly conduct that the CRC has affirmed. Often people who have been hurt by the church or its leaders are exhausted, feel abandoned by leaders and

members who are supposed to represent Christ to them, and lack the energy to carry their claims forward in any other setting. The Dignity Team provides a way of being heard and validated, though its work sometimes comes too late to bring about resolutions that reflect the expectations of the claimants.

C. Measurement of ministry impact

The Dignity Team recognizes that its work overlaps, in some ways, with that of other CRC structures: Thrive, the Judicial Code Committee, church visitors, official church discipline, and the various appeals procedures of Church Order Article 30. Where Dignity Team cases would be better served by those structures, the group seeks to direct claimants to those resources while continuing to provide pastoral support. But the Dignity Team notes that its cases are often ones that do not naturally fall within the system, where the primary need is to help a claimant feel heard and supported. Because the CRC's formal procedures often require a great deal of energy and knowledge in order to navigate concerns and overcome institutional inertia, claimants who come to the Dignity Team have felt unheard and unsupported.

While it is difficult to identify the precise impact of the Dignity Team's work, for many claimants the very existence of the Dignity Team as a place to be heard represents a significant part of God's healing work. Over the three years of its existence, the Dignity Team has received about three to four cases per year. Though it has seen only a small number of "resolutions" in the sense that we might pray for, the Dignity Team recognizes that the nature of pastoral care is that healing often takes a long time and that God's "resolution" for wrong does not always fit neatly into our expectations.

D. Initial assessment

The review team recognizes that the Dignity Team represents an "experiment" within our systems (to use the Dignity Team's own assessment of its work), created to address "cases that should not be ignored but may not warrant attention in one of the formal complaint channels" (see *Agenda for Synod 2021*, pp. 65-66). As such, it is still finding its place within the broad CRC complex of systems. At the same time, we recognize that a number of secular employers are also recognizing the potential for informal mechanisms to resolve disputes, developing groups similar to the Dignity Team. None of this *requires* that the CRC have a structure (even one intended to operate "nimble" and "informally") such as the Dignity Team, but the fact that others have seen value in such a device does speak to the matter of whether we continue the work of this team.

Synod 2025 instructed the COD to address concerns about "the scope of [the team's] role as a care provider" and about the "roles of local assemblies (applying Matthew 18 principles) in pastoral engagement" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608). This instruction is relevant at this time, because it ties directly

into the consideration of whether the CRC continues this “experiment” for the long term. We already have mechanisms in place in our polity to handle admonition, discipline, and dispute resolution (see Church Order, Art. 30, 78-84, and their supplements). The Dignity Team recognizes this tension and has reiterated its desire that its work not be used as a replacement for the work of church assemblies. In fact, the Dignity Team has at times redirected cases to the church assemblies when it felt it was being asked to serve as an alternative decision-making body.

The review team recognizes that synod raises a valid concern, one that demands more reflection (see below, III, C). But we do not believe that this concern alone serves as a sufficient reason not to continue the Dignity Team’s work. In many ways, the existence of the Dignity Team stems from the difference between the ideal ways our formal systems ought to function and the actual ways in which they do function. Even in the church, our systems sometimes reflect the reality of sin. The Dignity Team has a role to play in identifying ways in which our systems *have* at times failed to reflect God’s design for his people in the church, and to help in finding ways for those systems to function better in this regard. Recognizing that this is an ongoing process, the review team has concluded that continuing the Dignity Team’s mandate for another five years would be appropriate while also maintaining the intention of trying to build denominational capacity for resolving long-standing hurts.

III. Particular requests from synod

Having decided a general course of action, the review team also notes several specific issues that synod would like addressed if the work of the Dignity Team should continue.

A. Limited terms of service

Initial discussions about the Dignity Team recognized a need to address the “merits of . . . limited terms of service” (*Agenda for Synod 2021*, p. 67). The initial proposal for the Dignity Team envisioned three members; the COD then went on to appoint five members (*Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 935; compare *Agenda for Synod 2021*, p. 64), later establishing three-year renewable terms of service and adding a COD liaison (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 467). The members are appointed by the COD. The review team believes that the membership structure envisioned in the 2025 charter serves the denomination well and encourages both adequate continuity and turnover on the Dignity Team.

B. Reporting structure of this team

Initially it was envisioned that the Dignity Team would be “accountable to the COD” and make any reports and recommendations to the COD (*Agenda for Synod 2021*, pp. 64, 67); however, the COD also approved the placement of the Dignity Team “as reporting to the director of [Thrive]” (*Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates 2021*, p. 636) while later suggesting that the team report “to the COD (through the Executive Committee) and to

synod” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 467). These multiple references have caused some confusion (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 471). The matter of recordkeeping has also come up at times over the years of the Dignity Team’s existence (*Agenda for Synod 2021*, p. 62; *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 467). As a group dealing with sensitive issues, the Dignity Team does not share its records with the COD, synod, or other agencies but does maintain confidential files in ways consistent with denominational policies.

The review committee notes that the present structure, which is reflected in the charter presented to Synod 2025, seems to work reasonably well. This reporting structure gives the Dignity Team the ability to speak to the COD when necessary while also ensuring that the group has the ability to submit an annual report to synod. While the Dignity Team recognizes the importance of a good working relationship with Thrive staff, neither the Dignity Team nor Thrive believes it would be beneficial to merge the Dignity Team into the operations of an official denominational agency. Thus there are no changes recommended to the current charter in this regard.

C. Relationship with church assemblies

Synod requested that the review team address concerns about the potential for the Dignity Team to serve as a replacement for the legitimate work of local assemblies (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608). As noted above (in section II, D), this is a valid concern shared by the Dignity Team itself. The review team here joins the Dignity Team in affirming the legitimate authority of the church assemblies, and we encourage its continued desire to affirm the work of those structures in the eyes of the church. These mechanisms reflect our confessional convictions that formal discipline exists as a necessary part of church life, that God’s Spirit uses such processes at times to bring about repentance and restoration that might not occur otherwise, and that the assemblies of the church are the legitimate authorities ordained by God to oversee such processes (Belgic Confession, Art. 32; Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 85).

However, we also recognize that formal systems are not always the most appropriate place to begin. Our polity notes that mutual admonition is a responsibility first of all of the *members* of the church, not just its assemblies (Church Order, Art. 79). Synod has also observed in the past that informal structures may at times facilitate repentance and restoration in ways that might not be possible if the concerns were first addressed through the steps of formal discipline; in fact, in some cultures and contexts these informal structures are far more effective (see *Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 263-85; *Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 529-65; Church Order, Art. 65). Such an approach is not opposed to biblical principles; in fact, they represent an important application of Jesus’ instruction to “take one or two others” who might be able to help bring about reconciliation between brothers and sisters in Christ (Matt. 18:16).

The Dignity Team has stated that it has no desire to replace the role of church assemblies. At the same time, we observe that any structure, even an informal one, could be perceived on occasion as applying inappropriate influence in a given situation. This tension is inherent in the very existence of the Dignity Team, and its members operate with that tension well in mind. Where overlaps exist between their work and that of other church structures, the Dignity Team's desire is not to replace the ecclesiastical authorities or second-guess them but to enable them as much as possible to do their work. When structures such as church visitors, regional pastors, safe church teams, and other functionaries are serving faithfully in keeping with our vision for a godly Christian community, the need for an outside group such as the Dignity Team is diminished. We therefore affirm the Dignity Team's stated desire to direct cases to formal ecclesiastical bodies for resolution whenever possible. At the same time, we encourage the Dignity Team to continue looking for ways to enable our systems to faithfully minister, serve, and promote just resolutions where church members have been sinned against. We also encourage our church assemblies to increase their capacities to respond well in this work. The review team has suggested a minor addition to the Dignity Team's mandate to reaffirm this goal.

D. Financial viability

Finally, because the Dignity Team is a new ministry initiative, it is subject to the instruction of Synod 2016 that requires a plan for funding or sustaining the ministry, either within the confines of current denominational budgets or through an alternative funding source (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 858-59). Currently the Dignity Team is operating as a special project beyond the normal budget of the CRC with annual expenditures of somewhat less than \$10,000 (USD). In order to provide sustainability for this resource, the review team recommends that the Dignity Team be given a line in the budget for the Office of General Secretary.

IV. Conclusions

As noted above in our preliminary assessment, the review team recognizes that the Dignity Team is a relatively new group within the CRC and thus has a kind of "experimental" quality to it. While recognizing that in many ways it overlaps other functions of church life for which we already have formal structures (classis functionaries, Judicial Code Committee, Thrive, and other denominational staff), we also recognize the value of a kind of "ombudsman" that is in touch with denominational systems yet with a "nimble" quality that enables it pastorally to serve people who have been hurt by that system. Our ultimate desire would be to enable those systems to function more fully as instruments of Spirit-led discernment and response to the effects of sin and injustice that exist, sadly enough, even in Christ's church.

For this reason, the review team recommends that the Dignity Team be continued for another five years, with a particular focus on having the team

help to develop capacity in our denominational systems to address issues of dignity and respect. The review team also recommends another review in five years, with an instruction to the Office of General Secretary to begin the review process well ahead of the due date to allow for robust discussion of the issues identified in this review.

The review team is thankful for the time and effort invested by the Dignity Team in seeking to heal deep hurts in the name of Christ. Although no system will completely enable the church to care for one another perfectly this side of heaven, the Dignity Team represents an important effort by the CRCNA to live out its commitment to carry out its ministry in ways that reflect God's bestowal of dignity on all members of the church. We believe this mission remains a valuable contribution, and we pray for God's blessings on the work that is done in this regard.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod thank those who have served on the Dignity Team and affirm its work by extending its mandate for another five years, with a particular goal during that time for the Dignity Team to identify ways of strengthening the work of church assemblies and their functionaries to respond more effectively to issues of abuse and systemic hurt which the Dignity Team was formed to address.

Grounds:

1. There is a continued need for this kind of a structure within our system, where victims of abuse and systemic hurt can simply be heard in a pastoral way.
2. This approach recognizes the proper role of the assemblies to provide leadership in bringing healing to situations of abuse and systemic hurt. Although some assemblies do this well, other assemblies are uncertain about how best to address these issues. This review period gives the assemblies time to take greater responsibility for these matters so that the work of the Dignity Team may be assumed by these assemblies.
3. The Dignity Team can be a resource for training and support of church assemblies in practices such as restorative justice and reconciliation.

B. That synod commission another review of the Dignity Team beginning in the fall of 2029, and reporting to Synod 2031, to continue the discussion about issues identified in this report and especially the work of equipping assemblies for more faithful ministry, as well as other matters related to the team's charter.

Grounds:

1. This provides an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the Dignity Team in equipping the church assemblies to address situations of acute pastoral care and deep hurt.

2. Regular review of denominational structures is an important part of the stewardship of our collective resources.
- C. That synod approve the following changes to the charter of the Dignity Team (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

Changes to section f. Team Procedure:

- 2) Meeting locations: Meetings will ordinarily be held virtually. Once a year, ~~in conjunction with the fall COD meeting,~~ an in-person meeting of the Dignity Team may be held to welcome new members, build relationships together, and meet with parties whose case(s) would especially benefit from meeting in person. In special circumstances, at the approval of the general secretary or the director of ecclesiastical governance *where cost is involved*, other in-person meetings may be held.
- 3) While recognizing the value of a “nimble” approach, the team will also keep in mind the appropriate role of consistories and church assemblies (Church Order, Art. 25-b, 78-81) and will attempt to work with these bodies when possible to bring about resolution to cooperatively ensure a faithful application of biblical principles (cf. Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2). Where there is a disagreement about the appropriateness of the Dignity Team’s involvement, a concerned assembly may bring the matter to the assembly next in line.

Grounds:

1. The instruction to meet in conjunction with a specific COD meeting is overly specific.
2. The added subpoint recognizes the Dignity Team’s understanding of its role relative to the authority of the church assemblies and responds to concerns expressed about this relationship (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608).

D. That synod note the COD’s instruction to the Office of General Secretary to include the Dignity Team’s operations in the denominational budget in keeping with the funding principles identified by synod (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 858-59).

E. That synod remind all our church assemblies, committees, and boards of the principles of responsible use of authority that ought to shape our ministry and actions, especially as they relate to shaping a culture of dignity and respect, and to take greater responsibility for these matters so that the work of the Dignity Team may increasingly be assumed by these assemblies.

Grounds:

1. The assemblies are the rightful place for such leadership in the denomination, as embodied in the ideals for godly use of authority identified in our Covenant for Officebearers and our Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders.

2. Where these biblical ideals truly shape our ministry, the need for additional bodies which duplicate the functions of other denominational groups is reduced.
- F. That synod dismiss the review team with thanks, noting that issues related to terms of service, reporting structure, recordkeeping, relationship to the assemblies, and funding have been addressed as instructed by previous synods.

APPENDIX B

Proposed Changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure

I. Introduction

Synod 2025 approved a review of the Rules for Synodical Procedure with regard to “shifts in the nature of study committees, the role of the convening church of synod, the duties of officers, and issues of consistency between the Rules for Synodical Procedure and other governance documents” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608).

The Office of General Secretary conducted this review in the summer and fall of 2025, inviting COD members to provide further input as well. A number of changes have been proposed to the document, including the following:

- Elimination of the expectation that synod provide opportunity for ministry-related learning (Introduction, A, 2, c)
- Clearer explanation of the role of the convening church and the process for electing officers (II, B)
- Updated description of the work of the clerks of synod (III, C)
- Reorganization of the material related to advisers to synod (IV, B)
- Removal of the parliamentary position (IV, B, 2, h)
- Reordering of the material related to matters legally before synod (former section VI), including the adjustment of deadlines for the submission of study reports
- Clarification of the status of the Program Committee report (former section VII, A, 5)
- Updated description of the work of the advisory committees (former section VII, B)
- New procedures for the appointment and work of study committees (former section VII, D)
- Removal of the Judicial Code from the Rules for Synodical Procedure (former section VII, F)
- The removal of various references to past synodical decisions supporting particular rules

Some of the above updates propose a shift in practices previously mandated by synod. Thus, adoption of the revised Rules for Synodical Procedure as currently proposed would, in effect, also revise some existing instructions of synod, as noted below with grounds for revision:

A. The appointment of a parliamentarian each year is no longer needed at synod (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 810).

Grounds:

1. Changes at Calvin Theological Seminary have resulted in there no longer being a “faculty adviser for church polity,” requiring additional time and expense from what was originally envisioned in the annual appointment of a parliamentarian.
2. Although past parliamentarians have provided helpful advice on procedural matters, such a role is not strictly necessary “to assist synod in doing its work efficiently” (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 810).
3. Since 2019, when the parliamentarian position was first adopted, other staff roles in the Office of General Secretary have taken on some of the responsibilities initially covered by the parliamentarian.

B. The deadline for distribution of study committee reports would shift to December 1 from November 1, revising the decision of Synod 1989 (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 444)

Ground: A later deadline would give study committees more time to complete their work without significantly affecting the opportunity of churches to comment on such materials. The distribution date was December 1 prior to 1989, and advances in digital communication make it easier to forward study committee reports to the churches today than in previous years.

C. The director of ecclesiastical governance would be added to the Program Committee, revising the decision of Synod 1994, which appointed only the general secretary to this role (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 433).

Ground: The director of ecclesiastical governance plays a vital role in formulating the agenda for synod, and this work would be enhanced by the official addition of this role to the Program Committee.

D. The nature of the Program Committee report would be clarified in keeping with the practice regarding its use in recent years as a confidential document prior to its consideration by synod.

Ground: In keeping with concerns expressed by Synod 2019 about pressure on delegates in the forms of outside lobbying (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 816) and social media (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 811), such a step would help to protect the deliberative nature of synod.

E. Rules distinguishing the work of task forces and study committees would be significantly changed, revising the work of Synod 2016 (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 827-29).

Ground: Recent synods have taken an increasingly flexible approach to the appointment of study committees, task forces, teams, and staff consultations, rendering these rules difficult to apply. This change would allow synod greater latitude in determining the composition and rules under which the groups it commissions to study a certain subject ought to function, as was the case in our earlier history as a denomination.

F. The Judicial Code (reproduced there in part) would be removed from the Rules for Synodical Procedure, revising the decision of Synod 1977 to include it there as well as in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 55).

Ground: This change would reduce the potential for duplication or conflict with the full version of the Judicial Code provided in the Supplement, Church Order Article 30-c.

II. Proposed changes

The proposed changes are reflected in the document presented below (with additions indicated by underline and deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~).

Rules for Synodical Procedure

I. Introduction

A. Synod: What It Is and What It Does

What is synod?
[unchanged]

What does synod do?
[unchanged]

[section 1 unchanged]

2. Secondary functions of synod include the following:

- a. Conduct orientation for all delegates and advisers.
- b. Provide a denomination-wide context for worship, celebration, and fellowship.
- c. ~~Create opportunities for ministry-related learning via seminars, workshops, and discussion groups.~~
- cd. Occasionally make known, via letters or other forms of communication, the denomination's position on current issues or affairs.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 807–808)

II. Conducting Synod—Convening Through Adjourning

A. Synod shall convene virtually two weeks prior to the in-person meetings and be constituted as prescribed by the Church Order, Articles 45 and 46, ~~and the decisions of Synods 2000 and 2019~~. The virtual convening session will include a condensed time of worship and the election of officers.

- B. ~~Each synod shall designate a convening church whose duty it shall be to announce the next succeeding synod in the official publications of the church, three months before the date of meeting, with the following duties:~~
1. Provide a president pro tem, the minister (or counselor in the event of a vacancy), to do the following:
 - a. call synod to order
 - b. conduct the opening devotions
 - c. declare synod to be in session, provided that a quorum (i.e. two-thirds of the membership) is present
 - d. facilitate the election of officers
 - i) The officers of synod shall be chosen from a slate of nominees by the delegates from their own number, by ballot, in the following order: president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected.
 - ii) At each step in the election process the number of votes shall be read, and synod shall decide which numbers shall be included on the next ballot. After that decision has been made, the names corresponding to the numbers shall be read in alphabetical order.
 - e. Introduce the newly elected officers
 2. Plan and lead the opening worship service of synod with support from the Office of General Secretary and other denominational agencies.
 3. Plan and lead the Sunday Synodical Worship Service with support from the Office of General Secretary and other denominational agencies. This should use local congregations as much as possible in the planning and implementation of the service, reflecting our diversity. This service will include communion and an offering for denominational ministries Ministry Shares and will be held at a location determined by the Office of General Secretary dependent on the location of synod for any given year.
- C. ~~The Sunday Synodical Worship Service shall be planned by the Synod Worship Planning Committee, using local congregations as much as possible in the planning and implementation of the service, adhering to previously adopted guidelines (e.g., including communion, reflecting our diversity, etc.). All members of synod are expected to attend this worship service.~~
- (Amended Acts of Synod 2019, p. 803)*
- D. ~~The minister of the convening church (or in the event of a vacancy, its counselor) shall officiate as president pro tem. The duties shall be:~~
- ~~1. On the appointed day, and at the appointed time and place, the president pro tem shall call synod to order, and conduct the opening devotions.~~

2. ~~Thereafter the president pro tem shall call for the prescribed credentials of the delegates. Provided that a quorum, i.e., two-thirds of the membership, is present, the synodical assembly shall be declared to have opened.~~
 3. ~~The officers of synod shall be chosen from a slate of nominees by the delegates from their own number, by ballot, in the following order: president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected.~~
~~At each step in the election process the number of votes shall be read, and synod shall decide which numbers shall be included on the next ballot. After that decision has been made, the names corresponding to the numbers shall be read in alphabetical order.~~
 4. ~~The president pro tem shall thereupon introduce the president and the other officers to the assembly.~~
- ~~EC.~~ While synod is in session, its members may not leave the assembly without permission from the chair; neither is it permissible for any member to withdraw from the assembly and return home without the consent of officers.
- ~~FD.~~ Synod shall adjourn no later than midafternoon on the fourth day of plenary sessions. Unfinished business can be deferred to the agenda of the following synod or to the Council of Delegates if necessary.
- (Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 803)*
- ~~GE.~~ Synod begins each morning with a time of worship planned by denominational staff and a committee of delegates appointed by the program committee of synod, with the exception of the final day when synod concludes with worship. The Synod Worship Planning Committee will be composed of a diverse group of staff, delegates and advisers to synod and make use of the gifts of synod's attendees as much as possible to carry out worship.
- (Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 803)*
- ~~HE.~~ Prayer is central to worship and shall be an intentional feature of synod's work sessions.
- (Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 803)*
- ~~IG.~~ Synod should be intentional about providing opportunity for purposeful dialogue. ~~Synod 2019 listed a number of ways that healthy dialogue at synod can be promoted.~~
- (Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 808)*
- H. The synod news office will prepare reports of synodical activities and decisions for the benefit of the churches and members of the Christian Reformed Church.

III. Duties of Officers

The officers of synod work together to lead the delegates through each session of synod, making decisions with regard to order and decorum. Together the officers will determine the following:

1. length of speeches and visibility of the time clock
2. whether a session of synod is open or closed to the public
3. when synod enters executive and strict executive sessions
4. appointment of a Minutes Review Committee
5. appointment of the Sergeant at Arms

[sections A-B unchanged]

C. *The First Clerk and Second Clerk*

1. The first clerk shall each day call the roll immediately after the opening devotions.
2. The clerk shall ~~keep an exact record of the synodical proceedings~~ daily review the record of each session of synod with the Minutes Review Committee as assigned by the officers of synod. This record shall contain:
 - a. Opening and closing of sessions and roll call;
 - b. All main motions whether carried or defeated; all appeals whether sustained or not sustained;
 - c. All reports of advisory committees and all decisions of synod;
 - d. The names of ecumenical delegates and others who address synod;
 - e. Any document, any phase of discussion on the floor of synod, or any address that synod by a majority vote decides to insert into the minutes.
3. The record shall not contain:
 - a. Any rejected motion except when it is a main motion;
 - b. Any motion that is withdrawn;
 - c. Any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.
4. The clerks will be responsible to monitor the speaker queue, voting platform, new motions and amended motions, and the communication of the results to the president of synod. The minutes of each day will be examined and proofread by a small committee appointed by the officers of synod. The edited and proofread minutes will be posted in a public place where they can be read by delegates, and copies will be made available to delegates upon request.
5. The clerks will be responsible to communicate between synod staff and the president of synod regarding daily schedule and announcements for the body of synod.

6. The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk. The second clerk shall also render all possible assistance to the first clerk as circumstances may require.

IV. Duties of Nondelegated Synodical Functionaries

[section A unchanged]

B. Advisers to Synod

~~Synod 2014 acknowledged the importance of advisers in the work of synod and affirmed the intent to select all future faculty advisers from a pool of qualified personnel. The primary criteria for the selection of all faculty advisers shall be their knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod. In the case of ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives, the pool of selection will, at least in part, depend on recommendations received from the churches and classes.~~

(Acts of Synod 2014, p. 537; 2015, p. 673)

1. Classifications of Advisers to Synod

- a. Up to seven faculty advisers, but no less than five, shall be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary. The primary criteria for the selection of all faculty advisers shall be their knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:
 - 1) The general secretary shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, at the earliest possible date determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary, select faculty members with the particular expertise needed for that year. The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the general secretary of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members available to serve as advisers to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members.
 - 2) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee by the Program Committee of synod as proposed by the general secretary.
 - 3) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.
- b. Ethnic advisers are representative voices of ethnic minority communities in the membership of the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes.

- c. Women advisers provide gender diversity to the assembly and enrich the work of synod. Up to seven such women nonvoting advisers may be appointed, per the rules adopted by synod.
- d. Young adult representatives are representative voices of the young adult membership (ages 18-26) within the CRC that are not represented in the delegations by the classes.
- e. Staff consultants are members of the executive staff of the denomination serving in association with the Office of General Secretary and designated by the general secretary, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, to serve the assembly of synod. The following general procedures shall be followed:
 - 1) Procedural advice for all matters on synod's agenda shall be the responsibility of the general secretary or his/her designee.
 - 2) When the general secretary assigns a staff consultant to serve an advisory committee, then a faculty adviser may not need to be assigned to the same advisory committee.
 - 3) The parameter of service of the staff consultant is restricted to the particular area of their expertise. This provision shall apply to both serving in the advisory committee and in the plenary sessions of synod.
- f. Agency and institution board representatives: Normally the agency/institution board presidents, the agency directors, and the presidents of the educational institutions shall have the privilege of access to the advisory committee of synod that deals with the report of the agency or institution they represent. In addition, they shall be granted the privilege of the floor at the plenary session of synod when their respective report is discussed. The presidents of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University are designated as advisers to synod with respect to issues that affect their respective institutions.
- g. Council of Delegates of the CRCNA (COD) representation shall consist of the chair of the COD, at least one other member of the COD Executive Committee (ensuring representation from both Canada and the United States), the general secretary of the CRCNA, and such other members of the denominational executive staff as are needed to serve synod and its advisory committees. They shall have the privilege of meeting with the advisory committees that address Council of Delegates agenda matters as well as the privilege of the floor when Council of Delegates matters are addressed in plenary session.
- h. Ecumenical delegates from churches in communion shall be given the privilege of the floor, with the right to speak on matters before synod, and shall also be given the privilege of visiting meetings of advisory committees with the consent of the chair of the committee.

2. Appointments of Ethnic and Women Advisers and Young Adult Representatives
 - a. The Council of Delegates shall appoint the ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives each year at its February meeting. Nominations for these adviser positions shall be gathered by the general secretary from suggestions offered by the churches.
 - b. Ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives shall be members in good standing within the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.
 - c. The voices of ethnic minority members and women in the CRCNA will be supplemented by the appointment of up to seven nonvoting advisers from that group when the average number of delegates from that group in the previous three years is fewer than twenty-five. When advisers are appointed, in no instance shall a particular group have fewer than two advisers.
 - d. Up to seven Young Adult Representatives may be appointed each year with an attempt made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve a second time. This means that there will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.
 - e. Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
 - f. In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (at a rate set by the general secretary from time to time) will be available for ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives who are financially disadvantaged through service to synod.
3. Regulations for Advisers to Synod
 - a. Advisers shall observe and honor the conditions of their appointment.
 - b. Advisers shall normally be present for the duration of synod's meetings.
 - c. Advisers shall normally have access only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned by the program committee. A request to speak to, or be present at, another advisory committee is to be processed through, and approval is at the discretion of, the chair and reporter of that advisory committee.
 - d. Faculty advisers shall participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session to give advice and theological expertise.
 - e. Ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives may participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session, representing the voice of their advisory group to the issue being addressed.

- ~~f. Advisers may, within the normal rotation of discussion, speak to issues brought to the plenary sessions of synod by the advisory committees but must do so in an advisory capacity and as a service to the delegates of synod in their deliberations.~~
- ~~g. Advisers are not allowed to vote in the advisory committees they serve nor in plenary sessions of synod.~~
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 - ~~a. Advisers shall observe and honor the conditions of their appointment.~~
 - ~~b. Advisers shall normally be present for the duration of synod's meetings.~~
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 - ~~d. Faculty advisers shall participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session to give advice and theological expertise.~~
 - ~~e. Ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives may participate in synod's deliberations in plenary session, representing the voice of their advisory group to the issue being addressed.~~
 - ~~f. Advisers may, within the normal rotation of discussion, speak to issues brought to the plenary sessions of synod by the advisory committees but must do so in an advisory capacity and as a service to the delegates of synod in their deliberations.~~
 - ~~g. Advisers are not allowed to vote in the advisory committees they serve nor in plenary sessions of synod.~~
 - ~~(Acts of Synod 2014, pp. 539-40; 2015, p. 673)~~
 - ~~h. General Considerations for Ethnic and Women Advisers and Young Adult Representatives~~
 - ~~1) An attempt will be made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.~~
 - ~~2) Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.~~
 - ~~3) In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (at a rate set by the general secretary from time to time) will be available for ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives who are financially disadvantaged through service to synod.~~
 - ~~i. Qualification of Ethnic and Women Advisers and Young Adult Representatives~~

~~Ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives shall be members in good standing within the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.~~

- j. ~~Appointment of Ethnic and Women Advisers and Young Adult Representatives~~

~~The Council of Delegates shall appoint the ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives each year at its February meeting. Nominations for these adviser positions shall be gathered by the general secretary from suggestions offered by the churches.~~

~~2. Classifications of Advisers to Synod~~

- a. ~~Faculty advisers shall be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:~~

- ~~1) The general secretary shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, at the earliest possible date determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary, select faculty members with the particular expertise needed for that year. The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the general secretary of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members available to serve as advisers to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members. The number of faculty advisers shall ordinarily not be fewer than five.~~
- ~~2) Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee by the Program Committee of synod as proposed by the general secretary.~~
- ~~3) The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.~~

- b. ~~Ethnic advisers are representative voices of ethnic minority communities in the membership of the CRC that are not adequately represented in the delegations by the classes. Up to seven such ethnic minority nonvoting advisers may be appointed, subject to the selection rules as adopted by Synod 2005. The number of seven (or proportion of) such persons shall be appointed as long as the total number of ethnic minority delegates is less than twenty-five persons. The number of ethnic minority advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of voting delegates from ethnic minority origin exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of ethnic minority advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an~~

appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of ethnic minority advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three year rolling average of diversity presence at synod.

1) ~~Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the general secretary and approved by the Program Committee of synod.~~

2) ~~The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.~~

c. ~~Women advisers provide gender diversity to the assembly and enrich the work of synod. Up to seven such women nonvoting advisers may be appointed, per the following selection rules as instructed by Synod 2015. The number of seven (or proportion of) such advisers shall be appointed as long as the total number of women delegates is less than twenty five persons. The number of women advisers appointed shall be less than seven if the number of women voting delegates exceeds eighteen delegates. However, in no instance shall the appointment of women advisers be less than two. In order to provide for an appropriate notification timeline for those appointed to serve, the number of women advisers to be appointed shall be based on a previous three year rolling average of women delegated to synod.~~

1) ~~Advisers shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the general secretary and approved by the Program Committee of synod.~~

2) ~~The parameter of service of the adviser, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.~~

d. ~~Young adult representatives are representative voices of the young adult membership (ages 18-26) within the CRC that are not represented in the delegations by the classes. Appointment of these representatives to synod is made according to the guidelines previously adopted by synod.~~

1) ~~Young adult representatives shall be assigned to an advisory committee as proposed by the general secretary and approved by the Program Committee of synod.~~

2) ~~The parameter of service of the young adult representative, in advisory committee or plenary session, is to be in keeping with the general regulations of synod.~~

e. ~~Staff consultants are members of the executive staff of the denomination serving in association with the office of general secretary and designated by the general secretary, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, to serve the assembly of synod. The following general procedures shall be followed:~~

- 1) ~~Procedural advice for all matters on synod's agenda shall be the responsibility of the general secretary or his/her designee.~~
 - 2) ~~When the general secretary assigns a staff consultant to serve an advisory committee, then a faculty adviser may not need to be assigned to the same advisory committee.~~
 - 3) ~~The parameter of service of the staff consultant is restricted to the particular area of their expertise. This provision shall apply to both serving in the advisory committee and in the plenary sessions of synod.~~
- f. ~~Agency and institution board representatives: Normally the agency/institution board presidents, the agency directors, and the presidents of the educational institutions shall have the privilege of access to the advisory committee of synod that deals with the report of the agency or institution they represent. In addition, they shall be granted the privilege of the floor at the plenary session of synod when their respective report is discussed. The presidents of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University are designated as advisers to synod with respect to issues that affect their respective institutions.~~
- g. ~~Council of Delegates of the CRCNA (COD) representation shall consist of the chair of the COD, at least one other member of the COD Executive Committee (ensuring representation from both Canada and the United States), the general secretary of the CRCNA, and such other members of the denominational executive staff as are needed to serve synod and its advisory committees. They shall have the privilege of meeting with the advisory committees that address Council of Delegates agenda matters as well as the privilege of the floor when Council of Delegates matters are addressed in plenary session.~~
- h. ~~A parliamentarian shall be appointed each year by the Program Committee of synod in advance of synod. The duties of the parliamentarian shall serve synod by advising the president with regard to appropriate procedure related to Church Order and the Rules for Synodical Procedure, responding to procedural challenges from the floor, and serving with the officers of synod when complicated procedural processes arise. The person appointed should have demonstrated expertise in Church Order and meeting management, should be stationed in close proximity to the officers and other staff on the floor of synod, would have the right to challenge the chair related to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, and would provide training to the officers upon their election as well as in the moment advice. This position could be filled by the faculty adviser for church polity. There is no limit to the number of one year appointments the parliamentarian may serve.~~

(Acts of Synod 2014, pp. 537-39, 576; 2015, p. 673; 2017, p. 641; 2019, p. 810)

V. Ecumenical Delegates And Reporters Of Church Periodicals

~~A. Ecumenical delegates from churches in communion shall be given the privilege of the floor, with the right to speak on matters before synod, and shall also be given the privilege of visiting meetings of advisory committees with the consent of the chairman of the committee.~~

(Acts of Synod 1975, p. 39)

~~B. The task of the synodical news office is to prepare reports of synodical activities and decisions for the benefit of the churches and members of the Christian Reformed Church.~~

VI. Matters Legally Before Synod

~~A. Definitions~~

~~1. Appeal~~

~~An appeal is a procedure by which a decision or action of an assembly, board, agency, or committee is brought to the appropriate assembly for review in the light of existing policies and standards of the church.~~

~~2. Communication~~

~~A communication is a document presenting information, ideas, thoughts, opinions, complaints, or objections for consideration of the assemblies. A communication is distinguished from an overture in that an overture proposes specific action, and a communication does not. One type of communication is a protest, which expresses a complaint or objection to a decision or course of action followed by an assembly. An assembly is not required to take any action with respect to a communication.~~

~~3. Overture~~

~~An overture is a formal written proposal sent to an assembly requesting adoption or amendment of a policy or other legislative action by the assembly.~~

~~4. Report~~

~~A report is a document of a board, committee, or agency of an assembly indicating the work performed in response to assembly mandates and presenting recommendations for assembly action.~~

AB. Following is a list of matters legally before synod.

~~1. Gravamina~~

~~(For guidelines and regulations see Church Order Supplement, Article 5.)~~

~~12. Reports~~

A report is either:

a. a document of a board, standing committee, or agency indicating the work performed in response to assembly mandates and presenting recommendations for assembly action.

b. a Reports of a committees or, including boards, appointed by a previous synods.

23. Overtures and Communications to Synod

a. A communication is a document presenting information, ideas, thoughts, opinions, complaints, or objections for consideration of the assemblies. A communication is distinguished from an overture in that an overture proposes specific action, and a communication does not. One type of communication is a protest, which expresses a complaint or objection to a decision or course of action followed by an assembly. An assembly is not required to take any action with respect to a communication.

b. An overture is a formal written proposal sent to an assembly requesting adoption or amendment of a policy or other legislative action by the assembly.

ca. Overtures and communications are legally before synod when sent from a classis (whether originated by or adopted by a classis) or from an assembly organized according to Article 44-b of the Church Order.

(Acts of Synod 1993, p. 574)

db. Overtures and communications which have failed to gain adoption of a council and/or classis may also be judged as legally before synod when ~~but which~~ an individual or council desires to submit them for synod's consideration:

- 1) Overtures and communications from a council (whether originated by or adopted by council) which have been submitted to classis but not adopted by classis as its own.
- 2) Overtures and communications of an individual which have been submitted to council and classis but which have not been adopted by either council or classis.
- 3) Overtures and communications of an individual which were submitted to council, adopted by council as its own, and submitted to classis by council, but which classis has not adopted as its own, which council has not submitted to synod, and which the initiating individual submits to synod.

ee. Assemblies and members should refrain from overtures, appeals, or communications which are repetitious or mere expressions of agreement or disagreement with matters already on the agenda of synod.

The general secretary is authorized to omit such items from the published *Agenda*. In such cases they shall merely be listed and accepted as communications. The senders shall be notified, and their materials shall be given to one of the advisory committees of synod to be received as information. Matters received as information will not ordinarily be mentioned in advisory committee reports or the *Acts of Synod*.

34. Appeals in Which the Judicial Code Has Not Been Invoked

An appeal is a procedure by which a decision or action of an assembly, board, agency, or committee is brought to the appropriate assembly for review in the light of existing policies and standards of the church.

(For procedural rules governing appeals, see Supplement, Article 30-a-30-b, Part B.)

~~5. Appeals and Other Matters Properly Presented to Synod under the Provisions of the Judicial Code~~

~~(See Supplement, Article 30-c for the Judicial Code.)~~

~~6. Application for Candidacy by Persons Not Recommended by the Candidacy Committee~~

~~(For the applicable procedural rules see Supplement, Article 30-b, Part A.)~~

4. Gravamina

(For guidelines and regulations see Church Order Supplement, Article 5.)

[sections 7-8 become sections 5-6 — unchanged]

~~79.~~ The Published *Agenda* and Study Committee Reports

Study committee reports shall be filed with the general secretary on or before ~~September~~ November 15, and the general secretary shall distribute them to the churches no later than ~~November~~ December 1. The *Agenda* shall be published not later than early April. It shall include reports of standing, study, and special committees; overtures of classes, councils, or individuals; published appeals; notices of nonpublished appeals; a list of communications; the names of the delegates; and pertinent announcements, with the understanding, however, that the Council of Delegates, upon recommendation of the general secretary, may, for good cause, determine not to print an item or to print an abbreviated version. If an abbreviated version is published, the entire item shall be forwarded to the appropriate advisory committee of synod. Items not published shall be listed in the *Agenda*. All such material shall be in the hands of the general secretary not later than the following deadlines: ~~September~~ November 15 for study committee reports; February 15 for the reports of standing committees and authorized representatives; ten days after conclusion of board meetings for board reports, but not later than March 1; and March 15 for overtures and appeals.

[sections 10-13 become sections 8-11 — unchanged]

VII. Synodical Committees

A. *Program Committee*

1. Members

- a. The Program Committee shall be composed of the officers of the previous synod, the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church, and the director of ecclesiastical governance.

- b. In case of a vacancy on this committee, the Council of Delegates shall appoint another member.

[sections 2-3 unchanged]

4. Information on Delegates

- a. The stated clerk of every classis shall forward an information sheet on each synodical delegate to the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church before March 15. Synod encourages suggestions, including biographical information, for those delegates qualified and willing to serve as an officer of synod.
- b. These information sheets shall give answer to the following questions:

For the minister delegates—

- 1) To which previous synod(s) were you delegated, if any?
- ~~2) At such synod(s), on which committee(s) did you serve?~~
- 23) Of what denominational boards, standing committees, classical and/or local committees, or study committees are you or have you been a member?
- ~~4) Of what classical and/or local committees are you or have you been a member?~~
- 35) What are your areas of special interest in the work of synod?
- 46) What other data do you wish to submit that will aid in being assigned to an advisory committee of synod?

For the elder and deacon delegates—

- 1) The same questions as listed for minister delegates.
- 2) What is your present occupation?
- 3) What have been your previous occupations, if any?

5. Report of the Program Committee

- a. A confidential written report of the Program Committee shall be distributed to all synodical delegates, staff consultants, advisers to synod, agency and educational institution representatives, the COD chair and vice chair, and the editor of *The Banner* before May 2515.
- b. This report shall be submitted for possible change and adoption as one of the initial items of synodical business.

(Acts of Synod 1970, pp. 56-57; Acts of Synod 1972, p. 14)

B. The Advisory Committees

1. *Status* of these committees. Advisory committees (except for the Judicial Code Committee) serve only for the duration of synod, following the adoption of the Program Committee Report, for the purpose of facilitat-

ing the work of synod. The advisory committees shall summarize matters before them and formulate recommendations with respect to these matters.

2. *Organization and rules governing these committees:*

- a. ~~The person first named at the appointment of the committee shall be its chairperson, and the one named second its reporter. The Program Committee will designate the chair and reporter for each committee. An alternate chairperson and an alternate reporter will be appointed named for each committee to fill the role if the assigned chair or reporter is elected to serve as an officer, except the Judicial Code Committee.~~
- b. The chairperson shall call the committee together, preside at its meetings, and see that it functions properly.
- c. ~~As a closed meeting,~~ Delegates and advisers shall follow guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of social media contact with nondelegates during advisory committee meetings, because such use might compromise the transparency and integrity of the deliberative process.
(Acts of Synod 2019, pp. 811-12)
- d. Any member of synod may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it at the discretion of the chair. This includes any staff consultant, adviser, delegate, or other such person named in the Program Committee Report.

[sections e-i unchanged]

3. *Recess of Synod for Study*

After the advisory committees have been appointed, synod may recess at specified times to enable these committees to perform their work.

C. Judicial Code Committee

Original hearings and appellate hearings before synod shall be referred to a Judicial Code Committee appointed by synod. This committee meets between synods as frequently as its business requires and presents its recommendations to synod in writing, operating under the procedures of the Judicial Code adopted by synod (cf. Supplement, Church Order Art. 30-c). The committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.

DE. Special Committees

Besides the advisory committees, ~~each~~ synod ~~has~~should have special committees appointed by the president that serve during the synodical sessions.

1. ~~A Hospitality Committee, appointed by the president, which shall attend to the proper reception of ecumenical delegates. It can advise synod, and synod must decide whether the representatives of various organizations should be received on the floor of synod.~~

2. ~~Special committees appointed by the president that serve during the synodical sessions.~~

E. *Study Committees and Task Forces* ~~Rules for Appointments to Boards and Committees~~

1. ~~All study committees and task forces shall be appointed by synod from a nomination made by the advisory committee which drafted the mandate, with the advice of the officers of synod. Delegates to synod will be given opportunity to suggest nominees to the advisory committee, but no new nominees will be accepted from the floor when a committee is recommended. The reporter of the advisory committee shall present the nominations on the floor of synod. If additional time is necessary to complete the appointment of a study committee, a two-week extension will be granted and responsibility to do so will be entrusted to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional person chosen by the advisory committee from among its members.~~

~~The advisory committee shall recommend to synod the scope of the mandate and include in their recommendation one of the following designations:~~

a. ~~Synodical study committee~~

~~A study committee typically includes a broad representation of the churches in its membership, has a membership of 9-12 persons, is appointed by synod per the above rules, is mandated to conduct a broad study of the matter in question, reports to synod three years after being appointed, may report to synod in the interim if instructed, and presents its final report by September 15 for distribution to the churches by November 1 preceding the synod to which it is scheduled to report. Reports submitted to synod that are longer than ten pages shall include an executive summary.~~

b. ~~Synodical task force~~

~~A synodical task force is typically more limited in membership and mandate, has a membership of 7-10 persons, is appointed by synod per the above rules, has a more specific mandate limited in scope, often reports to synod two or three years after being appointed, and may report to synod in the interim if instructed. Synod should indicate whether the mandate is considered to be substantial, requiring the task force to submit its final report by September 15 for distribution to the churches by November 1 preceding the synod to which it is scheduled to report, or whether a February 15 deadline is sufficient for inclusion in the Agenda for Synod. Reports submitted to synod that are longer than ten pages shall include an executive summary.~~

~~By way of exception to these rules, synod may mandate a task force to report through the Council of Delegates to synod, particularly if~~

the matter in question involves the ministries of the CRCNA and if reporting through the COD will help the work of the task force by providing frequent input/feedback. The Council of Delegates may offer comment (such as agreement with a report) or may serve synod with advice by way of its report to synod with regard to the recommendations of a synodical study committee or task force if any matters reported by such committee or task force relate to programmatic ministry matters falling under the mandate of the COD.

Synod shall limit its agenda in any given year to include no more than two major study reports so that fuller and more thoughtful discussion can take place.

(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 15; 1980, p. 21; 1997, p. 634; 2014, p. 540; 2016, pp. 827-28; 2017, p. 641; 2019, p. 803)

1. When appointing committees to conduct a study of a matter in question, synod should specify the scope of the mandate assigned to the committee, the future synod to which the committee should report, the time frame in which the final report should be distributed to the churches, the number of members assigned to the committee, and any specific parameters for membership on the study committee. For matters requiring a broad study, a membership of 9-12 persons and a mandate of three years is often appropriate; groups studying a subject which is more limited in scope may have a membership of 7-10 persons and could report within two years.
2. All study committees shall be appointed from a nomination made by the advisory committee which drafted the mandate, with the advice of the officers of synod, and shall as much as possible reflect a broad representation of the churches. Delegates to synod will be given opportunity to suggest nominees to the advisory committee, but no new nominees will be accepted from the floor when a committee is recommended. The reporter of the advisory committee shall present the nominations on the floor of synod for information only, not to be recorded in the minutes.
3. Responsibility to complete the appointment of a study committee will ordinarily be entrusted to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and one additional person chosen by the advisory committee from among its members. Study committee appointments shall be completed within one month of the closing of synod and reported as an appendix to the *Acts of Synod*.
4. All study committee reports shall be submitted as soon as possible in order to allow time for consideration by the churches. In no case shall a study report be submitted later than January 15 preceding the synod to which it is scheduled to report. Reports submitted to synod that are longer than ten pages shall include an executive summary.
5. These committees have the right of elucidating and defending their reports on the floor of synod. The spokespersons of these committees shall

- have the same privileges during the discussion as the chair and reporters of the advisory committees.
6. With respect to the reports submitted to synod that are given into the hands of advisory committees, the recommendations of these synodical committees shall have precedence if the recommendations of the advisory committee are substantially different.

F. Board and Committee Membership

12. All board and committee members shall be elected from nominations presented to synod. Boards and committees in which vacancies must be filled shall normally present a slate of multiple nominees for election to membership for a first term, with the exception of COD classical nominees. Boards and committees present a single nominee (the incumbent) for a second term. Some boards, as determined by their articles of incorporation or bylaws, may present a member for a third term (i.e., Board of Pensions).

~~(Acts of Synod 1976, p. 16; updated in Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 406-407; 2015, p. 633; 2017, pp. 640-41)~~

23. All standing boards and committees of synod, as well as stated clerks of classes, shall present their nominations to the general secretary immediately after the meeting at which nominations are made.

~~(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 16)~~

34. Nominations of officers, functionaries, synodical deputies, boards, and standing committees shall be compiled through the office of general secretary.

~~(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 15)~~

45. The president of synod shall call on the general secretary to present all ballots, nominations, and other matters pertaining to appointments to the floor of synod, with the exception of the appointments of study committees (cf. point 1 above).

56. Rules for Eligibility and Term of Office

- a. A person whose work is regulated by a board shall not be delegated to that particular board.

~~(Acts of Synod 1966, p. 87)~~

- b. Synodical board and committee members who have served two three-year terms shall not be eligible for reelection except when a specific exemption to this rule has been approved by synod.

- c. The terms of office for representatives to denominational boards and committees begin and terminate on July 1 of the year of appointment or termination.

~~(Acts of Synod 1972, p. 14; amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 536)~~

- d. In the case of an unexpected vacancy on the Council of Delegates, the COD may appoint an interim delegate—in consultation with the

classis for the classical delegates — until appointment of a new classical or at-large delegate can be made by the next synod. When a new denominational board delegate is nominated and subsequently elected by synod to replace a delegate who is unable to complete their term (e.g., due to illness, moving from the region), the new delegate shall ordinarily fill out the remaining term(s) of the previous delegate.

(*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 641)

E. — Rules for Committees Appointed by Previous Synods

~~These committees include those appointed to study and to report concerning matters that concern the whole denomination, to carry out certain resolutions of past synods, or to supervise the missionary, educational, journalistic, or benevolent activities of the denomination.~~

- ~~1. — These committees have the right of elucidating and defending their reports on the floor of synod. The spokesperson of these committees shall have the same privileges during the discussion as the chair and reporters of the advisory committees.~~
- ~~2. — With respect to the reports submitted to synod that are given into the hands of advisory committees, the recommendations of these synodical committees shall have precedence if the recommendations of the advisory committee are substantially different.~~

F. — Judicial Code Committee of Synod

~~1. — Mandate~~

~~Original hearings and appellate hearings before synod shall be referred to a Judicial Code Committee appointed by synod. This committee meets between synods as frequently as its business requires and presents its recommendations to synod in writing. The committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.~~

~~2. — Membership~~

~~The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of twelve (12) members and shall reflect the diversity of the denomination. Each year four (4) persons shall be elected for terms of three (3) years. At least one (1) of these four (4) persons shall be a minister of the Word or a commissioned pastor; at least one (1) shall be a person trained in the law; at least one (1) shall not be a minister of the Word or a commissioned pastor nor one trained in the law. Synod shall elect members from nominations presented by the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA. The Judicial Code Committee may recommend nominees to the Council of Delegates. The terms of members shall commence July 1 following their election by synod. In the event of a vacancy on the committee because of resignation or death, the Council of Delegates shall appoint a person to fill the balance of that term. Members may be reelected but shall not serve more than six consecutive years. A former~~

member who has been off the committee for two or more years shall be eligible for election to the committee as a new member. The Judicial Code Committee shall select a chairperson and reporter from among its membership. Any member of the Judicial Code Committee advising a given synod may be, but need not be, a delegate to that synod.

3. ~~Hearing and Appeal Procedures before the Synod Acting in Its Judicial Capacity~~

- a. ~~Written charges filed with synod shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the general secretary of the CRC to conduct an original hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.~~
- b. ~~Claims of appeal from decisions of classis following a judicial hearing shall also be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the general secretary of the CRC to conduct an appeal hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.~~
- c. ~~Written charges brought against an agency, board, or committee of synod and any other matters requiring formal adjudication that synod undertakes shall also be referred by the general secretary of the CRC to the Judicial Code Committee for conducting a judicial hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.~~
- d. ~~Claims of appeal filed with synod following an appeal hearing before classis shall also be referred to the Judicial Code Committee by the general secretary of the CRC. The Judicial Code Committee shall review the claim of appeal and make a recommendation to the Council of Delegates whether the application has sufficient merit to warrant further review. No further appeal proceedings shall be conducted unless the Council of Delegates approves. If approved, the Judicial Code Committee shall conduct an appeal hearing according to the procedures of the Judicial Code.~~
- e. ~~Individual delegates to synod shall not have the privilege of addressing the Judicial Code Committee as is normally permitted with other advisory committees.~~
- f. ~~The Judicial Code Committee shall present its findings of fact and recommendations, along with grounds for its recommendations to synod in writing, and they shall be openly discussed in a plenary session of synod. These written findings of fact and recommendations shall omit any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation.~~
- g. ~~During synodical discussions, the committee shall be represented by up to two spokespersons who will have the privilege of the floor. These spokespersons shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches.~~

- ~~h. Either party to the dispute may request the opportunity to address synod. Such request shall be made through the Judicial Code Committee, which shall make recommendations concerning the request to synod.~~
- ~~i. If synod permits the complainant or respondent to address synod, after the reporter provides the recommendation(s) of the Judicial Code Committee (and if there are majority and minority reports/ recommendations, after both have been presented), the complainant and/or respondent shall be given opportunity for summarizing their positions, not unlike provided in the hearing (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 5, a, vii), except that no opportunity for rebuttal will be allowed. Addresses shall be no more than five (5) minutes. If both parties have requested to address synod, the complainant shall be given no more than five (5) minutes to address synod first, and then the respondent shall be given no more than five (5) minutes to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee chair or the general secretary shall be responsible for providing these instructions to each party, stressing that the function of addressing synod is to provide their personal summaries to synod, not to retry the case. After addressing synod, neither party may provide additional comments to synod, nor may synod ask for either or both parties to return to the speaker's podium for further questions, comments, or discussion.~~
- ~~j. The Judicial Code Committee may provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on Judicial Code matters.~~
- ~~k. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:

 - ~~1) by deciding the matter;~~
 - ~~2) by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;~~
 - ~~3) by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council;~~
 - ~~or~~
 - ~~4) by conducting its own original judicial or appeal hearing.~~~~
 - ~~l. Synod should accept the findings of fact as presented by the Judicial Code Committee unless synod is persuaded that

 - ~~1) One or more parties were not given the opportunity by the hearing body to present important and relevant evidence;~~
 - ~~or~~
 - ~~2) After the Judicial Code Committee hearing, new evidence which is important and relevant has been discovered by one or more parties.~~~~
 - ~~m. If synod conducts its own judicial or appeal hearing, it shall follow Judicial Code procedures set forth herein.~~

- ~~n. Synod may decide to refer the matter back to the Judicial Code Committee for a rehearing before the initial hearing body.~~
- ~~o. Procedure for requesting rehearing under sections k through m above~~
 - ~~1) Any party who seeks to have synod conduct its own hearing or refer the matter back for a rehearing should submit such request in writing to the general secretary for distribution to the delegates of synod with a copy to the Judicial Code Committee. The writing should include a summary of the evidence which that party was not allowed to present at the evidentiary hearing and a short statement of how this opportunity was denied, or the statement should include a summary of the newly discovered evidence and an explanation of why it was not discovered earlier.~~
 - ~~2) All parties and the Judicial Code Committee representative(s) should be allowed a very brief time to address synod on such request.~~
- ~~p. When recommendations involve interpretations and applications of governing principles, such as the Church Order, to the facts involved in the matter, synod should allow the parties and representatives of the Judicial Code Committee a reasonable amount of time, set by the president of synod upon recommendation of the Judicial Code Committee, to argue for or against such interpretations and applications.~~

~~(Acts of Synod 1993, pp. 500-501, Acts of Synod 2014, p. 569, Amended Acts of Synod 2019, p. 718)~~

Note: For a complete description of Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures, see Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c.

VIII. Pension Matters at Synod

~~That~~ Synod shall defer action on overtures, ~~minority reports~~ recommendations of advisory committees, and motions from the floor of synod that involve substantive matters concerning the denomination's retirement plans, or any recommendation that is at variance with a recommendation made by the Pension Trustees or is independent of any action recommended by them, until advised by the U.S. and Canadian Pension Trustees. ~~The same is requested for actions that may be initiated by synod's advisory committee on finance or by any other of synod's advisory committees that is at variance with recommendations made by the pension trustees or is independent of any action recommended by them.~~ Advice to synod will be in the form of a memorandum or other materials directed to synod's advisory committee on finance, which is the committee normally designated for processing matters related to the denomination's benefit plans.

~~(Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 623-24)~~

VIII. Rules of Order

Our ecclesiastical assemblies “shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner,” as Article 28 of our Church Order stipulates. Our synods should therefore be allowed some measure of freedom in discussion and action. However, agreed-upon general rules of order serve a good purpose and are to be observed, as contained in this document, particularly in the following section regarding Rules of Order.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 804)

[sections A-D unchanged]

E. Objection to a Ruling of the President

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the president, the matter is referred to synod for decision (sometimes referred to as “a challenge to the chair”). An objection to a ruling of the chair must be seconded in order to be considered and debated. The person presiding at the time of the challenge shall relinquish the chair until the body votes whether to sustain the ruling in question.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 805)

[sections F-M unchanged]

N.IX. Changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure

These Rules for Synodical Procedure may be suspended, amended, revised, or abrogated by a majority vote of synod.

Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

[unchanged]

APPENDIX C

Governance Handbook Updates

I. Background

At its online meeting in February 2026, the COD received a number of updates to the COD Governance Handbook following a deep review by staff. Initially adopted in 2017 (*Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 640-41), the COD Governance Handbook was significantly revised after the adoption of the Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT) report in 2021. A draft of the revised handbook was presented to Synod 2023 for information, with the recognition that the materials were still in draft form and would require additional updating due to continued implementation of a planned revision to the organizational concept and structure of the COD (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 633-34, 913, 982).

The Governance Handbook has several distinct portions. The first chapter contains synod's mandate for the Council of Delegates in its role as synod's interim committee (Church Order Art. 33-b), as well as a summary of the work to be done by the ministry boards in their role overseeing the legal operations of the CRCNA in the United States and Canada. Synod is asked here to approve the proposed changes to the portions of the Governance Handbook in Chapter 1 over which it has authority.

The second chapter of the Governance Handbook contains the rules of procedure for the meetings of the COD, as well as its committee charters. While synod should have the expectation that all of the operations of the COD and of the CRC organizations conform to synodical directives, the distinction between governance and management (cf. *Acts of Synod 2014*, p. 564; *Agenda for Synod 2017*, pp. 45-46) suggests that it is more appropriate to simply note the existence of some of these procedural documents rather than to require formal approval of such items. The proposed revisions to the Governance Handbook reflect this philosophy. Thus, with exceptions as noted below, changes made to Chapter 2 will be reported to synod for information rather than for approval.

It should also be noted that the Governance Handbook does not simply represent the operations of the COD but that it also contains sections addressing the functions of the ministry boards. This is an area of growing awareness within the COD, as of the past few years. Thus the handbook would more properly be titled "The CRC Governance Handbook," with the understanding that synod has only the most limited authority over some sections of the handbook that address the organization and function of the legal entities governing the CRC ministries. These sections of the handbook are still under development.

Because Chapter 1 has been largely rewritten, it is presented here in its updated version only. For anyone who would like to compare editions, the current version of the Governance Handbook is available on the Council of Delegates page of the CRCNA website: crcna.org/welcome/governance/council-delegates.

II. Summary of Changes

Briefly, here is a summary of the changes to Chapter 1:

- replaced current structure of this chapter (which discussed "mandate," "synodical governance," "organizational governance," "synodical governance," and "CRC organizations") with a simplified structure that addresses the work of the COD, the ministry boards, and the relationship to the CRC ministry organizations
- provided more explanation on the distinction between the COD and the ministry boards (chapter 1, II, A)

- offered a more specific summary of the tasks assigned to the COD by synod, drawing on the current Introduction, section IV of the Governance Handbook, and the language of the former Board of Trustees mandate (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 625-33)
- added a new summary of the responsibilities of the ministry boards with regard to organizational governance, drawn in part from the existing bylaws of the two national boards (*Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 473-82, 503-12)
- replaced the sections on CRC organizations with a new description of the ministry organizations in relationship to the COD

In the future, changes to Chapter 1, Section II, B of the Governance Handbook will be submitted to synod for approval, and changes to Chapter 1, Section II, C-D will be processed through the ministry boards and reported to synod for information as a reflection of the corporate and legal structure of the denominational institutions.

CHAPTER 1

Purpose and mandate

Note: This section of the Governance Handbook is synodically approved.

I. Introduction

1. Preface

The COD Governance Handbook was created when the CRCNA Council of Delegates replaced the CRCNA Board of Trustees in 2017. The handbook has undergone a number of changes as the denomination has shifted its leadership structure. This handbook is intended to be a dynamic document, adapting to the changing needs of the denomination. Some portions of this handbook include materials explicitly adopted by synod; those are either noted or highlighted in grey.

2. CRCNA vision and mission

a. Our vision

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

b. Our mission

As people called by God,
we gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.
We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.
We love and care for one another as God's people.
We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.
We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.

3. CRCNA Ministry Plan

Milestones

In our journey with God, with each other, with our neighbors, and for mission, we desire to be congregations/communities that do the following:

- Cultivate practices of prayer and spiritual discipline, transforming our lives and communities by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Listen to the voices of every generation, shaping us for ministry together.
- Grow in diversity and unity by seeking justice, reconciliation, and welcome, sharing our faith as we build relationships with and honor the cultures of our neighbors and newcomers.
- Share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant new churches in our neighborhoods as we discover how to connect with our local and global ministry contexts.

II. Purpose of the COD and the ministry boards

A. Introduction

The Governance Handbook is designed to be a resource for the members of the Council of Delegates (COD) and of the Canada and U.S. ministry boards. The individuals who fill these roles have a synodical mandate (as COD members) to serve in the interim of the CRCNA synod. As members of a ministry board, these individuals serve as the CRCNA legal governing authority in their respective countries of Canada and the United States. In most cases the same individuals will serve both a COD role and a ministry board role. This handbook will cover the distinct work of both the COD (Section 2) and that of the ministry boards (Section 3).

The function of the members of these groups is noted at two separate places in the Church Order:

“Each classis shall appoint a classical interim committee, and synod shall appoint the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA, to act for them in matters which cannot await action by the assemblies themselves. Such committees shall be given well-defined mandates and shall submit all their actions to the next meeting of the assembly for approval” (Church Order Art. 33-b).

“Synod shall regulate the work of denominational ministries by way of the Governance Handbook and decisions of the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA” (Church Order Art. 77).

This “regulation” of denominational ministries carried out by the COD focuses on the synodical mandates of the various CRCNA organizations; operational questions are addressed by the ministry boards or by denominational staff. This Governance Handbook contains information about the governance processes for both types of work, sometimes described by the terms “synodical governance” (for the COD) and “organizational governance” (for the ministry boards). It is, therefore, a living document. Changes

made to the handbook will be processed through the COD or appropriate Ministry Board and sent to synod for approval, when needed.

B. Mandate and purpose of the COD as the interim committee of synod

As an ecclesiastical body, the Council of Delegates provides synodical governance by means of the authority delegated to it by synod and its synodically elected membership. The COD's authority as an ecclesiastical body has two dimensions: (1) the COD acts on behalf of synod while synod is not in session, and (2) the COD acts on matters assigned to it by synod.

1. Acting on behalf of synod

a. Interim role

Church Order Article 33-b: "... Synod shall appoint the Council of Delegates ... to act for them in matters which cannot await action by [synod itself and to] ... submit all their actions to the next meeting of [synod] ... for approval."

b. Advisory role

Attend to such church-polity issues as need to be addressed and render such advice to study committees as it deems necessary or as requested of it between the meetings of synod.

c. Convening role

Through the Office of General Secretary and in keeping with the Rules for Synodical Procedure, oversee arrangements related to the convening of synod.

2. Matters assigned to the COD

These matters primarily include the following regular tasks:

a. Synodical mandates and decisions of synod

Ensure the respective ministry and educational organizations are living into the synodical mandates and other directives by synod. Work with staff to regularly review the mandates to ensure they are current and beneficial to the churches as the ministry priorities are implemented.

b. Ministry priorities, strategy, and goals

Ensure the ministry and educational organizations' strategy and goals are aligned with the CRCNA ministry priorities, in cooperation with the Ministries Leadership Council (MLC).

c. Relative to other entities/boards

Cooperate with the educational institutions affiliated with the denomination and World Renew as well as other CRCNA boards toward integrating the respective missions of those institutions and functions into the denominational ministry priorities.

d. Leadership and organizational culture

Ensure the selection, support, and succession of governance and organizational leadership as outlined in COD procedures and organizational

bylaws, and that the mission and values of the CRCNA shape its organizational culture.

e. Hearing appeals

Adjudicate appeals placed before it by the agencies, committees, and educational institutions as provided in Church Order Article 30 and its supplements.

3. Revisions/updates

The Council of Delegates has the authority to revise and update applicable portions of the handbook and associated policies as it seeks to carry out its synodical governance responsibilities. The mandate and the other sections of the handbook requiring direct synodical approval should be regularly reviewed by the COD in consultation with synod and updated as necessary.

4. Annual report to synod

Provide an annual report to synod that addresses the following topics:

- a. *Membership matters* notes the current makeup of the COD, its officers, ministry boards, outgoing members, and nominees for open positions.
- b. *Program matters* addresses work that relates to the ministry programs and personnel of the denomination, as well as program work that is beyond the scope of or in addition to material in the reports of the agencies, ministries, and institutions.
- c. *Polity matters* covers the work of the COD as the denomination's governance board in the interim of synod.
- d. *Financial matters* provides synod with important information about the fiscal health of the CRCNA ministry corporations and its related institutions so that the churches and members of the denomination can assess its stewardship of the resources God has provided.

C. Mandate and purpose of the ministry boards with regard to organizational governance

The responsibility for organizational governance is delegated to the CRCNA ministry and educational organizations located in Canada and the U.S. (see *Agenda for Synod 2015*, pp. 375-76; *Agenda for Synod 2021*, pp. 519-40). This mandate reflects the legal documents governing the various ministry organizations. Changes to these responsibilities are made by the ministry boards in collaboration with synod and are presented to synod for information.

1. Legal responsibilities of ministry boards

Ministry boards have legal responsibilities and ministry governance responsibilities in each country to set and ensure organizational direction, to ensure adequate resources to carry out ministry, and to oversee the health of the organization.

The ministry boards' legal role with regard to the CRCNA organizations includes the following tasks as outlined in the boards' Articles of Incorporation and Ecclesiastical Mandate Letters, all of which reflect the instructions of synod:

- a. To manage the affairs of each national office as a registered charity, in keeping with the mission and vision adopted by synod.
- b. To develop, contextualize, implement, and evaluate the CRCNA ministry priorities to ensure that the ministry priorities are appropriately carried out by the agencies and institutions working in that country.
- c. To develop and manage, in conjunction with denominational staff, the Joint Ministry Agreements that facilitate the relationship between the national offices of the CRCNA.
- d. To exercise general oversight and authority in the manner provided in the governing documents of the respective national corporations, providing appropriate financial management and advancement policies as well as supervision of the board's chief executive officer.

2. Ministry boards' responsibilities for organizational health

The ministry boards attend to the organizational health of the CRC organizations as they function in each country. This includes the following responsibilities, depending on the particular ministry board:

- a. Canada Ministry Board (CMB)
The CMB supports the work of the Canada Ministry Office as it provides administrative and ministry oversight and support services that build a culture of cooperation, collaboration, and effectiveness with ministry organizations, agencies, and partners as they serve CRC congregations in Canada. This organization oversees the Canada Ministry Office (including the unique national work of Canadian Justice Ministries) and jointly oversees Thrive and Resonate Global Mission alongside the U.S. Ministry Organization.
- b. ReFrame Ministries Canada
The directors of the Canadian Ministry Board are also appointed as the membership of the ReFrame Canada Corporation, where the executive committee of the Canadian Ministry Board is appointed as the directors of the ReFrame Canada Corporation.
- c. U.S. Ministry Board (USMB)
The USMB supports the work of the U.S. Ministry Office as it provides administrative and ministry oversight and support services that build a culture of cooperation, collaboration, and effectiveness with ministry organizations, agencies, and partners as they serve CRC congregations in the United States. This organization oversees the U.S. Ministry Office (including the unique national work of the Reformed Benefits Association, the CRC Loan Fund, and the Delaware Investment Corporation)

and jointly oversees Thrive and Resonate Global Mission alongside the Canada Ministry Organization.

d. ReFrame Ministries U.S.

The membership of the U.S. ReFrame Board is the same as the membership of the U.S. Ministry Organization boards.

The ministry boards cultivate a culture of partnership between the CRCNA national offices as well as among churches and classes, agencies, committees, and educational institutions as they collectively carry out the mission identified by synod.

D. Additional CRC ministry organizations

The COD provides synodical governance and support, and the ministry and educational boards provide organizational governance and support. In addition, the CRCNA includes ministry organizations whose work is not governed directly by the COD, although certain aspects of that work may be done in collaboration with the COD, depending on organizational by-laws or synodical regulations. The following section describes the relationship as currently established in those bylaws and regulations, and any changes will be reported to the COD and synod for information.

1. Office of General Secretary

The Office of General Secretary (OGS) provides ecclesiastical and organizational leadership and support in Canada and the United States that promotes a culture of cooperation, collaboration, and partnership throughout the CRCNA organization. This work is done in close collaboration with, but exists beyond the scope of, the COD. Specific responsibilities are delineated as follows:

- a. The COD directly regulates OGS for the following work: Support for the Council of Delegates and its ministry committees (Thrive, Resonate, and ReFrame committees) as well as its advisory committees (Bible Translations Committee, *Banner* advisory team, Dignity Team, and Diaspora and Ethnic Ministry advisory team).
- b. The COD regulates the following OGS tasks to the extent that the work falls within the COD's mandate or tasks assigned by synod: Support for ecclesiastical governance exercised through the church's assemblies (synod, classis, and council) and any study committees appointed by synod. This work is regulated by the COD to the extent that it falls within the COD mandate or tasks assigned by synod.
- c. The following work of OGS ordinarily falls outside the scope of the COD: Support for the standing committees and other CRC organizations: Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, Candidacy Committee, CRC Loan Fund, Historical Committee, Judicial Code Committee, and Ministers' Pension Funds.

2. Connected organizations

The following connected organizations have their own synodical mandates and boards and are not responsible to the COD. They participate in the COD system as part of the Connections Committee in order to promote a culture of cooperation and partnership across the entire family of CRC organizations.

- a. Calvin University
Calvin University is organizationally governed by the Calvin University Board of Trustees.
- b. Calvin Theological Seminary
Calvin Theological Seminary is organizationally governed by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.
- c. World Renew
World Renew is organizationally governed by the World Renew Canada Board and the World Renew U.S. Board.

CHAPTER 2

Council of Delegates

Note: This portion of the Governance Handbook reflects internal operations of the COD, which reflect the general practices of the CRCNA based on its Church Order and synodical regulations. While synod will be notified when changes are made to this section, the changes will ordinarily not be reported in detail unless they are substantial or reflect a fundamental shift in philosophy or approach from that previously approved by synod. Exceptions to this general practice, as noted in the document text, are found in the following places:

- Chapter 2, I, I, 1-3: Rules regarding appointment of members
- Chapter 2, I, L, 1: Member qualifications
- Chapter 2, H, 1: *Banner* Advisory Committee Charter
- Chapter 2, H, 2: Bible Translations Committee Charter
- Chapter 2, H, 3: Dignity Team Charter

Changes to the above sections will be presented to synod for approval. All other changes will be approved by the COD and reported to synod for information. In the past year, the following updates were adopted to Chapter 2 of the Governance Handbook by the COD:

- I, B, 5 (formerly 1, II, 5): Added the expectation that chair and vice chair would ordinarily represent Canada and the U.S. as a general requirement for all committees, and removed this specific language from individual committee charters
- I, H (formerly 1, VIII): Added a requirement of quorum for conducting business

- I, I (formerly 1, IX-XIII): Rearranged order of materials related to membership:

<i>Topic</i>	<i>New section</i>	<i>Former Section</i>
Membership	I	XII
COD officers	J	X
Staff attendance	K	IX
Office of General Secretary	K, 3	XI

- (Former section 1, VIII): Removed duplicate note about the expectation that COD decisions are binding on all its members
- (Former section 1, IX): Removed numbers of members for each section because these are already reported in membership matrix chart
- I, I, 3 C (formerly 1, IX, 3): Changed terminology of “organizational guests” to “board guests” and removed reference to Governance Policy 2.1
- I, K, 3 (formerly 1, IX, 3): Added “coordinator of synodical operations” to required OGS staff in attendance
- I, K, 4 (formerly 1, XI): Retitled “educational institutions” to “connected organizations” and moved World Renew from “ministry agency” to the “connected organization” category
- (former section XII, 3): Removed part of historical footnote about organizational board guests
- I, L (formerly 1, XIII): Added a note indicating that COD member appointment procedures may not be changed without synodical approval
- I, L, 1, b (formerly 1, XIII, A, 2): Revised requirement for agreement with COD membership policies in light of changes to the COD nominations and personal reservations procedures
- (former section 1, XII, 6): Removed membership matrix (duplicated in II, E)
- II, A, 5: Added a subsection noting the potential for appointment of ad hoc committees of the COD
- (former section 2, II, 5): Removed description of appointment process for committee membership, since structures are different for U.S. and Canada ministry boards
- II, B, 5: Added statement (formerly found in each individual charter; see former sections 2, B, 3, c; 2, C, 3, c; 2, D, 3, b) about expectation that chairs and vice chairs should represent the U.S. and Canada, but shifted this expectation to be one that be done “ordinarily”
- II, C (formerly 2, III): Changed terminology of “organizational guests” to “board guests” and reference to Governance Policy 2.1
- II, F, 1, 3, e (formerly 2, VI, A, 3, e): Changed language of “exceptions” to “personal reservations” in keeping with decisions of COD and Synod 2025 related to alignment with COD Statement of Agreement

- II, F, 1, f (formerly 2, VI, A, 6): Updated list of policy documents for which the Executive Committee is responsible to reflect a distinction between formal policies and procedural advice documents
- II, F, 2, b, 2 (2, VI, B, 2, b): Allowed chairs of ministry board Governance Committees “or designees” to serve on the COD Governance Committee
- II, F, 3, b, 2 (formerly 2, VI, C, 2, b): Allowed chairs of ministry board Finance Committees “or designees” to serve on the COD Finance Committee
- II, F, 3, d, 5, a (formerly 2, VI, C, 4, e): Edited list of CRC organizations for which the Finance Committee has oversight of fiscal sustainability to include others besides the Pension Funds and Loan Fund
- II, F, 4, b, 1 (formerly 2, VI, D, 2, a): Updated membership of Synodical Services Committee from “4-6 members” to “at least four”
- II, G, 1, f (formerly 2, VII, A, 6): Adjusted general expectations for ministry committees related to the financial oversight and organizational governance matters reported to synod each year, in keeping with current practice. The list of items to be included in each report was then removed from each individual ministry charter (see former sections VII, B, 4, f; VII, C, 4, f; VII, D, 4, f).
- II, G, 5, a (formerly 2, VII, E, 1): Removed lengthy footnotes noting the history of the Connections Committee and summarized the history in the “purpose” instead
- II, G, 5, b, 1 (formerly 2, VII, E, 2, a): Changed membership of Connections Committee from “at least 3-6 members” to “at least three members” of the COD
- II, G, 5, d, 6 (formerly 2, VI, E, 4, f): Adjusted wording on right of comment from Connections Committee agencies to clarify that COD approval is not needed for the connected institutions to submit such documents to synod

Ministries Leadership Council Charter

Revised Fall 2025

I. Purpose and Mandate

The Ministries Leadership Council (MLC) is a collaborative binational table of the senior leaders of the ministry boards and synodically mandated agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). The MLC is gathered to advance the ecclesial vision, mission, values, and objectives of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the Ministry Plan (approved by synod and the Council of Delegates). The MLC guides the work of the synodically mandated agencies and educational institutions based on synodical and COD directives that facilitate collaborative and integrated ministry with and on behalf of the CRC congregations and classes (see *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 725-26).

Key responsibilities of the Ministries Leadership Council are as follows:

- A. Developing and overseeing the implementation of the CRCNA Ministry Plan on behalf of the Council of Delegates (COD), ensuring that MLC decisions and those of the individual CRCNA ministries are in alignment with the plan.
- B. Clarifying responsibilities and strategies of the agencies and institutions with regard to synodical directives about the major issues facing our congregations and classes. Often this will take the shape of a response to synodical directives requesting joint actions of CRCNA agencies and institutions on behalf of CRC congregations, classes, and synod.
- C. Nurturing a culture among our agencies and institutions that is responsive to our churches, classes, and synod and is collaborative, communicative, and trust filled.

Note: A separate group, the Administrative Leadership Council, is a forum of administrative and operations leaders from the CRCNA institutions and agencies in Canada and the United States who are tasked with designing and implementing policy that advances a culture of administrative cooperation, collaboration, and partnership.

II. Convener

- A. The Ministries Leadership Council is hosted by the Office of General Secretary and is accountable to the Synodical Services Committee of the Council of Delegates through the general secretary.
- B. The general secretary shall chair the Ministries Leadership Council, and the director of partnership administration shall serve as vice chair.
- C. The Office of General Secretary will manage the process of agenda setting and the council logistics.
- D. The Office of General Secretary will manage the Ministries Leadership Council Charter.

III. Membership of the Ministries Leadership Council

- A. The general secretary and director of partnership administration
- B. The senior leaders of the synodically mandated agencies of the CRCNA: Thrive, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, and World Renew
- C. The senior leaders of the educational institutions of the CRCNA (or their designees): Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary
- D. Executive leaders of the CRCNA offices in the U.S. and Canada
- E. The CRCNA director of communications and marketing
- F. Guests: At the invitation of the MLC chair and vice chair, other CRCNA staff or visitors may be asked to participate to offer necessary perspectives and feedback.

IV. Accountability

The MLC is accountable to the COD through the Office of General Secretary. The general secretary (or a designee) provides oversight for all of the ministries of the CRC on behalf of the COD. If a member of the MLC is persuaded that a principle is compromised by an MLC decision, the COD may be consulted, and its decision shall be final and binding on all concerned. The Ministry Plan facilitation and any updates to the MLC Charter are done in consultation with the COD's Synodical Services Committee.

V. Values

The MLC has defined a set of core and behavioral values to guide collaboration between ministries, agencies, and institutions.

- A. Core Values (How we do it): Relational Service (3 John 5-8), Diversity (Galatians 3:26-29), Growth (Romans 12:2), Lived-out Faith (1 Corinthians 3:10-16)
- B. Behavioral Values (What we do): Integrity (1 Chronicles 29:17), Servant Leadership (1 Peter 2:9), Excellence (Daniel 6:3-4), Sustainability (Ecclesiastes 5:13-15), Collaboration (Psalm 133), Communication (Proverbs 15:1-4), Celebration (Philippians 4:4-9)

VI. Meetings

The MLC meets ten times per year (omitting June and August). Several meetings per year will focus on the Ministry Plan strategy and objectives and will include all of the MLC members noted above. The other meetings will focus on themes or topics of special importance to the collaborative ministry of the agencies, institutions, and ministries, including synodical directives.

VII. Subteams

To sustain the integration and collaboration necessary for its work, the MLC may appoint subteams. One such subteam is the Ministry Plan Development and Implementation Team, which will do the following:

- A. According to the appropriate synodical cycle, the Ministry Plan Development and Implementation Team will be delegated to create or revise the Ministry Plan and its metrics with the feedback of governance, staff, local church, and classis leaders.
- B. During the implementation cycle, the Ministry Plan Development and Implementation Team guides the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the CRCNA to integrate the ministry plan into the fabric of their strategic planning and reporting in view of their synodical mandates.
- C. The Ministry Plan Development and Implementation Team coordinates with the CRCNA agencies, institutions, and ministries to provide stories and data about the Ministry Plan to congregations and classes.

The membership of the Ministry Plan Development and Implementation Team will include members who work directly with CRCNA congregations on Ministry Plan matters. The mandate of the Ministry Plan Development and Implementation Team is kept on file in the Office of General Secretary.

VIII. Communication

- A. All agenda materials shall be submitted to the Office of General Secretary no later than one week prior to the scheduled meeting date.
- B. The meeting agenda shall be distributed to the members not less than three working days prior to the scheduled meeting date.
- C. Every decision of the MLC shall be entered into an official record by way of minutes. The minutes of the MLC meeting shall be approved at the next scheduled meeting of the MLC. The official records of the MLC will be kept by the Office of General Secretary, which will also prepare and distribute the agenda for the MLC meetings.
- D. All minutes of the MLC are public unless specifically stated otherwise. Minutes will normally be distributed to members of the MLC and made available to COD members. Highlights from the meetings will also be produced and will be shared with staff, the COD, and members of the administration who do not serve on the MLC.
- E. The MLC will receive a copy of the minutes of all official staff meetings and team meetings where decisions are made that have an impact on the achievement of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church, on other denominational ministries (e.g., service costs, programs), and/or on the ability of an agency or department to implement their own mandate.

COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs

I. Introduction

The Council of Delegates, at its February 2025 meeting, approved the creation of a task force to consider ways to reduce governance costs, fund synod, and use time wisely. The task force is made up of members from the COD Finance and Synodical Services committees and relevant staff. COD members on the task force are Henry Eygenraam, Drew Sweetman (chair), Janet deVries, Andre VanRyk, Tom Byma (reporter), Mike Koetje, Phil Apoll, and Rob Toornstra. Staff members supporting the task force are Brian Van Doeselaar, Joel Vande Werken, Shirley DeVries, and Ashley Medendorp. The task force submitted an interim report to the COD for their May 2025 meeting, and the COD included it in their report to Synod 2025 for information. The task force met two times following synod to finalize the report and to submit it to a special virtual session of the COD on September 4, 2025.

II. Background

The impulse for the creation of this task force was the current decline in ministry-share revenue and the desire for good stewardship of the denomination's time and financial resources. As was shared in the interim report to synod (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 474-78), the task force looked at the big-picture costs of synod, both the programming and staffing costs. The biggest costs associated with synod are those that are clearly connected with the in-person meetings (travel, lodging, rental space, meals, etc.), which amounted to about \$250,000 USD for 2025. However, with the administration costs mandated by synod (staff salaries, programs, "hidden costs" such as travel insurance and site visits, the work of the synodical deputies, operations of the COD, and the development of denominational materials), the total cost of governance is closer to \$3,200,000 USD per year.

This report focuses primarily on the costs of synod itself; however, the task force is aware that governance costs can be reduced by focusing on other areas as well. In fact, the Office of General Secretary has already begun taking such steps—for example, shifting from print to digital materials, reviewing ways to reduce the costs of COD meetings, decreasing the number of standing committee meetings, and so on—where those steps do not require a significant shift in the philosophy of our governance systems. These changes have resulted in savings of more than \$50,000 USD already. More such changes will likely be proposed with regard to the assignment of Synod 2025 to review the Rules for Synodical Procedure (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608) and to report with recommendations to Synod 2026. Thus the items in this report will focus largely on costs related to synod and the COD, because those areas have the biggest impact on denominational expenses and are tied most closely to philosophical and theological commitments with regard to Reformed governance.

In its interim report, the task force presented a number of possibilities for moving forward, including holding a virtual synod, reducing the number of classes, moving synod to an off-site location in an airport-hub city, direct-billing classes a fee for governance, converting to a two-tiered ministry share system, and reducing the operational side of the Office of General Secretary. Through polls of the COD and conversations with delegates at synod, the task force heard various opinions from around the denomination on areas in which costs might be reduced. It was obvious to the task force that attendees at synod and members of the COD agree that changes need to be made in order to reduce costs and fund governance; however, there was some hesitancy at the COD level to make too many changes at once. It should also be recognized that our governance expenses are not simply “overhead” but are part of the *ministry* we share as a denomination. Matters such as mutual accountability and support are part of our theological commitment to one another as Reformed Christians. We do our “business” as a church through councils (Belgic Confession, Art. 30), and we hold our minor assemblies accountable to one another through major assemblies. Thus there will inherently be a financial cost associated with being part of a church body that shares such commitments—and there will be relational and theological costs connected with any proposals that reduce the financial obligations of those commitments.

Members of the task force worked with staff to further review the proposed steps forward. This included identifying some of the Office of General Secretary functions and what the impact of changes would be on costs, churches, and staff as well as on the people who would need to decide about those changes. For example, the impact of changing our annual synod to a biennial gathering would reduce costs by a minimum of \$500,000 USD per year (travel, lodging, facilities, and staff time for the week of synod). The impact on churches and staff would include longer wait times to address key issues and would likely lead to larger synodical agendas with more intensity. This change would also mean that staff would have longer periods of time to work through the decisions and assignments of synod and would need to prepare for fewer logistics because synod would meet every other year. This would also require a change to Church Order (Art. 46-a), so a decision by one synod would need to be approved by the next synod after the churches had adequate time to review the change. The task force also looked at the potential impacts of reducing the number of classes, reducing the number of delegates to synod, eliminating the parliamentary, reducing the requirement of synodical deputy concurrence from three to two, and direct-billing classes for governance costs.

III. Historical Data

As part of researching ways to move forward, the task force recognized that it would also be important to look at previous synodical decisions related to these matters. Most notable among synod’s decisions were the change to a one-week synod in 1996 (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 239-42), the transition from

the Board of Trustees to the Council of Delegates in 2015-2017, and the outcome of the Synod Review Task Force that reported to Synod 2019 (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 801-17). Other significant changes throughout the years have had to do with the way synod and its interim committee functions.

There is also historical information pertaining to classes, including the number of classes, the number of churches per classis, and the geographical size of a classis. Church Order Article 39 indicates that “a classis shall consist of a group of neighboring churches.” There are exceptions to this principle, however, as in the cases of Classis Ko-Am, Classis Hanmi, and Classis Minnkota. Regarding size, Van Dellen and Monsma in *The Church Order Commentary* reported that in 1937, Classis Hackensack had 6 churches, while the largest classis at the time, Orange City, had 31. Today, we see 7 churches in Classis Yellowstone and 35 in Central California. Van Dellen and Monsma also reported that in 1603, the synod of Harderwyk in the Netherlands recommended 10 churches as a minimum number for a classis. Today, the average number of churches per classis is about 20. The CRCNA currently has 49 classes and 787 organized churches. Bringing the number of classes down to 40 would allow for approximately 20 churches per classis, not including church plants that are not yet organized.

The membership number per classis also varies greatly and can be difficult to use as a measure because churches report membership numbers inconsistently. For example, some churches report all of their attenders, not only their professing members. The *Yearbook* office of the CRCNA can only report the numbers as received from the churches. The 2025 *Yearbook* reports the following:

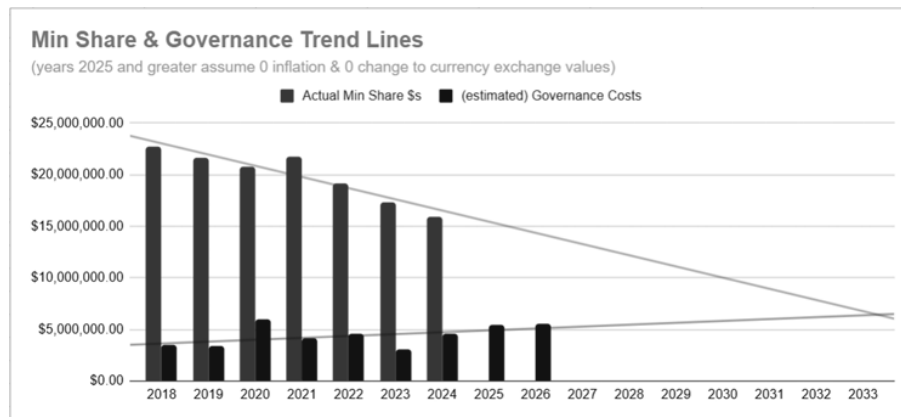
- Total of 49 classes with an average of 20 churches and an average of 2,760 professing members
- Classis Arizona: 9 churches; 330 professing members
- Classis Alberta North: 31 churches; 5,100 professing members
- Classis Rocky Mountain: 36 churches; 2,137 professing members
- Classis Central Plains: 21 churches; 3,896 professing members

In the past, ministry-share rates have been approved by synod and have had the following ranges:

Year	Total Professing Members (Org. Churches)	Ministry Share Rates per Member (USD)	Ministry Shares Received (USD)	Avg. Received Per Member
2025	135,648	N/A	\$10,470,000	\$77.18
2015	175,687	\$336.12	\$17,382,796	\$98.94
2011	181,222	\$307.53	\$17,662,684	\$97.46
2005	186,661	\$266.09	\$24,549,644	\$131.52
2000	183,516	\$237.46	\$20,267,000	\$110.44
1996	187,051	\$227.53	\$23,298,000	\$124.55

Using the above data, we can see that the average giving per member has dropped significantly within the past ten years. However, due to inflation

and the increased demand on synod, the COD, and the Office of General Secretary, governance costs have continued to increase. The chart below, reported by the chief administrative officer at the May 2025 COD meeting, shows the latest projected rates of ministry shares and governance costs. Currently ministry shares fund services that our congregations rely on, such as funding for theological education, classis and congregational support (safe church, disability, consultation, critical training), mission and media ministry, and so on—in addition to governance costs. However, the chart indicates that by 2033, ministry shares will no longer cover governance costs, not to mention the critical support our congregations and classes require.



Given the above data and the historical context of ministry shares provided in the interim report, it is clear that change must happen, both to reduce costs and to increase giving, in order for the governance work of the denomination to continue. The governance of the church requires synod to happen, but synod cannot happen if the costs are not covered.

IV. Proposals Discussed

As noted in the chief administrative officer's report to the May COD meeting, God is faithful and calls us to act. The way we respond to God's call will determine how the denomination can move forward in light of the preceding data. The task force looked closely at a number of proposals, which are described below. The task force also rejected a number of proposals because it seemed they would have either too little a financial impact or too great a relational impact. Some of those proposals included the following:

- holding virtual synods
- holding synod at a major airport-hub city
- requiring classes to plan travel and to cover costs for delegates to attend COD and synod meetings
- holding two virtual COD meetings and one in-person COD meeting

Here follow the proposals that the task force considered in detail:

A. Hold synod every other year

Holding synod every other year would provide a number of opportunities and challenges. As briefly mentioned earlier, there would be a large cost savings to the annual expense of synod, including the costs of transportation, food/lodging, and materials preparation. There would also be time to work on synodically assigned tasks throughout the two years between synods, extending deadlines for staff and volunteers to submit work. Staff would be able to plan for two years, based on synodical assignments, rather than reassigning other work after receiving new synodical assignments, as is the current reality. On the other hand, the agendas for biennial synods would likely be more weighty and challenging to manage.

In addition, a number of essential annual functions of synod would also need to be processed in a different manner, or perhaps a reevaluation of the necessity of the annual functions would be in order. A biennial synod would affect the approvals of candidates for minister of the Word, synodically appointed positions (such as general secretary and seminary faculty), board nominations, budgets, and pension matters.

One way to handle these concerns would be to assign them to the COD as the interim committee of synod. COD members are chosen by their classes and approved by synod in order to do the work of synod that cannot wait until the next synod convenes. If we moved to a biennial synod model, the list of agenda items for the COD to address would increase for the May meeting prior to synod. This challenge might possibly be resolved, however, by relieving the COD of annual deadlines for the *Agenda for Synod* materials, as noted in the following table.

Annual synod task	Possible solution for biennial synod
Consent agenda items	Approved by COD at its May meeting or just reviewed every other year
Synodical deputy reports	Approved by COD at its May meeting or just approved every other year
Candidates for minister of the Word	Options: 1. Approved by COD at its May meeting; this would be closer to the candidates' graduation time, so maybe more candidates could participate. 2. Handled by the classes 3. Candidacy Committee declares candidates.
Denominational board voting/appointments; thanking retiring board/committee members	Options for appointment: 1. Appoint each nominee to a two-year term with up to two renewals (total of 6 years).

	2. Appoint each nominee to one four-year term with a two-year renewal (total of 6 years). Thanking retiring members could be on similar cycles.
IRS declaration for housing allowance	Approved by U.S. Ministry Board
Standing committee reports	Published and made available to the churches Recommendations processed only in the years in which synod meets
Review of financial statements	Approved by U.S. Ministry Board and Canada Ministry Board (or full COD) – May meeting Reviewed every other year at synod
Agency reports	Two per synod
Time-sensitive overtures or appeals	Would require careful planning; exceptional cases could be handled by the COD
Appointment of senior-level staff for whom synodical approval is required (e.g., general secretary and seminary faculty)	Could make use of longer interim appointments
Ministry plan review	Currently on five-year rotation basis; would need to adjust to either a four- or six-year basis

Having biennial synods would not be new to the CRC. Synod met every other year between 1884 and 1936, at which point the decision was made to hold synod annually due to the volume of work and the principle that frequent meetings are helpful (*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 38-39). The matter of biennial synods was considered again in the 1950s, in conjunction with proposals to implement regional synods that could potentially relieve the need for an annual general synod. Discussions about matters such as candidate examinations were part of those considerations (see *Acts of Synod 1960*, pp. 342, 363). However, since synod decided against the regional synod proposal in 1960, there has been no further discussion about the frequency of synod meetings.

It is also worth noting that some other denominations have adopted similar patterns. The Reformed Church in America adopted a recommendation in 2025 that its general synod meet in person every three years. The United Reformed Churches in North America meet every other year. So while meeting less than every year would be a change for us and would be somewhat unusual among Reformed and Presbyterian bodies, it is not totally unknown.

B. Create a classis-level assessment to cover costs associated with COD and synod
While historically the denomination has used a per-member ministry share (or quota), it may be more appropriate for the denomination to use a per classis, or per church, quota to cover some governance costs. Recognizing that the total travel, food, and lodging costs associated with COD and synod meetings are around \$600,000 (USD), each classis would in this scenario be required to contribute \$12,000 annually. This amount would be adjusted every two years.

The task force discussed further implications of this type of assessment, including what could happen if a classis didn't remain current in its payments. Members of the task force looked into the RCA model of assessments, noting that their Book of Church Order (I, 1, 1, a) indicates that a classis must be current in their payments to have delegates seated at synod. This could require a change to Church Order Article 45 as suggested below (though such a change could be handled through synodical regulations as well). Suggested additions are indicated by underline, as follows:

Article 45

Synod is the assembly representing the churches of all classes.

a. Each classis shall ordinarily delegate one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer to synod. A classis may send no more than two delegates bearing the same office.

b. Each classis must be current in their assessment before its delegates may be seated at synod.

If there is a reduction in classes and a corresponding reduction in governance costs, the assessment per classis could be gradually reduced.

As with other proposals in this report, it should be noted that this kind of assessment is not new to the CRC. Prior to 1939, the CRC operated on a two-tier system of contributions to shared ministry programs. It was understood that all churches were obligated to provide certain amounts, and relief from those expenses needed to be specifically granted by synod and the classes. Other expenses were understood to be voluntary contributions that churches made once their other obligations were met. However, some argued that the distinction between the "assessments" and other contributions was artificial and that this undermined the shared ministry we undertook together (*Agenda for Synod 1936*, pp. 19-22; see the historical summary in *Acts of Synod 1989*, pp. 386-89). Our shift to a ministry-share system based entirely on voluntary contributions (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 789-90) represents a further shift in our understanding away from the "assessments" model, so this recommendation would need to take into account the reasons for this shift. On the other hand, the fact that we see Ministers' Pension Fund contributions as an assessment indicates that we already make some exceptions to a "voluntary contribution" approach to all expenses related to governance and ministry.

The strength of such a system is that it would make classes and congregations more aware of the financial costs of participating in the governance systems that provide the structure for our shared ministry and common witness to Christ in the world. One concern with this approach is that it could simply shift giving from ministry share contributions to governance assessments without truly providing additional financial resources for denominational ministry. Many North American denominations have transitioned to a per-congregation (or per-classis) assessment for certain denominational services such as governance. Despite such assessments being required, these denominations have not achieved uniform success in congregations' and regional bodies' paying these assessments. Finally, while instituting these assessments, synod would need to discern how to respond to classes facing financial hardship that would prevent full payment of governance assessments.

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025, the median amount given per classis was approximately \$300,000 USD. Nine classes, however (all in the U.S.), contributed less than \$100,000 USD in ministry shares. While this figure does not include above-ministry-share amounts, and while much of the shared ministry we do as a denomination can be distributed on a per-member basis, this figure serves as a reminder that the governance system (in which our systems allocate authority on a per-classis basis) requires approximately \$60,000-80,000 USD per year. Thus classes that are contributing less than \$100,000 USD are covering only the basic functions that support classes and congregational life.

After discussing all of these factors extensively, the task force concluded that, at least for now, a mandatory assessment and a Church Order change would not be necessary. While recognizing both the urgent financial situation and the need for classes and churches to plan and budget for such an assessment, the task force concluded that a better way to start this process would be to encourage the classes to consider payments to the denomination to help offset some of the synod and COD meeting costs. Classes could also consider covering the costs of their delegates; however, those costs are not equal for all classes, so some consideration should be given to classes with higher costs and/or fewer resources.

C. Reduce the number of synodical delegates from four to three per classis

In order to temporarily reduce governance costs as other cost reductions and restructuring are completed, the task force discussed reducing the number of synodical delegates from four to three per classis. This would create approximately \$125,000 in savings annually, which would be reflected in classical assessment relief, if approved. These savings would be reflected in synod costs only and would not be reflected in the governance costs including staff time and COD costs.

In this scenario concerns were noted regarding the diversity of delegates with regard to ethnicity, gender, office, and age.

From the 1890s, when synod first transitioned to classical representation, until 1936, each classis was represented by three elders and three ministers. When synod decided to meet annually, a reduction in the number of delegates was also adopted (*Acts of Synod 1936*, p. 39). Various synods since that time have discussed reducing the number of delegates, including by half, by changing from four to three, or by adopting a system of proportional representation based on membership. In general, synod has expressed concern about further reductions in the number of delegates, noting that “it is a recognized principle of Reformed polity that as many as possible attend the major ecclesiastical assemblies” (*Acts of Synod 1936*, p. 38). This principle was quoted when later synods considered reducing the number of delegates as well, noting also that “in the multitude of counselors there is wisdom” (*Acts of Synod 1953*, p. 97 [cf. Prov. 11:14]; see also *Acts of Synod 1963*, pp. 55-56).

These previous synodical discussions were primarily in response to concerns about finances, but they also had to do with proposals about the adoption of regional synods (*Agenda for Synod 1952*, p. 170; *Agenda for Synod 1957*, p. 296), the delegation of deacons to synod (*Acts of Synod 1967*, pp. 91-94, 232-55; *Agenda for Synod 1971*, p. 641), and delegation proportional to the size of the classis (*Agenda for Synod 1934*, pp. 319-20; *Agenda for Synod 1987*, pp. 443-44). Along with concerns about diversity, there have historically been concerns about the amount of work given to a synod and concerns that having fewer delegates could make the workload heavier for those delegates.

Instead of focusing on the number of delegates per classis, it may be more beneficial to suggest a number of delegates that would be appropriate for synod and to give space for each classis to delegate the appropriate number of delegates. For example, if synod decides that the most effective number of delegates is 150, the 49 classes would each be allowed three delegates. If there were 30 classes, each classis would have five delegates.

Any change to the delegation for synod would require a change to Church Order Article 45. The task force considered two different options: one that would reduce the number of delegates per classis, and another that would apportion a set number of delegates among the classes. One of these options could be adopted by way of Church Order changes as suggested below (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

Article 45

(Option 1)

Synod is the assembly representing the churches of all classes. Each classis shall ordinarily delegate one minister, one elder, and one deacon, ~~and one other officebearer~~ to synod. A classis may send no more than two delegates bearing the same office.

(Option 2)

Synod is the assembly representing the churches of all classes. Synod

shall ordinarily be made up of 150 delegates, equally representing the classes. Each classis shall ordinarily delegate ~~one~~ ministers, ~~one~~ elders, and ~~one~~ deacons, ~~and one other officebearer~~ to synod. A classis may send no more than two delegates bearing the same office.

After extensive discussion, the task force concluded that perhaps the best way to reduce the number of delegates at synod was to adopt neither of these prescriptions, but to depend on a more organic process of reducing the number of classes. Given the number of smaller classes and churches disaffiliating recently, reducing the number of delegates per classis might turn out be only a temporary solution that would need to change if classes had to be reorganized anyway. The task force therefore will not recommend reducing the number of delegates to synod.

D. Reduce the number of classes

While the idea of redistricting and reducing classes was already part of this task force's discussion, Synod 2025 instructed the Office of General Secretary (OGS) to "engage with" classes in response to a communication from Classis Grand Rapids East, noting the progress of conversations with congregations from neighboring classes as part of a potential realignment of classes in the city of Grand Rapids. Synod asked the OGS to coordinate those discussions with the work of this COD task force, prioritizing ministry effectiveness and classical health (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 654).

This proposal led to significant discussion within the task force, including whether synod had the authority to reduce the number of classes or if such a change had to originate from the classes themselves. Church Order Article 39 states that "the organization of a new classis and the redistricting of classes require the approval of synod," but this does not specify whether synod can mandate the organization or reorganization of a classis. After receiving a number of overtures about revising Church Order Article 39, Synod 1996 adopted a motion to "remind the churches that any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity and that synod is at liberty to consider such grounds in its disposition of the request" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561). While this decision was largely based on discussions about theological affinity with regard to women in ecclesiastical office, it does not offer any indication that synod may or may not reorganize classes. However, synod does need to approve the transfer of any church to another classis.

Nonetheless, a proposal to reduce the number of classes would not be entirely new to the CRC. Synod 1936 appointed a committee to review the districting of the classes, with the understanding that this be done "in full cooperation and consultation with the classes involved" (*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 37-38). The next year's synod reported on the extensive communication involved in this conversation and incorporated these responses into its decisions (see reports in the *Agenda for Synod 1937*, pp. 136-50, and in the *Acts of*

Synod 1937, pp. 236-49; decisions are reported in the *Acts of Synod 1937*, pp. 64, 104-5).

Along with the discussion about authority in the reorganization and reduction of classes, the task force considered suggestions on what the optimum number of classes might be, ranging from 12 to 45. Given historical data on the number of classes as well as the workload that would be required to continue the governance work of the denomination, it seemed that 12 would be too low a number and that 45 would still be too high to make a reducing impact on costs. Some factors that could come into play could be the financial impacts of having fewer delegates to both synod and the COD—and those impacts would be significantly more than the costs of travel, food, and lodging for synod and COD meetings. Reducing the number of classes, for example, would also reduce the time and financial costs of staff visiting classes, processing classis minutes, and following up on classis matters. In reviewing the number of vacancies across boards and committees at present, along with vacancies in classis positions (synodical deputies, regional pastors, church counselors, etc.) it becomes clear that reducing the number of classes and increasing the number of members within a classis could also provide a larger pool of individuals to fill these spots.

Each classis currently has the opportunity to send four delegates to synod each year. In 2023, Church Order Article 45 was revised so that in connection with ordinarily sending “one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer to synod,” each classis may now “send no more than two delegates bearing the same office.” One of the grounds for this change indicated that this was in response to some classes’ having difficulty in sending a full delegation (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 1031). It is too early to tell if this change will have a significant impact on the ability for all classes to send a full delegation to synod. For sake of comparison over the past decade, however, the following statistics show the percentages of classes that have been able to send four delegates to synod (ranging from 69% to 89%) since 2015. The remaining classes had 1-3 delegates.

- 2025 - 69%
- 2024 - 87%
- 2023 - 81%
- 2022 - 80%
- 2019 - 71%
- 2018 - 80%
- 2017 - 77%
- 2016 - 87%
- 2015 - 89%

The task force observed that it would be difficult to name a specific reduction in the number of classes, but noted that the reduction would need to be significant and done in consultation with the current classes. Such a reduc-

tion could provide cost savings in the expenses related to synod (the current estimate is that a classis delegation to synod and to the COD costs approximately \$10,000-12,000 per classis each year). A reduction in the number of classes could also help to make classis ministry more sustainable. For example, in addition to lowering the costs of denominational expenses, a reduction in the number of classes might result in the consolidation of funding and increased resources for classis initiatives such as church planting, development and support of ministry leaders, and a larger pool of volunteers to staff classis functionary positions. Conversely, reducing the number of classes could result in greater travel expenses. Further, intangible outcomes would likely include the required changes and adaptations in the cultures of classes to accommodate new member churches.

V. Concluding Observations

This task force recognizes that the changes discussed above would represent significant shifts in the way the CRCNA conducts its assemblies. As noted earlier in this report, we want to approach such shifts with a measure of caution. Governance is not something different from ministry; it *is* ministry in the sense that it is the place where our decisions about ministry are made, our priorities are set, our officebearers dialogue in order to seek the calling God has set before us as a denomination. In our governance systems we decide what kinds of character qualities we would hold up in those who give leadership to the CRCNA. We set the theological priorities that shape the way we together live out the gospel. We engage in processes to hold one another accountable in life and doctrine. Even where these processes are done imperfectly, they are vital to our shared witness as a church. Just as we believe that God works through the investment of time, treasure, and talent that is given to the work of discernment in a local council, so also we believe that the same kind of discernment takes place when officebearers gather to do the work of classis and synod, when the Council of Delegates meets to consider the work of denominational ministries, and when the synodical deputies and staff support the discernment processes of the assemblies. These systems and assemblies give our work a vibrancy and a level of accountability and mutual discernment that we could not achieve if our polity were congregational. Any shift in our current structure will have relational costs that are not easy to quantify.

Yet this task force also wants to convey to synod the urgency of our current situation. We cannot function in an environment of consistently declining ministry shares. If we do not look carefully at the financial expenses of our current practices related to governance (and especially to the operation of synod), we will face increasing pressure on our resources for other areas of ministry. We have already seen the impact of those pressures on our funding model for church planting (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 461-65). The churches' willingness to finance the operations of our denominational life affect our ability to do ministry of all kinds, and faithfulness in our present

moment demands that we discern where God's Spirit may be leading through the financial challenges we currently face.

But this also highlights another important theme that this task force would like to share with synod. This present moment is one of opportunity, not just challenge. As a result of our present financial challenges, we have opportunity to think through the priorities we believe God would have us embrace as a denomination. We have opportunity to consider what values would guide our governance so that we provide resources to give adequate space to the present diversity of the CRC, and how to appropriately balance systems of governance with the work of agencies and churches to carry out the work we have prioritized through our governance conversations. We believe that the recommendations below provide a balanced approach: directing sufficient resources to the work of synod (both the formal gathering and the implementation of its decisions through the work of the COD, staff, synodical deputies, and more) while also freeing up financial resources so that other ministries of denominational life can receive greater support. It is our prayer that God would be honored, and the church built up, as we seek to be faithful stewards of the time, treasure, and talents God has given us.

VI. Recommendations

A. That the COD recommend that synod meet on a biennial basis (every two years) beginning in 2027 and that synod direct the Council of Delegates to provide specific recommendations to Synod 2027 about the changes to the candidacy process, the process for approving key denominational leadership, and other matters that are currently handled by synod annually. This will require the following change to Church Order Article 46-a (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

- a. Synod shall meet annually/biennially, at a time and place determined by the previous synod. Each synod shall designate a church to convene the following synod.

Grounds:

1. This change would result in significant cost savings.
2. This change would allow for additional time to work on assigned tasks and for churches/classes to absorb/process synodical decisions.
3. The work of synod will still need to be processed. The specifics of how to do that are beyond the scope of the present task force and can best be addressed by the COD.

B. That the COD draw attention to the operational costs of synod and COD meetings (transportation, food, lodging, venue) and that the COD encourage classes to consider payments to the denomination to help offset those costs. (*Note: the average annual cost per classis for these expenses is estimated to be \$12,000.*)

Grounds:

1. While many denominational ministries receive “above ministry share” gifts, governance costs are not typically included in those gifts (and perhaps should not be, so as to avoid the appearance of improper influence).
2. A classis-level investment has the potential to provide both financial relief to the denomination and increased ownership and interest in the governance systems of the CRCNA.

C. That the COD recommend that synod establish a one-year task force, working in close coordination with the classes, to review the current classis structure and make recommendations to Synod 2027 for classis consolidations and/or overall restructuring. This task force should be made up of at least nine members, including someone from each of the six classical regions, classis leaders, someone with extensive synodical experience, someone with experience in organizational leadership, someone with a legal and/or financial background, a member of the COD Synodical Services Committee, and appropriate CRCNA staff while also honoring the diversity of the denomination (age, gender, ethnicity).

Grounds:

1. At this point in the life of our denomination, classis restructuring is necessary; however, it will require an additional task force to work through how that restructuring should take place.
2. Reducing the number of classes will result in additional cost savings due to the reduction in the number of delegates to synod and the COD.
3. Many classes are currently struggling to fill important roles and to engage in new ministry opportunities. Having fewer classes would increase the pool of resources (people and financial) for those roles and for ministries, such as church planting and leadership development.
4. Having fewer classes would reduce the staff time needed for interacting with the classes, allowing time to focus on other denominational priorities.
5. Synod has previously utilized such a committee to manage the process of redistricting the classes (*Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 37-38; *Acts of Synod 1937*, pp. 64, 104-5).

D. That the COD dismiss the task force with thanks for their work.

COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs

Drew Sweetman, chair
Tom Byma, reporter

ADDENDUM A

Synod 2024 Costs

	<i>Total Cost (USD)</i>
Space Rental	\$22,530.34
Breakfast	\$19,932.37
Lunch	\$23,630.30
Dinner	\$26,217.95
Breaks	\$17,021.75
Lodging	\$37,343.67
Sound Crew	\$13,692.59
<u>Live Stream</u>	<u>\$2,150.00</u>
Totals:	\$153,518.88

1 Week Salaries*

	<i>Total Cost (USD)</i>
IT salaries (2 weeks)	\$49,950
Advancement	\$2,471
Banner	\$9,150
Thrive	\$3,292
HR	\$2,483
ReFrame	\$4,105
Resonate	\$3,659
<u>Additional Admin.</u>	<u>\$1,737</u>
Totals:	\$76,846

*These are additional costs charged to other ministries not included in the budget for synod. This represents the labor costs for these people to be at synod. It also means they are not working on their ministry programs during this time.

Staff at synod	31
Days	9
<u>Avg. cost per day</u>	<u>\$975.34</u>
Total staff costs:	\$272,119.86

Average number of delegates and staff	275
Average cost per delegate for event	\$558.25

ADDENDUM B

2024 COD Costs

	All Entities		OGS-US		OGS-CAN	
	Year to Date		Year to Date		Year to Date	
	06/30/2024		06/30/2024		06/30/2024	
	YTD Actual	Budget	YTD Actual	Budget	YTD Actual	Budget
Expenditures						
Program Expenses						
Conferences, Conventions, and Meetings						
83100 - Board Meetings	788.45	0	788.45	0	0	0
83200 - Conference/Training	10.78	0	10.78	0	0	0
Total Conferences, Conventions, and Meetings	799.23	0	799.23	0	0	0
Printing and Publications						
84210 - Publications/Printed Materials	20.97	0	20.97	0	0	0
Total Printing and Publications	20.97	0	20.97	0	0	0
Travel Expenses						
83500 - Airfare	27,825.67	114,767.83	18,165.12	99,999.96	9,660.55	14,767.87
83510 - Lodging	32,118.07	0	31,791.90	0	326.17	0
83520 - Ground Transportation	11,734.56	0	6,481.68	0	5,252.88	0
83530 - Mileage	2,118.47	0	1,123.46	0	995.01	0
83540 - Travel/Nontravel Meals	11,642.66	0	11,141.39	0	501.27	0
83550 - Sundry Travel Costs	76.6	0	0	0	76.6	0
Total Travel Expenses	85,516.03	114,767.83	68,703.55	99,999.96	16,812.48	14,767.87
Postage and Delivery						
84200 - Postage/Shipping	694.7	0	457.32	0	237.38	0
Total Postage and Delivery	694.7	0	457.32	0	237.38	0
Insurance						
84170 - Business Insurance	50.7	0	50.7	0	0	0
Total Insurance	50.7	0	50.7	0	0	0
Office Supplies						

84180 - Supplies	1,114.38	0	1,114.38	0	0	0
Total Office Supplies	1,114.38	0	1,114.38	0	0	0
Telecommunication						
81280 - Phone Cost/Allowance	51.02	0	0	0	51.02	0
Total Telecommunication	51.02	0	0	0	51.02	0
Occupancy						
81240 – Rentals	350	0	350	0	0	0
Total Occupancy	350	0	350	0	0	0
Cost Share U.S./Canada						
84990 - CA/U.S. Cost Sharing	-6.43	-180.08	-4,002.52	-11,622.96	3,996.09	11,442.88
Cost Share U.S./Canada	-6.43	-180.08	-4,002.52	-11,622.96	3,996.09	11,442.88
Total Program Expenses	88,590.60	114,587.75	67,493.63	88,377.00	21,096.97	26,210.75
Total Expenditures	88,590.60	114,587.75	67,493.63	88,377.00	21,096.97	26,210.75
Total Revenues over Expenditures	-88,590.60	-114,587.75	-67,493.63	-88,377.00	-21,096.97	-26,210.75

ADDENDUM C

Yearbook 2025 Statistics

Classis	Congregations	Organized Congregations	Emerging Congregations	Multi-site Congregations	Average Sunday Attendance	Total Families	Professing Members Under 18	Total Professing Members	Non-Professing Members	Total Members
Alberta North	30	27	3		4207	2453	58	5118	2991	8109
Alberta South/Saskatchewan	18	17	1		1878	963	14	2322	1047	3369
Arizona	9	5	4		827	126	9	279	51	330
Atlantic Northeast	23	18	5		1662	973	37	1920	428	2348
B.C. North-West	21	16	2	3	3138	1092	69	2418	813	3231
B.C. South-East	23	20	3		3658	1555	31	3504	1200	4704

California South	18	12	6		2663	1287	164	2290	439	2729
Central California	35	27	8		4846	1740	147	4524	1587	6111
Central Plains	21	20	1		2817	1316	82	2855	1041	3896
Chicago South	16	15	1		2231	1240	121	2820	931	3751
Columbia	16	13	3		1191	538	41	1155	358	1513
Eastern Canada	19	19	0		1744	940	44	2079	849	2928
Georgetown	18	17	1		4108	2053	102	4778	1676	6454
Grand Rapids East	21	17	2	2	4466	2175	186	4711	1782	6493
Grand Rapids North	18	17	1		1973	1169	98	2458	644	3102
Grand Rapids South	18	15	3		4173	2210	131	4916	1580	6496
Grandville	17	15	2		3847	2201	86	4598	1658	6256
Greater Los Angeles	32	26	6		5484	2501	416	3279	2025	5304
Hackensack	26	19	7		2071	806	103	1620	360	1980
Hamilton	15	14	1		2467	1395	33	3451	1285	4736
Hanmi	24	12	12		1846	726	125	1122	236	1358
Heartland	22	20	1	1	3539	1432	108	3471	1397	4868
Holland	31	26	5		5301	2732	135	6141	1972	8113
Hudson	25	15	10		1521	678	96	1504	372	1876
Huron	22	21	1		3776	2004	22	4409	2016	6425
Iakota	20	19	1		5208	2132	48	4867	2400	7267
Illiana	18	18	0		3237	2150	129	3841	1366	5207
Kalamazoo	12	11	1		1663	721	89	1809	553	2362
Ko-Am	22	16	6		736	365	60	611	93	704
Lake Erie	16	14	2		1629	690	115	1810	410	2220
Lake Superior	25	22	3		2838	1553	78	3431	1255	4686

Minnkota	17	17	0		2619	1114	80	2693	931	3624
Muskegon	19	16	3		2557	1466	36	3022	768	3790
Niagara	14	11	3		2388	1357	0	2652	1044	3696
North Cascades	10	8	2		1584	619	57	1573	491	2064
Northcentral Iowa	12	11	1		706	404	43	943	231	1174
Northern Illinois	16	14	2		1666	1011	77	2159	811	2970
Northern Michigan	14	12	2		1591	798	51	1969	644	2613
Ontario Southwest	28	25	2	1	4301	1877	32	4628	1789	6417
Pacific Northwest	29	21	8		1829	731	30	1669	413	2082
Quinte	19	18	1		2629	1502	43	3383	1149	4532
Red Mesa	21	18	3		817	469	98	1110	470	1580
Rocky Mountain	36	20	16		2075	741	80	1751	386	2137
Southeast U.S.	21	10	6	5	2591	474	109	2010	461	2471
Thornapple Valley	13	11	1	1	2407	1247	128	2571	742	3313
Toronto	20	19	1		2196	1230	35	2968	575	3543
Wisconsin	16	15	1		2561	1104	160	2620	1035	3655
Yellowstone	7	6	1		872	309	36	826	279	1105
Zeeland	17	16	1		2712	1260	70	2990	1028	4018
Total	980	811	156	13	128846	61629	4142	135648	48062	183710

Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies, Institutions, and Ministries

Each year, synod provides delegates with a number of financial documents. These documents fall into three main groups and reflect the instructions of previous synods (cf. *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 439-40): the prior fiscal year-end balance sheets and income statements for each agency and institution are found in this appendix; the investment allocations as well as the budgets for the upcoming fiscal year will be presented in the Agenda Supplement. These materials are provided primarily for synod's information in order to maintain transparency about our use of the financial resources God has entrusted to the CRCNA.

In addition, an audited financial report as of June 30 is made available on the CRCNA website each year (crcna.org/welcome/governance/financial-statements).

The advisory committee addressing finance and administration matters at synod operates under a specific mandate (see *Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 92-93), which will be provided to the advisory committee members to guide their review of these documents.

This appendix contains the following documents:

- Balance Sheets (labeled "Schedule 1") for the CRCNA, ReFrame Ministries, World Renew, the CRC Loan Fund U.S., Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, Ministers Pension Plan (along with their accompanying Special Assistance Funds)
- Income Statements (labeled "Schedule 2") for CRCNA entities

Please note that, per the decisions of Synods 2015, 2017, and 2023, which combined the operations of Resonate Global Mission, Thrive, and the Office of General Secretary into the general CRCNA operations, the financial statements include financial information for all three of those entities in a single document (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 680; *Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 621; *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 956-57).

Schedule 1

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: CRC (Resonate, Office of General Secretary, Thrive, Ministry Boards, Canadian Ministries)

Balance Sheet (000s) as of June 30

	Fiscal 23-24		Fiscal 24-25	
	Can Dollars	US Dollars	Can Dollars	US Dollars
Assets	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Cash	\$ 11,191	\$ 4,428	\$ 8,162	\$ 12,537
Investments	\$ 31,629	\$ 21,116	\$ 34,203	\$ 22,980
Other	2,538	8,258	2,465	7,436
Total Assets	\$ 45,358	\$ 33,802	\$ 44,830	\$ 42,953
Liabilities				
Trade Payables	\$ 1,355	\$ 1,050	\$ 1,221	\$ 1,168
Other Payables	\$ 35,437	\$ 9,990	\$ 31,492	\$ 11,771
Total Payables	\$ 36,792	\$ 11,040	\$ 32,713	\$ 12,939
Net Assets				
Donor Designated	\$ -	\$ 11,602	\$ -	\$ 11,155
Unrestricted	\$ 8,566	\$ 11,160	\$ 12,117	\$ 18,859
Total Net Assets	\$ 8,566	\$ 22,762	\$ 12,117	\$ 30,014
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 45,358	\$ 33,802	\$ 44,830	\$ 42,953
Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.33567		1.4017	
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7371		0.7134	

Schedule 1

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: ReFrame Ministries

Balance Sheet (000s) as of June 30

	Fiscal 23-24		Fiscal 24-25	
	Can Dollar	US Dollar	Can Dollar	US Dollar
Assets	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Cash	\$ 2,336	\$ 1,751	\$ 2,330	\$ 694
Investments	\$ -	\$ 10,219	\$ -	\$ 11,338
Other	\$ 54	\$ 965	\$ 124	\$ 1,353
Total Assets	\$ 2,390	\$ 12,935	\$ 2,454	\$ 13,385
Liabilities				
Trade Payables	\$ 60	\$ 128	\$ 101	\$ 6
Other Payables	\$ -	\$ 393	\$ -	\$ 358
Total Payables	\$ 60	\$ 521	\$ 101	\$ 364
Net Assets				
Donor Designated	\$ -	\$ 1,906	\$ -	\$ 2,136
Unrestricted	\$ 2,330	\$ 10,508	\$ 2,353	\$ 10,885
Total Net Assets	\$2,330	\$12,414	2,353	13,021
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 2,390	\$ 12,935	\$ 2,454	\$ 13,385
Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.3567		1.4017	
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7371		0.7134	

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: World Renew
Balance Sheet (000s) as of June 30

	Fiscal 23-24		Fiscal 24-25	
	Can Dollar	US Dollars	Can Dollar	US Dollars
Assets	Actual		Actual	Actual
Cash	\$ 10,319	\$ 3,811	\$ 5,655	\$ 1,142
Investments	\$ -	\$ 14,599	\$ 100	\$ 14,579
CFGB* Investments	\$ 7,833	\$ -	\$ 8,367	\$ -
Other	\$ 4,461	\$ 14,372	\$ 7,106	\$ 13,449
Total Assets	\$ 22,613	\$ 32,782	\$ 21,228	\$ 29,170
Liabilities				
Trade Payables	\$ 1,214	\$ 949	\$ 1,498	\$ 571
Other Payables	\$ 4,070	\$ 3,764	\$ 3,803	\$ 3699
Total Payables	\$ 5,284	\$ 4,713	\$ 5,301	\$ 4,270
Net Assets				
Donor Designated	\$ -	\$ 13,659	\$ -	\$ 14,511
CFGB*	\$ 7,833	\$ -	\$ 8,367	\$ -
Unrestricted	\$ 9,496	\$ 14,409	\$ 7,560	\$ 10,389
Total Net Assets	\$ 17,329	\$ 28,068	\$ 15,927	\$ 24,900
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 22,613	\$ 32,781	\$ 21,228	\$ 29,170
* Canadian Foodgrains Bank Association Inc.				
Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.3567		1.4017	
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7371		0.7134	

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s) as of June 30

	Fiscal 23-24	Fiscal 24-25
	US Dollars	US Dollars
Assets	Actual	Actual
Cash	\$ 1,503	\$ 1,737
Investments	\$ 4,193	\$ 3,286
Other	\$ 10,015	\$ 10,214
Total Assets	\$ 15,711	\$ 15,237
Liabilities		
Trade Payables	\$ 40	\$ 20
Other Payables	\$ 9,426	\$ 8,842
Total Payables	\$ 9,466	\$ 8,862
Net Assets		
Board Designated	\$ 650	\$ 650
Unrestricted	\$ 5,595	\$ 5,725
Total Net Assets	\$ 6,245	\$ 6,375
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 15,711	\$ 15,237

Schedule 1**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA**

Agency: Calvin Theological Seminary

Balance Sheet (000s) as of June 30

	Fiscal 23-24	Fiscal 24-25
	US Dollars	US Dollars
Assets	Actual	Actual
Cash	\$ 549	\$ 690
Investments	\$ 73,760	\$ 70,239
Other	\$ 18,330	\$ 30,321
Total Assets	\$ 92,639	\$ 101,250
Liabilities		
Trade Payables	\$ 1,497	\$ 4,432
Other Payables	\$ 1,501	\$ 1,046
Total Payables	\$ 2,998	\$ 5,478
Net Assets		
Donor Designated	\$ 62,412	\$ 69,314
Unrestricted	\$ 27,229	\$ 26,458
Total Net Assets	\$ 89,641	\$ 95,772
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 92,639	\$ 101,250

Schedule 1**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA**

Agency: Calvin University

Balance Sheet (000s) as of June 30

	Fiscal 23-24	Fiscal 24-25
	US Dollar	US Dollar
Assets	Actual	Actual
Cash	\$ 19,367	\$ 21,961
Investments	\$ 347,070	\$ 327,510
Other	\$ 254,479	\$ 263,065
Total Assets	\$ 620,916	\$ 612,536
Liabilities		
Trade Payables	\$ 10,948	\$ 3,729
Other Payables	\$ 114,712	\$ 107,881
Total Payables	\$ 125,660	\$ 111,610
Net Assets		
Donor Designated	\$ 322,497	\$ 311,354
Unrestricted	\$ 172,759	\$ 189,572
Total Net Assets	\$ 495,256	\$ 500,926
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 620,916	\$ 612,536

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Ministers Pension Plan
Balance Sheet (000s) Calendar Year December 31

	Cal Year 2024		Cal Year 2025	
	Can Dollar	US Dollar	Can Dollar	US Dollar
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Assets				
Cash	\$ 359	\$ 4,541	\$ 468	\$ 8,785
Investments	\$ 94,835	\$ 122,685	\$ 97,719	\$ 123,032
Other	\$ 53	\$ 193	\$ (219)	\$ 547
Total Assets	\$ 95,247	\$ 127,419	\$ 97,968	\$ 132,364
Liabilities				
Trade Payables	\$ 89	\$ 26	\$ -	\$ -
Other Payables	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Payables	\$ 89	\$ 26	\$ -	\$ -
Net Assets				
Donor Designated	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Unrestricted	\$ 95,158	\$ 127,393	\$ 97,968	\$ 132,364
Total Net Assets	\$ 95,158	\$ 127,393	\$ 97,968	\$ 132,364
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 95,247	\$ 127,419	\$ 97,968	\$ 132,364

Schedule 1
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Special Assistance Fund
Balance Sheet (000s) Calendar Year December 31

	Cal Year 2024		Cal Year 2025	
	Can Dollar	US Dollar	Can Dollar	US Dollar
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Assets				
Cash	\$ 1,893	\$ 85	\$ 2,598	\$ 71
Investments	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other	\$ (1,506)	\$ -	\$ 182	\$ 10
Total Assets	\$ 387	\$ 85	\$ 2,780	\$ 81
Liabilities				
Trade Payables	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Payables	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Payables	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Net Assets				
Donor Designated	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Unrestricted	\$ 387	\$ 85	\$ 2,780	\$ 81
Total Net Assets	\$ 387	\$ 85	\$ 2,780	\$ 81
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 387	\$ 85	\$ 2,780	\$ 81

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: CRC (Resonate, Office of General Secretary, Thrive, Ministry Boards, Canadian Ministries)

Statement of Activities: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year		Fiscal Year	
	24-25 Actual		25-26 Budget	
	Can Dollars	US Dollars	Can Dollars	US Dollars
Income	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
Ministry Shares	\$5,102	\$8,340	\$5,500	\$8,325
Above Ministry Shares	\$3,882	\$14,797	\$4,061	\$13,482
Grant Income	\$41	\$4,465	\$108	\$132
Investment Income	\$3,343	\$1,517	\$126	\$0
Qualified Donees	\$1,048	\$0	\$0	\$0
Product Revenue	\$125	\$881	\$100	\$703
Advertising Revenue	\$30	\$211	\$8	\$275
Other Revenue	\$2,983	\$4,852	\$186	\$939
Service Allocations	\$3,713	\$693	\$2,435	\$4,879
Total Income	\$20,267	\$35,756	\$12,524	\$28,735

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: CRC (Resonate, Office of General Secretary, Thrive, Ministry Boards, Canadian Ministries)

Statement of Activities: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year		Fiscal Year	
	24-25 Actual		25-26 Budget	
	Can Dollars	US Dollars	Can Dollars	US Dollars
Expense				
OGS Admin	-\$4	\$855	\$343	\$677
OGS Synodical Services	\$103	\$218	\$205	\$406
OGS Synodical Deputies	\$9	\$20	\$14	\$27
OGS Annual Synod Meeting	\$111	\$252	\$212	\$419
OGS Ecumenical Relations	\$22	\$48	\$36	\$70
OGS Historical Committee	\$26	\$58	\$39	\$78
OGS Judicial Committee	\$0	\$0	\$3	\$6
OGS Stated Clerks gathering	\$14	\$30	\$1	\$2
OGS Study Committees	\$3	\$7	\$8	\$16
OGS Ministry Plan	\$0	\$0	\$2	\$4
OGS Yearbook	\$18	\$37	\$33	\$65
OGS COD	\$28	\$62	\$33	\$65
OGS Candidacy	\$78	\$167	\$94	\$185
OGS Communication	\$104	\$229	\$136	\$269
OGS Banner	\$365	\$780	\$51	\$896
OGS Grants	\$7	\$1,742	\$0	\$0
OGS Expense Subtotal	\$884	\$4,505	\$1,210	\$3,185
TH Admin	\$263	\$7	\$23	\$925
TH Connect	\$2	\$238	\$160	\$312
TH Engage	\$226	\$478	\$260	\$505
TH Equip	\$230	\$476	\$353	\$684
TH Operations	\$179	\$353	\$208	\$403
TH-Grants	\$2	\$528	\$157	\$748
TH Expense Subtotal	\$902	\$2,080	\$1,161	\$3,577
RG Admin	\$870	\$712	\$665	\$1,717
RG Asia	\$239	\$1,070	\$92	\$1,394
RG Eastern & Southern Africa	\$239	\$1,047	\$183	\$1,212
RG Europe	\$135	\$656	\$130	\$970
RG Global Mission Core Team	\$1,128	\$4,048	\$510	\$3,828
RG Latin America	\$428	\$1,634	\$0	\$1,811
RG Middle East	\$80	\$339	\$109	\$298
RG North American Engagement Team	\$674	\$1,177	\$680	\$1,470
RG Program Team	\$951	\$2,774	\$620	\$1,702
RG West Africa	\$175	\$777	\$0	\$792
RG Expense Subtotal	\$4,919	\$14,234	\$2,989	\$15,194

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: CRC (Resonate, Office of General Secretary, Thrive, Ministry Boards, Canadian Ministries)

Statement of Activities: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year 24-25 Actual		Fiscal Year 25-26 Budget	
	Can Dollars	US Dollars	Can Dollars	US Dollars
MB Canadian Ministries	\$1,456	\$0	\$1,598	\$0
MB Race Relations	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
MB Faith Alive	\$194	\$485	\$110	\$624
MB Libros DeSafio	\$0	\$48	\$0	\$0
MB Calvin Seminary	\$732	\$0	\$400	\$0
MB Calvin University	\$27	\$0	\$0	\$0
MB Other Organization	\$116	\$4	\$0	\$0
MB World Renew	\$1,591	\$0	\$0	\$0
MB Cash Management	\$1,460	\$0	\$0	\$0
MB CGI	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Mgt & Gnrl Building	\$367	\$372	\$327	\$176
Mgt & Gnrl Finance	\$874	\$1,401	\$900	\$1,498
Mgt & Gnrl Gift Entry	\$187	\$124	\$187	\$171
Mgt & Gnrl Human Resources	\$214	\$576	\$214	\$802
Mgt & Gnrl Information Technology	\$741	\$1,008	\$578	\$1,313
Mgt & Gnrl Risk	\$0	\$83	\$0	\$92
Mgt & Gnrl Payroll	\$96	\$74	\$117	\$106
Mgt & Gnrl Ministry Support Services	\$317	\$501	\$166	\$716
Mgt & Gnrl Admin	\$588	\$1,197	\$591	\$419
RG Advancement	\$344	\$863	\$626	\$457
RG Advancement Communications	\$262	\$625	\$0	\$893
MB Advancement	\$662	\$324	\$460	\$519
MB Advancement - Communications	\$100	\$0	\$121	\$0
MB Expense Subtotal	\$10,328	\$7,685	\$6,395	\$7,786
CRC Total Expense	\$17,033	\$28,504	\$11,755	\$29,742
Net Gain/Loss	\$3,234	\$7,252	\$769	-\$1,007
Program %	64%	75%	64%	76%
Mgt & General %	28%	19%	26%	18%
Fund Raising %	8%	6%	10%	6%
OGS= Office of General Secretary				
TH= Thrive				
RG= Resonate Global				
MB= Ministry Boards				
Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.33567		1.4017	
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7371		0.7134	

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: ReFrame Ministries
Statement of Activities: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year 24-25		Fiscal Year 25-26	
	Can Dollars	US Dollars	Can Dollars	US Dollars
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
Income				
Ministry Shares	\$448	\$743	\$398	\$570
Above Ministry Shares	\$1,767	\$3,753	\$1,817	\$2,456
Grant Income	\$0	\$556	\$0	\$0
Investment Income	\$0	\$832	\$30	\$498
Products Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Revenue	\$65	\$324	\$0	\$0
Total Income	\$2,280	\$6,208	\$2,245.00	\$3,524.00
Expenses				
Today Devotional	\$158	\$354	\$218	\$423
Church Juice	\$108	\$109	\$2	\$4
Groundwork	\$50	\$113	\$64	\$124
Family Fire	\$39	\$109	\$2	\$4
Think Christian	\$51	\$116	\$2	\$4
Kids Corner	\$43	\$96	\$61	\$119
Prayer Ministry	\$37	\$83	\$52	\$101
English	\$301	\$674	\$422	\$821
Korean Expenditures	\$8	\$18	\$9	\$18
Arabic Expenditures	\$27	\$59	\$9	\$53
Chinese Expenditures	\$245	\$552	\$267	\$493
French Expenditures	\$38	\$85	\$35	\$93
Hindi Expenditures	\$44	\$100	\$52	\$101
Indonesian Expenditures	\$63	\$141	\$74	\$143
Japanese Expenditure	\$145	\$327	\$177	\$344
Portuguese Expenditures	\$156	\$350	\$180	\$349
Russian Expenditures	\$95	\$214	\$0	\$0
Spanish Expenditures	\$74	\$167	\$81	\$158
Mgt & General	\$189	\$921	\$177	\$846
Advancement	\$364	\$742	\$277	\$608
Advancement Communications	\$82	\$251	\$100	\$413
Total Expense	\$2,317	\$5,581	\$2,261	\$5,219
Net Gain/Loss	-\$37	\$627	-\$16	-\$1,695
Program %	73%	66%	75%	64%
Mgt & General %	8%	17%	8%	16%
Fund Raising %	19%	18%	17%	20%
Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.3567		1.4017	
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7371		0.7134	

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: World Renew
Statement of Activities: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year 24-25		Fiscal Year 25-26	
	Can Dollars Actual	US Dollars Actual	Can Dollars Budget	US Dollars Budget
Income				
Ministry Shares	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Above Ministry Shares	\$8,002	\$12,113	\$9,982	\$14,535
Disaster Relief	\$5,685	\$3,936	\$5,000	\$1,400
Grant Income	\$8,894	\$2,680	\$15,620	\$108
Investment Income	\$442	\$1,736	\$428	\$1,500
Investment Income	\$0	\$0		
Total Income	\$23,023	\$20,465	\$31,030	\$17,543
Expenses				
Disaster Relief	\$1,962	\$5,160	\$4,306	\$2,508
Overseas Development	\$6,353	\$11,367	\$11,213	\$10,956
Education & Justice	\$1,307	\$2,062	\$553	\$400
CFGB*	\$10,645	\$0	\$5,761	\$0
Administration	\$2,372	\$2,598	\$1,996	\$3,609
Advancement Communications	\$1,786	\$2,802	\$3,373	\$3,861
Total Expenses	\$24,425	\$23,989	\$27,202	\$21,334
Net Gain/Loss	-\$1,402	-\$3,524	\$3,828	-\$3,791
Program %	83%	77%	80.26%	64.99%
Mgt & General %	10%	11%	7.34%	16.92%
Fund Rasing %	7%	12%	12.40%	18.10%

* Canadian Foodgrains Bank Association Inc.

Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.3567	1.4017
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7371	0.7134

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Loan Fund
Operating Budget (000s)

	Fiscal 24-25	Fiscal 25-26
	US Dollars Actual	US Dollars Budget
Income		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
Loan Interest Income	\$ 530	\$ 520
Investment Income	\$ 210	\$ 50
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ 1	\$ 65
Total Income	\$ 741	\$ 635
Expense		
Interest Expense	\$ 357	\$ 230
Mgt & General	\$ 208	\$ 356
Advancement	\$ 47	\$ 41
Total Expenses	\$ 612	\$ 627
Net Gain/Loss	\$ 129	\$ 8
Program %	58%	37%
Mgt & General %	34%	57%
Fund Rasing %	8%	7%

Schedule 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: Calvin Theological Seminary

Statement of Activities: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year 24-25 US Dollars Actual	Fiscal Year 25-26 US Dollars Budget
Income		
Ministry Shares	\$ 992	\$ 800
Above Ministry Shares	\$ 7,718	\$ 7,000
Net Tuition	\$ 885	\$ 850
Grant Income	\$ -	\$ -
Auxiliary Activities	\$ 637	\$ 700
Endowment Earnings	\$ 2,506	\$ 2,230
Other Revenue	\$ 351	\$ 100
Total Income	\$ 13,089	\$ 11,680
Expenses		
Instruction	\$ 3,736	\$ 3,750
Academic Support	\$ -	\$ -
Student Services	\$ 3,186	\$ 3,100
Auxiliary Activities	\$ 1,026	\$ 850
Mgt & General	\$ 2,303	\$ 2,400
Advancement	\$ 980	\$ 950
Total Expenses	\$ 11,231	\$ 11,050
Net Gain/Loss	\$ 1,858	\$ 630
Program %	71%	70%
Mgt & General %	21%	22%
Fund Rasing %	9%	9%

Schedule 2**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA****Agency: Calvin University****Statement of Activities: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)**

	Fiscal Year 24-25 US Dollars Actual	Fiscal Year 25-26 US Dollars Budget*
Income		
Ministry Shares	\$ 487	\$ 350
Above Ministry Shares	\$ 13,074	\$ 3,627
Net Tuition	\$ 49,943	\$ 81,066
Grant Income	\$ 4,056	\$ 12,372
Auxiliary Activities	\$ 22,669	\$ -
Endowment Earnings	\$ 14,810	\$ -
Investment Income	\$ 4,100	\$ -
Other Revenue	\$ 7,238	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 116,377	\$ 97,415
Expenses		
Instruction	\$ 47,773	\$ 79,271
Research	\$ 2,270	\$ -
Public Service	\$ 13,850	\$ -
Academic Support	\$ 11,335	\$ -
Student Services	\$ 28,333	\$ -
Auxiliary Activities	\$ 19,873	\$ 7,811
Mgt & General	\$ 10,264	\$ 7,387
Advancement	\$ 3,537	\$ 2,946
Total Expenses	\$ 137,235	\$ 97,415
Net Gain/Loss	\$ (20,858)	\$ -
Program %	90%	89%
Mgt & General %	7%	8%
Fund Rasing %	3%	3%

* Annual Budget is created for General Fund activities only.

24-25 Fiscal year is actuals for all of Calvin's funds

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Ministers Pension Plan
Statement of Activities: (000's) as of December 31

	Cal Year 2024		Cal Year 2025	
	Can Dollar	US Dollar	Can Dollar	US Dollar
Income		Actual	Actual	Actual
Employer Contributions	\$ 883	\$ 4,498	\$ 491	\$ 2,039
Participant Contributions	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Investment Earnings	\$ 22,542	\$ 38,155	\$ 6,031	\$ 20,254
Total income	\$ 23,425	\$ 42,653	\$ 6,522	\$ 22,293
Expenses				
Distributions	\$ 5,355	\$ 11,427	\$ 1,791	\$ 5,782
Mgt & General	\$ 760	\$ 1,442	\$ 460	\$ 675
Total Expenses	\$6,115	\$12,869	\$ 2,251	\$ 6,457
Net Gain/Loss	\$17,310	\$29,784	\$ 4,271	\$ 15,836
Program %	88%	89%	80%	90%
Mgt & General %	12%	11%	20%	10%
Fund Raising %	0%	0%	0%	0%

Schedule 2
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Special Assistance Fund
Statement of Activities: (000's) as of December 31

	Cal Year 2024		Cal Year 2,025	
	Can Dollar	US Dollar	Can Dollar	US Dollar
Income	Actual	Actual		
Ministry Shares	\$0	\$2	\$0	\$4
Employer Contributions	\$1,893		\$1,442	\$0
Foreign Exchange	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$77
Investment Earnings	\$46	\$3	\$26	\$1
Total Income	\$1,939	\$5	\$1,468	\$82
Expenses				
Distributions*	\$1,830	\$121	\$329	\$22
Management & General	\$0	\$2	\$0	\$0
Total Expenses	\$1,830	\$123	\$329	\$22
Net Gain/Loss	\$109	-\$118	\$1,139	\$60

* 2024 Includes distributions back to CRC Canada for prior years support of 703,000

REPORTS OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

Introduction

The Council of Delegates of the CRCNA submits a *unified* report to synod composed of ministry updates provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The various reports here are presented in alphabetical order by agency, institution, or ministry name. Supplementary reports will be provided as well, if necessary, before synod meets.

Much of the material here supplies significant background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. The content also provides the transparency necessary to enhance our life together as a denomination.

Together these reports present the story of how God is blessing and guiding our work through the agencies, institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church as we covenant together. As you read the material that follows, I encourage you to respond with gratitude for what God is doing through the Holy Spirit, transforming lives and communities worldwide, by means of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Zachary J. King
General Secretary of the CRCNA

Calvin Theological Seminary

I. Introduction—Mission statement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this report to Synod 2026 with gratitude to God for his provision in the past year and for the past 150 years. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) has been involved in the training, teaching, and formation of students for ministry for 150 years since 1876 and was the very first agency or institution developed by the Christian Reformed Church. For the past year, we have held special events and times of celebration as we give thanks for God's faithfulness and for affirming the consistent and ongoing tie between church and seminary.

Mission statement: As a learning community in the Reformed Christian tradition that forms church leaders who cultivate communities of disciples of Jesus Christ, Calvin Theological Seminary exists to serve the Christian Reformed Church in North America and wider constituencies by preparing individuals for biblically faithful and contextually effective ministry of the Word and by offering Reformed theological scholarship and counsel.

II. Response to Synod 2025

For the past few years, Calvin Theological Seminary has provided information concerning the ongoing confessional commitment of CTS. The following was provided in 2024 in the *Agenda for Synod 2024*.

A Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty

Since 1876, Calvin Theological Seminary has been the seminary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Its teaching faculty have been interviewed and approved by synod, and its faculty have served the church in numerous capacities, including service as advisors to synod.

As CTS faculty committed to the Covenant for Officebearers, we profess the teachings of Scripture summarized by the Reformed confessions as interpreted by the decisions of synod. We commit to teaching, preaching, counseling, and writing within these covenantal bounds, whether in the classroom, church, or beyond.

We hold a variety of opinions and ideas on many matters, including past and possible future decisions of synod, and we are encouraged to express these views via official channels such as through overtures or communications from the congregations and classes to which we belong, through raising thoughtful questions for the church to ponder in future deliberations, or through theological conversations as a faculty, with the understanding that such communications will not undermine our good standing with one another as faculty.

CTS Faculty Minute #9354: The faculty reviewed and discussed the “Statement on Our Confessional Commitments by the CTS Faculty.” A motion was made and seconded to approve the Statement and share it with the Board of Trustees for information.

Adopted.

At the CTS Board of Trustees meeting on October 27, 2023, the board again reviewed and approved the above statement. The board then proceeded to adopt the statement as its own and directed that this statement should be included in its Calvin Theological Seminary report to Synod 2024.

We believe that these actions and this statement are in keeping with the request to clarify the ongoing confessional commitment of both the CTS faculty and the CTS Board of Trustees.

(Agenda for Synod 2024, p. 226)

That belief was affirmed by Synod 2024 when it adopted the following in plenary session:

That synod take note of the “Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty” from the Calvin Theological Seminary report (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 226) serving as a good faith response to the deferred instruction of the 2023 Advisory Committee 8E report (majority), C, 11.

(Acts of Synod 2024, p. 809)

A. Additional information requested

Synod 2025 requested additional information as noted in the following instruction:

That synod instruct the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to provide information to Synod 2026 as to the adherence of all instructional personnel to the CRC’s teachings, especially the creeds and confessions.

Ground: We appreciate the commitment of regularly appointed teaching faculty to teach, preach, counsel, and write within the covenant bounds of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 133), and desire to learn more about how this also extends to the category of those serving in other teaching roles at CTS.

(Acts of Synod 2025, pp. 691-92)

B. Our respectful response to the instruction of Synod 2025

Prior to Synod 2025, the faculty and the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary were already working on adding additional policies to continue to align and clearly identify our adherence to the creeds and confessions by regularly appointed faculty.

This material was approved by the CTS Board of Trustees in May 2025 and has recently been affirmed and amended by the CTS Board of Trustees at its latest board meeting on February 23, 2026.

The final current version of our Faculty Handbook at section 1.2 reads as follows:

1.2. Requirements for Seminary Faculty

Faculty members at Calvin Theological Seminary must be committed to the Lord and to the ministry of the church. Ordinarily, faculty will be ordained within the Christian Reformed Church and have pastoral experience. Whether or not ordained, all CTS faculty must possess the character, wisdom, and many of the skills required of those who are ordained ministers of the Word. They must be sound in doctrine and zealous in propagating and defending Reformed Christianity.

All regularly appointed instructional personnel (full or reduced load), the president, chief academic officer, director of vocational formation, dean of students, dean of international student and scholar services, the director of the Center for Excellence in Preaching, academic program directors, as well as those the Board of Trustees shall from time to time designate for inclusion for this requirement, should be or become professing members of a Christian Reformed Church congregation and shall be required to sign the Covenant for Office-bearers.

When an incoming person for a position in those identified roles above begins their employment at Calvin Theological Seminary, they would identify a local Christian Reformed congregation as their congregation within two years of beginning their employment at Calvin Theological Seminary.

If the local congregation of persons in those identified roles referenced above becomes disaffiliated from the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), this person will move their membership to another local congregation within the CRCNA within a two-year period from when their current congregation has disaffiliated from the CRCNA.

In exceptional circumstances, the Board of Trustees may grant an exception to this requirement.

Persons identified in the roles referenced above shall include the identification of their local congregation in the yearly reports that they currently provide to the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.

At the same CTS Board of Trustees meeting of February 23, 2026, the board approved the following requirements for auxiliary teaching personnel, which includes all adjunct faculty.

Auxiliary Instructional Personnel Definition – Calvin Theological Seminary currently identifies adjuncts as well as faculty mentors in the Competency Based Theological Education (CBTE) programs and those who are formation mentors serving through the ministry of the Vocational Formation Office (VFO) as auxiliary instructional personnel. This does not include one-time or occasional guests to classes invited in by the teacher of record.

Auxiliary instructional personnel are asked to provide signature acceptance that they will adhere to the CRC's teachings, especially the creeds and our confessions.

Sample of Contract Language

We are glad that you are interested in serving Calvin Theological Seminary students. We appreciate your desire to be an instructor in this learning institution. Calvin Theological Seminary was formed in 1876 by the Christian Reformed Church, and we continue to be shaped and formed by this church denomination which continues to provide prayers, support, encouragement, and oversight (through trustees) for our work in serving the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the wider church.

As a result, we ask that you be familiar with and respect the Christian Reformed Church in North America and her constituencies. Over time, the Christian Reformed Church has stated its position on a variety of contemporary topics.

The following are summaries of the denomination's doctrinal and ethical positions as stated over the years by synod:

- crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements

We would also note the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are as follows:

- crcna.org/welcome/beliefs
- crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions

Consistent with your agreement as auxiliary instructional personnel at CTS to respect and adhere* to the CRC's teachings, especially the creeds and our confessions, we ask for your signature as a sign of your agreement to teach within those parameters.

**Adhere means agreement in doctrine and life with the ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions as interpreted by the synod of the CRCNA, including the CRCNA's understanding of a biblical theology of human sexuality.*

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

Exception Clause and Process: If for some reason, you are not able to provide your signature for this indication of agreement, the Academic Office would ask for a statement of reason, which we will process with the President, the Faculty Status and Development Committee, and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of

Trustees as to whether Calvin Theological Seminary may grant an exception to your signing for your teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary.

We (CTS) do greatly appreciate our ongoing foundational relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. We submit this material in the hope that our love and appreciation for this vital relationship and our common commitment to the creeds and confessions is recognized. As our Vision Frame states: “We are formed by and serve the church, God’s agent of hope for the world” (calvinseminary.edu/about/#vision).

III. Upcoming retirement of President Jul Medenblik

President Jul Medenblik was affirmed as president-elect by Synod 2010 and began his ministry as president on July 1, 2011. In the fall of 2025, President Medenblik informed the CTS Board of Trustees of his intention to step out of his current role on June 30, 2027. The board gave thanks for the service and achievements of President Medenblik and has begun to form a search committee in keeping with the CTS Board of Trustees Handbook. They have also retained Rev. Dr. Ken Eriks as a professional service consultant in this season of transition.

We invite the denomination to join us in giving thanks for the ministry of President Jul Medenblik, who embodies what it means to be “called to serve” and to pray for the search process to lead us to the next president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

IV. Highlights from the past ministry year

A. Building and program updates

1. New Student Housing Unit

October 30, 2025, marked a special time of “ribbon-cutting” for our new 46-apartment student housing project. As noted in prior reports, we are seeing more second-career students and students with children enroll at CTS. As a result, we plan to provide 20 three-bedroom, 19 two-bedroom, and 7 one-bedroom apartments. We are grateful for funding support for over 70 percent of the cost of completing this project. The location of this new building is next to our campus at 3300 Burton Street SE in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

2. Remodeled facility, distance learning

We continue to be grateful for our fully remodeled building facility featuring updated technology and collaborative learning spaces that serve residential students, online students, and students in “flex” learning situations, where both residential and online students meet in the same classroom.

We are grateful as well for the investment made many years ago in an online delivery system of education as we mark moving into a second decade of providing “distance” learning. More than ever, a Calvin Theological Seminary education is just a “click” away.

B. Enrollment

Fall 2025 brought us 120 new students (an increase from Fall 2024, when we welcomed 76 entering students), and now CTS totals over 364 degree-seeking students in all programs, with auditors and nondegree students bringing the total census up to 412.

We wish to highlight that we experienced a significant increase of students from Canada in fall 2025. The fall 2024 enrollment numbered 33 Canadian students in our census. The fall 2025 census included 58 Canadian students.

This increase is largely a result of the ongoing efforts of our Canadian Church Relations liaison, Rev. Shawn Brix, in collaboration with the admissions office, as well as recently policy changes such as our “at-par” tuition initiative, whereby tuition for Canadian students is at par between Canadian and U.S. dollars. As a result, we have had more students inquiring about studying at CTS and finding that it is in reach on multiple levels, including financial support and through our online ministry programs. Rev. Shawn Brix is available for consultation and discernment for anyone making inquiries about CTS. He can be contacted at sbrix@calvinseminary.edu.

C. New staff

Calvin Theological Seminary has been blessed by a number of incoming staff members who have felt called to serve our community:

Rev. David Beelen, who served for many years as pastor of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and retired in 2020, stepped in this past academic year and has committed to serve through the next academic year as director of vocational formation. Pastor Dave brings a stellar reputation of mentoring students, and he will focus on mentoring mentors and finding appropriate internship sites for students as he joins others in the Vocational Formation Office to serve our students and the church.

Ms. Holly Small is joining us as associate director of admissions. She brings a great deal of church and denominational experience to this role.

We look forward to the beginning of the teaching ministry of Dr. Jessica Joustra and Dr. Jared Michelson, who were interviewed and approved by Synod 2025. They take up positions this summer in the area of systematic theology.

Please join us in welcoming these and other new staff and faculty who are “called to serve.”

D. New master of arts degree program

Calvin Theological Seminary’s new master of arts in clinical mental health counseling (MCMHC) launched in fall 2023. This professional and theologically grounded degree offers coursework in religious and theological foundations, clinical counseling, and clinical practice. Graduates of the program could consider using their knowledge and gifts by serving in clinical mental

health therapy, clinical mental health counseling, addiction counseling, behavior counseling, or other mental health roles. We are currently in a search for a new director following the move of Dr. Danjuma Gibson to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in summer 2025.

E. Curriculum revision

CTS recently completed its master of arts and master of divinity curriculum revision. The revision has identified outcomes aligned with the understanding that Calvin Theological Seminary seeks to form graduates who will discern, together with those they serve, answers to the following questions:

- What is our ministry CONTEXT?
- How does the GOSPEL engage our context?
- What is God CALLING us to in this context?
- What is the PERSON and role of a servant leader in this context?

These program goals are intimately and necessarily connected because every ministry situation occurs in a particular CONTEXT where the GOSPEL of God's redemptive activity is communicated, where God is CALLING people to participate in his mission, and where God is forming the PERSON and role of a servant leader.

F. Strategic plan

In May 2024 the CTS Board of Trustees approved a strategic plan and set out goals to help guide us into the next 150 years of service to the church. We distill this plan into four major themes:

- *Compelling invitation*—We focus intentionally on our Reformed heritage and identity not only through scholarship but also in student formation and societal engagement. We want to share our distinctiveness in bold, creative, and clear ways that are compellingly invitational and winsome.
- *Holistic learning journeys*—We focus on serving students, ensuring the best learning experiences and mentorships by not only equipping staff and faculty appropriately and adequately but also meeting student expectations for contextual curriculum and multifaceted learning opportunities.
- *Organizational excellence*—We foster an ethos of organizational excellence where trust, accountability, respect, and mutuality around a shared vision are embodied, where individual and collective contributions are valued and celebrated, and where everyone who comes into contact with CTS will experience purpose, fulfillment, care, and ultimately a communal experience of our unity in Christ.
- *Cultivating abundance*—With gratitude to God for his providence, we are encouraged by and appreciate a community of generous supporters through whom our student body will continue to grow and expand, and through whom the mission of CTS is realized. We will promote this missional invitation to ensure a solid fiscal base for the

ongoing work of Reformed theological education, formation, and scholarship.

G. The Forum platform

As a tool by which to meet the goals of the strategic plan, we recently developed and launched The Forum platform (theforum.calvinseminary.edu), a website that serves as the intersection of faith, culture, and Scripture. With this platform the seminary continues to respond to the needs of the global church, upholding the authority of Scripture, the centrality of Christ in the world's story, and the world's desperate need for God's grace. We seek to serve the church by building on the foundation of *The Forum* magazine. We invite responses and reflections from all who pursue their call while wrestling with the enduring questions of mercy, justice, faith, and formation.

CTS plans to continue publishing *The Forum* magazine in print and digital formats. On The Forum platform we'll provide additional content from our partners that includes video teaching series, event invitations, free webinars, and opportunities to attend retreats. The platform is for people working in church ministry, seeking to live out their faith in their daily life, pursuing answers to vexing questions, or simply pursuing a deeper knowledge of God.

V. Reflecting on Our Calling

Over the past number of years, the Calvin Theological Seminary faculty, with input and final approval from the seminary's Board of Trustees, produced a "Vision Frame" document that includes our mission statement (*What* are we doing?) and continues as follows:

Values—Why are we doing it?

- *Reformed theology*—All our teaching and formation grow from a shared understanding of God's Word as articulated in the Reformed confessions.
- *The church*—We are formed by and serve the church, God's agent of hope for the world.
- *Cultural context*—We give our students tools to sow the gospel in a multicultural world. We challenge one another to have hearts that engage the broader world God so loves.
- *The whole person*—We cultivate meaningful relationships with our students to foster personal and spiritual growth throughout our learning community.

Strategy—How are we doing it?

Through the power of the Holy Spirit,

- we are known for academic excellence and scholarship.
- we provide innovative learning environments.
- we pursue synergy with our graduates and other ministry leaders.
- we nurture a community of hospitality.
- we enrich the student experience through vital partnership.

Measures—When are we successful?

When graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary

- preach and teach the Bible (*message*).
- grow in their pastoral identity (*person*).
- discern and engage ministry contexts (*context*).
- cultivate and lead communities of disciples (*goal*).
- equip the church to renew communities for the glory of God (*purpose*).

A scan of this material shows significant convergence with the ministry priorities of the Christian Reformed Church in North America:

Faith Formation—Calvin Theological Seminary seeks to train disciples who become the trainers of disciples of Jesus Christ.

Servant Leadership—Calvin Theological Seminary is seeking to identify, recruit, and train leaders to be servants in the kingdom of God. From resident and online education programs followed by continuing education programs and resources, Calvin Theological Seminary is training leaders.

Global Mission—the world is at our doorstep. Every year around 25 different nations are represented in the student body of Calvin Theological Seminary. (This past year nearly 40 percent of our degree-seeking students came from outside the U.S. and Canada.) The training for global mission takes place not just in classrooms but also over lunch in the Student Center.

Mercy and Justice—Calvin Theological Seminary trains students through cross-cultural internships and exposure to environments that help form the hearts of Christian disciples. For example, experience with prison ministry through Calvin Theological Seminary has led students to witness the need for ministry to prisoners and to understand the structures of society that need to be addressed.

Gospel Proclamation and Worship—Along with the priority of Servant Leadership this is probably our leading edge within the CRC ministry priorities. Our core degree is the master of divinity (M.Div.) degree, which helps to form preachers and teachers of the gospel.

VI. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey* (Ministry Plan)

A. Vocational Formation Office update

Making and maintaining connections with churches is a foundational component of education for Calvin Theological Seminary. Whether this involves church-based internships or assignments related to the local church environment, the local church is the key partner for nurturing, developing, and training students.

In fall 2017, Calvin Theological Seminary set up a new way for M.A. and M.Div. students to fulfill a significant part of their contextual learning requirements. From early on in their program, students are placed in a church or ministry organization where they serve for two years, concurrent with

their course work, through internship hours coordinated with churches during the ministry year. The Office of Vocational Formation—led by director Dave Beelen, associate director Jessica Rowland, and administrative coordinators Jennifer DeJong and Jennifer Greer—continues to develop partnerships that help bridge the classroom and the church. The following organizations and churches are part of this concurrent, contextual learning approach:

African Community Fellowship Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Beaverdam CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan
Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Caledonia CRC, Caledonia, Michigan
Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Christ Memorial Church, Holland, Michigan
Covenant PCA, Holland, Michigan
East Leonard CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Ebenezer CRC, Leduc County, Alberta
First Byron CRC, Byron Center, Michigan
First CRC of Oostburg, Wisconsin
First Christian Reformed Church of Bellflower, California
Gateway Community Church, Merced, California
Georgetown CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan
Grace CRC, Chatham, Ontario
In Spirit Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Jennings Creek CRC, Lindsay, Ontario
Korean Grace Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Korean Presbyterian Church of Metro Detroit, Michigan
Living Hope Community Church, Fox Lake, Wisconsin
Living Water CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Lucknow Community CRC, Lucknow, Ontario
Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Madison Square CRC: North Campus, Grand Rapids, Michigan
New Life Fellowship CRC, Red Deer, Alberta
Noordeloos CRC, Holland, Michigan
Pella Regional Health Center, Pella, Iowa
River Rock Church, Rockford, Michigan
Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Shawnee Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Sunlight Community Church, Port St. Lucie, Florida
Visalia CRC, Visalia, California
Walker URC, Walker, Michigan
Wayland CRC, Wayland, Michigan

Because internship hours may now occur during concurrent internships throughout the academic year, we have opened a new way of connecting students to churches for summer service. We appreciate the churches and

organizations that have served as “additional” places of formation, including these cross-cultural and international sites:

F Street Church, Lincoln, Nebraska
Africa Inland Church Ongata Rongai, Nairobi, Kenya
CMT Guatemala, Guatemala
Heartland Hospice, Grand Rapids, Michigan
National Evangelical Church, Bahrain
Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services (Clinical Pastoral Education),
Grand Rapids, Michigan
Resonate Global Mission, India
St. Lucie County Jail, Fort Pierce, Florida
St. Thomas Reformed Church, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

We are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Currently, ten of our fourteen formation groups are led by seminary faculty/administration members, and four are led by pastors. Formation group leaders include Sam Ha, Jeff Lash, Jeff Fisher, Wendy Fisher, Aleah Marsden, Matthew Wright, Jennifer Greer, Jennifer McCormick-Bridgewater, Scott De Young, Lisa Hoogeboom, Denise Posie, Sarah Chun, David Rylaarsdam, Aaron Vriesman, Layne Kilbreath, and Dave Beelen.

We appreciate the support of the church and alumni for their encouragement to expand our offerings for academic and ministry leadership for local churches and the global church.

We also continue to welcome the opportunity to connect our students with churches in need of summer ministry leadership as a result of pastoral vacancies, sabbaticals, and new ministry initiatives. Please contact the Vocational Formation Office for more information about this process (vocationalformation@calvinseminary.edu or calvinseminary.edu/church-resources).

B. Center for Excellence in Preaching

Now in its twenty-second year of service and ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary’s Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) continues to strive to achieve its original mission: to give preachers the resources they need to create and deliver fresh, compelling, and vibrant sermons from God’s Word. The CEP strives to spark every pastor’s creativity in engaging God’s Word, inspiring them to produce lively sermons of power and beauty.

Our website (cepreaching.org) continues to serve about 75,000 users every month from almost every nation in the world. Our sermon commentary resources, now available in English, Spanish, and Korean, serve pastors, Bible teachers, Bible study leaders, and others with ideas and insights into hundreds of biblical passages. In addition to new sermon commentary articles that appear every Monday morning, our sermon commentary library is searchable so that pastors and others can quickly find their way to the array of resources hosted on the website. These include audio/podcast sermons,

whole sample sermon manuscripts, a welter of sermon-illustration ideas, and preaching connections that include quotes and images from novels, biographies, movies, television shows, church history, and more. The site includes written work by director Scott Hoezee as well as Doug Bratt, Leopoldo Cervantes Ortiz, Lora Copley, Chelsey Harmon, Meg Jenista, John Lee, Stanley Mast, Al Postma, John Rottman, and Neal Plantinga.

Continuing education events remain a staple for the CEP, including week-long seminars for 15-20 pastors during the summer months. In July 2025 former seminary president Neal Plantinga and CEP director Scott Hoezee led a weeklong retreat on the topic “Preaching the Kingdom of God.” The seminar was highly ecumenical, and one of the five morning sessions was led by Dr. Danny Daley of CTS, whose work on the Beatitudes became a rich resource for the participants.

In 2025 the CEP completed its third year in a \$1.25 million five-year grant program as part of Lilly Endowment Inc.’s “Compelling Preaching Initiative.” The first year of the program was aimed at English-speaking pastors, and since January 2024 under the leadership of Latino Ministries director Gabriela Tijerina-Pike, the grant program has included Spanish-speaking pastors. Both parts of the grant program focus on Peer Learning Groups.

Additionally, in April 2025 as part of the Compelling Preaching Initiative, the CEP hosted a gathering of about a dozen current Peer Learning Group leaders for conversations at the Prince Conference Center on the Calvin University campus. The colloquy met for a day and a half and generated rich conversations on what the participants were learning from their respective Peer Learning Groups. Participants also shared many insights that members of their groups had brought forward on the various topics assigned through the CPI Lilly grant program. Time was also devoted to generating ideas for future Peer Group topics, and artificial intelligence came up as one of the most important themes to study in 2026.

The CEP continues to support major conferences and on-campus events. This includes the annual Symposium on Worship on the Calvin University campus in partnership with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. In February 2025 just over 800 people attended the event, where they heard sermons at the five main worship services based five of Jesus’ parables that are unique to the Gospel of Luke. As Symposium took a one-year hiatus in 2026, the CEP will be cosponsoring the upcoming Psalms Festival as part of Calvin’s 150th anniversary year. The CEP also supports the biennial Festival of Faith and Writing on the Calvin campus, and the next festival will take place in April 2026. CEP director Hoezee continues to serve as chair of the Calvin Center for Faith and Writing’s advisory committee.

As it continues its twenty-second year, the Center for Excellence in Preaching remains grateful to God for the grace he has given to this educational ministry and outreach. We remain grateful to our wonderful donors who

continue to underwrite the primary work of the CEP, and to Lilly Endowment Inc., which has opened new avenues of work in the Compelling Preaching Initiative. We remain grateful also for the support of the Christian Reformed Church.

C. Lilly “Pathways for Tomorrow—Next Steps” initiative

The “Next Steps” initiative at Calvin Theological Seminary consists of three programs designed to equip and support adult learning, particularly Latino/a pastors, commissioned pastors, and ministry leaders, by providing accessible and flexible theological education. Our overarching goal is to support the lifelong learning and formation of ministry leaders while they navigate their callings.

Through our Empower program, students can earn a certificate or a master of arts degree in a competency-based format. With the support of a mentor team, students complete a customized learning process in which they develop and demonstrate competencies for ministry. This flexible format is ideally suited to supporting the contextualized learning needs and goals of commissioned pastors across the CRCNA. CTS is actively seeking partnerships with classes to support the learning and credentialing of commissioned pastors.

The Empower program is designed to make ministry training more collaborative, flexible, integrated, and accessible. During our pilot phase, enrollment was initially limited to students participating through contextualized partnerships with the Grand Valley State University Campus Ministry (Grand Rapids, Mich.) and with Sunlight Community Church (Port St. Lucie, Fla.). In fact, this approach was highlighted at the recent Multiply Conference held at Sunlight Community, November 8-11, 2025. Students work with a CTS faculty mentor and two partner mentors to complete learning experiences that develop competence—head, hands, and heart—for ministry.

We have now developed a “standard path” as we move into making this competency-based theological education (CBTE) opportunity available to interested students. To learn more about CBTE as well as our new Lifelong Learning initiative, please contact associate director Wendy Fisher (wfish222@calvinseminary.edu).

Additionally, we are expanding our nondegree lifelong learning offerings, including workshops, retreats, and cohort-based experiences. These offerings are designed to support ministry leaders in their biblical and theological learning, mental health, ongoing personal discipleship, and leadership growth.

D. Lilly Endowment – “Thriving Congregations Initiative” grant

Calvin seminary’s Institute for Mission, Church, and Culture received a grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. in 2024 to help establish the “Ancient Practices for Missional Churches” initiative through 2028. The aim of the initiative is to encourage the flourishing of congregations, helping them

deepen their relationship with God, enhance their connections to each other, and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world. The “Executive Summary” in the grant proposal included the following remarks:

Calvin Theological Seminary has observed that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many churches are struggling because their rhythms of gathering and scattering have been disrupted, discipleship has become increasingly disembodied, and many people are feeling disconnected from or disenchanted with organized religion.

We see these challenges as opportunities to help congregants deepen their connection to God in the company of others, recenter the mission of the local church on the priesthood of all believers, and deepen their understanding of how their daily life and work connect to the mission of God.

To establish these pathways to congregational thriving, we want to implement an Ancient Practices for Missional Churches initiative that will directly engage ministry leaders and congregants. The initiative will center on four key activities:

1. **Retreats focusing on spiritual formation:** Pastors and ministry leaders will learn about the psalms and ancient Christian spiritual practices of formation and engage in experiential learning activities. Immersion in these spiritual formation riches of the Christian tradition will provide opportunities for innovation in their ministry context.
2. **Seminars focusing on the priesthood of all believers:** Congregations will learn a biblical/theological vision for the church centered on the priesthood of all believers, hear examples of historical and contemporary exemplars of this way of being the church on mission, and engage in practices of collaborating that cultivate and sustain this partnership between pastors and congregants.
3. **Consultations:** Seminary professors and staff will listen to the wisdom, challenges, and needs of pastors and churches. The focus of these consultations will be on ministries of the local church that connect with equipping the priesthood of believers, spiritual formation, and cultural analysis and engagement. In these consultations, participants will help us establish a research agenda and assist in compiling and creating best resources and practices for congregations.
4. **Resource curation and creation:** We will identify and synthesize leading theological and ministry frameworks for direct instruction in three areas: spiritual formation, the priesthood of all believers, and cultural understanding for flourishing. We will curate or create resources that offer an experiential approach to learning the habits, practices, and dispositions for each of the three areas.

We will also compile stories of historical and contemporary exemplars of each of the three areas.

All program activities will be facilitated by the Calvin Theological Seminary's Institute for Mission, Church, and Culture (IMCC), which has extensive experience in equipping pastors and ministry leaders, coaching and collaborating with pastors and staff to host workshops in their congregations, and curating and creating actionable ministry resources. The director of the IMCC is Dr. Cory Willson, who holds the Jake and Betsy Tuls Professor of Missiology, World Christianity, and Public Theology endowed chair at the seminary.

VII. Additional program and ministry highlights

A. Faculty interviews and updates

The Calvin Theological Seminary faculty and Board of Trustees anticipate presenting two candidates for interview and appointment at synod as new faculty members. We are in the final stages of a search for a professor of Old Testament as well as a professor for pastoral theology, care, and counseling. Please join us in prayer for these processes and for our candidates.

Dr. Ronald Feenstra, who began teaching at Calvin Theological Seminary in 1992, will be retiring this summer. He is scheduled to present a "Last Lecture" on May 1, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., and this presentation will be available on livestream after the event. Please join us in giving thanks for his thirty-four years of faithful service.

B. Doctor of Ministry program

The doctor of ministry program at CTS continues to develop with programming, coursework, and student research toward effective ministry praxis throughout a plurality of contexts. We have recently appointed Dr. Jeff Sajdak as Director of the D.Min. program.

For more information on the Doctor of Ministry program, please visit calvinseminary.edu/program/doctor-of-ministry.

C. Calvin Prison Initiative in partnership with Calvin University

On September 8, 2015, Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary were blessed to open prison doors by beginning classes at Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan, as part of the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI). Twenty new students from within the prison system came together to begin a five-year bachelor's degree program accredited through Calvin University.

Calvin Theological Seminary continues its partnership with Calvin University to financially support the Calvin Prison Initiative. Each year CTS raises around \$400,000 from donors to support this impactful program; Calvin University's role is to administer the program. Now in its eleventh year, CPI offers a heart-shaping, life-altering Christian liberal arts degree to men incarcerated at the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan.

Through this five-year program, men are earning a bachelor of arts degree with a double major: human services (similar to social work) and faith and community leadership. Currently 101 men are enrolled in the program. To date, 88 students have earned a bachelor of arts degree, and 18 more are set to graduate in May 2026. Of the 88 graduates, 14 have been paroled. One of those men is now studying at Calvin Theological Seminary toward a master in theological studies degree. He plans to earn a doctoral degree as well.

Each year CPI produces an Impact Report, accessible at this link: simplebooklet.com/calvinprisoninitiativeimpactreport2025

This year's report includes the stories of four CPI graduates who have been released or paroled. They share about the education they have received and how that is making an impact in their work outside of prison. Some of our partners at the Michigan Department of Corrections contribute to the report as well.

VIII. Administration

The seminary administration includes Rev. Julius Medenblik, president; the Internal Chief Operations Officer Team of Daryl Boersma (IT), Randy DeVries (controller), and Karen DeYoung (HR); Dr. Yudha Thianto, chief academic officer; Scott DeYoung, director of academic services and registrar; Rev. David Beelen, director of vocational formation; Robert Knoor, director of development; Rev. Jeff Sajdak, dean of students; and Sarah Chun, dean of international students and scholar services.

IX. Faculty

The seminary faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Though preparing students for various forms of ministry continues to be central to their work, members of the faculty also provide education and counsel to many local congregations and broader assemblies, preach regularly, publish scholarly books and articles, participate in significant conferences, and in various ways seek to stay attuned to developments in ministries in the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Christ worldwide.

X. Board of Trustees

The board met in plenary session online in October 2025 and in plenary session in person and online in February 2026. The board plans to hold an in-person/online plenary session in May 2026.

The recently elected board officers are Hessel Kielstra, chair; John Lee, vice chair; and Derek Buikema, secretary.

Information about nominees for the CTS Board of Trustees will be presented in the Agenda Supplement, and CTS will make recommendations related to new and reappointed board members as part of its supplementary report to synod.

XI. Students—Fall 2025

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics from fall 2025 indicate the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

A. Denominational affiliation

Christian Reformed: 172 (42%)

Presbyterian: 73

RCA: 8

Other Reformed: 15

Pentecostal: 5

Other/None listed: 35

B. Geographical information

U.S. students: 194 (47%)

Canadian students: 58 (13%)

Korean: 51 (11%)

Chile: 11 (2.4%)

Mexico: 16 (3.5%)

Nigeria: 6 (1.3%)

Chinese: 7 (1.5%)

Other: 69 (15%)

Total countries represented: 31 — Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Tanzania, Ukraine, United States, Venezuela

C. Student body

Male students: 289 (70%)

Female students: 123 (30%)

D. Programs and students enrolled

- M.Div.: 109
- Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy: 22
- M.A. (English): 63 (includes 46 students in M.A. in Missional Theology – MTC)
- M.A. (Spanish): 35
- M.T.S.: 19
- Th.M.: 30
- Ph.D.: 42
- D.Min.: 14
- Hybrid/Distance learning: 74 (this number does not reflect residential students who also take a hybrid/distance class)
- English Certificate: 8
- CBTE Certificate: 11
- Non-degree seeking: 5

Finally, we want to acknowledge and give thanks for ongoing, faithful support from the Christian Reformed Church as a denomination and from individuals, churches, and classes. We are blessed by this community that continues to care for and encourage us—board members, faculty, staff, and students.

XII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Hessel Kielstra, chair, and Julius Medenblik, president, and any other CTS Board of Trustees members who are present when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod take note of and accept the response of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to Synod 2025's request for additional information about "the adherence of all instructional personnel to the CRC's teachings, especially the creeds and confessions" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 691-92).

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Derek Buikema, secretary

Calvin University

I. A message from the president

Dear friends in the Christian Reformed Church:

In this sesquicentennial year of Calvin University (as well as Calvin Theological Seminary), we give thanks for God’s steadfast faithfulness—and for the covenantal partnership we share with you in this work. Calvin University exists to equip students as Christ’s agents of renewal, and the past year has offered fresh evidence that this mission remains both vibrant and urgently needed in our world.

We see daily reminders that creation is beautiful and yet broken; that human systems, relationships, and institutions are in need of repair; and that young adults are longing for truth, belonging, purpose, and hope. Calvin’s calling is to form graduates who can name the brokenness honestly, resist despair, and live with durable Christian hope—grounded in the gospel, shaped by the Reformed tradition, and prepared to serve the world with wisdom, courage, and love.

In 2025 we launched new academic programs, deepened local and global partnerships, strengthened student formation, and continued to lead in undergraduate teaching and scholarship. These are not ends in themselves; they are signs of a community that is learning to think deeply, act justly, worship faithfully, and participate joyfully in God’s renewing work.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence that the Lord who has sustained Calvin for 150 years will continue to guide us. Thank you for walking with us in this shared calling.

II. Executive summary

A. Overview

The 2025 calendar year accelerated momentum toward Calvin’s strategic goals and marked the beginning of our 150th-anniversary celebration. Calvin continued to demonstrate strengths in teaching excellence, robust Christian scholarship, and meaningful opportunities for students. *U.S. News & World Report* again ranked Calvin number 1 for undergraduate teaching in the Midwest U.S.; Calvin also rose in the “Most Innovative Schools” category and sustained a top-five overall regional ranking.

Calvin’s momentum from 2024 carried into 2025 in student outcomes and recognition, including a Carnegie Classification as a research institution, standout CPA pass rates, and above-average acceptance rates for graduates entering health-related graduate programs.

Amid all of these developments Calvin’s distinctive contribution remains clear: we pursue academic excellence through a Reformed Christian lens, forming graduates who understand that every square inch of life belongs to Christ and that every vocation can become a calling—an arena for service, justice, healing, and faithful presence.

B. Response to Synod 2025

With continued appreciation for the partnership between Calvin University and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), the Board of Trustees of Calvin University presents this response to questions posed by Synod 2025.

Synod 2025 commended Calvin University for its “high-level majority of confessional alignment in the Board of Trustees” and encouraged the board “to continue the good work of two-tier application and consider a higher level than a simple majority of confessional alignment, and report back to Synod 2026” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613).

Synod also instructed “the Calvin University Board of Trustees to further define ‘indefinite exceptions’ to confessional subscription (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 156) and the reasons that these may be granted, and report back to Synod 2026” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613).

The board’s response to Synod 2026 follows:

The Board of Trustees reported to Synod 2025 that it would ensure “that the majority of trustees are convictionally aligned with synod’s confessional expectations while allowing for measured flexibility in trustee selection to maintain governance sustainability and effectiveness” (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 156). In that limited context, the word “majority” made that statement unclear; as stated elsewhere in the board’s special report to Synod 2025, trustees are required to affirm the three ecumenical creeds and subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity, thereby ensuring “not only alignment of conduct, but also alignment of conviction, with the distinctives of the Christian Reformed Church” (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 162).

Historically, like officebearers and in line with the Covenant for Officebearers, all trustees were permitted to submit a gravamen to express a difficulty with a confessional teaching. That is no longer the case. As already reported (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 164), the board requires unqualified convictional alignment for all Classis Region Trustees, and that is a majority of trustees (16 of 31). Whereas all trustees historically had access to the gravamen process, now only a minority (15 of 31) do; moreover, the preference of the board is to have all nonclassical trustees in full convictional alignment.

The board’s preference for nonclassical trustees to have convictional alignment could mean that no trustee has a confessional difficulty with some aspect of the Three Forms of Unity. Indeed, no trustee presented for appointment since Synod 2022 has expressed a confessional difficulty, and the vast majority of trustees are in full convictional alignment. The reason the board believes some flexibility is appropriate for nonclassical trustees has to do with the board’s fiduciary responsibilities related to mission, accreditation, financial sustainability, and academic integrity. In this way, the university is different from the local church: there may be skills and experiences needed of new trustees that warrant consideration of a candidate who has a settled conviction against an aspect of the Three Forms of Unity. Whether a

particular skill or experience is sufficiently in demand (i.e., not possessed by anyone else willing to serve) to grant an exception to the preference for full convictional alignment depends on the skill/experience, the composition of the board, and the nature of the confessional difficulty. Weighing a candidate's need for an exception to full convictional alignment is not a formulaic matter but one of prayerful discernment regarding the best interests of the university, including with reference to its partnership with the CRCNA.

The changes summarized above reflect that gravamina are less available than before and are likely to be rare. What remains unchanged is the "clear expectations of conduct aligned with full support for the CRCNA standards and synodical interpretations" (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 164) by all trustees (31 of 31).

Calvin University views full convictional alignment literally. A settled conviction against any confessional teaching is not allowed for classical trustees and would require the granting of a gravamen for nonclassical trustees, regardless of the teaching in question. Lord's Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism is no more or less confessional than, say, Lord's Day 26, or any article in the Canons of Dort.

In the rare event that a nonclassical trustee has a confessional difficulty with an aspect of the Three Forms of Unity, that difficulty must amount to more than a measure of discomfort or curiosity. It must be a disagreement that causes persistent serious doubt or a settled conviction against a teaching in the Three Forms of Unity ("Guidance on 'Affirming the Confessions,'" Oct. 1, 2025; network.crcna.org/topic/leadership/crcna-and-synod/guidance-affirming-confessions). To be accepted, if at all, a gravamen would need to be biblically and confessionally grounded, reflecting an uncompromising commitment to the Reformed Christian tradition (e.g., a trustee candidate who disagrees with the confessions about baptism might anchor such disagreement in biblical evidence supporting believer's baptism and demonstrate resonance with Reformed understandings of covenantal theology).

We believe our response above fulfills synod's requests.

Finally, we worked with the Office of General Secretary to develop a trustee nomination form that includes basic contact information, education and professional journey, skills and experience for board leadership and fiduciary governance, connections to Calvin University and its mission, faith journey and stated commitment to Jesus Christ, and a commitment to the creeds and confessional standards of the CRCNA.

III. State of the university

A. Enrollment growth

Building on 2024 trends (largest incoming class in a decade), Calvin sustained interest and visibility in 2025 as a top-tier teaching institution with diverse programs and global reach. Calvin's 3,600 diverse students bring

strong representation across North America, internationally, and among first-generation university students.

In fall 2025, Calvin welcomed over 1,000 new students to campus for the third year in a row, a significant milestone reflecting sustained momentum amid a challenging higher-education landscape.

Since 2020, Calvin has seen applications rise by 78 percent, admissions by over 65 percent, and enrollment increase by 35 percent—trends driven by recruitment strategies, new financial-aid offerings, expanded campus visits, and a growing global footprint.

B. Local and global engagement

In 2025, Calvin's School of Graduate and Continuing Studies carried on its mission to provide high-quality, accessible, Christ-centered education for adult learners—refining and expanding pathways for graduate students, undergraduate degree completers, and professionals. Key highlights included the following:

- **Wayfinder:** A free humanities-credit program that moved on campus to strengthen belonging and expanded to a second cohort on the Handlon Correctional Facility campus (Ionia, Mich.), serving adults who face barriers to higher education—including those who have not had access to programming while incarcerated.
- **Professional development:** Noncredit microcredentials on mission-aligned topics, including Mental Health Ambassadors (with nursing faculty) and Cultural Values in Ministry (alongside the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship).
- **Degree completion:** Two new pilot pathways designed for working adults—one class at a time, one evening on campus each week—with transfer-friendly policies and credit for prior learning increasing future appeal.
- **Graduate programs:** Strategic program changes, including the retirement of several programs, investing in promising programs, and launching the master of social work program. Calvin also transitioned from a vendor partnership for graduate recruitment, enrollment, and advising to supporting this work with internal resources.
- **Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI):** One hundred students across five cohorts at Handlon Correctional Facility working toward a dual major in human services (similar to social work) and faith and community leadership, with the seventh cohort graduating in May; a new \$6,000 scholarship was established for Michigan Department of Corrections employees and their children.
- **Grant for community efforts:** A three-year, \$500,000 grant to support virtue formation through learning alongside community partners, emphasizing virtues such as empathy, justice, patience, humility, and curiosity through programs including community-based nursing, Plaster Creek Stewards, and Wayfinder.

1. Global engagement and scholarship abroad

Calvin's global scholarship and partnerships extended their academic and missional reach worldwide. Faculty contributed to international conferences and publications across disciplines, including research related to water stewardship, community health, and cross-cultural worship practices. Key highlights included the following:

- **Umm al-Jimal Archaeological Partnership (Jordan):** Continued collaboration at an ancient site recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2024, including public lectures and ongoing digital documentation and community archaeology involving faculty and students.
- **International University Partnerships:** Ongoing memoranda of understanding with Christian universities in Indonesia, Honduras, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Korea, supporting faculty exchanges, joint research, and student opportunities.

2. Global alumni engagement and lifelong learning

Calvin's "Calvin on the Road" sesquicentennial program gathered alumni and friends at 35 events across 19 states, two Canadian provinces, and four additional countries during the 2025-2026 school year. The Calvin Academy for Lifelong Learning (CALL) offered 76 courses, with 1,050 members including alumni and over 300 community members.

3. Off-campus programs

Calvin offered semester programs in Washington, D.C.; Peru; the United Kingdom; Spain; France; and Hungary; along with January and summer courses in more than fifteen countries—faculty-led, faith-infused experiences that prepare students to be wise and responsible participants in God's diverse world.

4. Community Engagement

Plaster Creek Stewards continued restoration, education, and youth Green Team programming across the local watershed. The Service-Learning Center hosted StreetFest in fall and spring, connecting students with service and learning at dozens of local nonprofits; the program received recognition through the Fountain Hill Center's Friends and Champion Award in December 2025. The Service-Learning Center also expanded partnerships and led spring-break trips to Georgia, Illinois, and North Carolina.

C. Finances

Calvin continued disciplined resource management while advancing strategic priorities (academic innovation, student experience, facilities). Like many universities and colleges, Calvin navigated sector-wide financial challenges related to the higher-education enrollment cliff, changing legislation, market pressures, and more. The end of 2025 brought faculty reductions and program changes aimed at long-term sustainability and mission alignment.

Advancement updates

During FY2024-2025, Calvin received \$27.7 million in total dollars and raised \$31.7 million overall, including \$3.06 million in Annual Fund support. The Named Scholarship Program surpassed a \$3.5 million goal by securing \$4.6 million in gifts, creating 32 new scholarships. In total, \$5.7 million was awarded to students, with 1,515 students receiving 1,634 individual awards.

Through the Strengthening Our Path Forward campaign, Calvin is pursuing strategic growth that strengthens enrollment, deepens investment in Christian liberal-arts education, and extends its reach in the broader community—supporting projects such as the Commons Union, athletic enhancements, and new developments in the School of Health.

In 2025, Calvin also received several significant gifts supporting core priorities, including a \$20 million grant from the Lilly Endowment for the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s Shalom Worship initiative, private donor funding for the university’s Nutrition Lab, and a new donor gift of \$2.5 million in Aerospace Engineering supporting a named professorship, student research, program development, and lab/equipment enhancements.

IV. Student experience

A. Faith, worship, and church partnerships

Campus Ministries, led by Pastor Mary Hulst, continues to be a driving force of evangelism and discipleship at Calvin. Local church engagement remains central through the church fair, communion partnerships, ministry partners on staff, service-learning partnerships, and more.

Campus Ministries leads LOFT, chapels, retreats, and campus-wide Bible studies. In fall 2025 the team began hosting weekly cereal bar and sermon chats. Following Chapel Team auditions, Campus Ministries added eleven new student members, expanding student leadership in worship. A new Faculty/Staff Advent service emerged in response to faculty-staff interest. In addition, Campus Ministries developed a system to support organic, student-led worship groups alongside worship through the Campus Ministries office.

Upcoming priorities include supporting the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s “Psalms 150: A Conference Experience” (Feb. 2026), planning the 150th Worship Service (Mar. 29, 2026), and hosting Calvin’s annual Day of Prayer (Mar. 2026).

B. Student opportunities and achievements

The 2025 student experience was energized by Calvin’s sesquicentennial celebrations, including three major Celebration Weeks beginning with Homecoming and featuring music festivals, theater performances, and traditions such as Cokes & Clubs and Chaos Night—events that strengthened community and fostered belonging.

During UnLearn Week, Calvin hosted campus-wide forums and intentional conversations designed to challenge biases and promote biblical antiracism. Career development remained a priority through the Career Center's Career Connections programming, including employer meetups, skill-building workshops, and career fairs.

The Center for Counseling and Wellness continued individual and group therapy using a Stepped Care Model, offered a three-session workshop series for coping skills, and provided suicide prevention training each semester. Off-campus students could access a therapist-assisted online program at no cost. The wellness room and lightbox lending program remained popular.

Students achieved national distinction across disciplines, including top industry awards for advertising and design majors, exceptional CPA pass rates, above-average graduate school acceptance for pre-health students, and Calvin's Model UN team earning its first-ever "Best Delegation" award at a major Midwest conference. Students contributed meaningful research with public health and conservation implications, including identification of the longhorned tick in Michigan and discovery of rare mussel species in Plaster Creek. Three students were named Goldwater Scholars. Sustainability efforts included installing the largest on-campus solar project to date on the Facilities Building and partnering with the mayor of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to design a potential green revolving fund.

C. Scholarship

Calvin's faculty were honored across several fields in 2025, and Calvin continued to emphasize excellent undergraduate teaching, engineering strength (including a new aerospace concentration), and research recognition spanning the sciences and humanities. Faculty honors included recognition for nursing, engineering, philosophy, communication, and aerospace engineering.

D. Arts

The arts continued to flourish at Calvin in 2025. Highlights included fiction screenwriting in the Calvin Prison Initiative, leading to the production of three short films; the opening of the Spoelhof Student Gallery; a new visiting artist series in the Center Art Gallery; major music events including the Calvin Music Festival and Lessons & Carols; and a theater season featuring strong student participation and the return of musical theater as part of the 150th-anniversary celebration.

E. Athletics

Calvin University athletics experienced exceptional success across men's and women's sports in 2025, including conference championships, NCAA tournament appearances, and top performances in basketball, soccer, volleyball, football, and track and field. Calvin earned the 2024-2025 MIAA Women's All-Sports Award for the tenth time and placed second overall in

the Commissioner's Cup standings. Calvin's holistic development of student-athletes—national finishes, strong team GPAs, and Christian formation—remained a distinctive hallmark.

V. Board Matters

A. Board officers

Board officers for the 2025-2026 year are Perrin Rynders, chair; Carolyn Van Allen, vice chair; Gene Miyamoto, secretary; Dirk Pruis, finance.

B. Board membership

1. Nominations

The nominations for new trustees and requests for reappointments to a second term will be presented in the Agenda Supplement.

2. New trustees

At its October 2025 meeting, the Calvin University Board of Trustees welcomed three new trustees confirmed by Synod 2025: Craig Lubben, Leslie Vande Griend, and Cathy Van Donselaar (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 719-20). In addition, the COD affirmed the board's interim appointment of Nancy Schoonmaker to fill a vacant position beginning in fall 2025, in keeping with the relevant provision of Calvin University's bylaws (*Deferred Agenda for Synods 2020-2021*, pp. 290-93, 337; *Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 841). A recommendation that she serve a full term will appear in the Agenda Supplement.

VI. Recommendation

That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the president, Greg Elzinga, and to the chair of the board, Perrin Rynders, when matters pertaining to education are discussed.

Calvin University
Greg Elzinga, president

Canadian Ministries

I. Introduction

The CRCNA's Canadian ministry office provides a variety of services to help churches carry out their work. The ministry office provides administrative services as well as office space for various staff members who work in Canada for the CRCNA's binational agencies and support ministries. The ministry office is also home to the Centre for Public Dialogue, Indigenous Ministry, and Intercultural Ministry, which help churches in Canada to live out God's call for justice, reconciliation, and belonging.

II. Canadian Administrative Services

The Canadian ministry office provides churches with practical resources and support to help them thrive in ministry and administration. Some examples include helping churches understand and support ministry shares, educational content on capital campaigns, benefits administration for pastors and church staff, administration for the Bridge App, management of the preauthorized remittance program, and regular consulting on church finance, administration, and human resources matters. These tools help churches operate smoothly.

The Bridge App continues to be a valuable resource for Canadian CRCs and their members, with over 130 churches and 14,000 registered users. The Bridge App is also noteworthy for helping churches process over \$18 million (CDN) per year in donations.

Through these services and resources, the CRC's Canadian ministry office aims to equip churches with information, tools, and support to strengthen their work and to help empower them in serving their communities effectively.

III. Centre for Public Dialogue

Cindy Stover, justice mobilization program manager

A. Introduction

The Centre for Public Dialogue (CPD) is supported by three staff positions: the senior leader, the justice mobilization program manager, and the Canada communications coordinator. The CPD is also advised and supported by the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), made up of representatives from alternating classes across Canada. The CPD promotes a positive voice of Christian faith in Canadian public life that seeks justice, hope, and reconciliation, in political dialogue and active citizenship.

B. Our Journey milestones (Ministry Plan)

1. **Prayer and spiritual practices:** Workshops and resources on practicing justice and advocacy as spiritual disciplines have been promoted to churches across the country. *Do Justice* provides weekly prayers and twice-weekly blogs from diverse voices, and updated worship resources are made available via the website and the Network.

2. **Every generation:** Staff intentionally engage with multigenerational audiences. Workshops and programming are developed specifically for youth, and the justice mobilizer regularly visits youth groups, campus ministries, and Redeemer University and The King's University.
3. **Unity and diversity:** Resources are developed from an intersectional lens, and advocacy actions are developed based on prioritization of the voices of those with lived experience. The Centre for Public Dialogue is also mutually accountable to Intercultural Ministry and Indigenous Ministry, and their teams speak directly into our advocacy and educational work.
4. **Share the gospel:** Education and action based in biblical justice are truly good news to the people we advocate alongside, creating communities of shalom where all can flourish in this world that belongs to God.

C. Collaboration

The Centre for Public Dialogue works hand-in-hand with Indigenous Ministry and Intercultural Ministry, collaborating as well with Thrive and World Renew Canada in the areas of climate and refugee justice. We collaborate on justice education with Diaconal Ministries Canada, and we are a member organization of KAIROS Canada, the Canadian Council of Churches, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. We also have close relationships and share resources with Citizens for Public Justice and For the Love of Creation.

1. Direction and priorities moving forward:
 - a. **Listening sessions** occurred in 2025 to gather data on the historical assets of CPD/CCG in order to develop renewed vision for the future. The data has been compiled and will be processed to reinvigorate CPD/CCG in this changing political world.
 - 1) Legislative analysis and advocacy action continue in the areas of climate justice, refugee justice, Indigenous rights, and medical assistance in dying.
 - 2) A justice educational series is planned for 2026 with Thrive and World Renew.
 - b. **Prayer requests:** For gracious engagement in an increasingly polarized world; for just government policy to be enacted that will bring shalom for all people in our communities, especially those who are most vulnerable; for true repentance and a desire for reconciliation where harm has occurred; and for God's healing to repair relationships.

IV. Indigenous Ministry

Adrian Jacobs, senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation

A. Introduction

Indigenous Ministry (IM) consists of a senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation and supporting staff: the justice mobilizer program manager and the Canada communications coordinator. The Canadian Indigenous Ministries Committee (CIMC) includes CRCNA and at-large members

from across Canada who are Indigenous and not Indigenous; it also includes the Urban Indigenous Ministries: the Indigenous Family Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Indigenous Christian Fellowship in Regina, Saskatchewan; and the Edmonton Native Healing Centre in Edmonton, Alberta.

The CRC in Canada responds to the Survivors' Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action to the churches in Canada to educate themselves on the history of colonization, Indian Residential Schools, and its ongoing impact. The Kairos Blanket Exercise, Hearts Exchanged, and On-the-Land Learning events deliver impactful education.

B. Our Journey milestones (Ministry Plan)

1. **Prayer and spiritual practices:** Indigenous ministry resources include liturgies and prayers with a focus on Indigenous Ministry Sunday/National Indigenous Peoples Day in June and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.
2. **Every generation:** Indigenous elders, CRC parents, and youth engage in the Kairos Blanket Exercise, Hearts Exchanged, and On-the-Land Learning.
3. **Unity and diversity:** The senior leader fosters engagement with local Indigenous communities in CRC churches, Christian schools, and community groups.
4. **Share the gospel:** The gospel of Jesus features clearly in the educational work and publications of Indigenous Ministry.

C. Collaboration

CIMC and the senior leader collaborate in the CRCNA Canadian Justice Ministries and with Diaconal Ministries Canada. We continue to work with CRC churches and CRC-related ministries. We do presentations in Christian schools, collaborate in ecumenical settings, and contribute to non-church entities with our Indigenous education.

1. **Organizational summary:** We have very skilled and educated CIMC members who volunteer in shaping Indigenous Ministry resources. The directors of the Urban Indigenous Ministries, including the new director of Indigenous Christian Fellowship, are valuable contributors.
2. **Prayer requests:** For increasing impact in On-the-Land Learning initiatives that connect CRC church members to their local Indigenous community for practical reconciliation; and for effective CIMC communications on Indigenous Ministry to their home churches and classes.

V. Intercultural Ministry

Jeremiah Bašurić and Sebastian Maldonado, senior coleaders of intercultural ministry

A. Introduction

Intercultural Ministry consists of two senior coleaders and supporting staff: the justice mobilizer program manager and the Canada communications coordinator. The Intercultural Ministry Collective (IMC) includes CRCNA

members from across Canada. The CRC's Intercultural Ministry in Canada seeks to form a holistic and reforming body of Christ where people from diverse ethnocultural and racial backgrounds experience belonging, unity, and flourishing through intercultural engagement.

B. Our Journey milestones (Ministry Plan)

In the past year Intercultural Ministry has focused on walking alongside churches as they move from conversation to practice in intercultural ministry. This includes leading intercultural cohorts, developing an intercultural adaptation of Hearts Exchanged, and providing direct support to churches across Canada.

1. **Prayer and spiritual practices:** The Intercultural Cohort centered on prayer and worship as lived intercultural practices. Churches gathered regularly to reflect on their journeys, seeing worship as a shared spiritual practice that forms hospitable and inclusive communities.
2. **Every generation:** The cohort model created space for leaders and members across generations to listen, learn, and reflect together, helping to shape a space that speaks across generations and cultures.
3. **Unity and diversity:** Churches grew in confidence as they engaged with questions of diversity, hospitality, and inclusion in worship, leadership, and community life. We supported these communities through workshops, conversations, and shared resources.
4. **Share the gospel:** Through our intercultural initiatives, churches moved from conversation toward practice, learning how intercultural ministry strengthens their witness in local contexts. This equipped them to build relationships and share the gospel with humility and care.

C. Direction and priorities moving forward

We will continue helping churches connect intercultural ministry with their mission and witness by supporting them as they live out the gospel through welcome, hospitality, and relationship-building in their neighborhoods and communities. This includes ongoing support for churches outside formal cohorts while inviting them into deeper, sustained engagement. Completing and piloting the intercultural adaptation of Hearts Exchanged and continuing to offer cohort-like spaces remains a key priority, with continued emphasis on unity, lived experience, cultural awareness, and intercultural worship practices.

VI. Finance

All activities were completed within the approved ministry budget. Cohort-related activities were supported through a grant provided by Thrive.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

I. Introduction

The CRC Loan Fund empowers churches to grow by providing low-interest loans for capital improvements. Loans are funded through equity, donations, and investment certificates, which are currently offered in 23 states. Operational costs are covered by loan-interest revenue, and any surplus is reinvested to maintain lower loan rates for our borrowers.

II. Financial operations

(Note: The Loan Fund operates only in the United States, so all figures are in U.S. dollars.)

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025:

<i>Statement of Activities</i>		<i>Certificate Activity</i>	
Revenues	\$741,419	Issued	\$1,308,965
Expenses	<u>611,783</u>	Redeemed or disbursed	\$2,096,305
Change in Net Assets	\$129,636	Renewed	\$1,329,486

Loan Fund Financial Information Reflecting Operational Trends

Assets	2025	2024	2023
Cash and equivalents	\$ 5,022,493	5,696,748	7,481,890
Loans Receivable	10,160,301	10,014,323	10,013,377
Total Assets	15,237,323	15,711,071	17,495,267
Liabilities			
Certificates and interest payable	\$ 8,827,696	9,465,733	11,544,800
Other Liabilities	34,653		
Total Liabilities	<u>8,862,349</u>	<u>9,465,733</u>	<u>11,544,800</u>
Net assets	6,374,974	6,245,338	5,950,467

Despite fluctuations in lending and investments, the Loan Fund remained financially strong in FY 2025, with steady growth in net assets and continued support for churches.

- **Loans:** Lending volume has varied over the past three years. In FY 2025, we closed two loans totaling \$1.26 million (MI; WA), compared to one loan of \$767,000 (MI) in FY 2024 and four loans totaling \$2.75 million in FY 2023 (AZ; CO; FL; MI).
- **Investments:** We raised our investment certificate rates in FY 2025, and the decline in investments has slowed. Certificates decreased by \$550,000 (from \$9.38 million to \$8.83 million)—a much smaller decline than FY 2024's \$2.12 million drop (from \$11.50 million to \$9.38 million).

- **Assets:** Total assets were \$15.2 million in FY 2025, down slightly from \$15.7 million in FY 2024, reflecting fewer loan originations and early paydowns. Net assets, however, grew from \$6.25 million in FY 2024 to \$6.37 million in FY 2025.

The Loan Fund maintains a loss reserve, with minimal losses over its more than 40 year history and zero in the past decade. Our audited financial statements as of June 30, 2025, can be found in the back of the Offering Circular available at crcna.org/LoanFund/investment-certificates.

III. Highlights

Over the past year we have focused on rebuilding our lending activity because the Loan Fund's portfolio has declined by nearly half over the past decade—from \$18.5 million in 2016 to \$10.22 million in 2025. To remain financially strong and mission-effective, we launched two key initiatives: (1) the First Church Building Loan Program and (2) expanded lending to CRCNA-related organizations. We are also in the process of developing a third initiative—a planned-giving program.

A. The First Church Building Loan Program

This program supports newer congregations seeking to purchase their first church home, an increasingly difficult step due to rising property and construction costs. Organized CRC congregations without a church building may obtain a secured loan at 1.5 percent below the Loan Fund's current rate.

This initiative is significant for the following reasons:

- It catalyzes growth by providing important early-stage funding for churches seeking a permanent location. The loan is visible institutional support that builds credibility and can unlock additional resources like grants and donations.
- It advances CRCNA *Our Journey* milestones: *sharing the gospel* through planting and strengthening churches; and *growth in unity and diversity* by supporting a method whereby established Dutch-ethnic congregations can come alongside younger ethnic-minority churches and offer support by investing in or giving to the program.
- It builds on denominational community identity, drawing on the shared financial and relationship strength of the CRC community to foster sustainable, long-term ministry growth.

B. Expanded lending to CRCNA-related organizations

Under its founding documents, the Loan Fund was limited to lending to CRC churches. Lending to Christian schools and nonchurch ministries was explicitly excluded (clarified by Synod 1985). Loan demand has dropped significantly over the past decade, and church-related projects now often involve partnerships or require more capital than the Loan Fund's \$1.5-million limit.

At Synod 2025, through a supplemental report, the Loan Fund requested authorization for the COD to review and approve an amendment to its Articles of Incorporation, with final ratification by Synod 2026.

In October, the COD approved (contingent on synod's ratification), an amendment to the Loan Fund's Articles of Incorporation, expanding lending eligibility to CRCNA-related organizations. The amendment has been adopted by the Loan Fund board, and we are promoting the opportunity; however, consistent with the COD's directive, we will not close any loans under the new authority before Synod 2026 ratifies the change.

Amended Purpose Statement (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund is organized exclusive-~~ly~~solely for the benefit of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), including~~and~~ its affiliated member~~member~~ churches, and boards, and agencies, as well as other organizations related to or connected with the CRCNA, such as schools. The ~~its~~ purposes of the corporation include, without limitation, providing financial assistance for acting for the benefit of, and assisting in the financing of capital improvements and other qualified purposes undertaken by such affiliated or related entities. In furtherance of its purposes, the corporation is authorized to for organized churches in such denomination and for churches organized and supported by the Board of Home Missions of such denomination; and further, shall include, without limitation, borrowing funds from, and to issue securities or other evidences of indebtedness to, financial institutions, individuals, churches, schools, agencies, and other entities that organizations created to support the mission of the CRCNA. ~~purposes of such denomination; and further shall include, without limitation, issuing securities and other evidences of indebtedness in order to acquire funds in furtherance of the corporation's purposes.~~

The Loan Fund now seeks synod's ratification of the amended Articles of Incorporation, enabling it to support a broader range of CRCNA-connected ministries and to strengthen the Loan Fund's financial capacity.

C. Planned-giving program

The Loan Fund has kicked off the process of developing a planned-giving program. Its investor population is aging, and our overall investment portfolio is on the decline. Establishing a planned-giving program will allow long-term investors to leave a legacy for future churches, providing the Loan Fund with the equity to offer lower loan rates, which could support the next generation of churches to establish permanency in their community.

IV. Staff and board matters

The Loan Fund is staffed by Layla Kuhl, director, and Alice Damsteegt, program coordinator. In the past year, the Loan Fund board participated in the

review of rubrics for considering nominations of board members (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76); the approved document can be found in the Agenda Supplement. The Loan Fund board is also requesting the reappointment of two members to additional terms.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Loan Fund director, Layla Kuhl, or board members, if present, when discussing matters related to the Loan Fund.

B. That synod ratify the amendment to the CRC Loan Fund's Articles of Incorporation.

C. That synod, by way of the ballot, reappoint Dale Burghgraef and Wayne Postma to subsequent terms on the Loan Fund board as indicated in the Agenda Supplement.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
Layla Kuhl, director

Pensions and Insurance

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

CEB Services is the third-party administrator for the Ministers Pension Plan and the denominational 403(b)(9) Retirement Plan.

The Pension Fund was established in its current form by Synod 1939, with significant revisions to the plan adopted in 1969 (*Acts of Synod 1939*, pp. 21-22; *Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 46-48) and later synods as well. The fund operates under a mandate to “maintain a Pension Fund and a Relief Fund from which emeritated ministers, widows, and orphans of ministers shall receive aid” in accordance with synodical regulations. This is in keeping with the expectation that the churches “provide honorably” for the support of retired ministers and qualifying dependents (Church Order, Art. 18-b; see *Agenda for Synod 1939*, Part II, p. 94).

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

The Ministers Pension Plan and the benefit insurance provisions of the CRCNA are an extension of our commitment to Servant Leadership, in which we aim to equip leaders so that they can be prepared in their roles of growing and developing the CRCNA’s churches and ministries. We acknowledge that taking care of those who serve the CRCNA, by making provisions for their health and well-being and by providing a foundation for their retirement needs, allows them to focus their efforts on the callings entrusted to them.

III. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey* (Ministry Plan)

Although the pension and benefits programs are not directly tied to our Ministry Plan, they take into account the diverse needs of our employees and their dependents, recognizing that caring for one is part of caring for the whole. The plans described here are practical and tangible services and benefits offered on behalf of CRCNA pastors and staff.

IV. Board matters

The CRCNA ministers pension plans, special-assistance funds, and 403(b)(9) plans are governed by the U.S. Pension Trustees and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint sessions. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed. U.S. Pension Trustees for 2025-2026 are Lloyd Bierma, Luke Kloosterman, Darrel Raih, Drew Sweetman (chair), and Alan Van Dyke. Canadian Pension Trustees for 2025-2026 are Janet Baird, Daryl DeKlerk (chair), Hessel Kielstra, Jack Vanden Pol, and Dick Vreugdenhil.

Lloyd Bierma will be concluding service on the U.S. Pension Trustees board June 30, 2026. A nominee will be presented in the Agenda Supplement.

In keeping with the instruction of synod (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76), the pension trustee boards reviewed their rubrics for board membership and forwarded the information to the Office of General Secretary.

V. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers pension plans

The ministers pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined by formula, and the required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The primary features of the plans include four benefit groups, as follows:

- Retirement benefits commencing at age 66, or early retirement benefits in a reduced amount beginning at age 55.
- Long-term disability benefits provided through an insurance company (to all full-time, active participants who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the insurance carrier).
- Survivors' benefits paid to a surviving spouse if death of a participant occurs while in active service.
- Orphans' benefits paid to a participant's orphaned children up to age 18, or to age 21 if in school.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2025, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column where they have residence.

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>Total</i>
Active ministers	561	227	788
Ministers receiving benefit payments	671	171	842
Spouses and dependents	180	56	236
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	<u>142</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>186</u>
Total	1,554	498	2,052

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. Both plans require a valuation every three years. The valuation dated December 31, 2025, is under way and will be summarized in the Pensions and Insurance Supplement to the agenda for synod. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination's investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans’ actuaries have informed us that as of the date of the plans’ last valuation (scheduled at a minimum of every three years), on a going concern basis, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$139.1 million for the U.S. plan (as of Dec. 31, 2022) and approximately \$53.8 million for the Canadian plan (as of Dec. 31, 2022). These amounts reflect the present value of the plans’ future obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents. The valuation data for December 31, 2025, will be included in the Pensions and Insurance Supplement to the agenda for synod.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	<i>December 31, 2025</i>	<i>December 31, 2024</i>
United States (U.S. \$)	\$132,086,038	\$125,556,000
Canada (Can. \$)	98,186,885	93,586,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans’ holdings along with contributions to the plans provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans’ obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While the basic defined-benefit form of the plan has not been altered, changes were made to benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

Synod 2024 affirmed that the pension plans were created with values that have shaped and guided them (1) to enable ministers to serve in Canada and U.S. while maintaining consistent retirement benefits; (2) to mitigate the impact of serving a smaller congregation; and (3) to honor the covenant of the denomination to care for pastors with long-term disability protection and life insurance (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 811). With that in mind, the pension trustees are exploring broader retirement benefit options that may include a blend of defined contribution plans along with the defined benefit plan(s). The trustees are in the process of exploration and research, with the assistance of plan consultants to develop recommendations. This will include discussion and input from U.S. and Canadian pastors, including bivocational and recently ordained pastors. In addition, the trustees are working on providing more information and education to pastors and churches about the current defined-benefit pension plan and the defined-contribution plan that are available to them, as well as about the importance of building retirement savings through these plans. These tasks are currently in process, and the trustees intend to have recommendations for submission to Synod 2026.

3. Funding

All organized churches are plan sponsors and thus are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor's participation in the plan. The amount of the assessment for 2026 will be added to the supplemental agenda for synod. The current assessment rate is \$37.20 per member in both Canada and the United States, and direct costs are set at \$7,704 for both countries. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

B. Employees' retirement plans

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. In the United States, contributions are paid into the two available defined-contribution plans by participating denominational agencies and ministries in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount.

In Canada, contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada, there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In these defined-contribution plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal or provincial regulation. Participants receive periodic statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by Empower Retirement and Envoy Financial, while Great-West Trust serves as custodian of the plan's assets. For Canadian participants, Sun Life Financial Group manages and serves as custodian of the plan's assets.

As of December 31, 2025, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$47,437,400 in the United States and \$6,665,554 in Canada. As of that date,

there were 325 participants in the U.S. plans and 118 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	<i>United States</i>	<i>Canada</i>
Active	190	100
Inactive	135	18

C. Nonretirement employee benefit programs

There has been some lack of clarity and some tension in the management of nonretirement employee benefit programs, since, over the past few years, the Canadian and U.S. ministry offices have come to recognize that they have fiduciary responsibilities as direct employers. Benefits-program reporting falls within operational reporting to the respective ministry boards.

Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 311 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 214 pastors and employees of local churches, 97 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and no retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider and is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs.

In the United States, the denomination offers health, dental, and life coverage to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 321 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 121 pastors and employees of local churches, 111 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 89 retirees. The plans are provided by the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) through a trust established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. RBA was established by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the Board of Benefit Services of the Reformed Church in America to provide nonretirement benefit programs for both denominations.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are set by RBA based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

Due to the lack of clarity concerning the management of the insurance programs in our current binational structures, the pension trustees are evaluating whether it is still appropriate to include RBA and CGI under their official mandate, as is currently the case (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 668). Further updates will be provided in the Pensions and Insurance Supplement.

D. Financial disclosures

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party (see crcna.org/welcome/governance/financial-statements). In addition, summary financial statements are

included in the *Agenda for Synod* each year (as an appendix to the Council of Delegates report). Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers pension plans and the employees' retirement plans.

E. Addition of pastors in churches newly affiliating with the CRCNA

Recent conversations with a number of pastors and churches exiting the Reformed Church in America and considering membership in the CRCNA have included inquiries about fitting together the pensions of pastors in such a transition. The RCA has worked with a defined-contribution pension system, which is fundamentally different from the CRCNA's defined-benefit pension plans. Careful assessments are being made to equitably and wisely incorporate the pension needs of pastors who may decide to enter the CRCNA.

VI. Oversight of retirement plans for unordained CRC employees

In 1951, in response to requests from the CRC's Board of World Missions, synod created a retirement program for unordained missions employees, a program later expanded to include all employees of CRCNA agencies (*Acts of Synod 1951*, pp. 69, 308-15; *Acts of Synod 1964*, pp. 21, 184-87). For many years this retirement program was overseen by its own committee, and that responsibility was transferred to the Ministers Pension Committee in 1992 (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 685). Although functional management of these plans has largely been taken over by the CRCNA's Human Resources staff in Canada and the United States, both plans formally report to the Pension Fund boards today. As provisions for retirement benefits have become an expected part of standard employment practices, it makes sense to restructure the oversight of these benefits plans so that the pension fund boards no longer have this responsibility.

The preferred structure is for the U.S. Employee Savings Plan (ESP) to serve the U.S. CRCNA (including ReFrame Ministries) employees and for the Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) in Canada to serve the employees in Canada. World Renew employees' participation would be determined in consultation with the respective national boards of that organization. These changes would allow the plan better to reflect the CRCNA's workforce needs, compensation strategy, and benefits philosophy.

Restructuring the ESP and the RRSP under CRCNA governance will improve fiduciary alignment, enhance employee outcomes, and provide greater flexibility to manage and evolve the plan in support of the CRCNA's mission and workforce.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees, the U.S. Pension Trustees, the director of partnership administration, and the executive director of CEB Services when insurance matters and matters pertaining to insurance and retirement plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2026 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1), but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod, by consenting to this report, will have designated up to 100 percent of an ordained pastor's distributions from their CRC 403(b)(9) Retirement Income Plan in 2026 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1), but only to the extent that those funds are used to rent or provide a home.

D. That synod transfer oversight and administration of the retirement plans for unordained employees to the respective national ministry organizations, and authorize the Office of General Secretary to make any necessary changes to the regulations of the Ministers Pension Plan mandates to implement these decisions.

Grounds:

1. Pension boards are primarily structured to oversee defined-benefit plans, not participant-directed defined-contribution plans such as the U.S. Employee Savings Plan and the Registered Retirement Savings Plan in Canada. The current structure has limited the CRCNA's ability to implement plan improvements and adapt to employee needs.
2. Transitioning governance to the national ministry organizations would allow for more timely plan enhancements, stronger fiduciary oversight, and improved alignment with regulatory requirements.
3. This change would bring our accountability structures into formal alignment with our current practices and eliminate confusion about reporting and authorization of changes to the retirement programs.
4. This request recognizes synod's previous decisions regarding retirement plans for unordained employees of the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 1951*, p. 69; *Acts of Synod 1964*, p. 21; *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 685).

E. That synod by way of the ballot appoint one new member to a three-year term on the U.S. Pension Trustees beginning July 1, 2026.

F. That synod thank Lloyd Bierma for his time of dedicated service with the Ministers Pension Plan.

Pensions and Insurance
Roberta Vriesema, director of partnership administration

ReFrame Ministries

I. Introduction — mission and mandate

ReFrame Ministries serves as the worldwide media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. What began in 1939 as a single English-language radio program, *The Back to God Hour*, has grown into a global media ministry serving people and communities across cultures and continents.

Today our vision is that the lives and worldviews of *all people around the globe* will be transformed by God's gospel message. Relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ReFrame creates contextual media resources that proclaim the gospel, disciple believers, and strengthen the church globally.

This work takes place through four core ministry commitments:

- Church-rooted: We believe the Holy Spirit works through the church, so we partner with churches to build and strengthen the body of Christ.
- Major languages: We strive to reach the widest possible audience, so we create content in the world's most spoken languages.
- Context-driven: We work with local partners who faithfully contextualize the gospel message and use the most effective media channels connecting with diverse audiences.
- Relationship-focused: Following the example of Christ, we seek to build long-term, discipling relationships with individual members of our mass audiences.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

ReFrame Ministries' work is guided by the Great Commission (Matthew 28) and aligns with the CRCNA's fivefold calling. Through global media mission, faith formation, servant leadership, mercy and justice action, and gospel proclamation, ReFrame seeks to work alongside churches and ministries worldwide in faithful witness to Christ.

A. Global mission

ReFrame ministers in nine major world languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish. We also have special translation projects in Korean and Urdu, as well as support for a women's program in war-torn Ukraine.

ReFrame uses popular forms of communication to share the gospel globally, reaching countries where traditional Christian missions often face restrictions. Through radio, print, TV, the internet, mobile apps, and social media, we bring the message of Christ to people without access to a faith community. As people worldwide share their experiences of encountering Jesus for the first time through ReFrame's media resources, it's clear that God is working through the CRCNA and ReFrame's international partners.

1. ReFrame works with about 170 indigenous staff members and more than 400 volunteers around the world. Through its partnerships, ReFrame has a ministry presence in over 50 countries through production and discipleship centers, broadcast locations, and resource distribution. ReFrame and its partners reach people in nearly every country through the internet and mobile applications.
2. ReFrame's international partnership ministry teams have developed 20 ministry websites in nine languages, supported by 73 social-media pages. ReFrame and its partners produce 47 audio programs, about half of which are aired on the radio, and 49 TV/video programs.
3. Together with our partners, we distribute nearly 2 million printed devotional booklets annually in six languages. In general, the number of printed daily devotions has decreased because we can reach more people in more places digitally via email, Facebook, and smartphone apps. We send more than 400,000 devotional emails daily.

B. Faith formation on the global mission field

ReFrame provides faith-formation resources in English, primarily for North American audiences, and supports culturally relevant discipleship resources across its international language ministries.

In all of our language ministries, faith formation resources are produced and distributed in print and digital formats, including devotional resources, audio programs, video content, and interactive online resources. These materials offer daily encouragement to believers through Scripture and provide accessible entry points for seekers exploring the Christian faith.

Audio and video programs apply God's Word to everyday life, offering biblical and Reformed perspectives on cultural and spiritual questions within local contexts. In times of crisis and uncertainty these programs also provide pastoral care, encouragement, and connection. These programs range from daily, two-minute devotional reflections to hour-long church services for people who can only attend remotely. Regardless of length, each video program offers the hope of God's truth in an easily accessible format. Most of these programs are available on social-media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube.

C. Servant leadership on the global mission field

ReFrame Ministries is blessed to work with indigenous ministry leaders gifted in ministry and media. These leaders and their teams provide culturally relevant outreach in their respective languages and cultural settings.

International ministry leaders include Rev. Youssef Adel Hanna (Arabic); Pastor Jerry An (Chinese); Justin Sterenberg (English); Rev. Marc Nabie (French); Rev. Arliyanus Larosa (Indonesian); Rev. Masao Yamashita (Japanese); Rev. Hernandez Dias Lopes (Portuguese); Rev. Huascar de la Cruz (Spanish); and a Hindi ministry leader whose name is withheld for security reasons.

We praise God for these leaders and their various partnerships with on-the-ground media-ministry workers, denominations, and organizations.

Language-ministry leaders guide teams that serve not only as content creators but also as pastors, teachers, and mentors. In many contexts this leadership includes equipping volunteers, supporting church leaders, and walking with individuals seeking faith or growing as disciples through ReFrame's media outreach.

Examples of training initiatives include the following:

1. French ministry leader Rev. Marc Nabie hosted Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) events in several West African nations.
2. ReFrame's Hindi (India) and Arabic (Egypt) ministry partners provided training and curriculum for vacation Bible school and Sunday school teachers.
3. Rev. Hernandez Dias Lopes leads online courses for church leaders and pastors in Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking countries.
4. Pastor Jerry An facilitates and leads events for Chinese church leaders in Asia and North America, promoting media for sharing the gospel.

D. Loving mercy and doing justice on the global mission field

While the mission of ReFrame is primarily global media missions, ministry teams and partners have opportunities to provide comfort and assistance to people who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and disadvantaged. Many programs that ReFrame and its partners produce include messages of hope for people living in challenging circumstances—questioning their beliefs where it could be dangerous to do so, living in physical poverty, or suffering from sickness. In these ways we also address social-justice issues through our various programs in several languages.

1. Rev. Arliyanus Larosa and his team coordinate a program that gifts goats to families in need. When bred, the goats provide income opportunities by producing milk and meat.
2. ReFrame's Hindi ministry produces content for people who struggle to earn income. Leaders share the gospel while providing sewing machines and training to women.

E. Gospel proclamation and worship

ReFrame's core mission is proclamation using various media to share the gospel in nine major world languages. ReFrame continually seeks culturally relevant and effective ways to proclaim the gospel and call people into a relationship with God.

1. We have increasingly moved to a partnership model with local denominations and organizations in our international ministries. This provides greater opportunity for local ownership and sustainability. In Brazil, for example, we partner closely with congregations in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil to distribute biblical content for church members and

the communities they serve in missions, including communities as far as Angola, in southern Africa.

2. As the world moves toward using less paper than in the past for publications, ReFrame expands the CRC's use of digital outreach for sharing the gospel: developing new apps, growing email and social-media audiences, and sharing almost all content online, even if it's also available offline.

III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey*

ReFrame offers a variety of programs and resources to help congregations and individuals work toward the milestones named in our denominational ministry plan, *Our Journey*.

A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

1. Our English-language ministry team has grown a network of more than 7,000 prayer partners in North America and globally who pray for people who respond to our media-outreach programs.
2. Our *Today* devotions, produced since 1950, are available in print, at TodayDevotional.com, by email subscription, on podcast websites, and through mobile applications. We print and distribute about 210,000 *Today* booklets six times annually, and more than 350,000 people receive *Today* emails. In addition, about 75,000 people use the *Today* devotional app on their mobile devices.
3. *Groundwork* is a 30-minute audio program and podcast that builds biblical foundations for life. *Groundwork* guides listeners in casual but thoughtful conversations about practical applications of God's Word in today's world.

B. Listening to the voices of every generation

1. *Kids Corner* is a program reaching children ages 6-12. This program has transitioned from a single audio program to a growing assortment of online resources for children's spiritual growth across North America. *Kids Corner* launched a new app in 2025, making these new features available with an accompanying parent-friendly blog.
2. People of all ages respond to messages in our *Today* devotions. A class of high school students responds to a new set of devotions each year by taking photos and writing reflections on the topic presented that month. Students read the devotions, look for daily reminders of the message content, and take photos of those things.

C. Growing in diversity and unity as we build relationships

1. ReFrame's global outreach is strengthened through crucial networks of North American and international partners. Strong collaborations create effective partnerships for mission, allowing resources to be invested wisely. In addition to our ministries within the CRCNA, ReFrame works cooperatively with the following Reformed denominations worldwide:

- North America (Words of Hope, affiliated with the Reformed Church in America)
- Japan (Reformed Church in Japan)
- Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil)
- Mexico (National Presbyterian Church in Mexico)
- Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church)
- Egypt (Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Egypt, Synod of the Nile)

In addition, we partner with evangelical congregations in Eastern Europe, Africa, India, and surrounding countries, as well as with house churches and Christian ministries in China.

2. In partnership with the CRC's Korean Council since 2008, ReFrame has published a bilingual Korean-English version of the *Today* devotions.
3. ReFrame continues to broaden the reach of Faith Alive's *Seeking God's Face* devotional book. After launching an English-language website with the devotional content in 2021, ReFrame's Chinese, Arabic, and French ministry partners have also translated the content for their audiences.

D. Sharing the gospel, living it missionally, and planting new churches as we connect with our local and global ministry contexts

1. ReFrame's English-language ministry produces ebooks as downloadable PDFs. Topics from the most recent resources include "Focus on the Cross" (a Lenten devotional from *Today*), "Waiting in Expectation" (an Advent devotional from *Today*), "Revelation: A Comfort for Believers" (*Groundwork*), "How Do I Pray?" two volumes (ReFrame's Prayer Ministry), and "Faith Practices for Families," four volumes (*Kids Corner*).
2. ReFrame's Japanese ministry partners offer videos to churches that are part of the Reformed Church in Japan. These videos help introduce the church to prospective visitors and local seekers and offer a glimpse of what a Sunday is like in a typical church. In this way, ReFrame helps to grow the global church in Japan using media resources.
3. ReFrame's Hindi ministry team supports the work of church planters in northern India. The team hosts radio-program listener gatherings and offers resources to communities of believers. These gatherings often take place in house churches that eventually become church plants.

IV. Recommendation

That synod grant the director of ReFrame Ministries, Kurt Selles, and the director of administration for ReFrame Ministries, Nellie Kooistra, the privilege of the floor when matters about ReFrame Ministries are addressed.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

ReFrame Ministries,
Kurt Selles, director

Resonate Global Mission

I. Introduction

Resonate Global Mission is your Christian Reformed mission agency. We exist because the Christian Reformed Church has discerned—through synod—that mission is essential to the life of the church and that this work is best carried out together. Resonate is meant to be the church's preferred partner on mission: trusted, accountable, and deeply connected to congregations and classes as we join God's work locally, globally, and through the planting of new churches.

Over the past year we have invested much in rebuilding and strengthening relationships across the denomination. We have shown up in classes, congregations, and conversations with listening ears, a prayerful presence, and a renewed commitment to walk alongside churches wherever they find themselves. This posture reflects a deep conviction that mission belongs first to the church. Resonate's role is to support, connect, and equip God's people as they discern their next faithful steps.

Through the work of Resonate and our partners around the world, God is writing a bigger story and inviting the Christian Reformed Church to step into it. We continue to see signs of God's work: new churches taking root, leaders being trained across cultures, young adults encountering Christ, and congregations rediscovering their calling to live and share the gospel. At the same time, we share honestly that this season has required hard decisions. Over the past year Resonate has taken decisive steps to address financial realities, including reducing expenses, and has reached a place of greater stability. For that we are deeply grateful.

As a denomination, you have asked Resonate to lead boldly on mission. This calling requires shared commitment. If the church desires to see increased church planting and renewed mission vitality, we must continue to give sacrificially.

We do not ask churches to support *our* vision, but to invest in *their own* calling—to step forward in the convictions we confess and to commit our resources according to the mission we say matters. Together, trusting the Spirit's leading, we step into a bigger story. Thank you for your generosity.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

As the mission agency of the Christian Reformed Church, Resonate Global Mission exists to walk alongside congregations as they join God's work in the world. Our calling is not to carry out a mission on behalf of the church but to help the church more fully live into *its* calling—locally, globally, and through the planting of new churches. This shared calling is rooted in Scripture and shaped by our Reformed convictions that God is at work in the world and invites his people to participate.

The ministry plan names five interwoven aspects of our calling: faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship. All five are present in Resonate's work.

A. Our core initiatives

1. Global mission

Global mission expresses the conviction that the church is called to bear witness to Jesus Christ beyond its own culture and place. Through global mission, Resonate partners with churches, missionaries, and global ministry leaders so that the Christian Reformed Church may participate faithfully and humbly in God's work among the nations.

We accomplish this work by

- walking alongside career and partner missionaries serving in more than 40 countries.
- proclaiming the gospel, discipling new believers, and strengthening local churches through long-term, relational presence.
- investing in leadership development where access to theological education is limited.
- equipping pastors, teachers, and lay leaders through Timothy Leadership Training.
- forming educators and school leaders through Educational Care.
- bringing churches and missionaries together as partners on mission through training, member care, partnership development, prayer, and financial support.

Our Global Mission Core Initiative reflects our conviction that global mission is not transactional or one-directional but relational, formative, and mutually transformative. As churches in the CRC engage globally, God continues to renew faith, imagination, and hope within our own denomination.

Example and story: *Hope in Hard Places*: resonateglobalmission.org/hope

2. Local mission

Local mission focuses on helping congregations live out and share the gospel where God has already placed them. Through coaching, training, and relational presence, Resonate's regional teams walk alongside churches as they discern how to join God's work in their neighborhoods and communities.

We accomplish this work by

- supporting campus ministries across Canada and the United States and connecting churches with universities and colleges in ministry on more than 40 campuses across North America.
- walking alongside churches through regional coaching, discernment, and missional accompaniment.

- facilitating Witness Trips, Cohort fellowships, and other opportunities that disciple participants in applying their faith and living it through mission work.
- equipping churches through the Witness Curriculum, Discover Your Bible, and other resources for missional practices and postures.
- maintaining consistent presence and relationship building through North America Regional Mission Teams.

Our Local Mission Core Initiative reflects the belief that mission is not confined to distant places but begins with faithful presence, attentive listening, and obedience in everyday life.

Example and story: *A Space to Ask Questions*: resonateglobalmission.org/questions

3. Church planting

Church planting brings together local and global mission as new Christian communities form among diverse peoples and contexts. Resonate partners with congregations, classes, and leaders to cultivate a healthy church-planting ecosystem that supports discernment, leadership development, and long-term sustainability.

We accomplish this work by

- supporting dozens of church plants across North America.
- partnering with classes and parent churches in the discernment and oversight of new church plants.
- assessing, training, and coaching church planters for long-term health and fruitfulness.
- developing apprenticeships and leadership pathways for emerging church planters.
- supporting microchurches and other new expressions of church.
- walking alongside churches serving diaspora and immigrant communities.

Church planting is not only about starting new congregations; it is also a sign of spiritual renewal. As churches plant churches, they rediscover the heart of mission, grow in prayerful dependence on the Spirit, and participate in God's work of forming new expressions of the body of Christ.

Through Resonate Global Mission the CRCNA is currently supporting 59 church plants, 14 of which are new in the past year. Last year, Synod 2025 commissioned a ten-year plan for church planting. This plan and supporting documentation will be included in the Agenda Supplement.

Example and story: *God's Doing It!* resonateglobalmission.org/vive

B. Core initiatives coming together as Our Calling

Resonate's three core initiatives—global mission, local mission, and church planting—are not separate silos but interconnected expressions of one shared calling. Together they nurture faith formation, cultivate servant

leadership, engage mercy and justice, and proclaim the gospel in word and deed.

In all of this, Resonate's role is to serve, connect, and support—so that congregations may take their next faithful steps in God's mission. We remain convinced that God is writing a bigger story and that the Christian Reformed Church has an important place within it. Our calling is to help the church see where God is at work and to step forward together in trust and obedience.

III. Connecting with Churches: *Our Journey*

Resonate exists to serve our congregations as they share the gospel, live it missionally, and plant churches—a key goal of the *Our Journey* ministry plan—but our work flows through all four aspects of this plan. Resonate's calling is integral to the life of the Christian Reformed Church. We do not pursue mission alongside the church but within it—through relationships with classes, congregations, leaders, and members who together are seeking to be faithful to God's call.

A. Global mission

Global mission serves the goals of *Our Journey* by inviting the church to lift its eyes beyond its own context and to step into the bigger story of God's work among the nations. It directly supports the ministry plan's call to **share the gospel, live it missionally, and grow in diversity and unity**, while also cultivating faith formation and servant leadership through deep, reciprocal relationships with the global church.

1. Classis engagement

Global mission engagement with classes is rooted in the conviction that the denomination discerns and carries its global calling together. Over the past year, Resonate staff and missionaries have engaged classes by

- sharing stories and realities from global mission fields to strengthen awareness, prayer, and shared ownership of the church's global calling.
- sending representatives to classis meetings to invite delegates into deeper understanding of the role of career and partner missionaries within the life of the denomination.
- encouraging classes to support and walk alongside missionaries through prayer, advocacy, and financial partnership.

2. Church engagement

At the congregational level, global mission focuses on fostering meaningful relationships between churches and missionaries, moving beyond transactional support toward shared ministry and mutual learning. This year, Resonate supported church engagement by

- walking alongside congregations as they deepen relationships with the missionaries they support.

- providing opportunities for churches to learn from and with the global church through stories, visits, and shared ministry experiences.
- helping churches to see global mission not as something delegated to an agency but as an integral part of their own discipleship and faith formation.

B. Local mission

Local mission serves *Our Journey* by helping congregations practice mission as a way of life in the places God has already planted them. This initiative is especially aligned with the ministry plan's milestones of **cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline, listening to the voices of every generation, and sharing the gospel in everyday contexts**, as churches learn to notice where God is at work in their neighborhoods and join in.

We invite churches into two significant postures/priorities in their missional call. The first is to embrace their call to the "local." We want congregations and faith communities to discern where God is at work in their neighborhood and surrounding community. The second is for congregations and faith communities to see their place within the global church.

1. Classis engagement

Local mission engagement at the classis level centers on accompaniment, listening, and shared discernment. Resonate's Regional Mission Teams have continued to be present with classes by

- attending classis meetings to build relationships and maintain consistent connection between Resonate and local leaders.
- listening to the missional questions, challenges, and hopes emerging within each classis.
- supporting classis-level conversations and initiatives related to local mission, church renewal, and witness.
- helping classes connect local mission efforts with broader denominational resources and partnerships.

2. Church engagement

With congregations, local mission emphasizes proximity and trust. Over the past year, Resonate engaged churches by

- walking alongside pastors and leaders through coaching and missional-discernment processes.
- equipping churches with practical tools such as the Witness Curriculum, available at resonateglobalmission.org/witness.
- facilitating Witness Trips and volunteer opportunities that expand imagination for mission.
- supporting campus ministries as a key expression of local mission among young adults.
- strengthening Scripture engagement and outreach through Global Coffee Break: resonateglobalmission.org/globalcoffeebreak.

C. Church planting

Church planting serves the goals of *Our Journey* by holding together gospel proclamation, local mission, and renewal in concrete and visible ways. It embodies the ministry plan's call to **plant new churches**, while also advancing **diversity and unity** and fostering spiritual vitality as new Christian communities take shape and reach new people.

The renewed effort we're making to expand church planting is focused on creating a garden where we grow all types of churches and ensure each gets what they need to thrive. This type of ecosystem includes all of our Christian Reformed congregations, whether or not they directly parent a church plant!

1. Classis engagement

Church planting has always been deeply connected to the work of classes, and this continues to be a primary focus of Resonate's engagement. During the past year, Resonate partnered with classes by

- supporting classes in discerning readiness and calling for new church plants.
- assisting with assessment, accountability, and governance processes required for new congregations.
- encouraging hospitality and inclusion toward new expressions of church and diverse leaders.
- sharing learnings and best practices across classes to strengthen the church-planting ecosystem.

2. Church engagement

At the congregational level, church-planting engagement focuses on helping churches rediscover their role as participants in God's mission. Resonate supported churches by

- walking alongside parent churches as they discern and nurture new church plants.
- coaching church planters and leadership teams for health, resilience, and sustainability.
- supporting apprenticeships and leadership pathways connected to local congregations.
- encouraging churches to pray for and imagine what new expressions of church God might raise up in their own contexts.

3. Needs for the future of church planting

Synod will receive a report and ten-year plan with much more detail related to the needs of church planting. However, the following three critical needs merit extra mention and are ways churches can support and grow church planting in their own context and begin anytime.

- a. Financial need remains the biggest obstacle to church planting, on the scale of both individual church plants and the denomination as a whole. We ask that every classis encourage their churches to support

church plants locally and with Resonate. A significant number of classes and churches have unused funds designated for church planting—if that is the case in your context, we encourage you to get in touch with Resonate so that we can think creatively together on how to put those funds to work to support church plants in your classis or region.

- b. Hospitality to new kinds of church plants—some leaders of micro-churches, diaspora communities, and young adult communities report not being included at the classical level in the same way that typical, traditional pastors usually are (for example, by being left off the email list or by not receiving notifications of when discussions are happening). One way for a classis to be hospitable is to check in with their church planters to ensure they have a seat at the table.
- c. Church-plant visits—the first step to finding out what your church planters need is to get in touch. We have seen church-plant visits make a big difference in a classis' church-planting engagement. We encourage you to make time to visit a church plant, especially if you sense God's call on your church or classis to plant.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the director of Resonate Global Mission, Kevin DeRaaf, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Resonate Global Mission are addressed.

B. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, encourage all Christian Reformed congregations to recognize the following Sundays as significant opportunities to pray for and to receive an offering for Resonate Global Mission: Easter, Pentecost, the second Sunday in September, and the fourth Sunday in November.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Resonate Global Mission
Kevin DeRaaf, director

Thrive

I. Introduction—mandate and mission

Led by Rev. Lesli van Milligen, Thrive seeks “to engage and accompany Christian Reformed congregations as they seek to faithfully and holistically embody the gospel in their respective contexts” (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 956). Synod 2023 entrusted Thrive with the responsibility to provide expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today.

While Thrive’s primary focus is on local Christian Reformed congregations, Thrive’s capacity to encourage and equip congregations is enriched and strengthened by engagement with external associations and partnerships, particularly those that focus on specialized aspects of Thrive’s responsibilities. (See *Agenda for Synod 2023*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 956-57.)

As can be seen from this mandate, synod charged Thrive to be attentive to a broad spectrum of congregational leadership roles and a wide array of congregational opportunities and needs. The underlying goal or mission that motivates Thrive’s efforts is to equip and encourage congregations in ways that help them thrive in their respective contexts.

In carrying out this mission, with a deliberate regional presence, Thrive engages Christian Reformed congregations through six primary activities: consultations and workshops for churches and classes; coaching and network facilitation for ministry leaders; and resource curation and creation for a wider range of audiences.

Thrive continues to be grateful to God for the honor and privilege of being able to come alongside CRC congregations in order to equip and encourage them in the work they do locally. We continue to experience some degree of change when it comes to staffing. We are thankful to have the Customer Service Team move to Thrive from Ministry Support Services, adding four team members to our staff roster along with the ability to be more closely informed about what resourcing needs are being asked for as well as to share in the support and training of congregational facing staff. Being able to do so as a team of 29 has enabled Thrive to be nimble and responsive to the immediate needs of congregations. We also said goodbye to Ron deVries, our youth and young adult connector, who left us in October. We are using his departure and that of our worship consultant as an opportunity to explore more regionalized support for these two ministry areas so that we can be more contextually relevant. The fact that we continue to support congregations through these shifts highlights both the value of our team approach and how well our team works together. I am grateful to be able to lead such a competent, collaborative, and high-capacity team.

It is worth noting that because of Thrive’s team approach, we were able to immediately respond to synod’s call for more robust support of pastors’

spouses (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 654-55). Thrive pivoted and included a specific track for spouses at its recent Pastors' Gathering, which included support of chaplains, regional pastors, and parish pastors. The spouses track garnered important information on how best churches can use the \$500 support that Synod 2025 urged churches to make available to support pastors' spouses in tangible ways. Several resources are currently being crafted that will help councils and classes better support spouses locally.

II. Reflecting on Our Calling

Here are a few additional examples of how Thrive has lived into the denomination's ministry priorities:

Thrive supported the faith formation efforts of our congregations in the following ways:

- Collating information gathered from past parent-listening groups where Thrive learned how the CRC can better support faith formation in the home. We are currently disseminating this information in classis meetings.
- Thrive also gathered CRC children's ministry leaders from around North America to learn more about their work and concerns to create stronger support for their ministries.
- Thrive is in the process of experimenting with positions for regional worship connectors, to capitalize on regional relationships and localized worship needs. This will entail a slower roll-out than hiring one central worship specialist, but this approach will improve responsiveness to contextual challenges and opportunities.

Thrive focused heavily in areas that support servant leadership and church renewal efforts (reported on in a separate part of synod's agenda) in our congregations by

- hosting the Pastors' Gathering in Niagara Falls, Ontario, which supported the work and well-being of parish pastors, chaplains, regional pastors, and their spouses. Total attendance was 116 participants from across North America.
- gathering groups of pastors who are in the midst of particular periods of transition. One group to highlight is pastors who are pastoring vulnerable churches that are experiencing decline. This group is meant to tend to the well-being of both pastor and congregation as they face difficult decisions about future viability.
- facilitating Gather Classis Muskegon. This is a concentrated five-hour event that allows local church members to experience Gather and is available to both classes and individual congregations.
- training young adults to become *Thriving Essentials* facilitators.
- continuing to support congregations and classes through Next Steps Discernment in response to Synod 2024, especially in conjunction with discussions pertaining to disaffiliation.
- supporting pastors through facilitated mentoring groups.

- supporting chaplains by ensuring that they are finding healthy connections with both their classis and oversight congregations.
- creating video resources for the Pastor Search Process and translating key Pastor Search Resources into Korean.

In the area of gospel proclamation and worship Thrive supported congregations in the following ways:

- With the resignation of our worship consultant, Thrive is pivoting to a more regional approach to worship support. In order to do this shift well, Thrive has been learning from Resonate about how they utilize and support their local mission leaders. As we move in this direction, we will take a slow and steady approach that will lead to sustainability for this position while relying on the continued good work of the Calvin Institute of Worship to support the worship needs of CRCNA congregations.

Thrive supported congregations in the area of mercy and justice as follows:

- Hosting the “Finding Hope in Hospitality” event and the binational immigration prayer vigil to help congregations aid newcomers to North America.
- Continuing to partner with the Reformed Church in America to support disability and accessibility resources for congregations.

Thrive supported congregations in the area of global mission as well. Recognizing that global mission is at our doorstep, Thrive meets regularly with Resonate Global Mission staff in order to ensure that our efforts are aligned with each other and that Thrive is aware of resources and support that are necessary for congregations growing with newcomers to North America. The full leadership teams of Thrive and Resonate have met together in order to find areas of synergy between the church-renewal and church-planting efforts of the denomination. This collaboration will continue to be fruitful.

III. Connecting with churches

Thrive specifically supported cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline by

- prioritizing the support of faith practices in the home. This has been our focus for the past year with the desire to help pastors and youth ministry staff better respond to the needs of the families in their congregations.
- continuing to focus on prayer and faith practices as part of our own team rhythms. Aside from opportunities to participate in CRCNA-wide devotional times, Thrive staff meet monthly as a team for prayer and scriptural engagement.
- creating resources like *Thriving Essentials* that help congregations discern their unique missional identity.

Thrive continues to listen to the voices of every generation:

- Through our Generation Spark initiative (shared with the RCA), Thrive staff continue to help congregations engage with emerging adults and young people through a supported mentoring program that helps congregations pair older members of their congregations with younger members to work together on meaningful ministry challenges.
- Thrive is creating a more robust system of helping our synod young adult representatives to prepare for, engage in, and process their time at synod, including opportunities for previous young adult representatives to mentor new ones.

Thrive promoted growth in diversity, reconciliation, and welcome in the following ways:

- Thrive continues to support cohorts for congregations who desire to become more intercultural.
- Thrive is intentionally meeting with second-generation leaders from various diaspora groups in order to learn how to support these leaders who bridge generations within those cultures.
- Thrive has raised funds for translation through its Revelation 7 fund in order that more of our resources can be translated into languages beyond Spanish and Korean as new language groups continue to become a part of our denomination.
- Thrive is supporting a facilitated mentoring group for Black women clergy.
- Thrive's entire staff has completed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment in order to serve our churches and leaders more effectively by supporting their growth in cultural competency. This effort strengthens Thrive's mission to promote cultural awareness and to equip leaders for more effective, inclusive ministry. Professional development opportunities in this area enhance this effort as well.

Thrive supports sharing the gospel by

- helping congregations identify their missional calling within their unique contexts. *Thriving Essentials* workshops continue to be our most effective tool for helping congregations engage in a renewed commitment to sharing the gospel.
- working closely with Resonate in supporting church planters in their work.

IV. Other significant activities

Thrive has been focused on creating a Church Renewal Journey requested by Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 976) that includes both learning activities and discernment activities that congregations can choose from with the help of coaching support. This approach recognizes that no two congregations are on the same learning and renewal path, and it allows congregations to discern and travel at their own pace and capacity levels. More on

this renewal plan can be found in a separate report to synod coming as part of the Agenda Supplement.

Thrive continues to be grateful for grant support from Lilly Endowment Inc. Lilly grants support ministry initiatives that Thrive is committed to in relation to faith formation and pastoral well-being. We received a scaling grant that will enable us to dedicate significant funding for the church-renewal work that synod has tasked Thrive to do.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the director of Thrive, or a designee, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Thrive are addressed.

B. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, remind all Christian Reformed congregations that Thrive exists “to provide expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today”; and that synod encourage ministry leaders and CRC members to reach out to Thrive for support.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Thrive
Lesli van Milligen, director

World Renew

I. Mandate and mission

“As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12).

For World Renew, the calling described by Paul and Timothy to the Colossians is woven into daily ministry with churches, communities, and partners around the world. We were founded in 1962 by a committee of Christian Reformed Church members as the denomination’s diaconal agency in response to a request from synod. Our mandate was “to minister in the name of our Lord to those distressed by reason of the violence of nature, the carnage of war, or other calamities of life, and to relieve the suffering of the needy in the world” (see *Acts of Synod 1962*, p. 333).

World Renew has worked to fulfill this mandate with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience for more than 60 years, reaching out in Christ’s name to support vulnerable people around the world. Through global staff and meaningful localized partnerships, World Renew works to respond to God’s call to live justly, love mercy, and serve Christ as the international community faces the challenges of injustice, hunger, displacement, and disaster. Because we serve the risen Savior, we aim to help renew hope where there is despair; reconcile lives into right relationship with our Creator, our neighbor, our world, and ourselves; and restore creation through sustainable practices and processes so that every one of God’s people can flourish.

A. 2025 by the numbers:

- World Renew served 720,633 participants in 1,449 communities.
- We partnered with 58 church-based agencies and local organizations.
- 340,982 participants engaged in development programs supported by World Renew.
- 379,651 people were offered assistance through disaster response.
- 1,417 volunteers served via Disaster Response Services or other volunteer roles.
- We helped repair or rebuild 209 homes.
- We supported the resettlement of 183 refugees in Canada.
- 384 congregations engaged in justice and climate witness work.
- 669 congregations and 8,108 households supported World Renew financially.

B. How we work: an integrated approach

World Renew’s approach is participatory and locally led. Communities discern their priorities, we strengthen local leaders and local organizational capacity, and together we design programs that endure. In our work, the integration of community health, food security, economic opportunity, disaster response, and justice helps communities and households meet immediate

needs while tackling the root causes of poverty, vulnerability, marginalization, and injustice. In this work we seek to make justice tangible and to offer communities dignity and hope.

II. Connecting with churches: *Our Journey* (Ministry Plan)

A. Cultivating practices of prayer and spiritual discipline

World Renew contributes to this milestone by providing resources to churches such as devotional guides, prayer guides, and worship resources in connection with our designated Sundays and special-offering resources. Prayer and spiritual discipline must also be built on the knowledge of needs and contexts. World Renew provides opportunities to engage with and resources to learn about global needs and the work the church is doing to address them.

Throughout the world, we integrate prayer and spiritual development into our work in communities. We model prayer through resources and reminders to our supporters so that they can lift up the prayers and praises of our ministry teams together. We support our global teammates as they visit churches and individuals across the Christian Reformed Church in North America, involving them in our work financially but also through prayer. In 2025 in the United States, we recorded 181 church visits and planned calls and one school visit. In Canada, we recorded 122 church visits and planned calls and five school visits.

Internally, prayer is a regular practice among our teams. To learn more about prayer and spiritual discipline at World Renew, please refer to the article “Prayer in the Workplace” (*The Banner*, April 2025).

B. Listening to voices of every generation

Through visits, videos, podcasts, and webinars, World Renew offers peer-to-peer learning opportunities. We collaborate with ministries such as Diaconal Ministries Canada and CRCNA justice teams to contribute to meaningful dialogue around living out our faith. Our Equipped to Educate curriculum has been used in approximately 40 classrooms, addressing young people from kindergarten through high school.

World Renew supporters of all ages in the Christian Reformed Church are uniquely positioned to engage in our work. Many seniors support our work based on their own life experiences of war, displacement, immigration, and poverty, with a meaningful understanding of our work. For younger churchgoers who have grown up in a time of easy access to global information and a growing need to find purpose in their lives and careers, World Renew provides professional, experienced, and evidence-based work for them to support, learn from, and engage with.

Our volunteer opportunities have the exciting characteristic of often consisting of intergenerational groups who can come together to learn, experience, and reflect. In 2025, 114 people participated in our learning trips, with

49 Americans and 65 Canadians traveling with us to our programs around the world to listen and learn, discovering how God is at work.

In many of our communities, elders are highly esteemed, but youth are often overlooked. Our youth-engagement programming helps to motivate young people to pursue education, make healthy life choices and overcome trauma. We also work with volunteers, interns, and church groups to provide resources to young people so that they can learn and grow in a deeper understanding of biblical compassion and justice, whether in the U.S. and Canada or around the world.

C. Growing in diversity and unity as we build relationships

World Renew provides the CRCNA with an opportunity to engage in global programming and to enter into partnership with a diverse set of 58 local churches and organizations around the world. In response to the CRC's milestone commitment to provide "welcome to newcomers," World Renew also has a unique program that partners churches directly with refugees and asylum seekers from around the world in our Canadian Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program. Through this program, churches submitted new sponsorship applications for 135 refugees last year. Learning about and engaging in World Renew's work and resources give CRCNA members the opportunity to better understand global diversity, even within the Christian faith, and to enter into real community and individual stories of change. Further, in seeking justice and reconciliation, World Renew's programs and resources provide evidence and experience-based avenues to engage in justice advocacy locally, nationally, and internationally. This year, our 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and our advocacy toward the Canadian government regarding refugee and asylum seekers were examples of opportunities for informed and collective justice and reconciliation advocacy.

Because the World Renew team is committed to cultivating a sense of belonging, we seek to hire staff in ways that reflect the body of Christ, in anticipation of the day when people of every tribe, language, and nation will worship the Holy Lamb together. We look for opportunities to support people who are most vulnerable so that each person, regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, or age, can be welcomed and celebrated. As we do so, Jesus shows us the incredible journey of justice in which he has invited us to participate. World Renew is deeply committed to diversity, and we monitor our efforts to ensure we are growing toward this biblical ideal, increasingly reflecting the composition of the communities in which we live, work, and serve.

In our programs, peacebuilding and trauma healing allow participants to overcome differences and become unified in their visions for their communities. Through our communications, every effort is made to represent diversity and dignity, and to highlight the participants' experiences in their own voices whenever possible. Every year, World Renew participates in the

global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. This year the focus of that campaign included understanding and prevention of digital violence as well as physical, mental, and emotional abuse. Additionally, we partnered with Friendship Ministries Canada in 2025 to demonstrate how every person, regardless of ability, can contribute to this world in wonderful ways. Friendship clubs across Canada raised funds for our World Hunger campaign using our Peter Fish banks.

D. Sharing the gospel, living it missionally, and planting new churches as we connect with our local and global ministry contexts

Contributing to the flourishing of all people as imagebearers of God is central to the good news that Christ came to bring us life in all its fullness, both in this world and the next. World Renew's global partnerships with churches give room for missional living in a remarkable way as communities across the world share with each other, pray for each other, and build each other up.

World Renew partners with many churches and Christian organizations globally. Through our support, these churches and organizations are better able to live out their biblical mandate to share the love of God through their holistic ministries in their own communities. World Renew cannot support direct evangelism in its programs because it must provide all community and individual projects based on need and vulnerability and cannot tie this work to conversion or church membership. This is the church's best attempt to reflect the example of Christ's holistic ministry to the lost. It is also a response to Christ's challenge to provide that cup of cold water, to feed the hungry, and to cloth the naked. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these . . . you did for me," he said (Matt. 25:40).

In the U.S. and Canada there are currently more than four dozen churches committed to partnerships with World Renew projects.

One beautiful way in which God's family is living missionally with the support of World Renew is through our Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program (RSRP). Sponsoring churches are challenged to host families in crisis, offer financial support, and provide community as they adjust to life in Canada. In 2025, RSRP worked with 32 sponsoring groups.

Another way World Renew supports missional living is through Disaster Response Services (DRS). Whether they are sending and supporting volunteers to help rebuild homes for people made vulnerable by natural disasters, or participating, hosting, and organizing within affected communities, congregations and dedicated volunteers help to make DRS a reality. DRS's work provides the CRCNA and its members an opportunity to share God's love in tangible and relational ways. Many DRS volunteers tell stories of holistically transformed lives in the communities where they have worked. In 2025, DRS worked with dozens of congregations to serve 2,367 individuals.

III. Our ministry in action: program updates

A. Community development

Asha's* Story

At just 16 years of age, Asha was married off by her father to ease the family's financial burden. But without a dowry, Asha paid a heavy price. Her husband, who struggled with alcohol addiction, and her in-laws subjected her to relentless abuse. When she became pregnant, Asha fled back to her parents' home, only to face harsh criticism and blame. She felt trapped, helpless, and alone.

Like many girls who marry young, Asha never finished school. She lacked many of the skills needed to earn a living. She took on occasional day work, but her future seemed hopeless. Then, in May 2022, World Renew's local partner launched a Food Security and Resilience Project in her village. Asha joined a women's savings group supported by the project, contributing regularly and attending weekly meetings. Her perseverance and vulnerability inspired the group to select her for poultry-rearing training facilitated by World Renew's partner. In 2024, Asha completed the training and received five chickens to start her own business. Within three months, those five chickens multiplied to 35. By December, she sold 15 chickens, earning 5,000 taka (\$58 CAD/\$42 USD). Today, Asha owns 25 chickens and plans to buy 10 more. Her income helps to provide stability, and her confidence has soared.

Now 28 years old, Asha shares her knowledge with other women in her group. Encouraged by her success, they too are raising chickens and earning income. Asha's joy comes from seeing others thrive. "I am thankful for the training and encouragement that helped me become self-reliant," she says.

*Participant's actual name and location withheld for security reasons

1. Food security

Families learn and adopt sustainable agriculture and climate-smart agricultural practices, improve access to water, enhance soil fertility, and develop better systems for crop handling storage and marketing so that food or money is available year-round. In Tanzania, after an accident left Juma unable to walk, isolation and loss of income followed. World Renew's local partner, Africa Inland Church Tanzania, visited Juma through the Integrated Food Security and Livelihood project, providing agriculture training, seeds, and a water pump. Juma established a thriving cabbage field (begun with about 300 seedlings), restoring household income and dignity. "I realized I am still a recognized person," he said.

2. Community health (maternal and child health)

In many of the countries where World Renew works, pregnancy, childbirth, and the first two years of a child's life are some of the most tenuous and dangerous for mothers and children alike. When proper nutrition and health care are not available, child and maternal mortality rates rise, and

children who do survive are often stunted (delayed in physical and cognitive development). World Renew-supported health teams equip community volunteers, clinics, and families to improve nutrition, sanitation, and access to health care, reducing preventable illness and death. In Uganda, Betty safely delivered her first child with support from a World Renew village health team member. A motorcycle voucher program enabled urgent transport for lifesaving care. Her family testifies: “May God continue to bless World Renew and everyone who makes it possible to support mothers like her.”

3. Economic opportunity

Linking both our health and agriculture programming, World Renew works with partners and communities to build, support, and sustain livelihoods that bring dignity to families and support the health and food security of households at the same time. For example, village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) are a kind of community banking system that helps to build financial inclusion, resilience, and enterprise. In the Sahel region, Saminu moved from unpredictable harvesting and outmigration to a stable, homebased tailoring business. Through his VSLA he saved, accessed a small loan, reinvested profits, and purchased a sewing machine—keeping his family together and “clothed” with dependable income and hope.

B. Justice and peace

The Justice and Peace Team coordinates justice assessments, capacity building, public engagement, advocacy, and peacebuilding to address systemic barriers—weak governance, discrimination, and violence—that erode dignity and undermine development. Grounded in Proverbs 31:8, the team helps to make justice tangible so that communities experience lasting peace and equality.

Joseph’s Story

When Joseph’s father migrated to Spain, he left behind family and responsibility. For Joseph, the emotional toll was devastating. Angry and hurt, he became rebellious, fell behind in school, and repeated seventh grade three times. Living with his mother, newborn brother, and stepfather, Joseph felt abandoned and hopeless.

In 2024, with encouragement from his grandmother, Joseph joined Strong Communities, a program facilitated by World Renew’s local partner in Honduras, the Association for a Just Society (ASJ). This initiative addresses systemic issues like domestic violence, broken homes, and community violence: root causes that undermine dignity and peace.

Program staff identified Joseph as high-risk, but through weekly sessions on preventing violence, self-care, and leadership, Joseph began to change. His family noticed a marked improvement in his behavior. He showed respect, tolerance, and a sense of belonging. Psychological support revealed Joseph’s resilience and openness to growth. He learned to manage emotions and embrace new challenges.

"I began to feel less angry and more self-confident," Joseph says. "I've learned to deal with negative emotions and to support my friends and family. My perspective on life has changed."

C. Humanitarian and emergency affairs

International Disaster Response (IDR): In 22 countries last year, World Renew and its partners provided emergency food, water, shelter, sanitation, cash, and livelihood recovery, accompanied by long-term work that rebuilds homes, revitalizes income, and strengthens community preparedness. IDR served a total of more than 382,018 individuals last year.

Disaster Response Services: DRS volunteers repaired or rebuilt 209 homes in the United States, serving 2,367 people.

Refugee Sponsorship: Churches across Canada welcomed 183 newcomers this year, and 32 sponsoring groups submitted applications, collectively representing 135 refugees.

Maranatha CRC's story

Churches across Canada have opened their doors, helping more than 11,500 refugees since 1979 find safety, dignity, and a new beginning. But the impact of this welcome extends far beyond any arrival date, often becoming a lifelong connection. After 1975, many Vietnamese families fled their country, mostly on boats, in search of safety. Compelled by the biblical call to "welcome the stranger" (Heb. 13:2), Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, stepped forward in faith. The church sponsored about 65 refugees, walking alongside each family as they rebuilt their lives in Canada.

Decades later, many of those families still live in Edmonton. Some have built businesses, raised families, and become essential parts of their communities. But the connection to the church that first welcomed them never faded. Jack, a sponsor from the church, remembers one young man arriving at the church and gently helping his elderly father up the steps. The young man explained that his father had been one of the refugees welcomed by the church many years earlier. His father had built a successful food-store business, which is now a family company with seven stores across Alberta and British Columbia. As he entered his later years, the father felt a deep desire to return to the place that had first offered his family safety, kindness, and hope. He presented a check to the church in the amount of \$30,000, insisting they accept it as a gift of gratitude and remembrance. Today, part of that gift is helping to support Maranatha CRC's next refugee sponsorship in partnership with World Renew. One generation supported the next, carrying on a legacy rooted in Christ's love. This is the power of welcome.

Transitions

In the past year, World Renew has engaged in organizational realignment to strengthen mission impact and stewardship. As part of this work, programming concluded in Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, with gratitude for many years of faithful ministry and prayer for partners and communities continuing their journeys.

Looking ahead, World Renew seeks to deepen its presence and impact in fragile and conflict-affected regions; grow capacity for rapid, high-quality response; expand peacebuilding and justice work; and use data and technology to learn, improve, and demonstrate outcomes. With your partnership, we aim to bring lifesaving aid, restore dignity, and help communities rebuild for a resilient future.

World Renew is also seeking to strengthen its commitment to localization and shifting power toward partnerships and community work closest to people who are made most vulnerable by hunger, poverty, and crisis. World Renew has been blessed by consistent giving from Christian Reformed churches, allowing us to build our local church and partner capacity and reduce the need to be present in-country. In many places, we have worked for decades to support and build that local capacity, and we are now ready to transition to a more genuine, partner-led program model. The reduction of our own presence will allow us to invest more in our partners and their programs while World Renew staff will continue to support partners in institutional grant acquisition, program quality, measurement and innovation, and donor compliance.

IV. Leadership

This year, World Renew welcomed a familiar friend to serve again in a new role. Peter Timmerman, who previously worked with World Renew in East and Southern Africa, joined the team again to serve as director of World Renew-Canada. With more than 30 years of experience in international development and organizational leadership, Timmerman has held various roles across Africa and Canada. His tenure includes 15 years in East and Southern Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Malawi), where he led community-development programs focused on faith-based partnerships and sustainable change. He later worked with World Vision Canada, leading the support of their programs in 22 countries as their Africa regional director. And at Canadian Feed the Children, he served as vice president of programs, overseeing operations in five countries and expanding Indigenous programming in Canada. Timmerman's return to World Renew is a calling rooted in faith, he said: "I am a lifelong member of the Christian Reformed Church and an active pastoral elder at New Life CRC in Guelph, Ontario. My goal is to offer leadership grounded in biblical truth, compassion, and a commitment to justice and mercy."

Timmerman serves alongside Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S., upholding the values of World Renew: faith, effectiveness, stewardship, and people flourishing. Bremer-Bennett has served for eleven years in her role with World Renew. She is born to the To'aheedliinii (Waters Flow Together) Clan and born for the Todich'iinii (Bitter Water) Clan of the Navajo Nation. Bremer-Bennett is an educator by training, with a B.A. from Calvin College and M.A. from Western New Mexico University. Her extensive experience in Christian ministry spans more than 30 years of organizational leadership, leadership development, and administration. Carol believes in the power of community and shares her passion and gifts with her church and international organizations. She has served on multiple boards, including those of Calvin University, the Christian Alliance for Inclusive Development, Integral Alliance, and Growing Hope Globally.

V. Board matters

The World Renew Board of Delegates is a key support of World Renew's ministry. The board's primary function is to set the vision and mission of World Renew and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

World Renew's governance structure is made up of delegates from each CRC classis, in addition to members at large, who together constitute the Board of Delegates of World Renew.

The delegates are a vital communication link with CRC classes and churches. They select member national governing boards, with seven to nine members on the U.S. board and up to ten members on the Canadian board. The two boards together form the Joint Ministry Council (JMC), which provides governance for World Renew as a whole.

Board of Directors of World Renew-Canada

Jeff Adams, president; Calgary, Alberta
Harry Bergshoeff, vice president; Burlington, Ontario
Marg Hoogland, secretary; Lacombe, Alberta
Darryl Beck, treasurer; Grimsby, Ontario
Gordon Van Vliet, legal advisor; Calgary, Alberta
Cari Fydirchuk, pastoral advisor; Cochrane, Alberta

Board of Directors of World Renew-U.S.

Jeffrey Banaszak, president; Holland, Michigan
Graham Seel, vice president; Concord, California
Kenneth Macbain, treasurer; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Beverly Abma, secretary; Grandville, Michigan
Bonny Mulder-Behnia, pastoral advisor; Bellflower, California
Charles Udeh, member at large; Kentwood, Michigan
Don Hansum, member at large; Parker, Colorado
Kimberly Starkenburg, member at large; Orange City, Iowa
Emily Boldenow-Fortna, member at large; Uxbridge, Massachusetts

Information on new board members, reappointments, and term completions will be provided after the annual general meeting of World Renew.

VI. Financial matters

Salary disclosure

In accord with synod's mandate to report executive salary levels, World Renew reports the following:

<i>Job level</i>	<i>Number of positions</i>	<i>Number below target</i>	<i>Number at target</i>
E1	2	0	2
E2	1	0	1
E3	4	0	4

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Jeff Banaszak, president of World Renew-U.S.; Jeffrey Adams, president of World Renew-Canada; Carol Bremer-Bennett, director of World Renew-U.S.; and Peter Timmerman, director of World Renew-Canada, when World Renew matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Council of Delegates and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

World Renew
Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.
Peter Timmerman, director, World Renew-Canada

STANDING COMMITTEES

Candidacy Committee

I. Introduction

Because the denomination has such a vital interest in the formation of ministers of the Word, synod in 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (now called the “Candidacy Committee”) to retain, direct, and enhance the denomination’s role in the process of equipping and forming its future leaders. Through this committee, the denomination is able to oversee the nurture and training of those preparing for ordained ministry through Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8. The Candidacy Committee, on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), is synod’s designated discernment partner in the communal work of preparing candidates and assessing their readiness for ministry. This work is done in conversation with other discernment partners, including mentors, classis leaders, and Calvin Theological Seminary faculty. Synod 2006 also mandated the committee with the task of encouraging and equipping classes in connection with the ordination of commissioned pastors through Church Order Article 23 (*Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 616-17; *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 662).

The committee mandate is available in a document titled Journey Toward Ordination, accessible on the Candidacy Committee website (crcna.org/candidacy). The mandate instructs the committee to perform the following functions:

- to foster the development of pastoral leadership
- to maintain consistent, clear, just standards
- to advise, resource, and maintain regular contact with Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams
- to grant candidacy applicants denominational licensure to exhort
- to support classes in maintaining consistent processes for examination and ordination
- to recommend candidates to synod

II. Committee membership

The members of the Candidacy Committee meet three times per year. As with other synodical standing committees, Candidacy Committee members serve a potential of two three-year terms.

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Andrew Beunk (2027/2), Caleb Dickson (2027/2), Moon Kim (2026/2), Henry Kranenburg (2028/2), Andy Sytsma (2028/2), Mark Bennink (2028/1), Mike Koetje (2028/1), Shaun Jung (2028/1), Susan LaClear (staff), Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), and Zachary King (ex officio, as general secretary).

We would like to express our thanks to Rev. Lora Copley for her faithful service to the Candidacy Committee. Rev. Copley resigned from her role in November 2025 upon being appointed as interim editor of *The Banner*.

The EPMC Facilitation Team, a subcommittee of the Candidacy Committee, is tasked with walking alongside participants in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) to advise, resource, and support them. The team members also oversee and implement the strategies of the program. The EPMC Facilitation Team currently includes the following members:

Rev. Shawn Brix, staff adviser, Calvin Theological Seminary; Canadian church relations liaison for the seminary
Victor Chen, general member, Classis B.C. Northwest
Rev. James Hollendoner, general member, Classis Illiana
Rev. Timothy Joo, general member, Classis Hackensack
Rev. Timothy Kooiman, general member, Classis Wisconsin
Rev. Michael Koot, general member, Classis B.C. Southeast
Rev. Aleah Marsden, general member, Classis Central California
Rev. Daniel Mouw, general member, Classis Grandville
Rev. Benjamin Oliveira, general member, Classis Muskegon
Rev. Marg Rekman, general member, Classis Ontario Southwest
Rev. Jack Van de Hoef, general member, Classis Eastern Canada
Rev. Josephine Wong, Classis B.C. Northwest
Rev. Daniel Unterkofler, Classis California South
Rev. Patrick Lin, Classis Central California
Rev. Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy

The Candidacy Committee is deeply appreciative of the valuable contributions of the following members who are completing or have completed their terms on the EPMC Facilitation Team: Rev. Charles Dillender and Rev. Lora Copley. We also appreciate the work of Dr. Geoff VanderMolen in supporting the vocational formation process of EPMC participants throughout his tenure at Calvin Theological Seminary.

III. Celebrating the value of well-formed, theologically trained church leaders

Over the past several decades, North America has experienced a rise of independent Christian churches. Their lack of denominational grounding has resulted in inconsistent levels of accountability and the lack of a standard baseline in theological training and spiritual formation for pastors. Within these models, pastors are ordained by local congregations that have no precedent or established process for vetting a pastor's qualifications or discerning their spiritual maturity and character. All of these factors have opened the door to a great deal of harmful doctrinal confusion, spiritual abuse, and personality cults within the church, resulting in harm to congregants and a loss of credibility and trust within the culture.

Against this background, the Christian Reformed Church in North America stands out with much to offer in terms of stability, accountability, and solid theology to people in search of a community they can trust. By the grace of God, we have worked to uphold our historical commitment to ensuring

that congregations are served by well-formed, theologically educated, well-vetted pastors. In contrast to the decrease of accountability in our culture in recent decades, the CRCNA has actively increased our attention to accountability by requiring psychological evaluations and abuse-of-power training as requirements for ministry preparation, and by implementing a Code of Conduct for all leaders. The Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary have also strengthened their focus on spiritual formation as a vital part of theological training in order to support emerging leaders in developing practices for balanced, healthy ministry.

The Candidacy Committee has seen many leaders from independent churches seek out Calvin Seminary and the Christian Reformed Church in pursuit of spiritual grounding in a trusted, accountable community. These leaders often express delight in our rich history and declare appreciation for our thoughtful articulations of Reformed theology. When seasoned CRC pastors invest themselves in mentoring these newcomers and as classis leaders come alongside to support them in their training, they are often motivated through such hospitality and care to put down roots in our spiritual communities. The Candidacy Committee has the joy of hearing such stories as we come alongside leaders in their ministry-training journey.

The Candidacy Committee also works to support classes in handling cases in which individuals are hired to serve as lead pastors but they have not been trained and vetted within our system. Such cases seem to occur most often in the following situations:

- when a congregation initiates their search for a pastor without the help of a classis-assigned counselor and without utilizing the resources that Thrive, the Candidacy Committee, and their local classis provide to assist in finding a qualified pastor
- when a congregation has worked through all the regular channels to find an eligible pastor but has been unable to find a suitable candidate

Because such cases are usually very complicated for the church, the classis, and the prospective minister, the Candidacy Committee urges churches to use all of the resources provided by their classis and the denomination (classis-assigned counselor, pastor-search portal, candidate list, etc.) to do a sustained and diligent search for an eligible candidate before pursuing candidates who are not eligible to serve in lead roles in established CRC churches. When the need to call someone who is not currently eligible is jointly discerned, the Candidacy Committee works alongside all parties to support, as much as possible, a healthy, unrushed process toward providing the leader with the training and orientation that will enable them to serve effectively. In this way, we have sought to offer hospitality and flexibility in regard to the timing of training and formation without sacrificing the quality or standard of training for CRC ministers.

IV. Increased support of Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams

A. Renewed energy and support for leadership development

Leadership development is essential to the health and growth of churches, so it has been deeply encouraging to observe a renewed energy for, and commitment to, the support of Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLTs) across the denomination. The Candidacy Committee believes that CMLTs are uniquely positioned to strengthen and guide this work. Historically, these teams have reliably supported and guided emerging leaders through the candidacy process, attending to financial support for seminary students as well. However, their suggested mandate also includes the key functions of serving as a “consultation and advisory resource to . . . classis . . . regarding matters related to ministerial candidacy in the CRC” and serving to “encourage the member congregations of . . . classis to be proactive in identifying possible candidates for ministry” (see *Agenda for Synod 2006*, pp. 326-27; the full mandate can be found in the Journey Toward Ordination document).

Over the past four years the director of Candidacy has been working to provide opportunities for CMLT members to receive regular support through online “Candidacy/CMLT Connect Meetings” twice a year. These times of conversation, updates, and resource-sharing have been very helpful, and they will continue to be offered.

B. In-person gathering in February 2026

In 2025, plans were also laid to host an in-person gathering for CMLT members to provide an opportunity for them to engage in deeper, more prolonged conversations about leadership development with key partners in the Candidacy Committee and at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS). Together with the CTS director of Empower and Lifelong Learning, the Candidacy director hosted a “CMLT Gathering” Feb. 3-5 at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Paradise Valley, Arizona. This event was made possible through the generous contribution of financial support provided by the seminary, for which the Candidacy Committee is deeply grateful. The goal of the event was to encourage and equip these leaders to become catalysts of leadership development within their classes—serving to cast vision, to resource, and to strategize with classis leaders about how to create a clear pathway of training and support for lay leaders, people seeking a license to exhort, and commissioned pastors.

Twenty classes sent CMLT representatives to this event. The attendees were energized and eager to engage in this work. The gathering gave them an opportunity to talk together about leadership needs within their classes and to share strategies they have used to try to address those needs. Some of the encouraging stories that were shared included a report from Classis Hackensack that fifteen lay leaders from immigrant congregations were enrolled in a preaching course organized and taught by local leaders. Classis Arizona shared how they catalyzed leadership development through providing internship grants and offering church-planting residencies. Classis

Southeast U.S. shared about the fruit of their efforts to train individuals for licensure to exhort and to become commissioned pastors; using the Empower program in their training effort even allowed some of their students to continue receiving accredited training at CTS by stacking their certificate level credits into a master of arts or a master of divinity degree. A CMLT member from Classis Lake Superior spoke of the importance of presenting leadership training as a valuable gift to emerging leaders, and of avoiding unhelpful references to “jumping through hoops” that have become an unfortunate part of some leaders’ vocabulary in the CRCNA. A general observation made by CMLT leaders was that a strong focus on discipleship and the training of lay leaders is foundational to developing more commissioned pastors and ministers of the Word.

After hearing from CMLTs about their needs and hopes for developing leaders, staff from the CRCNA and CTS shared information about resources and programs that support their various needs. Aaron Einfeld, Justin DenOuden, and Wendy Fisher shared about Calvin Seminary programs like the Empower program, the Commissioned Pastor Certificate program, Spanish-language programming, and options for continued learning such as the Adaptive Leadership cohort and the Lifelong Learning resources. Dave Den Haan shared about resources from Thrive, including Thriving Essentials and elder and deacon training resources that are being developed. Rick Zomer offered encouragement and insight for engaging young adults in conversation and inviting them into greater investment in the life of the church. Tim Sheridan shared resources used by Resonate, such as the Timothy Leadership program, and encouraged CMLTs with his shared vision for ensuring that church planters receive thorough Reformed theological training along with all the other needed components of equipping for their challenging work.

It was clear throughout this event that God is at work within the CMLTs of the CRCNA. Participants were attentive to how God might be leading their classes and equipping his people for works of ministry (see Eph. 4:12). Candidacy Committee member Andy Sytsma and prayer shepherd Jon Hoekema encouraged CMLT members to ask God regularly to send laborers into the harvest, and they invited everyone to join a weekly prayer meeting with CRC staff and CTS faculty.

V. Commissioned Pastor Study Team report

The Commissioned Pastor Study Team (a subcommittee appointed by the Candidacy Committee) consists of Rev. Shawn Brix, Rev. Lora Copley, Rev. Dan De Graff, Pastor Caleb Dickson, Pastor Rod Huguen, Rev. Petr Kornilov, Pastor Elly Boersma Sarkany, Rev. Joel Sheeres, Rev. Andy Sytsma, and the director of Candidacy, Rev. Susan LaClear.

The Candidacy Committee tasked this group to review the theological framework for the office of commissioned pastor, research the effectiveness of the current commissioned pastor ordination pathways, and make any

needed recommendations for clarifying Church Order Articles 23 and 24. In 2025 the team conducted a survey of commissioned pastors and took note of their feedback. They also worked to address challenges that had arisen in the practice of ordaining commissioned pastors to serve in solo and lead roles in established churches, making recommendations for modifications to the Church Order Supplement, Article 24 that were adopted by Synod 2025. Since that time, the team's focus has been on the following:

- Review the development of the office of commissioned pastor.
- Further develop the theological framework of this office.
- Recommend some clarifications to Church Order Article 23 that could serve to strengthen the CRCNA's understanding of this office and guide our practices for training commissioned pastors.

The Commissioned Pastor Study Team presents the results of their study and discussion in the appendix to this report.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy, and to an additional member of the Candidacy Committee, if one is present, when the Candidacy Committee report is discussed.

B. That synod encourage all classes to work in consultation with their Class Ministerial Leadership Teams to develop clear pathways for lay leader and pastoral leader training.

C. That synod affirm the theological framework for the office of commissioned pastor as articulated in the report of the Commissioned Pastor Study Team (Appendix).

D. That synod affirm the Commissioned Pastor Study Team's clarifications to Church Order Article 23 regarding categories and training guidelines for the office of commissioned pastor (Appendix).

E. That synod recommend the proposed changes to Church Order Article 23 and its supplement as presented in the Appendix to this report (see Addendum) for adoption by a future synod.

Candidacy Committee
Susan LaClear, director

APPENDIX

Brief Overview of the Development of the Commissioned Pastor Office

I. Background

For decades the CRC has been actively addressing the office known today as "commissioned pastor." Back in the 1970s special attention was being paid to the status of "layworkers in evangelism," which was not an office but a description that applied mainly to nonseminary-educated individuals

who were involved in founding new congregations. A study committee report to Synod 1973 laid out a biblical analysis of the historical development of the concepts of office and ordination (Report 44). The study committee noted: “It is evident that current understandings and practices with regard to office and ordination cannot be supported by Scripture in every detail” (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 673). What is meant here is that, although we find Greek words that can be translated as “pastors,” “elders,” and “deacons” in the Bible, Scripture doesn’t necessarily give a clearly defined blueprint structure of church offices that can be easily applied today. The CRCNA partially owes its structure to historical customs and tradition.

Synod 1978 created a fourth office, that of “evangelist,” and the persons ordained to this office were viewed as elders. This was a substantial change in CRC polity. A more recent study committee reflected that the addition of this fourth office “abandoned a long-held assumption that there were just three kinds of offices, each representing one aspect of the threefold office of Christ: prophet (ministers), priest (deacons), and king (elders)” (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 267). In 1994 the fourth office was expanded for use with staff ministry (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 488-91), and it was assumed that there would be a relationship between the individual in that office and a minister of the Word.

The office of evangelist continued to evolve in the 1990s, and a new study committee was tasked with looking at ordination and “official acts of ministry.” That committee reported to Synod 2001. Looking back at the 1973 report and synod-approved guidelines, the 2001 committee said:

The emphasis [of those decisions] is on function, and the terminology. . . is consistently the terminology of good order rather than spiritual endowment or consecration. . . .

We believe that it is better to approach ordination and office in a different way—relationally rather than functionally. . . .

We will suggest that church leadership (ordained church leadership in particular) is characterized in the first place by certain relationships of trust and responsibility. Leaders are entrusted by Christ with responsibility for and to the community. They re-present Christ to the community. In addition, leaders are entrusted by the community to bring its cares, concerns, joys, desires, gifts, and ministries to Christ. They re-present the community to Christ. . . .

Ordained leaders are set aside for the Lord’s use. Ordination requires the giving of oneself for the Lord and the church; it sets over the leader the sign of the cross. (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 275-76)

The 2001 committee’s report also highlighted three elements crucial to their understanding of ordination that continue to be referenced today: “calling,” “role,” and “excellencies for ministry” (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 282-84).

These understandings helped to steer the denomination toward our current concept of the office of commissioned pastor. In 2003 that title—“commissioned pastor”—was considered, but synod decided to rename the office of “evangelist” as “ministry associate.” A decade later, the Candidacy Committee (previously known as the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee, or SMCC), in consultation with ministry associates, re-proposed the title “commissioned pastor” for this office, with the following rationale:

Over the past few years, the number of persons serving in the CRC as ordained ministry associates has been growing significantly. This is an expected result of the strategy adopted by Synod 2007 to make more use of, offer more support to, and give greater value to the office of ministry associate (see *Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 299). This strategy was closely tied to returning to the historical usage of Church Order Article 7, limiting the number of persons entering the ordained office of the minister of the Word without the prescribed theological training (see *Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 298). . . .

The former term *evangelist* was recognized as being inappropriate for the many uses and job descriptions that were being approved relative to the office, and was particularly awkward for some serving in institutional chaplaincy. . . .

The current title of *ministry associate* is discouraging to many currently ordained in the office, making them feel marginalized or disrespected. Those who would formerly have been ordained to the office of minister of the Word under Church Order Article 7 often question whether the church sees them as a “minister” or as a mere “associate.”
(*Agenda for Synod 2012*, pp. 211, 213)

The title *commissioned pastor* identifies those in the office as a pastor while recognizing a difference from those ordained as a minister of the Word. Synod 2012 adopted this term—*commissioned pastor*—and Synod 2013 decided to distinguish this fourth office as separate from the office of elder.

The Candidacy Committee report to Synod 2012 summarizes well the spirit that continues in our denomination to the present:

The denominational commitment to maintain a tradition of theologically educated clergy can be maintained and developed, even as there is more use, support, and value given to the office of ministry associate. Toward this end, if ministers of the Word are actively committed and encouraged to continue to learn throughout their careers, the task of encouraging ministry associates to continue to learn will have greater credibility. The current trend of making more use of “non-theologically educated pastors” does not have to signal a change in commitment to theological education. Instead, it can simply signal a change in the *sequence* in which theological education is experienced (i.e., during a life of ministry rather than exclusively

before a life of ministry). Classes are well within their area of responsibility as they encourage ministers of the Word, ministry associates, and their sponsoring ministries to attend to the priority of continuing education. Ministry associates serving as solo or lead pastors can be encouraged to make a learning plan that moves them toward eventual ordination as minister of the Word.

(Agenda for Synod 2012, p. 223)

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has long valued, and continues to value, well-educated ministers of the Word who have received their education in a seminary. Seminaries equip emerging leaders with the knowledge and skills that are important for pastoral ministry, and in partnership with churches they provide opportunities for acquiring pastoral experience through field education. Calvin Theological Seminary (and some other seminaries) also attend to the spiritual formation and well-being of the emerging pastor. The formative process of the M.Div. degree is integral for discerning an individual's qualifications and readiness for ordained ministry. The candidacy processes for ministers of the Word and for commissioned pastors are designed to include oversight and approval by discernment partners, which may include a seminary, denomination officials, and a classis, in addition to their local congregation.

Since that 2012 report, the Candidacy Committee and the churches of our denomination have sought to maintain the high educational standard for solo or lead pastors while allowing more flexibility in the sequence of training for ministry. Over the past several years, Church Order Article 24-b has been used to allow many to serve as solo commissioned pastors while completing seminary studies (informally described as "bridge ordination"), instead of requiring them to finish their M.Div. coursework before being called to serve in solo leadership. Pursuit of seminary study while engaging in solo pastoral ministry can be extremely challenging, and yet this possibility has been greatly appreciated in many cases.

II. Strengthening the theological framework for the office of commissioned pastor

Throughout the development of the office of commissioned pastor, the Christian Reformed denomination has been attentive to ensuring that proper honor is given to those serving in this important role. Our attempts to honor this office have often involved making practical adjustments to the process, titling, and support of commissioned pastors. But it is also essential to honor the office of commissioned pastor by clearly articulating a clear theological framework that supports and validates its value.

Throughout the past seven decades, various study committees have contributed theological reflections that undergird this office, and these reflections have received affirmation by synod. In the following sections, our study team has drawn together and elaborated upon these insights to articulate clearly how this office is grounded in biblical principles.

A. *A variety of gifts needed to extend the strategic mission of the church*

The apostle Paul makes a special point of noting that a variety of different gifts are needed for the leadership and building up of God's church.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?"

(1 Cor. 12:27-30)

The commissioned pastor office and its predecessors (evangelist and ministry associate) have served to extend ordination to people with various pastoral giftings. This office has "the character of pastoral extension" (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 506). Although this term has admittedly more practical than theological basis, it could be said that the instances in which the apostle Paul sent ambassadors in his place to deliver messages, pastor churches, and preach the Word (1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 6:21-22; Rom. 16:1-2) were cases of pastoral extension. The ministries of those appointed individuals extended Paul's gospel reach in various ways. In a similar way, the ministries of commissioned pastors serve to extend the ministry of a congregation. Church planters extend the work into broader geographical areas, establishing and pastoring new congregations. Commissioned pastors who serve as youth pastors, worship pastors, children's pastors, chaplains, and more extend a congregation's ministry into areas of specialized focus that are "strategic for the accomplishment of the church's total ministry"; this was the rationale that informed the development of the office of evangelist after years of biblical study and discussion around the topic of the nature of ordination (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).

The "Report of the Committee for the Study of the Use of Ordained Men" in 1961 had established that the early church also recognized that changing times required changing ministerial functions.

However, it must be recognized that the situation in which the early church found itself was different than it is today. In the early church God appointed or permitted ordained ministers to perform tasks which were necessary for the welfare of the church *at that time*. There was no need for a secretary of missions, a stated clerk, or an editor of a church paper. In the time of the early church the welfare of the church demanded that minister, possessing certain qualifications and authority as Christ's representative, perform the work of pastor; but also the work of teacher, of evangelist. It was even necessary for the welfare of the church that Paul engage in the collection of funds and tent-making for a time. . .

But today the church lives in another age. The church has grown. The church is presented with new opportunities and challenges. The

church is able to meet these challenges because she has greater and more numerous means whereby she is able to carry out her task. Therefore, the church recognizes the need of a secretary of missions, a stated clerk, an editor of a church paper, a radio minister, and a chaplain in an institution of mercy. . . Does the church err by appointing ordained men to such positions? We think not; if it can be demonstrated that, in doing so, the church and the individual appointed are concerned with the perfecting of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ. (*Agenda for Synod 1961*, pp. 248-49)

The office of commissioned pastor is one in which congregational need and individual giftedness meet. Just as a need arose for deacons to be appointed in Acts 6, modern churches often discern the need for a commissioned pastor to serve a particular pastoral role to address the needs and promote the flourishing of a congregation or community. Ministers of the Word receive broad training in all aspects of ministry with a deep focus on exegeting and preaching the Word. But the church has a continual need for more specialized gifts and expertise in certain aspects of ministry—such as worship leadership, youth ministry, discipleship, evangelism, care, and so on. Leading the church well requires a variety of gifts that a solo or lead pastor does not necessarily possess.

Those with gifts in specialized areas of church ministry need to be trained in ways that are tailored to their specific role rather than through the M.Div. degree, which is designed to provide a broad and comprehensive training for pastoral ministry. Synod 2001's study committee noted that a "principle of proportionality" should guide the level of Reformed training required for commissioned pastors: "The degree of understanding and skill required to apply the confessional tradition is proportional to the level of ministry responsibility assigned. As one's sphere of authorized service extends, so should one's capability for understanding, articulating, and discipling others in the Christian faith and Reformed confessional tradition" (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 264).

B. The core function of equipping the body

In Ephesians 4:11, the apostle Paul also recognizes several offices for people with different giftings—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—all of whom share the common thread of serving "to equip [Christ's] people for works of service," helping the body of Christ to mature in the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God.

In the *Agenda for Synod 1961*, the "Report of the Committee for the Study of the Use of Ordained Men" noted this same biblical foundation for all ministerial roles as the committee wrestled with the question of which types of roles should be considered ministerial. Their conclusion was that a variety of roles and responsibilities could be considered part of a ministerial role, as long as they served the purpose of equipping the saints for the building up of the body of Christ.

“... Are there no limitations to the duties which an ordained minister may legitimately perform? Indeed there are. Scripture sets these limitations. . . . [here the report includes quotations from 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; Col. 1:24-25] The limitation is this: the ordained minister has been appointed by God to labor for the welfare of the church; he must serve Christ “for the perfecting of the saints,” “unto the building up of the body of Christ,” “for his body’s sake.” It was for the sake of the church, the welfare of Christ’s body, that God appointed ministers to be His servants. (Agenda for Synod 1961, p. 248)

Commissioned pastors are essential to the task of equipping the body of Christ more fully for the works of ministry.

C. Pastoral role

Until 2013, commissioned pastors were to be recognized as elders within their congregations. That year the wording in Church Order Article 23 was changed to say that they should be “acknowledged as such” — that is, acknowledged as commissioned pastors (*Acts of Synod 2013*, pp. 556-57). No theological grounding was provided for this change at the time. However, a desire had clearly surfaced to name a reality that was present—that those serving in specialized roles were being viewed and experienced as pastors within their congregations, and the church desired to honor them as such, recognizing that this was the Spirit’s work among them.

In 2001 the “Committee to Study Ordination and Official Acts of Ministry” recognized that certain distinguishing features set those ordained to office apart. Those distinguishing features included the recognition of certain “excellencies” or spiritual endowments, a call from God, and a role that is “pastoral” and “representative” in nature.

[The] dual relationship of leader to Christ and leader to the people is what above all defines leadership in the church. Leaders are those who have both the call of Christ and the call of the people.

(Agenda for Synod 2001, p. 296)

The role for which the church properly ordains leaders is, as we have insisted, defined by relationship. The defining relationship is that mediatorial, pastoral role that re-presents Christ to the people and presents the people to Christ. This role is symbolized and enacted in the “official acts of ministry.” As a matter of definition, whenever a person is called into a primary pastoral role with a congregation, ordination is proper. (Agenda for Synod 2001, p. 287)

Essentially the role for which ordination is proper is pastoral and representative. It involves responsibility for the care of souls, for the shepherding of a flock. It involves re-presenting Christ to the people. As such, it involves those pastoral actions traditionally called the “official acts of ministry.” (Agenda for Synod 2001, pp. 294-95)

To summarize, the office of commissioned pastor is grounded in the following biblical principles:

1. God provides his church with a variety of pastoral gifts to enrich and extend her ministry and mission.
2. Pastors with specialized giftings are vital in the work of equipping the saints for the works of ministry.
3. Pastors with specialized giftings function in a pastoral relationship to the members of the congregation.

The Christian Reformed Church has gradually come to recognize and embrace the commissioned pastor office as a gift to the church, essential to its ministry and mission.

D. Identified need for additional clarity

Tension and confusion often arise from the fact that there are a wide variety of commissioned pastor job descriptions lumped together into the same category and treated in the same manner in our Church Order. Some commissioned pastor roles are full-time, and others are part-time. Some roles are very specific, and others broad. Some involve preaching and administration of the sacraments, and others do not. It can be problematic to have one set of expectations and regulations for training, salary, benefits, and supervision when there is such variance in job descriptions. Commissioned pastor learning plans are intentionally tailored to the individual, and this flexibility has been helpful and appreciated. However, this has also led to vast differences in the level of thoroughness of these plans. In an increasing number of cases, individuals are ordained to the office of commissioned pastor after receiving little to no CRC-specific training. The examinations of commissioned pastors can also vary widely from classis to classis. One commissioned pastor recently reported her surprise at not being asked any Bible knowledge or theology questions at her examination. It is possible that misunderstandings of the “principle of proportionality” have led to the assumption that some commissioned pastor roles don’t require any knowledge of the Bible. So it seems important to highlight that biblical knowledge should be a fundamental component of all commissioned pastor learning plans, since commissioned pastors are trusted by congregations to lead ministries that are rooted in an accurate understanding of Scripture.

Commissioned pastor learning plans also currently include the following core subjects (applying a principle of proportionality to determine the level of knowledge necessary for each position): CRC polity, CRC history, Reformed confessions, and Reformed hermeneutics. These subjects appear on a learning plan template provided by the Candidacy Committee. Currently there is no explicit expectation that the training in an individual’s area of ministry specialization (worship, youth ministry, discipleship, etc.) be rooted in a Reformed perspective, but it would be beneficial for classis representatives to consider this when crafting a commissioned pastor learning plan.

The increasing use of commissioned pastors in solo or lead positions seems to have also fostered confusion about the nature of this office. When the

same office is utilized both for part-time staff positions and full-time solo pastor positions, it is understandable that some confusion would arise around the nature and appropriate use of the office of commissioned pastor.

E. Clarifying categories of commissioned pastors

In order to bring additional clarity to the office of commissioned pastor described in Church Order Article 23 and to continue working toward providing appropriate and effective training pathways for all commissioned pastors, it is helpful to recognize three general categories that already exist within this office:

- **Specialized congregational ministry:** called to serve in a position whose primary responsibilities are in an area of specialized focus (e.g., youth ministry, children's ministry, discipleship, worship, etc.)
- **Church planting:** called by a congregation to serve as a church planter or solo pastor of an emerging congregation, with primary responsibilities focused on evangelistic preaching, outreach, and community engagement
- **Noncongregational role:** called by a congregation to serve in a non-congregational setting, such as chaplaincy or missions

Commissioned pastors who serve in a solo or senior leadership position in an organized church are not included these three categories; solo/lead arrangements are exceptional, and most involve an understanding that progress will be made toward ordination as a minister of the Word. Specifics for solo/lead arrangements can be found in Church Order Article 24 and its supplement and in the corresponding section of the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

Defining the three general categories will allow us to contour the training and ordination pathway for each one in a way that is more clear and effective.

- Commissioned pastors serving in **specialized congregational ministry** roles should exhibit gifts and competency in their area of specialized ministry focus, as well as a general understanding of Christian Reformed doctrine, perspective, and practice. So their learning plans should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for all commissioned pastors, as well as training with a Reformed focus in their area of specialty.
- Commissioned pastors serving in **church-planting** roles should have evangelistic gifts and experience in leadership, as well as a general understanding of Christian Reformed doctrine, perspective, and practice. So their learning plans should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for all commissioned pastors, as well as church-planting training endorsed by Resonate Global Mission.

- Commissioned pastors serving in **noncongregational roles** should exhibit gifts and competency in their area of specialized ministry focus, as well as a general understanding of Christian Reformed doctrine, perspective, and practice. So their learning plan should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for all commissioned pastors, as well as any training required for endorsement by Thrive’s chaplaincy consultant or by Resonate Global Mission. Commissioned pastors called to noncongregational ministry ought to be called in the regular manner by a local congregation and supervised by the calling council with a plan outlined in a covenant of joint supervision, which they establish before ordination.

To clarify the distinctions above, the Commissioned Pastor Study Team, with the concurrence of the Candidacy Committee, recommends changes to Church Order Article 23 and its supplement, as presented in the following addendum.

ADDENDUM

Proposed Changes to Church Order Article 23 and Its Supplement

(with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~)

Article 23

- a. The ~~task~~ calling of the commissioned pastor is to equip the church through a specialized pastoral role that is strategic for the church's well-being and witness. A commissioned pastor is commissioned to a specific job description, which is approved by classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, to determine whether or not the position fits synodical guidelines for that particular role ~~bear witness to Christ through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, church education, pastoral care, evangelism, and other ministries in order that believers may be called to comprehensive discipleship and unbelievers may be called to faith.~~
- b. *[unchanged]*
- c. ~~Commissioned pastors shall be acknowledged as such in their calling churches. Normally, their work on the church council shall be limited to the ministries in which they serve as commissioned pastors.~~
- d. *[unchanged, but Art. 23-d becomes Art. 23-c]*

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-~~dc~~

Grounds:

1. This wording better expresses the specialized nature of the office of commissioned pastor and its distinction from the office of minister of the Word.

2. Preaching and administration of the sacraments is sometimes, but not always, included in commissioned pastor job descriptions, so these are removed from the article itself and mentioned within the supplement instead.
3. This highlights the important fact that a commissioned pastor is ordained to a particular job description requiring the approval of synodical deputies, rather than confining this information to the regulations in the Supplement.
4. Article 23-c is redundant and covers no more than what is covered by Article 24-c.

Supplement Article 23-a

The office of commissioned pastor is applicable to a variety of ministries, provided that these ministries fit the following guidelines adopted by Synod 2001:

A. General Characteristics

The job description of a commissioned pastor should reflect the following considerations about the nature of this office:

1. Ordination to this office is appropriate when the church has recognized the strategic value of ministry extension in specific ways that enhance the public witness of the church, as well as the gifting of an individual who can serve in that role so that God's people may be built up for service. These officebearers of evangelist[*] may be understood to have the character of pastoral extension. Evangelists extend the work of pastoral leadership by founding and working in new congregations; and by extending the ministry of organized congregations into specialized areas, including, but not limited to, youth ministry, education, pastoral care, worship, and evangelism; and by extending ministry into noncongregational settings, such as chaplaincy or missions.
2. ... By the broader application of the office of evangelist, with its existing regulations, to a variety of ministry positions, the church avoids the multiplication of offices and provides a way of recognizing and regulating a variety of pastoral positions in our churches. These positions may be identified by titles that indicate their ministry distinctiveness such as chaplain, missionary, pastor of education, pastor of youth, minister of congregational life, and so forth.

(Acts of Synod 2001, p. 506)

[*Note: In 2001 the office was known as *evangelist*. The title was changed to *ministry associate* by Synod 2003 and to *commissioned pastor* by Synod 2012.]

3. These roles should have a primary function of equipping the body of Christ for the work of ministry.

4. The job description should make clear that the role is “pastoral” and “representative” for the congregation, often (but not always) involving pastoral actions traditionally identified as “official acts of ministry.”

B. General Categories of Commissioned Pastors

There are three general categories of commissioned pastor roles, each of which requires its own unique pathway of preparation.

1. Specialized congregational ministry: A commissioned pastor may be called to serve in a position whose primary responsibilities are in an area of specialized focus (e.g., youth, children, discipleship, worship, etc.). Those called to such roles should exhibit gifts and competency in their area of specialized ministry focus, as well as a general understanding of CRC doctrine, perspective, and practice. Their learning plan should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for commissioned pastors, as well as training with a Reformed focus in their area of specialty.
2. Church planting: A commissioned pastor may be called by a congregation to serve as a church planter or solo pastor of an emerging congregation, with primary responsibilities focused on evangelistic preaching, outreach, and community engagement. Those called to such roles should have evangelistic gifts and experience in leadership, as well as a general understanding of CRC doctrine, perspective, and practice. Their learning plan should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for commissioned pastors, as well as church-planting training endorsed by Resonate Global Mission.
3. Noncongregational role: A commissioned pastor may be called by a congregation to serve in a noncongregational setting, such as chaplaincy or missions. Those called to such roles should exhibit gifts and competency in their area of specialized ministry focus, as well as a general understanding of CRC doctrine, perspective, and practice. They must be called and supervised by a congregation. Their learning plan should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for commissioned pastors, as well as any training required for endorsement by Thrive’s chaplaincy consultant or Resonate Global Mission. The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define noncongregational ministers ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to commissioned pastors ordained to noncongregational roles under Article 23.

~~All commissioned pastor positions must be approved by classis, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, to determine whether or not the position fits these guidelines adopted by Synod 2001.~~ All commissioned pastors must demonstrate through an examination their ability to function in the ministry to which they are being called.

Examinations for the office of commissioned pastor must follow the guidelines established by synod as described and recorded in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

The Commissioned Pastor Handbook shall be consulted regularly, as it offers guidelines and regulations approved by synod. These include the protocol for examination, the creation of job descriptions, and the standards and qualifications to be met by those seeking to be ordained as commissioned pastors.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 783)

~~The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define noncongregational ministers ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to commissioned pastors ordained to noncongregational roles under Article 23. Commissioned pastor job descriptions related to the ministry of chaplaincy must be approved in consultation with Thrive.~~

~~*(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 613)*~~

~~*(Amended Acts of Synod 2025, p. 659)*~~

Grounds:

1. Removing the reference to decisions of Synod 2001 recognizes the ongoing development in the denomination's thinking about the office of commissioned pastor.
2. Separating "general characteristics" of commissioned pastors (which in the current Supplement are largely related to character) from the "general categories" of commissioned pastors provides classes and synodical deputies with greater clarity about what "pastoral extension" means, so that those tasked with approving commissioned pastor job descriptions are aided in their ability to discern whether a job description "meets synodical guidelines."
3. The material related to "general categories" gathers synodical regulations found elsewhere and collects them in a central place for easy reference.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

I. Introduction

There are two distinct and important aspects to our committee's work: *ecumenical* relationships with other Christian denominations and organizations and *interfaith* interactions between the CRC and non-Christian faith traditions. According to our Ecumenical Charter, "the CRC recognizes its ecumenical responsibility to cooperate and seek unity with all churches of Christ in obedience to the gospel."

To guide this effort, regarding the ecumenical directive in bilateral (denomination-to-denomination) relationships, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) uses two synodically approved categories. The category of *churches in communion* includes churches with whom the CRCNA has a particular confessional affinity or history. These denominations may be engaged in joint ventures with the CRC and/or its agencies, exchange delegates at synod, welcome each other's members at the Lord's Supper, recognize each other's pastors in the pulpit, and encourage each other in ministry and faithfulness. The category of *churches in cooperation* recognizes all other varied bilateral relationships the CRC has with Christian denominations. These relationships have emerged through mutual ministry interests, the work of CRC agencies, and sometimes from historic ties. In addition to bilateral relationships, we pursue multilateral relationships that allow numbers of denominations to come together in unity.

As determined by prior synods, interfaith efforts between the CRC and non-Christian faith traditions are led by a subcommittee of the EIRC. This subcommittee has continued to monitor and spur this work, particularly as it relates locally between and among Reformed congregations and those whose house of worship may be a synagogue, mosque, or temple.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the EIRC for the current year ending June 30, 2026, are Jake Bentum (2028/2), Ryan Braam (2027/1), Sheila Holmes (2026/1), Joshua Johnson (2026/1), William Krahne (2026/1), Marno Retief (2027/1), Shirley Roels (2028/2), Eleanor Boersma Sarkany (2027/1), Chad Steenwyk (2028/1), and William Wilton (2027/1). The general secretary (Zachary King) and the executive director-Canada (Al Postma) serve as ex-officio members of the EIRC. It is noteworthy that five of the ten EIRC members joined the committee during 2025. Each received a structured orientation to the committee that included substantial consideration of the CRC's Ecumenical Charter.

The EIRC met in person in November 2025 and virtually in February 2026. Another virtual meeting is scheduled for April 2026. Between formal meetings, the EIRC has three working subcommittees, two of which are focused on a Synod 2025 assignment. There are subcommittees reviewing the CRCNA's relationship with the Reformed Church in America and with the World Communion of Reformed Churches in response to Synod 2025's di-

rections (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 704-5, 711-12). A third subcommittee is reviewing ecumenical relations with the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken, a new denomination originating from a merger that includes a denomination with which the CRCNA has had *church in communion* status (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 541).

III. EIRC membership rubrics and nominations for membership

As decided at Synod 2025, the EIRC participated in the denomination-wide process to develop and communicate clear rubrics for committee and board member nominees (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76). In fall 2025, in consultation with the EIRC and other denominational groups, a standard rubric was developed, and specific details about knowledge and experience relevant to the EIRC were added. (For additional information, see the Council of Delegates report, section II, D.)

Some members of the EIRC are completing terms and are eligible for reappointment. Committee membership changes and recommendations will be reported to synod in the Agenda Supplement. Additionally, the EIRC has had to address the need to fill the terms of members who departed prematurely for varied reasons. As a result, some members' terms have been adjusted in order to retain the balance of when terms end. The committee recommends that synod take note of this action.

The EIRC also secured the approval of the COD for an exception to the regional balance requirement on the EIRC (see *Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 842), allowing Rev. Dr. Marno Retief (formerly representing Canada West, and now representing Canada East) to complete his first term ending in 2027. The EIRC requests that synod take note of this action as well.

IV. Bilateral relationships

The CRC maintains a relationship of *churches in communion* with 24 denominations and of *churches in cooperation* with 20 denominations/partners. The following continents are represented in the combined total of those relationships: Africa (24), Latin and South America (5), Europe and the Middle East (3), Asia (5), and North America (7). A complete list is available on the "Relationships" page of the EIRC website (crcna.org/EIRC).

One noteworthy addition is the CRC's *church in communion* relationship with the Alliance of Reformed Churches; Synod 2025 approved this new relationship subject to subsequent agreement by the Alliance (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 705). In early fall 2025, the EIRC received notice of full approval by the Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into this relationship with the CRCNA. This *church in communion* relationship is the first of its kind for the Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Currently EIRC members are working to forge closer understanding and engagement with *churches in communion* and *churches in cooperation*. In addition to participating in synodical exchanges, committee members are responsible for communicating annually with designated denominations to learn about the joys and challenges of Christian ministry in their contexts.

This interaction will create increased opportunities to pray with church leaders and share resources between ecumenical partners as the EIRC supports the CRCNA's ministry priorities (*Our Journey* milestones). By the time Synod 2026 meets, the EIRC will have designated its members for these ecumenical connections and will have completed guidelines for these engagements. These activities will link our members more closely with on-the-ground ministry leaders.

A. Formal exchanges

1. Rev. Jose Rayas attended the general synod of the Reformed Church in America in June 2025.
2. Rev. Al Postma represented the CRCNA at the 150th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in June 2025.
3. Rev. Reggie Smith represented the CRCNA at the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in June 2025.
4. Zachary King met with senior leaders of the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians and of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in September 2025 and in winter 2026 about areas of mutual ministry interest and support.
5. Dan DeKam and Zachary King attended the National Association of Evangelicals board meetings and senior leader gatherings in 2025-2026.
6. Zachary King and Elly Boersma Sarkany attended the 27th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, held in Thailand, on the occasion of the organization's 15th anniversary.
7. Rev. Jeong S. Gho attended the general assembly of the Reformed Church in Japan in October 2025.
8. Rev. Moses Chung attended the 10th General Assembly of the Hapdong Presbyterian Church of Korea in September 2025. While this is not a denomination with which the CRCNA has a formal ecumenical relationship, it is valuable to have such connections in his work as the Asian regional team leader for Resonate Global Mission.

Each of these participants filed a report with the EIRC about their exchanges.

B. Activities with bilateral partners

1. Reformed Church in America

The CRCNA continues to have a meaningful ecumenical relationship with the Reformed Church in America. While we have twenty-three other *church in communion* relationships, this is the one Reformed denomination mentioned in the Church Order (Art. 8-b). Synod 2014 and the RCA General Synod 2014 declared that "the principle that guides us, and the intention that motivates us, is to 'act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately'" (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 502-4). Yet Synod 2025 recognized a period of substantial and ongoing change in the RCA. To add clarity to CRC understandings, Synod

2025 approved the addition of a phrase to the regulations of Supplement, Article 8, D, 6 of the CRC Church Order that would improve clarity regarding the expectation that RCA pastors serving CRC churches will sign the CRC Covenant for Officebearers when entering ordained leadership within the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 711).

Further, Synod 2025 commissioned the EIRC to conduct a substantial review of the CRC-RCA relationship over the next five years (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 711-12). This includes a requested review of existing denominational collaborations. The EIRC has begun this review. As a first step, Zachary King and Joel Vande Werken (director of ecclesiastical governance) held a Zoom conversation with RCA pastors serving CRC churches in October 2025 to discuss the expectation for signing the Covenant for Officebearers. Then in November 2025, the EIRC established a designated subcommittee chaired by Rev. Chad Steenwyk to guide the broader review, and the subcommittee established a five-year work plan.

The focus in 2025-2026 is principally on research and analysis to determine the many varied ways in which CRC and RCA ministries are intertwined in local contexts, national connections, and international engagement. Subcommittee members are communicating actively with the following groups regarding current RCA connections and experience: Classis Iakota overture leaders; RCA pastors serving CRC churches; RCA pastors who are now serving congregations in the Alliance of Reformed Churches; CRC pastors serving RCA churches; leaders of union and dually affiliated congregations; CRC denominational agencies and institutions; and Canadian RCA-related congregations. The data and interview results will be summarized for Synod 2026 in the EIRC's supplemental report. Later in 2026 the subcommittee will seek to learn more about revised RCA polity and the role of its middle assemblies as a replacement for both its regional synods and its classes. The EIRC will continue to inform the CRC synod on an annual basis about its learning, evaluation, and recommendations.

2. Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK)

In 1967 the Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerken and the Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt (Liberated) became two separate denominations through a painful split. But in May 2023 these two denominations merged to become the second largest Netherlands-based Protestant denomination, adopting the name Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerken and consisting of 320 congregations and about 130,000 members who share the same three Reformed confessions. The Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerken had been a *church in communion* with the CRCNA, but the Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt did not have a formal relationship with the CRC. In a Zoom-based January 2026 conversation between an EIRC subcommittee and two NGK denominational leaders in the Netherlands, we learned more about their interests. They have pursued and received permission to translate and publish in the Dutch language *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*. They also seek to consider worship, confessions, church

practices, and categories for ecumenical relationships in our engagement. The NGK hopes to learn from the CRCNA in its experience with multiethnic churches, church planting, and diaconal ministries. Their leaders are also eager to forge connections between denominationally affiliated institutions of higher education and have particular interest in resources provided by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Currently the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken is revising and refining its categories for ecumenical relationships. It is also charting a varied path regarding inclusion of Christians in same-sex relationships. These factors also affect the CRC's relationship with the NGK.

The EIRC reviewed the nature of this ecclesiastical relationship in its February 2026 meeting. After substantial discussion, the EIRC recommends to Synod 2026 that the CRCNA extend and affirm a relationship with the new Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) as a *church in cooperation*.

Further, the EIRC recognizes that if synod approves this recommendation, there are potential implications for ecclesiastical partnerships with other church denominations. During the year ahead, our committee will review the current CRCNA partnership with the Protestant Church of the Netherlands (PCN) as a *church in communion*.

3. Africa exchanges

During the 2025-2026 ministry year, Zachary King organized a Zoom meeting to provide support for the three Nigerian denominations with whom we have *church in communion* relationships. In December 2025 there were conversations and correspondence with leaders from the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN), the Reformed Church of Christ for Nations (RCCN), and the Universal Reformed Christian Church (NKST) regarding their struggles for basic security from attacks by organized groups of thugs and terrorists. We offered prayers on their behalf and prompted a *CRC News* article (crcna.org/news-and-events/news/mission-partners-nigeria-request-prayers) to inform CRC members about these struggles. In the CRC's Ministry Plan (*Our Journey*), prayer with and for our global ministry partners is a priority. The EIRC wishes to note that it would be appropriate for synod to offer a prayer for these three historic mission partners as well.

Concerning East Africa, the EIRC has observed that the ambiguous conflict within the Christian Reformed Church of East Africa remains unresolved.

V. Multilateral relationships—ecumenical organizations and dialogues

The CRCNA belongs to a number of ecumenical organizations, including the Canadian Council of Churches, Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Global Christian Forum, the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Reformed Fellowship. We also participate in important dialogues among churches and groups of various Christian traditions. The organizations with which we have made specific connections this past year are highlighted in the following:

A. World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

The WCRC is divided into nine regions, six of which are represented by regional councils. The CRC is active in one such group, the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC). Additionally, when the WCRC held its 27th worldwide General Council in October 2025 on the theme of “Persevere Your Witness” (wcrc.ch/gc2025), Zachary King and Eleanor Boersma Sarkany attended as delegates.

As one of the influential founding denominations of the WCRC, the CRCNA has remained engaged with this organization for many years. Synod 2025 requested that the EIRC complete an analysis of concerns articulated in an overture and report to Synod 2026 regarding approval or disapproval of continued membership in the WCRC (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 704-5).

Since then, the EIRC has taken several steps. The committee received and discussed a written report submitted by our two delegates to the 2025 General Council of the WCRC. Upon request, Zachary King received feedback from Dr. Mary Vandenberg of Calvin Theological Seminary about some theological stances articulated by WCRC leaders. Additionally, the EIRC communicated in writing with Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, the interim general secretary, and Rev. Dr. Phillip Peacock, the incoming General Secretary of the WCRC (effective Feb. 1, 2026) about the CRCNA’s questions and concerns. This led on January 14, 2026, to a virtual session in which both general secretaries and a third WCRC leader, Dr. Hanns Lessing, participated with Zachary King, Shirley Roels, and the EIRC subcommittee tasked with this review. Subsequently, the full EIRC committee considered the report of its subcommittee. The EIRC’s report to Synod 2026 on this matter is included as an appendix to this present report. The WCRC has provided the CRCNA with a channel through which to understand the unity and diversity of the Reformed family of denominations. It has also been a means through which to seek justice and reconciliation across cultures. As a result, the EIRC recommends that synod affirm the continued membership of the CRCNA in the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

B. Canadian Council of Churches

Al Postma, executive director-Canada, and other EIRC members (see section V, D below) routinely participate in gatherings and initiatives of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and represent the CRCNA on the council’s governing board. He and others participated in the CCC’s November 2025 meetings.

C. Other multilateral organizations and dialogue

We benefit from partnership with the National Association of Evangelicals and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), and we participate in the United States Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue. Al Postma attended a denominational leaders’ meeting of the EFC. In December 2025, Zachary King participated in a National Association of Evangelicals retreat for denominational executives.

D. Appointed representatives and observers

The EIRC appoints representatives and observers to many of the aforementioned ecumenical organizations' meetings and to other ecumenical efforts. Often CRCNA members are asked by these organizations to serve as well.

1. In 2025, Dan DeKam was appointed to serve as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Al Postma and Ruth Hofman serve on the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). The Christian Reformed Church also has a number of representatives who serve on various standing committees, reference groups, and commissions of the CCC.
3. Al Postma represents the CRCNA to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).
4. Ronald Feenstra is the ecumenical staff officer representative of the CRCNA to the United States Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue. Two additional representatives include Matthew Lundberg and Clair Mesick.

VI. Interfaith activities

The Interfaith subcommittee of the EIRC continues its work. Membership includes Melissa Bos, Zachary DeBruyne, Frans van Liere, Tim Rietkerk, Naji Umran, Cory Willson, and the general secretary. The diverse composition of this committee provides opportunities for the EIRC to intersect with both Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University on their research of and engagement with the interfaith landscape. The subcommittee met in September 2025. Another meeting is scheduled for February 2026. The Ecumenical Charter that guides the EIRC states that our "responsibility is expressed locally (between and among neighboring congregations), regionally (among churches in a given geographical area), and denominationally (among churches nationally and internationally)." For interfaith efforts, the EIRC and its Interfaith subcommittee emphasize regional and local engagement. To that end, the EIRC seeks to highlight regional groups that are open to CRC members and to publicize local efforts. The Joint CRC/RCA Interreligious Committee has disbanded at the RCA's request.

VII. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Shirley Roels, chair, and Zachary J. King (ex officio) when matters relating to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee are discussed.
- B. That synod take note of the updated terms of the EIRC members rebalanced according to the interim positions that were vacated, and of the exception granted by the COD to the regional balance requirement, allowing Rev. Dr. Marno Retief (formerly representing Canada West, and now representing Canada East) to complete his first term ending in 2027.
- C. That synod reappoint three members to the EIRC to a second term, as found in the list of names presented in the Agenda Supplement.

D. That synod gratefully receive the positive response from the Alliance of Reformed Churches regarding the CRC's invitation to be a *church in communion* with the CRCNA, and offer a prayer and communication of thanksgiving for this decision.

E. That synod extend and affirm a relationship with the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken as a *church in cooperation*.

Grounds:

1. There is a strong historic ecumenical connection to approximately one third of the churches (the former Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken; see *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 62) that now are part of this new denomination.
2. The new denomination affirms the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism, as does the CRCNA. This basis supports cooperation in dialogue, relationships, and the shared use/development of ministry resources.
3. The time is not right to extend *church in communion* status, given the direction being charted by this new denomination regarding some matters concerning human sexuality. The new NGK polity allows local congregations to hold varied positions about the full inclusion of Christians in active same-sex relationships.

F. That synod affirm the continued membership of the CRCNA in the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Grounds:

1. The WCRC provides the broadest worldwide level of ecumenical engagement with Reformed denominations, many of whom already are ecumenical partners of the CRCNA.
2. Continued participation in the WCRC allows the CRCNA to offer a distinct confessional voice, influence, and contribution to and among the denominations in the WCRC.
3. The CRCNA has contributed significantly to the membership and worship planning of this ecumenical body.
4. The WCRC provides an important Reformed Christian forum in which to hear and respond to worldwide needs for Christian responsiveness to war, poverty, and other sources of injustice.

G. That synod offer a public prayer for the leaders and congregations of our three historic mission-partner denominations in Nigeria who have experienced upheaval, displacement, and violence over many years, and especially in the past two years.

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

Comprehensive Review of CRCNA Membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee responds here to synod's instruction that our committee "conduct a comprehensive review of the CRCNA's membership in the . . . [World Communion of Reformed Churches] and report back to Synod 2026" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 704-5). This report includes consideration of the concerns expressed in an overture submitted by Classis Illiana (Overture 24, *Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 388-92) but it is not limited to them. The report also includes a recommendation regarding future CRCNA membership in the WCRC.

I. Preface

The WCRC is the largest Reformed Christian communion in the world. It spans 230 denominations, 108 countries, and 100 million Reformed Christians on six continents. This network has its roots in the Protestant Reformation and, more particularly, in the theological teachings of John Calvin. Discussions about formation of the WCRC began with the CRC's encouragement by Revs. Leonard Hofman, David Engelhard, and Peter Borgdorff in 2000. They sought to consider such a possibility in close consultation with Dr. Richard Van Houten, general secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, which the CRC had been instrumental in founding after World War II.

Synod 2008 formally approved that the EIRC proceed in this uniting work to form one worldwide Reformed communion (*Acts of Synod 2008*, pp. 462-63). In June 2010, a uniting general assembly was held at Calvin College (now University) with delegates from both the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Rev. Peter Borgdorff planned and coordinated that meeting, which gathered Reformed Christians from six continents in a common worldwide witness. This was the occasion on which the Reformed Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches merged to form the WCRC. Rev. Borgdorff then served for several years on the WCRC's Executive Committee. The next such General Assembly was held in 2017 in Wittenberg, Germany, to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. At that assembly, the CRCNA was represented by Rev. Peter Bordorff as the CRCNA ecumenical officer. He was joined at that assembly by four other CRC lay and ordained leaders. Additionally, Rev. William Koopmans, a former chair of the EIRC, served as an adviser to the WCRC's Executive Committee in 2017 and for subsequent years.

Leadership of the WCRC was provided by Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi as its executive director from 2010 through 2014, followed by Dr. Chris Ferguson, a Canadian pastor, theologian, and social-justice advocate, from 2014 through 2021. During the pandemic years, the WCRC was served jointly by three co-executive leaders along with their board president, Rev. Najla Kassab, an

ordained pastor in the Evangelical Synod of Syria. From 2023 through 2025, Dr. Nyomi returned as an interim executive leader to plan for the WCRC's October 2025 General Assembly and prepare the path for a new executive director. In fall 2025 Dr. Philip Peacock, already a senior leader for the WCRC, was confirmed as the incoming general secretary. He began his service in February 2026.

II. Recent CRC engagement with the WCRC

Upon request, Zachary King received feedback from Dr. Mary Vandenberg of Calvin Theological Seminary about some previous theological statements articulated by WCRC leaders. Prof. Vandenberg reviewed three documents from the WCRC: the "Wittenberg Witness," the "Declaration of Faith on the Ordination of Women," and the "Joint Declaration on Justification." While Prof. Vandenberg said she appreciates some aspects of the documents (especially the original "Joint Declaration on Justification"), she noted that theological deductions in the "Wittenberg Witness" document and some additions to the "Joint Declaration" (such as a connection of justice-seeking to justification) raised concerns.

Then, from October 14-23, 2025, the WCRC held its most recent general assembly in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The theme of that gathering, "Persevere in Your Witness," was based on Hebrews 12:1. The CRCNA was represented by Rev. Zachary King as executive secretary and by Ellie Sarkany, a Canadian commissioned pastor who also serves on the EIRC. This gathering provided insights into the current WCRC emphasis on both communion and justice. It was also an opportunity to renew the ongoing conversation between the CRCNA and the WCRC.

After that assembly, the EIRC took several additional steps in its comprehensive review. The committee received and discussed a written report by Zachary King and Ellie Sarkany on the 2025 General Council. Additionally, the EIRC communicated in writing with Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, the interim general secretary of the WCRC, and Rev. Dr. Phillip Peacock, the new general secretary (effective Feb. 1, 2026) about its questions and concerns. On January 14, 2026, a virtual discussion occurred in which both general secretaries and a third WCRC leader, Dr. Hanns Lessing, participated with Zachary King, Shirley Roels, and the designated EIRC subcommittee to inquire about specific questions concerning the mission, authority, and stances of the WCRC. Subsequently the full EIRC committee considered the report of its subcommittee.

In the January 2026 virtual meeting, the WCRC leaders noted with gratitude the former CRC denominational leaders who were catalysts for the WCRC's development. They also noted their appreciation for worship-related support provided by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the CRC's steady presence and guidance over many years. WCRC leaders were asked what membership means in relation to WCRC statements and agreements. According to their ecumenical charter, decisions by the WCRC are

not binding on members. The communion does not have authority over their members.

Overall, the WCRC has adopted a system for how its statements are generated. The highest level of messages is produced by the general council from its meetings every seven years. All member churches discern and then work to confess something together. Every general council has a message that emerges with similar status. The second level is that of the general secretary and the president as the voice of the communion. They may speak on authorized positions, and they base their statements on what the WCRC has said in the past. They also consult with the region of the member churches that are directly affected by an issue. The third message level occurs in a meeting that produces a statement—but such statements belong to the members that are present at the meeting.

None of these levels impose specific requirements on any denomination member, however. Instead, the messages are invitations to discernment, dialogue, and discussion. In addition, the WCRC relates only to the highest-level assembly of a denomination, not to distinct regional bodies within a denomination such as classes. For example, after the WCRC adopted the Accra Confession, the CRC via EIRC assigned a specialized task force to consider that document in the CRC context. That task force report that was submitted to the EIRC noted both agreement with and reservations about the Accra Confession. It described ways in which the CRC was working actively to address substantial challenges in the relationships and resources between developed and majority world nations, but the EIRC did not recommend adoption of the Accra Confession as a theological commitment. That was not required, nor necessarily expected, by the WCRC. The WCRC has authority principally to suggest on the basis of persuasion, collective discernment, and mutual confession, but not in terms of force or coercion. When the organization does advocate, it may request a response from member churches or direct specific communications to governmental or international institutions; part of its purpose in advocacy is for its member churches to discern a response to current signs of the times in which the WCRC perceives God's call for Christians to be engaged. The WCRC focuses on analyzing the context and then allowing members to test and retest any given position.

Another example is found in the WCRC's affirmation of the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" (JDDJ). This document was jointly created and agreed to by the Roman Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation in 1999. It stated that the churches now share "a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ."¹ The statement continues by noting that good works are a genuine response to God's grace, not the

¹ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Preamble, 5; see lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/joint_declaration_2019_en.pdf.

cause of it. When the JDDJ was first presented to the WCRC in 2010, the CRC was one of two member denominations that registered doubts. In 2017 the JDDJ was approved by the WCRC in conjunction with the 500th-anniversary celebration of the Reformation in Leipzig, Germany. Still, the WCRC's affirmation is not binding on the CRCNA.

A question was raised about encouragement for women's ordination in all member churches. WCRC leaders explained that when the WCRC was formed, all denominations were invited regardless of whether they ordained women. The WCRC recognized that some did not ordain women for theological and cultural reasons. Yet as part of the #OrdainHer campaign from about eight to ten years ago, a gender review of participating denominations was completed. In the process, the WCRC recognized that a few member of its denominations do not ordain women. Yet the leaders also noted that the WCRC does not have authority within the context of a denomination. Because the CRCNA at its synodical level does allow for the ordination of women, there is no question in this regard about CRCNA membership and variations within the denomination.

III. Upcoming WCRC plans

With a new general secretary in place, the WCRC has begun its current strategic-planning process. In that process they plan to revisit the confessions and reexamine the signs of the times. Leaders noted that the WCRC constitution points to shared Reformed confessions that connect to diverse regional expressions. Looking back, they recall that by 1982 a strong movement to become a confessing communion was growing. In prior years, confessions were important in addressing apartheid in South Africa. More recently, at the 2025 General Council, one of the key themes focused on seeking to live out the Reformed Confessions. When they receive general assembly feedback about a confession, they work to listen carefully. Minority reports are important sources of feedback, and any feedback is passed along to the next general council. Feedback is also given to the program committee for potential inclusion in the definitive version of the general council workbook. Still, they see their path as one of discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being Reformed together. They see that these principles are central to the life of the communion.

Some people have questioned why the WCRC does not focus closely on gospel proclamation and evangelism. WCRC leaders noted that they do hear this critique. In response they noted that many of their member denominations excel in evangelism already. Therefore, they do not need the WCRC to add to work in which they are already engaged. Instead, WCRC leaders observe that there are global situations in which no one member denomination can have sufficient influence to bring needed change, particularly in matters of justice where there may be significant pain and suffering. Thus the WCRC focus on such matters is intentional.

IV. CRCNA membership in the WCRC

Based on this history, further research, and the outcome of the January 2026 virtual meeting, EIRC members had follow-up discussions about continuing membership in the WCRC. The concerns noted below were raised by the EIRC subcommittee, which also identified reasons for continuing membership in the WCRC.

A. *Concerns about continued membership*

- There appears to be less emphasis within the WCRC on the importance of the Reformed confessions, raising questions about confessional accountability.
- Some concern was expressed about a reduced focus on clear gospel proclamation, emphasizing the saving work of Christ on the cross, received by faith alone through grace alone to the glory of God alone.
- There is a perception that confessional Reformed perspectives may not always have adequate space in certain theological or ethical discussions within the WCRC.
- The justice issues highlighted in WCRC statements were viewed as appearing selective, arbitrary, or shaped by ideological frameworks rather than a consistently articulated Reformed theological rationale.
- The WCRC's participation in and endorsement of certain ecumenical agreements raised questions about potential tensions with the CRCNA's confessional commitments.
- The financial cost of membership was noted as a practical concern.

B. *Reasons in favor of continued membership*

- WCRC membership allows the CRCNA to maintain a unified witness in Christ across the global Reformed family.
- The WCRC embodies a broad diversity of worship, spirituality, and theological expression, reflecting the global character of the Reformed tradition.
- The CRCNA benefits from and contributes to the global exchange of worship practices, enriching our understanding of how the church worships across cultures and connects through the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.
- Continued participation enables us to stay in the conversation as Christian Reformed followers of Jesus, offering a distinct confessional voice rather than ceding space to others. Membership allows the CRCNA to be an influence for confessional Reformed theology, bearing witness to the authority of Scripture and the Reformed confessions in a diverse theological environment.
- The WCRC is the broadest Reformed ecumenical body in existence. Membership allows the CRC to engage denominations with whom we have a relationship but may not otherwise encounter due to limited staff time and financial resources.

- Over the past couple of decades, the CRCNA has had a considerable influence in the development of the WCRC. Additionally, the CRCNA played a role in bringing many members into the prior Reformed Ecumenical Council, one of the WCRC's predecessors. Thus, in the Reformed Ecumenical Council merger with the former World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), we brought many REC members into the WCRC. The CRCNA has a responsibility to be present with these former REC communions. Our continued participation honors and extends that legacy.
- The WCRC provides an international forum where issues of justice are named and addressed. It offers opportunities for engagement, discernment, and critique of global justice challenges from within the Reformed tradition.
- Through the WCRC, the CRCNA can contribute meaningfully to global Christianity, particularly in contexts where theological resources and institutional support are limited.

After weighing these considerations, the EIRC perceives that the benefits of remaining in the WCRC outweigh reasons for withdrawal. While some concerns are real and should not be minimized, the EIRC recommends the CRCNA's continued engagement, faithful presence, and critical participation in this global body. Remaining in the WCRC is an important way to bear witness, exercise influence, and remain accountable within the global Reformed communion.

Historical Committee

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934. Its revised mandate, as approved by Synod 2022, states the following:

The Historical Committee and the [general secretary] of the CRCNA are responsible for the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and its agencies, while administrative oversight is provided by the Hekman Library of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. The Historical Committee ordinarily communicates with the Hekman Library through the Hekman Library Archives Advisory Council. The Historical Committee also cultivates within the Christian Reformed Church, the wider church, and the academic world, knowledge of and appreciation for the CRCNA's history, heritage, and legacy by, among other things, identifying and assisting in accumulation of resources. *(Agenda for Synod 2022, p. 81)*

Current elected members of the committee, showing the concluding year and present term of service, are Stanley Jim (2026/1), Jessica Joustra (2028/1), Christian Oh (2026/1), Janet Sheeres, chair (2026/1); Don Sinnema (2027/1); and Rich Sytsma (2028/1).

Current administrative committee members are Jeff Haverdink (ex officio, representing Calvin University), William Katerberg (ex officio, as curator of Heritage Hall, without vote), Zachary King (ex officio, as general secretary of the CRCNA, without vote), and Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as president of Calvin Theological Seminary).

Since its 2025 report to synod, the committee met in person and via Zoom on September 25, 2025; November 6, 2025; and February 19, 2026.

II. Committee activities and reminders

The Historical Committee has communicated with classical representatives—in virtually all cases the classical stated clerk—to remind churches to submit minutes and other records to Heritage Hall on a timely basis. (Every three to five years is ideal.) Heritage Hall is also in regular contact with administrative assistants of local congregations. The committee is grateful for the role of classical representatives in encouraging compliance by congregations and for the work of congregation administrators in keeping the archives up to date. Heritage Hall's copies of these records serve as backup protection for congregations and contribute to the denominational collection of archival records.

Council minutes are kept restricted for 100 years. They may be accessed only by permission of the church council, provided on the congregation's letterhead. Minutes that are more than 100 years old, most of which are in Dutch, can be accessed by permission of the curator. For more information

on records management for congregations, please see the Heritage Hall website (library.calvin.edu/hh/crcna).

Heritage Hall has shifted to keeping church minutes online, as microfilm services have become increasingly expensive and many vendors have shut down. It is most efficient to send minutes to the archives in digital format, since paper copies must be scanned. For the best way to send minutes, contact Heritage Hall's assistant archivist, Jen Vos, at crcarchives@calvin.edu or jen.vos@calvin.edu. For best practices for organizing and keeping minutes and submitting them to Heritage Hall, please see the Heritage Hall website.

In addition, the committee asks that congregations observing anniversaries send copies of commemorative materials to Heritage Hall (e.g., booklets). Congregations should also send copies of church directories, about once a decade, and news clippings. The committee recommends that congregations also check with Heritage Hall to see if it has copies of their incorporation papers and bylaws—as backups in case the originals might ever be lost or damaged.

Finally, committee member Richard Sytsma published *We Served Side by Side: The Cooperation of the Christian Reformed Church Japan Mission and the Reformed Church in Japan, 1951-2017* (Van Raalte Press, 2025). At the heart of the cooperative work chronicled here was the partnership of missionary couples with Japanese pastors and their wives as they served together in team ministries to begin new churches.

III. Report on the activities of Heritage Hall

A. Archives staff

Heritage Hall had no staffing changes in the past year. Our staff includes Will Katerberg as curator; Jen Vos as assistant archivist and digital specialist; Alyssa Johansen as archives assistant; and Laurie Haan as archives assistant. We also have one student worker, who will be returning next year. Volunteers remain important to the work of the archives. Phil Erffmeyer works on a variety of projects, processing church council and classis minutes and organizing collections. Clarice Newhof is cataloging our biographical data collection.

Churches can contact archives staff through our general email address (crcarchives@calvin.edu) or general phone line (616-526-6313). To connect with the curator, email will.katerberg@calvin.edu. Visit our website for more information (library.calvin.edu/hh/crcna). The mailing address is Heritage Hall, Calvin University, 3201 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, 49549.

B. Archival activity during 2025

1. New online catalogs and digital archiving

Heritage Hall has upgraded its online “finding aid,” which catalogs the university, seminary, and denominational collections and describes and catalogs its manuscript collections (i.e., collections related to Reformed history and Dutch-ethnic history in North America more generally). It was using a

dated Archon platform that grew increasingly hard to support; it is shifting to ArchivesSpace, an industry-standard platform commonly used in the United States.

Shifting to ArchivesSpace will benefit Heritage Hall as it implements the Preservica platform for archiving digital records. The archives will begin to archive digitally born records using Preservica rather than printing and storing them. Digital preservation is the industry-standard practice. It is also a practical matter. Heritage Hall's primary storage areas are at 90 percent capacity. It has some new compact shelving in the basement of the library, but the archives will continue to need more space or will need to invest in compact shelving in its main storage areas.

The archives are 20 years behind in beginning to archive digital records systematically. Heritage Hall has begun doing so with church council and related minutes, but it does not yet have an adequate platform for doing so generally. Preservica will address this need. It is the digital equivalent of "brick and mortar" storage infrastructure for analog material. It meets essential needs such as secure multisite cloud storage; public access controls; catalog integration with ArchivesSpace; and automated processes such as file preservation, indexing, and file-format updates. Preservica will enable efficient management of digital records by Heritage Hall's small staff. It also aligns with institutional priorities by supporting long-term data security and accessibility.

2. Collections

In the past year Heritage Hall had the usual variety of small accessions of manuscript material, genealogical and family history records, rare books, photographs, and so on—as well as repository material from the university and the denomination. Examples of accessions in 2025 include material related to Stanley Wiersma; CRC congregations that have closed; CRC missions in Nigeria; Reframe Ministries (Back to God Hour); the Michigan Theological Society; and Neal Plantinga. Heritage Hall will also be archiving some material from the Trinity Christian College special collections.

3. Digitization and indexing

Current indexing projects include *Chimes* (the Calvin University student newspaper) and *Spark* (the alumni magazine). In relation to the 150th anniversary of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary in 2026, Heritage Hall is digitizing fifty years of *Chimes* with the support of the Calvin University Alumni Association. As resources permit, in the coming year Heritage Hall will also digitize other university and seminary periodicals such as *Prism* (annual photo yearbook) and *Stromata* (a seminary student magazine). The digitized periodicals will become part of Hekman Library's Digital Commons (digitalcommons.calvin.edu/).

4. Promotion and outreach

During the past year the archives staff worked with a variety of seminary and university faculty, classes, and students doing presentations about the

archives and research in them. It gave students tours of the collections and rare-books areas and provided them with material from various archival and rare-books collections. In spring 2026 the curator taught a three-week class on the history of the seminary and university for the Calvin Academy of Lifelong Learning and delivered a public lecture on the history of integrating faith and learning at Calvin.

Origins: Historical Magazine of the Archives and *Origins Online* (origins.calvin.edu/) continue to reach a variety of audiences. The fall 2025 issue of the magazine included articles on Calvin College and the Seminary in the early twentieth century; Dutch waste haulers in Chicago; a memoir of a family's emigration to the United States after World War II; and more. The spring 2026 issue includes articles on the founding of the *Theologische School* in 1876, the final installment on the World War II letters of Walter and Wilma Lagerwey, and more. Posts on *Origins Online* in the past year included topics such as Calvin College's first baccalaureate degrees, the four campuses of the seminary and university, and the SS *Calvin Victory*, a ship built in 1945 for transporting livestock. The blog website also provides access to back issues of *Origins* magazine—currently through 2024.

Heritage Hall also has a Facebook page, enabling it to reach out to a variety of audiences (facebook.com/heritagehallarchives). It will continue to assess its social-media presence and find ways to connect with denominational, university, and seminary audiences as well as others interested in the history of Reformed Christianity and Dutch North Americans.

C. Research

In the past year we have hosted scholars, students, and community members working on a variety of topics. Most common by far have been family histories. Other research topics have included Christian schools; Grundy College; Hendrik de Cock; Christian Reformed missions in New Mexico and Arizona; Dutch American women; Christian schools; local churches; race relations and Grand Rapids area churches; Henry Beets; Vern Ehlers; Diet Eman; Lee Huizinga; history and photographs of Calvin College and Seminary; and *The Witness* and *Religion and Culture*, two magazines associated with the Ralph Janssen controversies of the early 1920s.

A student worker from the seminary did research with the curator during summer 2025 on Korean American congregations in the Grand Rapids area. The goal of the research was to gather some of the congregations' history and to begin to develop relationships between the Heritage Hall archives and those congregations.

In addition to editing and writing in the *Origins* magazine, the curator, William Katerberg, wrote blogposts for *Origins Online*. He is also preparing to deliver a paper at a conference on ethics, history, and archival work at a symposium at Georgetown University. In addition, he is finishing a new history of the seminary and the university, and he is continuing research on

Native American policy as part of his role as a professor in the historical studies department, where he teaches one course a year.

IV. Anniversaries

The committee is grateful to Heritage Hall staff for compiling the following information on forthcoming ordination and congregational anniversaries. We congratulate ministers and churches on reaching these milestones.

A. Ordained ministers — anniversaries of service

The names are living clergy with current ordained status in the CRCNA. They are listed according to years of ordained service in the CRCNA.

50 YEARS (1977-2027)

Bekker, Gary J.
Boukamp, Ronald L.
Bouwman, Roger A.
De Jonge, Bernard H.
De Young, Roger
De Young, Wayne R.
Hartwell, Jr., Richard M.
Kamps, Gilbert J.
Kamstra, Douglas A.
Keizer, John G.
Klimp, Ronald A.
Kuipers, Jake
Lammers, Warren H.
Martin, Gregg Vincent
Niehof, Thomas
Slofstra, Peter
Steehoek, Donald J.
Stel, Philip
Tenyenhuis, John
Veenstra, William C.
Vreeman, Gerrit (Jerry) H.

55 YEARS (1972-2027)

Bierma, Merle H.
Bierman, Harry J.
Boot, Joel R.
Cooper, Dale J.
Davies, Mark A.
Erffmeyer, Gerald R.
Flikkema, Melvin J.
Fyneweaver, Ronald L.
Holwerda, Peter J.
Kortenhoven, Paul

Lagerwey, Donald W.
Lamsma, John H.
Lindemulder, Al
Palsrok, Russell
Postema, Gerald D.
Postuma, John
Remeur, James F.
Roels, Edwin D.
Tigchelaar, David J.
Van Daalen, Siebren A.
Van Schepen, John
Van Wyk, Kenneth E.
Vanden Bosch, William
Vanden Heuvel, Jack
Vander Plate, Jack C.
Visser, John

60 YEARS (1967-2027)

Blankespoor, Edward J.
Brouwer, Peter
De Vries, Ecko
Grevengoed, Richard O.
Koops, Ralph
Lunshof, Henry
Mans, Peter J.
Pool, Melle
Pruim, Jay R.
Rietema, Fred D.
Tinklenberg, Duane E.
Uken, Charles D.
Van Tol, William
Wagenveld, Louis W.
Warners, Douglas A.
Witvliet, John L.

65 YEARS (1962-2027)

Bierling, William A.
 Hofland, Gary G.
 Vos, Jack B.

70 YEARS (1957-2027)

Los, Eugene W.
 Stulp, Jack

B. Church anniversaries—at 25-year intervals

25 YEARS (2002-2027)

Chicago, Illinois – Grace and Peace
 New Lennox, Illinois – New Life

50 YEARS (1977 -2027)

Abbotsford, British Columbia – Trinity
 Alto, Michigan – Lakeside Community
 Beaver Dam, Wisconsin – Faith Community
 Goderich, Ontario – Trinity
 Lake Odessa, Michigan – Harvest Community
 Tillsonburg, Ontario – Crosspoint Community
 Woodstock, Ontario – Covenant

75 YEARS (1952-2027)

Allendale, Michigan – Second
 Blenheim, Ontario – Blenheim
 Brooks, Alberta – Brooks
 Burnaby, British Columbia – New Westminster
 Calgary, Alberta – River Park (First)
 Chilliwack, British Columbia – Cornerstone (First)
 Denver, Colorado – Hope Fellowship (Third)
 Duncan, British Columbia – Duncan
 Edmonton, Alberta – Inglewood (Third)
 Grand Rapids, Michigan – Alger Park
 Grand Rapids, Michigan – Cascade Fellowship
 High River, Alberta – High River
 Kalamazoo, Michigan – Westwood (Northwest)
 Lindsay, Ontario – Jennings Creek
 Lucknow, Ontario – Lucknow Community
 Mount Hope, Ontario – Mount Hope Community
 Niagara Falls, Ontario – Faith Fellowship
 Pembroke, Ontario – Zion
 Peterborough, Ontario – Cephas
 Sarnia, Ontario – Living Hope (Second)
 Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – Bethel
 Smithers, British Columbia – Smithers
 St. Thomas, Ontario – The Junction (First)
 Telkwa, British Columbia – Telkwa Community
 Terrace, British Columbia – Terrace
 Victoria, British Columbia – Victoria
 Wellandport, Ontario – Riverside

Williamsburg, Ontario – Williamsburg
Wyoming, Ontario – Wyoming

100 YEARS (1927-2027)

Bellflower, California – First
Grangeville, Idaho – Grangeville

125 YEARS (1902-2027)

Byron Center, Michigan – First
Edgerton, Minnesota – First
Holland, Michigan – Fourteenth Street
Hudsonville, Michigan – Bauer
Hudsonville, Michigan – First
Oak Harbor, Washington – Oak Harbor
Tracy, Iowa – Tracy

150 YEARS (1877-2027)

Penfield, New York – Rochester

V. Nominations

The committee assembled a slate of nominees for three appointments to the Historical Committee for three-year terms, to replace Stanley Jim, Christian Oh, and Janet Sheeres after they complete their terms on the committee this year. The list of nominees will be included in the Agenda Supplement.

VI. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to committee members Janet Sheeres, chair, and Jul Medenblik (seminary president) when matters pertaining to the Historical Committee come before synod.
- B. That synod appoint three members to the Historical Committee, each to a first term of three years, from the slate of names in the Agenda Supplement.
- C. That synod take note of the activities on which the committee has embarked and encourage leaders and churches to offer the committee suggestions and information related to them.
- D. That synod recognize with appreciation the service of retiring members Stanley Jim, Christian Oh, and Janet Sheeres, and of curator William Katerberg and the Heritage Hall staff, student worker, and volunteers.

Historical Committee
Janet Sheeres, chair
Rich Sytsma, secretary
Jeff Haverdink
Jessica Joustra
William Katerberg
Zachary J. King
Jul Medenblik
Donald Sinnema

Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee (JCC) was established as a standing committee of synod with the mandate to process hearings of Judicial Code matters referred to it by synod (*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 658). When called upon to provide recommendations to synod about a particular case, the committee also functions as an advisory committee of synod. In keeping with the instructions of synod regarding committee composition (see Supplement, Church Order Art. 30-c, Section 8, b), the following members are currently serving:

- Randy Engle, U.S., minister of the Word, 2028/1
- Jill Friend, U.S., nonordained person with no legal training, 2028/1
- Robert Drenten, U.S., minister of the Word, 2028/2
- Sarita Vandernaalt, Canada, nonordained person with no legal training, 2028/2
- Justin Snyder, U.S., nonordained person with no legal training, 2028/1
- Leah Nieuwstraten, Canada, person trained in law, 2028/1
- Heidi de Vries, Canada, person trained in law, 2026/1
- Gerritt Wieringa, U.S., person trained in law, 2026/1
- Deloris Carter, U.S., nonordained person with no legal training, 2026/2
- Bomsu Kim, U.S., minister of the Word, 2026/2
- Richard Bodini, Canada, minister of the Word, 2027/2
- Vacant, person trained in law, 2027/1
- Zachary King, ex officio
- Joel Vande Werken, staff support

In addition, the Office of General Secretary maintains a roster of volunteers willing to provide assistance to complainants and respondents with respect to prehearing procedures (Judicial Code, section 4, b). This roster is provided to any complainant or respondent upon request.

The Judicial Code Committee held its annual meeting on November 11, 2025. At that meeting the JCC reviewed its mandate, assessed the place of the committee as defined by synodical regulations, and took note of work being done to align two versions of the Judicial Code (one in the Church Order Supplement and one in the Rules for Synodical Procedure). The committee also reviewed its standards for committee membership in keeping with the instructions of synod (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76) and presented that information to the Office of General Secretary, as requested.

Standing committees of synod ordinarily present to synod nominations of persons to fill the vacancies created by committee members whose terms have expired. Because the Judicial Code Committee meets only at the request of synod, however, synod has assigned the responsibility for nominating JCC members to the Council of Delegates (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 633).

During the past several years the JCC has had a light agenda. Those who have been assisted by the JCC testify that the experience has been a good

one and has proved helpful. Members of the denomination are asked to note this avenue for settling certain differences that may arise in the life of the church, and churches are reminded that the full text of the Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures can be found in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. The committee stands ready to serve synod and church members should any requests arise.

Judicial Code Committee
Gerritt Wieringa (chair)
Joel Vande Werken (staff support)

SYNODICAL TASK FORCES

Addressing Accountability in Pastoral Misconduct (Response to an Overture from 2024)

I. Background

Synod 2024 received an overture (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 434-36) from a member of Hancock (Minn.) CRC, identifying a problem (determining and overseeing appropriate accountability for pastors found to have been responsible for abuse, misconduct, maltreatment, or job performance deficiencies) and proposing a solution (a licensing board).

Synod responded to the overture by pointing out an insurmountable challenge with the solution—namely, that such a licensing board “would exist outside of existing CRCNA structures” and thus “would conflict with CRCNA church polity.” But while noting that a variety of current structures and systems are designed to address this accountability (classis positions and procedures, church visitors, Safe Church ministry, Dignity Team), Synod 2024 also saw enough merit in the “issues of accountability” mentioned in the overture to ask the general secretary to look at those issues and report to Synod 2026 on “how to address them within Reformed polity” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 908-9).

The overture suggested three concerns that could undermine the accountability our current structures intend to provide:

- a (typical) council’s “lack of objectivity . . . when investigating abuse of power situations and cases because of the council’s . . . friendship with the pastor/church leader, their need for the pastor/church leader’s approval, and their fear of retaliation and rebuttal should a council member stand up against a pastor/church leader”
- a council’s lack of “expertise when reviewing complaints and situations that involve abuse issues by church leaders”
- a council’s lack of “ability to know how to do investigations of pastor/church leader wrongdoing, how to question the accused, how to write reports about their investigations, and how to conduct interviews.”

We also note the overture’s concern about “the burden [on] councils and consistories when they are faced with how to handle a pastor’s/church leader’s misconduct, allegations of abuse, and other difficult situations.” While synod did not base its response on agreement with these concerns, Thrive ministry consultants have observed the same concerns in their work with churches.

The goal of this response, drafted by Thrive staff with input from the Office of General Secretary, is to strengthen the credibility, transparency, and pastoral integrity of ministry leaders in a way that benefits the CRCNA as a whole. Councils do at times lack sufficient training and are too close to situations to handle them objectively. Their processes and decisions should be supported and reinforced by outside resources that can provide increased oversight and accountability.

II. Areas of focus

The issues identified in the overture from 2024 and observed by Thrive ministry consultants can be classified under a number of general categories:

A. Churches must formally investigate any type of alleged misconduct against a ministry leader, not just sexual misconduct

The Supplement, Church Order Article 42-b states that “when allegations of abuse against a church leader are brought forward to a church council, the council will contact the classis interim committee, which will appoint church visitors” to offer support and advice. This happens inconsistently, and classis functionaries are generally not trained to respond well when allegations are brought forward. The phrase “allegations of abuse” is almost exclusively defined by leaders as sexual misconduct, extramarital affairs, or sexual abuse of minors and does not encompass the wide range of allegations of abuse or ungodly conduct that may be received. Therefore the classis interim committee is rarely informed of allegations. This report will recommend an amendment to Supplement, Church Order Article 42-b to include “allegations of any type including general misconduct” and to include the safe church coordinator in the response team.

Expanding the scope to include a broader definition of abuse would reflect the CRCNA Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders and would acknowledge that councils receive concerns related to a wide range of misconduct and ungodly behavior that can cause real harm even when not meeting a strict “abuse” threshold. Involving trained classis-level resource persons, including the safe church coordinator, would also increase consistency, expertise, and pastoral care in responses, and would reduce the burden on local councils who may lack training in responding to complex allegations. In addition, requiring third-party involvement in cases that could lead to discipline would strengthen accountability, protect all parties involved, and increase trust that decisions are made carefully, fairly, and with appropriate oversight.

B. Administrative leave in cases of sexual misconduct should be mandatory, not optional

The Supplement, Church Order Articles 82-84 states that “an administrative leave may be imposed without prejudice.” Currently, leaves of absence are used inconsistently and are often imposed only in formal advisory panel situations. It can be difficult for councils to discern when a leave of absence should be considered in a case of allegations of abuse or misconduct. This can leave congregations and leaders in unclear situations, and the ambiguity may fail to communicate the seriousness of the allegations or the need to protect the community during an investigation. Clarifying and standardizing the use of nondisciplinary leaves would help to ensure consistent, transparent, and safe responses across the denomination.

This report therefore recommends an amendment to Supplement, Church Order Articles 82-84, to impose a nondisciplinary, mandatory leave of absence for allegations of sexual misconduct of any kind. Councils should always consider the necessity of a leave of absence following any allegation of abuse or ungodly conduct, including the message it sends about continuing in a leadership role while an investigation is conducted. Attention should be given to all allegations of abuse or misconduct, not only to those involving formal investigations or advisory panels.

Differentiating between leaves of absence and suspension will ensure clarity in process and communication, protecting both the leader under investigation and the congregation. Mandatory, nondisciplinary leaves provide an appropriate response while investigations are conducted, demonstrating seriousness and care for all parties. The need for a leave of absence should be considered in all relevant situations to safeguard congregations and maintain trust in church leadership.

C. Church visitors and councils need more clearly defined expectations for how to handle suspension and reinstatement

Church Order Articles 82-84 state that a neighboring council must approve a council's response. This approval is often binary—to discipline or not; to suspend or not—rather than to consider a more dimensional form of involvement. Further, the role of the church visitors in such cases is largely undefined, and the lifting of a suspension does not explicitly require the concurrence of (or even notification to) any outside party beyond the local council that imposed the suspension.

This report recommends an amendment first of all to Supplement, Church Order Art. 42-b to clarify that classis is required, at least through approval of a church visitor's report, to coordinate the involvement of safe church team representatives and to review a council's response to an allegation and provide oversight. Councils may lack sufficient objectivity to fully evaluate their own responses, and classis can instruct a council to perform a more detailed review if the initial response is deemed insufficient. Thrive staff also observe that it may be wise for councils responding to abuse allegations to invite the church visitors to be present during the consultation with a neighboring council required by synodical regulations.

In addition, this report recommends changes to Supplement, Church Order Articles 82-84 to require notification to the neighboring council as well as the church visitors when a suspension is lifted. Such matters should be reported to classis in the written report of the church visitors. The goal of this report is not to second-guess the council's decision but to provide greater transparency and credibility to the decisions of a council in a sensitive situation. The report of the church visitors would only be open for discussion and instruction to the council where there is concern about the adequacy of the council's response. This requirement, however, would ensure that there is a written record of the suspension and its resolution in the records of

classis, an issue that is of particular importance for the supervision of ministers of the Word.

Corresponding changes to the “Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Church Leader” are also included in this report’s recommendations in order to bring these procedures up to date with these other synodical regulations.

D. Councils are responsible to oversee the life and doctrine of all ministers whose credentials they hold (even if those ministers serve in another setting)

In several situations in the past few years, denominational staff have consulted with classis and council leaders who were caught off guard by the responsibility of responding to allegations of misconduct against a minister whose credentials they held but whose ministry was with another institution. Holding a minister’s credentials is not a mere administrative formality but a commitment to ecclesiastical supervision. A council that accepts this responsibility must ensure that it possesses the means to provide the oversight promised. When councils fail to maintain regular, substantive contact with noncongregational ministers, the “supervision of life and doctrine” becomes impossible to execute. This lack of engagement leaves the minister without a support system and leaves the council unable to faithfully fulfill its responsibility. Without proper oversight, those under the pastor’s leadership may be left in a vulnerable position.

However, this observation is not intended to frighten councils from carrying out this important responsibility. Synod 2024 received a report offering advice for councils holding the credentials of noncongregational ministers (see *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 86-88, 93-94). Because all supervision has relationship at its core, that report reminded councils and classes (as well as the pastors being supervised) of the importance of regular check-ins so that these relationships are as meaningful as possible. In this way, “the concept of call is honored more effectively, ministers in noncongregational service are blessed and encouraged [as well as supervised], and the calling church is aware of its ministry ‘reach’ via the ministers whose credentials it holds” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 94). Our ecclesiastical system provides support for councils facing unexpected challenges related to allegations of misconduct by the pastors it supervises, and we encourage councils to take ownership of the supervision process in the trust that God will provide the resources to address difficult pastoral situations if the time should come.

E. Background checks must become a routine part of the pastoral calling process

Synodical regulations already require a disclosure of past legal or ecclesiastical complaints for new candidates for ministry or for those seeking admission to CRC ministry from another denomination (*Agenda for Synod 2006*, pp. 321-22; *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 662), and such reference checks are also part of the process of readmission of ministers released from CRC ordination (Supplement, Art. 14-e). Thrive encourages this for all churches as part

of the calling process, whether for a minister of the Word, a commissioned pastor, or even an interim pastor.

Currently, however, there is no standard process for reporting past allegations of ungodly behavior for CRC ministers. In several cases, this has meant that pastors have faced allegations in multiple settings without other churches being aware. While our polity cannot compel churches to conduct such background checks as part of their calling process, we do have the ability to create a system to make this information available and to encourage churches to use it. Recognizing the reality that allegations may sometimes be used unfairly to undermine a pastor's future ministry, or that churches may have a bias against pastors who have an allegation on their record, we believe that a system would need to be developed in such a way as to encourage pastors to disclose such information themselves, and to limit information about allegations so that a church can access that only during later stages of the calling process. This report's recommendations will reflect this approach.

F. Classis safe church team coordinators should be appointed in collaboration with Thrive

Regional pastors are appointed in collaboration with Thrive. This allows the denominational agency overseeing the regional pastor program to be involved in the resourcing and training of regional pastors and to indicate any potential concerns before such appointments are made (see discussion in the *Agenda for Synod 2018*, p. 43). This report recommends that a similar procedure be adopted for safe church coordinators. This would allow Thrive to standardize the job description and participate in the interview process and selection of the candidate.

G. Thrive is able to provide substantial support to church assemblies in these situations

Thrive frequently encounters situations in which allegations or concerns are not handled effectively — sometimes resulting in unresolved issues and ongoing harm within congregations. For this reason we want to call attention to the resources available through Thrive and to the value of consultation in cases of ungodly conduct. Early consultation provides councils with guidance, expertise, and support, ensuring that responses are consistent, fair, and aligned with denominational expectations. Resourcing from outside congregations also promotes accountability, encourages councils to seek help rather than handling complex matters in isolation, and helps to safeguard the well-being of congregations and leaders.

Synod 2024 also observed, in responding to the overture from 2024, the importance of the resources available through Safe Church and the Dignity Team along with classis positions and procedures that exist to help church assemblies navigating allegations of abuse (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 909). This report aims to echo synod's encouragement for churches to utilize these resources rather than attempting to address such complex concerns alone.

Our polity emphasizes the importance of mutual discernment, available through a multiplicity of church assemblies. Though certainly there will be concerns about confidentiality when dealing with allegations of ungodly conduct by church leaders, protecting the privacy of the accused does not mean that councils (or, in some cases, council leaders) may fail to invite others into the conversation who can invite healthy discernment. While acknowledging the many wise leaders God has placed in the assemblies of the CRCNA, we also encourage councils and classes to utilize the resources developed by denominational staff specializing in procedures for responding to allegations of misconduct, as well as to lean into the shared discernment of the church's assemblies and functionaries such as church visitors.

H. These procedures should be reevaluated regularly

Finally, it should be noted that abuse prevention and response is a part of the church's life that is very much a topic of public discussion at this time, and that the legal and cultural factors shaping the church's response to allegations of ungodly conduct shift frequently. For these reasons the CRC would benefit from a regular review of the synodical regulations concerning these procedures. While changes could be adopted at any time by means of the ordinary synodical process, this report will recommend a regular review every three years in consultation with congregational support staff.

III. Conclusion

Synod 2024, in responding to the overture from 2024, recognized concerns over issues of accountability while at the same time suggesting that these issues could be adequately addressed by existing mechanisms in Reformed polity (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 909). This report largely agrees that we have structures in place to take seriously whatever allegations of wrongdoing are raised. Thus we recommend no substantive changes to the structures identified in the Church Order: the original authority of councils, the responsibility of classes in situations of special discipline, the advisory role of church visitors, and the place of the denomination as a support to the churches' ministry. While no system is perfect, Thrive consultants and other denominational staff can point to numerous situations in which church assemblies did take on the hard work of responding to allegations against a pastor and did so with careful, serious attention to God's truth and grace. We are thankful for all of the council members and classis leaders who have taken on such difficult responsibilities. Their work represents a faithful application of the gospel's recognition of the depth of human sin even in the church, and a trust that God disciplines those he loves (see Heb. 12:4-11).

This report also recognizes, however, that our structures do not always function as intended. For this reason, the following recommendations provide clarification about the roles of some of our ecclesiastical mechanisms when responding to allegations of ungodly conduct. These recommendations also provide strong encouragement for churches not to "go it alone"

when facing such complex situations. And they provide avenues for future follow-up to ensure that, as much as possible, we continue to address issues of accountability that may be easy to overlook.

Our confessions remind us that even believers can fall into “serious and outrageous” sins (Canons of Dort, Pt. 5, Art. 4; see Gen. 12:10-20, 2 Sam. 11, Matt. 26:69-75), which should not be addressed through “cheap grace.” This was an important emphasis as well in the study committee report that originally led to the creation of the denomination’s safe church ministry (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 332-33). As a denomination, we have taken steps to address that reality by reminding officebearers of the necessity of holiness in their leadership (Church Order Art. 5, and the Covenant for Officebearers and Code of Conduct found in its supplements) and by providing avenues for special discipline (Art. 82-84) and appeals (Art. 30) when leaders fall into sin. We believe that God has placed consistories in positions of authority to supervise the life and conduct of fellow officebearers (Art. 25-b), and that synod is correct to note that such structures are normally sufficient to address concerns about accountability. We lament those times when our human fears and biases have kept our systems from functioning as instruments of God’s justice and truth, yet we continue to trust that God’s Spirit will provide the necessary strength for our churches to grow in their ability to act as instruments of Christ’s redemption and healing.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod amend the regulations of Supplement, Church Order Article 42-b, as presented in Addendum 1 to this report, in order to expand the definition of “abuse” situations requiring formal involvement from assemblies outside the council, and to clarify the role of church visitors in responding to abuse allegations against an officebearer.

Grounds:

1. The current wording of Supplement, Church Order Article 42-b suggests that the classis’ involvement is mainly limited to allegations of physical and sexual abuse rather than ungodly conduct in general.
2. “Churches are to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise . . .” (Art. 42-b).
3. The proposed revisions assist classes by providing clear guidelines for the involvement of the church visitors in responding to allegations of wrongdoing.

B. That synod amend the regulations of Supplement, Church Order Articles 82-84, as presented in Addendum 1 to this report, in order to require the imposition of an administrative leave when allegations of ungodly conduct are received, and to mandate the involvement of a neighboring council in the lifting of an officebearer’s suspension.

Grounds:

1. Leaves of absence are applied inconsistently and often do not allow for an adequate investigation of allegations brought against a church leader.
2. Although a neighboring council must concur when an officebearer is suspended, and church visitors are to be involved in such situations, there is currently no corresponding expectation that other assemblies be involved when a council believes it has adequately responded to serious concerns about ungodly conduct.

C. That synod approve the updates to the “Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Church Leader,” as presented in Appendix B to this report, in order to bring that document into harmony with the changes to Supplement, Church Order Article 42-b and Articles 82-84.

D. That synod remind churches holding the credentials of noncongregational ministers (including chaplains, missionaries, professors, pastors loaned to other congregations, and those in other specialized ministry positions) that the councils of those churches hold primary responsibility for supervising the doctrine and life of such pastors (Church Order, Art. 13-b), and that synod call particular attention to the requirement that the supervising council has a duty to respond to allegations of ungodly conduct even if those allegations arise in the context of another institution or denomination (see Supplement, Church Order Art. 8, D, 9; Supplement, Art. 13-b, B; Supplement, Art. 42-b, b). While such a response may take place in coordination with the other church or institution, ultimate responsibility for decisions of discipline lies with the CRC assemblies.

Ground: A council that accepts this responsibility must ensure it possesses the means to provide the oversight promised.

E. That synod encourage churches, as part of their pastoral search process, to conduct a background check on pastoral candidates before presenting a nomination to the congregation for approval, and that synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to develop a process for maintaining a history of allegations against pastors while accounting for the sensitive nature of such information.

Grounds:

1. Such evaluations are required for new applicants for CRC ministry (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, pp. 366, 385; *Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 465), but there is currently no system in place to assist churches in being aware of issues that may have arisen since a pastor’s ordination.
2. The need for churches to be aware of allegations of ungodly conduct must be framed by concern for appropriate recognition of confidentiality concerns, particularly where allegations remain unproven or have been adequately addressed.

F. That synod remind churches of the resources available through the denomination, particularly through Thrive, to support the assemblies' response to allegations of ungodly conduct, and that synod strongly advise councils and classes to make use of these resources when dealing with such matters.

G. That synod instruct classes to consult with Thrive staff in the process of appointing new classis safe church coordinators.

Grounds:

1. This proposal represents a deliberate attempt to keep appointment and accountability close to each other within the classis, while at the same time maintaining a vital and necessary connection with Thrive.
2. This method has been utilized well for the appointment of regional pastors (Supplement, Church Order Art. 42-d, b; see *Agenda for Synod 2018*, p. 43).

H. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to review the CRCNA's abuse response procedures every three years in order to report to subsequent synods on the effectiveness of these procedures.

Ground: The continued prominence of this issue in the church and in wider society merits the regular review of our procedures.

I. That synod express its deep appreciation for the councils and classes who have sought to faithfully address allegations of abuse against a church leader under their supervision, and that synod pray for the Spirit's wisdom and clear guidance for all officebearers who may find themselves confronting such difficult situations in the future.

J. That synod thank Thrive staff for their work in supporting churches and classes as they seek to prevent and respond to incidents of ungodly conduct by church leaders, and that synod accept this response as a fulfillment of the instruction of Synod 2024.

Thrive staff, with input from the
Office of General Secretary

APPENDIX A

Updates to Church Order Supplement

I. Proposed updates to Supplement, Church Order Article 42-b

We propose that the Supplement, Church Order Article 42-b be changed as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~):

Supplement, Article 42-b
[subpoint a unchanged]

- b. When allegations of abuse or other ungodly conduct against a church leader are brought forward to a church council, the council

will contact the classis interim committee, which will appoint church visitors to do the following:

- 1) Meet with the church council of the accused for the purposes of advice, encouragement, and support as the council determines the most appropriate process for investigating and responding to the allegations (~~advisory panel process, independent investigation, mediation/restorative conversations, other~~) and to ensure the involvement of safe church team representatives in addressing the concerns.
- ~~2) Participate as an observer on the panel if an advisory panel process is initiated.~~
- 23) Advise the church council as they discern how to follow up on and respond to the advisory panel findings of an investigation.
- 34) Prepare a written report detailing their observations of the advisory panel investigation's proceedings and the council's response. The report is to be kept confidential and will be submitted to the church council and, if requested, to the claimant, the claimant's advocate, the accused, and the support person for the accused. The report is to be kept confidential and may be submitted to classis with a summary providing an account of the church visitors' work (Church Order Art. 42-b) with the full report submitted confidentially but considered only if there is an appeal of the council's decision. All parties shall commit to maintaining the confidentiality of the report.

II. Proposed updates to Supplement, Church Order Articles 82-84

We propose that the Supplement, Church Order Articles 82-84 be changed as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~):

Supplement, Articles 82-84

The Admonition and Discipline of Officebearers

- a. An administrative leave may be imposed without prejudice by the council in order to investigate allegations of deviation from sound doctrine or godly conduct. Such administrative leave is mandatory for allegations of any kind of sexual misconduct. Compensation and benefits would continue, and any duties to be performed during the leave would be specified by the council. All suspensions and administrative leaves are temporary.

[subpoints b-g unchanged]

- h. The lifting of suspension is the prerogative of the assembly which imposed suspension, with the concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.

[subpoints i-k unchanged]

Updates to “Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Church Leader”

We propose that the “Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Church Leader” be changed as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~):

[point 1 unchanged]

2. Responding to abuse by a church leader when the claimant is an adult

The guidelines in this section describe the process to be followed (1) when the claimant is an adult or (2) when the claimant comes forward as an adult with an allegation of abuse that took place during childhood or adolescence.

- a. The claimant contacts the Thrive safe church consultant office of Safe Church Ministry or a classis safe church team for an advocate. The advocate will assist the claimant with her or his allegation by helping to compile witnesses and testimony, by attending the panel session with the claimant, and by advocating for the claimant before other ecclesiastical bodies. If an allegation is first addressed (whether formally or informally) to a council or classis, the assembly should contact the denominational or classis safe church consultant to initiate the process of addressing the allegation.
- b. The advocate should contact a member of the executive committee or similar committee (executive) of the accused person’s church council or the chairperson of the safe church team (team) with the allegation of abuse. The contact should include the allegation in writing with the names of the claimant and the accused person.
- c. The executive notifies the safe church team chairperson (or the chairperson notifies the executive) of the advocate’s contact. The executive (or chairperson) will identify the claimant, the accused person, and the allegation known at that time. The council will also contact the interim committee of its classis, which will appoint church visitors to assist the council in responding to the allegations (Church Order Art. 42-b).
- d. The executive calls a meeting ~~with the executive committee or to~~ include representatives of the council, the claimant’s advocate, ~~the church’s Safe Church leader or the Classis Safe Church Coordinator~~ a safe church representative, and the church visitors to

develop a plan for exploring the veracity of the allegations.¹ Ordinarily, the plan will involve

- ~~Suspending~~ placing the accused on administrative leave from their duties without prejudice until the allegations have been investigated.
- participating in a 60-minute safe church ~~Ministry~~ orientation and training on due process, abuse awareness, and response (cf. Supplement, Church Order Art. 30-a, A, 3).¹²
- at least one of the following processes:
 - 1) an advisory panel process exploring the gravity and probability of the allegations of abuse (the denominational ~~Safe Church Ministry~~ office is available to convene the panel)
 - 2) an independent investigation into the allegations of abuse (the denominational ~~Safe Church Ministry~~ office will keep a list of reputable investigators). It is strongly recommended that councils make use of an independent investigator in the following situations:
 - a) The accused or claimant is a prominent leader in the community or region such that impartiality is especially elusive.
 - b) The accusations consist of multiple victims or multiple jurisdictions.
 - c) Real or perceived conflicts of interest make impartiality especially elusive.
 - 3) an internal investigation led by a designated investigation team
 - 4) mediational/restorative conversations or other avenues of resolution
- e. Denominational ~~Safe Church Ministry~~ staff are available to help the council execute the agreed-upon plan for responding to abuse (i.e., providing a list of independent investigators, initiating an advisory panel, providing training and counsel, and/or providing resources regarding how to conduct a church investigation).

¹Before handling situations involving abuse allegations against a church leader, members of a council along with the church visitors will participate in a 60 minute Safe Church Ministry orientation and training on due process, abuse awareness and response. Training will be made available through Safe Church Ministry.

¹² This training might be fulfilled through watching and discussing a safe church ~~Ministry~~ training video, participating in an in-person training by a safe church representative or mental health professional, engaging in a live online Zoom training with safe church staff, or taking part in some combination of these options.

f. Ordinarily, once a formal claim is filed, neither the claimant (advocate) nor the accused person should meet with the council prior to the time when the panel's report is considered.

3. Convening an Advisory Panel

[subpoint a unchanged]

b. If a classis does not yet have a safe church team, then the advocate or the executive should contact the nearest team to convene an advisory panel (panel). A panel should be convened as soon as possible after it receives a request to convene. If the accused person is an employee of the CRCNA or an agency of the CRCNA, the panel shall include an observer who is a representative of the employer to be named by the executive director of the CRCNA in consultation with any agency involved. If the accused person is an officebearer, the panel ~~will ordinarily~~ shall include two church visitors of the classis of the accused's church as observers. The observers shall not participate in the panel but simply observe the proceedings.

[subpoints c - l unchanged]

m. The council has thirty days from receipt of the report to adjudicate the allegation and decide the next course of action. The council will notify in writing the claimant and the accused person of its adjudication and its next course of action. The council may conduct its own hearing into the matter, and if so, the claimant and the accused person may have legal counsel present at the council's expense. Guidance on hearing procedures can be found in the Supplement to Article 30-c of the Church Order, "Judicial Code of Rights and Procedures," ~~Sections 2-5~~ Articles 2-14.

n. The church visitors shall be present at all deliberations regarding the council's response to the allegations of abuse. At the end of the deliberations, the church visitors will prepare a written report detailing their observations of the advisory panel proceedings and the council's response (Thrive has a template available). The report is to be kept confidential and will be given only to the church council, and, if requested, to the claimant, the claimant's advocate, the accused, and the support person for the accused. The report ~~may~~ is to be submitted to classis with a summary providing an account of the church visitors' work (Church Order Art. 42-b), with the full report submitted confidentially but only considered if there is an appeal of the council's decision to classis.

[subpoint o unchanged]

p. Either the ~~The~~ claimant ~~or~~ and the accused person may appeal the decision of the council. Such appeals should be addressed to the

classis, where standard appeal procedures are applied as outlined in Article 30 of the Church Order and Its Supplements. When an Article 30-a appeal involving allegations of abuse against a church leader comes before classis, the synodical deputies will advise the classis in order to ensure that fair process and proper respect and care for all involved are maintained (per Church Order Art. 48-c).²³

4. Five important footnotes

- a. These are *suggested* guidelines. The circumstances of abuse may dictate that church officials deviate from them. In addition, state and provincial laws vary somewhat in terms of the manner in which abuse is defined and how it should be reported. The presumption should be in favor of following the guidelines in the case of each allegation of abuse; however, the church is best served by retaining legal counsel with expertise in the area to define the legal standards relevant to a particular jurisdiction. Furthermore, ~~denominational staff should~~ the director of Safe Church Ministry can be consulted regarding the application of the guidelines.

[subpoints b-e unchanged]

²³ “Besides the duties elsewhere stipulated, the deputies shall, upon request, extend help to the classes in the event of difficulties in order that proper unity, order, and sound doctrine may be maintained” (Church Order Art. 48-c).

Defining Membership Task Force

I. Introduction

Synod 2024 received an overture authored by Rev. Andrew Aukema, pastor of Inglewood CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, requesting advice regarding how the confessions and their interpretations apply to confessing members who are not officebearers (Overture 17, *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 456-58). In response, synod tasked the Office of General Secretary “to provide theological reflection and advice on the historical, biblical, and theological aspects of membership.” In assigning this task, synod observed a need for clarification in the “difference in the relative commitment to the confessions between a member and an officebearer” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 866-67). Synod later noted that this response to Overture 17 would cover the issues posed by another overture as well: Overture 32 from Classis Alberta North. That overture asked a number of specific questions about the implications of synod’s decisions regarding Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 on the wider life of the church (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 941-42).

Because this task was assigned to be reported “after receiving thoughts from Calvin Theological Seminary,” a small staff group of Zachary King (general secretary), Joel Vande Werken (director of ecclesiastical governance), and Jul Medenblik (president of Calvin Theological Seminary) gathered as a task force to review past synodical guidance on the matter of church membership. Over the course of several months, this task force also met with a number of CRC leaders throughout North America to discuss the ways in which congregations are implementing decisions about church membership in their own contexts. The Office of General Secretary is thankful to all whose wisdom and experience provided helpful input for this conversation. We also recognize the administrative support provided by Ashley Medendorp (coordinator of synodical operations) and help from Thrive staff who reviewed the final report.

II. Biblical and theological reflection on membership

Membership is a key part and process by which a local church body is identified and commitments are made before God and each other as part of the visible expression of a congregation’s faith. The Heidelberg Catechism expresses our understanding of the church as “a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith” and prompts believers to confess personally, “And of this community I am and always will be a living member” (Q&A 54).

In the catechism’s summary of biblical teaching here we find two important points: the community of God’s people is (1) “chosen for eternal life” and (2) “united in true faith.”

To belong to the church begins with being “chosen,” not simply with our “choosing” (see Eph. 1:4-6; John 15:16; Rom. 9:16). The church consists of members gathered by the electing love of God into the fellowship of his people sanctified by Christ’s blood and by the work of the Holy Spirit (see

Belgic Confession, Art. 27; Canons of Dort, Pt. 2, Art. 9). In the Reformed churches this emphasis on election is seen most clearly in our theology of baptism. Because infants as well as adults are members of God's covenant people (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 74), our understanding of church membership is grounded in an individual's baptismal identity, which in turn points us to the communion we enjoy at the Lord's table (see *Agenda for Synod 2011*, pp. 578-79).

Along with this, Reformed theology sees the church as a community in which we are "united in true faith" (see 1 Cor. 15:1-11; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Tim. 6:12). And while faith itself is also a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9), our understanding is that those who share one faith will have a desire to publicly confess that faith together. This common confession of faith comes to its fullest expression in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, where "we engage together, with thanksgiving . . . as we thus confess our faith and Christian religion" (Belgic Confession, Art. 35). Thus our communion liturgies include a recitation of the church's creed, and the CRC has traditionally given an important place to public profession of faith. Though this profession is no longer tied to admission to the Lord's Supper in all of our churches, our Church Order and church culture continue to see public profession of faith as an indicator of a mature Christian life (see Church Order, Art. 59-b). In fact, only confessing members may participate in the governance of the church or present children for baptism (Church Order, Art. 59-c). The process of membership in Reformed polity is overseen by the elders.

However, membership is not limited to its doctrinal and sacramental aspects. The life of a professing Christian is a life of ongoing discipleship and growth as well as participation in the witness and work of the church. As part of the "communion of saints," each member of the church also considers it a "duty" to use one's gifts, which are imparted by Christ, "readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 55; see 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Rom. 12:3-8). Church members together also proclaim the grace and truth of Christ to the world through their words and actions (Isa. 49:6; Matt. 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 3:13-16).

While membership in the body of Christ is fully a gift of God's grace, the CRC has long recognized that our shared witness to Christ in the world as members of that body includes some sort of content that we affirm together. To that content we now turn our attention.

III. The content of confessing membership in the CRC

A discussion about membership should include some background on what it means to be a confessing member in the Christian Reformed Church. While membership in the CRC begins with and is rooted in one's baptism, the promises of God in baptism call each individual to a public profession of faith in those promises. When synod first adopted a liturgical form for profession of faith in 1932, it formulated four questions to be answered publicly by persons committing themselves to membership in the local

church.¹ Those questions asserted the importance of a personal love for Christ, an acceptance of God's covenantal promises, a confession of the truth of Scripture as summarized in the Reformed confessions, and submission to the government and discipline of the church (*Acts of Synod 1932*, pp. 79-80). While modified somewhat by the addition of a second version of the profession of faith form in the 1970s (*Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 89, 351-54), these four themes have more or less shaped the CRC's understanding of confessing membership for much of its history.²

Beginning in the 1990s, the desire to connect the Lord's Supper more directly with baptism led to a revision of the forms for profession of faith. As a result of those revisions, many churches no longer explicitly require candidates for confessing membership in the CRC to separately affirm their commitment to the Reformed confessions (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 715-16; *Acts of Synod 2013*, pp. 339-44; *Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 102-5). Rather, for such churches this affirmation is now implied in and seen as part of the candidate's commitment to accept the church's spiritual guidance. This does not mean that confessing members are not expected by these newer liturgical forms to affirm the truth of the Reformed confessions; such an expectation remains part of our Church Order (Art. 59-b).³ However, it is fair to say that the confessions play a less explicit role in confessing membership than they once did, and that the newer forms emphasize participation in the church's witness.

Synod 1975 noted, "Full agreement with the confessions is expected from all members of the church" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44). However, the CRC now has greater diversity in its understanding of membership than in previous generations. Communicant membership in the CRC no longer necessarily means confessing membership. The increasing ethnic diversity of the denomination means that we no longer necessarily hold the same cultural expectations about the nature of Christian community. At the same time, confessing membership is, in many ways, both more universal and local than a historic Reformed understanding of membership—more universal in that it emphasizes a member's connection to the faith of the church catholic; and more local in that there is often a more explicit reference to the member's connection to the local congregation and its ministry. In both cases, these emphases have shifted the focus away from one's membership in the family of Reformed (or, more specifically, Christian Reformed) churches.

¹ Prior to that time, consistories prepared candidates for profession of faith by means of a series of generally accepted questions by which the council assessed the candidate's understanding of the gospel, intention to live in harmony with biblical teaching, and willingness to submit to the discipline and authority of the church (see *Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 65-71).

² See also the summary of church membership given in *Acts of Synod 1974*, pp. 59-60, 521-22, which emphasized similar themes in response to pastoral questions about the compatibility between lodge and church membership.

³ This is true, at least, for baptized members who make profession of faith. This expectation is less explicit for "persons coming from other denominations" per Church Order Article 59-f.

There is a recognition and even appreciation of those who come from a non-Reformed background and who also profess the historic ecumenical creeds. Many of the church pastors we interviewed talked about discipleship in terms of building from the various Christian backgrounds of those who are now attending their local churches and introducing them to the Reformed worldview. This approach to membership and discipleship is not necessarily at odds with the questions in the CRC's profession of faith forms nor with the expectations of Church Order Article 59.⁴ Many such churches would see the confessions as important tools for discipling new members in a Reformed understanding of Scripture; in fact, this is how the CRC historically approached the baptism of converts (see *Acts of Synod 1953*, p. 85). However, developing a focus on the creeds for new believers may require that we permit consistories a wider latitude for membership acceptance than some past synodical statements have suggested.

The trend of introducing prospective members to the confessions is not new but comes as a result of a long-held desire in the CRC to engage with surrounding cultures and other Christian churches. Already in the 1960s, for example, the CRC was faced with questions about the place of members who could not embrace the confessions' understanding of covenantal baptism for infants (*Acts of Synod 1964*, p. 63). Questions about baptism have only continued to grow as the CRC has experienced more influence from the broad spectrum of North American evangelicalism as well as from immigrant communities whose baptismal theology has been shaped by a rejection of ritualism (see *Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 659; *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 710; *Acts of Synod 2011*, pp. 831-32; *Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 328). Similar questions have arisen about other issues, including the CRC's position on human sexuality (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 866-67, 941-42). Can such individuals offer the "full agreement with the confessions" expected of members by Synod 1975? This question is important not only for the issue of covenant baptism but also for other issues of the present day.

Perhaps one way to address this question is to contrast the level of confessional agreement expected of confessing members with that expected of officebearers. The Covenant for Officebearers requires that those in ordained leadership affirm that the "doctrines [of the Reformed confessions] fully agree with the Word of God" (Supplement, Church Order Art. 5-a; see also subsections A, 1 and A, 5). Confessing members, however, are expected by our liturgical forms to affirm that the confessions of the church "faithfully reflect" the truths of Scripture (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 353). While the difference between these two commitments may seem subtle at first glance, past

⁴ See, for example, the article by Eric Dirksen and Aleah Marsden, "A Positive Theological Vision for the CRC," thebanner.org/columns/2024/11/a-positive-theological-vision-for-the-crc. It could be noted here as well that the membership vows of other denominations in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition focus not on their confessions but on a commitment to the basic teachings of the ecumenical creeds and on submission to the spiritual authority of the church.

synods have insisted that the “doctrinal understanding and competence” required for church office should not be “imposed as a condition of church membership” (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 22; see also the plea of Classis Holland, *Agenda for Synod 2023*, p. 604). In other words, not every member will have sufficient understanding of, or alignment with, a Reformed view of scriptural teaching in order to serve effectively in ordained leadership. Nor should we expect that of every member. Part of the biblical requirement of being “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2) or of “hold[ing] firmly to the trustworthy message” (Titus 1:9; cf. 1 Tim. 3:9) is that officebearers should have a level of agreement with the church’s doctrine that ensures they present a consistent picture of the Christian faith. But this is not required of members who are not called to ordained leadership.

It seems possible, then, that a consistory may admit an individual to confessing membership whose commitment aligns more closely with the ecumenical creeds than with some elements of the Reformed confessions. This is not to dismiss the reality that the unity of the church is aided when church members find themselves in consistent alignment with the teachings of their church, as Van Dellen and Monsma argue in their *Revised Church Order Commentary*.⁵ But this also leaves space for pastorally recognizing the realities of an increasingly diverse church environment. As Synod 2024 observed, when people make profession of faith, they are not claiming to fully comprehend all the nuances of the creeds and confessions (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 866). Sanctification and theological understanding are continual processes of growth.

Though this section has largely focused on the CRC’s practice with regard to admission to confessing membership, it is also important to note that we do not see membership simply as a one-time decision. For this reason, consistories have the responsibility of supporting the process of faith nurture and pastoral care among members of the church (see Church Order, Art. 25, 62-65, 71-73). The CRC has consistently placed important emphasis on members’ participation in worship and the sacraments as well as on their investment in the life and work of the local church and in the wider work of God’s kingdom. In considering the significance of membership, discussion of doctrinal standards should not lead churches to neglect the consideration of nurturing members’ growth in Christian community as well.

IV. Role of the local consistory and current practices in CRC congregations
Church Order (Art. 59) assigns the primary responsibility for admission to confessing membership to the discernment of the elders of the local church. Synod 2024’s advisory committee observed that “‘full agreement’ and ‘commitment’ to the creeds and confessions” implies “increasing submission to the spiritual guidance of the church in a spirit of Christian love during the sanctification process,” and the committee further encouraged local leaders “to work out situations under the principle of original authority (Church

⁵ Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Revised Church Order Commentary* (Zondervan, 1967), p. 234.

Order, Art. 27) within their context and in submission to our creeds and confessions” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 866). These statements recognize that the persons who are in the best position to work through membership in a local church are the local church leaders—pastors, elders, and deacons.

Our task force spent several hours meeting with local church leaders in a variety of contexts across the CRCNA to understand better how membership functions in those situations.⁶ We asked several questions of each church leader:

1. What is the process of becoming a member of your church?
2. What are the expectations you have for membership in your church?
3. What are the convictions and beliefs that you expect of new members in your church?
4. Are there any liturgical forms that you use to receive new members?
5. Do you have a faith formation process that you use in your church?

These conversations revealed a wide range of practices, from traditional Reformed catechetical formation to less formal avenues of instruction in the basics of Christianity. Some of these are reflected in resources like Thrive’s “faith practices” toolkits (see crcna.org/FaithFormation/resources), while others reflect circumstances unique to a particular congregation. We offer the following summary of these conversations (in the order of questions asked):

1. Membership procedures vary among congregations and even among the individual members being received. In some churches, most new members have not been familiar at first with the CRC, Reformed doctrine, or even the Christian faith. Scenarios like these may require a longer-than-usual membership process. A “newcomers class” may last a few weeks, but such classes do not always result in an immediate commitment to membership. Even in more traditional CRCs, new members today come from a variety of backgrounds, and catechetical practices are varied. We commend the practice of using new-membership classes and processes by local congregations, particularly as it provides an opportunity to introduce a person to both the local church and the wider church—including, in many cases, an introduction to the teachings of the CRCNA denomination by noting the ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions.
2. While a variety of expectations came into view about members’ participation in the life of the church, repeated themes that stood out

⁶ The authors of this report express their thanks to Tabitha Manuelito (Tohatchi, N.Mex.); Joseph Hun-Suk Bae (Ann Arbor, Mich.); Ron DeVries (Edmonton, Alta.); Rick Zomer (Grand Rapids, Mich.); Harold Caicedo (Fontana, Calif.); Victor Ko (Edmonton, Alta.); Brian Na (Queens, N.Y.); Jim Kirk (Madison, Wis.); Ryan Pedde (Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.); Stephanie Van Rooyen (Chatham, Ont.); John Lee (Sioux Center, Iowa); John Medendorp (New Era, Mich.); and Chad Steenwyk (Holland, Mich.) for their participation in these conversations.

were attendance at public worship, having a lifestyle that reflects a Christian profession of faith, promoting the welfare and harmony of the local church, financial support of the church as God provides, prayer with and for others, and seeking to grow in one's understanding of Scripture. In some cases these expectations are spelled out in a membership covenant; in other situations they are simply communicated verbally as part of a membership class. The question about membership expectations also sparked reflection on the need to care for disengaged members, an issue that will be addressed in more detail below.

3. The doctrinal convictions and beliefs expected of members were also expressed in various ways. In a number of congregations, a specific statement of faith has been developed, reflecting apostolic Christian convictions. It should be noted that such statements, while they may align in many ways with a "commitment to the Reformed confessions" (Church Order, Art. 59-b), may also leave room for disagreement with Reformed doctrine (often evident in the omission of specifically Reformed doctrines). A number of churches in the CRC have used Alpha and similar evangelistic programs, which have been helpful to proclaim the basics of faith but are not necessarily fully Reformed in their teaching or approach. Other churches use teaching materials based on the Reformed confessions themselves to convey the foundations of faith. In some cases, churches noted that a journey toward a specifically Reformed understanding of Scripture involved a discipleship journey that could take a number of years. The variations in practice may be of interest for continued reflection for the CRCNA.
4. The use of liturgical forms in the congregations we surveyed largely reflected the practices of churches regarding the convictions expected of their members (discussed in point 3 above). Congregations that expect a member largely to align with, or be on a journey toward alignment with, the Reformed confessions often make use of CRC liturgical forms. It should be noted that the CRC has translated many of its liturgical forms into Spanish and Korean, but it may be time to complete the work so that all forms are translated, along with translations into other languages (see crcna.org/resources/church-resources/liturgical-forms). Many congregations offer an informal welcome to new members consistent with their presentation of their church community as a family, expressed in terms of broadly accepted standards of doctrinal agreement. A more complete approach to translation of these forms could foster a greater unity of understanding for membership across the denomination, particularly in churches where the English language is not used in worship.

5. Regarding faith formation, one approach that a number of churches noted as helpful was to see membership as a lifelong journey of discipleship, a theme which the CRC has increasingly embraced in the past couple of decades (see *Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 499-500; *Agenda for Synod 2011*, pp. 556-57). In this understanding, membership is not a “yes/no” matter in which one either agrees with everything or does not. A basic grasp of the gospel is seen as the fundamental element of membership, with the expectation that members will continue to strive toward holiness and spiritual growth. It is noted that this idea of “belonging before believing (or at least before fully understanding)” represents something of a shift from the traditional CRC approach to membership, which tended to call for an “all-in” approach to the life of the church. But it might also reflect a more realistic approach to the way that many people in the wider society relate to the gospel today. Because the Christian faith no longer saturates Western culture in the way it did even a few generations ago, the journey from conversion to maturity in faith may be longer than the CRC has historically envisioned.

From the above reflections, we can see several key themes developing. First, CRC congregations take a wide variety of approaches with regard to membership formation. This is to be expected. Ministry is inherently local, and at various points in the past synod has emphasized the importance of local discernment (see *Acts of Synod 1952*, pp. 199-200; *Acts of Synod 1974*, pp. 545-56). Second, the CRC’s liturgical forms, where used, play an important role in naming some of the key elements of church membership in both the doctrinal basis of members as well as their relationship to the guidance of the local church’s leadership. Third, there is a growing trend in churches toward “belonging” before “joining as a member.” This may mean that membership is viewed increasingly in terms of a journey of sanctification. It may also require that churches distinguish more clearly between the expectations of members and the expectations of officebearers.

During its conversations with church leaders, the task force was encouraged to comment on the reality of inactive members. Though this is not a new challenge to the church, it has become all the more acute in an increasingly mobile culture in which members move or shift their faith commitments. It is also increasingly difficult to enforce membership commitments where the wider culture encourages “authenticity” and sees institutional authority as “judgmental.” For these reasons, church leaders must approach conversations with inactive members in a pastoral spirit and with a clear vision for the long-term task of calling people into faithful fellowship with Jesus as a part of his church. But pastoral sensitivity does not mean that local leaders may ignore the responsibility to pursue members who do not participate in the life of the local church. Our theological vision for membership as a community of believers actively sharing in the witness of the local church means that we have a covenant obligation to do so. (The

nature of the institutional church as a legal corporation may also provide reasons for councils to attend to this responsibility.) Past synods have provided advice in this regard; because a full treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this group's work, we have summarized additional information on inactive membership in an appendix to this report.

In sum, then, our treatment of the consistory's role in membership reflects the fact that belonging to the church is not just a matter of assent to certain theological convictions. It also includes a process of growing participation in the shared life of the church, living under its authority, joining in its work, and publicly confirming our commitment to its witness with our words and actions. Our liturgical forms and membership statements reflect these values,⁷ but in our current setting there is value for local churches to provide additional statements to guide the process of discipling members toward deeper participation in the life of the Christian church and toward the importance of "milestones" along that journey rather than toward a single moment of "yes/no" commitment.

V. Practical implications for membership issues

In considering the meaning of membership, this task force also took into consideration the material of Overture 32 from Classis Alberta North, requesting clarity on the implications of our confessional expectations for members in the church. In particular, this overture asked whether members who are uncertain about or who may disagree with elements of our confessions may make profession of faith, remain members, present children for baptism, or serve as officebearers (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 498-501).

The overture asks many good and practical questions worth careful consideration by the churches. Some of the questions have already been addressed by synod's work on gravamina in recent years, which have clarified that members who have settled convictions contrary to the Reformed confessions may not serve as officebearers (Supplement, Church Order, Art. 5-a).⁸ Other issues, such as baptism, have also been specifically addressed by synod, which has reaffirmed the authority of local consistories provided

⁷ See, for example, the Form for Profession of Faith (1976): "Do you promise to do all you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen your love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honoring and submitting to its authority; and do you join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere?" Or, in the 2013 version: "Do you promise to exhibit the joy of new life in Christ; to share fully in the life of the church; to be faithful in worship and service; and to offer your prayers and gifts?" This emphasis is also implied in the admonitions to participation in Christian community in our liturgical forms for baptism and the Lord's Supper.

⁸ With regard to objections about the real presence in the sacrament (and other concerns about the wording of matters in the Belgic Confession) see *Acts of Synod 1952*, pp. 520-21; *Acts of Synod 1954*, pp. 253-55; *Acts of Synod 1961*, pp. 205-12. On election and predestination in the Canons of Dort, see *Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 73-76, 486-559. Synod has not been presented with a gravamen related to infant baptism. However, it is important to recognize that gravamina decisions do not primarily address *membership* issues but rather those surrounding *ordained leadership*.

that other synodical instruction is kept in mind (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 697). However, in other situations synod has not spoken definitively with regard to the implications for members of the church. This reflects the reality that local congregations retain significant authority to determine how to apply synodical decisions with regard to membership issues.

In some ways the Classis Alberta North overture asks whether the CRC approaches membership from a confessional lens. The answer we found is that it does, but the expression of that approach depends on the context of ministry and the local church leaders who are responsible for how the confessions are introduced, taught, and developed as a matter of spiritual discipleship in the local church.

On the one hand, church leaders owe it to their members to develop ministry that allows for ever-greater engagement with the truths of Scripture summarized in the Reformed confessions. For example, many church pastors regularly preach through the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer by use of the confessions (see Church Order, Art. 54). The purpose in membership is to recognize Christ's call on an individual's life and that the individual is called into a growing relationship with the triune God. That is ultimately a journey of ever-deepening relationship, and CRC polity recognizes the primacy of local authority in nurturing the relationships that direct people toward Jesus. The consistory is the body charged with determining when and how to answer questions of admission, continuation, and even exclusion of members (see Church Order, Art. 59-b, -e, -f; 80-81). Our liturgical forms commit members to "accept the spiritual guidance of the church" (Profession of Faith forms—2013, 2016) as they make their profession in a local congregation. The local leadership is in the best position to nurture this life of faith through pastoral care, faith nurture, and (if necessary) exclusion or formal discipline (see Church Order, Art. 63-65; Supplement, Art. 67; Art. 81).

On the other hand, it is also important to recognize that membership in Christ's church brings responsibilities and not just privileges. Our Church Order recognizes that confessing members should offer their "full participation in the work, life, and mutual discipline of the local congregation and the universal body of Christ" (Church Order, Art. 59-c; see also Supplement, Art. 67; Art. 74-c; Art. 79). Thus, while individual members are not asked to provide assurance of "full agreement" with confessional statements, the nature of church life does expect that members will work for the common good of the local church as well as its wider expression in the classis, denomination, and universal church. Local leaders should remind members of their obligations to support the wider church through their time, treasure, and talents and should model what it means to be stewards of these gifts in the way that they lead.

The matter of responsibilities also raises questions about the life of a believer in the context of a community of faith. In fact, the "privileges of mem-

bership” (such as the right to vote in congregational meetings, present children for baptism, or serve in church office) often depend in some way upon one’s fulfillment of “responsibilities” (as our discipline process makes clear; see Supplement, Church Order, Art. 78-81, b). Applying this to Classis Alberta North’s questions, we observe that local councils have the authority to determine whether a member is in good standing. But they do so in ways that are mindful of the wisdom of the wider church regarding when and how to draw boundaries.⁹

A survey of CRC history provides numerous examples of advice given by major assemblies on how to apply our confessional convictions to the “life and doctrine” of church members.¹⁰ But it is ultimately the local leadership that must determine how to apply this collected wisdom. The recognition that such decisions may be appealed if they are inconsistent with Scripture or with the Church Order (Church Order, Art. 30) should invite careful and collective discernment in sensitive cases, whether through conversations with church visitors (Church Order, Art. 42-b) or requests for advice from the classis as a whole (Church Order, Art. 41). But this expectation of collective discernment need not make a local council fearful of using its authority to disciple those members and prospective members whom God has entrusted to its care. In fact, recent synods have reaffirmed this very truth (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 866-67).

Synod 2024’s advisory committee had begun to work on a response to Overture 32 but withdrew its recommendations when it became clear that there was significant overlap between that overture and Overture 17. However, their initial response, addressing particular questions about human sexuality, is instructive for this task force’s work. The advisory committee suggested that a positive response to the profession of faith questions implied that an individual did indeed submit themselves to the authority of the local consistory’s oversight of their doctrine and life. It also observed that past synods have provided extensive reflection on the ways in which churches could faithfully engage LGBTQ+ members, their families, and their friends in ways consistent with our understanding of Scripture’s demands concerning “unchastity.”¹¹ As a report to Synod 2025 noted, “a confessional commitment that views all same-sex sexual activity as sinful does

⁹ Decisions about the relationship between lodge and church membership are instructive here. For example, Synod 1982 reaffirmed the right of synod to establish regulations for church membership by decisions considered “settled and binding” in ways that do limit a consistory’s authority to admit confessing members (*Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 44-45, 628). However, it should be noted that this authority is limited only where synod has specifically spoken, not where synod has left questions open.

¹⁰ Some examples relate to the proper celebration of the Lord’s Day, views of the Spirit’s work in an individual’s life, divorce and remarriage, and lodge membership, in addition to same-sex marriage. See relevant sections of the CRC’s “Position Statements” at crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements.

¹¹ See, for example, *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 609-33; *Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 313-51; *Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 361- 443, 917-18; *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 313-487.

not lock the church or individual members into a particular course of pastoral care beyond those on which synod has specifically spoken.^[12] . . . The principle of the original authority of the local assemblies (Church Order, Art. 27-a) dictates that local leaders do have significant authority to disciple members in ways that make sense in a particular situation, and should be able to do so with the trust of fellow officebearers and members of the CRC” (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 328-29).

Thus the answer to Classis Alberta North’s broader questions—regarding what latitude members who are uncertain about or who disagree with confessional interpretations have to participate in the life of the church—is fundamentally pastoral. If a member’s disagreement with the confessions is significant enough that it disrupts the peace of the church, it certainly seems challenging to allow such a person to remain a member in good standing. If, however, a member is willing to “accept the spiritual guidance of the church” (Profession of Faith forms—2013, 2016) and can say with integrity that the confessions “faithfully reflect [the Bible’s] revelation [of Christ and his redemption]” (Profession of Faith form—1976), then our polity has traditionally recognized the possibility for ongoing pastoral engagement and discipleship as the consistory determines appropriate. In other words, there is space for a wide variety of avenues of service for individuals at various points of their membership journey in the local church—as greeters, musicians, nursery attendants, coffee servers, and office volunteers, to name a few. Councils and consistories would be wise to ponder these issues and to recognize the importance of potentially involving individuals in appropriate ways in the life of the church even prior to formal membership. This is consistent not only with our Church Order but also with Jesus’ own approach to people who had not yet committed to him (see Matt. 9:9-13; Luke 19:1-10).

VI. Conclusion

As we conclude these reflections, it is important once again to acknowledge the mandate given to this group “to provide theological reflection and advice on the historical, biblical, and theological aspects of membership” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 866-67). The first aspect of this mandate has been easier to fulfill. The CRC has historically given significant emphasis to the content of church membership. While some of the specifics of this content have varied over time, in general it can be said that membership in the CRC has been grounded in the baptismal call that brings an individual into the covenant community of God’s people. This baptismal call points toward obedient participation in the Lord’s Supper and a public profession of faith under the direction of the elders of a local church. This profession of faith involves some kind of affirmation of the Reformed confessions as “faithful reflections” of the gospel message, or at least as the framework that provides the

¹² Matters that do bind churches and officebearers can be found, for example, in the list presented in the *Acts of Synod 2024*. p. 891.

“spiritual guidance” of the church to which one belongs. While sharing with the worldwide evangelical church a desire for a personal embrace of the Christian faith, the Reformed understanding strongly emphasizes the Spirit’s work of initiating our walk with Christ and the importance of a shared testimony with the church by means of its sacramental witness.

Applying these theological reflections to the present context requires wisdom. For one thing, we need to recognize the value of our theological perspective and the importance of continuing it. We all benefit from the common vocabulary around membership commitments provided by our liturgical forms and synodical statements, and we would do well to foster a robust and consistent use of this vocabulary throughout our churches. Yet we also recognize that our wider culture no longer reinforces the value of membership commitments, and we cannot assume that everyone around us knows the meaning of the statements we make in those forms (or even that people acknowledge the value of a formal commitment to the church). In such a context, we recognize the value of framing membership as a “journey” in which formal admission to membership is only one milestone in a walk with Christ that includes (among other things) continual repentance from sin, joyful embrace of godly living, public commitment to Christ, participation in the Lord’s Supper, and a desire to share in the work of the church.

We believe that our theological convictions and historic practice provide sufficient latitude to allow churches to minister in a changing context. Specifically, the task of applying the Reformed theological and practical understandings that we share falls to local consistories. It is they who determine when to administer baptism and how to oversee the Lord’s Supper; it is they who decide when to admit individuals to membership, how to faithfully disciple those who continue in the journey of following Jesus, and how to disciple erring members. Though the entire church is called to “go and make disciples . . . baptizing . . . and teaching them” faithful obedience to the way of Christ (Matt. 28:19-20), this task is an inherently local and relational one. Within our shared commitments to the public obligations involved in the church’s witness—and specifically the CRC’s witness—is the reality that we “follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7) in covenant with one another as fellow pilgrims on the journey to full life forever with the Savior. This journey brings us into fellowship with the people of God, who in every time and place embrace the amazing and gracious call to salvation in Christ so that we may become together “one body” in which “each member belongs to all the others” (Rom. 12:5).

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod commend to the churches the reflections and advice on the historical, biblical, and theological aspects of membership identified in this report, noting again the distinction in confessional commitment required of officebearers in comparison to that of confessing members.

B. That synod again remind consistories of the privilege and responsibility of discerning how to invite believers to membership and disciple them faithfully (including, if necessary, discipline of erring members), in keeping with the principles previously established by our denomination, and to urge continued reflection about the balance between confessing membership rooted in the ecumenical creeds and an approach rooted in the Reformed confessions.

Grounds:

1. The local consistory is the body charged with evaluating membership decisions within the framework established by Scripture and our denominational standards (see Church Order, Art. 59, 78-81; Supplement, Church Order, Art. 67).
2. Our profession of faith practices assume that there is no “disjunction” between a Christian confession and a Reformed confession: “A Christian confession is by implication a Reformed confession and vice versa” (*Acts of Synod 1959*, pp. 21-22, 373).
3. A number of denominations in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition base confessing membership in an embrace of the ecumenical creeds, embracing the Reformation-era confessions as the framework for the “spiritual guidance of the church” to which members also assent.

C. That synod encourage churches to use our approved liturgical forms, or adaptations of them that conform to synodical guidelines (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 493-94), in the administration of the sacraments or in celebrating public profession of faith; and instruct the Office of General Secretary to make progress toward providing translations of all of these forms in the languages used in the churches.

Grounds:

1. The use of these liturgical forms will foster a greater shared understanding of membership across the denomination.
2. “The consistory shall see to it that the principles and elements of worship approved by synod are observed, including the use of liturgical forms If liturgical forms are adapted or additional psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are used in worship, these elements should conform to synodical guidelines” (Church Order, Art. 52-b).
3. Translating our liturgy into the languages used in worship across the church will provide ways to communicate expectations about membership in communities where English is not widely spoken.

D. That synod, while recognizing the validity of CRC professing membership rooted in alignment with the ecumenical creeds, encourage churches to develop and use membership and profession of faith classes that foster a commitment to the Reformed confessions, and to reflect on the ways in

which this goal might require adaptation of programs developed in other theological traditions when our churches make use of these programs.

Grounds:

1. Membership or profession of faith classes provide a means for churches to establish a baseline of expectations for persons committing to the life of a local CRC congregation.
2. “Commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church” is a basic expectation of professing membership (Church Order, Art. 59-b; see also Profession of Faith forms—1976, 2013, 2016).
3. A number of churches are using resources developed outside the Reformed theological tradition to invite people to membership in their congregations. While these resources have been beneficial to many churches, many of them also contain theological convictions about the nature of salvation or the role of the church and sacraments that undermine important insights of the Reformed understanding of Scripture. Discernment is important both to identify teachings that connect us to the wider Christian tradition and to recognize teachings that may tend to undermine our understanding of Scripture.

E. That synod declare the mandate of this working group complete, noting the responses to Overtures 17 and 32 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 866-67, 941-42), with thanks for the reflections provided by those who participated in its discussions.

Defining Membership Task Force
Office of General Secretary

APPENDIX

Addressing the Reality of Inactive Members

Many established congregations are wrestling with membership lists including the names of baptized and professing members who have not been a meaningful part of their local body for a number of years. Some characteristics that may identify “inactive members” are that they do not attend worship, make use of the means of grace, contribute financially, or participate in the life of the church; these do not include mitigating circumstances such as military service or a move to a nursing home (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 215; see *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 410).

It is helpful to note that synod has, in the past, developed guidelines to assist consistories in addressing these realities (see Supplement, Church Order, Art. 67; *Acts of Synod 1974*, pp. 81-82; *Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 25, 593-99). In the case of members worshiping elsewhere, a consistory may approach

the matter positively: there is spiritual value in recognizing one's affiliation with another congregation, even when that may mean acknowledging the painful reality that a former member is no longer a part of one's own congregational fellowship. In cases regarding members who have moved away, it is worth noting that Church Order Article 67 allows for members to retain membership in their former congregation but assumes some measure of active engagement with church life there. If that active engagement is not possible, consistories have freedom to determine whether and when to lapse membership. Releasing the memberships of those who are a part of other Christian fellowships allows consistories the space to determine how best to engage those who still live nearby but are not worshiping elsewhere. In such cases it may be necessary at some point for all to recognize that an individual no longer desires a meaningful relationship with the congregation. Whether this is done through a member's resignation from the church or through a disciplinary process is a matter of pastoral wisdom.

Church leaders may also find it helpful to note the advice of past synods to congregations ministering to their "dispersed" members. At one time, consistories were requested to share with the denomination the names of members who had moved from their home church (*Acts of Synod 1902*, pp. 15-16) in the hope of fostering a shared pastoral presence to such individuals. This request would later inform the work of the CRC's home-mission efforts, which saw one of its goals as bringing the gospel "to the dispersed [members] of the faith" ("Home Mission Order" preamble in *Agenda for Synod 1936*, p. 267). In fact, for many years synod received a report each year on "dispersed and non-resident members," and the topic of reporting on dispersed members was one of the questions posed to councils for discussion on classical credentials per Church Order Article 41 (*Acts of Synod 1947*, pp. 38-40). Due to increased mobility and willingness to embrace the ecumenical nature of the church, the matter of "dispersed members" has received less attention over the years (the home-mission reports on dispersed members were dropped around 1970, and the Art. 41 question was dropped in 2006). This is not a bad thing. But we would note that drawing upon other CRC congregations (or congregations of denominations in communion with the CRC) to pastorally support members who have moved to another area could be a helpful practice and would encourage consistories to see this as one avenue for addressing members who move away from their home church rather than leaving the burden of a search for a new church home solely to the members themselves.

Of course, addressing concerns about inactive membership has pastoral and practical complexities that can hardly be addressed in a paragraph or two. Nonetheless, it is important for consistories to take such procedures seriously as a reminder to the congregations—and perhaps even to themselves—about the importance of a continuing and active engagement with Christ and his church. This is an issue with practical significance as well,

since our polity accords professing members certain privileges. In particular, some churches have discovered to their alarm that, in distinction from some other denominations, the CRC does not have a mechanism for removing from a member the privilege of voting at a congregational meeting unless the member is under discipline. This situation has occasionally resulted in unnecessary conflict when a congregation faces a vote on a divisive issue and inactive members become part of the process. For pastoral, theological, and practical reasons, then, churches are reminded to give regular attention to their list of inactive members and to seek to restore them to the church or commit them to the care of other Christian churches.

Task Force to Study Multisite Churches

I. Background and mandate

In response to its own experience with a multisite expression of church, Classis Chicago South presented an overture to Synod 2024 to study multisite models of organizing congregational life (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 427-28). Recognizing that our Church Order and synodical regulations do not presently envision multisite arrangements, synod appointed a task force with a mandate to provide the following information (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 884-85):

- direction, advice, and guidance on what models best fit Reformed theology and polity
- direction, advice, and guidance on what models should not be employed in Reformed churches
- a roadmap for how churches might become a multisite campus or enfold a church as part of a campus
- recommended changes to Church Order supplements to facilitate such arrangements and provide clarity for how such churches should properly function in relation to each other, the classis, and synod

In keeping with the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the officers of synod met in summer 2024 and appointed the following members to this task force: Derek Buikema (chair), Scott Vander Ploeg (reporter), Pedro Aviles, Jonathan Kim, and Samantha Teran. Staff members Tim Sheridan (Resonate), Joel Vande Werken (director of ecclesiastical governance), and Lesli van Milligan (Thrive) served as consultants to the task force, and Ashley Medendorp and Melody Van Arragon provided administrative support. The team consulted over Zoom and via email a number of times and met in person in Elmhurst, Illinois, on December 9, 2025.

II. Orienting definitions and the rationale for multisite expressions

Within today's ecclesiastical landscape, the term *multisite* is used in a variety of ways. In practice, churches that identify as multisite exist along a spectrum, ranging from highly integrated expressions of a single congregation to loosely connected networks of related but autonomous churches. Most real-world models fall somewhere between these poles. What follows is a descriptive framework that names six broad categories along this spectrum, moving from the lowest level of separation to the highest.¹

A. One church in many rooms

At one end of the multisite spectrum are churches that function as a single congregation while utilizing multiple physical spaces at the same time. This may include a primary worship space alongside overflow rooms, a gymnasium, fellowship hall, or chapel, all operating simultaneously during a

¹ For more information, see *MultiChurch: Exploring the Future of Multisite* (Zondervan, 2017) by Brad House and Gregg Allison.

service hour. In some cases, different worship styles and music are used in each room (traditional vs. contemporary), differing “atmospheres” are expressed in each venue (formal vs. informal), and differing people are involved, but the preaching is most often shared—either live from one location or via video.

These churches share a single leadership structure, unified budget, common branding, and one membership body. For some churches, such an arrangement may be temporary, and sometimes it is a more permanent feature of the congregation’s mission. Functionally the groups remain one congregation using multiple rooms rather than multiple locations. While this model is not always labeled “multisite,” it is worth identifying as the beginning of the spectrum.

B. One church in multiple services or venues

Closely related but slightly further along the spectrum are churches that operate multiple services or venues within the same physical campus. These services may differ in worship style—such as traditional, contemporary, or language-based services—and yet remain part of a single church organization.

In this model there is typically one council or leadership team, one budget, and one membership roll, and there may be either a shared preaching pastor (whether live or by video) or multiple pastors (especially in language-based services). The congregation understands itself as one church expressed through multiple services.

C. One church in multiple locations (classic multisite)

The most commonly recognized multisite model involves one church operating across multiple geographic locations or campuses. In this arrangement, campuses are often miles apart and may serve distinct local communities yet remain part of a single church organization.

Typically, this model includes a shared council or elder board, a unified budget, a common sermon series, and centralized staff functions. Preaching may be delivered live at some campuses and by video at others, while local campus pastors provide contextual leadership and pastoral care. Membership is usually held in a single roll shared across all campuses.

D. Networked multisite (sister campuses with shared DNA)

Further along the spectrum are networked multisite arrangements, where campuses or congregations share a common vision, theological commitments, and philosophy of ministry but retain a greater degree of local autonomy. These churches often collaborate around shared teaching themes, ministry resources, curriculum, systems, and/or branding while allowing flexibility in local expression.

In this model, each campus may have its own council or leadership team and its own budget even while participating in an extended structure. Membership may be held locally rather than centrally. Some networked

multisite arrangements emerge through mergers or strategic partnerships between congregations. Multipoint pastoral charges also may be considered to fit in this pattern.

E. Replant or adoption multisite

A replant or adoption multisite model represents a more intensive expression of either the classic multisite or the networked approach. In this scenario, a declining or struggling congregation becomes a campus or partner of a healthier, established church.

The adopting church typically provides significant support, including council oversight, preaching, administrative systems, and branding. Over time the replanted congregation may follow different trajectories: it may fully integrate as a permanent campus; it may relaunch as a revitalized but independent church; or it may remain semiautonomous within an ongoing partnership. This model is often driven by a desire for gospel presence, stewardship of assets, and congregational revitalization.

F. Church network or family of churches

At the end of the spectrum are church networks or families of churches, which emphasize relational connection rather than organizational integration. These networks share theology, vision, and often leadership development pipelines or ministry resources, but each congregation functions as a fully autonomous church.

Each church maintains its own leadership team, budget, membership, and local preaching ministry. While there may be regular collaboration or occasional shared worship gatherings, authority and accountability remain local. Many house church networks fall under this category.

III. Key factors for defining multisite models

For the purposes of this task force, clarity may best be achieved not by labels alone but by attending to several core organizational factors. Across the spectrum, five areas consistently distinguish one model from another:

1. **Governance**—whether authority is vested in a single council or leadership team, or distributed among multiple local councils.
2. **Budget**—whether finances are unified across sites, managed locally, or structured through a hybrid model.
3. **Membership**—whether there is one shared membership roll or multiple site-based memberships.
4. **Preaching**—whether preaching is unified, shared across campuses, or independently developed at each site.
5. **Branding and identity**—whether congregations operate under a single name and identity or maintain distinct local identities.

Together these factors provide a practical framework for describing and evaluating multisite expressions within the CRCNA, allowing for greater

precision, shared understanding, and constructive dialogue across diverse contexts.

IV. The need and rationale for multisite expression in the CRCNA

The task force observed that within the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) there already exist examples of congregations operating across the full range of multisite expressions described above. From congregations utilizing multiple rooms on a single campus, to geographically distinct campuses, to networks of related churches, our denomination is organically experimenting with and embodying various ways of being the church in multiple places and forms. In general, the task force affirms both the need for and the rationale behind these multisite expressions even as we identify areas of caution, discernment, and pastoral wisdom that will be addressed later in this report.

This section articulates why multisite expressions matter for the current and future health of our denomination. It offers a theological and practical rationale for supporting, resourcing, and—where appropriate—encouraging such expressions within the CRCNA.

A. Responding to growth

At the most basic level, some multisite expressions arise from the simple and welcome reality of numerical growth. Many congregations have outgrown their sanctuary spaces, leading them to utilize overflow rooms or alternate venues simultaneously. Others have expanded from one worship service to multiple services on Sunday morning to accommodate growth combined with varied worship preferences.

These forms—what we have described as “one church in many rooms” or as multiple services on one campus—are not new phenomena in the CRCNA. They reflect faithful stewardship of space and resources to welcome increasing numbers of worshipers into the life of the church. Historically, as congregations have grown, they have responded creatively to make room for all who seek to worship together. These patterns demonstrate that multisite expressions can be an organic outgrowth of local vitality and congregational health.

B. Extending ministry into new places

Beyond the local campus, the CRCNA has a history of establishing chapels, ministry points, and emerging congregations that serve communities “off location” (see *Acts of Synod 1908*, pp. 37-38; *Acts of Synod 1941*, p. 115; *Acts of Synod 1957*, pp. 100-1, 203-5). These ministries have functioned as important extensions of congregational life, bringing word and sacrament to neighborhoods and populations beyond the immediate core congregation.

Such expressions help congregations to incarnate the gospel beyond their walls. They deepen ministry into distinct geographic and cultural contexts while retaining a shared accountability and often a shared identity within the broader church.

C. Revitalizing dying congregations

A particularly compelling rationale for multisite expression in recent decades has been the opportunity to revitalize congregations that might otherwise have closed. Across North America, many historically rooted churches face declining attendance, aging membership, and the very real possibility of closing their doors. In multiple instances within the CRCNA, healthy congregations have adopted these struggling congregations as campuses or ministry partners, bringing fresh leadership, shared resources, renewed vision, and renewed life.

The task force affirms this as a missional imperative: where geography, culture, and ministry context allow, healthy congregations can—through intentional partnerships and strategic resource sharing—help to sustain and renew congregational life that might otherwise end. Rather than allowing weak and dying churches simply to conclude their ministry life cycle, multisite adoption and replant strategies marshal the gifts and resources of stronger congregations to reestablish a gospel presence in local settings that deeply need it.

D. Planting for diversity and mission

Another significant rationale for multisite expressions is found in the demographic realities of our denomination and the communities we serve. The CRCNA is committed to church planting as a key strategy for advancing the gospel and reaching new people and cultures. In many regions this includes planting congregations within or alongside existing churches that intentionally serve particular language groups, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities.

Multisite approaches—such as hosting language-specific congregations or culturally distinct worship communities within a larger church structure—offer a strategic means of nurturing diverse expressions of church life without duplicating infrastructure unnecessarily. These nested church plants can become vibrant, self-sustaining communities of faith that reflect the multicultural reality of the kingdom of God and the communities in which we minister.

Our denomination has set ambitious church-planting goals, and it is clear that multisite strategies will play a central role in achieving those aspirations. We encourage every church that has the capacity—spiritual, human, and material—to explore how it might participate in planting congregations for diverse language and cultural expressions within its context.

E. Encouraging innovation and local creativity

Finally, multisite expression invites creative thinking about how congregations can embody the church in ways that are faithful to Scripture, adaptive to culture, and responsive to mission. Whether through worshiping in multiple rooms, partnering across locations, revitalizing struggling congregations, or hosting culturally distinct worship communities, multisite models offer flexible and contextual ways to proclaim and live out the gospel.

We are grateful to see that much of this activity is already happening across the CRCNA. While not every context will adopt every model, the diversity of expressions represented within our denomination reflects both our theological convictions about the unity of the body of Christ and our commitment to contextual mission. As we look toward the future, we encourage continued innovation, discernment, and collaboration in how multisite expressions can strengthen congregational health, extend gospel presence, and nurture faithful discipleship across varied contexts.

V. Reformed ecclesiology and multisite expression

Any consideration of multisite expressions within the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) must be grounded in the church's confessional and ecclesiastical commitments. At the heart of Reformed polity, as articulated in Belgic Confession Articles 27–32 and embodied in the Church Order, is the conviction that Christ gathers, protects, and preserves his church in local, concrete congregations. These congregations are marked by the faithful ministry of the ordinary means of grace—Word and sacrament—governed by ordained officebearers elected by congregation members, and sustained through pastoral discipline. Broader assemblies, denominational agencies, and shared structures exist to serve this local reality rather than to replace it.

The task force affirms this foundational principle. The instituted local congregation—with its own council of ministers, elders, and deacons—remains the primary and ordinary expression of the church on earth. Multisite expressions must therefore be evaluated by how well they preserve and strengthen this local, embodied reality, even when ministry is shared across locations, cultures, or communities.

We took note as well that multisite expressions have a rich history in our Reformed tradition. Both John Calvin's Geneva and Abraham Kuyper's Amsterdam were cities that employed a multisite conception of church, given that Amsterdam had citywide elders, and Calvin's company of pastors shared pulpits throughout Geneva.

A. Multisite expressions and ecclesiastical order

Because multisite churches exist along a spectrum of integration and decentralization, not all multisite expressions raise the same ecclesiological concerns. Some models—such as those featuring multiple services or venues within a single location—largely preserve traditional patterns of governance, preaching, sacramental administration, and discipline. Other models, particularly those involving geographically distinct campuses or networked congregations, require greater intentionality to ensure that Reformed ecclesiastical principles are honored in practice.

The task force notes that certain multisite arrangements risk unintentionally reversing the proper ecclesiastical order. When authority is concentrated in a central brand, pulpit, or governing board, and when local worshiping communities function primarily as extensions of that center, the local

congregation may be reduced to a dependent gathering rather than a full expression of the church. This concern reflects the Reformed conviction that ecclesiastical office is exercised in and for the local church, for its edification, and is not abstracted from it.

B. The marks of the church in multisite contexts

Belgic Confession Article 29 identifies the marks of the true church as the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of discipline. These marks provide a necessary lens for evaluating multisite expressions.

1. Preaching

Reformed ecclesiology assumes a close pastoral relationship between the minister of the Word and the congregation. While shared sermon series and occasional shared preaching may serve unity and theological coherence, preaching functions best when delivered by ministers who know the particular joys, struggles, sins, and hopes of their local membership. Multisite expressions should therefore guard against patterns in which preaching becomes detached from local pastoral oversight or reduced to a centralized product delivered without contextual care.

2. Sacraments

Word and sacrament belong together in the gathered congregation. Multisite expressions must ensure that baptism and the Lord's Supper are administered locally, under the oversight of elders who know the members and their lives, and by ministers lawfully called to that ministry. Sacraments should not ordinarily be mediated through screens, delayed indefinitely, or treated as occasional events disconnected from the regular pastoral life of a congregation.

3. Discipline

Church discipline is most faithful and restorative when exercised by elders who are personally known to the members and who share life with the congregation. While broader councils may rightly participate in final decisions, the ordinary work of shepherding, admonition, and restoration should remain rooted in local relationships.

C. Differentiated maturity within multisite expressions

In its deliberations the task force recognized that a one-size-fits-all approach to multisite governance would be neither realistic nor helpful—though all multisite expressions should be shaped by confessional convictions (Belgic Confession, Art. 30-31). Multisite churches often include worshiping communities at different stages of maturity, capacity, and leadership development. Reformed ecclesiology has long recognized such differences, particularly in mission contexts, church planting, and congregations in transition.

For this reason, the task force finds it helpful to distinguish between established/organized congregations and emerging worshiping communities that are both within a multisite structure.

An established congregation is a worshipping community with sufficient spiritual maturity, numerical stability, and leadership capacity to call and ordain elders and deacons who are locally present and actively engaged in oversight, pastoral care, and diaconal ministry. In such settings the marks of the church are exercised in a fully local and embodied way, even when the congregation remains connected to a broader multisite structure or shared council.

An emerging congregation, by contrast, may be at an earlier stage of development and may lack the readiness or capacity to ordain local elders and deacons. In these cases it may be appropriate for elders and deacons ordained in another congregation within the multisite to exercise oversight for the emerging community. Local leadership teams or steering committees may assist with ministry coordination, pastoral presence, and mission, while formal ecclesiastical authority remains with the council of the multisite church.

This distinction allows multisite churches to nurture new or fragile worshipping communities without prematurely imposing structures they cannot yet sustain, while also maintaining a clear trajectory toward fuller local expression of the church wherever possible.

D. Differentiated roles among council members

The task force also recognized that when a multisite church operates under a single shared council, it is often neither practical nor desirable for every elder to function in exactly the same way. For example, many multisite churches designate certain elders or deacons as having primary responsibility for the shepherding of a local campus while others focus on providing leadership and vision for the entire network. This is appropriate, provided the distinction remains consistent with Reformed ecclesiology and the Church Order, which views the “common administration of the church” as the responsibility of all officebearers collectively (Art. 35-a). Our polity also holds that the distinct tasks of elders and deacons are the responsibility of the consistory and diaconate together (Church Order, Art. 35-b and -c).

Thus it may be appropriate to designate some elders whose primary responsibility is pastoral care, visitation, spiritual oversight, and discipline within a local context, and others who are entrusted with council-level oversight, strategic discernment, and accountability for the multisite church as a whole. This differentiation does not create two classes of elders; nor does it diminish the authority of local shepherding. Rather, it reflects a practical ordering of responsibilities within a complex ministry structure, analogous to how councils already assign particular roles or portfolios among elders. However, whatever work is delegated to smaller groups within the consistory should be reported to the whole body, which is ultimately responsible to ensure that the work expected of elders (Church Order, Art. 25-b) is being accomplished faithfully.

The same is true of deacons, who may similarly be designated for particular roles within the multisite network but whose work as deacons (Church Order, Art. 25-b) must be done collectively. Our Church Order also expects the consistory and diaconate to “give an account of [their] work to the council” (Art. 35-b and -c). Such procedures are important to foster coordination and transparency in ministry, especially given the complexity of multisite governance.

E. Safeguards and accountability

While affirming flexibility, the task force emphasizes several important safeguards:

- Emerging congregations should be understood as temporarily lacking local officebearers, not as permanently dependent communities (see Church Order, Art. 38-a).
- Elders providing oversight to emerging sites must be intentionally present and relationally engaged, not merely administratively responsible (Art. 25-b).
- Multisite structures should include clear pathways for leadership development and, where feasible, movement toward greater local governance.

The structure and status of multisite congregations—including distinctions between organized and emerging communities—should be clearly communicated to classis to ensure appropriate ecclesiastical accountability.

Congregations and classes in need of assistance are encouraged to draw upon the multiple denominational resources available through Thrive.

Reformed polity itself also provides safeguards in that it assigns primary responsibility for the supervision and administration of the church to a council chosen by the members of the congregation. Even when staff (ordained or unordained) bear the most responsibility for providing a church’s vision and implementing ministry decisions, the ultimate authority remains with the council. This principle helps also to ensure that a multisite church’s vision will remain with the congregation and will not be dependent on a single leader.

Regular reviews of the details of the multisite network, and accountability to the classis for such an arrangement, can also provide key safeguards for the functioning of such a church.

F. Ecclesiology in service of mission

In making these distinctions, the task force draws on Reformed theological insights that emphasize both the institutional and organic dimensions of the church. The church as institution—marked by Word, sacrament, and discipline—must be preserved. At the same time, the church as organism grows, adapts, and takes root in diverse contexts over time.

The task force therefore concludes that multisite expressions within the CRCNA fit well within a framework of Reformed ecclesiology. When well-

structured, they can serve mission, foster revitalization, and express unity across diverse contexts. The central question before the CRCNA is not whether multisite expressions may exist but how they can be shaped in ways that remain deeply rooted in Reformed ecclesiology, accountable to the Church Order, and oriented toward the flourishing of local congregations and the faithful exercise of Christ's ministry through ordained officebearers.

G. Guarding against abuses of power

At the same time, the task force recognizes that certain multisite arrangements—particularly those with highly centralized leadership, diffuse accountability, or unclear lines of ecclesiastical authority—can unintentionally create conditions in which pastoral abuses of power go unchecked. Recent and well-publicized failures in large multisite systems outside the CRCNA illustrate how charismatic leadership, opaque governance structures, and weak external accountability can undermine trust, silence concerns from local leaders, and delay appropriate intervention. Reformed polity provides important guardrails against such dynamics by locating authority in councils of known officebearers elected by the congregation, requiring mutual accountability through classis, and maintaining clear processes for discipline as outlined in Church Order Articles 82–84. Multisite expressions within the CRCNA should therefore be intentionally structured so that no pastor or board functions without meaningful oversight, grievances can be addressed without fear of reprisal, and discipline—when necessary—is exercised carefully, transparently, and ecclesiastically for the good of the church and the honor of Christ.

VI. Proposed Church Order supplement on multisite congregations

In light of the increasing number and diversity of multisite expressions within the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the task force recommends that synod adopt the following principles to guide the polity of multisite congregations. These principles are intended to provide clarity and ecclesiastical accountability while allowing appropriate flexibility for local discernment and missional context. Given their focus on governance and oversight, the task force believes these principles would fit most appropriately in a supplement to Church Order Article 35, which addresses the work of the council.

Supplement, Article 35

Multisite congregations

1. Forms of governance

Multisite congregations may be organized in various ways, including as a single congregation governed by one council, as a network of congregations each governed by its own council, or as a combination of these arrangements. In all cases, the ordinary provisions of the Church Order apply with respect to the calling and

election of officebearers and the matters for which the judgment of the congregation is required (see Art. 4, 25, 35–37). Multisite structures do not suspend or replace these ecclesiastical responsibilities but must give them appropriate local expression.

2. Establishment, merger, and classical oversight

When one or more councils enter into a multisite arrangement—whether by merging congregations, adopting another congregation, or establishing a new campus—the approval of classis is required, in keeping with the principles of Church Order Articles 38-a and -e.

In granting such approval, classis shall discern and record the ecclesiastical status of each campus or worshiping community. This includes determining whether a campus functions as an organized congregation with its own council of elders and deacons, or as an emerging congregation under the care of a broader council. In making these determinations, classis shall consider factors such as leadership capacity, numerical and financial viability, and long-term sustainability and shall take into account relevant synodical guidance.

Church visitors should regularly inquire into the formal arrangements governing multisite congregations and their campuses to ensure continued ecclesiastical clarity and accountability.

3. Representation in broader assemblies

For purposes of delegation to classis, individual campuses of multisite congregations may be represented in accordance with their recognized ecclesiastical status as determined by classis. Organized congregations shall be represented in the ordinary manner prescribed by the Church Order, while emerging congregations may be represented according to the classis' organized provisions for emerging churches.

Regardless of status, classis shall ensure that appropriate church visitors and, where applicable, church counselors are assigned to each campus or worshiping community within a multisite structure.

4. Membership records and pastoral accountability

The council of a multisite congregation shall maintain clear and accurate membership records for each campus or worshiping community. This practice serves pastoral care, discipline, and ecclesiastical accountability and assists both council and classis in discerning the health, development, and status of each community within the multisite arrangement.

VII. Roadmaps for multisite development in the CRCNA

Because churches pursue multisite expressions for different reasons, the task force recommends “roadmaps” tailored to the most common scenarios. These roadmaps are not intended to be rigid templates. Rather, they offer a

suggested process that helps councils and congregations proceed with clarity, pastoral care, and ecclesiastical accountability—especially through early consultation with classis and careful attention to Church Order principles.

Across all of the roadmaps presented here, the task force encourages churches to (1) name their intended multisite model on the spectrum; (2) clarify whether each worshiping community will be treated as organized or emerging; (3) specify how Word, sacrament, and discipline will be administered locally; and (4) ensure transparent relationships of governance, finances, and membership.

Roadmap 1: Responding to growth

(from “one church in many rooms” toward additional services/venues and, where appropriate, a second location)

1. Discernment and data
Council reviews attendance patterns, space limitations, neighborhood demographics, and ministry capacity. Identify whether the need is best addressed through additional services/venues on one campus or through a new location.
2. Clarify the ecclesiological aim
Articulate how the proposed approach will preserve the marks of the church in practice: faithful preaching, regular sacraments, and local pastoral care/disciple-making. Ensure that the plan does not unintentionally reduce a worshiping community to a “dependent gathering” without clear oversight.
3. Choose a model and governance structure
Decide whether the next step is (a) multiple services/venues, (b) a new campus under one council, or (c) a more networked approach. Identify whether the new gathering will be an emerging worshiping community (at first) with oversight from existing officebearers and with a trajectory toward becoming organized as leaders develop.
4. Early consultation with classis
Before launch, consult classis leadership and/or church visitors for counsel on polity questions, representation, and reporting. If the plan includes establishing a new campus/location, follow the classis approval pathway described in the proposed supplement to Church Order Article 35 (section VI above) and ensure consistency with Article 38 principles.
5. Congregational communication and required approvals
Clearly communicate the plan, including membership implications, pastoral staffing, worship schedule, and financial strategy. Where Church Order requires congregational involvement for specific actions (e.g., calling of officebearers or ministers), ensure that those processes are followed.

6. Launch with clear pastoral oversight
Ensure that elders and deacons are assigned and visibly present, even if the site begins as emerging. Keep Word and sacrament integrated in the life of the worshipping community, not treated as occasional add-ons.
7. Review, report, and adjust
As time proceeds, the council evaluates fruitfulness, pastoral strain, finances, and discipleship health. Provide classis with an update as appropriate, especially if the site is moving from emerging to organized.

Roadmap 2: Extending ministry into new places

(from chapel/ministry point to an emerging worshipping community, and potentially to an organized congregation)

1. Begin with mission clarity
Identify the community being served and the ministry aim: outreach, mercy/justice, evangelism, discipleship, or worshipping community. Clarify whether the effort is a ministry program, a ministry point, or a congregation-in-information.
2. Define the “threshold” toward becoming a worshipping community
Establish criteria for when a ministry point becomes a regular worshipping community: consistency of gathering, pastoral leadership, sacramental readiness, and basic structure for care and accountability.
3. Establish oversight and local leadership
If the community is emerging, appoint a local leadership team/steering group while assigning elders/deacons from the sponsoring council to ensure real pastoral oversight. Maintain clear lines for handling membership, pastoral care, and concerns.
4. Engage classis early—especially as worship and sacraments emerge
Once regular worship begins (or is planned), consult classis about ecclesiastical status, appropriate reporting, church visitors, and representation. This is especially important if the ministry is moving toward organized status with its own council.
5. Membership and sacramental practice
Decide how members relate to the ministry point: Are they members of the sending congregation, or is a separate roll being formed? If sacraments will be administered locally, ensure proper administration under ordained ministry and local elder oversight.
6. Leadership development plan
Create a pathway from emerging to organized: developing qualified elders/deacons locally, training leaders, and clarifying whether and when the community might become an independent organized congregation or remain a long-term campus.

7. Formalize status and representation

When readiness emerges, work with classis to recognize the ministry as an organized congregation.

Roadmap 3: Revitalizing dying congregations

(adoption/replant multisite: from exploration to covenant, to revitalization, to clarified long-term status)

1. Begin with shared spiritual discernment

Both councils (the potential adopting church and the struggling church) enter a season of prayerful discernment. This includes honest assessment of spiritual health, finances, facilities, leadership capacity, and community context.

2. Initial classis consultation

Because this affects the ecclesiastical status of an existing congregation, classis involvement should occur early. Consult classis leadership and church visitors about possible pathways consistent with Church Order principles (merger, adoption as a campus, reorganization, etc.).

Note: Classis itself might actually catalyze a process of discernment between a potential adopting church and a struggling church. In fact, classis through its church visitors, counselors, or otherwise should take note when a congregation's membership numbers decline below a sustainability threshold (historically the CRCNA has considered forty-five members to be the threshold), when there is not a sufficient number of individuals qualified or able to serve as elders and deacons, or when the financial viability of a congregation has become strained (see Supplement, Church Order Art. 38-d).

3. Determine the intended ecclesiastical form

Agree whether the revitalized ministry will function as an organized congregation with its own council, as an emerging campus under another council, or as a hybrid arrangement (e.g., transition period with outside oversight moving toward local organization).

4. Develop a written covenant/plan

The councils draft a plan that addresses governance, preaching and pastoral care, sacraments, discipline processes, finances, property stewardship, staffing, branding/identity, and a timeline for review. The covenant should specify how accountability will function, including classis reporting and church visitor review.

5. Congregational communication and required processes

Both congregations should be treated pastorally and transparently. Where decisions require congregational input or approval under Church Order (e.g., significant structural changes, calling actions), those processes should be honored.

6. Implement revitalization with visible local shepherding
Ensure that the congregation experiences genuine shepherding, not just operational change. Assign elders/deacons who are present and known. Clarify membership records (including whether membership remains local or transitions).
7. Review and determine long-term status
As time proceeds, conduct a formal review with classis/church visitors: Is the congregation becoming organized with local officebearers? Will it remain a campus? Is organization as an independent congregation appropriate? The goal is not to force independence but to ensure ecclesiastical clarity and pastoral health.

Roadmap 4: Planting for diversity and mission

(nested or partnered church plants serving a different language/culture within an existing church's structure)

1. Start with relational listening and community partnership
Identify the language/cultural community and ensure leadership is shaped with them, not merely for them. Clarify ministry aims: evangelism, discipleship, worshiping community formation, leadership development.
2. Choose a structural pathway: campus, partner, or future independent congregation
Decide whether the plant will begin as
 - an emerging worshiping community under an existing council,
 - an organized congregation from the outset (rare but possible), or
 - a community with a planned transition toward organization over time, whether in a multisite/partner arrangement or as an independent organized church.
3. Clarify governance and pastoral authority
Put in writing how oversight will function: which elders/deacons are responsible, what authority the local leadership team has, and how decisions about worship, ministry direction, finances, and staffing will be made. Protect the plant from becoming merely an "extension" without local agency while also ensuring true ecclesiastical accountability.
4. Consult classis early for status and representation
Early classis consultation is especially important in cross-cultural contexts so that status, delegation, and pastoral safeguards are clear. Classis can help churches avoid ambiguity and support healthy accountability.
5. Membership and sacramental practice with cultural sensitivity
Decide how membership is held and how sacramental administration will occur. Ensure that sacraments are administered locally under

proper oversight and that the elders responsible for admission and fencing understand the community well.

6. Leadership pipeline and movement toward organization
Build a deliberate plan for identifying, training, and ordaining local elders and deacons as readiness develops. The long-term health of the plant is strengthened when local leaders from within the community are developed and empowered.
7. Periodic review and long-term discernment
Set review points with council and classis: Is the plant thriving spiritually? Is governance functioning well? Is there clarity, transparency, and mutual trust? Determine whether the community should remain a campus, become an organized congregation, or move toward another form along the multisite spectrum.

VIII. Summary and conclusion

Synod 2024 appointed this task force because multisite expressions are increasingly present within the CRCNA, yet our Church Order and synodical regulations do not explicitly envision these arrangements. In response, this report has sought to provide the denomination with shared definitions, theological and ecclesiastical guidance, practical roadmaps, and a proposed Church Order supplement that aims to clarify how multisite ministries can be pursued in a manner consistent with Reformed polity.

First, the task force observed that the term *multisite* is used broadly in today's ecclesiastical landscape. We therefore described a spectrum of multisite expressions ranging from highly integrated "one church in many rooms" models to decentralized networks and families of churches. We further identified five key factors—governance, budget, membership, preaching, and branding/identity—that provide a consistent framework for describing and evaluating multisite arrangements in CRCNA contexts.

Second, the task force offered a rationale for multisite expressions within the CRCNA. Multisite development may arise from healthy growth, from extending ministry into new places through ministry points and emerging congregations, from revitalization and adoption of struggling congregations, or from planting culturally and linguistically diverse worshipping communities. The task force is grateful that much of this activity is already occurring, and we believe these expressions may contribute to the future health of the denomination when pursued with theological clarity, pastoral wisdom, and ecclesiastical accountability.

Third, the task force assessed multisite expressions through the lens of Reformed ecclesiology. We affirmed the foundational conviction that Christ ordinarily gathers his church in local, embodied congregations under ordained officebearers, by the ministry of Word and sacrament, guarded by discipline. Multisite expressions are consistent with this ecclesiology, but they must be structured to preserve the marks of the true church and the

integrity of ecclesiastical office in each worshiping community. To avoid one-size-fits-all assumptions, we also encouraged clarity regarding maturity and capacity, distinguishing between organized congregations and emerging worshiping communities within multisite arrangements, and recognizing that councils may differentiate local shepherding responsibilities from broader council-level oversight.

Fourth, the task force proposed a supplement to Church Order Article 35 aiming to provide clarity and accountability for multisite arrangements, especially regarding governance forms, classis approval and discernment of status, representation in broader assemblies, and maintenance of clear membership records by the campus or worshiping community.

Finally, the task force provided roadmaps for churches and classes navigating multisite development in four common scenarios. These roadmaps are offered not as rigid templates but as practical guidance for churches to proceed transparently, pastorally, and in close collaboration with their classis.

The task force concludes that multisite expressions can serve the CRCNA's calling to faithful worship and contextual mission. The central question is not whether multisite expressions may exist but how they can be shaped in ways that remain deeply rooted in Reformed ecclesiology, accountable to the Church Order, and oriented toward the flourishing of local congregations and the faithful exercise of Christ's ministry through ordained officebearers.

IX. Recommendations

The task force respectfully recommends that synod take the following actions:

A. That synod commend this report to the churches as a resource for discernment and guidance regarding multisite expressions, particularly as a resource for congregations considering disbanding, and encourage councils and classes to make use of the report's definitions, roadmaps, and ecclesiological principles as they consider multisite developments in their contexts.

B. That synod encourage classes to recognize multisite expressions as a potential pathway for growth, revitalization, and church planting, and to cultivate a deeper sense of shared ownership for the health and mission of the churches within a classis.

Ground: This provides one more avenue for churches and classes to consider toward church planting and congregational renewal as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission.

C. That synod instruct classes to work with new and existing multisite churches to provide a clear ministry plan to classis when forming or significantly restructuring a multisite arrangement (see Appendix). Such a plan should address, at minimum, how the worshiping communities will

fulfill the marks of the true church in their context, including preaching, sacraments, discipline, pastoral care, and clear lines of accountability.

Ground: Such accountability is essential to the health of multisite churches and their members and is a key element of Reformed church polity.

D. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to develop and implement a method for collecting and reporting membership and leadership data by campus or worshiping community in multisite arrangements (as distinct from only aggregated reporting), in order to support pastoral accountability, ecclesiastical transparency, and accurate denominational understanding.

Ground: Providing a standardized way of reporting membership and leadership data promotes clear expectations for multisite congregations and their individual campuses.

E. That synod encourage classes to ensure that emerging worshiping communities are appropriately recognized, supported, and—where consistent with classis rules and Church Order provisions—represented in broader assemblies, and to develop or clarify classis policies regarding delegation from emerging congregations where such policies do not yet exist.

Ground: This provides support and accountability for multisite churches and their campuses within the broader framework of the church assemblies.

F. That synod adopt the proposed supplement to Church Order Article 35 included in this report with the goal of providing clear ecclesiastical guidance regarding governance, classis approval and discernment of status, representation in broader assemblies, and membership recordkeeping for multisite arrangements.

Ground: The proposed regulations provide consistent and clear pathways for recognizing multisite arrangements within the framework of Reformed church polity.

G. That synod dismiss the task force with thanks for its work.

Task Force to Study Multisite Churches

Pedro Aviles

Derek Buikema (chair)

Jonathan Kim

Samantha Teran

Scott Vander Ploeg (reporter)

Multisite Campus Governance and Partnership Description

This document describes the formal relationship between _____ (original campus) and _____ (new campus), which together function as campuses within the _____ multisite network. Where this template is used as a partnership between two existing congregations, both sites should complete this document.

Note: This is a template intended to identify a number of issues common in multisite arrangements. It may be edited and adapted as necessary. It should be noted that any appeals of a decision of a council (either of a local campus or of an entire network of churches) will be taken to the classis; where a local campus is considered an “organized” congregation by its classis, appeals may not be made to the network council because it is not “the assembly next in order” (Church Order, Art. 30-a). No provisions in this document should be construed as superseding the CRCNA’s Church Order and/or synodical regulations. A regular review of these arrangements is recommended every three to five years, with updates shared with the classis.

A. Campus identity and context

Describe the basic identity and ministry context of this campus.

- Name of campus:
- Physical location and ministry context (neighborhood, city, region):
- Regular worship/gathering times:
- Campus pastor(s) and primary ministry leaders:

B. Nature of church governance

1. Membership

Describe how church membership is held within this multisite arrangement. Clarify whether membership is held at the network level, the local campus level, or in another configuration. Indicate how membership statistics are recorded and reported for denominational purposes.

2. Council oversight and organization

Describe whether this campus is considered an organized congregation with its own council of elders and deacons, or an emerging campus under the supervision of another council.

- If the campus is emerging, identify the supervising council and explain how oversight is exercised (including any council members specifically assigned to this campus).
- If the campus is organized, describe the relationship between the local council and the multisite network, including how authority, accountability, and mutual submission are practiced.

3. Congregational voice and decision-making

Describe how members of this campus participate in significant decisions, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Election of elders and deacons
- Approval of budgets
- Calling of pastors
- Major ministry or property decisions

Explain whether this participation occurs through joint congregational meetings, local campus meetings, delegated representation, or a combination of these methods.

4. Network-level decision-making

If a multisite or network council exists, describe the following:

- Its composition and authority
- Which decisions (if any) are binding on local councils
- How local campuses participate in or consent to network-level decisions
- Any defined exceptions or limits to network authority

5. Recordkeeping

Describe how official records (minutes of council meetings, congregational meetings, etc.) are maintained and where they are filed (locally, centrally, or both).

C. Pastoral care and tasks of the church

Describe how the following responsibilities are carried out and who holds oversight in each area:

- Pastoral care, supervision, and church discipline
- Preaching and administration of the sacraments
- Shared or network-wide ministries
- Campus-specific or contextual ministries
- Benevolence and mercy ministries

Clarify how coordination and accountability are maintained across campuses.

D. Financial and legal arrangements

1. Budgeting and financial oversight

Describe how budgets are developed, approved, and monitored, including the roles of local campus leadership and any network-level bodies.

2. Ministry shares

Explain how denominational ministry shares are calculated and paid (e.g., based on local campus membership, network-wide membership, or another method).

3. Legal incorporation

Describe whether each campus is incorporated separately or under a shared legal entity, and explain the rationale for this arrangement.

4. Property ownership and control

Describe how property is owned and governed, including the following:

- Whether property is held by the network or the local campus
- What approvals are required for purchase, sale, or transfer
- Any restrictions or covenants related to property use

5. Financial liabilities

Explain how debts, liabilities, and financial obligations are allocated between the local campus and the multisite network.

6. Employment, pension, and benefits

Describe how ministers and staff participate in pension, insurance, and benefit programs, and which entity serves as the employer of record.

E. Dissolution or transition of the multisite relationship

Describe the process by which this multisite arrangement may be modified or dissolved, including the following:

- Required congregational approvals
- Voting thresholds
- Number and timing of meetings
- Notification of classis
- Disposition of property, staff, and financial obligations

F. Schedule for review

This document will be reviewed by the multisite network leadership and the individual campus again and will be shared with the classis in (date) _____.

Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers

I. Introduction

A. Background

The original request for the formation of this task force came through an overture from Classis Hackensack in 2022 (Overture 76). That overture was deferred in 2022 and in 2023 and then acted upon in 2024. The overture requested that synod “appoint a task force to develop Church Order procedures to discipline officebearers, including disaffiliation of a council or classis initiated by a major assembly” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 408-10). Synod 2024 acceded to this overture (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 929-31, 943), and the approved grounds are as follows:

1. There is confusion in our churches and classes over the application of discipline, one of the marks of the true church (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). This confusion leads to serious difficulties that can be addressed only by developing biblical principles of church discipline and Reformed polity, then applying these principles to our Church Order.
2. The Church Order lacks a clear mechanism for discipline and disaffiliation initiated by a broader assembly. Such a mechanism would assist churches, classes, and synod to respond to error. This lack is significant enough to merit the attention of a task force.
3. The practice of the church and past synodical decisions affirm the authority of broader assemblies to depose officebearers or councils (see Overture 76 for examples).
4. The authority of church visitors, counselors, and those appointed to advisory roles by synod is not delineated in our Church Order.
5. Clear guidelines would protect classes, councils, and officebearers from inconsistent application of discipline.
6. Such a task force and the report it would produce was something requested by the Neland Avenue CRC *In Loco* Committee appointed by Synod 2022 (*Agenda for Synod 2023*, Rec. E, p. 325-26).

Synod 2024 noted the similarity of another overture presented that year (Overture 75—a request from Classis Zeeland to form a study committee to clarify the relationship between church assemblies) but deferred that request to Synod 2025. Synod 2025 deferred that overture again, suggesting that Synod 2026 would be in a position to determine whether further study will be warranted on that subject, or whether the work of this task force will have sufficiently addressed the issues raised by Classis Zeeland (see *Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 407-8; *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 928-29; *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 665-66).

Following the parameters of composition and membership delineated by synod, this task force includes the following members: Ken Benjamins (chair), Barb Bulthuis (reporter), Shaun Jung, William Koopmans, Petr Kornilov, Cindy VanderKodde (adviser), Charles Veenstra, Beverly Weeks, and Andrew Zomerman. John Tamming, who was recommended to serve on the task force in the original mandate from synod, stepped down early in the process of our work. Mirtha Villafane also served until she had to step down in May 2025. The task force was also assisted by denominational staff, including Zachary King, Ashley Medendorp, and Joel Vande Werken. The committee met as a whole once in person and eight times via Zoom; subcommittees and the leadership team had additional meetings.

The issue of the authority of broader assemblies is a challenging topic. It involves the following questions:

- What is the nature of the authority of broader assemblies?
- Do they have the right to intervene in the governance of the local church?
- Can broader assemblies apply discipline?
- Can they depose officebearers?
- If so, what guidance can one find in Scripture to support this?

In CRC history we have not always seen eye to eye on these matters. Sometimes we have emphasized more the autonomy of the local church, and at other times we have emphasized more the authority of the classis and synod. Henry DeMoor writes about this tension within the CRC in his dissertation, “Equipping the Saints.”¹

B. Methodology

To organize its work, this task force decided to focus on the following five areas of study, recognizing that these areas would overlap and yet anticipating that the focus from each perspective would bring valuable insights:

- *Biblical*: What scriptural principles can be discerned about major assemblies disciplining minor assemblies?
- *Theological*: What have Reformed theologians said about this topic?
- *Historical*: How has the Christian Reformed Church acted in the past when situations have arisen?
- *Church Order*: What do our documents currently say, and how has that been explained and interpreted by Church Order experts?
- *Other denominations*: How have other churches² chosen to address the relationships between major and minor assemblies?

¹ Henry DeMoor, “Equipping the Saints” (D.D. diss., Theologische Academie Uitgaande van de Johannes Calvijn-Stichting te Kampen, 1986); see chap. 7, “May Broader Assemblies Depose a Consistory?” pp. 156-74.

² This area of study included particular attention to other Reformed denominations, as well as to others with a similar polity.

Based on its study of these focus areas, the task force was able to discern a way forward.

II. Overview of general findings on discipline and broader assemblies

A. Biblical foundations and principles for the exercise of church discipline

A review of both Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) passages, as well as books on church discipline that interpret biblical texts, shows a range of focus on various aspects of discipleship, encouragement, and confrontation as well as formal steps of church discipline. It is imperative to seek clarity on the essential foundations and scope of the biblical principles regarding “discipline,” since that term is at times used narrowly and at other times more broadly. In a broader sense, the term “discipline” is often connected with various biblical texts regarding discipleship, while in a narrower sense it is frequently connected with an understanding of the keys of the kingdom entrusted to church leadership.

In the Old Testament, discipline is to be understood in the context of the covenant relationship between God and his people. The OT frequently addresses the contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous (e.g., Psalm 1; 7:9-11; 11:5-7; 37:9-17). There is a close connection between the covenant relationship that God establishes with his people and the exercise of discipline. Within the covenant relationship, God expects and requires his children to live in ways that are correct, upright, and true. While God places a primary responsibility upon individual members of his covenant to live in righteousness, he also establishes provisions for communal guidance, encouragement, and accountability. To assist and ensure that his children live in a way that is upright, God uses various agents to provide guidance and correction. A significant role of guidance and discipline is assigned in the OT to parents.

Further, within the covenantal context of theocracy, the following leaders were all intended to have a significant role in encouraging righteous living and holding others accountable:

- *Tribal elders:* The book of Deuteronomy describes the service of the elders, for example, in the trial of accused murderers, implementing punishment for disobedient children (Deut. 21:18-19), penalizing slander (22:13-15), disobeying Levirate marriage laws (25:7), and generally enforcing the law (27:1).
- *Priests:* OT priestly duties included the teaching of the law to the people (Lev. 10:8-11).
- *Prophets:* Prophets in the OT were frequently entrusted with words of correction, rebuke, reproof, and announcements of divine judgment and punishment (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:1-12; Isa. 7:10-25; Jer. 28:12-17; 44:4-6; Ezek. 2:3-9).
- *Specially appointed leaders:* Moses, for example, served as a judge among the people but could not do so alone and needed to be assisted by other leaders to provide the necessary judgments (Ex.

18:13-27). Following the leadership of Moses and Joshua, there was a period of leadership by judges in Israel, though they appear to have exercised a primary role of military support rather than judgment and discipline of the general population.

- *Kings*: The biblical record of the life and influence of the kings in Judah and Israel typically describes whether they influenced the people to do wrong or right in the sight of the Lord.

It is noteworthy that the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel both presented indictments of covenant leaders who did not properly exercise the disciplinary office of their anointing.³

In the New Testament, numerous texts call followers of Christ to exercise forms of self-discipline (cf. Matt. 23:25; Acts 24:25; 1 Cor. 7:5, 9; 9:25; Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Tim. 3:3) to live a life that is pleasing to God. The NT call to practice self-discipline and to live an upright life may be compared to the OT emphasis on a life that is upright and righteous. As in the OT context, the call to pursue holiness in the NT is not restricted to individual endeavor. The communal component of discipline comes to expression in a significant variety of ways within the covenant family of God, as God disciplines the children he loves (Heb. 12:6-8). Procedures of NT discipline include interpersonal dialogue and accountability (Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 2:11-14; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). When necessary, the local church leaders are instructed to become involved in discipline (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5; Titus 3:10; Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 4; Heb. 13:17). Officebearers are called to standards of accountability (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; see also Matt. 7:15-20).

Further, the narrative of Acts 15:1-29 provides a precedent in which a broad assembly of elders and apostles places requirements on the membership of local churches (cf. Acts 21:25) in keeping with the authority granted by Christ (Matt. 16:19).

B. Theological foundations and principles for the exercise of church discipline

The theological starting point for Reformed church government is that Christ is Lord and is head of the church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18). The source of the church's authority is found in Christ alone.⁴ As such, it is important to remember that the authority of officebearers in local congregations is *vested* authority that originates from Christ.⁵ In the Reformed understanding of church governance, this vested authority resides first of all in

³ See Jeremiah 23 regarding false teaching and prophecy, and Ezekiel 34:1-10 regarding shepherds of Israel being rebuked for dereliction of duty.

⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 581ff., 593. Cf. Belgic Confession, Articles 29, 31; see also Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995), p. 202.

⁵ R.J. Danhof, "May a Classis or a Synod Depose a Consistory?" quoted in Henry DeMoor, "Equipping the Saints," p. 119 (see footnote 1).

the local council and is then “transferred” to the major assemblies—classes and synods.⁶

Though delegated by minor assemblies, the authority of major assemblies does not come from local councils but from Christ.⁷ Further, as “combined consistories,” the authority of a major assembly is the “cumulative authority of all the churches present in their delegated officebearers.”⁸ Thus, the authority of the major assembly is “greater in degree and wider in extent” than local councils.⁹ It does not mean that the authority of the major assembly holds a *higher* kind of authority over local councils but that it is *greater*, as the gathering of many councils represent a greater measure of authority than a single council.¹⁰

Also, given that the major assemblies are “combined consistories” of many councils and not simply gatherings of individual delegates, major assemblies are the ruling agency of the minor assemblies.¹¹ Just as a council serves as a ruling agency of the local congregation, the classis serves as a ruling agency of the regional group of councils, and synod that of the entire denomination.

As such, the decisions of a major assembly carry greater weight and can never be set aside at will by minor assemblies. They are “settled and binding,” except in cases where the decisions may be explicitly declared as advisory or are shown to be contrary to the Word of God.¹²

Moreover, we must remember that as part of a denomination, local congregations are not autonomous. Local councils willingly surrender a measure

⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 584; see also Ryan Faber, “Dordrecht, *Doleantie*, and Church Order,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2020): 241.

⁷ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 584; see also DeMoor, “Equipping the Saints,” p. 240. DeMoor notes that H. Bavinck acknowledged that there is no essential difference between consistories and broader assemblies in regard to their authority because they both receive their authority from Christ.

⁸ Danhof, “May a Classis or a Synod Depose a Consistory?” quoted in DeMoor, “Equipping the Saints,” p. 245; see also Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary: A Brief Explanation of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1941), p. 343. While these authors use the term “combined consistories,” we would probably describe them today as “combined councils” to emphasize the way the authority of the most local assembly—the council—is then delegated to the major assemblies.

⁹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 592; see also Faber, “Dordrecht, *Doleantie*, and Church Order,” p. 244. Faber notes that the failure to recognize the authority of major assemblies deviates from the principles of Reformed church polity.

¹⁰ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 592.

¹¹ DeMoor, “Equipping the Saints,” p. 240; see also Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 591, 598-600.

¹² Church Order Art. 29; see also Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 592, and Clowney, *The Church*, p. 203.

of authority to the major assemblies in order to give expression to a denominational fellowship based on a commonly held confession.¹³ Thus the authority of the local council is limited by its association with other churches in one denomination.¹⁴

In addition, officebearers are appointed as stewards of Christ's church and are granted the authority to uphold the purity and holiness of the church through the preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and exercise of discipline.¹⁵ As such, when the welfare of a congregation is at stake, a major assembly, as the ruling agency of minor assemblies, has the authority to discipline a minor assembly.¹⁶

It is also worth noting that while many Reformed theologians talk about the authority of major assemblies to exercise discipline on minor assemblies, very few of those theologians talk about *how* discipline is to be exercised by a major assembly on a minor or local assembly. The task force notes, as well, the challenge of how a major assembly could exercise its authority through discipline when there is disagreement between the major and minor assemblies about what the Word of God says on matters that require discipline.

C. Historical examples of church discipline exercised by major assemblies

The issue of whether a broader assembly may depose a council has been treated at length by DeMoor in *Equipping the Saints*.¹⁷ In the early stages of CRC history, the deposition of a council seems to have been a relatively noncontroversial occurrence. Classis Michigan saw it as the only way out of an intolerable situation in Grand Rapids surrounding the person of Gysbert Haan in 1861 (*Minutes of Classis 1861*, pp. 33-37). Similar action was taken with respect to the council of Zeeland (*Minutes of Classis 1864*, p. 98). DeMoor also briefly describes Classis Hackensack deposing the council of Ramsey, New Jersey, and Synod 1900 overruling the classis in that case (*Acts of Synod 1900*, pp. 23-28). The feeling was, as the 1877 General Assembly (predecessor of the CRC's synod) articulated it, that a classis stands above a council; it has every right to act if the welfare of the congregation is served (*Acts of Synod 1877*, p. 398).¹⁸

¹³ DeMoor, "Equipping the Saints," pp. 236, 240; see also Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), pp. 619, 637.

¹⁴ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 584; see also Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 639.

¹⁵ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 584, 595-601; see also Clowney, *The Church*, pp. 101, 114, and G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 365.

¹⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 591; see also Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 639.

¹⁷ DeMoor, "Equipping the Saints," pp. 107-120.

¹⁸ DeMoor, "Equipping the Saints," pp. 108-9.

After Synod 1918, Classis Muskegon deposed the council of First CRC of Muskegon amid a great deal of controversy.¹⁹ Perhaps the clearest explanation of the relation of the assemblies is given by Henry Beets: the denomination is a “federation of free Reformed churches,” quite analogous to the federation (not confederacy) which is the United States of America.²⁰ Already around 1920 some voices emphasized the importance of denominational ties and warned against excessive individualism. Churches that depart from the confession, Gabriel D. De Jong said, should be honest enough to withdraw from the denomination.²¹

The story of Sioux Center in the 1920s has been told in detail by Lou Van Dyke.²² Synod 1922 did not establish principles for the authority of synod over classis and classis over council. Rather it dealt with the material issues at hand and gave pastoral advice to the parties. Classis Sioux Center asked synod to set up a study committee to clarify the matter of the relation of broader assemblies to councils (*Acts of Synod 1924*, pp. 15-16),²³ but the four members of the study committee couldn’t agree and wrote two different reports, one emphasizing the authority of the local church and the other the authority of synod (*Agenda for Synod 1926*, pp. 125-47).

In summary, as stated in Overture 76 in the *Agenda for Synod 2023* (pp. 597-98), while the CRC may have some *precedents*, the *principles* are not spelled out in the Church Order itself. The principle that seems to arise from history is that discipline must include the larger church assemblies in order to get past the individualism that runs rampant in our society. This means that councils cannot simply act on their own but are accountable to the larger part of the church—that is, to classis. In the same manner, a classis cannot simply act on its own without being accountable to the larger denomination, of which synod is the representative assembly.

D. Church Order considerations

Section IV of the Church Order lays out “The Admonition and Discipline of the Church.” In our current Church Order this section consists of Articles 78-84 (in earlier editions the numbers varied). Section IV tells us that the goal of admonition and discipline is to help “restore those who err . . . maintain the holiness of the church, and . . . uphold God’s honor” (Art. 78). This section outlines that we are accountable to each other as members and

¹⁹ Henry Beets, “Church News: Classis Muskegon,” *The Banner* (Jan. 1, 1920), p. 14; cf. *Acts of Synod 1918*, p. 80.

²⁰ Henry Beets, *The Christian Reformed Church: Its Roots, History, Schools, and Mission Work, A.D. 1857-1946* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1946).

²¹ DeMoor, “Equipping the Saints,” p. 110.

²² Louis Y. Van Dyke, *Breaching the Dam: How One Sioux Center Congregation Became Two*, unpublished (accessed in the office of First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Center, Iowa).

²³ See DeMoor, “Equipping the Saints,” p. 113.

as officebearers. It also lays out steps of admonition, discipline, and potential readmission for members—and separately for those who have been installed into office.

Several other articles in the Church Order also have a bearing on discipline. Article 5 discusses officebearers signing the Covenant for Officebearers. Some material in Section II outlines the assemblies of the church (Art. 26-50)—particularly Article 29, which outlines that the decisions of the assemblies of the church are settled and binding. Article 30 deals with appeals.

Relevant information from Church Order commentaries follows:

1. Monsma and Van Dellen;²⁴ Brink and De Ridder;²⁵ Both of these commentaries consistently show that discipline ought not to be a rare thing but, rather, seen as a positive and useful means of guiding and correcting the church.
2. Engelhard and Hofman;²⁶ Borgdorff;²⁷ DeMoor;²⁸ All of these Church Order commentators also hold up discipline as a good and necessary thing but note the challenge of discipline as our society becomes increasingly litigious. DeMoor also includes in his commentary helpful real-life situations (often with a name or detail changed to retain confidentiality) in which he has counseled churches in regard to specific questions, also in regard to discipline.

There seems to be a move from viewing discipline as a duty and obligation that the church and the councils have to exercise, to something that is increasingly distasteful and applied only in especially egregious situations. Rather than being viewed as an expression of the church's loving concern for its members, discipline is increasingly viewed as judgmental. And in our litigious society today, councils have to acquiesce to people resigning their membership rather than moving through the discipline process.

E. Other denominations and how they address relationships between assemblies

The task force attempted to identify answers to questions such as the following with regard to other denominations through interviews, emails, and a review of published documents:

1. What is their perception of the Church Order and polity of the CRC? How is their polity different from ours? What are the distinctives of their polity?

²⁴ Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, *Church Order Commentary: A Brief Explanation of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1941).

²⁵ William P. Brink and Richard De Ritter, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1979).

²⁶ David H. Engelhard and Leonard J. Hofman, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2001).

²⁷ Peter Borgdorff, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2008, 2015).

²⁸ Henry DeMoor, *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2010, 2020).

2. What is the relationship between council, classis, and synod in other denominations? Do they use the language of *original* authority (in council) and *delegated* authority (given to the broader assemblies)? What is the nature of the authority of broader assemblies? Is it mostly “advisory”? How do broader assemblies maintain accountability? To what extent must churches “submit” to synodical decisions? Must they “believe” them or simply “abide” by them?
3. Can churches disaffiliate from the denomination on their own initiative? Are there recognized procedures for this?

These are the denominations reviewed/consulted:

Canadian Reformed Churches	Protestant Reformed Churches
Church of the Nazarene	Reformed Church in America
Episcopal Church (USA)	United Methodist Church
Evangelical Covenant Church	Southern Baptist Convention
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	

We noted through this process that some denominations have significantly hierarchical or congregationalist polities that are not really relevant to the CRC and its Church Order. Alternatively, denominations with polities similar to ours seem to be wrestling with the same issues that the CRC is facing.

III. The polity of Dort and the Reformed tradition

A. Theological underpinnings of the Church Order of Dort

Although we are a task force and not a study committee, there are basic polity issues we need to affirm from the outset. In some ways the polity that arose from the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), on which the current Christian Reformed Church Order is based, is between hierarchy and congregationalism (practiced in various independent evangelical churches). Roman Catholic polity of hierarchy is largely based on the authority of church tradition. As Protestants, we do not grant church tradition that kind of authority. Church polity must be based on the principles of Scripture alone. Strict congregationalism, on the other hand, claims that since Scripture (which is our sole authority) provides no example of a polity involving multiple levels of church government, we ought not to practice such polity either.

The polity of Dort falls between the hierarchical and congregational models in that it makes the case for *delegated* authority (CRCNA Church Order, Art. 27). The rationale goes as follows: Christ rules directly in the local church by his Word through the appointed officebearers. In that sense, Christ’s authority is indeed *original* in the local church. But for the protection of itself and the blessing of other churches, the churches agree to work together. To make this happen, each local council grants—or *delegates*—a certain authority to the broader assemblies. The local council is not forced to follow such a polity; it agrees to do so. In this way the local councils *covenant* to work together on the basis of a Church Order.

It is true that the Church Order, which binds the churches together, is a human-made document. Many of its details are not in Scripture. But this ought not to be perceived as a problem. Nothing forbids churches from working together in this way for the blessing of everyone involved. Local church authority is established through human-made rules in the same way the government can set highway speed limits. Church authority is delegated to the broader assemblies in the same way that parents delegate their God-given authority to a babysitter to help care for their kids. The Church Order is our human-made rule book to ensure decency and good order in the covenant that we agree to and share together.

Working together as churches in this way serves four generally accepted purposes:

1. It allows the church to complete what is unfinished at the local level.
2. It provides opportunities to do more ministry in the areas of evangelism, disaster relief, leadership training, and the like.
3. It serves better to express the unity of the church.
4. It provides better accountability for the churches individually and collectively.

B. Ambiguities in the Church Order of Dort

The Church Order of Dort leaves some unanswered questions. It contains a certain ambiguity or tension between a leaning toward federation (a more congregationalist model) and a leaning toward stronger central authority (a more hierarchical model). This has caused many disagreements—even divisions—among churches that adhere to the Church Order of Dort. To this day, the Protestant Reformed Church, for example, which came out of the CRC in 1924, identify themselves as a federation. They see themselves as a collection of churches. In fact, they call themselves the “Protestant Reformed Churches.” The “Canadian Reformed Churches” also see themselves in this way.²⁹ These churches reject what they call “synodocracy.” The real church, for them, is the local church. Because that is so, they do not believe the Church Order grants broader assemblies the authority to depose officebearers. That right belongs to the local council alone. When a local council breaks covenant, the only and final recourse is to remove the congregation from the federation.

But is the CRC a federation, like the Protestant Reformed and the Canadian Reformed Churches? It is noteworthy that we have hesitated to use that word in our history. Even our name hints at this caution. We are not the “Christian Reformed *Churches*”; we are the “Christian Reformed Church.” But “federation sympathies” have never been far outside of the CRC’s polity. This is partly due to the influence of Abraham Kuyper and the *doleantie*

²⁹ It is noteworthy that the Canadian Reformed Churches acknowledge the right of broader assemblies to approve candidates for the ministry, for example. Even they admit a certain tension here between the major and minor assemblies.

tradition he represented.³⁰ Kuyper clearly put the emphasis on the autonomy of the local church. Monsma and Van Dellen, well-respected Church Order specialists in the CRC, also favored a more *federalional* interpretation and/or application of the Church Order. But never was the CRC strictly bound to such a view of the church. When circumstances required it, the CRC granted broader assemblies a wide range of powers—including the authority to depose officebearers. We’ve done it more than once. Many in our history have defended this.

Perhaps the practical implication of these issues may be summarized in this way: according to the Church Order of Dort, what is the purpose of major assemblies? One of the roles of major assemblies is to offer advice. When a local council proceeds with discipline (Church Order Supplement, Art. 78-81, c), for example, it must seek the advice of the classis. Church visitors also offer advice on behalf of the classis to the local council. But offering advice is not all that major assemblies do. For a local council to proceed with the final act of discipline, for example, it must receive the *concurrence* of classis. Classis must *approve*. Major assemblies are also involved in the examination and approval of candidates for ministry of the Word. A local council cannot ordain a pastor without the *approval* of classis and synod. All of this suggests that major assemblies have more than just advisory power. And as for discipline by major assemblies? Did the original architects of the Church Order of Dort believe that major assemblies have the authority to depose officebearers in the local church? Evidently, yes, for the Synod of Dort and other provincial synods subsequently deposed countless officebearers with Remonstrant sympathies. This is in our history.

Such is our history in the CRC as well. In 1982 synod 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 the congregation is at stake” (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 55). Synod declared this after a classis was charged a few years earlier with abusing its “God-given authority . . . by lording it over . . . [a local council] and by exercising ecclesiastical authority in a hierarchical manner not in keeping with the domain and character of the authority entrusted to it by delegation.” The first three of the six grounds given to support synod’s decision are as follows:

- a. . . . Christ gave authority to the church as a whole and entrusted authority to the occasions of its exercise in classis and synod as gatherings of the churches to maintain the unity of the congregations in both doctrine and discipline.
- b. The gathering of churches and their representatives in Jerusalem set a pattern of authoritative decisions, which pattern is followed in principle in the deliberations and decisions of the major assemblies;

³⁰ See Faber, “Dordrecht, *Doleantie*, and Church Order,” pp. 235-52.

- c. To contend that [a classis] . . . had no proper jurisdiction over the . . . [council] proceeds on a mistaken conception of the relation of the minor assembly to the major assembly.

(Acts of Synod 1980, pp. 28-29)

In the history of the CRC there has always been a general desire to protect the autonomy of the local church as much as possible—but not at all costs. If the welfare of a congregation or of the churches in common was at stake, synods cautiously used the authority of major assemblies to protect all parties involved. Synod 1988 (*Acts of Synod 1988*, pp. 542-43) was willing to hear and even sustain an appeal of one classis against a decision of another, pointing to our denominational covenant and to the need to avoid congregational individualism. Synod 2015 (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 674), on the other hand, argued that a broader assembly cannot instruct a minor assembly to exercise discipline, except on appeal. Synod 2018 (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 516) further declined to adopt procedures for classes to appeal to other classes. Then at Synod 2023, Neland Avenue CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.) submitted an appeal to synod, suggesting in part that the actions of synod in 2022 were inappropriate with regard to procedures of Church Order (*Agenda for Synod 2023*, pp. 622-27). The most relevant parts of synod’s response are as follows (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 1024-25):

- b. “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 Art. 27-b and 28-b).
- c. 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.”

IV. Affirming our historic practice of applying the Church Order of Dort

A. Fundamental principles

The concern of Overture 76 from Classis Hackensack in 2022 is that there remains confusion regarding the nature of the authority of the major assemblies in the CRC, especially as it relates to discipline. The most pressing question is this: Do major assemblies have the authority to initiate and practice discipline? Our answer is yes—when the appropriate qualifications are properly understood. To bring clarity to the issues involved, we lay out what we believe are the basic biblical principles that undergird the Church Order of Dort.

1. Christ is the head of the church. This needs to be acknowledged—indeed celebrated—from the beginning. Christ is King. He rules through his Word.

2. Christ rules directly in the local church. In that sense the authority of Christ is indeed *original* in the local church. We must affirm the local church's right and responsibility to govern its own affairs. What is especially unique to the local council is the use of the means of grace and the keys of the kingdom. Preaching, sacraments, and discipline rightly belong first to the local church. Here ministry takes place on the ground. As much as possible, the major assemblies ought not to interfere with these matters unique to the local congregation. We believe this point honors the principles of Kuyper and the *doleantie* tradition.
3. Minor assemblies *delegate* authority to the major assemblies. It is important to acknowledge the nature of this delegated authority.
 - a. Delegated authority is more than just advice. Church Order Article 27-b says that "the classis *has the same authority* over the council as the synod has over the classis." This point cannot be overlooked. If the authority of the major assemblies is only advisory, then we are essentially no different from a convention of congregationalist churches.
 - b. The things that major assemblies have authority over are "those matters which concern its churches in common" (Church Order Art. 28-b). This refers to matters related to our shared creeds, confessions, Church Order, and ministry. There is undoubtedly a gray area here. But some things are clear: picking the carpet color for a sanctuary is clearly a local matter; discerning what ministry to support as a classis has to do with "matters . . . in common." Nothing in the Church Order speaks against the full authority of the major assemblies in this area.
 - c. As explained earlier, major assemblies also have authority to intervene when the well-being of a local congregation is at stake. It has, at times, been argued that Article 85 of the Church Order forbids this. This article says, "No church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no officebearer shall lord it over another officebearer." However, the intent of Article 85 is not to preclude the authority of the major assemblies. What it speaks against is a hierarchical dominance of one congregation over another, or one officebearer over another.³¹
 - d. The matters that major assemblies do not have authority over are those that rightfully belong to the local council. Article 27-a says, "Each assembly exercises, *in keeping with its own character and domain*, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ" (emphasis added). In the matters that are "in common," or that threaten the well-being of the local church, however, the major assemblies wield the full authority of Christ over a local council. According to

³¹ See Borgdorff, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 281.

Article 29 of the Church Order, the decisions of the major assemblies “shall be considered settled and binding.” No minor assembly has any right to dismiss the decisions of the major assemblies. They have *covenanted* to abide by those decisions.

B. Practicing our principles when there is disagreement

The principles of the Church Order are clear enough. The challenge is in determining what assemblies should do when there is disagreement within the denomination. What is a minor assembly to do when it fundamentally disagrees with a decision of a major assembly? Our task force considered creating various procedures for the Church Order that would effectively address the different scenarios that churches might face. In the end, we decided that this is not possible—or even wise. The problems and disagreements churches face are often varied, multilayered, and complex. For every Church Order article we create, we could envision an “exception” to the rule. The fact of the matter is that different situations call for different actions. Take, for example, how the CRC responded to those pastors and churches that could not accept the three points of common grace in 1924. Because Herman Hoeksema and the council members of Eastern Avenue CRC declared separation from the CRC, Classis Grand Rapids East felt it essentially had one choice, and that was to acquiesce to their departure while recognizing a minority of the congregation as continuing in the CRC. A month later, in a separate situation, Classis Grand Rapids West took a different approach. Because the councils of First CRC of Kalamazoo and Hope CRC of Grandville refused to submit to synod’s decisions, the classis felt it had no other option but to depose the councils of those two churches.³² Different situations call for different actions. This explains why we propose only minimal Church Order changes. What serves the churches better are working guidelines. To that end we offer the following:

1. When a minor assembly disagrees with a decision of a major assembly, the minor assembly ought to be reminded of the right of appeal—all the way up to synod. If the major assemblies do not sustain the appeal, the minor assembly has the following options:
 - a. It can learn to accept and live with the decision.
 - b. It can protest the decision—while not agitating against it.
 - c. It can disaffiliate from the denomination.
2. Minor assemblies do retain the right to disaffiliate from the denomination. This freedom is in line with the principles of Dort. If a minor assembly has the right to delegate authority to the major assemblies, it

³² The different approaches to these two cases are seen clearly in the *Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 138-39. The report of the December 1924 meeting of Classis Grand Rapids East is published in *The Banner* (Jan. 23, 1925; pp. 56-60), and so is the report of the January 1925 meeting of Classis Grand Rapids West (*The Banner*, Feb. 13, 1925; p. 98). Both classes’ actions were upheld by synod (*Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 131-40).

also has the right to rescind that authority. Rescinding such authority, however, amounts to leaving the denomination. The CRC has a process for congregations to follow under Article 38-f of the Church Order. Decency and good order dictate that congregations that leave should do so in an orderly way with respect, civility, and love.

3. Councils open themselves to discipline if they do not follow the decisions of the major assemblies but choose not to disaffiliate. It must be acknowledged that such discipline is different from the kind of discipline practiced by the local council. As a rule, major assemblies ought not to administer the keys of the kingdom. Opening and closing the kingdom rightly belongs to the local council alone. But administering the keys of the kingdom is not the only form of discipline practiced in the church. There is also a form of discipline that protects the integrity of the churches in common. Such discipline should be carried out with love, care, and patience. It should follow the principles of Matthew 18 as much as possible.

If a charge has been raised alleging the noncompliance of a local council, the classis or synod would decide whether that church is in violation of the covenant we all agree to uphold (Church Order Art. 29, 86). If so, the council would be given a timeframe to bring its practices in line with that covenant or to follow the process to disaffiliate. During that time the council would also have the right to appeal a decision of classis to synod. Once synod's decision is made and the given timeframe has passed, if the council chooses not to agree or disaffiliate, the classis or synod may declare the council/congregation as having de facto disaffiliated from the denomination. In this case, the steps of disaffiliation as laid out in Article 38-f should be followed as closely as possible. Those faithful to the denomination may request pastoral care and assistance from classis.

- a. Things become more difficult if there is division within the local congregation itself regarding compliance with denominational commitments. We suggest the following guidelines:
 - 1) If the majority in council favors breaking the shared denominational covenant (and this is the position of council) in such a way that a classis or synod deems that it jeopardizes the well-being of the congregation, the classis or synod has the right and responsibility to intervene.
 - 2) If a minority in council favors breaking covenant and in fact continues to do so, such officebearers may face special discipline according to Articles 82-84 of the Church Order.
 - 3) If all of the officebearers of a council are negligent in duty to the point that the welfare of the congregation is at stake, and the con-

gregation asks classis for assistance, the classis may, under extreme circumstances, depose the entire council and assist the congregation in appointing a new one.

- b. What if a classis refuses to hold a noncompliant local council to account? According to our polity, other assemblies from outside the classis may communicate their concerns to the council and the classis. We offer a word of caution here, however. We ought to discourage councils and classes from focusing on the “speck in the eye” of other councils and classes when they ignore “the log” in their own (Matt. 7:3-5). (As articulated in the *Acts of Synod 1988*, pp. 544, we encourage the balance between investigating suspicion while also protecting the “suspect” from unfair treatment.) On the other hand, the case with Neland Avenue CRC and Classis Grand Rapids East in 2022 shows what happens when assemblies differ on how to address compliance with synodical decisions within their own spheres of jurisdiction. Councils and classes must have the right to overture synod to deal with councils and classes that openly break covenant. If an entire classis refuses to enact discipline upon a local council that breaks covenant, synod may exercise discipline in the place of classis by way of a committee *in loco* and may define the mandate of that committee.

V. Amending our Church Order

Our task force was asked to review the Church Order and to suggest appropriate Church Order changes where necessary. We did a thorough review of the Church Order. We noted the areas that require strengthening—especially in regard to discipline by broader assemblies. We also considered some of the wording of the Church Order that might cause confusion.

We debated the merit of the words “major and minor assemblies.” It has been said that the word “major” leaves the impression that it is more important or carries more authority and power than the word “minor.” We toyed with finding better words (such as “broader,” which is used elsewhere in the Church Order), but in the end we were unsuccessful. We decided to leave these terms alone since they are simply part of our ecclesiastical language. It is to be noted that a major assembly is not more important or authoritative than a minor assembly. The authority of a major assembly is simply broader. All authority in the church is original in the minor assembly, and from there it is delegated to the major assemblies for the common good of the broader church.

We also discussed the word “disaffiliation.” It has been said that this word suggests negative connotations. We toyed with replacing it with another word, but, again, in the end we agreed to leave it alone. The word is sufficient. When a congregation disaffiliates, this means it is no longer part of the denomination and has no legal ties. Words like “separation” don’t seem to carry enough weight for this situation.

Other matters were brought to our attention. Do the recent synodical decisions regarding gravamina affect our work? We didn't think so, since these are matters internal to local councils, whereas our mandate was to deal with the authority of major assemblies. It goes without saying that officebearers who have difficulty subscribing to the Covenant for Officebearers must follow the appropriate articles of the Church Order designed for issues related to confessional subscription.

On another topic, Synod 2024 made some decisions regarding "limited suspension" (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 891-93). This was in response to recent events in the life of the denomination. We do not believe that this precedent was meant to create a new category of discipline in addition to the already established categories of suspension and deposition. Synod's decisions address the unique situation faced in 2024. One of our recommendations is that synod take note of that.

There was also brief discussion regarding Articles of Incorporation. Some congregations have Articles of Incorporation that commit them to advancing the purposes of the denomination (cf. Supplement, Church Order Art. 32-d). The task force is aware that some churches and classes have questioned the right of a major assembly to restrict a minor assembly's right to choose its own delegation, or to remove officebearers in a local congregation. While this is a legal rather than an ecclesiastical question and therefore is outside the scope of this task force, we would argue that the Articles of Incorporation should not be used to handcuff or supersede the weightier constitutional documents of the church. According to the Church Order, our prioritized authoritative documents are as follows: Scripture, the creeds and confessions, the Church Order, synodical statements—and then finally Articles of Incorporation.³³ Congregations that disaffiliate should use the procedures outlined in the supplement to Church Order Article 38-f. We identify this as a problem area that is outside the scope of this task force.

As stated earlier, changing many things in the Church Order would not be wise. Because situations can be so different depending on the contexts, trying to create a Church Order rule for every scenario would be virtually impossible. There are too many exceptions to every rule. What the church needs are guidelines as presented in this report. It is our prayer that the churches use these guidelines in a wise and gracious way.

What is especially crucial at this time is that synod make explicit what has always been implied: major assemblies do have the authority to ensure accountability. We suggest two changes in the Church Order and Its Supplements to make this clear: by way of adding a supplement to Article 27-b

³³ See the list under "Important Distinctions" in the introduction to the Church Order and Article III of the Model Articles of Incorporation in Supplement, Church Order Article 32-d, as well as the report of the Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice and synod's comments (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 322-30; *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 690-91).

(which deals with the authority of major assemblies) and adding a statement to Article 83 (which deals with the special discipline of officebearers).

To Article 27-b we suggest adding a supplement consisting of three paragraphs that essentially allow major assemblies to guide processes of discipline within the minor assemblies. The proposed addition concludes with a recommendation that if a council chooses not to follow denominational commitments within a reasonable period of time, the major assembly may declare the church as having de facto disaffiliated from the denomination. This recommendation does not speak about removing the leadership of the church. It only declares the local congregation outside of the denomination. This recommendation aims to protect the “autonomy of the local church” as much as possible.

There are times, however, when things are at such a state at the local leadership level that the well-being of the local congregation is at stake. In such rare situations, the only reasonable course of action is to allow the major assembly to get involved—and to depose officebearers if necessary. To make this clearer, we recommend adding a statement to Article 83: “In exceptional circumstances, when necessary for the well-being of a congregation, a major assembly may suspend and depose officebearers even when such action has not been initiated by the council.” Some of the text of the Church Order Supplement would also have to be adjusted slightly to reflect this change.

It cannot be emphasized enough that no matter how many articles are changed or added, no Church Order can fully protect and/or save a denomination when there is disagreement. For the church to function well, it requires a basic sense of trust, respect, and love by all. We strongly warn against using the Church Order in a legalistic fashion or as a club to coerce wayward officebearers into compliance. May we all look to Christ and walk in his way!

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Ken Benjamins (chair) and Barb Bulthuis (reporter) when the report of this task force is discussed.

B. That synod recommend the task force report to the churches as a helpful guide in the application of discipline by the major assemblies.

C. That synod affirm that although Synod 2024 made decisions regarding “limited suspension” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 891-93), that precedent should not be deemed to create a new category of discipline (“limited suspension”) in addition to the already established categories of suspension and deposition.

Ground:

The measures taken by synod were under unusual circumstances, in which the aspect of “limited” suspension was intended to implement a measure of grace, considering the short time frame within which deci-

sions with major consequences for officebearers, councils, and congregations had been proposed and implemented. Continuing to maintain a category of “limited suspension” beyond the time frames set out by Synod 2024 would needlessly complicate the procedures of discipline available in the existing categories of suspension and deposition.

D. That synod add the following proposed Supplement to Church Order Article 27-b (which reads, “The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis”):

When necessary for the well-being of the churches, classes, or the denomination at large, classes and synod may guide procedures of discipline at the levels of local councils and classes, respectively, even if not requested by the minor assembly. Major assemblies are expected to hold councils or classes within their constituency accountable to the ecclesiastical covenant implied in denominational membership.

The means of maintaining accountability may include the steps of special discipline described in Church Order Articles 82-84 and their Supplements.

If a council chooses not to follow the decisions of classis or synod within a period of time determined by classis or synod, that assembly may declare the church as having de facto disaffiliated from the denomination. In this case, the steps described in Supplement, Article 38-f should be applied as closely as possible.

Grounds:

1. Although the authority of the local council is original, the delegated authority of classis and synod carries weight and must be allowed to be used for purposes of accountability to our shared covenant.
2. Accountability is one of the primary values of working together rather than solely as independent local churches. Councils accept this accountability when they choose to join the denomination.
3. Councils that are not willing to live within the bounds of our shared covenant cannot rightly remain part of that covenant.

E. That synod make the following amendments to Church Order Article 83 and to Supplement, Articles 82-84 so that they read as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

Article 83

- a. Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.
- b. In exceptional circumstances, when necessary for the well-being of a congregation, a major assembly may suspend and depose officebearers even when such action has not been initiated by the council.

Supplement, Articles 82-84

The Admonition and Discipline of Officebearers

- a. An administrative leave may be imposed without prejudice by ~~the council~~ an assembly (ordinarily the council) in order to investigate allegations of deviation from sound doctrine or godly conduct. Compensation and benefits would continue, and any duties to be performed during the leave would be specified by the council. All suspensions and administrative leaves are temporary.
- b. *[unchanged]*
- c. *[unchanged]*
- d. *[unchanged]*
- e. Suspension/deposition of elders, deacons, and commissioned pastors
 - 1) The suspension or deposition of an elder, deacon, or commissioned pastor shall ordinarily be imposed by the council with the concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.
 - 2) *[unchanged]*
 - 3) *[unchanged]*
- f. Suspension/deposition of ministers
 - 1) The suspension of a minister of the Word shall ordinarily be imposed by the council of the minister's church with the concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.
 - 2) *[unchanged]*
 - 3) *[unchanged]*
- g. *[unchanged]*
- h. *[unchanged]*
- i. ~~The council of the church~~ assembly which deposed the minister shall declare the deposed minister eligible to receive a call upon the affirmative judgment of the classis which approved the deposition, together with the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Upon acceptance of a call, the previously deposed minister shall be reordained.
- j. *[unchanged]*

Grounds:

1. Officebearers have a high level of responsibility to the church and therefore a high level of accountability as well. In situations where officebearers are violating the covenant they agreed to follow, they must be held accountable for the good of the church.
2. Leadership comes with the temptation to abuse power, as has often been demonstrated in churches across the world. Sometimes the dynamics are such that the officebearers inside a church are not able to see or appropriately address such situations.

3. If the accountability of the local leadership is not addressed at the local church level, the broader assembly has an obligation to step in for the good of the congregation to avoid the perpetuation of neglect, abuse, or heresy.
- F. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of this task force and dismiss the task force with thanks.

Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures
to Discipline Officebearers

Ken Benjamins (chair)	Cindy VanderKodde (adviser)
Barb Bulthuis (reporter)	Charles Veenstra
William Koopmans (vice-chair)	Beverly Weeks
Shaun Jung	Andrew Zomerman
Petr Kornilov	

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Note: This list includes documents and published works that were helpful to our committee in its work. We recommend these for further study.

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- *Church Order and Its Supplements*

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DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Dordt University

Greetings to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

Dordt University remains deeply grateful for its longstanding relationship with the CRCNA and for the shared Reformed commitment that continues to shape our mission and life together. While Dordt is not an official institution of higher education in the denomination, we remain steadfast in serving the CRC through Christ-centered higher education rooted in Scripture and committed to the Reformed confessions.

During the 2025-26 academic year, we have seen evidence of God's faithfulness as Dordt continues to grow while remaining anchored in its mission: to equip students for Christ-centered renewal in all areas of contemporary life.

Dordt remains committed to grounding every aspect of campus life in fidelity to Scripture. This year the university undertook a refreshing of its Task and Framework documents (dordt.edu/about-dordt/consumer-information/the-task-and-educational-framework-of-dordt-university), reaffirming Dordt's biblical foundations while clarifying how its mission is lived out in a changing cultural context. This work reflects a continued commitment to theological clarity, institutional integrity, and faithful Christian witness.

Spiritual formation remains central to the Dordt student experience. Chapel and faith-based small groups continue to play a significant role in campus life, alongside service-learning opportunities and local outreach programs. Nearly half of the Dordt student body participates in Bible study groups, and more than two-thirds of students engage in volunteer or community outreach efforts—purposely integrating faith and service.

Students' commitment to the church remains strong: approximately 94 percent of Dordt students regularly attend church, demonstrating ongoing engagement with local congregations during their college years.

Dordt also continues to encourage students to prayerfully discern whether God may be calling them into ministry and church leadership. In fall 2025, the university hosted "Called," an event that brought together area pastors and denominational leaders to help students as well as others from the region explore a range of ministry pathways, including congregational ministry, church planting, and overseas service. Dordt is also in the process of developing partnerships with Calvin Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary (an RCA institution in Holland, Mich.) to support students who are called to seminary training.

Dordt continues to serve the Christian Reformed Church and the intent of Article 71 of the Church Order to promote Christian education through a distinctive institutional commitment: all full-time faculty and professional staff are active members of congregations that subscribe to the Reformed confessions, and they commit to educating their children through Christian day schools or parent-directed education.

The university remains actively engaged with Christian day schools through the work of the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education (CACE), which supports teachers, administrators, and schools across North America. Through conferences, research, and professional development, Dordt continues to strengthen the pipeline between Christian K–12 education and Christian higher education.

For the fifth year in a row, Dordt achieved record enrollment (dordt.edu/news/dordt-achieves-record-enrollment-for-the-fifth-year-in-a-row). As of fall 2025, 2,077 students are enrolled, including 1,655 full-time undergraduates with a nearly even mix of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. This continual growth reflects the confidence families place in Dordt's Christ-centered education and the university's expanding geographic reach across states and countries, including an enduring Canadian presence.

The Dordt campus continues to be expanded and enhanced to support the university's growing student body. Recently completed projects include new upperclassmen cottages that foster community-focused residential living and a new nursing lab to support enrollment growth. Improvements have also been made to athletic and arts facilities, including expanded offices, training spaces, and locker rooms in the Rozenboom Family Athletic Center. The Jim and Marilyn Dean Recital Hall (dordt.edu/news/dean-family-performing-arts-center) is a newly constructed multipurpose venue intended to serve both artistic and academic needs on campus, including performances and rehearsals. The Atrium—Dordt's new dining commons—provides longer serving hours and enhanced gathering spaces that serve as a central hub for campus life. Construction continues on a new set of upperclassmen apartments, and work will begin on a new underclassmen dormitory in late spring (dordt.edu/news/dordt-university-launches-major-housing-expansion-to-meet-record-enrollment); in total, Dordt will add approximately 355 beds in the next two years.

Alumni remain deeply invested in the life of the university through annual giving and prayerful support. This year 21 percent of Dordt alumni participated in giving, and many current students are second- and third-generation Dordt graduates—signs of long-term trust in Dordt's mission among families and communities.

Dordt students and faculty continue to demonstrate excellence in academics, scholarship, and cocurricular life. A team of Dordt finance majors placed second nationally (dordt.edu/news/dordt-finance-team-places-2nd-nationally-at-elite-business-valuation-competition) at an elite business valuation competition. Faculty leadership was highlighted through Dr. Jeff Ploegstra's appointment to the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council (dordt.edu/news/dr-jeff-ploegstra-appointed-to-serve-on-iowa-governors-stem-advisory-council). New academic offerings, including the recently announced master of science in nursing: family nurse practitioner program (dordt.edu/fnp), expand Dordt's capacity to serve students called to advanced professional leadership.

Athletics also remains a vital context for discipleship and excellence. This year included historic achievements such as the Dordt women's basketball team winning the NAIA national championship (dordt.edu/news/dordt-womens-basketball-are-naia-national-champions-again), the Dordt football team capturing the GPAC championship (gpacsports.com/sports/fball/2025-26/releases/20251117kvo275), and continued national-level success in cross country, hockey, and other programs.

In the arts, Dordt's Wind Symphony represented the university while touring the East Coast (Feb. 27 - Mar. 9, 2026), including an opportunity to be guest conducted by the assistant director of "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band and performance in a joint concert with U.S. Marine Band Quantico at Quantico Marine Corps Base. These opportunities highlight both artistic excellence and Dordt's national presence.

We are grateful for the Christian Reformed Church's continued prayers, partnership, and encouragement. Dordt remains committed to serving the church by forming graduates who love God, serve faithfully in their vocations, and seek Christ-centered renewal in all areas of life.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Dordt University
Erik Hoekstra, president

The King's University

Greetings from King's!

We are thankful for God's continued blessings on The King's University and for the faithful partnership of our supporting community. New programs are being offered, and the construction of our new facility continues to progress.

Applications for Fall 2026 are trending very positively. We currently have 544 applications for the next academic year, representing a 24-percent increase in comparison to this time last year. While there is still important work ahead to support applicants as they progress toward enrollment, we are encouraged by continued and growing interest from students considering to study at King's. We give thanks to God for his ongoing provision of students who are eager to engage in Christian university education.

Construction of our new Centre for Excellence in the Sciences is progressing on schedule. The construction is on pace to be completed in July. We are thrilled to see this new addition to campus continuing to progress toward completion and are very excited about the new opportunities it will create for King's. New laboratories, additional instructional classrooms, collaborative research space, and faculty and administrative office spaces will all be a part of this new construction. Visit kingsu.ca/sciences for more information on this exciting development. We look forward to hosting a grand opening of the new science center on October 3, 2026, followed by an evening of food, fellowship, and celebration at our annual Harvest Banquet. We are eager to welcome our broader community to celebrate this milestone with us.

This past July, The King's University received final approval to offer a bachelor of kinesiology degree. The program equips students for careers in recreation, athletic performance, and health science and builds on King's strong reputation in the natural and social sciences. "Students who have a passion for sport and exercise will learn about the beauty of human motion through this program," said Dr. Kris Ooms, vice president of academics and research. "King's is bringing a Christ-centered perspective to the field of kinesiology by exploring how God created the human body, and how motion and exercise can be acts of worship." King's approach to the field of kinesiology stresses holistic connections between physical, mental, and spiritual wellness.

The King's Centre for Visualization in Science (KCVS) has received a \$1 million donation to support sustained programming, staffing, technical equipment, and expanded undergraduate research opportunities for King's students. This generous gift comes from Faculty of Natural Sciences alum Dr. Colin Wiebe ('85) and his wife, Patty. "KCVS is a very unique initiative," said Colin Wiebe. "It offers amazing opportunities for students who are passionate about changing the world through ethical chemistry and creating climate change learning tools. Patty and I hope that this donation will support these important projects and allow them to expand."

KCVS student-research teams create free digital-learning resources that are used by educators around the world to make topics in ethical chemistry and climate change more accessible. The KCVS learning suite currently includes more than one hundred interactive resources, with additional tools under development by this year's student-research team. "It's really valuable to have a Christ-centered viewpoint in the world," said Patty Wiebe, "and KCVS is an amazing platform for that. I did not attend King's, but I'm deeply impressed by the heart of this community and the impact of KCVS and other programs. We are grateful for the opportunity to support King's in this way."

Thank you for your continued prayers for The King's University and our students. The financial support we receive from many churches in the western Canadian classes of the Christian Reformed Church in North America is key in our efforts to keep a King's education an affordable option for anyone seeking a university degree grounded in our Christian faith. We are grateful for the vision that members of the Christian Reformed Church have had in establishing King's and in ensuring that this important option for Christian university education is available for students.

The King's University
Shannon Tuininga, vice president for
institutional advancement

Kuyper College

Greetings from Kuyper College!

In our 87th year, we give thanks to God for his abundant blessings on the Kuyper College community. We are grateful for steady enrollment, a diverse student body pursuing a Bible college education within the Reformed tradition, and a faithful constituency that helps to sustain our mission. In a challenging season for small faith-based colleges, it is a particular blessing to address unexpected maintenance needs, balance our operating budget, remain debt-free, and celebrate how our students are flourishing inside and outside of the classroom. These highlights demonstrate Kuyper's mission—to form lifelong learners for purposeful lives of work and service to God and neighbor:

I. Purposeful learning

- **Accreditation and partnerships:** Since 1964, Kuyper has been accredited by the Association for Biblical Higher Education. We will host a comprehensive accreditation visit in March 2026. In fall 2025 the Social Work program was reaffirmed for eight years by the Council on Social Work Education. Kuyper also signed agreements with Calvin University's education program and Dordt University's online program for the master's degree in social work.
- **Student scholarship:** In December the Scholarship Committee hosted Global Advocacy and Awareness Day, with students showcasing research, practicing professional presentations, and encouraging participation in restorative change.
- **Faith and sports experience:** In partnership with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Kuyper hosted a Faith and Sports Experience Day for over forty high school students, featuring guest speakers from professional teams and local Christian high schools who shared a Bible-based perspective on careers in sports.
- **Dual-enrollment partnerships:** Kuyper expanded partnerships with area Christian and charter high schools to offer dual-enrollment courses on their campuses, with 104 students participating this year.

II. Purposeful Work

- **Work college:** Kuyper celebrated five years as a federally recognized Work College—the only one in Michigan and one of ten nationwide. Through KuyperWorks, students integrate learning, work, and service to prepare for meaningful vocations while reducing debt. This year 81 percent of students participated in on- or off-campus placements focused on five core competencies: theology of work, professionalism, critical thinking, effort and productivity, and collaboration. Students received \$4,000–\$6,000 in tuition grants in addition to scholarships and other aid, allowing them to graduate with 52 percent less debt than the Michigan average.

- **Theology of work research:** With funding from the Work Colleges Consortium, five faculty members are completing research on the theology of work and its application within their respective vocational disciplines.
- **Teaching and writing:** While teaching “Introduction to Biblical Interpretation” at Kuyper College, Dr. Anthony Bradley was inspired to write a new book: *God at Work: Loving God and Neighbor Through the Book of Exodus*, designed for classrooms, churches, and small groups and featuring a built-in study guide and reflection questions.
- **Faculty scholarship:** Jennifer Colin, L.M.S.W., program director and associate professor of social work, presented “Supporting Those with Disability That Accompanies Aging” at the Council on Social Work Education Annual Conference, exploring how social workers can help older adults navigate aging and disability with resilience and purpose.

III. Purposeful service

- **Campus theme—*Seek First*:** This year the Kuyper community came together in student-led chapels, classroom discussions, weekly emails, and personal conversations to focus on putting God first, following the call of Matthew 6:33.
- **Service trip:** Nine student leaders and our director of faith formation spent spring break serving with World Renew in Seminole, Florida, assisting with follow-up relief efforts from Hurricane Helene.
- **Prison initiative:** Through our partnership with the Calvin Prison Initiative at Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Michigan, several faculty teach undergraduate courses.
- **Law enforcement partnerships:** We continue building strong relationships with local law enforcement agencies, hosting campus trainings, and inviting officers and first responders to our campus-wide Thanksgiving Dinner.

This is my final report to synod as president of Kuyper College, since I plan to retire on June 30, 2026. I am deeply grateful for thirteen years of service alongside faculty and staff who nurture students’ faith and prepare them for service in every square inch of God’s world. I am confident that Kuyper will continue advancing its mission—championing its identity as a Bible College within the Reformed tradition, deepening its Work College model, and expanding innovative learning opportunities—while inspiring supporters, partners, and students to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At Kuyper we celebrate community and are grateful to be part of the CRCNA community. Thank you for your prayers and support, and thanks be to God for the gift of his church.

Kuyper College
Patricia R. Harris, president

Redeemer University

In 2025, Redeemer University celebrated a milestone year of student growth, the launch of Canada's only Reformed Christian master of education degree, and the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. Looking ahead to 2026, Redeemer remains steadfast in its commitment to prepare students to reflect the love of Jesus Christ in their careers and callings. We are grateful for God's provision, and in gratitude we share the following highlights from the past year.

I. Milestone year of student growth

It was a record-breaking year for overall enrollment and new students in residence, with a total of over 1,100 students and 585 in residence. Redeemer's students are growing academically and in spiritual formation as they study through a distinctly Reformed Christian worldview.

II. Advancing Christian scholarship

The Albert M. Wolters Centre for Christian Scholarship hosted a conference in celebration of the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed. The event was a rich time of learning and reflecting on this central creed of the Christian faith.

At this year's "The World and Our Calling" lecture, Dr. Katie Day Good (Calvin University), winner of the 2025 Emerging Public Intellectual Award, addressed how digital platforms intended for connection often lead to isolation.

Redeemer also commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the publication of Dr. Wolters' book *Creation Regained*, a seminal work encouraging the exploration of every aspect of God's creation from the perspective of the renewing hope found in Jesus Christ.

III. 2035 strategic plan—every career and calling

Redeemer's 2035 strategic plan lays the foundation for the university's undergraduate growth and expansion into graduate programs and professional studies. The strategic plan is intended to be dynamic, ensuring mission alignment while adapting to the changing needs of the university. The 2035 strategic plan is available at redeemer.ca/about/strategic-plan-2035.

IV. A distinctly Christian master of education degree

In fall 2025, Redeemer announced its first graduate degree. The Master of Education degree is the first program of its kind in Canada to provide advanced learning for educators and school administrators from a distinctly Reformed Christian worldview. Interest in the program has been strong since its announcement in October 2025, attracting applicants from across Canada. At the time of this writing, the first cohort is anticipated to reach full capacity, with a waiting list of additional applicants.

Following this successful launch, preparations are now under way for Redeemer's next graduate degree, a master of arts in counseling, in 2027.

V. H. Evan Runner Reading Room

Redeemer has unveiled the H. Evan Runner Reading Room, within the Peter Turkstra Library, to house the personal library and papers of Dr. Calvin Seerveld. This room stewards significant resources and materials of the Reformed Christian academic and scholarly tradition, including the personal library of Dr. Albert Wolters. The Reading Room has capacity for approximately 11,500 volumes and is available to faculty, external scholars, and students interested in neo-Calvinist and Reformational academic traditions.

VI. Church and student placements

In the past academic year, Redeemer helped more than 150 students gain practical workplace experiences through co-operative placements and internships. Redeemer's co-op and internship students are studying in programs such as mission and ministry, worship music leadership, media production, business/marketing, and social work.

VII. Thank you

We are thankful for the CRCNA's faithful support and prayers. Redeemer remains committed to the mission of preparing students to reflect the love of Jesus Christ in every career and calling. Thank you for making it possible for students to follow their God-given purpose.

Redeemer University
David Zietsma, president

Trinity Christian College

Note: On November 4, 2025, Trinity Christian College announced that it would close at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year. The general secretary shares the following announcement from the Board of Trustees at Trinity Christian College and invites you to pray for the Trinity Community.

For additional information, please see the Trinity Christian College website at trnty.edu/announcement-2025. News reports are also available through *CRC News* (crcna.org/news-and-events/news/trinity-christian-college-close) and *The Banner* (thebanner.org/news/2025/11/trinity-focused-on-closing-well-for-students-cccu-has-sustainability-index-for-member).

The Board of Trustees at Trinity Christian College has voted to close the 66-year-old private institution at the conclusion of the 2025-2026 academic year. Trinity will hold its final commencement ceremony on May 8, 2026.

Despite strategic efforts to adjust its growth model and eliminate its deficit, Trinity has faced fast-evolving economic and cultural realities: post-COVID financial losses, persistent operating deficits, a decline in college enrollment, increased competition for students, and shifting donor giving and financial circumstances. These challenges impacted Trinity's ability to continue providing a transformative, affordable education rooted in its Christian mission. After reviewing the assessment of multiple advisors, projections for future revenue and enrollment, and strategic alternatives, the board voted on November 3, 2025, to close the college and facilitate a smooth transition for students.

"Our deepest commitment in this season is to care for our people, particularly our students, faculty and staff, as we mourn this ending. Trinity will provide advising, support, and a multitude of resources to our students to help them complete their academic pursuits here or at other institutions," said Jeanine Mozie, acting president of Trinity Christian College. . . .

Faculty and staff will receive resources and guidance to transition to new professional opportunities. . . .

"We thank our God for the impact of this community, and we thank the faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and dedicated board members who have worked tirelessly to serve our students for 66 years," said Mozie. "The Trinity story is enduring. It lives in the generations of people who have been formed by the faithful service of this community and will continue to impact their own communities for years to come." . . .

OVERTURES

OVERTURE (DEFERRED FROM SYNOD 2025)

OVERTURE 75 (DEFERRED FROM 2025)

Evaluate Polity to Clarify Relationship of Assemblies (Deferred from 2023)

Classis Zeeland overtures synod to appoint a study committee to evaluate our church polity in light of the Scriptures, our theology, and our history, with the goal of clarifying the relationship between the council, classis, and synod. This should take particular note of the authority of the church and its various assemblies in light of the issue of discipline and excommunication on the local level, and church discipline and disaffiliation at the classical and synodical levels. The biblical and theological underpinnings should be analyzed first, turning then to recommendations for a proper polity that is biblically faithful and historically informed and addresses the issues the church is facing today. Based upon those conclusions, recommendations for structural changes should follow, including recommendations for changes to Church Order that reflect the biblical and theological and polity conclusions.

Grounds:

1. There is considerable confusion over the nature and authority of church assemblies today. This is causing chaos in the church and must be addressed.
2. These difficulties are deep and serious and can only be appropriately addressed by agreement at the biblical and theological level first, and then applied to our polity, Church Order, and practice.
3. Local churches and classes lack the time and resources to handle such an extensive biblical, theological, and historical task. It involves all our churches, so it must be addressed at the synodical level.
4. The task is significant in terms of weight, content, and impact, and it requires a full study committee to do it justice.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

OVERTURES TO SYNOD 2026

OVERTURE 1

Permit the Transfer of Orange Korean Church from Classis California South to Classis Ko-Am

Overture

Classis Ko-Am, in accordance with Church Order Article 39, overtures synod to permit the transfer of Orange Korean Church from Classis California South to Classis Ko-Am.

This request originated from the council of Orange Korean Church and has been approved by both Classis California South and Classis Ko-Am.

Grounds:

- A. Orange Korean Church's newly called pastor, Rev. You Sung Jung, already has established relationships within Classis Ko-Am. These existing connections will greatly facilitate the training, mentoring, and integration of Orange Korean Church leaders into the regional and collegial life of the classis.
- B. Rev. You Sung Jung desires to actively network and collaborate with fellow pastors in Classis Ko-Am and believes he can contribute meaningfully to the shared ministry and mission within the Korean-American ecclesiastical context of the classis.
- C. The congregation of Orange Korean Church has reached a stage in its ministry where connection with a Korean-speaking classis is more appropriate and beneficial than continued participation in a primarily English-speaking classis. Alignment with Classis Ko-Am is expected to result in greater engagement at the classis level, as well as more effective pastoral care, counsel, mutual accountability, and encouragement among colleagues who share a common language and cultural context.

Classis Ko-Am
Daniel Yi, stated clerk

OVERTURE 2

Allow the Transfer of Orange Korean Church from Classis California South to Classis Ko-Am

Overture

We, Classis California South, in accordance with Church Order Article 39, overture synod to allow the transfer of Orange Korean Church from Classis California South to Classis Ko-Am.

This request originated from the council of Orange Korean Church and has been approved by both Classis California South and Classis Ko-Am.

The following grounds express our rationale:

Grounds:

- A. Orange Korean Church's new pastor, Rev. You Sung Jung, already has connections in Classis Ko-Am, which will facilitate training Orange Korean Church leaders in the regional life of the church.
- B. Pastor You Sung Jung desires to network with the pastors in Classis Ko-Am and feels he is able to contribute much in the Korean-American setting of Classis Ko-Am. The congregation is at a point where connecting with a Korean-speaking classis is preferable to connecting with a primarily English-speaking classis.
- C. The ministry would be more inspired to participate at the classis level and be more effectively counseled and held accountable by their colleagues in Classis Ko-Am.

Classis California South,
Becca Triemstra, stated clerk

OVERTURE 3

Amend the Rules for Synodical Procedure regarding Overtures and Communications

I. Background

Section V, B, 3 of the Rules for Synodical Procedure addresses both overtures and communications to synod. This overture seeks (1) to clarify how an overture comes before synod, and (2) recommends creating a separate classification for communications. There are two distinct types of communications: one requiring a response, and one received for information which may receive a response.

The current process for bringing an overture before synod currently over-emphasizes the congregational spirit within the CRCNA and undermines its Reformed heritage, which highly values mutual accountability.

The current process allows an overture to be considered by synod without the approval of a council and/or classis. The current process devalues the

council's and classis' role in the process and places an undue burden on synod. In 2022 about 28.5 percent of the overtures considered were not approved by a council and/or a classis. In 2023 the percentage rose to about 34.2 percent, and in 2024 the percentage declined to about 29.4 percent. The current process, in addition, does not foster mutual accountability and the call to submit to one another in humility.

Church councils and classes throughout the CRCNA invest significant time in processing overtures. Each body must assess every overture scripturally, theologically, and confessionally, considering also its implications, intended and unintended, for the CRCNA. When an overture is not approved by a council or classis and is then forwarded to synod without addressing the identified concerns and objections, it devalues a council's or classis' wisdom and service to the church.

II. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to amend the Rules for Synodical Procedure¹ to clarify how an overture comes before synod and to create a separate category for communications, as follows (additions indicated by underline; deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~):

Proposed Changes to Rules for Synodical Procedure (section V, B, 3)

3. Overtures and Communications to Synod

- a. ~~Overtures and communications~~ from a classis (whether originated by or adopted by a classis) or from an assembly organized according to Article 44-b of the Church Order.

(Acts of Synod 1993, p. 574)

- b. ~~Overtures and communications which have failed to gain adoption of a council and/or classis but which an individual or council desire to submit for~~come before synod's consideration through the following process:

- 1) An overture generally originates with an individual, who submits it to the council of their congregation for consideration. In the case of an individual who is part of an emerging congregation, the overture is submitted to the supervising congregation's council.
- 2) If a council adopts an overture, it is forwarded to the classis for consideration.
- 3) If a council does not adopt an overture, the individual submitting the overture may forward it to classis for consideration along with an appeal, not to exceed 500 words, that explains

¹ Section VIII, N of the Rules for Synodical Procedure states, "These Rules for Synodical Procedure may be suspended, amended, revised, or abrogated by a majority vote of synod." It does not specify how changes are to be brought before synod.

how the council which did not adopt the overture erred biblically, theologically, or procedurally. The council which did not adopt the overture may also submit a rebuttal, not to exceed 500 words, that addresses the matters raised in the appeal.

- 4) Classis shall consider an overture adopted by a council according to its policies and procedures.
 - 5) Classis shall consider an overture not adopted by a council if an appeal is attached. The classis, before processing the overture, must consider the appeal and the rebuttal, if submitted, and either grant or deny the appeal by simple majority. If the appeal is granted, the classis shall consider the overture on its own merits. If the appeal is denied, then the overture will not be considered.
 - 6) If an overture is adopted by classis, it will be forwarded to synod for consideration.
 - 7) If an overture is not adopted by classis, a synodical advisory committee may consider the overture if an appeal is attached. The appeal, not to exceed 500 words, must explain how the classis erred biblically, theologically, or procedurally. The classis may submit a rebuttal, not to exceed 500 words, that addresses the matters raised in the appeal.
 - 8) Synod shall consider an overture adopted by a classis according to its policies and procedures.
 - 9) Synod shall consider an overture not adopted by a classis if an appeal is attached. The synodical advisory committee, before processing the overture, must consider the appeal and the rebuttal, if submitted, and either grant or deny the appeal by simple majority. If the appeal is granted, the synodical advisory committee shall consider the overture on its own merits. If the appeal is denied, then the overture will not be considered.
- b. Communications from a classis (whether originated by or adopted by a classis) or from an assembly organized according to Article 44-b of the Church Order.
- (Acts of Synod 1993, p. 574)*
- 1) A communication generally originates with an individual, who submits it to the council of their congregation for consideration. In the case of an individual who is part of an emerging congregation, the communication is submitted to the supervising congregation's council.
 - 2) If a council adopts a communication, it is forwarded to the classis for consideration.

- 3) If a council does not adopt a communication, the individual submitting the overture may forward it to classis for consideration along with an appeal, not to exceed 500 words, that explains how the council which did not adopt the communication erred biblically, theologically, or procedurally. The council which did not adopt the communication may also submit a rebuttal, not to exceed 500 words, that addresses the matters raised in the appeal.
- 4) Classis shall consider a communication adopted by a council according to its policies and procedures.
- 5) Classis shall consider a communication not adopted by a council if an appeal is attached. The classis, before processing the communication, must consider the appeal and the rebuttal, if submitted, and either grant or deny the appeal by simple majority. If the appeal is granted, the classis shall consider the communication on its own merits. If the appeal is denied, then the communication will not be considered.
- 6) If a communication is adopted by classis, it will be forwarded to synod for consideration.
- 7) If a communication is not adopted by classis, a synodical advisory committee may consider the communication if an appeal is attached. The appeal, not to exceed 500 words, must explain how the classis erred biblically, theologically, or procedurally. The classis may submit a rebuttal not to exceed 500 words that addresses the matters raised in the appeal.
- 8) Synod shall consider a communication adopted by a classis according to its policies and procedures.
- 9) Synod shall consider a communication not adopted by a classis if an appeal is attached. The synodical advisory committee, before processing the communication, must consider the appeal and the rebuttal, if submitted, and either grant or deny the appeal by simple majority. If the appeal is granted, the synodical advisory committee shall consider the communication on its own merits. If the appeal is denied, then the communication will not be considered.
- 1) ~~Overtures and communications from a council (whether originated by or adopted by council) which have been submitted to classis but not adopted by classis as its own.~~
- 2) ~~Overtures and communications of an individual which have been submitted to council and classis but which have not been adopted by either council or classis.~~

- 3) ~~Overtures and communications of an individual which were submitted to council, adopted by council as its own, and submitted to classis by council, but which classis has not adopted as its own, which council has not submitted to synod, and which the initiating individual submits to synod.~~

[subsection c unchanged]

Grounds:

- a. Overtures and communications are two distinct types of communication and should be treated separately.
- b. The overture ought to reflect the conciliar nature of CRCNA polity.
- c. The proposed process in the overture recognizes the value of the deliberative process as well as the authority and wisdom of councils and classes.
- d. The proposed process in the overture provides a means for appealing decisions and processing them in an orderly manner.

Classis Holland
Jennifer Rozema, stated clerk

OVERTURE 4

Establish a Common Format for Reports to Synod

I. Background

The Rules for Synodical Procedure describe the roles of and composition of task forces and study committees (section VI, D, 1). It is curious that the rules provide no guidance for these teams on the structure and length of their reports.

The intent of this overture is to establish report writing parameters to ensure consistency, clarity, accessibility, and consideration of the primary issue(s) addressed in the report. Delegates since 2021 have been asked to process two lengthy reports—from the Committee to Articulate a Foundational Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality (2021, deferred to 2022: 175 pp.) and from the Church Order Review Task Force (2024: 103 pp.).

II. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to provide guidance to facilitate the reading of, processing of, and engagement with reports by inserting the following as section VI, D, 2 in the Rules for Synodical Procedure and by renumbering the remaining points in section VI, D (additions indicated by underline; deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~).

Proposed addition to Rules for Synodical Procedure (section VI, D)

2. A report is a document submitted by a study committee or task force describing the work performed in response to their mandate and presenting recommendations for action. The report to synod shall not exceed 5,000 words (20 pages @ 250 words per page; see sub-points a-f below), excluding appendices. Reports should be clear and concise and should focus on the group's findings and recommendations. Additional materials (i.e., descriptions of methodology, supporting arguments, testimonies) are to be included in appropriate appendices.

Minority reports shall not normally exceed 2,500 words.

Reports to synod should generally follow this common format:

- a. Mandate: a restatement of the mandate with a brief description of its scope.
- b. Recommendations: the report's recommendations for synod's consideration.
- c. Methodology: a summary description of how the mandate was pursued.
- d. Biblical, theological, and historical underpinnings for the recommendations: a summary of the biblical and theological rationale historically informed for the recommendations offered.
- e. A synopsis of relevant "finds" from other fields and testimonies that informed the recommendations.
- f. Additional questions to be addressed that were identified and were considered outside the scope of the mandate.

A minority report should follow the same format and specifically address where the majority report erred and offer a viable alternative.

23. All boards and committee members . . .

[The remaining points in section VI, D are to be renumbered but are otherwise unchanged.]

Grounds:

- a. A common report format enables delegates to focus on the report's content rather than on discerning its structure.
- b. Limiting the length of the report (except for appendices) allows delegates to focus on the primary arguments and to engage with the appendices if additional information is needed.
- c. Moving the recommendations toward the beginning of the report allows the reader to evaluate whether the information/data presented supports the recommendations.

Classis Holland
Jennifer Rozema, stated clerk

Conform COD Membership to Article 30 of the Belgic Confession

I. Introduction

The Council of Delegates (COD) has served our denomination well since its founding. It handles the necessary interim work between synods, serves as a connecting point between our classes and agencies, and helps lead those same agencies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the COD was also forced to meet in lieu of Synods 2020 and 2021. While we hope never to repeat those circumstances, they do highlight just how broad the ecclesiastical responsibility of the COD can be. As Article 33-b of our Church Order instructs interim bodies, an ongoing responsibility of the COD is “to act for them in matters which cannot await action by the assemblies themselves.” Further, though the regular meeting structure of the COD includes time for separate meetings of the Canadian and U.S. ministry boards to satisfy legal requirements, that time takes up less than a third of their meeting schedule, with the vast majority of time spent as the full Council of Delegates. These meetings open with worship and devotional meditations and are bathed in prayer. Largely mirroring the proceedings at synod, a COD meeting is clearly an ecclesiastical gathering because it fills a role of leadership within the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

II. Background

The need for an interim body between synods was recognized early in our denomination’s history. The Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) was first composed exclusively of ministers (*Acts of Synod 1890*, p. 34) and later only of current or former officebearers (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 74). This was a very logical criterion for membership, since this body served synod and was also called to make, at the very least, preliminary decisions and judgments between synods. The only voting members of any synod are the delegates, made up exclusively of current officebearers within the CRCNA. Because synods meet for only a week or two, and because our polity rotates elders and deacons on typically three-year terms, it makes sense that the membership of an interim standing committee will not always align with those cycles. Further, since our elders and deacons are often employed outside of the church, serving concurrently on a local council as well as in a body like the COD may be an overly taxing expectation.

The requirement that the SIC be made up of current or former officebearers was dropped with the adoption of a more corporate or academic model when synod established the Board of Trustees (BOT) in 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 582-83; *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 622). During this transition, membership broadened to mirror other denominational committees, thus opening it to any church member in good standing. However, both the name change to Board of Trustees and the broadened membership separated this committee from its original clear purpose: serving synod on an interim basis

with members who were qualified to serve at synod. When the Council of Delegate model was adopted in 2017, we significantly strengthened the structural unity between synod and classes, since the classes elect or appoint the majority of COD members, just as they do their delegates to synod. However, the membership requirements were not reverted back to those of the SIC.

III. Confessional Considerations

As Reformed believers, we confess that Christ gave his Church three offices for its leadership: ministers, elders, and deacons (Belgic Confession, Art. 31). Also, Article 30 of the Belgic Confession states, “We believe that this true church ought to be governed according to the spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his Word.” Unlike standing committees that oversee the candidacy process, interdenominational relationships, or the boards of our academic institutions, the COD is unique. It leads the denomination between synods, and sometimes in place of synods. At its core, it is ecclesiastical in its role and thus should conform to our Reformed understanding of and expectations for ecclesiastical leadership.

IV. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2026 to direct the Council of Delegates to revise its membership requirements so that, moving forward for all new members, membership is limited to current or former officebearers.

Grounds:

- a. The COD is a body of ecclesiastical leadership within the CRCNA.
- b. Reformed churches are to be led by officebearers.
- c. Having served on a local council gives an important perspective of how the decisions of the COD may be received by our churches.
- d. The COD's name presupposes officebearers, given the synodical tied word of “delegates” (not trustees, commissioners, etc.).
- e. There is wisdom in Abraham Kuyper’s insight on sphere sovereignty — we don’t run a church like a corporation. In an age of ever-growing corporatization, the church must resist the trend and renew the biblical modes and models of leadership.
- f. While we are always seeking to reform our church in line with God's Word, this is not a matter that we judge demands the expulsion of any present nonconforming board members. Implementing it as the standard moving forward seems prudent.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

OVERTURE 6

Confessional Integrity of Denominational Employees, Writers, Boards, and Agencies

Overture

Classis Iakota overtures Synod 2026 to instruct the COD and the Office of General Secretary to require all ministry staff employed for denominational service related to the CRCNA and its mission to have confessional integrity. This includes but is not limited to all those employed at our denominational agencies: *The Banner*, Resonate, Thrive, as well as all who populate volunteer boards, must show that they are professing members of a congregation in the CRCNA who fully support and defend the fullness of God's Word and that the creeds and confessions of the CRCNA faithfully reflect Scripture's revelation.

Grounds:

- A. The Office of General Secretary, denominational boards, and agency leadership exercise significant influence over policy, communication, and direction of the CRCNA. Confessional alignment is therefore essential to strengthening trust and partnership between congregations, classes, and denominational leadership.
- B. Denominational funds, contributed by member churches through ministry shares and other offerings, ought to support work carried out by those who are personally committed to the CRCNA's confessional standards and ecclesial life.

Classis Iakota
Bernard Haan, stated clerk

OVERTURE 7

Restore the Previous Gravamen Policy

I. Introduction

A member of Covenant Life Church of Grand Haven, Michigan, is writing to express concern regarding the changes to the gravamen/gravamina policy at Synods 2024 and 2025 (Supplement, Church Order Article 5-a). A request for reconsideration: that church polity allowing gravamina for church leaders (and members) be changed to the previously stated policy, which had provisions for a gravamen *which could be held indefinitely*. On the issue of gravamen policy, Synods 2024 and 2025 exerted overreach in dealing with divisive issues, using the change of rules regarding gravamina to accomplish their objectives.

This request is based on two factors: (1) newly discovered evidence that the data and facts concerning actual membership loss and church disaffiliation numbers were not fully understood nor realized when the decision was

made in 2024 and 2025; nor were the implications of dissension in this action fully understood (reference CRCNA factual reports on disaffiliation and closures); and (2) the error of accurate data not provided misled the decision makers of Synods 2024 and 2025 in not realizing the impact of their decisions over time and into the future. This combined action has resulted in further division within the CRCNA, membership loss, acceleration of the continued exodus within the denomination, and the loss of church congregations through the disaffiliation process. It remains an ongoing issue and is problematic to the denomination, with negative long-term implications.

II. Brief history/background

Gravamen policy was formalized and adopted for the first time in 1976 as official policy introducing “guidelines and regulations as a Supplement to Article 5 of the Church Order” (*Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 68-70). This policy served the denomination well throughout nearly fifty years—including times of difficult and contentious issues, such as the women in church office debate and other divisive issues. It was an effective and reasonable provision to address “theological differences” of interpretation and conflicting opinion within the denomination, preventing further church division and enhancing overall church unity. The actions of synod in 2024 and 2025 changed that with the tightening of gravamen provision and the addition of a three-year period limit to the gravamen.

III. Premise

The strength of any organization (particularly the church) is in how it handles differences of opinion, thought, and particularly faith/theology positions which are “not matters of salvation.” Theological differences are a given within any denomination. If this church denomination is to stabilize loss and prevent further divisions, this provision must be made to restore church unity and get back on mission and purpose—evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship in unity.

IV. Overture

This overture is a request to restore the previous gravamen policy:

Allow for theological differences that are classified as “not matters of salvation” to be allowed through a restored gravamen policy in the CRCNA and to be able to be held indefinitely *without regard to a specified time limit*. Restore and return gravamen policy to the previously adopted language prior to Synod 2024, whose foundation was formally established in the language of the *Acts of Synod 1976*.

Grounds:

a. A method for reasonable disagreement

This solution allows for a reasonable method of established means of disagreement, a pathway of “reasonable disagreement and differences” on matters of theology and faith within the church on controversial and current topics, without prompting further decline in membership and

additional church disaffiliation. The CRCNA has a concerning history of division and separation within the church which has had serious historical consequences and ramifications, often reflecting poorly on our faith and denomination. Theological differences need to be respected and allowed in all other matters not of salvation.

b. Church division

Whereas the change in gravamen policy has further divided the church, causing a lack in confidence with CRCNA church polity and the ability to handle theological differences and divisions, Synod 2025 worsened this situation of divide and accelerated membership loss and exit of congregations from the CRCNA denomination.

c. The future of the CRCNA denomination

The denomination has set a policy precedent which is not helpful for its stabilization and eventual potential growth in the future due to its rigid demands. (One must consider, What will be the next issue raised where compliance with it produces division and conflict within the church?) The revised policy of Synod 2025 has been detrimental and harmful to church unity, threatens individual church and denomination survivability, and merits reconsideration. Without a process to disagree, the future of the denomination is at risk. A change to revert to the former gravamen policy is needed. I believe it would better serve the denomination for the long term, benefit stabilization of loss within the denomination, and prevent further decline.

Member of Covenant Life Church, Grand Haven, Michigan
Mark A. Werkema

Note: This overture was submitted to the council of Covenant Life Church, Grand Haven, Michigan, for consideration at the December 16, 2025, council meeting but was not adopted. This overture was then submitted to Clasis Muskegon at its February 26, 2026, meeting but was not adopted.

OVERTURE 8

Concerning Confessional-Revision Gravamina

I. Background

The Covenant for Officebearers basically requires that all officers affirm that the Three Forms of Unity are in full agreement with the Scriptures. This implies that the writings of human beings can be sufficiently perfect that they may stand on equal footing with the Scriptures. Fortunately the CRC Church Order recognizes that people are fallible, so it provides a way to modify the Three Forms of Unity should the need arise. The submission of a confessional-revision gravamen initiates this process. As might be expected, such submissions rarely occur.

A confessional-revision gravamen could pursue a change along various different lines. First, it could seek to change an actual interpretation of Scripture along with the related Three Forms of Unity content. This effort would be a profound and daunting task, for the existing interpretation rests on hundreds of years of history and acceptance. Few would succeed at this, even if they were correct. Another avenue would be to remove the item of concern from the Three Forms of Unity. This strategy would assume that the change would consist of minor matters over which total agreement would not need to be required. Many such matters of faith exist already. This serves to loosen the doctrinal requirements a bit, thereby enlarging the tent of the CRC faithful, thus promoting a broader Christian fellowship. Undoubtedly, a confessional-revision gravamen could apply other strategies of change as well.

This overture seeks to address situations in which the matter being set forth in a confessional-revision gravamen would merit attention, and thus synod would not want to reject it, and yet the matter would deviate sufficiently from historical understanding that synod would not want to change the Three Forms of Unity.

II. Overture

To address such situations, I overture synod to create a Three Forms of Unity Alternate List. The process would take a confessional-revision gravamen and put it onto the Alternate List. The Covenant for Officebearers would then be modified to recognize the Three Forms of Unity with any of the alternates. Alternates would of course have to be approved by synod. This process would allow synod to recognize that there may be sufficient grounds to support several views on a matter while not dropping the matter from the Three Forms of Unity.

The process would go as follows:

1. Create a Three Forms of Unity Alternate List (made of gravamina).
2. Update the Church Order related to confessional-revision gravamina to allow synod to add the confessional-revision gravamina to the Alternate List (addition indicated by underline):

Supplement, Article 5-a, C, 6

6. A revision of the confessions, or an addition to the Three Forms of Unity Alternate List, shall not be adopted by synod until the whole church membership has had adequate opportunity to consider it.
3. Update the Covenant for Officebearers to allow affirmation of the Three Forms of Unity with the Alternate List (addition indicated by underline):

Supplement, Article 5-a

Covenant for Officebearers
[paragraphs 1-2 unchanged]

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, along with the Alternate List—. . .

[remaining text unchanged]

Elder at Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon
John Shaw

Note: This overture was submitted to the council of Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon, on September 18, 2025, but was not adopted. This overture was then submitted to Classis Columbia at its October 4, 2025, meeting but was not adopted.

OVERTURE 9

Amend Gravamen Regulations to Clarify Confessional Difficulty

As a preliminary note, we request that due consideration be given to the fact that this overture comes from the remaining churches in Classis Grand Rapids East who continue to pursue alignment with the CRCNA. This overture has no intent of creating loopholes or covertly pushing for any agenda that undermines the theology of our confessions or what has been identified as having confessional status. It aims for further clarity in the processes and provisions for flexibility and pastoral space for growth in the calling of officebearers. The remaining ambiguity regarding gravamina disproportionately presents barriers for leaders formed outside the CRCNA ecosystem, particularly those in multiethnic, urban, or first-generation contexts, even when they are fully aligned with the church's mission and willing to adhere to its doctrine.

I. Purposes of the overture

Classis Grand Rapids East submits this overture to Synod 2026 with the following purposes:

A. Eliminate any confusion that may be caused by recent decisions of synod (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 867-71; *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 669-73) and by denominational communications provided to explain the meanings of various phrases by incorporating the appropriate language in the Church Order supplemental material itself.

B. Provide clarity for the local council's discernment in making decisions regarding the nature and extent of an individual's expressed difficulties when considering their initial call to serve as an officebearer.

C. Note that providing measured flexibility in what individuals may believe on certain doctrines does not weaken our collective commitment to the confessions and confessional unity but increases opportunity and expectation that we grow "in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel" (Covenant for Officebearers).

D. Ensure that gifted and qualified leaders do not self-select to decline or be rejected in the nomination process for officebearers based not on their rejection of the church's teaching but because of their honesty about having unresolved theological difficulty.

II. Introduction

At Synod 2024, Advisory Committee 9, discussing gravamen matters, explicitly acknowledged two different understandings concerning the nature and use of a confessional-difficulty gravamen (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 868-69):

- 1) In one understanding, an officebearer uses a confessional-difficulty gravamen to express a personal difficulty to a council. The council would then judge whether they could tolerate the officebearer's disagreement with the confessions. If so, the officebearer could continue to serve with the gravamen submitted to their local council.
- 2) In the other understanding, an officebearer uses a gravamen to express a personal difficulty to a council. However, the purpose of expressing the difficulty is to determine whether the officebearer's gravamen is in line with the doctrines of our confessions, and if not, to help the officebearer pursue a path toward alignment—enlisting the help of the classis and synod if necessary.

The advisory committee conceded that "currently, both understandings of confessional-difficulty gravamen have some merit because the current wording of the Church Order is not sufficiently clear" (p. 869). The past two synods understandably sought clarity regarding the use of gravamen because of its inconsistent and imprecise usage across the denomination. However, the language adopted in the Church Order Supplement has not entirely achieved that clarity, but, rather, by restricting the gravamen process with new procedures and eliminating one of the previous uses, the updated wording in the Church Order Supplement has generated new areas of confusion and concern. This is clearly demonstrated by the need for denominational leaders to produce explanatory documents on crcna.org such as the Synod FAQs, "Guidance on 'Affirming the Confessions,'" and "In Search of Wisdom in the Midst of Doubt" to navigate the complexities involved.

The intent here is not to reopen gravamen categories or propose a new gravamen category but to address remaining internal ambiguity regarding the weight and timing of when an individual's difficulty necessitates the filing of a confessional-difficulty gravamen that then disqualifies them to begin service as an officebearer. Ongoing ambiguity in implementation is resulting in the loss of the particular giftings, contributions, ministry, and service of otherwise qualified leaders who have a nonsettled disagreement with a confessional teaching that has historically been interpreted differently within the Reformed tradition, yet have no intent to undermine or advocate against the doctrines contained in our shared confessions and are fully willing to live and serve in accordance with the collective teaching of the CRCNA. For this reason, we need clarity on the degree of flexibility for councils to discern the eligibility of incoming officebearers.

III. Understanding the Language of Confessional Difficulty in the CRCNA

At Synod 2025, Advisory Committee 3, discussing the Church Order and Its Supplements, asserted in a preamble to its recommendations, "A deeper engagement with Church Order Article 5-a and its supplement can help address many of the concerns that have prompted calls for a third category of gravamen. These existing resources already make space for honest wrestling, careful discernment, and communal trust, without weakening the integrity of our confessional commitments" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p 671). Yet our "deeper engagement" with Church Order Article 5, its supplement, and the Covenant for Officebearers has still resulted in many questions and indicates the need for further work.

The most recent post from the general secretary, "In Search of Wisdom in the Midst of Doubt" (on network.crcna.org; Dec. 10, 2025), reinforces this problem when it acknowledges that "synod seemed to be saying incompatible things: officebearers must affirm our shared doctrine 'without reservation,' and officebearers may have doubts. As a result, many congregations (and their leaders) are confused." It is quite evident that, following the decisions of Synod 2025, many churches—including those supportive of the decisions and direction regarding matters related to sexuality and marriage—have had concerns, questions, and confusion about the implications and implementation of the changes to the Church Order Supplement on gravamina and the Covenant for Officebearers.

The following discussion examines lingering discrepancies in how gravamen-related terms such as "difficulty," "reservation," "doubt," and "conviction" are used across the Church Order, *Acts of Synod*, and in subsequent guidance, and this discussion demonstrates why these inconsistencies create uncertainty for councils charged with faithful discernment about when a disagreement may be weighty enough to require formal action.

A. What is a personal difficulty that “rises to the weight of requiring a gravamen”? The introduction to the article issued by the Office of General Secretary, “Guidance on ‘Affirming the Confessions’” (on network.crcna.org; Oct. 1, 2025) acknowledges,

In some minds, the “full agreement” required by synodical regulations has set an impossibly high bar for church leaders who desire to uphold their calling to lead with integrity, humility, and submission to the Word of God and to our Reformed confessions. . . . The answer to the question about what it means to “affirm the doctrines in the confessions without reservation” requires some careful reflection on the meaning and purpose of our denominational covenants.

The article then points to several of the key phrases from the Covenant for Officebearers and its supplemental material before acknowledging that “Synod has not specified the relative weight to be given to those various phrases, so in many ways it falls to the local council (and classis, if there is need for further clarification) to discern how to balance the various aspects of confessional adherence in the local church,” and then later helpfully concludes that a council “has the authority to judge *whether* a given difficulty rises to the weight of requiring a gravamen.”

Thankfully, the wisdom offered in these posts has been useful, beneficial, and encouraging. Yet, since the discernment and decision-making about whether a potential officebearer has a difficulty must be done by the local council, it is imperative that the wording that has binding on the local council (i.e., Church Order and synodical decisions) not be inconsistent, unclear, and confusing when we have spent significant time and energy at recent synods seeking clarity on these very matters.

The “Guidance” article states, “The word ‘gravamen’ indicates a weighty, serious matter: in the words of synod, ‘a persistent serious doubt or a settled conviction’ (Supplement, Church Order Art. 5-a, A, 2).” Likewise, “In Search of Wisdom” echoes this when it states:

If these interactions [between council and potential officebearer] reveal that the difficulty is serious and persistent, or that they reflect a settled belief that the doctrine in our confessions is not a teaching of God’s Word, then synod asks that councils graciously and humbly continue to engage that person as a member of the congregation, but decline to permit that person to serve in ordained office.

This seems to be a correct way of reading Synod 2025’s amendments to the Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a (A, 2):

“Without reservation” means that an officebearer does not have—to the best of their knowledge—either a difficulty persistent serious doubt or hold a settled conviction contrary to any of the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions. (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 672)

This reading of the material reasonably sees that a “reservation” at least includes “a persistent serious doubt or a settled conviction” and might refer

to the same thing conceptually as a “difficulty.” Such an understanding also corresponds to Supplement, Article 5-b, B, 7 when referring to a confessional difficulty, stating that “an assembly may not merely acknowledge an officebearer’s *reservation* regarding a confession—it must work toward resolving it” (emphasis ours). The guidance to local councils, then, is that a “gravamen-worthy” difficulty is when the reservation rises to the weight of “a persistent serious doubt or a settled conviction.”

The problem is that the distinctions set forth at Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 870-71) as currently articulated in Church Order Supplement, Article 5-b, B, 7 explicitly state that “a confessional-difficulty gravamen is *not* a settled conviction contrary to the confessions themselves or to anything that holds confessional status” (emphasis ours). Similarly Supplement, Article 5-b, B, 2-a states that the council shall do the following:

Examine and judge the nature and extent of the difficulty in question and discern whether an officebearer has a sincere difficulty *or* a settled conviction contrary to the confessions better served by filing a confessional-revision gravamen. (emphasis ours)

This statement specifies that a “settled conviction” corresponds to “filing a confessional-revision gravamen,” and is therefore different from a “sincere difficulty” that may require a confessional-difficulty gravamen. The “Guidance” and “Wisdom” seem to focus on the meaning of a gravamen that reaches the confessional-revision level but conflate it with “difficulty.”

To add to the confusion, Church Order Supplement, Article 5-b, B, 7 supplies a definition that “this type of gravamen [confessional-difficulty] *is* a personal request for information and/or clarification of the confession,” which is also expressed in the Synod 2024 FAQ: “A confessional-difficulty gravamen is used by an officebearer to provide formal notice to their council about their difficulty with some aspect of the confessions. The process around gravamina then provides a way for officebearers to seek clarification” (crcna.org/Synod2024FAQ). Such a description of a confessional-difficulty gravamen as “information and/or clarification” does not carry much, if any, weightiness that would require a council to discern if that individual reservation/difficulty “rises to the weight of requiring” a gravamen. A mere request for information or clarification is also far different from the description in the Synod 2025 Advisory Committee 3 preamble that states, “A confessional-difficulty gravamen is not merely a note of discomfort or curiosity—it signifies a *genuine obstacle* in affirming the church’s doctrine” (emphasis ours, *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 670). Would not a “note of . . . curiosity” be “a request for information and/or clarification,” which by the definition in Supplement, Article 5-b, B, 7 is a confessional-difficulty gravamen?

Finally, Synod 2025 also added Supplement, Article 5-b, A, 3, saying that when one signs the Covenant for Officebearers “without reservation,” that does not mean “that a signatory does not struggle emotionally with some doctrine” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 672). This is also more broadly expressed in

the Synod 2025 FAQ: “Synod clarified that there is a difference between a confessional difficulty and the wrestling, doubts, and concerns that officebearers often have in the course of ministry” (crcna.org/Synod2025FAQ). This too seems to go beyond “a personal request for information and/or clarification.”

This brief survey of communication about confessional-difficulty gravamen reveals that the current language of the Church Order Supplement still has not sufficiently articulated the expectations of officebearers when it comes to reservations, difficulties, disagreements, or concerns with one or more specific doctrines contained in our confessions. Using these various sources, some of which have authority and some which are only interpretations, we can identify three “levels” of what these written words say about when a reservation/difficulty “rises to the weight of requiring a gravamen”:

- may sign “without reservation” because it does not rise to the weight of any gravamen: doubt, honest wrestling, emotional struggle, discomfort, curiosity
- rises to the weight of a confessional-difficulty gravamen and cannot begin to serve as an officebearer: currently “a personal request for information and/or clarification”
- rises to the weight of a confessional-revision gravamen: settled conviction/persistent serious doubt

It seems quite inconsistent that a “personal request for information and/or clarification” is weightier than doubt, honest wrestling, emotional struggle, or discomfort, and that it is not at least similar to curiosity. It should not be surprising that, as currently articulated, these “levels” of difficulties require multiple external clarifications. What does a council do when presented with a potential officebearer who has their own individual difficulty about a specific doctrine contained in the confessions and who, as they read the wording in the Covenant for Officebearers with its explanations in the Church Order Supplement and these external online articles from the denomination, are not only confused but even grow frustrated? Both they and the council have to consult numerous sources, with admittedly apparent discrepancies, to attempt to discern whether their difficulty rises to the weight of a belief that disqualifies them from beginning to serve in office.

B. When can a potential officebearer have a personal difficulty?

Clarifying when a personal difficulty “rises to the weight of requiring” a confessional-difficulty gravamen further raises important questions about the assertion that such a difficulty arises only “subsequent to their ordination” (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5, guideline 1). Nearly all theological disagreements or reservations that would necessitate a confessional-difficulty gravamen emerge from prior church background, theological formation, teaching, study, and sustained reflection, rather than only after one begins serving in office. This is particularly the case for those in CRCNA

churches that serve multiethnic or ethnic-minority communities that necessitate having representative leadership in order to more effectively minister in culturally relevant, authentic, relatable, and empathetic ways that address the unique needs of that congregation and community.

The phrase, “Should we come to believe . . .” in the Covenant for Officebearers should not be understood as referring exclusively to something that must happen after ordination. Certainly, in practice, this has not been the assumption, as councils and potential officebearers routinely engage in discussions about theological views that may differ from the church’s teaching. More significantly, the 2012 revision of the Form of Subscription to the Covenant for Officebearers replaced “if in the future we come to have any difficulty with these doctrines . . .” with the broader, not explicitly time-oriented phrasing, “Should we come to believe. . . .” As part of their reasoning for wording changes, the 2012 Revision Committee explained:

We increasingly realize that we are part of a broader body of Christ and are working toward greater unity with our brothers and sisters in various places and that our common creedal heritage connects us to a deep historical reality that gives strength and breadth to our witness of Jesus Christ in the world. *(Agenda for Synod 2012, p. 456)*

While, of course, this revision did not lower confessional expectations for officebearers, it did reframe confessional commitment in covenantal, relational terms and acknowledged that the CRCNA operates within the broader church and has been gifted with leaders whose theological formation occurred outside the Reformed tradition. The revised wording (“Should we come to believe . . .”), which removed “in the future,” no longer explicitly specified when a difficulty arises, at least allowing for the possibility that it occurs at any point, including before one begins serving in office. This does not and should not preclude ongoing theological formation before, during, and after one begins serving as an officebearer.

When Synod 2024 added the language “subsequent to their ordination, develops and then,” it also sought to ensure stronger confessional faithfulness. However, the effect of inserting this phrase unintentionally discourages potential officebearers from pursuing thorough exploration of the confessions prior to ordination. Since the present wording for a confessional-difficulty gravamen insists that a “request for information and/or clarification” automatically disqualifies one from beginning to serve as an officebearer, it has the unintended effect of encouraging potential officebearers to delay rigorous engagement with confessional teachings until after ordination, in order to leave the necessary room for difficulties to arise only in the future. Our concern is procedural distortion, not theological laxity.

Our Church Order processes and language ought to encourage, prioritize, and incentivize deep, robust, rigorous, and intellectually curious theological exploration by our officebearers, especially on the hard and controversial

doctrines. A framework that permits councils to address confessional-difficulty gravamina before officebearers begin serving aligns more faithfully with the nature of theological formation, supports robust confessional teaching, and restores the flexibility evident from the 2012 revision resulting in the Covenant for Officebearers. If we truly desire the strengthened teaching and learning of our confessions that recent synods have rightly insisted on—and that the Reformed tradition has historically valued—then in our present moment what is needed is not an appearance of unqualified agreement but the pastoral space to struggle with the doctrines contained in our confessions so that they can shine forth with the richness and beauty they truly have.

IV. Possible scenarios

Consider that a person in your church came to faith in Jesus and was raised, nurtured, and formed in a Baptist church where the gospel was faithfully preached; people were disciplined in community revolving around the Word, healthy relationships, and the celebration of the sacraments in gathered worship; and followers of Jesus were held accountable through pastorally careful discipline to live in obedience to Scripture. Later this person joined your Christian Reformed Church and grew deeply appreciative of its theology and the covenantal life of faith, actively serving as a trusted member of the congregation who demonstrated spiritual maturity, pastoral wisdom, and humble service. Many in the congregation, including current officebearers, recognized the gifts and biblical qualifications described in Scripture for elders and deacons.

When approached by the council to serve as an officebearer, this leader affirmed commitment to the Covenant for Officebearers and hearty support for the church's beliefs without any interest in advocating for or teaching any views to the contrary. The potential officebearer stated clear affirmation to uphold, promote, and defend the church's teachings and practices, including covenant baptism.

However, this individual questioned whether the confessional teaching that infants should also be baptized fully agrees with the Word of God. The individual's upbringing and faith formation instilled not only an intellectual framework for making the case for believers' baptism but also a love for the community of people convinced by that view, who faithfully trust and follow Jesus with their whole lives. This perspective has not been expressed as opposition or rejection but as a personal difficulty with a specific confessional doctrine. There has been no need to request more information or clarification about the confessions' teaching because the leader understands and can accurately explain the Reformed view on covenant baptism. The struggle is not with the church's teaching and practice of baptizing infants but with whether this personal view would be considered as saying that the Heidelberg Catechism's teaching that infants should also be baptized "is

not the teaching of God's Word." Throughout conversations about this matter, the individual has remained open, teachable, and enthusiastic to "seek a fuller understanding of the gospel" together with the council.

This leaves both the leader and the council facing significant questions:

- Does this unsettled conviction on baptism automatically disqualify a person from beginning to serve as an officebearer?
- Must the person assert that the CRCNA's view is the only faithful way of interpreting and applying the Bible's teaching on baptism, or is it sufficient for them to acknowledge that they can see how Reformed Christians draw these conclusions from Scripture?

Asserting that the confessions' teaching on baptizing infants cannot be justifiably drawn from Scripture (i.e., "is not the teaching of God's Word") is much different from acknowledging that covenant baptism is a possible theological conclusion of faithful interpretation of the Bible and that there are others. There are different angles to saying one believes "that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word." Holding the first view would rightly disqualify a person from serving as an officebearer in a confessional church, but does holding the second?

Now replace "covenant baptism" with "limited atonement," "annihilationism," "meticulous providence," or any other of a myriad of possible individual theological views on the doctrines contained in the confessions that locate us within the larger body of Christ but are viewed differently by true Christian believers in other parts of the one single catholic or universal church.

What do we do when we face these various scenarios? How do we faithfully discern if a gifted leader is disqualified from beginning service as an officebearer when the language of Church Order and its Supplement is inconsistent and requires external explanation to address sincere questions of implementation?

The purpose of this illustration is not to have synod construct detailed parameters or parse out every key word but to demonstrate that there are still unclear challenges in the implementation of synod's recent declarations that need to be resolved by synod and not only, or primarily, through online summaries and guidance, or even through preambles in the *Acts of Synod*.

We should clarify for local councils what determines when an individual reservation/difficulty regarding a specific teaching in the confessions rises to the weight of necessitating the filing of a confessional-difficulty gravamen or possibly a confessional-revision gravamen. In practice, councils are already discerning whether a personal difficulty is serious enough to limit service in office, but often they must do so apart from the wording of the Church Order Supplement, unfortunately sometimes even setting it aside or ignoring it. Aligning the wording in our procedures with the lived dis-

cernment of councils reinforces the corporate covenantal nature of Reformed governance and allows councils to act with integrity, consistency, and confidence.

V. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East therefore presents this overture to Synod 2026:

That synod adopt the following amendments to Supplement, Church Order Article 5-a and 5-a, B, 7 (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~) to clarify when a difficulty “rises to the weight” of a gravamen, to reduce any unintentional incentivizing of less-developed engagement with the confessions prior to ordination, and to have consistency with the description of a confessional-difficulty gravamen in both the Church Order Supplement and external explanations offered by the denomination:

Supplement, Article 5-a

Guidelines and Regulations re Gravamina

Synod declares that gravamina fall into two types:

1. *A confessional-difficulty gravamen:* a temporary gravamen in which an officebearer, ~~subsequent to their ordination, develops and then~~ expresses a weighty personal difficulty with a point of doctrine/teaching contained in the confessions but does not have a settled conviction contrary to and does not call for a revision of the confessions.

Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a, B. 7

7. In all instances of confessional-difficulty gravamina, the matter shall be handled with grace and truth. It shall not be open for discussion by the whole church, since this type of gravamen is a ~~personal request for information and/or clarification of the confession. A confessional difficulty gravamen is not~~ weighty personal difficulty, which may include a request for information and/or clarification of the confession but does not rise to the weight of a settled conviction contrary to the confessions themselves or to anything that holds confessional status.

Grounds:

- a. The CRCNA has been working on clarifying the proper extent and use of the two types of gravamina, which has resulted in misinterpretation at minimum and internal inconsistencies and discrepancies across the denomination. Following both Synod 2024 and Synod 2025, churches continue to need external explanation on what constitutes a confessional-difficulty gravamen and when it should be used.

- b. Various churches throughout the denomination have received different interpretations on whether they are in alignment with what synod has decided on these matters. Councils need a consistent message that is stated in the Church Order Supplement itself and not dependent on additional denominational explanations in person or in writing. This is especially the case for churches discerning their faithful next steps regarding how or whether they can live with integrity as part of the CRCNA.
- c. Including the term “weighty” in the description of this gravamen reflects its Latin root (to weigh down) and has been used in the Church Order Supplement in reference to other significant decisions regarding leadership in the CRCNA. This would aid councils in their consideration of when a difficulty is beyond “the wrestling, doubts, and concerns that officebearers often have in the course of ministry” (Synod 2025 FAQ).
- d. Striking the phrase “subsequent to their ordination, develops and then” restores the implicit broadening of theological space in the 2012 change from the Form of Subscription to the Covenant for Officebearers in the recognition that the CRCNA is only one part of the much bigger church and kingdom of God. God has gifted many of our congregations with people who have been taught, raised, and nurtured in non-Reformed Christian settings and have the giftings and qualifications required of officebearers. This is particularly necessary for churches whose leaders have been formed across multiple theological traditions and cultural environments, a reality increasingly common across the CRCNA.
- e. Replacing the confusing phrase “personal request for information and/or clarification of the confession” is essential in order to be consistent with Synod 2025’s declaration that a confessional difficulty is not a “note of . . . curiosity” and with denominational explanations that a confessional difficulty consists not merely of questions or wonderings about what is being taught.
- f. As the CRCNA continues to “seek a fuller understanding of the gospel” in following Jesus’ commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20) and strives to be a visible reflection of the universal church, the communion of saints, and a people from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev. 7:9), we are richer because of the ethnic-minority and multiethnic churches in our denomination. Our polity must coherently support the covenantal nature of confessional commitment without assuming a uniform path of theological formation. The practical effects of an unclear Church Order language on gravamen are not evenly distributed but fall with particular weight on ethnic-minority, multiethnic, and urban churches as they seek to faithfully discern the call of qualified leaders who are deeply committed to the church’s doctrine and mission and willing to be “formed and governed by them,” yet who may have unsettled, nonadversarial difficulties with particular confessional teach-

ings. While not all Christian Reformed churches will or can be multiethnic, our denomination must ensure that its polity can faithfully serve churches whose leaders were not formed in the same theological or cultural settings, so that they can thrive and serve with integrity as part of the denomination. Our procedures should not create unnecessary barriers that disproportionately affect churches seeking to call qualified leaders who reflect and represent the ethnic and cultural makeup of their communities and whose experiences, perspectives, and challenges correspond to those of the people they serve. Clearly articulated expectations in the Church Order Supplement itself foster faithful council discernment in precisely those contexts.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert Arbogast, stated clerk

OVERTURE 10

Set Aside Time to Celebrate Retiring Ministers

Classis Heartland overtures Synod 2026 to set aside time during every synod, in coordination with the celebration of new candidates for ministry, to invite, recognize, give thanks for, and celebrate those retiring from ministry in the previous calendar year.

Grounds:

1. As every pastor begins their ministry at synod, with approval from the entire body representing the entire denomination, so it would be most appropriate to conclude full-time ministry at synod, with thanks from the entire body representing the entire denomination.
2. As important as it is to begin well, it is even more important to end well. A lifetime of ministry in devotion to Christ, his people, and the Christian Reformed Church is extremely significant and worth synod's time and effort.
3. As we are continually looking for more people to enter into ministry, it would be of significant encouragement and motivation to see those who have been in ministry honored and recognized for a lifetime of labor in Christ's church.
4. As we look for people to model and motivate people for ministry, it would be meaningful to honor and lift up people who have persevered faithfully, who flourished, who blessed many, and who ended well.
5. As we recognize candidates for ministry at synod, it would be most appropriate to recognize alongside them those retiring from ministry, seeing in real and palpable ways the baton of gospel proclamation being passed from generation to generation.

6. Though there may be some cost to inviting all retiring pastors to join synod for one morning if the body decides to supplement their travel and accommodation, after a lifetime of devoted service it is the least we could do as a denomination. Ministry can be difficult and come at great cost to pastor and family. For the church as a body to honor them in word and deed, in concrete and meaningful ways, publicly and formally, would show the entire church that we value the labor and sacrifices of her pastors and that this calling is noble and worthy of honoring.

Classis Heartland
Pete Van Velzen, stated clerk

OVERTURE 11

Appoint a Task Force to Amend Church Order Article 38

I. Background

The Church Order has long required the attention and oversight of synodical deputies whenever classes make decisions about the ordination, resignation, separation, discipline, or reinstatement of a minister of the Word. Increasingly, as more churches rely on commissioned pastors for ministry, this attention is being extended to matters regarding them as well. This is important and good because the character, doctrine, and gifts of those to whom the churches entrust their ministry influences the broader church in many ways. Bringing ministers and pastors into the denomination concerns the whole church, releasing them is weighty and potentially harmful and ought to be done with careful attention to respect, dignity, and proper procedure. For these reasons, synodical deputies are asked to concur in the deliberations of classes concerning these matters.

However, no synodical attention is given to the affiliation or disaffiliation and the organization or disbanding of congregations, which arguably affect the broader church in just as many, if not more, ways. It is our conviction that the movement of congregations into or out of the denomination also concerns the whole church and therefore merits the attention and concurrence of synodical deputies.

This has not been the historical practice of the denomination, but this is not surprising. When Article 38 of the Church Order was formulated, it was a different time. The movement of organized congregations into or out of the denomination was incredibly rare. The emergence and organization of church plants was generally predictable—the result of family growth and immigration, rather than evangelism or discipleship of the unchurched.

Today the church faces a new reality. Most classes in the denomination have faced at least the possibility of overseeing church closures or disaffiliations, sometimes facing challenging questions about the distribution and

ownership of assets and property. At the same time, many classes are fielding inquiries from established congregations exploring possible affiliation with the CRCNA. Many classes have had difficult conversations about how or whether to organize church plants that have not made the Reformed tradition central to their ministry or identity. In all of these conversations and deliberations, there is great potential for harm but also wonderful opportunity for the church to model the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are common realities across the denomination, matters that concern the churches in common.

Synodical deputies are appointed by the classes and approved by synod precisely to attend to matters that concern the churches in common. For these reasons we believe it is time to review the Church Order to require the involvement of synodical deputies in matters concerning the organization, affiliation, disaffiliation, and disbanding of congregations within the CRCNA. Most of these changes will require modifications to Article 38 of the Church Order, but because of the complexity and interrelatedness of the Church Order and the significance and sensitivity of these changes, we recommend that synod appoint a task force to make recommended changes to the Church Order.

II. Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to appoint a task force to amend the Church Order to require synodical-deputy oversight for the organization, affiliation, disaffiliation, and disbanding of congregations within the CRCNA.

Ground: The congregations that make up the CRCNA are as important to the overall denomination as are individual ministers.

Classis Muskegon
Drew Sweetman, stated clerk

OVERTURE 12

Remove Mention of Contemporary Testimony from the Covenant for Officebearers

I. Preamble

Church Order Article 31 states: “A request for revision of a decision shall be submitted to the assembly which made the decision. Such a request shall be honored only if sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented.”

We believe such grounds now exist. Since the adoption of the Covenant for Officebearers in 2012, the inclusion mentioning Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony has resulted in ongoing—though unintended—ambiguity regarding its doctrinal weight and the expectations

placed upon officebearers. This ambiguity has become more evident over time, including, for example, the rationale of an overture to Synod 2025 proposing the addition of the Belhar Confession to the Covenant for Officebearers.

Because synod alone has authority to revise the Covenant for Officebearers (Church Order, Art. 28–29), and because the presence of Our World Belongs to God has created uncertainty that is inconsistent with Reformed confessional subscription, we request that synod act specifically to remove the mention of Our World Belongs to God from the Covenant for Officebearers and to clarify that contemporary testimonies are nonbinding and devotional in nature.

II. Background

In 2012, synod replaced the Form of Subscription with the Covenant for Officebearers to express confessional commitment in contemporary language (*Acts of Synod 2012*, pp. 761–64). As part of this change, the mention of Our World Belongs to God was included because it is a document that “forms and guides us in our present context.”

At Synod 2025, an overture argued that the Belhar Confession should be added to the Covenant for Officebearers on the grounds that Our World Belongs to God—also a contemporary testimony—was already included (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 356–57). While synod declined that request (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 652–53), the reasoning of the overture revealed that the presence of Our World Belongs to God in the Covenant for Officebearers has produced ongoing uncertainty about the status and authority of contemporary testimonies.

Over the past decade, the broader and more pastoral tone of the Covenant for Officebearers, combined with the inclusion of the name of a contemporary testimony, has led to differing understandings of how the Covenant for Officebearers relates to confessional subscription within the CRCNA. Removing the mention of this contemporary testimony will add clarity to the Covenant for Officebearers.

III. Overture

Classis Georgetown overtures Synod 2026 to do the following:

A. Amend the Covenant for Officebearers to remove the mention of Our World Belongs to God, thereby removing reference to contemporary testimonies from the covenant altogether. The covenant would be amended as follows (deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~):

Supplement, Article 5-a

Covenant for Officebearers

[paragraphs 1–4 unchanged]

~~Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony as a~~

~~current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.~~

[remaining paragraphs unchanged]

B. Affirm that the Covenant for Officebearers shall reference only the creeds and confessions (Three Forms of Unity) as doctrinal standards for subscription, and that contemporary testimonies, statements, or contextual documents shall not be added to the Covenant for Officebearers in the future.

Grounds:

1. Confessional documents bind; testimonies inspire.

The Covenant for Officebearers should be reserved for subscription to the creeds and Three Forms of Unity, which are the church's doctrinal standards. Contemporary testimonies may remain useful pastorally and/or devotionally, but they should not function as part of a subscription covenant.

Synod 2025 said that *confessional interpretations* require officebearers to agree that those doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. This was differentiated from the *doctrinal applications* category, which includes contemporary testimonies (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 690-91). Testimonies that allow for discernment to be applied locally should not be included among statements of affirmation from all officebearers.

2. The inclusion of Our World Belongs to God in the Covenant for Officebearers has created a hybrid doctrinal category, leading to ambiguity about what binds the conscience of officebearers.

Describing Our World Belongs to God as a document that “forms and guides us” has resulted in inconsistent assumptions about its authority. Synod has previously rejected hybrid doctrinal categories—most notably in the Belhar process—and should do so again for the sake of clarity and unity.

3. The Three Forms of Unity, alongside the ecumenical creeds, remain sufficient as *Repetitio Sacrae Scripturae*.

These confessions provide the enduring, faithful summary of Scripture necessary for confessional subscription. Removing contemporary testimonies from the Covenant for Officebearers preserves this historic Reformed foundation.

Classis Georgetown
Glenda Tebben, stated clerk

Church Order Changes Pertaining to Classis Red Mesa

I. Background

The Church Order of the CRCNA has a couple of article supplements pertaining to Classis Red Mesa that have become irrelevant. The stipulations of Supplement, Article 4-a have become more standard in the CRCNA, and the parameters of Article 7 have largely shifted to applications of Article 23.

On the other hand, Supplement, Article 40-a allows Classis Red Mesa councils to delegate any combination of officebearers to classis meetings if a minister, elder, or deacon is not available. Classis Red Mesa believes this allowance should remain standing, along with that of Supplement, Article 40-c, which allows Classis Red Mesa to select any officebearer to preside over a classis meeting.

II. Overture

Classis Red Mesa overtures synod to remove the supplements to Church Order Articles 4 and 7 that pertain to Classis Red Mesa, but to maintain Supplement, Article 40-a and -c as written (deletions indicated by strikethrough).

Supplement, Article 4-a

Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa

~~In calling to an office, the council shall present to the congregation a nomination of one or more persons for each position to be filled.~~

(Acts of Synod 1983, p. 660)

Use of Lot in Elections

The use of the lot in the election of officebearers is permitted when a congregational vote is part of the process.

(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 609)

Supplement, Article 7

[sections A-B remain unchanged]

~~C. Special Advice for Classis Red Mesa~~

- ~~1. That the following be the method by which the ordination of native workers is to be effected:~~
 - ~~a. That capable persons, who feel the call to the gospel ministry, be encouraged to pursue the regular course of study for ordination.~~
 - ~~b. That those who are not able to pursue that course, and who possess exceptional gifts, be advised to seek ordination under the pattern prescribed by Article 7 of the Church Order, and make known their desire to their council, the classis, and the Candidacy Committee.~~

2. ~~For those seeking ordination by way of Article 7 of the Church Order, the following procedure is recommended:~~
- a. ~~The written credentials of the council and the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team concerning the required qualifications stated in Article 7 are to be forwarded to the Candidacy Committee.~~
 - b. ~~Upon receipt of application, together with the recommendation of the council and the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team, the Candidacy Committee shall determine whether it considers the applicant eligible for further consideration to become ordained under Article 7.~~
 - c. ~~If the preliminary judgment is favorable, the Candidacy Committee is authorized to issue the applicant a preaching license so that the applicant can preach at several of the churches in the classis.~~
 - d. ~~All other procedures of the Candidacy Committee (as approved by Synod 2006) shall apply.~~
 - e. ~~The examination for ordination follows later according to existing rules, except in the classical languages.~~

(Adapted from Acts of Synod 1958, pp. 87-88)

(Acts of Synod 2006, p. 663)

Classis Red Mesa
John Greydanus, stated clerk

OVERTURE 14

Establish a Standing Committee to Advise the COD and Synod on Church Order Matters

I. Background

The Church Order presents the common wisdom of the church for regulating all ecclesiastical affairs “in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40). Article 47 of the Church Order states, “No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of proposed changes.” Nevertheless, every year, changes are made to the Church Order and Its Supplements. Sometimes these changes are directly from overtures or agency reports released in the *Agenda for Synod*. But often these changes are compromises formulated by advisory committees which have not appeared before the churches in any way. This has led to a Church Order that feels

less and less coherent, as articles are modified in isolation without attention to the broader unity of the Church Order.

It has been over sixty years since the last *comprehensive* review of the Church Order. The most recent Church Order Review Task Force, which reported to synod in 2024, was focused on only specific sections of the Church Order. Specifically their work was focused on the articles related to the ordination and supervision of ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors. To illustrate the importance of the committee we propose, Synod 2024 approved two conflicting changes to Supplement, Church Order Article 15, one from recommendations adopted by Synod 2023 in support of bivocational pastors (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 54-55; see *Agenda for Synod 2023*, pp. 306-8, and *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 963-64) and the other from the Council of Delegates in relation to pensions (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 623-24), which had to be resolved by denominational staff before implementation (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 35).

Synod in the past has established permanent standing committees for the tasks listed in Article 47. Committees for Bible translations, liturgical forms, hymnals, and revisions or translations of the creeds and confessions have existed in various forms throughout the history of our denomination. It is our perspective that the church is well served by the *permanence* of these committees. A standing Liturgical Committee was approved by synod in 1964 (*Acts of Synod 1964*, p. 60) but was eventually placed under the authority of the CRC Publications Board and disbanded by the publications staff after the year 2000 (*Acts of Synod 1985*, pp. 683-84; *Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 488). A standing Bible Translations Committee was established by synod in 1969; it was dissolved in 1982, and another was reestablished by Synod 2018 in response to an overture (*Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 49-50; *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 70; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 764). Our stewardship of these committees is vital for synod's faithful and consistent attention to the tasks delineated in Article 47.

II. Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to establish a permanent standing committee on Church Order, which shall advise our denomination and its congregations on recommended changes to the Church Order, with special attention to the unity and consistency of the Church Order in the rapidly changing ministry context of the CRCNA.

Grounds:

1. Article 47 clearly assigns the stewardship of the Church Order to synod and emphasizes caution and deliberation in adopting changes.
2. Many changes to the Church Order in recent years were changes proposed by advisory committees to synod, which the broader church had no prior opportunity to consider before they went into effect.

3. The rapid adoption of changes to the Church Order has led to a fragmented and confusing Church Order that many councils feel ill-equipped to navigate.
4. In 2024, synod adopted contradictory changes to the Church Order Supplement that caused confusion and unnecessary expense.
5. The church is well-served by permanent standing committees that devote their attention to the ecclesiastical tasks of synod.

Classis Muskegon
Drew Sweetman, stated clerk

OVERTURE 15

Require the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees and Faculty to Sign a Covenant of Confessional Commitment

I. Background

Legitimate questions have arisen about the strength of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS)'s commitment to our Reformed creeds and confessions. Between Synod 2022 and Synod 2024, some CTS faculty and staff were opposed to the Christian Reformed Church's (CRC) confessional teaching on human sexuality. Following Synod 2024's clarification of what it means for officebearers to subscribe to the confessions "without reservation," some of these faculty and staff left the seminary, whereas others simply transferred their membership and ordination to the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

Due in part to these circumstances, Synod 2024 instructed the CTS Board of Trustees (BOT) as well as other denominational boards "to review and revise, as needed, their gravamina policies (e.g., exceptions) related to the decision of Synod 2024 and report on their actions to Synod 2025" (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 880). It is important to note that Synod 2024 gave this instruction to the BOT despite the BOT's having submitted to synod "A Statement on Our Confessional Commitment by the CTS Faculty." Synod 2024 noted this statement as a "good faith response" but was clearly not satisfied (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 809).

In their report to Synod 2025, the BOT reported that CTS has not had a gravamina policy, nor have they had a process of noting "exceptions" since 1991, when synod created separate boards for Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. The BOT also pointed Synod 2025 back to its earlier 2024 statement regarding the faculty's confessional commitment. While grateful for the BOT's fulfillment of its 2024 mandate, many delegates at Synod 2025 remained concerned about the ambiguous nature of the seminary's confessional commitment. Accordingly, Synod 2025 instructed the

BOT to “provide information to Synod 2026 as to the adherence of all instructional personnel to the CRC’s teachings, especially the creeds and confessions,” noting in the grounds the concern about the confessional “commitment of regularly appointed teaching faculty” as well as “those serving in other teaching roles” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 691-92).

A review of the CTS Faculty Handbook (i.e., the rules and procedures governing faculty standards, hiring, and discipline) reveals that Synod 2024’s and Synod 2025’s concerns about the seminary’s confessional commitment are well founded. While other confessionally Reformed seminaries have adopted the practice of requiring their faculty to subscribe to Reformed confessions, CTS does not officially require its faculty to subscribe at any time. (Reformed seminaries in the United States that require faculty subscription—sometimes both annually and in writing—include Covenant Theological Seminary; Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; Mid-America Reformed Seminary; Reformed Theological Seminary; Westminster Theological Seminary, California; and Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.)

Presumably, this lack of a faculty requirement to subscribe to the confessions reflects a time when all CTS faculty were ministers of the Word in the CRC. As a result, it was assumed that those with faculty status would have signed the Covenant for Officebearers with their local council and have signed according to the CRC’s understanding of subscription (see Church Order, Art. 5). Today, however, the Faculty Handbook merely states that CTS faculty will “ordinarily . . . be ordained within the Christian Reformed Church . . .” (section 1.2). Therefore, confessional subscription is not a requirement to hold faculty status at CTS. Instead, people with faculty status are only required to profess a vague “commit[ment] to the Reformed confessions” (section 1.2).

This lack of a requirement for those with faculty status to subscribe to the confessions undermines other portions of the Faculty Handbook, which once provided a means for dismissing heterodox faculty. According to the Faculty Handbook, “Grounds for dismissal of a faculty member shall include . . . [a] clear contradiction (by conduct or through teaching) of the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church to which faculty members subscribe . . .” (section 1.8). As already explained, however, faculty members are not required to subscribe to the CRC’s doctrinal standards. And even if a faculty member had at one time subscribed to the CRC’s doctrinal standards, their subscription would be nullified by transferring their ministerial credentials to the RCA (as some current CTS faculty have done).

This ambiguity of the seminary’s commitment to the confessions is compounded by its giving faculty status to people who not only are not required to subscribe to the confessions but are also not required to have a synodical interview. Currently, this category includes the dean of students, the dean of international students, the director of distance learning, the theological librarians, all term-contract professors, all lecturers, all ministry

partner professors, and the Huizinga missionary-in-residence. These individuals are permitted to influence the outcome of faculty meetings (i.e., the chief means of seminary self-government) by their participation in the meeting's deliberative process, including, in some cases, by having the privilege of voting. These individuals are also permitted to serve on faculty committees, including tenure-track faculty search committees, and on the Faculty Status and Development Committee, one of the seminary's most powerful committees, which (among many other things) is responsible for ensuring that "CTS faculty possess a firm Christian commitment and way of life . . ." (section 6.4).

Some may argue that the BOT's "Statement on our Confessional Commitment" (submitted to Synods 2024 and 2025) should allay our concerns about the strength of the seminary's confessionalism. Yet there are good reasons why this statement has proven repeatedly unconvincing. First, the statement was written and adopted prior to Synod 2024's clarification of what it means for officebearers to subscribe to the confessions "without reservation." Accordingly, when the statement says that the CTS Faculty are "committed to the Covenant for Officebearers" the nature of that commitment is unclear. In fact, given that some of the faculty were opposed to the CRC's confessional teaching on human sexuality at the time the statement was written, we can confidently say that, for some faculty, the word "commitment" did not mean what many delegates at Synods 2024 and 2025 thought it should mean.

Second, the statement's second paragraph is worded in such a way as to allow for different interpretations. According to the statement, "[the Faculty] profess the teachings of Scripture summarized by the Reformed confessions as interpreted by the decisions of synod." This assertion can be interpreted in more than one way. On the one hand, the statement could mean that the faculty affirm "without reservation all the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions [as interpreted by synod] as being doctrines taught in the Word of God" (Church Order, Supplement, Art. 5-a). This would mean (among other things) that all those with faculty status in 2023 agreed that same-sex sexual relationships are contrary to God's law. On the other hand, the statement could be interpreted to mean that the faculty profess only those teachings in the Reformed confessions (as interpreted by synod) that are the teaching of God's Word. This second interpretation leaves open the possibility that there are some teachings in the confessions (as interpreted by synod) that a faculty member does not profess, because the faculty member does not believe that what the confessions teach (as interpreted by synod) is the teaching of God's Word.

As already indicated, it is our estimation that this second way of interpreting the faculty's statement is the correct one. Again we note that, following Synod 2024's clarification of what it means for officebearers to subscribe to the confessions "without reservation," some of those with faculty status either left the seminary or transferred their ministerial credentials to the RCA.

This strongly suggests that some of the faculty who endorsed the CTS “Statement on our Confessional Commitment” in 2023 did so only because it did not require them to profess “without reservation all the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions [as interpreted by synod] as being doctrines taught in the Word of God” (Church Order, Supplement, Art. 5-a).

Finally, it is important to draw attention to the damage that the seminary’s confessional ambiguity is having on its reputation in our denomination. According to the BOT’s handbook, CTS’s vision is that it would be “readily trusted for counsel within the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and naturally chosen by Christian Reformed students and others for graduate professional ministry preparation” (Board Handbook, p. 5). Instead, potential Christian Reformed students are being encouraged to attend other Reformed seminaries, because those seminaries have a clearer confessional commitment to our understanding of Scripture. For some students, the decision to attend CTS is ultimately made not because of their confidence in the institution but because they do not want to pay the financial penalty that non-CTS graduates must pay to become candidates for ministry.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2026 to instruct the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees as follows:

- A. to require all trustees, all regular teaching faculty, and all persons with the privilege of attending faculty meetings to subscribe annually, in writing, to the following Covenant of Confessional Commitment (adapted from the CRCNA Covenant for Officebearers; Church Order, Supplement, Art. 5-a):

Covenant of Confessional Commitment

We, [the undersigned], believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God’s creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God’s Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend

their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God's Word, we will communicate our views to the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary. If the Board of Trustees asks, we will give a full explanation of our views.

Further, we promise to submit to the Board of Trustees' judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

B. to instruct the faculty as follows:

1. to update the Faculty Handbook to reflect the above requirement.
2. to develop a process for the resolution of confessional difficulties among those with faculty status that substantially mirrors Church Order, Supplement, Article 5.

This process should be time limited and lead either to the resolution of the faculty member's difficulty or to their dismissal from the seminary.

C. to report back to Synod 2027 on the seminary's progress in fulfilling these instructions.

Grounds:

1. Church Order Article 19 says, "The churches shall maintain a theological seminary at which persons are trained for the ministry of the Word. The seminary shall be governed by synod through a board of trustees appointed by synod and responsible to it."
2. Church Order, Article 20, states, "The task of the ministers of the Word who are appointed as professors of theology is to . . . vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors." "Sound doctrine" includes all the doctrines contained in the CRCNA's creeds and confessions.
3. Requiring all trustees, all regular faculty members, and all persons with the privilege of attending faculty meetings to sign the Covenant addresses concerns about CTS's confessional commitments.

4. All members of the Board of Trustees, all regular faculty members, and all persons with the privilege of influencing faculty decisions by their attendance and/or vote at faculty meetings should be aligned with the confessional commitments of our denomination.
5. Our churches and seminary students deserve to know beyond a reasonable doubt that our seminary faculty and faculty administration are aligned with the confessional commitments of our denomination.
6. Signing the proposed Covenant brings CTS into alignment with the standard practice of confessionally Reformed seminaries in our context.

Classis Illiana
Laryn Zoerhof, stated clerk

OVERTURE 16

Require Full Confessional Alignment for Faculty at Calvin University

I. Background

Synod 2024 processed several overtures asking that officebearers, board members, and institutional faculty not be allowed to take exceptions to our confessions. Some of them had asked that those who were unable to personally agree with our confessional beliefs would be required to resign from their position or be removed. In answer to these overtures, synod instructed all agencies and institutions to revise their gravamina policies and report back to Synod 2025 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 880). Further, synod instructed the Calvin University Board of Trustees to “define the differences in Calvin’s use of ‘confessional difficulties’ in relation to the decisions of synod concerning gravamina and to develop language and processes in alignment with those in the CRC” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 882). To be “in alignment” should mean that the university has a similar process to the Church Order Article 5 supplemental material pertaining to officebearers. That process allows for personal difficulties but not settled convictions that are contrary to the confessions. The signatory promises that they affirm our doctrines “without reservation.” The process calls for a resolution to the difficulty with either full affirmation of the confessions, submission of a confessional-revision gravamen, or resignation from office.

Calvin University (CU) reported to Synod 2025 a revised confessional framework related to confessional subscription (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 167-73). At the time of hiring, faculty need not affirm our three confessions but only the three creeds. They must agree to align personal and professional conduct with the positions of the CRCNA. Upon a three-year re-appointment, faculty are then required to sign the Covenant for Faculty Members and must submit in writing any confessional-difficulty gravamen. Upon evaluation, the Board of Trustees (BOT) is allowed to determine

whether or not the difficulty is either disqualifying for further employment or whether it leads to a two- to three-year period of discernment and mentoring. Upon the six-year reappointment, any faculty member with a confessional-difficulty gravamen may then submit a confessional-exception gravamen. This exception may be deemed by the BOT as either disqualifying or permitted. At the end of this process, then, the BOT is permitted to grant indefinite exceptions to our confessions or synodical interpretations.

In response to these reports, Synod 2025 affirmed CU in their work to respond to the Synod 2024 request but also instructed them to further define “indefinite exceptions” to confessional subscription for faculty and the reasons that these may be granted (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613). While this process is a good start, it does not adequately answer synod’s instruction to be in alignment with the process of the CRC. All officebearers sign the Covenant for Officebearers immediately upon ordination, while faculty members wait three years. Officebearers are not allowed exceptions, and any confessional difficulties must be resolved after three years. On the other hand, Calvin University is allowed what is called a “confessional exception gravamen.”

II. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2026 to instruct the Calvin University Board of Trustees to do the following:

- A. Require all faculty, including those newly appointed, to subscribe to the Covenant for Faculty Members.
- B. Not permit any exceptions to our confessions for faculty at any time of their service to CU unless the CU BOT has been granted an exception by synod in any particular confessional area.

Grounds:

- 1. These requirements would bring the university into alignment with the Church Order Article 5 process of confessional subscription as instructed by synod.
- 2. Academic freedom for Christian institutions is subject to the authority of the Word of God, as interpreted through the Reformed Confessions.
- 3. Synod has asserted that the church “does indeed adequately and directly supervise and operate the College” (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 97).
- 4. The church has a vested interest in maintaining the biblical and confessional character of institutions of higher learning, since both work together to “instruct the youth in the Scriptures and in the creeds and the confessions of the church” (Church Order, Art. 63-b).

Classis Illiana
Laryn Zoerhof, stated clerk

Require Full Confessional Alignment for Trustees at Calvin University

I. Background

Synod 2024 processed several overtures asking, among other things, that board members of denominational institutions not be allowed to take exceptions to our confessions. Some of them had asked that those who were unable to personally agree with our confessional beliefs would be required to resign from their position or be removed. In answer to these overtures, synod instructed all agencies and institutions to revise their gravamina policies and report back to Synod 2025 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 880). Further, synod instructed the Calvin University Board of Trustees to “define the differences in Calvin’s use of ‘confessional difficulties’ in relation to the decisions of synod concerning gravamina and to develop language and processes in alignment with those in the CRC” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 882). To be “in alignment” should mean that the university and its board has a similar process to the Church Order Article 5 supplemental material pertaining to officebearers. That process allows for personal difficulties but not settled convictions that are contrary to the confessions. The signatory promises that they affirm our doctrines “without reservation.” The process calls for a resolution to the difficulty with either full affirmation of the confessions, submission of a confessional-revision gravamen, or resignation from office.

Calvin University (CU) reported to Synod 2025 a revised confessional framework related to confessional subscription (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 167-73). CU offered a two-tiered alignment model for its Board of Trustees (BOT). Classis region trustees are required to hold full convictional alignment but at-large and alumni trustees are not (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 164). Current CU board makeup is as follows:

- Regional trustees: 6 regions, 10 regional at-large, 16 total
- Alumni trustees: 3
- At-large trustees: 12

This means that under the current two-tiered alignment model, 16 members of the BOT are required to be confessionally aligned and 15 are not. At synod, incoming board chair Perrin Rynders said that at the time 28 (out of 31 total) board members were confessionally aligned, and that recently all new board members were. Even though he expressed the desire to have more than just a “bare majority,” it would be more effective to require all board members to fully agree, especially when they direct the Christian and Reformed direction for the university.

In response to these reports, Synod 2025 affirmed CU in their work to respond to the Synod 2024 request but also instructed the CU BOT to “consider a higher level than a simple majority of confessional alignment” for trustees (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613). While this process is a good start, it does not adequately answer synod’s instruction to be in alignment with the

process of the CRC. Officebearers are not allowed to enter into office with exceptions, but trustees have no requirement to be confessionally aligned without exception. Even professing members of the CRC testify that they sincerely believe in the doctrines of the church (Form for Profession of Faith, 1932). Their public profession of faith “includes a commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church” (Church Order, Art. 59-b). Should not all trustees, who are not required to be officebearers or even members of the Christian Reformed Church, profess the same doctrines that we heartily believe?

II. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures Synod 2026 to instruct the Calvin University Board of Trustees to do the following:

- A. Require all Board of Trustees members to subscribe annually to the Covenant for Faculty Members without exceptions.
- B. Reduce or eliminate at-large delegates to have more representation from the churches.

Grounds:

- 1. These requirements would bring CU trustees into alignment with the Church Order Article 5 process of confessional subscription as instructed by synod.
- 2. Synod has asserted that the church “does indeed adequately and directly supervise and operate the College” (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 97).
- 3. The church has a vested interest in maintaining the biblical and confessional character of institutions of higher learning, since both work together to “instruct the youth in the Scriptures and in the creeds and the confessions of the church” (Church Order, Art. 63-b).

Classis Illiana
Laryn Zoerhof, stated clerk

OVERTURE 18

Proactively Articulate Qualities Desired in Our Next Seminary President

I. Background

On November 25, 2025, the Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) president, Julius Medenblik, announced his plan to retire at the end of the 2026-2027 academic year. That same day, the CTS Board of Trustees chair, Rev. Scott Greenway, announced that the board intends to appoint a transition team and a search committee to identify the person of God’s choosing to serve as the next president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Since our Church Order states that the seminary is governed by synod and that the CTS Board of Trustees is responsible to synod (Art. 19), synod should proactively articulate some of the key qualities that it desires to have in the next president of our seminary.

II. Overture

Classis Georgetown overtures Synod 2026 to instruct the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to identify a presidential candidate who meets the following description:

- A. Will focus the seminary's attention on training and equipping students to become pastors in local churches.

Grounds:

1. The purpose of our seminary as articulated in Church Order Article 19 is to train students for the ministry of the Word.
2. Our denomination has a number of vacant churches that need their pulpits filled by well-trained ministers of the Word.

- B. Will be a leading voice in publicly vindicating sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

Ground: Church Order Article 20 states that one of the duties of the seminary faculty is to "vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors." It is critical that the seminary president leads, encourages, and galvanizes the faculty in this task.

- C. Is an ordained and experienced minister of the Word with a well-known reputation for faithfully expounding the Word of God.

Grounds:

1. An ordained and experienced minister of the Word should lead the institution that trains future ministers of the Word.
2. A stated task for our seminary faculty is to "expound the Word of God" (Church Order Article 20), and this ability should be found in and regularly exercised by our next president.

- D. Has a well-known reputation for godliness.

Ground: The Scriptures stress the importance of godliness in church leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9), as does our Church Order (Art. 10-b).

- E. Wholeheartedly affirms the authority, sufficiency, inerrancy, and clarity of the Word of God without compromise in accordance with Belgic Confession Articles 5-7 and Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 21.

Ground: Having a president with a high view of Scripture is vital in a secular, skeptical, and post-Christian age. Our seminary will continue to receive students who will need to be shown that the Word of God is reliable and can be taught and preached with confidence.

Classis Georgetown
Glenda Tebben, stated clerk

Amend Church Order to Include Prayer in Description of Ministerial Calling

I. Background

A praying church is not just a church that prays. Everything changes when seeking God's presence and discerning the Spirit's leading become the foundation for ministry. Prayer, then, is not the only thing the church does but the *first and continual* thing the church does.

Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 116 states that "prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us."

Prayer should be the foundation of gospel witness and mission. Prayer should be the foundation of the study and presentation of the Word. These are as true of us today as they were for Jesus and Paul.

Gordon Fee, in his book *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (p. 147) says it this way:

What is clear from Paul's letters is that he was a *pray-er* before he was a missionary or a thinker. His life was devoted to prayer, and his relationship with his converts was primarily sustained by way of thanksgiving and prayer. To eliminate prayer from Paul's personal piety would be to investigate the workings of a gas-combustion engine without recognizing the significance of oil. Paul did not simply believe in prayer or talk about prayer. He prayed, regularly and continuously, and urged the same on his churches (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

The priority of prayer is demonstrated for us in the ministry of Jesus as he regularly steps aside from ministry to commune with the Father. In Paul's ministry, he repeatedly writes to the many churches that he prays for them and urges the churches to do the same (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

If that is how Jesus and Paul prayed, then we should recognize our dependence upon God through prayer and make clear that this should be the first and continual thing that the pastors in the Christian Reformed Church do as well.

II. Overture

Classis Northern Illinois overtures Synod 2026 to amend the Church Order Articles 11, 12-a, and 25-b (with additions indicated by underline):

Article 11

The calling of a minister of the Word is to be devoted to prayer, to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and equip the members so that the church of Jesus Christ may be built up.

Article 12-a

- a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall pray, preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public

worship services, catechize the youth, and train members for Christian service. The minister, with other officebearers, shall supervise the congregation and fellow officebearers, exercise admonition and discipline, see to it that everything is done decently and in order, exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism and diaconal outreach.

Article 25-b

- b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall pray for the congregation, shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall provide counsel and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith. As shepherds of the church, they shall encourage and support the members in their Christian life. The elders also shall nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation in the Lord's Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

Grounds:

1. Biblical precedent

In the beginning of the life of the church, when the disciples were increasingly pressured from busier ministry, they focused on their responsibilities: they devoted themselves "to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). It is the calling of pastors and leaders today to do the same.

2. Historical precedent

The original Dort Church Order, Article 16, used in the CRC before 1965, included prayer as part of the description of the calling and responsibility of the minister:

The office of the Minister is to continue in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to watch over his brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well and the Congregation, and finally, with the Elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

3. Pastoral expectation

The primacy of prayer has been an expectation for pastors in the ordination forms for the minister of the Word.

The 1959 ordination form states:

It is the office of the ministers publicly to call upon the Name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; for what the apostles say in Acts 6:4, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word," these pastors have in common with the apostles; to which St. Paul alludes what he speaks thus to Timothy: I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and

all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

The Form for the Ordination/Installation of Ministers (1986) states:

In all this work, the minister proclaims, explains, and applies Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the church of Jesus Christ. For this work, the minister devotes himself to the ministry of prayer, joining all Christians in confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.

Classis Northern Illinois
Wendy Haack, stated clerk

OVERTURE 20

Update the Vision and Mission Statements of the CRCNA

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2026 to replace the denomination's current vision and mission statements:

Current Statements

Our Vision

The Christian Reformed Church is a diverse family of healthy congregations, assemblies, and ministries expressing the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.

Our Mission

As people called by God,

We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.

We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.

We love and care for one another as God's people.

We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.

We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.

Proposed Replacements

Our Vision

The Christian Reformed Church seeks to be individual congregations covenanted together in a combined effort to make disciples by baptizing them into the name of the triune God and teaching them to obey all that Jesus Christ commanded. We are unified by our commitment to God's Word as it is summarized by our Three Forms of Unity—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort—in order that we may proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Our Mission

To equip and support member congregations in fulfilling the Great Commission according to the means God has ordained: the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them, and the practice of church discipline, each as governed by the Word of God.

The CRCNA fulfills this mission through agencies and ministries that serve and strengthen the local congregations and classes by leveraging and enhancing our combined efforts.

Grounds:

1. The current vision statement relies on broad, abstract language that does not adequately define the CRCNA or explain our purpose or vision. This statement mentions nothing of Christ, the mission he gave his church, or the CRCNA's confessional commitment. Terms like "diverse family," "healthy," and "transforms" are vague and could be interpreted in a variety of ways. As a result, it offers little doctrinal or missional clarity to unify the denomination or direct its ministry with biblical precision.
2. The proposed vision statement offers greater biblical, Christ-centered, and confessional clarity by rooting the identity and vision of our denomination explicitly in the Great Commission and in our shared commitment to God's Word as summarized by the Three Forms of Unity. Denominational agencies and ministries, which are not explicitly referenced in the proposed vision statement, remain essential to the life and mission of the church. They find their place in the mission statement that follows, which focuses on what we do in service of the congregations and their calling. This distinction preserves the primacy of the local church while affirming that shared ministries exist to support, extend, and coordinate the work Christ has given to his church.
3. The current mission statement, while pastorally warm and biblically resonant, relies on broad and generic language that lacks clear ecclesiastical, confessional, and Christ-centered definition. It does not objectively describe the ordinary means Christ has given his church to carry out its calling; nor does it provide a biblical or confessional standard by which faithfulness or success may be discerned. As a result, the statement functions more as a vague description of Christian life than as a mission statement for a Reformed denomination.
4. The proposed mission statement clearly defines both the denomination's purpose and the standard by which its faithfulness may be assessed by rooting its work in the biblical and confessional marks of the church. It establishes an objective focus on the ordinary means Christ has given for the building up of his church (preaching, sacraments, and discipline) while rightly identifying repentance, faith, and obedience as the fruit God ordinarily brings through them.

The mission statement communicates what the denomination does (equip and support member congregations) and how this mission is accomplished (through agencies and ministries that serve and strengthen the local congregations and classes).

By distinguishing between the calling of local congregations and the supportive role of denominational agencies, the statement reinforces historically Reformed ecclesiology and polity. This clarity provides a durable, theologically grounded framework to guide denominational priorities and shared ministry.

Classis Minnkota
Ryan A.K. VanderWees, stated clerk

OVERTURE 21

Do Not Recognize Exclusively Digital Ministries as Churches

I. Preamble

Synod 2025 affirmed the value of the internet and digital tools for Christian ministry and outreach but did not decide whether “virtual churches” (i.e., Christian communities that are exclusively digital or online) may properly be considered churches. In the absence of clear guidance, there is a danger that these ministries will come to be viewed or treated as churches by default.

However, as a denomination that confesses Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, we may not recognize a ministry as a church, or permit it to be called a church, unless we genuinely believe the following three marks to be present:

- the pure preaching of the gospel
- the administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them
- the practice of church discipline

Because these marks define the true church, any ministry that is to be recognized as a church in the CRCNA must faithfully embody them. Until it is clearly demonstrated that these marks are present in virtual churches, synod should clarify that the CRCNA does not presently recognize them as churches.

II. Overture

Classis Atlantic Northeast overtures Synod 2026 to decide as follows:

A. Declare that the CRCNA does not at present recognize exclusively digital ministries as churches.

B. Direct exclusively digital ministries in the CRCNA to refrain from using the term “church” in their official names or in descriptions of their ministry.

C. Direct denominational offices to refrain from characterizing or presenting exclusively digital ministries as churches in official communications, on the CRCNA website, or in any other denominational materials.

Grounds:

1. Referring to exclusively digital ministries as churches has the potential to cause confusion among members and the public.
2. The Lord calls his church to assemble (Lev. 23:3; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:18), and the Word of God proclaims the benefits of God's people gathering together (Ps. 133:1; Acts 4:31). It has not yet been demonstrated that a digital or virtual-only ministry can do justice to the Bible's emphasis on the church gathering together as an assembled congregation (1 Cor. 5:4; Heb. 10:24-25).
3. It has not yet been demonstrated that the three marks of the church, as set forth in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, can be truly manifest in a digital or virtual-only ministry context.
4. The Belgic Confession teaches that all people are "obliged to join and unite with" the true church (Belgic Confession, Art. 28). In view of this, the CRCNA should not treat a ministry as a church unless it sincerely believes it to be that true church which believers are obliged to join and unite with.
5. Synod has a responsibility to maintain the confessional understanding of the church and to guard the use of the term "church" within the CRCNA.

Classis Atlantic Northeast
David D. Poolman, stated clerk

OVERTURE 22

Revise Church Order Language and Process for Tracking Membership

I. Background

Article 67 of the Church Order addresses what happens to a person's membership when they "move to localities where there is no Christian Reformed Church and no church in communion." The article's supplement addresses the practice of "lapsing," or terminating memberships of members who "move away from the area of their church so that a meaningful church relationship is no longer possible." The guidance of this article clearly represents a bygone time of denominational loyalty and is in dire need of updating for our current religious cultural context. Because of the undertone of disciplinary action involved in "lapsing" membership, many churches have either discontinued the practice, opting instead for "inactivating" membership (a process ungoverned by Church Order) or using "lapsing" in place of

formal church discipline, which is governed under Article 81 of the Church Order. Both of these have caused issues of governance in local congregational meetings in the recent history of our denomination, as “inactive” members technically retain all the rights and privileges of full membership according to Church Order.

Membership in our churches is fraught with questions of genuine relationship, spiritual authority, and voluntary association. While most evangelical churches in North America define membership as a voluntary association, in the Reformed tradition we continue to value the covenant nature of our mutual relationships in the body of Christ. People become members of our churches not by saying a prayer or simply attending our worship services but by making vows to God and his people, including a vow to “submit to the authority and discipline of the church.” When members stop attending church or start attending other churches without informing the council, the situation quickly becomes tense.

But the process is not any easier for people who do, in good faith, try to communicate clearly with their council. Currently, if a member decides to move their membership to a church that is not in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA, the process requires them not merely to inform the council or request a transfer of their membership but, instead, to “resign” their membership in the church, indicating a breaking of fellowship. This too, reflects a bygone era of ecclesiastical superiority, when our Church Order and theology reflected a belief in denominational superiority and rejected other Christian traditions as “false churches,” a position synod explicitly rejected and repented of already in 1944 (*Agenda for Synod 1944*, p. 359).

II. A few case studies

Allow us to share a few case studies that demonstrate a profound need for revision concerning the language and practice of membership:

- Marcus and Sheryl went through a difficult divorce. Prior to the divorce, due to increasing tension in their marriage and their family, they attended church much less frequently. The leadership of the church explained this away because their oldest son, Freddy, had severe developmental disabilities and mobility issues, which became more demanding for the couple as he grew into adulthood. The church was caught by surprise when Marcus and Sheryl announced their divorce. After the divorce, Sheryl moved away and began attending a Baptist church. Marcus remained and continued to look after Freddy but did not return to church. Three years later, the council decided to lapse both of their memberships. Marcus thought he was being disciplined for not attending church services, which was impossible due to his role as Freddy’s caretaker and the church’s lack of accessibility. Sheryl thought she was being disciplined for joining a Baptist church in her new community. This experience left Marcus

and Sheryl feeling resentful of the congregation and denomination they had grown up in.

- Tonya moved away to attend university after graduating from the local Christian school. While living on campus, she started attending a Pentecostal campus ministry and joined a local Pentecostal church. When she told her parents, they told her she should write the council to transfer her membership, which she did. In response, she received a long email explaining that since the Pentecostal church is not in ecumenical fellowship with the CRC, they could not transfer her membership, but that the council had acquiesced to her resignation from the church. The experience left Tonya feeling devastated, rejected, and confused.
- Kwame joined a local CRC while studying and working in Grand Rapids for fifteen years. When he moved back to Nigeria, he returned to the Anglican church he had grown up in. Two years later, he received an email from the church office explaining that since he had not been in attendance for over two years, his membership was being lapsed. Kwame was unfamiliar with that language, so he looked up the word in the dictionary:

1: an error typically due to forgetfulness, inattention, or incompetence: see BLUNDER; 2: a deviation or fall from a higher to a lower state: see DECLINE; 3: the termination of a right or privilege through neglect: see DISCONTINUANCE; 4: the abandonment of a religious faith: see APOSTASY

Kwame was horrified and offended by the connotations of this word being applied to his faith.

We encourage synod to recognize that when it comes to church attendance, our polity should match our theology. We believe that Christians in denominations outside of the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition are members together with us of the “one holy catholic and apostolic church” (Nicene Creed). The truth of the matter is that even churches that share ecumenical fellowship with our denomination do not track or keep membership papers in the same way we do. Our membership papers are a mere *symbol* of spiritual authority and covenant relationship.

Therefore, we recommend doing away with the negative language that concerns lapsing and resigning membership, and we recommend recognizing that our keeping of membership papers is, precisely, a matter of internal recordkeeping. We suggest moving to the language of “archiving” membership in cases that do not involve formal discipline. Members whose membership is archived ought to be informed of this, with an invitation that their membership will be unarchived if they ever decide to rejoin the CRCNA. We also feel that councils ought to be reminded that real spiritual authority is found in the genuine, living covenant relationship between a congregation’s members and its council, and to be admonished to value relationship over polity when it comes to matters of internal recordkeeping.

II. Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to replace Article 67 of the Church Order and its supplement with the following:

Article 67

Members who leave the Christian Reformed Church for a church that is not in communion with the Christian Reformed Church may notify their council of this move, at which point the council shall archive their membership.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 67

Supplement, Article 67

Guidelines for Archiving Membership

1. Councils are encouraged to note any extended and unexplained absence by members of the church, and to communicate regularly with those who are not regularly attending church services so that all members may receive proper discipleship, pastoral care, and encouragement in the faith.
2. In the case of extended and unexplained absence, or an inability on the part of the council to communicate with a member due to lack of accurate contact information, the council may take the initiative to archive memberships. This may be done only when . . .
 - the council believes the person remains committed to the Christian faith and is worshiping elsewhere.
 - the council is not aware of any public sin requiring discipline.
 - the council has made every good faith effort to establish communication with the person.

Classis Muskegon
Drew Sweetman, stated clerk

OVERTURE 23

Replace Church Order Article 52 and Its Supplement

I. Background

The CRCNA has adopted a number of synodical reports and statements throughout its history that articulate a robust biblical and Reformed theology of corporate worship and are intended to guide ministers, worship planners, and worship committees. Church Order Article 52 refers to several of these synodical decisions and guidelines, but does so in a manner that provides limited clarity regarding their content and practical application. The current Article 52 and its supplement also do not reference any of our confessions' sound, yet succinct, teaching on corporate worship.

When governing principles are inaccessible to those charged with applying them, the Church Order itself fails in its instructive function. In the absence of clear theological guidance in the Church Order, consistories are left either to improvise or to follow prevailing cultural models of worship that are often contrary to biblical principles.

The proposed replacement of Article 52 and its supplement does not introduce any new requirements or prescriptions for corporate worship. Rather, it seeks to clarify, summarize, and make accessible the principles, decisions, and guidelines for corporate worship that have already been adopted by synod.

In other words, we are not proposing any changes to how our churches ought to worship from what has already been determined. We are simply proposing that the biblical wisdom that has been developed over the church's history be more practically communicated in our Church Order.

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2026 to adopt the proposed replacement of Church Order Article 52 and its supplement and to submit the revised article to the classes for consideration, with ratification by Synod 2027.

Proposed replacement of Church Order Article 52 and its supplement

Article 52

a. The consistory shall regulate the worship services in such a way that God is not worshiped in any other way than has been commanded in his Word (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 96), rejecting all human innovations (Belgic Confession, Art. 32) and utilizing the means of grace he has prescribed (Canons of Dort, Point 5, 14).

b. The consistory shall ensure that all songs, liturgical forms and resources used in public worship are biblically sound and confessionally faithful according to our governing principles of worship. Churches are encouraged to emphasize Psalm singing. see to it that the principles and elements of worship approved by synod are observed, including the use of liturgical forms, songs, and synodically approved Bible versions. If liturgical forms are adapted or additional psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are used in worship, these elements should conform to synodical guidelines.

— Cf. Supplement, Article 52-b

c. Corporate worship services shall be a covenantal meeting between our triune God and his people which is structured by and saturated with the Bible. It shall be ordered as a dialogue in which God speaks through his Word and sacraments (when they are administered), and the congregation responds in confession, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, offerings, and obedient faith.

— Cf. Supplement, Article 52-c

A. Governing principles of worship

Worship is a microcosm of the entire gospel, of the whole life of a gospel people, and of life in Christ, in which God himself meets with, speaks with, transforms, and sends out his people. The liturgy shapes us into the very image of Christ, by the Spirit, to the glory of the Father, who alone is worthy to be worshiped.

Worship is covenant dialogue

Worship is a **dialogue between God and his people**, in which God speaks and acts and the congregation responds in faith, obedience, praise, and prayer.

God is the primary actor in worship

Worship begins with **God's gracious initiative**: his Word proclaimed, his promises announced, his sacraments administered. Human response is real and necessary, but always secondary and responsive.

Worship is corporate action

Worship is the act of **the gathered congregation**, not a performance by clergy nor a private devotion carried on in parallel. The whole people of God participate as priests before him.

The Word of God is central

Scripture—read, sung, preached and prayed—forms the **structural backbone** of worship. Preaching is not an add-on but the defining element of the church's liturgical life.

Sacrament completes the dialogue

The sacraments are not separate from the Word but bring the dialogue to a **visible and enacted convergence**, where proclamation and response occur together in faith-filled action.

Edification governs order and freedom

The Spirit grants freedom in worship, but that freedom is exercised within **order aimed at edification**, intelligibility, and congregational participation.

Corporate worship is distinct but tied to all of life

While all of life is lived before God, corporate worship is a **distinct, irreplaceable act** of the gathered church.

- B. Bible versions **Bible versions** recommended by synod for use in worship services are listed online at crna.org and include the King James Version (KJV), the American Standard Version (ASV), the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New International Version (NIV),

the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Today's New International Version (TNIV), the English Standard Version (ESV), and the New Living Translation (NLT).

- ~~Liturgical forms, songs, and elements of worship~~ approved by synod are contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination's *Psalter Hymnal*. Forms, subsequent revisions of forms that are synodically approved, and other such resources are made available on the denomination's website (crena.org) under "Synod Resources."
 - ~~Synodical guidelines pertaining to the adaptation of liturgical forms~~ are found in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, pages 493-94, and in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*.
 - ~~Materials on the principles of, elements of, and guidelines for worship and music~~ are found in the "Introduction to the Psalms, Bible Songs, and Hymns" contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination's *Psalter Hymnal*, pages 11-13; in the *Acts of Synod 1997*, pages 664-68; and in the 1997 Committee to Study Worship Report available on the denomination's website (crena.org) under "Synod Resources."
- C. "Just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments" (Canons of Dort, Point 5, 14).
- D. "The music of the church should be appropriate for worship—that is, it should be liturgical and have aesthetic integrity. The music of worship should serve the dialogue between God and his people. It must be true to the full message of the Scriptures and reflective of biblical Christian experience. Along with the biblical motif, the music of worship should give expression to the other motifs of liturgy: the catholic, the confessional, and the pastoral. The music of worship should satisfy the aesthetic laws that are conditions of good art, such as imaginative craftsmanship and seriousness of expression. It should reflect the church at worship today and throughout the ages in ways that are relevant, enduring, festive, and dignified" (*Psalter Hymnal*, Statement of Principal, revised from the 1959 edition and adopted by Synod 1979. For more details, see the full "Introduction to the Psalms, Bible Songs, and Hymns" in the *Psalter Hymnal*, pp. 11-15).
- E. "The celebration of the sacraments shall be done in accord with the confessions of the CRC and include at least the following elements:
- a. For baptism—the scriptural words of institution, the baptismal covenant (including God's promises and our promises), and the act of baptism with water and in the name of the Trinity.

- b. For the Lord's Supper—the scriptural words of institution (with actions of breaking and pouring), the thanksgiving and consecration, and the communion with bread and cup (approved by Synod 1994).

Supplement, Article 52-c

Ordinary Elements of Public Worship

These are the recurring elements found consistently in biblical, early church, and Reformed worship patterns:

God speaks to his people

- Call to worship, God's greeting and blessings
- Declaration of God's commands, promises, and grace
- Reading and proclamation (preaching) of his Word

The people respond

- Congregational singing (psalms and hymns drawn from Scripture)
- Confession of sin
- Prayer (including thanksgiving, intercession, supplication)
- Confession of faith
- Offerings for the ministry of the church and care of the needy

God and his people act together

- Administration of the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)

God sends his people

- Pronouncement of God's blessing (benediction)
- God's people respond with songs of glory (doxology)

Sources: 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee (*Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 134-98)
1997 Committee to Study Worship Report (*Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 93-144)

Grounds:

1. Article 52, as it is currently written, indicates that “the consistory shall regulate the worship services” but inadequately describes how to do so. Since corporate worship is the principle task and activity of the church, as indicated by Article 51, the Church Order ought to clearly, yet succinctly, communicate our rich, Reformed theology of worship for pedagogical and regulative purposes.
2. The current Article 52-b and its supplement reference “liturgical forms” and “synodical guidelines” that are difficult to utilize. For example, the “synodical guidelines pertaining to the adaptation of liturgical forms are found in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, pages 493-94, and in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*.” These *Acts of Synod* must be accessed either in a printed version, or through Calvin's Hekman Library online synod portal, which only offers access to a scanned copy of the entire

- 578-page *Acts of Synod* combined with the *Agenda* for that year (and the PDF page numbers do not correspond to the printed page numbers). The “1997 Committee to Study Worship Report” is one of dozens of reports that must be located on the “Synod Resources” page. It weighs in at over fifty pages of difficult-to-read scanned documents. Since this is critical knowledge for worship planners, the primary points of these documents should be included in the Church Order article and its supplement.
3. The latest synodically approved *Psalter Hymnal* was published in 1987, nearly four decades ago. Since then, excellent song books like *Lift Up Your Hearts* (produced by Faith Alive), the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (produced as a joint effort between the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church), *SING!* (produced by the Gettys through Crossway) and many others have been published. While the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal* continues to serve the church well, most congregations now supplement it with additional resources that are published far faster than synod can approve them. Consistories need a more robust Church Order article and supplement to evaluate songs sung in their services. The current Article 52 and its supplement do little to emphasize Psalm singing, which historically has always been, and ought to be, a robust part of our repertoire.
 4. All of the principles contained in the proposed Article 52 and supplement are sourced directly from our confessions and synodically approved reports, documents, and decisions. Everything proposed reflects guidelines that are already currently normative in the CRCNA. No new prescriptions or restrictions on how local congregations exercise corporate worship are proposed in them.
 5. The proposed Article 52 and supplement do not mandate a uniform style, order, cultural, or musical expression. The proposed material only clarifies the theological boundaries within which contextualization takes place.
 6. The proposed Article 52 and supplement, while longer than the current version, succinctly summarize the biblical, confessional, and historical principles of worship the CRCNA holds to and adequately convey these principles to consistories, pastors, worship committees, and planners. They provide a solid guideline and criteria for the ongoing development of curricula and training materials.

Classis Minnkota
Ryan A.K. VanderWees, stated clerk

OVERTURE 24

Establish Ecclesiastical Relations with the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico

Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to instruct the Office of General Secretary and the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee to work toward establishing a formal ecclesiastical relationship with the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico (*La Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México* AR or INPM), with the ultimate goal of welcoming them as a church in communion.

Grounds:

1. The INPM is a historic Reformed denomination that is committed to Reformed theology, adheres to the Forms of Unity and the Westminster standards, and is a member together with us of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
2. The denomination's seminary is well regarded and is committed to Reformed theology.
3. We have a long history of collaboration, with INPM pastors serving CRCNA churches and ministries and CRCNA pastors and missionaries serving INPM churches and ministries.
4. CRCNA classes have collaborated with the INPM on church-planting projects on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.
5. As our denomination continues to grow among immigrant and ethnic-minority communities in North America, it will benefit us to have more and stronger relationships with the Reformed communion throughout Latin America for mutual learning, encouragement, resourcing, and support.

Classis Muskegon
Drew Sweetman, stated clerk

OVERTURE 25

Affirming the Traditional Reformed Understanding of Church and State

I. Preamble

We submit this overture in joyful gratitude for the Reformed tradition entrusted to the Christian Reformed Church and with a desire to preserve its theological integrity for future generations. Our purpose is not to introduce new doctrinal requirements or to pursue ideological objectives but to reaffirm the traditional Reformed distinction between the spiritual authority of the church and the civil authority of the state.

We recognize that many faithful officebearers seek to honor Christ's lordship in every sphere of life and may articulate that desire in diverse ways.

In response to the growing influence of Christian nationalism among some Christian leaders, we seek to remember and reaffirm the teaching of the church's confessions and doctrinal standards, which call officebearers to teach and live in faithful submission to them. Our Church Order impresses on officebearers to subscribe to our confessions and previous synodical decisions and to teach and live in a manner that is consistent with them.

II. Background

The ideology commonly described as Christian nationalism has gained increased visibility in recent years not only in North American culture but even in various Christian communities, including within the Christian Reformed Church. Surveys show that 32 percent of all Americans, including 54 percent of those who attend religious services weekly or more, adhere to or sympathize with Christian nationalism, a percentage that must be considered as we work toward being faithful witnesses of our Lord. We believe that the increasing prevalence of these dynamics reveals a pressing discipleship need calling the Christian Reformed Church to teach clearly the Reformed distinction between the kingdom of Christ and the political nations of this world.

A number of officebearers within the Christian Reformed Church have publicly self-identified as Christian nationalists, although those self-labeled definitions vary. We intentionally avoid naming specific officebearers or particular circumstances because our concern is not with particular persons but with providing pastoral clarity for the church as it seeks to form disciples whose ultimate allegiance is to Christ and his kingdom.

The definitions for Christian nationalism vary, but for the purposes of this overture we define Christian nationalism as an ideology that seeks to merge Christian identity with national identity, asserting that a modern state has a special and divinely ordained status and that its political identity is meant to be a particular version of Christianity in which loyalty to Christ is closely bound to loyalty to a nation. We use this definition because it focuses on ideologies that seek to ground civil authority in Christian law while distinguishing them from the broad range of political views that are sometimes imprecisely labeled "Christian nationalism." We also recognize the reality that, historically and at present, this ideology is frequently intertwined with racialized conceptions of national identity, especially forms of white supremacy that privilege one racial group as uniquely representative of Christian civilization.

The Christian Reformed Church has historically confessed a careful distinction between the spiritual authority of the church and the civil authority of the state. This distinction is grounded in Scripture and is articulated in the Reformed confessions, particularly the Belgic Confession (Art. 36), as inter-

preted and revised by the CRCNA in 1958. Throughout its history, the Reformed tradition has sought to affirm Christ’s lordship over all of life while resisting attempts to identify the kingdom of God too closely with any earthly political order.

Concerns regarding Christian nationalism are not unique to the CRCNA but are being addressed across the broader Reformed and Presbyterian landscape. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has established a study committee to examine Christian nationalism and its implications for officebearers. Our overture participates in a broader ecclesial effort to clarify the Reformed understanding of church and state. The members of the PCA’s committee were selected by Rev. Dr. Kevin DeYoung, who recently published a widely circulated article on the theological problems with Christian nationalism.

III. Key Terms for Clarity

To prevent confusion with healthy patriotism, civic responsibility, or appropriate public engagement, we offer the following key distinctions:

Term	What It Means	Healthy Example	Distortion to Avoid
Patriotism	Gratitude for your country and desire to see it flourish	Celebrating national holidays, serving community, honoring those who serve	Treating a nation as having a unique and divinely ordained national identity
Civic engagement	Participating in public life for the common good	Voting, volunteering, advocating for just laws, promoting social order	Believing politics is tied to the ultimate hope for salvation
Christian nationalism	Assigning a religious identity or divine mandate to a modern nation; attributing to civil authority responsibilities belonging properly to the church, such that allegiance to Christ becomes entangled with allegiance to a nation or political order	<i>(None — this is what we reject.)</i>	Equating being a “true citizen” with being a Christian; identifying Christian faith with national belonging or subordinating the church’s identity and mission to political power

Christian nationalism conflicts with the CRCNA understanding of Government as stated in Belgic Confession Article 36 and previous CRCNA synodical decisions, which contend that civil authorities are ordained by God “not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also to protect the sacred ministry” (*Acts of Synod 1938*, p. 17).

This holy church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or certain people. But it is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world, though still joined and united in heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith. (Belgic Confession, Art. 27)

And regarding the role of civil authority, the Belgic Confession reminds us:

[Civil authorities] should... [remove every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel] while completely refraining from every tendency toward exercising absolute authority, and while functioning in the sphere entrusted to them, with the means belonging to them.

(Belgic Confession, Art. 36)

In addition, the "Report of the Committee with Respect to Article 36," submitted to Synod 1910, states,

"... both State and Church as institutions of God and Christ have mutual rights and duties appointed them from on high, and therefore have a very sacred reciprocal obligation to meet, through the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. They should not, however, encroach upon each other's domain. The Church as well as the State has the right of sovereignty in its own sphere."

(*Acts of Synod 1910*, p. 105)

Synod 1958 adopted a revision of Belgic Confession Article 36 to provide "a clear expression of the Reformed witness regarding the relation of Church and State" and declared that the previous version could not "be judged to express in a fully satisfactory and unequivocal way the Reformed witness to the relation of Church and State" (*Acts of Synod 1958*, p. 29). The grounds for the confessional revision included this statement: "This formulation expresses the Scriptural teaching that the two realms of Church and State must be distinguished as to their spheres of operation and as to the nature of the means that are entrusted to them" (*Acts of Synod 1958*, p. 30; directing readers to the *Acts of Synod 1946*, p. 416, for Scripture passages).

We desire to see the CRCNA reaffirm its position of the church and state relationship. We desire to see the Christian Reformed Church embrace and embody the biblical vision of the church described in Revelation 7:9, of a redeemed people from every tongue, tribe, people, and language, united not by nationality but by the blood of the Lamb. Christian nationalism stands as a significant obstacle to this gospel vision. Therefore, we must faithfully reject any movement that uses Christianity as a tool for political dominance or cultural supremacy.

The CRCNA is called to bear faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom in a divided and polarized world. Faithfulness to Belgic Confession Article 36 and to the synodical decisions of the CRCNA requires the church to resist ideologies that rival Christ's lordship or confuse his kingdom with earthly power. It blurs the distinct callings of church and state, distorting the church's witness and the magistrate's authority, and thus harms both spheres of God's ordained order.

IV. Overture

A. That synod adopt the following definition of Christian nationalism for doctrinal clarification and ecclesial discernment: an ideology that seeks to

merge Christian identity with national identity, asserting that a modern state has a special and divinely ordained status and that its political identity is meant to be a particular version of Christianity in which loyalty to Christ is closely bound to loyalty to a nation.

B. That synod reaffirm that the Christian Reformed Church's confessional teaching on church and state, as articulated in Belgic Confession Article 36 and its synodical interpretations in 1910, 1938, and 1958, rejects theological frameworks that conflate ecclesial identity with national identity or assign to civil authority responsibilities properly belonging to the church.

C. That synod declare and clarify that Christian nationalism is theologically incompatible with Belgic Confession Article 36 and the CRCNA synodical interpretations because it localizes Christ's reign, instrumentalizes the state for kingdom purposes, and treats civil authority as a proxy for Christ's kingdom, all of which contradict the doctrines contained in the three forms of unity and especially the interpretive revision of Belgic Confession Article 36.

Grounds:

1. Christian nationalism confuses the kingdom of God with earthly political power and undermines the catholicity of the church.
2. Christian nationalism contradicts the confession that Jesus Christ alone is "the only universal bishop, and the only head of the church" (Belgic Confession, Art. 31).
3. Christian nationalism is a distortion that leads people to view their nation or political preferences as essential to the advancement of the kingdom of God. Allegiance to country or ideology can begin to replace devotion to God's kingdom in our hearts, becoming a form of idolatry. This confuses the mission of the church with political goals and undermines the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom (John 18:36).
4. The CRCNA revision of Belgic Confession Article 36 (1958) was based on the conclusion that "a teaching in the confessional documents [was] not the teaching of God's Word" (quoted from the Covenant for Officebearers). Thus, all subsequent republications of the Belgic Confession with this revision repeatedly demonstrate that this has been the church's authoritative interpretation of the doctrine(s) confessed in that article. Views that correspond to the removed wording of Article 36, including Christian nationalism as defined above, are outside the bounds of confessional subscription in our denomination.
5. Christian nationalism denies the catholicity and unity of the church. The Belgic Confession teaches that the church is "spread and dispersed throughout the entire world" and "not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or certain people" (Art. 27). By privileging one nation, cultural, or racial identity as uniquely Christian, Christian nationalism fractures the unity of the body of Christ and marginalizes believers both within its own nation and across other nations and cultures. Historically and in the present, Christian nationalism has often been intertwined

with racial ideologies that elevate whiteness as normative or divinely favored. While such racial hierarchies are themselves contrary to the biblical teaching that all people are created in the image of God, their entanglement with Christian nationalism further reveals the theological danger of identifying the kingdom of God with any particular nation, ethnicity, or culture. This stands in direct opposition to the biblical vision of the church described in Revelation 7:9—a people from every nation, tribe, people, and language—a reality the church is called to anticipate and embody even now as we live in the hope of Christ’s coming kingdom. Therefore, Christian nationalism must be rejected as incompatible with the gospel and with the Reformed confessional understanding of the church’s unity and catholicity.

6. Christian nationalism conflicts with the Reformed understanding of government. The Belgic Confession teaches that civil authorities are ordained by God to promote justice and restrain evil, not to establish or advance the kingdom of Christ. Synod 1958 did not adopt a commentary alongside the three forms of unity. It altered the received text of one of the three forms. Therefore, Article 36 is the confessional teaching of the CRCNA on church and state relations. Christian nationalism collapses this distinction by treating political power as a primary means of advancing God’s kingdom, thereby exceeding the confessional mandate given to government and misdirecting the church’s witness.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Robert Arbogast, stated clerk

OVERTURE 26

Do Not Adopt Biennial Synod Proposal

Classis Heartland overtures Synod 2026 to continue with annual in-person synods and not to adopt the proposal from the Council of Delegates to hold biennial synods.

Grounds:

1. Christ himself has chosen to provide for, nourish, shepherd, feed, and rule over his people through the officebearers he has called and ordained into office. Synod is the broadest assembly of the church in which Christ himself is guiding us by his Word and Spirit through his officebearers. This is the most important assembly we have as a denomination, and it is of the highest value to our well-being, flourishing, and obedience.
2. The church is guided by the assemblies and offices of the church that Christ has instituted, not by committees, agencies, staff, or volunteers to whom those assemblies assign specific tasks. To move to less frequent

- synods will inevitably mean that more and more of the work of the denomination is done by committee, agency, and staff and that less and less is done by its officebearers gathering under the Word to guide the church as Christ instituted.
3. Since the church is guided by the officebearers appointed by Christ in her various assemblies, these are of first and primary importance in planning, budgeting, purpose, and mission. A representative gathering of all the churches is the first thing we did when we became a denomination and is the heart of our ongoing denominational identity and covenant.
 4. Synod, as a major assembly, guides and supervises all other denominational work and ministry. It should therefore be of first importance in planning and budgeting.

Classis Heartland
Pete Van Velzen, stated clerk

OVERTURE 27

Do Not Adopt Recommendation to Have Biennial Synods

I. Introduction

On September 4, 2025, the Council of Delegates (COD) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) met in a special meeting to consider the draft report and recommendations of a COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs. In a letter from the general secretary, Rev. Zachary King, sent by email to classis clerks on September 9, 2025, it was relayed that the COD adopted the following recommendation for Synod 2026:

That synod meet every other year beginning in 2027, and that synod direct the COD to provide specific recommendations to Synod 2027 about the changes to the candidacy process, process for approving key denominational leadership, and other matters which are currently handled by synod annually. During the “off” years, other gatherings of CRC people such as regional, agency, or inter-classis events would be encouraged.

The COD task force report (now posted at crcna.org/synodresources) also notes that adopting this recommendation would necessitate change to Church Order Article 46-a, which currently stipulates that synod shall meet annually. The grounds offered to support this recommendation are as follows:

1. This change would result in significant cost savings.
2. This change would allow for additional time to work on assigned tasks and for churches/classes to absorb/process synodical decisions.

3. The work of synod will still need to be processed. The specifics of how to do that are beyond the scope of the present task force and can be best addressed by the COD.

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2026 not to adopt the Council of Delegates recommendation that synod meet every other year beginning in 2027.

Grounds:

1. The grounds offered to support the recommendation are insufficient to support such a significant and impactful change. Two of the grounds offered by the task force and adopted by the COD do not have to do at all with cost savings. The second ground makes vague and unsupported references to additional time to process synodical decisions, a matter surely not pressing enough to support such dramatic action. The third ground only speaks to the need to explore further how to deal with the upheaval that following the recommendation would cause.
2. The COD task force ground number one, regarding “significant cost savings,” is worthy of scrutiny.
 - a. The COD task force reports that moving to biennial synods would reduce costs by approximately \$500,000 USD. This is not true, because approximately half of this figure is staff time. Since staff would not be reduced, the cost for staff time would not be a reduction or a savings, just a shift. A closer approximation of savings is the \$250,000 associated with travel, lodging, rental space, and meals, etc., noted in the report.
 - b. A potential savings of \$250,000 represents only about 7.8 percent of the annual \$3.2 million in governance costs overall as estimated by the COD task force. This potential savings does not justify the significant potential impact of reducing synodical governance by half.
 - c. Some of the potential \$250,000 cost savings may never be realized.
 - 1) Some of the cost would potentially shift to the COD, as the COD task force report notes that the COD will need to take on additional work previously done by synod. It is unlikely that the COD doing more work would not result in greater costs.
 - 2) Some of the cost would potentially shift to a longer biennial synod gathering, as the COD task force report acknowledges that synodical agendas would contain more material if moved to biennial meetings. It is unlikely that a biennial synod could tackle a significantly longer agenda in the same amount of time as a current annual synod. Longer synods would cost more money, thus eating up some of the potential cost savings.
 - 3) Some of the cost would potentially shift to other gatherings in “off years,” as the recommendation encourages other gatherings such as regional, agency, or inter-classis events. It is unlikely that

these meetings (particularly any agency meetings) would not be drawing from either the denominational budget or further drawing on church and/or classical budgets.

3. The COD task force indicates that “the agendas for biennial synods would likely be more weighty and challenging to manage.” This would almost assuredly require longer synods. Not only would that reduce potential cost savings as noted above, but it would also have the effect of incrementally making the filling of synodical delegate spots more challenging. Currently it can be quite challenging to find synodical delegates, particularly for the deacon-delegate spots. Deacon delegates often tend to be younger, less financially flexible, more tied to young families, less apt to have significant vacation time, and less likely to be established in business to be able to afford the commitment to go to synod. Making synod longer would exacerbate this challenge.
4. The imbalance that the COD proposes between itself and synod is not commensurate with the relative importance, authority, and accountability of the respective bodies. The COD derives its existence, authority, and mandate from synod, and yet it proposes an outsized role for itself in the governance of the CRCNA. Under the recommendation of the COD, the work of synod would decrease while it would assume for itself greater work. The imbalance in frequency of meeting and ability to respond to denominational matters in a timely fashion would be stark: six or more meetings biennially for the COD with only one meeting for synod biennially. Currently the COD meets three times per year, and the report from the COD task force suggests that the COD will likely have to assume some work that synod now does if synod moves to biennial meetings. This would likely mean that the COD has to continue at least three meetings per year, resulting in at least a 6:1 ratio of meeting for the lesser body to the greater body. This ratio is not a ratio that would build trust in the CRCNA, in particular as the COD is a less transparent and less accountable body in comparison to synod, in at least the following ways:
 - a. Synodical deliberations are broadcast, liveblogged, and attended by many observers. Additionally, *Banner* reporting on synod is much more robust than reporting on COD meetings.
 - b. Synodical delegates must be officebearers, while COD members currently need not be officebearers.
 - c. Synodical representation is broader than that of the COD (by a factor of about four) in the size of the body.
5. At this time in the life of the CRCNA, with recent significant and impactful decisions leading to disaffiliating churches, exiting pastors, and potential classical realignment, it would be unwise to reduce our frequency of meeting in our broadest assembly. Not only would this keep our churches and classes more separated during a time in which unity

- and relationship strengthening are paramount, but it would also inhibit the ability of the CRCNA to respond in a timely manner to various questions, overtures, and situations that arise in our corporate church life that impact the CRCNA broadly.
6. Recently the CRCNA engaged in a series of ten gatherings across the denomination under the Gather initiative. The Gather initiative aimed to “bring together CRC leaders.” At a time when connection and gathering are a particular point of emphasis in the CRCNA, it seems contradictory and counterproductive to cut in half the opportunities for CRC leaders to gather for mutual encouragement and corporate discernment.
 7. Synod and the functions of church governance more broadly are core functions of the CRCNA as an ecclesiastical body. There are other areas across the ministry and budget of the CRCNA that are less pivotal to the core function of the CRCNA and her churches that can and should receive deeper cuts before cost-saving measures of this drastic nature to core governance functions are considered. At \$3.2 million the total governance costs of the CRCNA represent only about 6 percent of the total CRCNA budget (approx. \$53 million, with ReFrame included). The potential cost savings of moving to biennial synods would represent about 0.5 percent of that broader budget. There are offices and costs within the CRCNA that provide less tangible benefit to the average CRC congregation than the core governance function of annual synods. There is certainly room for increased fiscal scrutiny in these areas before considering cutting synodical gatherings in half.
 8. The COD task force report contains the following quote:

It should also be recognized that our governance expenses are not simply “overhead” but are part of the *ministry* we share as a denomination. Matters such as mutual accountability and support are part of our theological commitment to one another as Reformed Christians. We do our “business” as a church through councils (Belgic Confession, Art. 30), and we hold our minor assemblies accountable to one another through major assemblies. Thus there will inherently be a financial cost associated with being part of a church body that shares such commitments—and there will be relational and theological costs connected with any proposals that reduce the financial obligations of those commitments.

The relational and theological costs recognized by the COD task force as inherent to their proposal are too great to justify the potential cost savings.

Classis Minnkota
Ryan A.K. VanderWees, stated clerk

Do Not Adopt Recommendation for Biennial Synod

I. Background

At the September 4, 2025, special meeting of the Council of Delegates (COD), a recommendation from the COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs was adopted by the COD to propose “that synod meet on a biennial basis (every two years) beginning in 2027 and that synod direct the Council of Delegates to provide specific recommendations to Synod 2027 about the changes to the candidacy process, the process for approving key denominational leadership, and other matters that are currently handled by synod annually.” As stated in a letter to classis clerks from Rev. Zachary King, general secretary, “during the ‘off’ years, other gatherings of CRC people such as regional, agency, or inter-classis events would be encouraged.”

II. Overture

Classis Holland overtures Synod 2026 not to adopt the COD recommendation proposing that “synod meet on a biennial basis.”

Grounds:

1. In a time of particular turmoil and change, our denomination needs to come together regularly to rebuild trust and unity. Recent disaffiliations coupled with other significant challenges necessitate the church’s gathering. A biennial synod would provide less opportunity for input and connection for the churches of the CRCNA, further widening the gap between congregation and denomination.
2. While other gatherings are encouraged during the years synod does not meet, those are not ecclesiastical gatherings. Only a duly delegated synod can provide a forum for open discussion and deliberation on the matters facing the CRCNA.
3. Over the course of two years, the proposal would have the COD meeting six times (or more with the potential added workload) as compared to one meeting of synod. This imbalance would not be reflective of the ecclesiastical importance of each body and would limit deliberation on important annual matters.
4. This proposal was adopted as a way to “reduce governance costs . . . and use time wisely,” according to the task force report posted at crcna.org/synodresources. In the report, an additional proposal would shift some of the costs of synod to the classes. While the CRCNA is wrestling with continuing decreases in ministry-share support, the gathering of the church at synod annually is a worthwhile and needed cost.

Classis Holland
Jen Rozema, stated clerk

Reject Proposal that Synod Meet Biennially

I. Background

At the Fall 2025 meeting of Classis Georgetown, the delegates heard a presentation from our COD representative and the president of the COD (who is also a pastor in Classis Georgetown) in which a report with several recommendations for synod came to our attention. We all applaud the desire to save money in governance costs for the CRC, as declared initially in the report from a COD task force that studied this matter. However, the first recommendation and the most consequential in that report is also the most concerning to us—and that is the proposal that synod would meet every other year rather than every year. The rationale offered is that there would be significant cost savings. However, despite the figures given in the report, it remains unclear exactly how much money would be saved and whether the savings would be sufficient to avoid a financial crisis that is likely to come as the result of declining ministry shares. Furthermore, the downgrade of synod from an annual to a biennial assembly brings with it several likely costs, which are only hinted at in the COD report but which we believe to be worthy of consideration.

1. Moving to a biennial synod means that fewer officebearers will have the opportunity to serve in governance at the denominational level. For example, ten years with an annual synod gives each classis the opportunity to involve forty officebearers, while a biennial synod reduces that potential to twenty.
 - a. This especially impedes young ministers and transfers from other denominations as they seek more involvement in the binational church.
 - b. To the extent that there is any competition to go to synod, reducing the number of opportunities over the years increases that competition.
2. The COD, which stands to receive more power and responsibilities if this proposal is adopted, is a less desirable stand-in for synod.
 - a. The composition of the COD is not representative of the denomination's membership because there are at-large delegates (6 of the 55).
 - b. The COD already exerts considerable influence in the CRCNA.
3. While it is true that other Reformed fellowships work with biennial and triennial synods, the CRCNA is in a time of many consequential reports, challenges, and proposals (such as this one from the COD). If the CRCNA has a biennial synod, there is a great likelihood that the work for those synods will be greatly increased and may reach a point where a longer synod is called or more work remains undone.

II. Overture

Classis Georgetown asks synod to reject the COD proposal that synod meet biennially.

Ground: Moving to a biennial synod would offer unknown and likely insufficient cost savings and at the same time bring risks of less efficient and more contentious governance.

Classis Georgetown
Glenda Tebben, stated clerk

OVERTURE 30

Improve Financial Transparency and Clarity for Ministry-Share Funding Priorities

I. Background

Synod 2026 is being asked to consider holding biennial synods due to financial constraints being faced by the denomination. Along with this situation, ministry shares have been steadily decreasing over the past decade. This has sparked many conversations about the financial health of the denomination and what the priorities should be for funding via ministry shares. If the churches and classes of the CRCNA are being asked to consider such a drastic measure as no longer having a yearly synod, it is reasonable and essential for the churches of the CRCNA to have the most complete financial picture possible.

Currently, very few people are able to access the detailed financials of the denomination. Most of the public information is confined to the total amounts for each ministry area reported in the CRCNA *Church Administration and Finance Guide* or in the Agenda Supplement, released a few weeks before synod (crcna.org/sites/default/files/Church%20Administration%20%26%20Finance%20Guide%20-%202025%20-%20US.pdf).

Local councils have no way of knowing further details about how the money is being spent, and attempts to gain more information have led to more questions than answers; furthermore, even the finance subcommittee of synod is only given partial information on budget line items. While there is no doubt a desire for privacy as it pertains to staff salaries and some program costs, the value of transparency when being asked to make significant financial decisions should be—at the very least—an equally strong consideration.

In contrast to the current CRCNA system, due to a desire for transparency, many local churches publish their full budget with line items, including salary figures. This is not considered a controversial idea, since many public-service employees also have their compensation packages published each year. One of the reasons is simple: the community pays their salaries, so they have a right to know what those employees are making.

Connected to the need for transparency is the funding mechanism for the various entities that receive ministry shares. The most recent information from the denomination in the *Acts of Synod 2025* (p. 567) shows the following breakdown in the current fiscal year budget for ministry-share percentages (combined U.S. and Canada):

Office of General Secretary	\$3,512,000	24.5%
CRC Ministry Boards	\$3,117,000	21.8%
Thrive (Congregational Ministries)	\$3,560,000	24.8%
ReFrame	\$890,000	6.2%
Resonate Global Missions	\$1,883,000	13.1%
Calvin University	\$550,000*	3.8%
Calvin Theological Seminary	\$818,000	5.7%

* No Canadian ministry-share dollars are allocated to Calvin University.

This breakdown of support shows 71.1 percent of ministry shares going to administration, governance, advocacy, and Thrive. Shares for missions, ReFrame, and Resonate are at 19.3 percent. This has not always been the case. In prior decades, most of the denominational ministry shares went to the support of missions. See figures below from the years 1966, 1981, and 2001 with regard to ministry-share allotments:

From *Acts of Synod 1966* (p. 568)

<i>Denominational Quotas</i>	<i>Per Family for 1967</i>	<i>Percent of Min. Shares (to nearest 0.1)</i>
1. Back to God Radio Hour	\$ 9.25	9.1%
2. Calvin College and Seminary	\$23.00*	22.7%
3. Committee on Education	\$.75	0.7%
4. Denominational Building Addition	\$1.00	1.0%
5. Foreign Missions	\$17.50	17.3%
6. Fund for Needy Churches	\$5.25	5.2%
7. Home Missions (includes Indian missions)	\$33.50	33.1%
8. Ministers' Pension and Relief Administration	\$10.00	10.0%
9. Synodical Expense Fund	<u>\$1.10</u>	1.0%
Total	\$101.35	

*In agreement with the decision of Synod 1962, regional or area quotas for Calvin College and Seminary were suggested. This does not change the overall percentages because the difference was intended to be directed to other denominationally affiliated educational institutions.

Note: In the approved quotas, missions-orientated funding (Back to God Radio Hour, Foreign Missions, Home Missions) was 59.5 percent of ministry shares. The synodical expense fund and the denominational building fund was 2 percent of ministry shares. Note as well that the minister's pension fund was included in ministry shares (it has been separate since Synod 1997 made the change to direct billing of the churches).

From *Acts of Synod 1981* (p. 635)

Denominational Quotas

Per Family for 1982

*Percent of
Min. Shares
(to nearest 0.1)*

Back to God Hour	\$38.00	11.5%
CRC-TV	\$13.00	3.9%
Calvin College and Seminary	\$52.80*	15.9%
CR World Missions	\$66.00	19.9%
CR Home Missions	\$75.00	22.6%
Board of Publications	\$2.25	0.7%
Chaplain Committee	\$4.80	1.4%
Comm. for Educ. Assist. to Churches Abroad	\$.50	0.2%
Denominational Services	\$14.70**	4.4%
Fund for Needy Churches	\$23.00	6.9%
Ministers' Pension Fund	\$36.00	10.9%
Supplemental Fund	\$.75	0.2%
Synodical Committee on Race Relations	\$2.70	0.8%
Translation and Educ. Assistance Committee	<u>\$2.15</u>	0.6%
Total	\$331.65	

*Synod approved the 1982 regional or area quotas for Calvin College and Seminary, in agreement with the decision of Synod 1962.

**Includes synodical assembly, committees, offices, and CR denominational building debt and maintenance.

Note: In the approved quotas, missions-orientated funding (Back to God Hour, World Missions, Home Missions) was 57.9 percent of ministry shares. The denominational services expense fund was 4.4 percent of ministry shares.

From *Acts of Synod 2001* (p. 539)

Denominational ministry shares

*Per professing
member*

*Percent of
Min. Shares
(to nearest 0.1)*

Back to God Hour	\$32.61	11.5%
CRC TV	\$12.35	4.4%
Calvin College*	\$59.70	21.1%
Calvin Theological Seminary	\$24.68	8.7%
Canadian Ministries Board ministries	\$6.27	2.2%
CRC Publications	\$5.96	2.1%
CR Home Missions	\$52.37	18.5%
Fund for Smaller Churches	\$2.50	0.9%
CR World Missions	\$51.23	18.1%
Denominational Services		
Synodical assembly, Board of Trustees, and general administration	\$21.58	7.6%
Ministry programs	<u>\$14.10</u>	5.0%
(Abuse Prevention, Chaplaincy Ministries, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, Race Relations, Social Justice and Hunger Action)		
Total	\$283.35	

*Synod approved the 2002 regional or area ministry shares for Calvin College, in agreement with the *Acts of Synod 1962, 1984, 1993*, across eight areas at \$59.70, 40.80, 33.30, 7.80, 37.40, 21.00, 11.30, and 5.00, respectively.

Note: In the approved ministry shares, missions-orientated funding (Back to God Hour, World Missions, Home Missions) was 52.5 percent of ministry shares. The denominational services expense fund was 7.6 percent of ministry shares.

Using these three years as historical snapshots, it is clear that over the past 25 years a far higher percentage of ministry-share income has been devoted to paying administration, advocacy, and congregational-support programs and employees. Instead of embracing this change, in the current communication from the CRCNA there appears to be a desire to say that missions remain the funding priority. The *Church Administration and Finance Guide 2025*, under the heading “Mission and Ministry Priorities” on page 9, says that 73 percent of the budget is invested in missions; however, this number includes all the different sources of income including gifts and investments, not just ministry shares. What is not stated but can be inferred is that personal donations and investment income for Resonate and ReFrame are being used to subsidize the other components of the denomination. When a church or individual sends funds directly to Resonate or ReFrame, this allows the denomination to give those ministries a smaller share of the ministry-share funds.

One reason this is concerning is because some donors specifically do not want their funds to go to some areas under the CRCNA. This became such a widespread issue in the denomination that on page 7 of the *Church Administration and Finance Guide 2025*, under Option 2, the donor or church is allowed to fund or not fund the different areas of ministry. At least this is what the donor is led to believe. In reality, when pressed, denominational employees admit that the funds are simply shifted around due to the ability to change the ministry-share allotment percentage. Undesignated gifts are assigned in an unproportional way to make up for the designated percentages. Perhaps this model is meant to help the consciences of some donors, but in practice the will of the donor is not fully appreciated.

This current practice isn’t denied by current leadership, but a common refrain from denominational leaders has been that people don’t get excited about giving to administration and overhead, hence the need for a higher percentage of ministry shares for those areas than in the past. That sentiment may very well be true, but there are different ways to look at this. Consider how in the past the denomination was able to function quite well with far less overhead; furthermore, if something is not supported financially by the local churches, that’s a sign it is not seen as an important component of shared ministry. This is a signal it may be time to significantly reduce the size of those departments. We need to ask this question: Why was the denomination able to do good ministry in decades past with significantly less overhead and congregational support programs?

One of the potential retorts will be that over the years different synods have asked that more work be done in various congregational support and advocacy ministries. It is true previous synods have asked the CRCNA to do work in these various areas; however, in the *Acts of Synod* from those years, there are no mandates for the number of employees, their salary, or set budgets for those programs. Right-sizing areas of the CRCNA that are not properly supported by the local congregations of the denomination would seem to reflect the will of the denomination; for example, Synod 2016 adopted the following action:

That synod instruct the BOT to evaluate and prioritize all existing programs and ministries with the goal of reducing the institutional footprint, including the following:

- Produce a detailed chart of all existing ministries that includes the following information: ministry description, date the ministry began, account of synod that established the ministry, and current financial ministry-share allocation. This chart is to be presented to the BOT by February 2017.
- Provide an update on the process to Synod 2017.
- Seek input from the churches and classes in the prioritization and evaluation.
- Bring a final report to Synod 2018 to affirm the prioritized ministries.
- Going forward, all ministries will be evaluated on a regular basis.

Grounds:

- a. A smaller institutional footprint allows for churches and classes to better support their local ministries.
- b. This process will create greater ownership of denominational programs and ministries within the local congregations.

(Acts of Synod 2016, p. 858)

This action taken by Synod 2016 does not appear to have led to a reduced institutional footprint when looking at the current ministry-share percentages. Nor do current practices indicate the sense of urgency apparent ten years ago when this was adopted. For all ministries to be evaluated on a regular basis, some changes are in order. Budget and ministry-share transparency and simplicity will demonstrate to churches that the denomination *is* doing the ministry the churches have called it to do in a stewardly fashion. There are many examples of good ministry work happening in the CRCNA today, and this overture is intended as a step toward rebuilding trust and confidence in the ministry-share system to ensure the good work continues.

II. Overture

Due to the need for better financial transparency and clarity with ministry-share percentages, Classis Georgetown overtures Synod 2026 to do the following:

A. Provide detailed current and proposed budget line items in the yearly *Agenda for Synod* (not the supplement). This information will include the compensation numbers for each full-time employee position; additionally, detailed financial reports and budgets will be made available to any church council that requests them starting with the 2026-27 fiscal year.

Grounds:

1. In order for local councils to make the best decisions on yearly pledges, they need more complete information as they practice good stewardship of resources. Faithful stewardship strengthens our shared trust and witness.
2. The current system has created mistrust due to secrecy. For denominational unity to increase, trust and transparency with finances is paramount. Tithes and offerings from local CRC congregations pay the salaries and fund the programs of the CRCNA, and it is reasonable to know where the money is being allocated.

B. Starting in fiscal year 2027-28, 50 percent of ministry-share funding will be devoted to missions. ReFrame Ministries will receive 15 percent, and Resonate will receive 35 percent of all ministry-share gifts. The remaining 50 percent of ministry-share funding will be allocated by denominational staff and the COD to the other areas as deemed fit. We ask the CRCNA to honor the intent of these percentages, in both spirit and practice, by ensuring that budgeting, cost-sharing, and administrative decisions do not reduce the practical amount that reaches mission work in any way.

Grounds:

1. Returning the ministry-share percentage to 50 percent for missions is in line with what the denomination did for many years and shows a renewed focus on expanding the vision and mission of the denomination. If the CRCNA expects to make disciples and see the gospel advance across the world, the funding percentages from ministry shares for missions ought to reflect this desire.
2. Set ministry-share percentages will allow senior staff to better plan and execute the vision for their ministry programs as it pertains to budgeting.
3. Additional monetary gifts to ReFrame and Resonate beyond ministry shares should have no bearing on the budget process for other ministry-share funding priorities.
4. This overture allows denominational staff and the COD one year to align the next fiscal-year budget with the ministry-share allotments.

Classis Georgetown
Glenda Tebben, stated clerk

Develop Resources to Facilitate Classis Mergers

I. Background

Recently the COD has been exploring ways to reduce governance costs. In the report of the COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs, one of the suggestions is classis consolidation: “That the COD recommend that synod establish a one-year task force, working in close coordination with the classes, to review the current classis structure and make recommendations to Synod 2027 for classis consolidations and/or overall restructuring.”

Classis Yellowstone and Classis Columbia have been aware of the COD’s work and have already begun discussions about a potential merger. Our preliminary discussions about Montana’s churches’ past membership in Classis Columbia and our two classes’ rural and urban contexts led us to believe that we could be a good fit. Classis Columbia voted to create an exploratory merger committee at its September 2025 meeting. Classis Yellowstone recently approved moving forward with a merger at its February 2026 classis meeting. We are currently discussing what the next steps would be.

II. Overture

That synod immediately direct the Office of General Secretary to work with classes and develop resources to facilitate mergers.

Grounds:

1. The COD recommends that the study committee report to Synod 2027. While we appreciate the ambition of this timeline, we believe the committee may need more time to complete a task of this size.
2. Our two classes are in active merger discussions and could use these resources now. It is possible that other smaller classes may benefit from them as well.

Classis Columbia,
Brad Vos, stated clerk

Revise Ministry-Share Program to a Two-Tier System with Flexible Giving Options

I. Background

The ministry-share program continues to be discussed both at the local church level and at the denominational level as both parties work toward a solution for funding CRCNA ministry.

The most recent change was adopted by Synod 2019 and is referred to as “Ministry Shares Reimagined” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 110-18). This new system removed the “per professing member over 18” ministry-share assessment with an annual pledge that can be calculated using whatever method the church decides to use (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 789-90).

While it was hoped that this new system would bring new energy and additional funds into the ministry-share program, that has not happened. Some will blame the “system.” Perhaps it’s time to truly “reimagine” ministry shares.

What led to “Ministry Shares Reimagined” was a report to the Board of Trustees (BOT; now Council of Delegates [COD]) from the Task Force on Financial Sustainability (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 723-33, 857-59). That report contains some history of ministry shares (quotas).

This is not the first task force assembled to review the financial support provided to the ministries of the denomination. Synod 1990 adopted the recommendation of an advisory committee “to engage in a comprehensive address of denominational ministry funding, with particular attention to the quota [now ministry share] system” (*Agenda for Synod 1990*, pp. 96-98). The following is an excerpt from the report of that committee to Synod 1992, which also provides a good summary of the history of the ministry-share system (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 386-87):

Concern about financing denominational ministry is not new to CRC congregations and synod. Already in the earliest records of synodical gatherings (Classis Grand Rapids), references to financial matters indicate a church struggling with numerical growth and with obligations to both local ministry and ministry shared with other CRC congregations. The early concerns and causes are remarkably similar to present-day quota causes: support for both active and emeritus ministers, for widows of ministers, for student ministers, for publication of periodicals, for Bible distribution, for travel and meeting expenses for synodical gatherings, etc. In these early years (1860-1880) the churches were asked to contribute specific dollar amounts (based on congregation size) and to hold freewill offerings to fund the causes which were mutually agreed to.

The early years were difficult years for many congregations. They struggled to sustain life in an untamed wilderness, to establish a Reformed identity, and to resist being dominated by the "Americanizing" environment. There was a strong sense of mutual support. Congregations stood together and sensed a responsibility to and for each other in spite of strong clashes of will and vision. As the church grew, a sense of joint financial responsibility also developed. Adjustments were made as ministry expanded.

Prior to 1939, the denomination financed its ministries through two methods: assessments and quotas. Assessments funded Calvin College and Seminary, the Emeritus Ministers Fund (the early Ministers' Pension Funds), and Synodical Expenses (now identified as Denominational Services). These were considered "family" expenses. They involved "huge investments" and put the congregations of the denomination under obligation. The "security" of these causes required assessments to which the churches were specifically bound (*Acts of Synod 1939*, p. 71). Churches could be held financially responsible for any arrears in paying assessments. Quotas, on the other hand, were means to fund spontaneous special-interest programs, e.g., missions.

In 1939, synod concluded that the distinction between assessments and quotas was artificial and that quotas and assessments were both equally binding on the churches. Synod decided to use only the term *quota* and to define it as the amount per family which should be contributed by each congregation to apply "to all the work in God's Kingdom for which we as a Christian Reformed Church are jointly responsible" (*Acts of Synod 1939*, p. 72). The quota amount would be determined annually by synod. "Consistories [were] reminded of the urgent necessity to keep before their congregations not only the privilege but also the sacred duty to contribute liberally toward the work of the Lord . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1939*, p. 72).

In the years since Synod 1939, synod has frequently been overtured to revise or change the quota system in some way. The synods of 1949, 1954, 1962, 1965, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1975, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1987, and 1990 were all asked to investigate, amend, freeze, alter the formula, correct inequities, etc., of the quota system.

Synod and our committee are convinced that a new kind of pressure is challenging the funding of denominational ministry. A new and more thorough response is necessary.

II. Continued downward trend and changing patterns

Much has changed since the early days of the CRCNA; indeed, much has changed since 2019 and "Ministry Shares Reimagined." Those changes, and other factors, have contributed to the continued downward trend of ministry shares given to the CRCNA.

- Worship attendance has declined in many churches, so churches are trying to keep budgets as flat as possible.
- The costs of everything (utilities, maintenance, salaries) is higher, so to keep the budget flat, something has to give. Ministry shares is an easy place to cut without the church feeling any pain.
- There is a lack of direction on how much to pledge. Even though there are suggested methods (e.g., percent of budget, increase from prior year), none are required, thus enabling ministry-share giving to remain flat or to decrease as church budgets need to be balanced.
- There have been frustrations with some denominational agencies and institutions.
- There is no accountability for churches that do not participate in the ministry-share program.

Furthermore, there are behavior and thought patterns toward ministry shares that have changed over the years and will likely not change moving forward:

- There is less of a felt need for denominations and denominational services. Newer denominational/network models (e.g., Kingdom Network, Alliance of Reformed Churches, ECO) as well as longer-established denominations (e.g., PCA) are operating on “askings” that are considerably lower than CRCNA ministry shares and yet are experiencing growth in the areas of church growth and missions. Can the CRCNA learn from this?
- There is a greater focus on local ministry. A few generations ago, when CRCNA churches were mostly populated by immigrants trying to get settled and struggling for resources, the idea of pooling resources to do missions and ministry worked. Today, churches are opting to fund local ministries where their members can be part of the ministries and interact with those directly involved in the ministries.
- Today’s givers prefer to give to a “cause.” They want to “make a difference” and see the difference that their giving is making.

The ministry-share system remains the most efficient way to raise money for the work of our denomination; however, it is time to truly reimagine ministry shares and better position the CRCNA based on current and future financial realities.

III. Proposed ministry-share program

The Ministry-Share Program will be a two-tier program with ministry share giving tied to a percent of annual giving or annual budget. Ministry shares to the CRCNA should not exceed 9 percent of giving or budget (churches always have the option to give “above ministry shares”).

A. Tier 1: CRCNA governance giving

Tier 1 will fund essential denominational functions such as the Office of General Secretary (which includes expenses related to synod) and the U.S. and Canada ministry offices.

An amount will be determined based on average attendance at the main weekly worship event (in the case of multiple services, the attendance should be combined). That amount will change from year to year as denominational governance expenses change. A minimal amount will be assessed to emerging churches without factoring in attendance.

If a church does not fulfill its Tier 1 giving, that church will not be seated at classis. If a classis does not fulfill its total Tier 1 giving, that classis will not be seated at synod.

B. Tier 2: CRCNA agency/institution giving

Tier 2 will fund denominational ministries that are part of our agencies and educational institutions. Congregations will have three options on how to allocate their Tier 2 ministry shares.

- Using the current ministry-share allocation as approved by the Council of Delegates (COD).
- Wherever the funds are most needed (allows denominational staff to allocate the funds based on current needs and/or anticipated short-falls).
- Self-allocate. Churches will have the option to allocate their ministry shares to the agencies/institutions of their choice or at their own amounts.

If churches do not participate in Tier 2 giving, denominational services through the agencies will be provided on a “fee for service” basis (except for emerging churches).

See Appendix for a sample worksheet for churches to fill out and submit to the Office of General Secretary.

IV. Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to do the following:

A. Endorse the proposed two-tier ministry-share program.

B. Convene a working committee that includes denominational staff, pastors, and lay leaders (e.g., treasurers) to fine-tune the details and develop an implementation plan. The committee will report to the Council of Delegates in February 2027 and, in turn, to the next synod.

Grounds:

1. A new system is needed to enable the CRCNA to perform essential functions and to engage in ministry in North America and around the world.
2. The two-tier system requires all churches to participate as part of the CRCNA.

3. Churches can give, knowing where their ministry shares are going. Perhaps this will refocus some of the advancement work by the agencies.
4. Tying giving to a percentage of congregational budget or giving enables ministry-share giving to increase as those amounts increase.

Classis Muskegon
Drew Sweetman, stated clerk

APPENDIX

CRCNA Ministry Shares Pledge Form 2026-2027

Church Name	
Classis	

Annual giving or Annual budget:	\$0.00
9% of the above:	\$0.00

1. CRCNA GOVERNANCE GIVING (Tier 1)

Average AM (total all services) attendance

- ☐ Emerging
- ☐ 1-50
- ☐ 51-100
- ☐ 101-150
- ☐ 151-200
- ☐ 201-300
- ☐ 301-400
- ☐ 400+

\$0.00

2. CRCNA MINISTRIES GIVING (Tier 2)

- ☐ Please allocate my Tier 2 pledge amount based on the current approved allocation.
- ☐ Please allocate my Tier 2 pledge where it's most needed.
- ☐ Please allocate my Tier 2 pledge as indicated below.

Calvin Seminary	
Calvin University	
Thrive	
ReFrame Ministries	
Resonate Global Mission	

Total \$0.00

TOTAL CRCNA MINISTRY SHARE PLEDGE **\$0.00**

Appoint a Study Committee on Reformed Ecclesiology

I. Background

In 1857 the CRCNA was established by Dutch immigrants who desired to start a new denomination in North America that could be a faithful expression of a Reformed church. While we no longer share exactly all their practical convictions about the church (e.g., singing the Psalms only instead of hymns), they were nevertheless motivated by a deeply theological vision of the church. Central to that vision was a sense that the foundation of the church is established by God's gracious election and that the church in history is gathered and preserved through his Word and Spirit. For over 150 years the CRCNA has uniquely embodied a holistic Reformed ecclesiology that has contributed broadly to the theological and spiritual well-being of North American Christianity. However, along with most other traditional Protestant denominations in North America, the CRCNA finds itself in a situation of terminal decline. Denominational membership peaked in 1992 with 316,415 members. As of 2025 our total membership sits at 175,000.

Reflecting our American pragmatic context, we have tended to approach the problem of decline functionally rather than theologically. Our instincts are to start with our doing and the search for practical solutions as reflected in an overture to Synod 2023 to "Develop a Strategy to Reverse the Trend of Membership Decline and Require Annual Reporting of Progress" (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 973). In all the attention given to practical strategies for church growth and renewal, we have not stepped back to consider the nature of the churches we are seeking to renew and grow. There seems to be an unstated assumption that we already know what the church is and that our problem is a failure of right practice and therefore not a theological matter. So instead of seeking ecclesial renewal in the light of a theological vision of the church for our changing ministry contexts, our tendency has been "clutching for any and every programmatic solution and structural reorganization in the desperate hope that survival is just another project or organizational chart away." We have lost sight of the fact that within the biblical economy of salvation the church's fruitful doing always presupposes a theological vision of its faithful being. We cannot answer the question of what the church is called to do without first answering the question of what the church is called to be.

When appeals are made to Reformed ecclesiology, we seem unable to think beyond a narrow account of the three marks of the church from the Belgic Confession, Article 29 (the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments, and church discipline). These three marks are an essential dimension of Reformed ecclesiology, but they are functional tests of the church that communicate little positive vision about the nature of the church. However, behind and beneath these marks within the Reformed

tradition stands a theologically rich and multifaceted vision of the church that needs to be freshly articulated for our own day.

Since the year 2022, synod has commissioned several task forces and committees related to the diverse practical necessities in the life of the church:

- an Assisted Suicide Task Force to report on the practice of assisted suicide and give guidance and pastoral advice on end-of-life matters
- a Church Order Review Task Force to conduct a comprehensive review of Church Order Articles 8, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 and their supplements
- an *In Loco* Committee to address confessional covenant breaking on the part of one particular congregation
- an Appeals Process Task Force to design/clarify an appeals process for church members under discipline (especially general discipline)
- a Virtual Church Task Force to determine if churches may be entirely virtual
- a Multisite Church Task Force to research multisite models and give advice about which models are appropriate in the light of Reformed ecclesiology
- a Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers (including disaffiliation initiated by a major assembly)
- a Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice
- a Task Force to Define Membership to provide theological reflection and advice on the historical, biblical, and theological aspects of church membership

Each of these task forces or committees has been appointed to address a demonstrable lack of clarity in how churches are supposed to operate as bodies. They seek to address practical matters, but each assumes deeper theological questions. What is the nature of a church that operates in multiple sites? Is a virtual church a real church? How are churches supposed to relate to each other within our denomination when they disagree on matters of discipline? What is the meaning of church membership in the light of confessional subscription?

While addressing particular ecclesiastical matters, these committees have functioned independently, and each with a different frame of reference. They have addressed a specific practical or operational need rather than fundamental theological realities. There is a pressing need to synthesize the work of these committees, to clarify guiding principles, and to affirm an ecclesiology grounded explicitly in Reformed doctrine.

This need for clarity and theological grounding is intensified in our present context. Synod 2025 declared “that church planting is a key strategy in building the health and vitality of our denomination” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 709) and instructed the Office of General Secretary “to coordinate with agencies and the classes to develop a vision, plan, strategy, and financial

proposal for church planting for the CRCNA for the next decade.” Church planting should be a priority for our classes and congregations. However, this prioritization of church planting within our denomination will require an increase in ecclesiastical clarity flowing from a clear theological center, because understanding the essence of the church is fundamental to its fruitful multiplication and growth.

Christian history shows that periods of renewal in the life of the church flow from a renewal of theological vision. As the Christian Reformed Church pursues renewal and growth in mission in North America, the time is right to deepen our unity around a shared vision for the church rooted in the biblical witness and classical Reformed sources. The task forces and committees highlighted above reveal the need for the kind of theological reflection that can provide strategic guidance based on our deepest convictions and beliefs as Reformed Christians.

II. Overture

Classis Wisconsin overtures synod to do the following:

- A. Appoint a study committee on Reformed ecclesiology that will articulate and explain the necessary theological center of Christian Reformed congregations as understood in the light of the Holy Scriptures and the confessional Reformed tradition.
- B. Explain and show how this theological vision of the church is still relevant today and applicable to ministry in a North American context and can lead to fruitful homiletical, missional, communal, and liturgical life within our congregations.
- C. Evaluate and synthesize the work of the above-named task forces and committees in the light of this ecclesiological center.
- D. Offer clear commentary about the nature of the churches our denomination is called to plant.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2025 expressed the need for a deeper theological study of the nature of the church in relationship to the work of the Virtual Church Task Force, stating that 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” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 699).
2. The lack of clarity in ecclesiastical functioning from a congregational to denominational level merits being addressed with the full weight of a study committee. The work of individual task forces over the past half decade should be synthesized and explicitly grounded theologically.
3. Only a theological vision for the Christian Reformed Church can sustain a flourishing diversity in the church ethnically, regionally, and mission-

- ally. Unity does not mean uniformity but requires clarity about what it means to be the one body of Christ with many members (1 Cor. 12).
4. The fruitful work of church planting to which the denomination is being called depends upon having theological clarity on the nature of the church.

Classis Wisconsin
Jason Ruis, stated clerk

OVERTURE 34

Ensure Task Force Recommendations Do Not Conflict with Federal, Provincial, or State Laws

I. Background

In its report (section V, para. 6), the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers briefly discusses Articles of Incorporation, noting that some congregations have such articles committing them to advance denominational purposes. There are legal questions about whether a major church assembly can restrict a minor assembly's rights, such as choosing delegates or removing officebearers, but the task force considers these to be legal questions rather than ecclesiastical questions and therefore outside the report's scope. The report emphasizes that Articles of Incorporation should not override more authoritative church documents, which are prioritized as Scripture, creeds and confessions, Church Order, synodical statements, and, lastly, Articles of Incorporation.

It is therefore evident that the report is written primarily from an ecclesiastical perspective and does not adequately take into account applicable Canadian and United States law.

It should be noted that most Canadian (and possibly U.S.) Christian Reformed Churches are incorporated and are therefore subject to applicable federal, provincial, and state corporate and tax laws. The 2021 Structure and Leadership Task Force (SALT) report to synod includes the following text (*Deferred Agenda for Synods 2020-2021*, p. 297):

In Reformed polity the local church council holds original authority, which in turn is delegated to classis, which delegates its authority to synod (Church Order Art. 27). Synod is the broadest assembly of the churches covenanting together on ecclesiastical matters. Synod therefore exercises direction and control of ecclesiastical matters and holds the ecclesiastical vision for the CRCNA. Current corporations exist within the CRCNA (most churches and classes are incorporated) because churches, through synod (Church Order Art. 32), have asked for collaborative and nationally contextualized ministry. Synod, however, is not a corporation.

Unlike ecclesiastical assemblies (classis and synod) that have delegated authority over lower assemblies (classes over councils and synod over classes), CRCNA corporations are legal entities whose boards do not function with ecclesiastical authority. They simply lack ecclesiastical standing, for they are legal entities whose purposes are to implement synod's denominational Ministry Plan in all of its complexity and specificity. Therefore, CRCNA corporations do not have authority over other corporations in the CRCNA, including churches and classes that are incorporated.

In Canada (and possibly the U.S.), the elected elders and deacons in incorporated churches generally have two intertwined roles: one role being an elder or deacon, and the other role being a director of the corporation that runs the church's operations. The first role is governed by ecclesiastical law (Church Order), while the second role is governed by the applicable laws (secular laws) of the jurisdiction in which the church is incorporated. Under secular law, it is generally the membership of the corporation that has the authority to elect and remove members of the board of directors.

As recommendations D and E of the report deal with the removal of elders and deacons, and thus the removal of members of the board of directors of incorporated churches, there is an apparent conflict between ecclesiastical law and secular law.

Furthermore, in Canada, in order to issue charitable receipts to donors, churches must be registered charitable organizations as legislated under the federal *Income Tax Act*. It is currently unclear what the impact on the charitable status of a Canadian Christian Reformed Church would be if another body has the power to remove the members of the board of directors of a registered charity. Possibly complicating things further, if the decision to remove members of the board of directors is made by synod, there may be questions whether Canadian Christian Reformed churches are indirectly controlled by a foreign entity (as the majority of the synod membership is made up of U.S. delegates).

II. Overture

We, Classis Eastern Canada, respectfully overture synod to do the following:

- A. Do not adopt the report of the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers.
- B. Expand the mandate of the task force to address legal issues arising from recommendations D and E.
- C. Undertake a legal analysis by legal professionals with extensive experience in corporate and income tax law, ensuring this analysis covers both applicable Canadian and U.S. laws. This analysis should also include, where appropriate, obtaining input from the Charity Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency and/or the Income Tax Rulings Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency to determine whether the proposed changes to the Church

Order in any way impact the charitable status of the churches. A similar request may need to be made to U.S. authorities such as the Internal Revenue Service.

D. Upon receipt of legal advice, require the task force to revise its report to incorporate that advice and, where appropriate, develop recommendations that comply with applicable laws.

Grounds:

1. Incorporated local churches and classes are bound by secular law and must act according to those laws. Ecclesiastical law, generally, does not override secular law where there is a conflict between the two.
2. Where there is a potential conflict between proposed ecclesiastical and enacted secular law, the Christian Reformed Church in North America itself, as the body making the changes to the Church Order, is responsible to address/resolve those potential conflicts. This should not be left to classes or individual churches.
3. Expanding the report to include a legal analysis of the recommended changes and to provide recommendations that are in compliance with applicable secular laws provides clarity and certainty to churches, classes, and synod.

Classis Eastern Canada
Greta Luimes, stated clerk

OVERTURE 35

Defer Consideration of the Task Force Report on Procedures to Discipline Officebearers

I. Introduction

While we appreciate the time, energy, and effort that the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers has devoted to producing its report, and while we agree with the need to clarify the relationship between major and minor assemblies when it comes to the discipline of officebearers, it is our opinion that this report is not of sufficient quality to be endorsed or acted upon by Synod 2026. Accordingly, we request that formal consideration of the task force report and its recommendations be deferred until Synod 2027 so that the task force can revise its important work.¹ There are two main reasons for our request, which we will briefly articulate.

¹ Given this, we do not think, in its current form, the task force's report should be recommended "to the churches as a helpful guide in the application of discipline by the major assemblies" (see Recommendation B at the end of the task force report).

II. Overture

We, Classis Holland, overture Synod 2026 to defer formal consideration of the report and recommendations of the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers until Synod 2027 so that the task force can revise its important work as indicated below.

Grounds:

1. First, while the report includes a significant amount of helpful material, it is not always easy to track and evaluate the main argument; nor do we think the report is as clear² or as thorough³ as it needs to be if it is to be of maximum value for the denomination going forward. Focusing here on the report's main argument, it seems the task force has two main reasons for concluding with the recommendations it does—(1) councils have covenanted together, and officebearers are thus accountable to the local council *and* to broader assemblies; and (2) there are historical precedents suggesting that the discipline of an officebearer by a major assembly fits within our theological and ecclesiastical tradition. These two reasons could well be enough to support the task force's recommendations. That said, one has to read almost nine pages before coming across the first mention of "councils *covenant[ing]* to work together on the basis of a Church Order" (III, A). Given the "confusion" over this topic and the fact that "in CRC history we have not always seen eye to eye on these matters" (I, A, 1), we think it would be more helpful to find the

² In terms of the report's clarity, we noticed several instances where precision was lacking, and we cite the following two as representative examples. First, in section II, C of the report, the task force discusses a major assembly's deposition of a council and writes, "Perhaps the clearest explanation of the relation of the assemblies is given by Henry Beets: the denomination is a 'federation of free Reformed churches.'" Perhaps so—or perhaps, at least, that was the basis for the situation under consideration. In any case, in section III, B of its report, the task force indicates that whether the CRC is a "federation" of churches has been a matter of historical debate. It seems, then, that the Beets reference needs to be nuanced to reflect the historical debate over this topic. Second, in section III, B, the task force notes that "when circumstances required it, the CRC granted broader assemblies a wide range of powers." Using "CRC" in this way, however, suggests that our denomination has held a consistent perspective on the question at hand, something the report emphasizes is not true (as above, see also section I, A). Accordingly, in this statement in section II, B, it would be better to substitute "various synods" for "CRC."

³ In terms of the report's thoroughness, our main concern is that while the report is right, we think, to highlight the covenantal nature of our relationships within the denomination (e.g., sections III, A; IV, A, 3, d), it is not evident that the report adequately demonstrates from Scripture that a major assembly has the authority to discipline a member of a council. Put differently, while section II, A offers enough to demonstrate the need for accountability and discipline within the Christian community, what has been written in that section does not adequately address the main question the task force is trying to answer. Specifically, while it is understandable to refer to Acts 15:1-29, the task force's discussion of this passage mainly supports the general legitimacy of our major assemblies but fails to make the case for how this passage supports a major assembly disciplining an officebearer of a local church. On this latter topic, perhaps a discussion of Galatians or the topic of apostolic authority would help make the case, but the task force did not include discussion of such a letter or topic.

- task force's main position(s)/argument stated up front—in discussion with the history of this debate within our tradition⁴—and then supported by Scripture, the Reformed tradition, our Church Order, and historical precedent.⁵
2. The second main reason we think formal consideration of the task force's report should be deferred until Synod 2027 is because we think the recommended changes to the Church Order are not as clear or as helpful as the task force presumes them to be in Recommendations D and E. First, regarding Recommendation D, we have two concerns regarding the first paragraph of the proposed addition to the Supplement to Church Order Article 27-b:
- While we can envision the potential need for a major assembly to “guide procedures of discipline at the levels of local councils and classes . . . even if not requested by the minor assembly,”⁶ we find the absence of any indication regarding *who* would initiate such a process and *how* it would be implemented to be a problem, since a lack of clarity could result in a lack of consistency in the implementation of the proposed process.⁷

⁴ Related to this point, while the task force helpfully points to Henry De Moor's scholarship on the relationship between major and minor assemblies on the matter of disciplining officebearers, it is not evident that the task force adequately summarizes or evaluates De Moor's conclusions on this matter. Doing so, we think, would strengthen the report and be of great assistance to the CRCNA at this time.

⁵ In addition to this comment related to the report's main argument, we think a general note is in order about the need to substantiate key points because, at times, key claims are more stated than argued. Section II, B alone includes the following examples: “Though delegated by minor assemblies, the authority of major assemblies does not come from local councils but from Christ”; “. . . major assemblies are the ruling agency of the minor assemblies”; “. . . when the welfare of a congregation is at stake, a major assembly, as the ruling agency of minor assemblies, has the authority to discipline a minor assembly.” Now, in fairness, these three quotes come from the section summarizing “theological foundations and principles for the exercise of church discipline,” and, moreover, each of the three quotes above ends with a footnote citing references upon which the statements are based. That said, given that “in CRC history we have not always seen eye to eye on” the appropriateness of a major assembly disciplining an officebearer (section I, A), the report—we think—would be strengthened by a more thorough discussion in which the claims quoted above are clearly substantiated. Perhaps to validate our perspective, the footnote following the conclusion of the third example quoted above cites “Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 591.” However, nowhere on p. 591 (or anywhere on pp. 590-92) can one find language specific to “when the welfare of a congregation is at stake.” This is not to say that the task force's claim or conclusion is unwarranted; rather, it is simply to point out that for its claim or conclusion to be widely accepted, it needs to be discussed more thoroughly while citing references that support its claim/conclusion more specifically.

⁶ Indeed, Classis Holland submitted an overture to Synod 2021 in which it requested intervention after Neland Avenue CRC ordained a deacon in a same-sex marriage, so in principle we agree with this.

⁷ In section IV, B, 3, b of its report the task force writes, “Councils and classes must have the right to overture synod to deal with councils and classes that openly break covenant.” We

- Stating that “major assemblies are expected to hold councils and classes within their constituency accountable to the ecclesiastical covenant implied in denominational membership” is understandable and valid, but it is possible to read this in a broader sense than the task force intends. The “ecclesiastical covenant” could include many things, after all—e.g., ministry shares—but we suspect the task force does not intend for this sentence to be read that broadly. Perhaps qualifying the sentence in question would make it less susceptible to overapplication.

Further, with regard to Recommendation D, we also have two concerns with the third proposed paragraph to be added to the Supplement to Church Order Article 27-b:

- Whereas the main focus of the report is on a major assembly disciplining *officebearers*, this paragraph jumps to the possibility of a major assembly declaring *a church* to have, de facto, disaffiliated. We think such an addition is problematic. Since the report emphasizes disciplining *officebearers*, we would understand why the task force might highlight in this paragraph the possibility of deposing *a council*, but to declare *a church* to have, de facto, disaffiliated from the denomination seems to be more an act of disciplining an entire congregation—a topic that seems to us to be outside the scope of the task force’s mandate.
- Relatedly, pointing to Supplement, Article 38-f to guide a process in which a major assembly declares that a church has, de facto, disaffiliated from the denomination seems ill-advised since it is one thing for a council/congregation to *decide* to disaffiliate and quite another thing for a church to *be told* that it has, de facto, disaffiliated. Because the two situations are so different, it is not evident that Supplement, Article 38-f would offer much guidance for the latter.

Next, regarding Recommendation E, we do not think the task force has provided enough clarity within the proposed changes to Church Order Article 83 and to Supplement, Articles 82-84 to warrant Synod 2026 adopting them. Here we offer four considerations:

- Concerning what would become Article 83-b, as with Recommendation D, the absence of guidelines regarding *how* the process for a major assembly disciplining an officebearer is to be initiated invites, we think, the possibility for inconsistency in the application of this proposed addition and, thus, for appeals in the event it is implemented.
- Regarding the amendments proposed for Supplement, Articles 82-84, it is not obvious to us that the change suggested for subsection *a*

think this is probably the right avenue to consider for initiating the discipline of an officebearer by a major assembly, but we also think including this in the proposed addition to the Church Order would be beneficial.

would be palatable for councils and congregations if *a major assembly* placed one of their officebearers on *paid* administrative leave.

- It seems that subsection *e*, 1), for example, implicitly suggests that a *council* would need to concur with the judgment of a *classis* if the latter were to suspend or depose an officebearer.⁸ We do not think the task force thinks that would need to happen, but without further alteration to the language in this provision, the Church Order would be left ambiguous on this point.
- We will simply point out that the task force quotes what appears to be Church Order 2024 regarding Supplement, Articles 82-84, subsection *i*, since Church Order 2025 has new language (adopted by Synod 2025) for this subsection. The language should thus be updated to reflect the current Church Order wording.

IV. Closing Comments

In closing, we once again wish to convey our appreciation to the task force for the work it did to produce this report. It has amassed and conveyed a significant amount of information related to this necessary and important conversation, and we think where the task force is pointing us has merit and could prove to be quite helpful. Nevertheless, for the reasons provided above, we reiterate that it is our opinion that Synod 2026 should not formally consider the task force's report and recommendations but should instead defer formal consideration until Synod 2027 so that the task force has the opportunity to revise its report and fine-tune its proposed changes to our Church Order. Thank you for considering our perspective.

Classis Holland
Jen Rozema, stated clerk

OVERTURE 36

Do Not Adopt Recommendations D and E of the Report on Procedures to Discipline Officebearers

I. Introduction

The Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers submitted its recommendations to Synod 2026 in its report, and councils and classes have been invited to share their opinions on how synod should respond to this report. Classis British Columbia South-East has reviewed the report and offers the following opinions with an accompanying overture.

⁸ Similar revisions should also be considered, we think, for subsection *f*, 1) and subsection *g* of Supplement, Articles 82-84.

II. Background

We can appreciate the motivation and impetus toward developing Church Order procedures for discipline, especially since this area has given rise to confusion and disagreement over the nature of the authority of broader assemblies.

There is significant value in honoring the bond of the Spirit in a covenant of churches that can offer support and accountability. This spiritual bond is clearly articulated throughout Scripture—for example, in texts like Acts 15; 1 Corinthians 7:17; 11:16; 16:1-4; and 2 Corinthians 11:28.

However, there is also significant value in equipping and guiding local officebearers in taking up their proper responsibilities as appointed and ordained by Christ in texts such as Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1-3.

In interacting with these two principles, the report rightly, and importantly, begins from the biblical starting point that Christ is Lord and head of the church (section II, B). While we believe that the Church Order may benefit from dealing with situations where councils do not follow the decisions of major assemblies, we disagree that the recommended changes to Articles 27 and 83 of the Church Order are the best way to deal with this challenge for the following reasons:

The report makes the mistaken assumption that there are only two options in our church polity: hierarchy and congregationalism. Based on this assumption, the report finds an ambiguity and tension between these two extremes. Within this framework, delegated authority becomes accumulated authority.

Delegated authority in the Church Order, however, is not accumulated authority. In fact, Article 28-b limits the domain of broader assemblies by stipulating that “a major assembly shall deal only with those matters which concern the churches in common or which could not be finished in the minor assemblies.”

The domain and jurisdiction of major assemblies is not as abstract or undefined as the report claims. The Church Order sets out several matters that belong to the first category, “churches in common”:

- creeds and confessions (Art. 5)
- theological training and candidacy for ministry (Art. 6-7)
- eligibility for call and ordination of ministers (Art. 9-10)
- release of a pastor (Art. 17)
- maintaining a theological seminary (Art. 19)
- financial assistance to aspiring ministers (Art. 21)
- adoption of creeds and Church Order (Art. 47)

The current Church Order also sets out regulations for including broader assemblies in discipline processes:

- appeal of a decision of a minor assembly (Art. 30)
- church visitors (Art. 42-b)

- synodical deputies (Art. 48-c)
- excluding a person from membership only after approval of classis (Supplement, Art. 78-81)
- suspension or deposition of an officebearer done after presenting its case to classis (Supplement, Art. 82-84)

Each of these provisions is in keeping with the Reformed principle that matters of discipline should begin at the local consistory or council. This is consistent with the second aspect of the domain of major assemblies being matters “which could not be finished in the minor assemblies.” Other matters that cannot be finished in a minor assembly include appeals and matters that require advice from a broader assembly.

Based on these considerations, delegated authority is not “transferred,” “combined,” or “cumulative,” as the report describes it. Rather, councils delegate the authority that is needed in order to finish the matters that are properly before the major assemblies. When broader assemblies make decisions on matters that are properly before them, we understand that these decisions are settled and binding and ought to be followed by local councils.

Adopting the task force’s recommendations as set out in the report along with its rationale risks altering our understanding of the basic principles of our Reformed church polity by creating a tension between hierarchical and congregationalist models. In the task force’s appeal to a hierarchical model, the recommended changes create further tension between minor and major assemblies in place of the cooperation that is currently possible by minding the jurisdiction, nature, and domain of the authority of each assembly. The result of these recommendations will be less clarity in the application of discipline and less support for local councils.

It is our opinion that clarifying the Church Order in the articles which currently deal with major assemblies would be more helpful than the additions to Articles 27 and 83 as recommended by the task force. This approach would keep us within the principles of original and delegated authority already present in the Church Order. It would also further strengthen the covenantal bond as churches work together as much as possible to equip and support each other in carrying out the responsibilities placed on them by Christ.

III. Overture

Classis British Columbia South-East overtures Synod 2026 not to adopt the additions to Articles 27 and 83 of the Church Order as recommended in the report of the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, and instead to instruct the task force to develop procedures consistent with the current nature and domain of major assemblies.

Grounds:

1. The Church Order throughout requires and assumes that matters of discipline begin at the minor assembly.

2. The principle of beginning discipline at the minor assembly is consistent with the responsibilities of officebearers given in Scripture (for example, Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3).
3. The authority of major assemblies is not “full authority,” nor is it transferred or combined, as the report suggests, but, rather, is delegated to finish the matters properly before the major assemblies. The Church Order already defines which matters are properly before the major assemblies and already provides procedures with which major assemblies can guide processes of discipline.

Classis B.C. South-East
Kaitlyn Hofsink, stated clerk

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION 1

Classis North Cascades

Classis North Cascades spent time discussing the report of the COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs at our fall 2025 meeting. We would like to express the following points considering the proposals which are being presented to Synod 2026.

We believe that holding synod every other year will adversely impact the deliberative nature of synod and place more decisions into the hands of denominational administrative staff instead of holding to our Reformed polity of having the churches consider the questions and concerns of the denomination. We see this as a negative and are not in favor. Furthermore, by going to synods every other year, we believe the agendas will become too unwieldy as was shown when synod did not meet during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is our understanding that classical assessments are not being recommended by COD at this time; however, we would prefer to “pay to play” than to meet less frequently as a synod—though we feel that the “pay to play” model would unfairly burden classes that span large geographic distances, such as Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain, and others.

We are in favor of reducing the number of delegates to three but would not agree with having any fewer delegates.

On reducing the number of classes in the denomination, we are not in favor of trying to equalize classis size. We have found great benefit in being a smaller classis after having been created out of one of the largest classes in the denomination. This smaller size has enabled more lay participation in meetings while creating a significant time savings for our churches in comparison to our previous experience.

If synod decides that reducing the number of classes is the best thing to do, we ask that it consider very carefully how this restructuring would be done, and that synod invite at least three classes in a geographic area to consider how those churches might be able to redraw their lines into two classes so that the structural adjustments are placed into the hands of the people most affected by it. For example, synod could ask Classis North Cascades, Classis Pacific Northwest, and Classis Columbia to consider how the three classes might be able to merge into two classes. Or synod could consider including Classes B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East in the conversation with these other three classes and ask them to discuss how the five classes might be able to adjust boundaries to create three or four classes.

Classis North Cascades
J. Scott Roberts, stated clerk

Acts of Synod 2026



Christian
Reformed
Church

May 27, June 12-18, 2026
Calvin University
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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FOREWORD

Synod 2026 was held both virtually and in person. Synod 2026 convened virtually on Wednesday, May 27, to elect officers, and the assembly met again in person June 12-18 on the campus of Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Second CRC of Grand Haven, Michigan, served as the convening church of synod, with Rev. Tim Blackmon as president pro tem.

Delegates to Synod 2026 prayed and worshiped through the theme “Founded on God’s Faithfulness,” looking at the Psalms and joining in the 150th-anniversary celebration of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary.

Synod 2026’s agenda was largely focused on renewal and church planting, with synod approving a ten-year strategic plan for church planting. Synod also clarified the gravamen process, handling two gravamen appeals and updating the supplement to Church Order Article 5.

Significant time was spent discussing ecumenical relations, with synod receiving a positive response from its invitation to the Alliance of Reformed Churches to be a *church in communion*, voting to extend and affirm a relationship with the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken as a *church in cooperation*, and deciding not to affirm continued membership in the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

The *Acts of Synod 2026* contains the following:

- supplemental reports of the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the agencies and committees authorized to file them
- updated financial reports
- four overtures
- three appeals
- one communication
- a new section that gathers board and committee nominations in one place (see p. 591)
- the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise
- the minutes of Synod 2026
- a brief index of various items recorded in the minutes of synod

It is necessary for the user of the *Acts of Synod* to keep the *Agenda for Synod* readily available as a reference. The *Agenda* is not reprinted in the *Acts*. The minutes of synod often make reference to reports and overtures in the *Agenda for Synod*. The pagination continues from the *Agenda* to the *Acts*. Supplementary materials begin on page 427, with updated financial statements appearing on pages 480-88. The minutes of synod begin on page 609. The brief index at the end of this volume references items in the minutes of synod according to article numbers within the minutes.

The decisions of Synod 2026 will likely generate significant discussion in the coming months, particularly regarding how our classes and congregations live into the vision of church planting. In all that we do and say, may we “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (1 Tim. 6:11). Now “may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word” (2 Thess. 2:16-17).

Office of the General Secretary
Christian Reformed Church in North America

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT

Council of Delegates Supplement

I. Introduction

[Sections I, A-C are found in the COD report in the Agenda for Synod 2026.]

D. Staff transitions update

At its May meeting, the Council of Delegates (COD) heard interviews for the positions of ReFrame Ministries director, Thrive director, and editor in chief of *The Banner*.

1. Reframe Ministries

The COD approved Rev. Darrell Delaney (Appendix G) to serve as ReFrame Ministries director. In keeping with established procedures for appointment to this position, synod is asked to ratify the appointment of Rev. Delaney (see Recommendation BB). Synodical ratification of this position constitutes “affirmation that the person in question has the requisite gifts to perform the task to which he or she has been called or appointed,” in particular for one whose position has significant theological components (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 40-41).

2. Thrive

The COD approved Dr. Lee Carter (Appendix H) to serve as Thrive director. In keeping with established procedures for appointment to this position, synod is asked to ratify the appointment of Dr. Carter (see Recommendation CC). Synodical ratification of this position constitutes “affirmation that the person in question has the requisite gifts to perform the task to which he or she has been called or appointed,” in particular for one whose position has significant theological components (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 40-41).

3. *The Banner*

Rev. Lora Copley (Appendix I), who has been serving as interim editor of *The Banner* since December 1, 2025, was presented at the May COD meeting upon the completion of a search process for a permanent *Banner* editor. The COD recommends that synod appoint Rev. Copley as editor in chief of *The Banner* following a successful interview (see Recommendation DD), in keeping with regulations regarding the appointment of a new editor (*Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 560-61; *Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 48).

II. Membership matters

[Sections II, A-D are found in the COD report in the Agenda for Synod 2026.]

E. Rubrics for denominational boards

Synod 2025 directed the Office of General Secretary to request that synodically appointed boards, committees, and agencies provide rubrics that would clearly identify nominees as having appropriate qualifications for service in their roles, as well as having stated their “commitment to Jesus Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76). This has created an opportunity for the Office of General Secretary to review the ways in which nominees are presented to synod.

The Office of General Secretary has decided that it will present a single, complete list of nominees in the Agenda Supplement each year, rather than listing nominees in the various reports of boards, committees, and agencies, with some nominees appearing in the main *Agenda for Synod* and others in the Agenda Supplement. This process has been affirmed by the COD, which has completed a review of its own rubrics as well. The COD recommends that synod take note of the work done to gather all of the rubrics in fulfillment of synod's instruction (see Recommendation EE). The complete rubrics document is presented in Appendix J.

F. Nominations

The COD recommends the individuals identified in the Nominations section of the Agenda Supplement for appointment or reappointment to a three-year term on the Council of Delegates (see Recommendation FF).

G. Concluding service

Concluding service on the Council of Delegates in the past year are the following members:

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Member</i>
Canada at-large	Melissa Van Dyk
Grandville	Rachel Bouwkamp
Greater Los Angeles	Thomas Byma
Illiana	Jill Feikema
Muskegon	Drew Sweetman
Red Mesa	Tabitha Manuelito
U.S. at-large	Michael Ten Haken

In addition, the following members have opted not to serve a second term or have resigned from the COD in the past year: Jeff Dykema (Arizona), Bonnie Zigterman (Northern Illinois), and Steve Bussis (Yellowstone).

The COD recommends that synod express gratitude to these members for their faithful service and their significant contributions to the denomination during their tenure on the Council of Delegates (see Recommendation GG).

In addition, the COD oversees nominations for the Banner Advisory Committee and the Judicial Code Committee. It received the resignations of David Koll and Henry Hess as non-COD members of the Banner Advisory Committee and of Arlo Bossenbroek as a member of the Judicial Code Committee and recommends that synod express gratitude to those members for their faithful service on these committees (see Recommendation GG).

III. Program Matters

[Sections III, A-G are found in the COD report in the Agenda for Synod 2026.]

H. Diversity efforts

1. Annual report on diversity efforts by denominational agencies
At the instruction of Synod 2013, each CRCNA agency and ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, and World Renew are

asked to submit to the general secretary, “as part of their strategic plan, diversity goals and timelines in their leadership, administrative, and regional ministry teams” (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 629). In addition, the Office of General Secretary regularly reminds and encourages stated clerks and denominational boards to seek ethnic diversity in nominating people to serve on denominational boards and as delegates to synod. These reports are shared with the COD to provide an ongoing summary of our efforts to foster diversity within our denominational systems.

2. Board diversity report

Synod 2016 tasked the CRC’s executive director (now general secretary) with requesting “an annual diversity report from each agency and ministry” and including “a summary of these reports . . . to the [COD] each February” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829). A delay in receiving data from various boards this year led to the summary of reports being delayed for presentation to the COD until its May 2026 meeting. The COD presents here the summary of the diversity reports. Data for the 2025-2026 year with regard to gender and ethnic diversity has been received from the denominational boards (Council of Delegates, Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, and World Renew). In addition, data from the World Renew Joint Ministry Council (JMC) is included along with material from the World Renew Board of Delegates. *Note:* The JMC is elected from the membership of the World Renew Board of Delegates.

Denominational board ethnic diversity

<i>Board</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>
Calvin Theological Seminary	25%	14%	17%
Calvin University	19%	19%	20%
World Renew (JMC)	20%	25%	6%
COD	14%	17%	17%

Denominational board gender diversity

<i>Board</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>
Calvin Theological Seminary	25%	19%	11%
Calvin University	35%	23%	30%
World Renew (JMC)	47%	38%	38%
COD	31%	26%	21%

3. New process to harmonize diversity reporting

Synod currently receives at least three separate diversity reports through different channels as a result of prior mandates. With the variety of pieces of diversity reporting to synod there is no clear way or method by which to review the overall picture of our denominational diversity efforts. In addition, the filing of the various reports requires significant effort on the part of our ministries. In response to a request in an overture for more visible reporting for ethnic-minority ministry groups (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820), the COD has reviewed the process

by which we gather diversity information. As a result, the COD is recommending a new process to harmonize some of these reports through its Diversity Connection Advisory Committee (see Recommendations HH-II).

4. Diversity Connection Advisory Committee report

Synod 2025 took note of the COD's decision to develop a committee of the Council of Delegates to function as a connection point for identified ethnic-minority leaders of the CRC to share their feedback and engagement regarding the CRCNA's ecclesiastical structures, with the understanding that the COD would evaluate the effectiveness of this committee after a year of work (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 600-1; see *Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 439, 451-453). The committee's report is presented in Appendix K, along with two recommendations including a recognition that the review intended for this year was not able to be completed. Due to timing issues, the COD received their report and recommendations virtually (see Appendix K and Recommendations JJ-KK).

I. Church renewal

An overture about membership decline led Synod 2023 to talk openly about the membership challenges our churches are facing. In response, synod instructed the Office of General Secretary "to develop a comprehensive unified strategy and plan to arrest and reverse the trend of decline and bring about a positive trend of membership growth to our denomination," and to "continually update this plan and to report its progress regarding this plan to synod annually until such time as synod decides that this issue has been satisfactorily addressed" (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 975-76).

In response to this instruction, Thrive staff led by Rev. Elaine May developed a series of events in 2024-2025—called the Gather initiative—as a first step in encouraging and assisting CRC congregations in renewal. A report on this initiative was presented to Synod 2025 (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 509-25, 595) with a commitment to return to Synod 2026 with further learning and proposals. Synod also encouraged classes to reflect on the results of the Gather initiative and to pray for continued renewal in the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 698). Additional reflections and proposals gathered in the past year are presented as part of this year's Thrive supplement, and the COD recommends that synod take note of these efforts as well as the coordination of renewal and church-planting plans (Recommendation LL).

J. Ten-year strategic plan for church planting

Recognizing the vital role that church planting plays in our present existence and future growth as a denomination, Synod 2025 instructed the Office of General Secretary to "coordinate with agencies and the classes to develop a vision, plan, strategy, and financial proposal for church planting for the CRCNA for the next decade" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 707-9). Resonate Global Mission was assigned to take the lead in developing this plan, which is presented in the Resonate supplement. The COD discussed this proposal

and has endorsed in concept the ten-year strategic plan developed in response to synod's instruction.

K. Review of World Renew

Synod 2025 approved an annual review cycle in which World Renew was scheduled to be reviewed for Synod 2026 (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 455-56; *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 601-2). The COD received the report of the review committee (Appendix L) at its May meeting and presents it to synod for adoption, including its recommendations (see Recommendations MM-RR).

L. Abuse prevention and response

Over the years, synod has mandated a variety of actions to address abuse within the CRCNA, with responsibility assigned to the COD to monitor the progress of these efforts (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 794-99). Among other reporting components, the annual *Yearbook* survey includes questions designed to assess the CRC's progress regarding key indicators of safe church commitments adopted by Synod 2014 (see *Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 559-60). The results of the 2025 survey include responses from organized and emerging CRCNA churches, although not all churches participated in the survey. The percentages below are based on the total number of CRCNA churches, not just those that reported.

1. Has your church implemented a written policy for abuse prevention? (74.44%)
2. Does your church have a team or committee that regularly meets regarding abuse prevention? (32.74%)
3. Does your church include Circle of Grace or another abuse prevention program in its church school or youth education? (12.4%)
4. Does your church require training for pastors, elders, and deacons regarding the use and potential abuse of power associated with their position? (36.1%)
5. Does your church have protocols in place for responding to church leader misconduct? (59.51%)

In addition, Thrive reports that approximately half of CRCNA classes have safe church teams. Thrive also notes the past decisions of synod that have strongly encouraged the development of classical or regional safe church teams and the need to support churches by advocating for safe church personnel, policies, and practices (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 885; see also *Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 559-60; *Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 670; *Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 636). The COD continues to review the work done to equip churches and classes for awareness, prevention, and response of abuse within the CRCNA's congregations and denominational systems.

M. Global Vision Implementation Team

Synod 2024 approved the recommendations of the Global Vision Team report (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 807-9), which provided vision and advice for

churches and classes that are engaging with leaders and congregations outside North America. An implementation team, chaired by Rev. John Medendorp, is currently working on an inventory of resources and is discussing with various stakeholders within and outside the CRC how to assess the barriers and opportunities to implement this vision. Through the general secretary, the team has been providing updates on its work to the COD and intends to bring recommendations to the COD by the time of its February 2027 meeting for potential adoption by Synod 2027.

IV. Polity matters

[Sections IV, A-F are found in the COD report in the Agenda for Synod 2026.]

G. Right of comment—Response to Overture 6

In keeping with past protocols regarding the COD's role in providing background information on ministry matters that come before synod (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, A, 3, c), the Council of Delegates has endorsed the response presented in Appendix M to Overture 6 from Classis Iakota, calling for "Confessional Integrity of Denominational Employees, Writers, Boards, and Agencies."

H. Disaffiliation resources

Synod 2024 instructed the Office of General Secretary "to pay particular attention to the needs of disaffiliating churches and of classes who are supporting them to ensure that the proper support is available" (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 906). The Office of General Secretary has worked closely with Thrive to update disaffiliation resources, including the *Next Steps* discernment process, and the denominational staff have been in communication with churches that are disaffiliating or considering disaffiliation. At its May meeting, the COD received a report from Thrive staff on their work with churches discerning disaffiliation (see Appendix N). The COD provides the report from Thrive for information, especially as it may address continued confusion within our systems.

I. Banquet

Synod has long had the practice of holding a banquet each year to honor retirees and recognize special achievements. In recent years, the logistics of this event have become increasingly challenging to organize as synod faces increasing constraints on time and financial resources, and changes to the denominational structure have reshaped the kinds of events traditionally recognized at this banquet. The COD recommends suspending the practice of a noon banquet luncheon in favor of allowing the general secretary and the officers of synod to identify the best ways to honor retirees and recognize special achievements each year (see Recommendation SS).

J. Publications

1. *Yearbook*

Since the late 1800s, synod has mandated the publication of an annual *Yearbook* with statistical information about the churches, as well as contact information for CRC ministers. After 2015, the CRC has endorsed a greater online presence for this publication (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 463), a direction which the Office of General Secretary has continued to lean into due to the cost and time of producing a printed book. The COD recommends suspending the publication of this information in printed form and focusing instead on alternate ways to make the material available electronically (see Recommendations TT-UU).

2. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

Synod 1993 instructed the general secretary to prepare a handbook for synodical deputies (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 582). This publication is updated regularly and is used alongside other polity publications such as the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*. The Office of General Secretary is currently reviewing how best to provide a format that would avoid unnecessary duplication within these publications while maintaining the information in an easily accessible format.

K. Judicial Code Committee

1. Nominations

The Council of Delegates recommends that synod elect one new member for each position to the Judicial Code Committee, for a first term of three years, from the slates of nominees in the Nominations section of the Agenda Supplement (see Recommendation VV).

2. Nomination Process

The Judicial Code Committee (JCC) currently does not process its own nominations. These are processed through the COD. In order to bring the nomination process into line with other standing committees that report to synod, the COD recommends that the responsibility of nominations to the JCC be assigned to the committee rather than to the COD (see Recommendation WW).

L. Interim appointments

1. Synodical deputies

On behalf of synod, the COD has ratified the following classical appointments of synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies*:

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Deputy</i>	<i>Alternate</i>	<i>Term</i>
Heartland	Rev. P. Westra	Rev. S. Terpstra	2028/1
Pacific Northwest	Rev. D. Fakkema	Rev. J. Knoester	2028/1

*Terms of alternate synodical deputies run concurrent with those of the synodical deputies.

2. Other board and committee appointments

In the past year, the COD was asked to make the following interim decisions regarding board appointments:

- a. The Calvin University Board of Trustees notified the COD that it is temporarily appointing Nancy Schoonmaker to fill a vacancy on the board, in keeping with relevant provisions in the bylaws approved by synod (*Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council of Delegates 2021*, p. 561; *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 840-41).
- b. The COD approved a request from the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee asking for an exception to the regional balance requirement on that committee (see *Acts of Synod 2022*, p. 842), allowing Rev. Marno Retief to complete his first term ending in 2027 (see EIRC report, section III).

The COD recommends that synod ratify these interim actions (Recommendation XX).

V. Financial matters

[Sections V, A-D are found in the COD report in the Agenda for Synod 2026.]

E. Budget review and ministry shares

At the May 2026 COD meeting, the ministry boards approved the budgets for the national ministry offices, for the joint ministries of the CRCNA in Canada and the U.S., and the joint service agreements (Recommendation YY and Appendix O).

Synod has also assigned to the COD the task of reviewing and monitoring the ministry-share system. Information regarding the receipts and allocations of these funds can also be found in the financial statements provided.

F. Investment compliance statement

As requested by a previous synod (*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 439), the COD reports that on December 31, 2025, all of the agencies and institutions appear to be in compliance with the denomination's investment policy, including the guidance it provides for assets received as a result of gifts or gift-related transactions (Recommendation ZZ and Appendix O).

VI. Recommendations

[Recommendations A-AA are found in the COD report in the Agenda for Synod 2026.]

BB. That synod ratify the appointment of Rev. Darrell Delaney as director of ReFrame Ministries (section I, D, 1 and Appendix G).

CC. That synod ratify the appointment of Dr. Lee Carter as the director of Thrive (section I, D, 2 and Appendix H).

DD. That synod, following a successful interview, appoint Rev. Lora Copley to serve as the editor in chief of *The Banner* (section I, D, 3 and Appendix I).

EE. That synod take note of the work done by the Office of General Secretary and the various boards and committees of denominational organizations to fulfill the request of Synod 2025 regarding the creation and presentation of rubrics for board membership (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76) (section II, E and Appendix J).

FF. That synod, by way of the ballot, appoint, reappoint, or ratify the election and reelection of COD members from the slates of nominees presented in the Nominations section of the Agenda Supplement (section II, F).

GG. That synod express its gratitude to members finishing their tenure on the Council of Delegates and its advisory committees (section II, G).

HH. That synod revise its previous instructions concerning diversity reporting to ask that the general secretary facilitate the collection and reporting of data related to diversity in the CRCNA as deemed most appropriate, while ensuring that information about the diversity of board composition (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829; *Acts of Synod 2013*, pp. 631-32) is still reported annually and that the growth of our churches and agencies in the area of diversity (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 907) remains part of that information (section III, H, 3).

II. That synod instruct the general secretary to work with the COD to report on diversity efforts each year in such a way that provides recognition of the good work done by churches and leaders in the area of diversity and provides avenues for accountability for such work, especially as it relates to the work of formal and informal networks that exist among ethnic-minority communities within the CRCNA. This may be in the form of an in-person report from an individual from these communities, but this is not required. It is understood that this instruction replaces synod's encouragement for Resonate Global Mission to serve as the avenue for reporting by groups such as Consejo Latino (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820) (section III, H, 3).

JJ. That synod take note of the reports provided by representatives of the major ethnic groups within the CRCNA and make space to hear about and celebrate the work God's Spirit is doing within these communities (section III, H, 4 and Appendix K).

Ground: This fulfills the request of Synod 2024 to create a pathway for Consejo Latino and other groups to "report on their work and to share resources with the CRCNA" (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 419; see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820).

KK. That synod take note of the COD's intention to review the work of the Diversity Connection Advisory Committee at the two-year mark instead of this year (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 600-1) due to the brief time in which the group has been able to begin its work (section III, H, 4).

LL. That synod take note of the reports on Thrive's ongoing efforts to work with classes and churches to address membership decline (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 975-76) and their efforts to coordinate these church renewal plans with the church-planting strategy being developed by Resonate Global Mission (section III, I).

MM. That synod receive the report of the World Renew review team for information in fulfillment of Synod 2025's instructions regarding the regular review of CRCNA agencies (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 455-56; *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 601-2) (section III, K and Appendix L).

NN. That synod endorse and recommit to its covenantal relationship with World Renew (section III, K and Appendix L).

OO. That synod give serious consideration to how the work of World Renew, intended to be an extension of the natural work of the local churches and classes, may be truly supported by the same (section III, K and Appendix L).

PP. That synod encourage congregations and classes to be intentional in making reporting opportunities available for World Renew (section III, K and Appendix L).

Ground: It is believed that these opportunities will be inspirational and mutually beneficial for visiting missionaries and World Renew staff, and for the congregations and classes.

QQ. That synod urge local congregations to be encouraged and inspired by the example of World Renew to engage similarly with their communities (section III, K and Appendix L).

Ground: World Renew has many resources and ideas and would welcome invitations from CRCNA churches to come and share their stories.

RR. That synod urge churches to encourage their younger members to explore opportunities to serve with and to support World Renew (section III, K and Appendix L).

SS. That synod suspend the practice of holding a noon luncheon to honor retirees and recognize special achievements (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 534) and instead direct the general secretary to work with the officers of synod each year to identify the best way to accomplish these purposes within synod's schedule (section IV, I).

Ground: This change would allow greater flexibility in making decisions about how to accomplish these important purposes within the time frame and financial constraints under which synod needs to work each year.

TT. That synod no longer require the COD and the Office of General Secretary to ensure the publication of an annual *Yearbook* in printed form (section IV, J, 1).

Grounds:

1. The growing availability of digital materials no longer makes it financially viable or practically necessary to continue the publication of an annual resource such as the *Yearbook*, which was first mandated in 1880 and adopted as an official publication of the CRC in 1930 (*Acts of Synod 1880*, p. 463; *Acts of Synod 1930*, pp. 17-18).

2. The responsibility for overseeing the publication of the *Yearbook* was given to the Synodical Interim Committee, the predecessor of the COD (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 75; *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 620-22).

UU. That synod, instead, instruct the Office of General Secretary to provide for the public distribution of denominational statistics formerly collected in the *Yearbook* by requesting that churches continue to provide membership information as well as records related to churches, ministers, classis personnel, institutions approved for offerings, and classis funding for counseling services for abuse survivors; and that synod authorize the Office of General Secretary to make this data available to the churches in methods that support reasonable access and timeliness (section IV, J, 1).

Grounds:

1. Churches are already required to keep complete records of membership statistics (Church Order, Art. 68), so requesting that this information be collected for denominational uses places only a minimal reporting burden on councils.
2. Past synods have specifically requested that statistical information on churches, classes, and other denominationally related materials be made available publicly (*Acts of Synod 1898*, p. 40; *Acts of Synod 1910*, p. 59; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 797), while also recognizing that decisions about the specific information to be included in such publications are not matters that should concern our highest ecclesiastical assembly (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 11; *Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 582).
3. Such membership records continue to be actively used in informing denominational conversations and in decision making.

VV. That synod elect one new member for each position to the Judicial Code Committee, for a first term of three years, from the slates of nominees in the Nominations section of the Agenda Supplement (section IV, K, 1).

WW. That synod assign responsibility for the nominations of Judicial Code Committee members to the JCC rather than to the COD, and authorize the general secretary to update any governance documents to reflect this change in procedure (section IV, K, 2).

Grounds:

1. This would bring the JCC's practice into alignment with that of the other standing committees and would remove the extra step of COD approval for JCC nominees.
2. Synod 1990 removed this responsibility from the JCC because the committee met only infrequently at the time (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 633). However, the availability of online meetings now allows the JCC to meet at least annually.

XX. That synod ratify the COD's work with regard to interim appointments (section IV, L).

YY. That synod receive as information the work on budgets for fiscal year 2026-2027 for the agencies, institutions, and ministries (section V, E and Appendix O).

ZZ. That synod receive as information the summary of denominational investments and compliance with investment policy (section V, F and Appendix O).

Council of Delegates
of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
Michael L. Ten Haken, chair

APPENDIX G

Director of ReFrame Ministries **Curriculum Vitae: Rev. Darrell L. Delaney**

Executive profile

Ordained minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America with over a decade of experience in pastoral leadership, organizational development, and media-based discipleship. Proven leader skilled in casting vision, cultivating healthy culture, developing leaders, and stewarding mission-driven organizations through complexity and change. Recognized communicator with experience in preaching, teaching, coaching, and content creation for local, national, and global audiences.

Core strengths

Executive Leadership | Vision and Strategy | Reformed Theology and Discipleship | Media and Public Communication | Organizational Health | Team Development and Mentoring | Cross-Cultural Leadership | Pastoral and Spiritual Care | Coaching and Facilitation | Conflict Resolution | Systems Thinking

Professional experience

ReFrame Ministries

Groundwork Podcast Co-Host, 2021–Present

- Co-host of Scripture-centered, Reformed theological broadcast and podcast owned by ReFrame Media.
- Develop and deliver accessible, faithful teaching for global radio and digital audiences.
- Collaborate with editorial, production, and ministry leadership to ensure theological clarity, mission alignment, and consistent quality.

Strategic Design Consultants

Founder: Consultant, Coach, Speaker, 2021–Present

- Provide leadership coaching and consulting for nonprofit and faith-based leaders.

- Facilitate workshops focused on resilience, identity, organizational culture, and sustainable leadership.
- Guide leaders through adaptive change using systems thinking and organizational leadership frameworks.

Calvin Theological Seminary

Adjunct Professor, Foundations of Pastoral and Spiritual Care, 2025

- Designed and taught graduate-level coursework in pastoral care, listening, presence, and spiritual formation.
- Led case-based learning, role play, and reflective practice for ministry readiness.
- Evaluated student work and mentored emerging pastoral leaders.

Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry

Assistant Regional Leader and Lead Chaplain, Ottawa County, Michigan, 2023–2025

- Provided regional oversight for chaplaincy operations across 30+ Michigan counties.
- Delivered pastoral care, crisis support, and conflict mediation within correctional institutions.
- Supported recruitment, onboarding, and development of chaplains and volunteers.
- Advanced trauma-informed and inclusive spiritual care practices.

Madison Christian Reformed Church, Square Campus, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Campus Pastor, 2014–2021

- Cast vision and led ministry programming for a multi-ethnic urban congregation.
- Preached regularly and provided pastoral care to individuals and families.
- Recruited, trained, and mentored leaders across generations.
- Built discipleship pathways and strengthened volunteer leadership systems.

Madison Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Middle School Coordinator, 2012–2014

- Oversaw ministry operations, volunteer coordination, and parent communication.
- Delivered teaching and relational discipleship for middle school students.

Writing and publications

Today devotions

- Authored published sets of devotions in 2022–2024, 2026 for *Today*, ReFrame Ministries' daily devotional platform.

The Banner (CRC magazine and website)

- Published writer and contributor

Education

Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership (in progress)

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, expected 2028–2030

Master of Theology, Pastoral Care

Calvin Theological Seminary, 2014

Master of Divinity and Graduate Certificate, Urban Pastoral Ministry

Western Theological Seminary, 2012

Bachelor of Science, Bible and Theology

Kuyper College, 2005

Ordination and affiliation

Ordained Minister of the Word

Christian Reformed Church in North America

Ordained through Madison Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Governance and board service

Kuyper College

Board of Trustees, Trustee, 2015–2024

Programs Committee Chair, 2021–2023

Executive Committee Member and Secretary, 2021–2023

- Provided governance oversight and strategic guidance in support of institutional mission and sustainability.
- Contributed to board-level decision-making, accountability, and stewardship for a Christian higher education institution.

Affiliations

The Society for Collegiate Leadership and Achievement (SCLA), November 2025

Certifications

Certified Courageous Conversations Facilitator

APPENDIX H

Director of Thrive

Curriculum Vitae: Dr. Lee A. Carter

*Nonprofit Executive | Leadership Development Strategist | Adjunct Professor |
Missional and Intercultural Leadership | Organizational Health | Faith-Based and
Global Nonprofit Expertise | Homewood, Illinois*

Professional summary

My vision is to equip missional leaders with healthy leadership models that foster flourishing communities and strong team dynamics to support and

scale the mission. With extensive global experience in leadership development, organizational strategy, and team formation, I bring strategic insight, empathetic leadership, and a deep commitment to purpose. I thrive in roles requiring innovative thinking, relational depth, and seamless execution. Grounded in my strengths, I help leaders turn vision into impact. Whether shaping culture, guiding strategy, or supporting behind-the-scenes execution, I lead with clarity, consistency, and a passion for helping others thrive in mission-driven environments.

Core competencies

- **Strategic and Visionary Leadership:** Extensive experience guiding organizations through vision casting, strategic planning, and execution. As EVP at Bible League International, led global strategy integration across departments. Skilled at translating visionary ideas into aligned, mission-driven initiatives.
- **Missional Team Leadership and Development:** Equipped and led cross-cultural, high-performing teams with a focus on spiritual formation, community-building, and collaborative culture. Created and facilitated leadership development programs rooted in theology and ethics, shaping emerging leaders globally.
- **Program Design and Innovation:** Designed innovative programs that integrate faith, leadership theory, and practical formation—like the Leadership-in-Community curriculum. Applied design thinking in program development, aligning initiatives with long-term organizational impact.
- **Thought Leadership and Teaching:** Doctor of Strategic Leadership with teaching experience at the graduate level and national conferences. Developed and delivered content on leadership, ethics, and formation, influencing organizational culture and equipping leaders in both academic and applied contexts.

Education

Regent University

Doctor of Strategic Leadership

Graduated May 2021

Regent University's Doctor of Strategic Leadership is a terminal professional degree that expertly prepared me to tackle complex organizational challenges in global environments. The program empowered me to transform organizational systems and teams, fostering healthy, flourishing organizations. I developed deep expertise in organizational theory and practice, focusing on strategic initiatives, organizational assessments, and change management through a Christian worldview. My education seamlessly integrated rigorous Biblical study with advanced leadership theory, equipping me to lead with both spiritual insight and strategic acumen in high-impact leadership roles.

North Park University
Master of Nonprofit Administration
Graduated May 2009

The Master of Nonprofit Administration (MNA) degree from North Park University equipped me with the leadership skills and strategic insight necessary to drive success in the nonprofit sector. The program provided comprehensive knowledge in all critical areas of nonprofit management, including fundraising, financial decision-making, governance, and compliance with regulations and reporting requirements. It emphasized strategic management, enabling me to navigate the complexities of both small and large organizations. This degree honed my ability to lead mission-driven organizations effectively, preparing me to serve as an executive capable of delivering impactful results in dynamic environments.

University of Montana
Bachelor of Science, Business Administration Emphasis in accounting,
Minor in Communication Studies
Graduated May 1997

In addition to my core studies in Business Administration, I specialized in accounting and complemented my education with a minor in Communication Studies. This focused academic path enhanced my financial acumen while developing my ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively, equipping me with a well-rounded skill set for leadership in business environments.

Professional experience

Imago Leadership Consulting, LLC

Imago Leadership Consulting equips nonprofit and missional leaders with transformative tools for leadership team development and spiritual formation, preparing them as adaptive, missional leaders for the next generation.

Founder and Principal Consultant, July 2025 to present

I founded Imago Leadership Consulting, LLC as a platform to apply my doctoral research in leadership development and training for missional leadership teams. Through this venture, I designed and launched a comprehensive leadership curriculum for global nonprofit cohorts, integrating strategic theory with accessible, practice-based exercises. I developed a StoryBrand Brandscript and a full digital engagement strategy that includes a website, blogs, podcasts, vlogs, and social media channels. To deepen organizational impact, I created direct email campaigns and companion guides that support cohort learning. I've facilitated workshops and consulting engagements focused on communal discernment, team culture, and organizational development. Additionally, I authored a strategic business plan outlining service offerings, market positioning, and a growth roadmap for leadership formation initiatives. Throughout this work, I've applied

nonprofit marketing and fundraising principles from my graduate studies to shape messaging, outreach, and audience engagement strategies.

Bible League International Crete, Illinois

March 2004–April 2025

Global Christian nonprofit providing Scripture engagement programs and Bible resources in over 40 countries, equipping local churches and partners to disciple believers and transform communities through God’s Word.

Executive Vice President of Scripture Engagement, June 2016–April 2025
(8 years, 11 months)

In this role, I reported directly to the CEO/President and led a global Scripture Engagement team of 40 staff members across multiple functions and six regions, including Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and the United States. I provided executive leadership for program strategies that reached 2.8 million people annually through the training of 175,000 community leaders worldwide. By introducing appreciative inquiry as a development model, I enhanced cross-team collaboration and spearheaded the creation of a new Ministry Model that strengthened program design and measurement across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. I directed the annual strategic planning and budgeting process for an \$18 million budget, ensuring alignment of global program strategies with funding goals and mission objectives in 70 countries. My leadership encompassed five key organizational functions—Ministry Partnerships, Publishing, Bible Translation, Content & Training, and Mission Engagement—resulting in unified planning, budgeting, and improved collaboration. Additionally, I designed and facilitated training programs for staff, partners, and volunteers on essential mission topics such as missional leadership, team building, and spiritual formation, which led to the development of foundational theological and strategic documents aligning BLI’s global efforts with its mission and values.

Senior Director of International Finance, June 2008–May 2016 (8 years)

In this role, I reported to the Executive Vice President of Finance and led a team of three staff responsible for international finance, grant administration, KPI reporting, inventory management, procurement, and shipping. I provided financial oversight and ensured compliance for approximately \$15 million in international grant-making, encompassing both operational funding and program materials. This oversight enhanced transparency and enabled more effective project management for three core programs implemented across roughly 70 countries. Additionally, I directed budgeting, forecasting, and financial analysis, delivering regular financial and KPI reports to three divisional unit directors—the Vice Presidents of Latin America, EMEA, and Asia-Pacific—as well as the EVP of Operations. These efforts improved transparency and supported data-informed decision-making to strengthen overall program execution.

Finance Manager for Africa Ministries, March 2004–June 2008 (4 years, 4 months)

As Finance Manager for Bible League International’s Africa ministries, I served as a key liaison with partner offices across the continent, ensuring accurate grant accounting and timely financial reporting. I played a critical role in the annual budgeting process, aligning financial planning with programmatic goals to maximize impact within available resources. I led the development of robust accountability structures for partner accounting offices, enhancing financial transparency and compliance. Additionally, I delivered targeted training on accounting systems to build local capacity and ensure consistent, high-quality financial operations across Africa ministries.

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

Madison, WI

Campus Staff Member

April 1997–July 2002 (5 years, 4 months)

Montana State University (Bozeman), Montana State University – Billings (Billings), Rocky Mountain College (Billings)

As a Campus Staff Member with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, I played a pivotal role in the spiritual and leadership development of Christian university students. I mentored and discipled students through Bible studies and one-on-one guidance, empowering them to take on leadership roles within the campus chapter. I regularly delivered impactful Scripture-based messages at large group meetings and conferences, focusing on evangelism, discipleship, and living out the Christian faith with integrity. In addition, I gained valuable experience in fundraising, crafting compelling case statements, promoting the ministry’s mission, writing engaging newsletters, cultivating donor relationships, and securing continued and increased support for ministry growth and initiatives.

Volunteer experience

Remember Me Global Initiatives (Dissolved)

Chicago, Illinois

Board Treasurer (Volunteer)

January 2010–November 2017 (7 years, 11 months)

As a founding board member of Remember Me Global Initiative, a 501(c)(3) public charity established under Illinois state law, I played a key role in supporting and amplifying indigenous grassroots community development efforts. We raised awareness of impactful local initiatives, securing funds to foster self-sustaining development while empowering communities to drive lasting change. I provided strategic counsel to local partners, offering expertise in administrative, technical, and operational areas to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of community development projects. My leadership helped shape a foundation committed to transformative, locally

driven progress. As a founding board member of Remember Me Global Initiative, a 501(c)(3) public charity established under Illinois state law, I played a key role in supporting and amplifying indigenous grassroots community development efforts. We raised awareness of impactful local initiatives, securing funds to foster self-sustaining development while empowering communities to drive lasting change. I provided strategic counsel to local partners, offering expertise in administrative, technical, and operational areas to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of community development projects. My leadership helped shape a foundation committed to transformative, locally driven progress.

By the Hand Club for Kids
Chicago, Illinois

Classroom Volunteer (Volunteer)

August 2021–May 2022 (3 years, 10 months)

As a volunteer at By the Hand Club for Kids in Alsted, IL, I provided classroom support by tutoring and mentoring third-grade students in an underserved community. I worked closely with the lead teacher to reinforce lesson plans, offer individualized instruction, and assist students in developing critical academic skills. My role was essential in helping foster a positive learning environment, supporting students' academic growth, and addressing unique challenges faced by children in this underserved area. I contributed to building a foundation of hope and opportunity for the next generation in a community in need.

Publications

Leadership-in-Community: The Missiology, Community, and Ethics of Missional Leadership

First edition, 2021: Kharis Publishing

Revised edition, 2025: Self-Published (Draft2Digital)

Leadership-In-Community is a transformative team leadership formation curriculum that equips Christian leaders with both a theological and practical foundation for fulfilling God's mission in an ever-changing world. It engages both emerging and seasoned missional leaders in the core principles of missiology, leadership theory, and essential leadership practices. The curriculum explores three interwoven themes critical to effective missional leadership: missiology, community, and ethics.

These themes are deeply examined through *Lectio Missio*, an innovative expansion of *Lectio Divina*, which incorporates mission-focused spiritual practices. Leaders participate in small groups, engaging in Scripture study, prayer, dialogue, meditation, journaling, and experiential learning. These spiritual formation disciplines form the bedrock for missional leadership development, fostering both personal transformation and effective leadership in mission-driven contexts.

Friendship: Recovering the Soul of God's Mission

Unpublished

Friendship argues that friendship is central to God's mission, not a secondary virtue. Blending biblical theology, cultural critique, and narrative, the manuscript explores how friendship reflects the relational nature of the Triune God and restores the wonder lost through sin and isolation. Through Christ, believers are invited into transformative, self-giving relationships that reflect divine love and enable human flourishing. The book challenges individualism and calls the Church to embody friendship as a communal, missional practice. Ultimately, it presents friendship as essential to renewing the Church's witness and cultivating a culture of belonging and grace.

- Blog: imagoleadership.org/category/blog/
- Vlog: youtube.com/@imagoleadership
- Podcast: imagoleadership.podbean.com

Teaching Experience

Development Associates International (DAI)

June 2022–June 2023 (Remote via Moodle)

Global Christian nonprofit dedicated to enhancing the integrity and effectiveness of Christian leaders through servant leadership training, mentoring, consulting, and educational programs. Operating in over 75 countries.

Course Facilitator

June 2022–June 2023

As a graduate instructor for Development Associates International, I taught a master's-level Spiritual Formation course to a cohort of 20 international students—primarily from the Middle East and Africa—through the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo. These students, many of whom held high-level leadership roles in nonprofit and NGO sectors, were equipped with a Christ-centered foundation for leadership that fostered personal transformation, ethical discernment, and integrity within their cultural and organizational contexts. I designed transformative learning experiences that integrated spiritual practices with leadership training, guiding students in applying faith-based principles to global leadership challenges. Through dynamic teaching, mentorship, and cross-cultural insights, I supported their holistic development, helping them lead with greater relational depth, balanced priorities, and mission-driven clarity.

Presentations

A Person, A Place, and A Thing: Narrative and Identity Formation, Reflections on Colossians 3 (Invited Lecture)

Men of Faith Network

April 27, 2024

Palos Heights, Illinois

Dyadic Leadership: Friends on Mission (Workshop)

2024 Outcomes Leadership Conference

Christian Leadership Alliance
April 10, 2024
Jacksonville, Florida

Leadership-in-Community (Workshop) 2023 Outcomes Leadership Conference
Christian Leadership Alliance
March 28, 2023
Chicago, Illinois

Leadership-in-Community: Peacemaking (Workshop)
Leadership Team Workshop
By the Hand Club for Kids
June 29, 2022
Chicago, Illinois

Languages

French: CEFR Level B2 (Intermediate)

APPENDIX I

Editor in Chief of *The Banner*

Curriculum Vitae: Rev. Lora A. Copley

Work experience

Dec. 2025 to present: Interim Editor – *The Banner*, magazine of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

2022 to present: Campus Pastor – Areopagus Campus Ministry, Iowa State University

- Disciple undergrad and graduate students in weekly group and 1:1 Bible studies
- Serve the Iowa State University community through lecture events, service projects, and relational connectivity with the international student community

2011 to present: Contract Ministry Work – various preaching, speaking at retreats, Bible camps

- Regular pulpit supply (usually once/month); occasionally a member of interim teams
- Calvin Symposium on Worship, workshop presenter, panel moderator (2014, 2017)

2015–2022: Instructor and Coordinator – Classis Red Mesa Leadership Development Network

- Taught Bible, doctrine, and preaching to equip Native leaders in Classis Red Mesa
- Coordinate the effective running of this program with advancement and grant work

2016–2021, 2002–2004: Christian Doctrine Teacher – Rehoboth Christian High School, New Mexico

- Taught and formed web curriculum for a course on tenets of the Christian gospel

2013–2014: Interim Assistant Preaching Pastor – Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan

- Preached three times a month and led liturgy for non-preaching services.

2006–2011: Minister of Congregational Life – Calvin CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan

- Primary responsibility for all discipleship, care, outreach and diaconal ministries
- Pastoral care of members in their twenties and thirties; preaching/leadership in three-year vacancy

Honors and publications

Teach Us to Pray: Scripture-Centered Family Worship through the Year. Daily family worship liturgies, coauthored with Elizabeth VanderHaagen; Calvin Press, 2017.

Articles

- One month of *Today* devotions (in process)
- One editorial in *The Banner*
- Ten sermon starter articles for the Center for Excellence in Preaching (Jan./Feb.)
- *Abingdon Preaching Annual* 2016
- Articles in *Reformed Worship* (2012, 2016, 2017)
- Article in *Christian Courier* (2023)

The Ellens Preaching Award (2002)

The Vander Wilt Heidelberg Sermon Award (2000)

Denominational service

- CRCNA Candidacy Committee and EPMC mentoring subcommittee (2023–2026)
- CRCNA synod delegate, Classis Northcentral Iowa; advisory committee reporter (2024)
- Synod delegate, Classis Red Mesa (2019)
- Member, CRCNA Council of Delegates (2020–2022)

Education and training

- Colson Fellow, Colson Fellows Program, certificate in worldview studies (2019–2020)
- Equipped as instructor in Timothy Leadership Training; Stephen Ministries; Prepare-Enrich programs
- Calvin Theological Seminary (GPA: 3.8), Master of Divinity (1998–2002)
- Dordt University (GPA: 3.9), Bachelor of Arts in Theology (1994–1998)

Board and Committee Rubrics

In response to an overture requesting that an advisory committee be created to interview and recommend nominees for denominational boards, Synod 2025 instructed that all denominational boards and committees develop “rubrics for board membership” and that the rubrics be made publicly available. The rubrics are to include information about relevant education and professional experience, spiritual maturity and moral integrity, and a stated commitment to Jesus Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76). Past synods have also requested that information about church membership, ethnic and gender diversity, and educational and professional experience be collected as well to assist the boards in developing a well-qualified membership that represents the diversity of the denomination (see *Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 353; *Agenda for Synod 1999*, pp. 380-83; *Acts of Synod 1999*, pp. 597-600).

The information in the first section of the form below (Part I) will be collected for all nominees within the CRCNA board nomination system. It covers two basic areas: contact information and educational/professional background. The second section of the form (Part II), is designed to collect information requested by the specific boards and committees in evaluating potential nominees. This information will be gathered by the Office of General Secretary through an online form to be filled out by all applicants for positions of service on denominational boards.

This appendix reflects the input of the various boards and committees involved—all of which have reviewed their questionnaires for nominees in the past year and have worked to coordinate their forms with the general information already collected by the Office of General Secretary. Once synod has completed its work this year, the intention is to post this information online at crcna.org/nominations.

DENOMINATIONAL BOARD NOMINATIONS FORM

Part I: Information asked of all nominees

CRCNA Boards and Committee Nominations

Thank you for your willingness to be considered for service on a CRCNA board or committee. This form gathers information that helps the respective committee understand your background, professional experience, Christian commitment, and alignment with the mission and Reformed Christian confessional identity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Your responses will remain confidential within the nomination review process. The form typically takes 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any questions at any point, you are encouraged to contact the Office of General

Secretary (synod@crcna.org) or the chair of the board/committee to which you are nominated.

General information (*indicates response required)

- Name*
(Prefix, First name, Last name, Suffix)
- Email address*
- Street address*
- Street address (line 2, if applicable)
- City*
- State/Province*
- Postal/ZIP code
- Country*
- Phone number*
- Ethnicity*
- Birth year*
- Gender*

Membership and experience

- I am a member in good standing at*
(Church name, city, state/province)
- Classis*
- Please list your academic, business, or professional training.*
- Please include names of post-secondary schools attended and dates of graduation, if applicable.
(Enter N/A if no academic, business, or professional training.)
- Current professional role*
(Title, organization, major responsibilities, and areas of oversight)
- Past professional experience*
(Highlight key roles and achievements, especially those relevant to nonprofit governance, leadership, higher education, or financial/organizational stewardship.)
- Please list your previous experience on denominational, ecclesiastical, or nonecclesiastical boards or committees.
(Please clearly indicate the board name and position you held. Enter N/A if no previous board or committee experience.)
- Please list any current membership on boards or committees.*
(Enter N/A if not currently serving on a board or committee.)
- Please list your experience serving on church council or in church leadership.*
(Enter N/A if you have not served on your local church council or in church leadership.)
- Please list other ministry positions or community-service positions you have held, also indicating time frame.*
(Enter N/A if you have not served in other ministry positions or community-service positions.)

- Are you, or have you ever been, employed by, or served as a contract employee for, the CRCNA? If yes, indicate agency/ministry.*

Board

I have been nominated to serve on the following board or committee:*

(Mark only one.)

- ☐ Council of Delegates (COD)
- ☐ COD: Banner Advisory Committee
- ☐ COD: Bible Translation Committee
- ☐ COD: Diaspora and Ethnic Ministry Committee
- ☐ COD: Dignity Team
- ☐ Candidacy Committee
- ☐ Historical Committee
- ☐ Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
- ☐ Judicial Code Committee
- ☐ Calvin University Board
- ☐ Calvin Theological Seminary Board
- ☐ Loan Fund
- ☐ Pensions Fund
- ☐ Reformed Benefits Association

Part II: Information requested of nominees for specific boards

Council of Delegates

- Please share why you are interested in serving on the Council of Delegates (or, in particular, one of its advisory committees).*
- Please list your specific skills related to this board/committee position.*
(*Examples: finance, law, fundraising, education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, diversity/equity work, global engagement*)
- Commitment to the CRCNA*
 - ☐ I can affirm the doctrinal commitments of the denomination as articulated in the COD Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA and that such agreement is without reservation and does not include settled convictions that do not agree with the creeds and confessions of the CRCNA.
- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.*
(*This reference will be contacted by a member of the COD, and information will be shared only with the COD itself.*)
- By clicking “I accept” below, I am indicating my willingness to sign the COD Statement of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA, the Code of Conduct, and the Conflict of Interest Form.*

Candidacy Committee

- What are you able to offer in service to the Candidacy Committee?*
- Please list your experience with leadership development and/or mentorship of pastoral leaders.*
(Enter N/A if no experience.)
- Please list your specific skills related to this board/committee position.*
(Examples: finance, law, fundraising, education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, diversity/equity work, global engagement)
- Why would you like to serve on the Candidacy Committee?*
- Commitment to the CRCNA: Describe your commitment to Jesus Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA.*
- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis, who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.*
(This reference will be contacted by a member of the committee, and information will be shared only with the committee itself.)
- By clicking “I accept” below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the Candidacy Committee.*

Calvin Theological Seminary

- Describe your relationship to Calvin Theological Seminary.*
(Alumni status, family connections, volunteer roles, donor engagement, committee service, or other involvement)
- Why are you interested in serving as a trustee?*
- How do you see your competencies and/or connections contributing to Calvin Seminary’s mission?*
- Please list your specific skills related to this board position.*
(Examples: finance, law, fundraising, education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, theological training, justice work, cross-cultural competency)
- Briefly describe your personal faith journey as a Christian.*
- How would you articulate what it means to be a Reformed Christian in today’s contemporary world?*
- Commitment to the CRCNA*
— As a member in good standing in the CRCNA, I profess faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; acknowledge the divine inspiration and authority of the Word of God; and am committed to the confessional standards of the CRCNA as faithful reflections of the Word of God.
- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.

(This reference will be contacted by a member of the board, and information will be shared only with the board itself.)

- By clicking “I accept” below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.
— I accept

Historical Committee

- Please explain your expertise in CRCNA history and the Reformed legacy, or some aspect thereof.*
- Please list your specific skills related to this committee position.*
(Examples: finance, law, fundraising, education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, diversity/equity work, global engagement)
- Commitment to the CRCNA*
— As a member in good standing, I am committed to Jesus Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA as faithful reflections of the Word of God.
— I am currently unable to sign my commitment to Jesus Christ or the confessional standards of the CRCNA but would like to have a conversation on this matter.
- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.*
(This reference will be contacted by a member of the committee, and information will be shared only with the committee itself.)
- By clicking “I accept” below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the Historical Committee.*

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

- What interests you about serving on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC)?*
 - What education, professional training, and/or personal experience do you have that is related to the work of the EIRC?*
 - Please list your specific skills related to the work of the EIRC.*
(Examples: education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, diversity/equity work, global engagement, ecumenical relationships)
 - Are you committed to Jesus Christ? And do you believe that the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—the confessional standards of the CRCNA—faithfully reflect the revelation of Christ and his redemption of you and our world?*
- Yes
— No
— I'd like to discuss this matter.

- Please provide the EIRC with a reference who can comment on your commitment to Christ, path of Christian maturity, and service in your church community. This could be a pastor, a council chair, or another leader.*
(This reference will be contacted by a member of the EIRC, and information will be shared only with the committee itself.)
- By clicking “I accept” below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the EIRC.*

Judicial Code Committee

- I am eligible for the following position on the Judicial Code Committee*
☐ minister of the Word or commissioned pastor
☐ person trained in law
☐ nonordained, not trained in law
- Please list your specific skills related to this committee position.*
(Examples: finance, law, fundraising, education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, diversity/equity work, global engagement)
- Commitment to the CRCNA*
☐ As a member in good standing, I am committed to Jesus Christ and embrace the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort) as faithful reflections of Scripture’s teaching.
- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.*
(This reference will be contacted by a member of the committee, and information will be shared only with the committee itself.)
- By clicking “I accept” below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the Judicial Code Committee.*

Calvin University

- Describe your relationship to Calvin University*
(Alumni status, family connections, volunteer roles, donor engagement, committee service, or other involvement)
- Why are you interested in serving as a trustee?*
- How do you see your competencies and/or connections contributing to Calvin’s mission?*
- Please list your specific skills related to this board position.*
(Examples: finance, law, fundraising, education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, diversity/equity work, global engagement.)
- Briefly describe your personal faith journey as a Christian.*

- Do you affirm the ecumenical Christian creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian)?*
 - ___ Yes
 - ___ No
 - ___ Other:
- Commitment to the CRCNA*
 - ___ As a member in good standing, I am committed to Jesus Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA as faithful reflections of the Word of God.
 - ___ I am currently unable to sign my commitment to Jesus Christ or the confessional standards of the CRCNA but would like to have a conversation on this matter.
- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.*
(This reference will be contacted by a member of the board, and information will be shared only with the board itself.)
- By clicking "I Accept" below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the Calvin University Board.*

Pension Trustees (U.S. and Canada)

- Please mark all the areas of education and experience you have (check all that apply).*
 - ___ Legal education
 - ___ Legal professional experience
 - ___ Financial education
 - ___ Financial professional experience
 - ___ Investment certification
 - ___ Banking experience
 - ___ Banking professional experience
 - ___ Pension education
 - ___ Pension certification
 - ___ Pension professional experience
 - ___ Financial planning education
 - ___ Financial planning certification
 - ___ Financial planning professional experience
 - ___ Administrative education
 - ___ Administrative professional experience
 - ___ Senior management education
 - ___ Senior management professional experience
 - ___ Communications/marketing education
 - ___ Communications/marketing professional experience
 - ___ Ministerial experience (active participant in Ministers Pension Plan)
 - ___ Other:

- What interests you about serving on this board?*
- Commitment to the CRCNA*

As a member of the CRCNA, are you willing to accept the spiritual guidance of the church?

___ Yes

___ Not at this time

- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.*
(This reference will be contacted by a member of the board, and information will be shared only with the board itself.)
- By clicking “I accept” below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the Pension Fund Board.*

Loan Fund

- Please list your specific skills related to this board position.*
(Examples: finance, law, fundraising, education, strategy, governance, human resources, ministry experience, diversity/equity work, global engagement)
- What is your capacity to attend two to four meetings annually and to review materials in advance?*
- Commitment to the CRCNA: As a member of a CRC congregation, I have made a public profession of faith and reaffirm that profession (see 2016 *Profession of Faith* form).*
___ Yes
- Please provide the name and contact information of someone within your church or classis who would be able to attest to your spiritual maturity and moral integrity.*
(This reference will be contacted by a member of the board, and information will be shared only with the board itself.)
- By clicking “I accept” below, I indicate my willingness to be contacted by a member of the Office of General Secretary and/or the Loan Fund Board.*

Submission

- Is there any additional information you would like to share?
- By submitting this form, I am stating that the information is correct, and I am willing to be contacted by a representative of the CRCNA, Calvin University, or Calvin Theological Seminary. I understand that the information shared here may be used in my synodical biographical description, with the exception of contact information, which is used only for internal CRCNA purposes.*

Diversity Connection Advisory Committee Report

I. Mandate and membership

The Council of Delegates established the Diversity Connection Advisory Committee (DCAC; originally called the Diaspora and Ethnic Ministry Advisory Committee) on a provisional basis in spring 2025 in order to “listen to the perspectives of CRCNA members and leaders of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds regarding their engagement within our denomination’s ecclesiastical system and to advise the COD and its committees on policies and activities” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 451).

The COD selects six of its members to serve on the committee, with particular attention given to members of the COD committees supporting the work of CRC agencies and the Office of General Secretary. In addition, the general secretary annually invites up to six guests from among the preceding year’s delegates to synod who represent the ethnic diversity of the denomination. The members of the DCAC Committee for 2025-2026 were Andre Van Ryk (chair), Linda VanSligtenhorst, Debra Jallim, Rachel Bouwkamp, Christian Pedersen, and Doug Fakkema, and guests were Joseph Hunsuk Bae, Julia Alonzo, Aaron Solomon-Mills, and Ruben Aguilar. The committee met by videoconference on January 7 and April 2, 2026.

II. Annual report on activities

The DCAC is responsible to advise the COD and its committees about the effectiveness of the CRCNA’s efforts to enfold ethnic-minority members and leaders into our denomination’s ecclesiastical governance (synod, classis, council, and Council of Delegates). It also is tasked to report to the COD and its committees about the results of efforts to live out our denomination’s vision as expressed in the synodical report *God’s Diverse and Unified Family* (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 595-619; crcna.org/sites/default/files/diversefamily.pdf).

Because the committee formed this past year, there was no established format for accomplishing these tasks. A main focus of the committee’s work so far has been to discuss the best way to recognize the efforts of ethnically diverse groups in the CRCNA. In recent years synod has celebrated the work of specifically identified groups at the synod banquet. However, that approach can create gaps of several years in the reporting by any group. The committee also recognized synod’s response to an overture asking that Consejo Latino be given space to “report on their work and to share resources with the CRCNA” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 419). Synod responded by assigning Resonate Global Mission to work on an appropriate pathway for such reports (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820). This committee has inherited that assignment from Resonate.

After some consideration, the DCAC decided to request reports from each of the identified ethnic groups (see Addendum to this report). These reports will be included regularly with the DCAC report to the COD and synod for

discussion and reflection. The committee is thankful for all who shared about the work God has been doing within their communities and prays that this information may help to encourage and challenge the entire CRCNA to consider how to live more fully into the vision of the diverse family of God “chosen for eternal life and united in true faith” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 54).

III. Reflection on CRC diversity efforts

As the committee considered how it could contribute helpfully to the conversation around diversity in the CRCNA and various connections to denominational systems, it reviewed the synodically mandated denominational diversity reports as well as the summary of various groups’ experiences within the CRCNA.

Synod itself has set several diversity goals for the denomination. In 2005, it challenged the classes to send at least one ethnic-minority delegate to synod (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 756). Although this goal has not been reached, we do note that for the first time in several years there is a sufficient number of ethnic-minority delegates so that ethnic advisers are not needed at Synod 2026 (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, III, B, 2, b). This year, twenty classes are sending at least one delegate from a non-Anglo background. We are thankful for this steady progress and for examples of instances in which newcomers feel embraced by the existing CRCNA community. We remind classes of the “One Family Conversation” resources available through the Office of General Secretary (with support from Thrive) to support classes seeking to grow in their capacity to engage issues of diversity (see *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 80-82).

Synod has also requested information about the place of diversity in each agency’s strategic plan and in our progress toward the goal of 25 percent ethnic-minority representation (*Acts of Synod 2013*, pp. 629, 831-32; *Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 829). These reports are processed through the Ministries Leadership Council (MLC) and the COD. All of the CRCNA agencies and institutions have sought to recruit diverse staff and to address issues of diversity, including efforts to combat racial bias both in the workplace and in their areas of ministry. Unfortunately, progress toward the goal of 25 percent representation to include diverse voices on our boards has stalled, and we recognize the importance of making this a priority. Current percentages are presented in the COD supplementary report (section III, H, 2).

With regard to the experience of individual communities, reports indicate both joys and concerns. Almost a third of the CRCNA’s 925 congregations draw from ethnic backgrounds that are not predominantly Anglo. Some groups, notably Koreans and Hispanics, have seen dramatic growth and increased participation in denominational systems. Other groups, especially the Black and Reformed Network and Indigenous communities, have seen declining numbers and face challenges in leadership development. All of

these communities have expressed that they recognize the ongoing importance of maintaining ways to connect with denominational systems, and we are grateful to hear about efforts to prioritize the development of resources in the various languages spoken in our churches.

Written reports do not adequately capture the range of activities in our various ethnic-minority networks, however. To address this gap, Synod 2024 asked Resonate Global Mission to work with Consejo Latino to find ways to report directly to synod about work being done in that community (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820). Recognizing that the CRCNA contains a number of diverse representatives, however, the MLC and COD are recommending that synod provide space this year in plenary session for all of the groups represented in this report to share joys and concerns about the work God is doing in their networks, rather than merely reporting through Resonate (see the COD supplementary report, section III, H, 4 and recommendation JJ). We are encouraged by this suggestion, and we hope that in years to come we can establish a regular pattern of sharing and celebration to provide greater visibility for the ministries in our ethnically diverse congregations.

More discussion is needed regarding the denomination's effectiveness at making diversity a comprehensive piece of the CRC's ministry efforts. In the end, growth in the area of diversity in pursuit of a Revelation 7 vision is obviously a work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of every member and leader in the CRC—from both the majority and minority cultures. But we recognize that concrete strategies, such as synod's recommendations about ethnic-minority representation on boards and at synod, can play a role in this work. We are thankful to find very few stories of hostility in the CRC toward ethnic minorities—and in fact the very opposite: again and again we hear of welcome embrace. But work remains as we continue the ministry that God has called us to do side by side as long-established groups in the CRC and as groups who are new to our part of God's family. This group plans to pick up that conversation again in the fall.

In the end, our goal in this conversation is not (just) to share the experiences of certain ethnic groups but to foster conversations about the ability of the CRCNA to integrate all of the diverse voices God has given us, including those of multicultural church settings. We encourage churches to review the reports in the Addendum that follows, and to join synod in bringing the joys and concerns of these networks before God in prayer.

IV. Evaluation and continued work

The Diversity Connection Advisory Committee was originally formed with the intention of evaluating its effectiveness after its first year of work (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 600-1). Given the relatively short time since the committee started its work, we believe it would be better to delay this evaluation for another year to more accurately assess whether the efforts of the DCAC are making a difference in deepening relationships and shared ministry efforts across ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the CRCNA.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod take note of the reports provided by representatives of the major ethnic groups within the CRCNA and make space to hear about and celebrate the work God's Spirit is doing within these communities.

Ground: This fulfills the request of Synod 2024 to create a pathway for Consejo Latino and other groups to "report on their work and to share resources with the CRCNA" (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 419; see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820).

B. That synod take note of the COD's intention to review the work of the Diversity Connection Advisory Committee at the two-year mark instead of this year (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 600-1) due to the brief time in which the group has been able to begin its work.

Diversity Connection Advisory Committee
Andre Van Ryk (chair)

ADDENDUM

Experiences of Specific Groups within the CRCNA

I. Background

The Diversity Connection Advisory Committee requested representatives of each of the six identified ethnic-minority communities in the CRCNA to briefly share a few concrete items that could be passed along to the wider denomination. Specifically, each representative was asked the following:

- What opportunities or victories have you experienced in the work your group does across the CRC?
- Where have you seen challenges and setbacks in your ministry?
- What prayer requests can you share with your brothers and sisters across the CRC?

The answers from each group are compiled below.

II. Consejo Latino

A. *Opportunities and victories*

We celebrate recognition within the denomination, the establishment of Revelation University (an institution in Florida offering accessible religious education), the Luke 10 and SLIM programs (Spanish-language training for church leadership), City to City trainings (Flourishing Churches), a connection to Multiplication Network Ministries, and the development of Calvin Theological Seminary's programs in Spanish. In addition, the Latino community has been active in planting churches across North America as well as in building relationships with and celebrating the growth of Reformed churches in Venezuela. In addition, a memorandum of understanding was signed with Reformed congregations in the Dominican Republic. We have enjoyed being part of the CRC's conversations about promoting a global denomination, providing

leadership to development of the stance on sexuality, and participating in synod and in the Abide network within the CRC, as well as with Life-way Churches. We are seeking to train multiplication network coaches and have published materials for Latino churches, including materials for youth groups, marriages, and translations of training certificates.

B. Challenges and setbacks

Some of the challenges include a need for improved connection with Spanish-speaking pastors, a better connection with agencies (Thrive, Re-Frame Ministries), engaging young leaders in the call to ministry, and work in the wider community. The general culture of the CRCNA is one obstacle to connection with agencies in particular.

C. Prayer requests

We humbly ask for prayers in the following areas as we continue to serve the Latino community within our denomination:

1. For deeper connections and unity: Please pray that God would break down cultural and organizational barriers that sometimes hinder our full integration and collaboration within the CRCNA. Specifically, pray for the following:
 - stronger, more meaningful connections between Latino pastors and the broader denominational leadership
 - better partnership and communication with CRC agencies like Thrive and ReFrame Ministries, that cultural differences would become bridges rather than obstacles
 - wisdom and grace as we navigate the general culture of the CRCNA while maintaining our unique cultural identity and contributions
2. For the next generation of Latino leaders: Pray earnestly for young Latino leaders who are discerning God's call to ministry. Ask the Lord to do the following:
 - ignite passion for pastoral ministry among Latino young people
 - provide mentorship, resources, and pathways (through institutions like Calvin Seminary's Spanish programs and others) that equip them for effective service
 - raise up a new generation that is bilingual, bicultural, and deeply committed to the gospel
 - open doors for collaboration with organizations like World Renew to engage young leaders in holistic ministry
3. For fruitfulness in church planting and community impact: Pray for the continued growth and multiplication of Latino churches within the CRC. Please intercede for the following:
 - church-planting efforts that are reaching unchurched Latino communities across North America

- our ongoing relationships with churches in Venezuela and the Dominican Republic, that these partnerships would strengthen both our international connections and our witness
- effectiveness in community work—that our churches would not only gather for worship but also scatter to serve, transforming neighborhoods with the love of Christ
- the development of culturally relevant resources (materials for youth groups, marriages, discipleship) that equip our congregations for ministry

We are deeply grateful for your partnership in the gospel and for the privilege of serving together as one body with many members. Thank you for standing with us in prayer.

III. Korean Ministers Association

The CRCNA Korean Ministers Association (KMA), formerly the Korean Council, serves as the representative body for ethnic-Korean ministers and Korean-speaking ministries within the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The KMA is committed to strengthening bonds of fellowship, fostering the renewal of local churches, and ensuring effective communication within the broader denomination.

The KMA strives to hold a unique space for leaders and ministries with a shared story while navigating the complexities of a complicated immigrant history in various Korean-American and Korean-Canadian contexts. The KMA seeks to continue to create opportunities for mutual encouragement to help strengthen ministers and ministries to serve more effectively, contributing to the collective history and shared calling of the Christian Reformed family.

A. Opportunities and victories

1. The Korean ministry remains a vibrant and essential demographic within the CRCNA: out of 918 CRCNA churches, 110 are ethnically Korean, and 107 are primarily Korean-speaking; there are 213 ethnically Korean pastors out of a denominational total of 1,308.
2. The 2026 Seattle Gathering (Apr. 20-23): For the first time in our history, Korean-speaking and English-speaking ministers convened for a joint gathering in Seattle. The week consisted of language-specific tracks for continuing-education opportunities in addition to times of fellowship and mutual edification. We are thankful for the historic opportunity to bring together both Korean-speaking and English-speaking ministers. We pray that God will continue to use all our ethnic-Korean ministers to be a blessing to the Christian Reformed family.
3. Governance: The KMA Steering Committee, consisting of regional leaders (the stated clerks of Classis Hanmi and KoAm), meets monthly to respond to the ongoing needs of ethnic-Korean ministers and Korean-speaking ministries.

4. Korean-Language Church Order Translation Task Force: Recently the Translation Task Force met in Phoenix, Arizona (Mar. 8–10, 2026) to finalize a comprehensive revision of the Korean-language Church Order. This project ensures that our governing documents are accurate, readable, and consistent for the Korean-speaking community.

B. Prayer requests

1. Addressing the "gap" in specialized support: Since the dissolution of the Korean Ministry Office, many Korean-speaking churches feel a lack of specialized consultation. Please pray for the continued development of necessary resources and training that will help these churches internalize Reformed theology and CRCNA traditions more deeply.
2. Cultivating new leadership: Pray for the identification and mentoring of potential leaders and church planters. We seek God's wisdom in creating robust pipelines to inspire the next generation to serve within the CRCNA.
3. Identity and education: Pray that Korean-speaking churches would continue to grow in their identity as essential members of the CRCNA, and that the KMA, in partnership with the denominational office and agencies, may have the wisdom to provide the necessary education and resources needed to make this a reality.

IV. Native American and Indigenous Ministry

The CRCNA has a long history of ministry in the Four Corners area of the southwestern United States, as well as a presence through Indigenous ministry centers in Denver, Colorado, and in several Canadian cities. Because of the role that Indigenous Ministry plays in Canada, additional information about that work can be found in the Canadian Ministries report (section IV) in the *Agenda for Synod 2026* or at crcna.org/indigenous.

A. Opportunities and victories

1. The ownership of Whitehorse Lake CRC in Classis Red Mesa was recently turned over to the local congregation as part of an ongoing strategy to foster local control over deeds to mission stations originally owned by Resonate's predecessor agency, Christian Reformed Home Missions.
2. Classis Red Mesa continues to cultivate a culture of leadership development, with a robust Leadership Development Network that meets twice a month to raise up new pastors, commissioned pastors, and members licensed to exhort within the classis.
3. In fall 2025, fifteen students in the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) took part in a four-day "connection trip" designed for learning about the impact of residential schools on Indigenous ministry in Canada, deepening the participants' understanding of pastoral ministry within this context.

B. Challenges and setbacks

1. In Classis Red Mesa, historically the center of CRC ministry among the native population in North America, very few ministers of the Word are available to lead congregations.
2. An increasing number of young people on the Navajo and Zuni reservations see the Christian faith as something foreign to their own experience.

C. Prayer requests

1. Pray that God will move Native American and Indigenous peoples to an awareness of Christ and the gospel, and that churches in these settings may become rallying points for leaders to direct their efforts toward building up communities where people gather and work in their local spaces.
2. Pray for avenues for current leaders working in Indigenous spaces to find support and leadership well-being.

V. Black and Reformed Network

A. Opportunities and victories

We celebrate God's provision of young leaders such as Chris Kingdom-Grier, Aaron Solomon-Mills, and Ericka Williams-White.

B. Challenges and setbacks

1. Significant challenges have accompanied the disaffiliation of multiracial churches such as Pullman CRC (Chicago, Ill.), Roseland Christian Ministries (Chicago), Grace CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.), Washington D.C. CRC, and Oakdale Park CRC (Grand Rapids), which historically pulled the denomination into experiencing the expansion of racial justice and the gifts of leadership that helped it live into the Revelation 7 vision. In addition, closings such as Coit CRC in Grand Rapids have contributed to the decrease as well.
2. The Black and Reformed Network has largely ceased to exist because the present leaders have either resigned or left the CRC, and the low numbers and slow growth of African Americans in the CRC makes it hard to replace this network.

C. Prayer requests

1. Pray for ways of growing young leaders and succession orientations that would usher these leaders in the right way.
2. Ask God to provide ways to ease the heavy burden of sustaining the faith of younger leaders in the CRC for the long haul.
3. Join in lament and pray for God's Spirit for guidance as African American leaders do their best to reverse the current reality and raise up new African American leaders and churches in the CRC.

World Renew Review

I. Background and methodology

Synod 2025 brought forward a previous practice of review for the CRCNA-related ministries, agencies, and institutions. The annual review cycle was paused to allow governance structure changes to be fully implemented, noting that it was difficult to conduct a wholesome review in the time of transition (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 601-2). This report represents the resumption of the scheduled review cycle under the new methodology.

Synod deemed that these reports should be informative and inspirational, seeking to outline how the partnership under review fulfilled the four milestones: prayer and spiritual practices; every generation; diversity and unity; and sharing the gospel. The purpose was not to be an organizational review of budget, finance, staffing, or other elements related to the structure of the organization. The review was to focus on the alignment of the ministry, agency, or institution to their mandate from synod within the context of the milestones. Note was to be made of any applicable metrics that supported and underlined alignment with the Ministry Plan.

In keeping with the methodology adopted by Synod 2025, this review was conducted by a panel of COD members (Robert Drenten, Jeff Dykema, and Roy Heerema); World Renew Board members (Harry Bergshoeff, Ben VanderWindt); and the World Renew codirectors, Carol Bremer-Bennett and Peter Timmerman; and was facilitated by Office of General Secretary staff members Roberta Vriesema and Zoe Sherman.

Foundational meetings were held in early January of this year as part of the determination on how to move forward with the revised review. The review panel convened on March 13 and March 26. This report results from those review meetings.

II. Ministry evaluation through the lens of *Our Journey*

A. Review of synodical mandate

After the Red River Valley flooding of 1950 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, as well as the 1953 flooding in Ontario and the Netherlands, Synod 1959 received a request to create a permanent worldwide relief organization. A study committee was formed by Synod 1960, responding favorably to recommend the establishment of a “World-wide Relief and Services Committee of [the CRCNA’s] Deacons’ Conferences to administer all of our works of mercy in such areas where the local congregation is unable to do so” (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 40). Formalized by Synod 1962, a mandate was adopted for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) “to minister in the name of our Lord to man distressed by reason of the violence of nature, the carnage of war or other calamities of life, and to relieve the suffering of the needy of the world. . . .” (*Acts of Synod 1962*, pp. 106-7, 333). From its earliest days, World Renew’s work was shaped not only by disasters in Canada

and the United States but also by a growing denominational conviction to respond to global crises such as problems emerging from the Korean War, major disasters in Asia, and the widespread hunger affecting much of the world. Over the years the primary purpose and focus for World Renew has remained the same.

B. Prayer and spiritual practices

World Renew has developed an intentionally vibrant prayer life. Leaders of the organization surrender their work to prayer because they have witnessed how the Holy Spirit has moved through their prayers. They recognize that prayer must be the first, and sometimes even the only, response in their service. More significantly, World Renew recognizes the need for prayer partnership with CRCNA churches for their collective work and invites churches into shared prayer.

When disaster strikes a community or a need becomes present, World Renew may or may not be called to that particular space to bring support. Prayer, however, is an act of faith and surrender that can always be taken. World Renew prays weekly and consistently with board members to discern the direction and actions of the organization. Important meetings are bathed in prayer, sometimes with more people praying for the meeting than people at the meeting. World Renew believes prayer to be a vital, sacred rhythm.

Through prayer, World Renew has been reminded that their mission to extend Christ's compassion to others around the world is bigger than themselves or the CRCNA. World Renew has been humbled and honored that God continues to allow World Renew to have such an impact in disaster response and community development. Often, a well-cultivated prayer life is the fruit of such work in itself. In discussing this, a member of World Renew shared a story from 2013 where they were responding to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Although World Renew faced delays in procuring resources, members of the local community were deeply grateful that the volunteers continued to walk alongside them in prayer and partnership throughout that time of waiting. The power and impact of World Renew's commitment to prayer goes beyond the tangible support and relief the organization provides.

The World Renew leaders also recognize justice as a core spiritual practice the organization focuses on. Working towards justice and reconciliation with a gospel lens strengthens one's relationship with God and their community. World Renew looks to Micah 6:8 to challenge them to continually seek God's kingdom here on earth and to encourage congregations to engage in justice as a spiritual practice.

C. Every generation

World Renew engages people of all ages in its mission, with particularly strong intergenerational involvement through its volunteer-driven Disaster Response Services (DRS). Disaster Response Services' week-long trip

groups are known to consist of volunteers as young as 14 and as old as 85. World Renew is experiencing an increasing number of churches and families sending intergenerational groups on DRS trips. The 2025 spring break season was especially impactful. Thirteen college groups served, contributing to a total of 1,027 volunteers serving on week-long trips throughout the year. At the time of this report, 15 college groups were already underway in their service to disaster-affected communities across North America. In all these instances, the older generations are invited to cast the vision for Christ-focused servitude. Older generations are some of the strongest supporters of World Renew and its work. In Canada, World Renew was formed and mandated when many of them were new immigrants. There is a strong link that can be nourished between socially conscious young people and the older generations.

World Renew has expressed, though, that while service trips are a fantastic way to get people exposed to the CRCNA and service work, they are short-term. World Renew recognizes that their work uniquely appeals to Generation-Z's social awareness. With their donor and volunteer base aging, World Renew's marketing and communication strategies have been changing to better communicate with the younger audience. World Renew has also made efforts to connect to students at Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, Redeemer University, Kings College, and Dordt University through service trips, guest speaking, and teaching classes, although staffing continually poses a challenge.

By the very nature of World Renew's work, their programs empower people in every generation to live into the lives of flourishing God desires for them. In many of the countries in which World Renew works, young people make up a majority of the population. In Africa, over 60% of the population is made up of people aged 15–25. World Renew organizes youth running clubs in Africa where kids and teens are partnered with an adult mentor and are taught about healthy bodies and relationships. World Renew also supports community programs that are dependent on intergenerational involvement. Some programs work alongside communities to strengthen opportunities for young people to develop skills, contribute meaningfully to local initiatives, and build a sense of purpose and belonging as part of broader community renewal efforts.

Another area in which World Renew serves every generation is in the development of curriculum. Partnerships with Christian Schools in Canada allowed World Renew to develop curriculum focusing on justice and finding best practices in service to their communities. World Renew has also worked with farming organizations including Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Growing Hope Globally, and Future Farmers of America to develop curriculum that leads to multi-generational projects. Projects like these have a compounding impact on growing a service mindset in the broader community.

D. Diversity and unity

The milestone of diversity and unity is central to the very bones of World Renew. In these particular conversations, the panel focused on World Renew's Canadian Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program and their established relationships with other denominations and organizations.

The Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program (RSRP) of World Renew in Canada is nationwide and has been extremely successful. World Renew's RSRP partners with Christian Reformed churches, other denominations, and other faith-based organizations to sponsor and resettle refugees in Canada. Partners provide all financial and non-financial support for the refugees they are sponsoring for their first year in Canada. The RSRP provides expertise, guidance, and support to churches throughout the sponsorship process, training sponsors to meet government requirements and providing a healthy welcome to newcomers. In addition, the RSRP builds awareness for refugee justice by engaging in advocacy and equipping their sponsorship volunteers to advocate with them regarding the broader global context of the challenges and injustices that refugees face. As of March 31, 2026, the RSRP is partnering with 56 Christian Reformed churches across Canada to resettle 289 refugees to Canada. World Renew's refugee work is much more prominent in Canada because of a collective decision for the organization to step back from refugee work in the United States to create space for Bethany Christian Services; this was discussed as a self-imposed constraint to World Renew's work.

World Renew works extensively with other denominations, organizations, and governmental entities around the world because they recognize that the need for reconciliation and justice goes far beyond what World Renew or the CRCNA could accomplish on their own. World Renew's mandate is not evangelism, but a Christ-centered ministry of mercy—responding to disaster, hunger, and poverty in ways that demonstrate God's love through action and strengthen the witness of local churches and communities. This approach to outreach is why World Renew is invited into so many spaces where they have the opportunity to testify to the work God is doing through their organization and the programs they've developed. World Renew is a part of many alliances, including the Act Alliance and the World Council of Churches, and is connected to the ecumenical relationships of the CRCNA through the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee. Because of World Renew's distinction in their mission, governments are also more apt to provide crucial funding.

Collaborating with other organizations has strengthened World Renew's Reformed roots and commitment to the CRCNA. In its work, World Renew has partnered with hundreds of other churches and Christian organizations to implement community development, disaster response, and justice programs in over 30 countries. World Renew provides Christian Reformed churches with opportunities to learn about and tangibly connect with the

diversity of the global body of believers; Revelation 7:9 depicts this wonderful vision as “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.”

E. Sharing the gospel

World Renew testifies that the common thread of community development is spiritual transformation. World Renew helps people experience a holistic gospel vision. Service is used as a means to show people God’s mercy and compassion.

World Renew affirms that community development is rooted in spiritual transformation and a holistic vision of the gospel. Through compassionate service, World Renew seeks to reflect God’s mercy and love, accompanying people and communities who are often remote or made most vulnerable by disaster, poverty, and injustice. This posture of service opens doors for World Renew to be invited into diverse and unlikely spaces.

As World Renew walks alongside communities around the world, these experiences also shape and renew the church in North America. Volunteers and partners return to their congregations with stories of God at work—stories that encourage churches to see God’s kingdom more broadly and to rediscover the gospel’s call to love, humility, and faithful service.

III. World Renew’s relationship with the CRCNA

A. Connections within

World Renew’s work is deeply intertwined with that of the CRCNA and the individual churches within the denomination. Please see the addendum provided by World Renew to learn of the specific connections.

The work of World Renew and Resonate Global Mission are often likened; however, the mandates and focuses remain distinct. The two entities share the support and fellowship of the same theological background but are independently run. World Renew operates as a distinct legal entity from the CRCNA as the denomination’s relief organization while Resonate operates as the CRCNA’s internal mission agency. In some countries, the two entities share a presence, but their footprint is different as their mandates are different. World Renew’s calling often leads them into the most remote and oppressed areas of the world to provide disaster relief and support. Lines of communication are utilized to strengthen the other’s work and coordinate when necessary.

B. A Reformed foundation

World Renew’s work is committed to its Reformed theological roots and its shared life within the Christian Reformed Church. These commitments are expressed in the values and practices that guide World Renew’s programs and partnerships, including a deep respect for the dignity and sanctity of human life. Even in diverse international contexts, World Renew approaches sensitive issues with care, humility, and faithfulness, seeking to

communicate its convictions with compassion and integrity. This same thoughtfulness is reflected in World Renew's strong commitment to stewardship, transparency, and financial accountability.

World Renew lives into the church's mandate to seek out the lost and the suffering. This work is founded in the CRCNA's emphasis on both sin and grace. Our Reformed theology is sensitive to the profound scope of sin and misery and recognizes how sin negatively impacts everything God created to be good in this world. World Renew is the CRCNA's response to this brokenness as it relates to disasters and development. This theological understanding of how deep sin fractures our world leads to an even larger appreciation of God's grace and cements our hope in Jesus.

In reflecting on World Renew's approach, the panel affirmed that World Renew's work is firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. World Renew's commitment to justice and mercy is an expression of God's compassion, not a replacement for the saving work of Christ. With humility, World Renew carries out its calling knowing that it is not the savior of the world; rather, it seeks to serve faithfully, trusting that lasting transformation and flourishing are found in Jesus Christ alone.

C. Strengthening churches in North America

World Renew embodies a holistic vision of Christ-centered restoration. The stories and testimonies that World Renew staff and volunteers share in North America demonstrate how vast the transformative and renewing work of the Holy Spirit is. As World Renew gazes upon the brokenness of this world, leaders and volunteers seek to challenge those in North America to lift their heads to the world around them. World Renew hopes to inspire churches in North America and invites them to join in their endeavor to embody God's compassion and justice to those in their own communities.

D. Financial covenant

World Renew has been a faithful servant of the Lord's work in the CRCNA since 1962, growing in their mission to renew hope, reconcile lives, and restore creation. World Renew operates as a distinct legal entity and does not receive ministry shares. They are an entirely donor-based organization, dependent on support from individuals, churches, and grants. Throughout this process, the panel has reviewed and analyzed World Renew's commitment to the CRCNA and fulfillment of their mandate. The panel confidently concludes that World Renew is a blessing to the denomination and the world through their disaster relief and development work. We would, therefore, recommend that churches in the CRCNA remain confident in World Renew's work and leadership and approach their conventional financial support of World Renew with a renewed commitment. God willing, World Renew will continue to serve marginalized communities for years to come with the generosity of churches in the CRCNA.

E. Communicating God's goodness

World Renew carries the responsibility to communicate the ways in which the CRCNA is partnering with the Holy Spirit to transform lives—both in the tangible provision of needs and development and the intangible spiritual transformation of individuals and communities. However, World Renew has experienced challenges in finding ways to communicate these testimonies and results to the CRCNA, specifically in classis meetings. We would encourage classes to hold space for World Renew on a regular rotation, recognizing that classis agenda space is always a desired commodity. This can be further supported by encouraging local churches to utilize the willingness of World Renew to speak to them directly.

IV. Conclusion

World Renew's tracing of its origin to a 1962 Christian Reformed Church synodical mandate speaks to organizational history. However, the history of the organization only hints at the organic relationship that holds the CRCNA and World Renew together. A denomination that understands that both the curse of sin and the grace of Christ reach far and wide in God's creation is the denomination that shapes its mercy through World Renew in service to Christ. In word and deed, the Christian Reformed Church and World Renew are fitting partners in gospel service.

The committee is grateful to learn that this partnership is still vital to our work together. While working with a variety of agencies, serving in varied contexts across the globe, World Renew seeks to align faithfully with the Christian Reformed Church. Conversely, World Renew inspires and challenges the Christian Reformed Church to see the broader vision of the work Christ calls us to do.

Now is the time for the Christian Reformed Church and World Renew to commit anew to its historic partnership. Financial resources are stretched while fresh donor streams need to be developed. A generation which supported World Renew, giving time and treasure, now must be replenished with a new generation ready to continue the work. World Renew faces challenges of telling its story in compelling ways to a new audience.

The Christian Reformed Church and World Renew are strongest when they live intentionally into their shared history and partnership. These recommendations are offered to help keep that relationship vital and trustworthy, inviting the church to embody this shared ministry for the flourishing of communities, the health of the church, and the glory of God.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod receive the report of the World Renew review team for information in fulfillment of Synod 2025's instructions regarding the regular review of CRCNA agencies (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 455-56; *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 601-2).

B. That synod endorse and recommit to its covenantal relationship with World Renew.

C. That serious consideration be given to how the work of World Renew, intended to be an extension of the natural work of the local churches and classes, be truly supported by the same.

D. That synod encourage congregations and classes to be intentional in making reporting opportunities available for World Renew (section III, K and Appendix L).

Ground: It is believed that these opportunities will be inspirational and mutually beneficial for visiting missionaries and World Renew staff, and for the congregations and classes.

E. That synod urge local congregations to be encouraged and inspired by the example of World Renew to engage similarly with their communities (section III, K and Appendix L).

Ground: World Renew has many resources and ideas and would welcome invitations from CRCNA churches to come and share their stories.

F. That churches encourage their younger members to explore opportunities to serve with and to support World Renew.

World Renew Review Team

Harry Bergshoeff
Carol Bremer-Bennett
Robert Drenten
Jeff Dykema
Roy Heerema

Zoe Sherman
Peter Timmerman
Ben VanderWindt
Roberta Vriesema

ADDENDUM

World Renew and CRCNA Connections

I. Governance and accountability connections

World Renew U.S. and World Renew Canada are both ministries of the CRCNA, each governed by a board while still accountable to synod through reports, reviews, and a shared ecclesial identity. Ongoing dialogue occurs through meetings and review processes involving CRCNA leadership and staff (e.g., Connections Committee conversations).

II. Congregational and classical engagement

World Renew serves CRCNA congregations through the following:

- Disaster Response Services (DRS) in North America:
 - Offers congregations meaningful opportunities to serve while remaining aligned with the CRCNA's best practices and diaconal calling.
 - Provides well-established, safeguarded pathways for volunteer involvement in North America.
 - Engages church groups, intergenerational groups, and youth groups (see chart at the end of this section).

- Incorporates trauma-informed approaches.
- Builds strong partnerships with local communities.
- Focuses on defined volunteer roles that meet real needs without displacing local capacity.
- Refugee Sponsorship and Resettlement Program (RSRP).
- Presentations at classis meetings, congregational events, local Christian primary and secondary schools, and denominational gatherings.

The chart below breaks down the denominational demographics of DRS volunteers. A significant portion of DRS volunteers come from CRCNA congregations reflecting the denomination's deep commitment to compassionate response.

Demographics of DRS volunteers

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Group volunteers (mostly youth)</i>	<i>3-week volunteers</i>	<i>Total volunteers</i>	<i>% Overall</i>
CRCNA	509	420	929	69.3%
RCA	174	53	227	16.9%
Nondenominational	26	23	49	3.7%
ARC	30	11	41	3.1%
Kingdom Network	16	23	39	2.9%
ECO Presbyterian	34	0	34	2.5%
Orthodox Presbyterian	22	0	22	1.6%

III. Formation, diaconal support, and shared learning

World Renew provides resources and support to congregations to help churches deepen their understanding of global realities and their shared calling with the body of Christ. The CRCNA's relationship with World Renew supports the denomination's diaconal calling to help churches engage their local and global communities with wisdom and humility.

World Renew provides formation, support, and learning opportunities through the following:

- equipping churches with formation resources rooted in Reformed theology and best practices (e.g., When Helping Hurts, asset-based community development, partnership discernment, Climate Witness Project);
- offering lectures and workshops at Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary;
- supporting CRCNA Justice Ministries (e.g., Do Justice, Indigenous Ministries, Centre for Public Dialogue);
- working with Diaconal Ministries Canada and partaking in other US diaconal conferences; and
- connecting with Candidacy to support new pastors.

The Church and Community Engagement (CaCE) team serves as a primary relational resource for CRCNA congregations discerning their calling in

global and local engagement. World Renew's CaCE staff walk alongside churches at various stages of engagement, offering the following:

- o theological framing for diaconal and global engagement;
- o discernment conversations with church leaders and councils;
- o guidance on healthy, values-aligned partnership models;
- o connections to trusted World Renew partners and learning opportunities; and
- o ongoing coaching grounded in humility, mutuality, and a long-term perspective.

World Renew also facilitates Connection Tours and other global learning experiences that enable CRCNA congregations to listen to and learn directly from global partners. These experiences are intentionally designed as formation and learning opportunities, rather than service trips, and emphasize the following:

- o listening to local leadership and community voices;
- o understanding the complexities of poverty, disaster, and development; and
- o building long-term commitment grounded in relationships rather than transactions.

IV. Financial partnership and stewardship

World Renew was established to do the diaconal work of the CRCNA and has never received ministry shares. Congregations, classes, and members financially support World Renew through denominational giving, designated offerings, and shared initiatives. Synod encourages churches to take four offerings per year for World Renew. This can be done anytime, but there are four designated Sundays to assist with deacons' planning. Those Sundays are Canadian Foodgrains Bank and DRS Sunday, Mother's Day, Refugee Sunday, and World Hunger Sunday; some churches also add Thanksgiving and Christmas offerings. Just over 50% of CRCNA congregations take offerings for World Renew (45% of US churches and 80% of Canadian churches). This partnership enables the CRCNA to have a global reach beyond what individual congregations could accomplish alone.

V. Prayer, worship, and spiritual life

World Renew participates in and invites CRCNA churches to join them in the following practices:

- praying for disaster-affected communities;
- utilizing justice-focused worship resources; and
- sharing global testimonies that enrich congregational faith and discipleship.

Council of Delegates Response to Overture 6

The Council of Delegates submits the following in response to Overture 6, calling for “Confessional Integrity of Denominational Employees, Writers, Boards, and Agencies” (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 340).

I. Overview: Overture 6

Classis Iakota has presented an overture to Synod 2026 requesting that ministry staff employed by denominational agencies and those who populate volunteer boards are in alignment with the CRC’s confessional positions. The overture observes that the people in these positions “exercise significant influence over policy, communication, and direction of the CRCNA” and should therefore be in alignment with our shared confessions.

The COD agrees with the basic premise of the overture, namely that the ministries of the denomination should be carried out in accordance with its confessional convictions. The COD presents these comments to inform synod of current conviction alignment expectations for boards and CRCNA staff members.

II. Confessional alignment for boards

Synod 2024 responded to overtures calling for a review of board practices related to doctrinal alignment by instructing the boards and institutions of the CRCNA to review their policies related to confessional subscription and to revise them as necessary (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 880). The COD and other institutional boards have done so, and synod has commended the ongoing efforts to ensure a robustly Reformed set of standards for board membership (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 613, 666-67, 691). Synod 2025 further requested that all synodically appointed bodies provide rubrics for membership that include a commitment to Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76). Those materials are included in the COD supplementary report (Appendix J) in keeping with the instructions of synod, and reflect an ongoing commitment of our agencies and institutions to be governed in accordance with our shared understanding of Scripture and of God’s call on us as a denomination.

III. Confessional alignment for staff

Confessional alignment of staff was a significant concern of two overtures to Synod 2023 (see *Agenda for Synod 2023*, pp. 540-46) and the COD submitted comments in response (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 794-95). However, Synod 2023 did not offer a specific response to the COD’s comments about staff alignment with the confessions.

It is a reasonable expectation that staff working for the denominational agencies and ministry offices (Canada and U.S.) faithfully support the denomination’s mission. As noted in the 2023 COD response, this concern was addressed already in 2017 with the adoption of a policy for church member-

ship and confessional conformity of personnel. The 2017 policy was updated in spring 2023. The policy distinguishes between “direct ministry positions” (including leadership) and “support ministry positions.” Direct ministry positions are those which “encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of word and deed witness to Christ and his kingdom” (Church Order, Art. 76-a), and require professing membership in the CRCNA or a church in communion as well as the signing of a covenant statement indicating commitment to the doctrines of the CRCNA. Support ministry positions “provide organizational and administrative assistance so that direct ministry staff members can do the ministry work entrusted to them by synod” (e.g., payroll administrator). Such positions include the following qualification: “Able to respect and support the mission, vision, and values of the CRCNA. Recognition that the CRCNA desires a profession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and active involvement in a Christian congregation.”

As noted in 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 794-95), the denomination remains bound to federal and provincial/state laws governing employment that regulate religious tests for employment. However, denominational leadership exercises discernment in hiring practices in accordance with the interests of the denomination and applicable laws permitting the use of “bona-fide occupational qualifications” for religious organizations. Ongoing review of the ways in which this discernment is applied is a regular part of denominational human resources practice.

IV. Concluding observations

The COD recognizes the important value of denominational leadership alignment with our confessions, as expressed by this overture. The COD and staff leadership desire to build trust with CRCNA congregations and believe that current policy and practices safeguard staff and board commitment to the CRCNA’s understanding of Scripture and the direction set by synod.

Note: This communication is submitted to synod per the “Right of Comment” protocols that guide the processes by which staff and boards respond to an overture or report on synod’s agenda in keeping with the principles established by the Rules for Synodical Procedure and other governance documents.

Thrive Report on Disaffiliation Discernment

I. Background

A. Challenging Conversations Toolkit (2020-2022)

As the committee working on the Human Sexuality Report (HSR) prepared to present their work to the churches for discussion at synod, Thrive (then Pastor Church Resources) recognized that many congregations had little experience dealing with a topic as sensitive and polarizing as human sexuality. At the same time, the HSR committee itself expressed concern that congregations and church members would not meaningfully interact with the HSR but would likely engage only if the report said “yes” or “no” to same-sex marriage. In consultation with representatives of the HSR committee, Thrive staff created a small group study guide based on the HSR. With the committee’s endorsement, the guide was released at the same time as the Human Sexuality Report. From 2020-2022, Thrive used that guide to help more than 80 churches organize and facilitate about 300 small groups, including about 2,500 participants. The resource supported prayer, study (of the HSR), and listening but did not support (and actively discouraged) decision making.

B. Next Steps Discernment (Phase 1: After Synods 2022 and 2023)

In 2022, Thrive began hearing from churches that synod’s decisions about the HSR, particularly the recommendations related to the confessional status of the clarification of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108, made them wonder if they could stay in the CRC or if it would be better to leave. They asked for resources to support both prayer/study/listening *and* decision making. Thrive developed *Next Steps Discernment* to support churches at this time. *Next Steps* begins with a discernment-readiness assessment focused on four questions:

1. Is my foremost desire that God’s will be done?
2. Do I understand the issues prompting this discernment?
3. Am I ready to steward my decision-making power well?
4. Is it necessary or helpful to do this now?

The resources then provide materials to help prepare hearts, increase understanding, and exercise a Church Order-compliant process for discernment and decision making.

From 2022-2023, many churches using this resource developed recommendations to remain with the CRC, to teach from the HSR, to refrain from officiating same-sex weddings, to restrict same-sex married individuals from serving in office, and to require officebearers not to teach or preach contrary to the HSR. These churches usually retained some discretion to permit officebearers to serve even if they held some private reservation.

C. Next Steps Discernment (Phase 2: After Synod 2024)

After Synod 2024, many churches were reckoning with the perceived loss of discretion they had thought they had (to permit officebearers to hold private reservations about the definition of “unchastity” and other confessional matters). This shift initiated a new round of discernment about whether it was wise to remain affiliated with the CRC. The *Next Steps* resource was revised accordingly, with fresh emphasis on communicating clearly synod’s decisions related to the matter of confessional subscription.

II. Current Thrive support for churches discerning disaffiliation

Thrive has had some degree of disaffiliation-discernment contact with 83 churches (and seven classes) since Synod 2024. Of those 83 churches, some engaged in the *Next Steps* process thoroughly, some engaged partially, and others merely sought advice and consultation. Among those 83 churches, 16 have completed a process of disaffiliation. Of the 67 churches that had contact with Thrive and have not disaffiliated, Thrive estimates that about 10 are settled in deciding to remain in the CRCNA.

A. Observations

1. The most common *practical* challenge identified by churches engaging in *Next Steps Discernment* is to understand what synod means when it says that officebearers must subscribe to the CRC’s confessions “without reservation.” Thrive has clarified that Synod 2025 provided space for officebearers and councils to exercise discretion in evaluating the persistence and seriousness of an officebearer’s doubts or questions. Nevertheless, these churches perceive that they are receiving contradictory messaging from the Church Order, the Covenant for Officebearers, synod, church visitors, and the Office of General Secretary. Depending on whom they listen to, they reason that they could stay or that it might be better to leave.
2. Almost as common are church leaders who are frustrated because they think that subscribing to the CRC’s confessions “without reservation” (depending on which voice they listen to) is an impossible standard more likely to discourage honest wrestling and to encourage secret doubting or unthinking assent.
3. Still others think that “without reservation” subscription is an unnecessarily restrictive standard that would prevent otherwise highly qualified (and much relied upon) leaders in their churches from serving. These churches believe they had been living faithfully and well under a practice that permitted some discretion for confessional *submission* and would prefer to continue to do so.
4. These churches are as likely to be dealing with officebearer reservations concerning covenant baptism and reprobation as they are to be dealing with reservations regarding synod’s clarification of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108.

5. The most common *relational* challenges identified by *Next Steps Discernment* churches are the following:
 - a. They report that others in the denomination sometimes do not seem to consider their misunderstanding or apprehension to be genuine.
 - b. They report that others in the denomination can seem to be more interested in evaluating their compliance than in meeting them where they are and practically accompanying them toward a more positive, Reformed vision of leadership and ministry.
 - c. These relational dynamics are complicated by the fact that these churches are not monolithic and sometimes contain people whose misunderstanding, apprehension, or resistance to compliance seems to be serving an unacknowledged agenda.
6. Among churches that are unsettled in deciding to remain in the CRCNA, the most commonly stated concerns (what they're watching warily) are the following:
 - a. Our denomination will actively or passively limit the roles of women in ecclesiastical office.
 - b. Our denomination will move into a confining theological direction that may further break up its congregations and impair, rather than enrich, their local mission and witness.
 - c. Our denomination will increasingly seek to control what can be done in local congregations.

B. Some editorial observations

1. Our denomination, through synod, seems to be wanting churches to embrace our doctrinal heritage more enthusiastically and overtly. Rather than having generic community churches with a Reformed identity hidden in the background, synod wants churches to reclaim their Reformed heritage and move it closer to the foreground. Synod hopes that officebearers in particular would not just accept Reformed doctrines but champion them. Alas, if these are the intended messages, they are not consistently getting through. Synod's decisions, particularly decisions perceived to limit council discretion, are being experienced as disruptive solutions to problems that a number of churches didn't think they had. As such, synod's decisions are experienced much more as a threat to the viability of these congregations than as an invitation to adapt or change. These churches are often open to some change, but they resent the sense of looming threat and mistrust they perceive underlying the changes resulting from synod's decisions.
2. We have lost about 70 churches to disaffiliation in the past few years. Many of those 70 seemed unwilling to submit to the CRCNA's practice and position in those years. It seems that we've got another, possibly similarly sized group of churches that are willing to *submit* but may not be willing or able to stay if affiliation requires the most literal definitions

- of “without reservation” subscription. This is the major practical hinge point for many of these congregational discernments.
3. It would be hard to overstate the depth and breadth of grief, confusion, and frustration Thrive has witnessed in this work in the past few years.

APPENDIX O

Financial Statements

Each year, synod provides delegates with a number of financial documents. These documents fall into three main groups and reflect the instructions of previous synods (cf. *Acts of Synod* 1998, pp. 439-40): the prior fiscal year-end balance sheets and income statements for each agency and institution are found in Appendix F of the Council of Delegates report (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 113-124); the investment allocations as well as the budgets for the upcoming fiscal year are presented in this Financial Statements Supplement.

This appendix contains the following documents:

- Budgets for Fiscal Year 2026-2027
- Investment summary

Further background information can be found in the COD Supplement, Sections V, E and V, F. Note that, per the decisions of Synods 2015, 2017, and 2023, which combined the operations of Resonate Global Mission, Thrive, and the Office of General Secretary into the general CRCNA operations, the budgets in this supplement include financial information for all three of those entities in a single document (*Acts of Synod* 2015, p. 680; *Acts of Synod* 2017, p. 621; *Acts of Synod* 2023, pp. 956-57).

Budget

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: CRC (Resonate, Office of General Secretary, Thrive, Ministry Boards, Canadian Ministries)

Budget: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

Income	Fiscal Year 25-26 Actual		Fiscal Year 26-27 Budget	
	Can Dollars	US Dollars	Can Dollars	US Dollars
	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
Ministry Shares	\$5,500	\$8,325	\$5,100	\$8,600
Above Ministry Shares	\$4,136	\$13,482	\$3,563	\$13,774
Grant Income	\$108	\$132	\$100	\$132
Investment Income	\$126	\$885	\$180	\$1,222
Product Revenue	\$110	\$703	\$136	\$526
Advertising Revenue	\$8	\$275	\$20	\$170
Other Revenue	\$100	\$54	\$120	\$308
Release from Restrictions	\$0	\$443	\$0	\$1,240
Service Allocations	\$2,435	\$4,879	\$2,589	\$4,560
Total Income	\$12,523	\$29,178	\$11,808	\$30,532

Expense				
OGS Admin	\$343	\$677	\$318	\$755
OGS Synodical Services	\$205	\$406	\$168	\$363
OGS Synodical Deputies	\$14	\$27	\$10	\$22
OGS Annual Synod Meeting	\$212	\$419	\$126	\$273
OGS Ecumenical Relations	\$36	\$69	\$28	\$60
OGS Judicial Committee	3	\$6	\$3	\$6
OGS Study Committees	\$8	\$16	\$6	\$10
OGS Stated Clerks gathering	\$14	\$3	\$1	\$1
OGS Historical Committee	\$39	\$78	\$40	\$86
OGS Ministry Plan	\$2	\$4	\$2	\$5
OGS Yearbook	20	65	23	42
OGS COD	\$33	\$65	\$34	\$88
OGS Candidacy	\$94	\$185	\$50	\$216
OGS Communication	\$136	\$269	\$229	\$288
OGS Banner	\$51	\$896	\$247	\$721
OGS Grants	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$55
OGS Expense Subtotal	\$1,210	\$3,185	\$1,285	\$2,991
TH Admin	\$23	\$924	\$270	\$709
TH Connect	\$160	\$312	\$177	\$352
TH Engage	\$260	\$505	\$125	\$597
TH Equip	\$353	\$684	\$157	\$621
TH Operations	\$208	\$403	\$115	\$436
TH Communications	\$0	\$0	\$15	\$72
TH-Grants	\$157	\$747	\$101	\$971
TH Expense Subtotal	\$1,161	\$3,575	\$960	\$3,758
RG Admin	\$664	\$1,717	\$688	\$1,337
RG Advancement	\$626	\$457	\$596	\$534
RG Advancement Communications	\$0	\$893	\$61	\$845
RG Asia	\$92	\$1,394	\$156	\$1,337
RG Church Planting Team	\$224	\$606	\$335	\$898
RG Eastern & Southern Africa	\$183	\$1,212	\$227	\$1,270
RG Europe	\$130	\$971	\$134	\$796
RG Global Mission Core Team	\$510	\$3,828	\$510	\$4,151
RG Latin America	\$0	\$1,806	\$118	\$1,922
RG Local Mission Core Team	\$396	\$1,102	\$481	\$1,141
RG Middle East	\$109	\$298	\$113	\$298
RG North American Engagement Team	\$680	\$1,467	\$629	\$1,321
RG West Africa	\$0	\$792	\$34	\$844
RG Expense Subtotal	\$3,614	\$16,543	\$4,082	\$16,694

MB Canadian Ministries	\$1,598	\$0	\$1,394	\$0
MB Faith Alive	\$110	\$624	\$121	\$572
MB Calvin Seminary	\$400	\$0	\$400	\$0
MB Calvin University	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Mgt & Gen Building	\$327	\$176	\$339	\$0
Mgt & Gen Finance	\$900	\$1,497	\$683	\$1,443
Mgt & Gen Gift Entry	\$187	\$171	\$190	\$148
Mgt & Gen Human Resources	\$214	\$802	\$274	\$714
Mgt & Gen Information Technology	\$578	\$1,313	\$794	\$1,371
Mgt & Gen Risk	\$0	\$97	\$0	\$85
Mgt & Gen Payroll	\$117	\$106	\$113	\$47
Mgt & Gen Ministry Support Services	\$166	\$716	\$156	\$608
Mgt & Gen Admin	\$591	\$1,280	\$643	\$1,098
MB Advancement	\$460	\$519	\$571	\$510
MB Advancement - Communications	\$121	\$0	\$42	\$76
MB Expense Subtotal	\$5,769	\$7,301	\$5,720	\$6,672
CRC Total Expense	\$11,754	\$30,604	\$12,047	\$30,115
Net Gain/Loss	\$769	-\$1,426	-\$239	\$417
Program %	68%	78%	64%	76%
Mgt & General %	21%	16%	20%	14%
Fund Raising %	10%	6%	11%	7%

OGS= Office of General Secretary

TH= Thrive

RG= Resonate Global

MB= Ministry Boards

Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.4286	1.3889
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7	0.72

Budget

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Agency: Calvin Theological Seminary

Budget: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year 25-26 US Dollars	Fiscal Year 26-27 US Dollars
Income	Actual	Budget
Ministry Shares	\$ 900	\$ 788
Above Ministry Shares	\$ 6,800	\$ 6,500
Net Tuition	\$ 760	\$ 900
Grant Income	\$ -	\$ -
Auxiliary Activities	\$ 843	\$ 995
Endowment Earnings	\$ 2,599	\$ 2,168
Other Revenue	\$ 340	\$ 90
Total Income	\$ 12,242	\$ 11,441
Expenses		
Instruction	\$ 3,690	\$ 3,750
Academic Support	\$ 1,190	\$ 1,122
Student Services	\$ 2,302	\$ 1,978
Auxiliary Activities	\$ 950	\$ 700
Mgt & General	\$ 2,401	\$ 2,300
Advancement	\$ 979	\$ 960
Total Expenses	\$ 11,512	\$ 10,810
Net Gain/Loss	\$ 730	\$ 631
Program %	71%	70%
Mgt & General %	21%	21%
Fund Rasing %	9%	9%

Budget
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Calvin University
Budget: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year 25-26 US Dollars	Fiscal Year 26-27 US Dollars
	Actual	Budget*
Income		
Net Tuition	\$ 59,338	\$ 56,190
Contributions/Sponsored Programs	\$ 3,977	\$ 4,238
Investment Income	\$ 5,544	\$ 5,856
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 7,090	\$ 7,937
Total Room & Board, Campus Store	\$ 21,466	\$ 20,353
Total Income	\$ 97,415	\$ 94,574
Expenses		
Salaries & Wages	\$ 49,897	\$ 48,657
Benefit Operating	\$ 15,150	\$ 13,860
Professional Services & Outside Contractors	\$ 20,654	\$ 17,259
Advertising & Promotion	\$ 1,225	\$ 855
Shared Services	\$ (741)	\$ (903)
Supplies & Equipment	\$ 3,108	\$ 2,679
Repairs & Maintenance	\$ 1,474	\$ 1,090
Utilities	\$ 3,588	\$ 3,954
Insurance	\$ 1,137	\$ 1,225
Dues & Memberships	\$ 460	\$ 421
Travel	\$ 2,044	\$ 1,912
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,725	\$ 1,913
Allocations	\$ (825)	\$ (763)
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 99,896	\$ 92,159
Transfers To/Transfers From		
Transfers To/Transfers From	\$ 71	\$ 8
Debt Service Transfer	\$ 4,563	\$ 4,563
Total Transfers(To)/Transfers From	\$ 4,634	\$ 4,571
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ (7,114)	\$ (2,153)
 One-time events	 \$ (7,114)	 \$ (2,153)
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ -	\$ -

Budget
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: Loan Fund
Budget: Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal 25-26 US Dollars	Fiscal 25-26 US Dollars
	Actual	Budget
Income		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
Contributions	\$ -	\$ 25
Loan Interest Income	\$ 525	\$ 531
Investment Income	\$ 110	\$ 85
Grants/Miscellaneous	\$ -	\$ -
Total Income	\$ 635	\$ 616
Expense		
Interest Expense	\$ 239	\$ 250
Mgt & General	\$ 369	\$ 344
Advancement	\$ 20	\$ 14
Total Expenses	\$ 628	\$ 608
Net Gain/Loss	\$ 7	\$ 8
 Program %	 38%	 41%
Mgt & General %	59%	57%
Fund Raising %	3%	2%

Budget
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Agency: ReFrame Ministries
Budget Fiscal Year ending June 30th (000's)

	Fiscal Year 25-26		Fiscal Year 26-27	
	Can Dollars	US Dollars	Can Dollars	US Dollars
Income	Actual	Actual	Budget	Budget
Ministry Shares	\$398	\$570	\$400	\$500
Above Ministry Shares	\$1,817	\$2,456	\$1,787	\$2,663
Grant Income	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Investment Income	\$0	\$0	\$31	\$250
Products Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Revenue	\$30	\$499	\$0	\$50
Total Income	\$2,245	\$3,525	\$2,218.00	\$3,463.00
Expenses				
Today Devotional	\$218	\$423	\$184	\$399
Church Juice	\$2	\$4	\$0	\$0
Groundwork	\$64	\$124	\$58	\$125
Family Fire	\$2	\$4	\$0	\$0
Think Christian	\$2	\$4	\$0	\$0
Kids Corner	\$61	\$119	\$56	\$120
Prayer Ministry	\$52	\$101	\$46	\$100
English	\$423	\$821	\$339	\$732
Korean Expenditures	\$9	\$18	\$8	\$18
Arabic Expenditures	\$27	\$53	\$33	\$71
Chinese Expenditures	\$267	\$493	\$238	\$515
French Expenditures	\$35	\$93	\$41	\$89
Hindi Expenditures	\$52	\$101	\$44	\$99
Indonesian Expenditures	\$74	\$143	\$65	\$142
Japanese Expenditure	\$177	\$344	\$157	\$337
Portuguese Expenditures	\$180	\$349	\$163	\$352
Russian Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Spanish Expenditures	\$81	\$158	\$70	\$151
Mgt & General	\$177	\$846	\$355	\$767
Advancement	\$277	\$850	\$291	\$628
Advancement Communications	\$100	\$171	\$77	\$166
Total Expense	\$2,280	\$5,219	\$2,225	\$4,811
Net Gain/Loss	-\$35	-\$1,694	-\$7	-\$1,348
Program %	76%	64%	68%	68%
Mgt & General %	8%	16%	16%	16%
Fund Raising %	17%	20%	17%	17%
Exchange Rate CAN/US	1.4286		1.3889	
Exchange Rate US/CAN	0.7		0.72	

World Renew FY27 Board Approved Budget

Unrestricted Program Contributions	15,048,000
Investment / Other Revenue	2,250,000
Unrestricted Grant Revenue	1,200,000
Board-designated Joseph Fund Gifts	4,500,000
Total Unrestricted Revenues	23,078,000
Unrestricted Programming	15,162,771
Systems	4,752,557
Fundraising	5,983,343
Total Unrestricted Expenses	25,898,672
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS	
Total CD Restricted Revenue	14,675,000
Total Ministry Teams CD Restricted Exp	12,305,000
DISASTER RESPONSE PROGRAMS	
Total DR Revenues	6,550,000
Total DR Expenses	3,250,000
VOLUNTEERS & WORK TEAMS	
Volunteer Support	110,000
Volunteer Expenses	110,000
GRAND TOTAL	
Total Revenues	44,413,000
Total Expenses	41,563,672
Total NET Revenue (Expense)	2,849,328

Summary of Denominational Investments and Compliance with Investment Policy

Synod 1998 approved a number of measures dealing with investment guidelines and disclosures. Two of these appear on page 440 of the *Acts of Synod 1998* as follows:

That the [COD] annually provide synod and classical treasurers with a summary of all investments owned by the agencies and institutions of the CRCNA. The summary is to include groupings of investments listed in the investment policy.

That the [COD] annually provide synod with a statement that the agencies and institutions are in compliance with the investment policy; any exception to the policy will be reported.

The accompanying summary and related footnotes constitute the Council of Delegates' response to the first of these requests. In response to the second request, the Council of Delegates reports that on December 31, 2025, all of the agencies and institutions are in compliance with the denomination's investment policy, including the guidance it provides for assets received as a result of gifts or gift-related transactions.

The Council of Delegates' discussions regarding these matters included the following:

1. As requested by synod, the investment summary contains information regarding assets held by the agencies and institutions of the denomination. In addition to these investments, the denomination is responsible for the administration of investments held by various benefit plans, including retirement plans. The COD reports that assets held by the benefit plans also are in compliance with the denomination's investment guidelines.
2. As requested, the summary includes investments only. It tells nothing of the commitments, restrictions, and purposes attached to the investments. Persons interested in a full understanding of these aspects are encouraged to refer to the financial statements posted on the CRCNA website.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Investment Policy Review
Canada Investment Summary (IN CDNS)
As of December 31, 2025

Categories Specified by Investment Policy:

	CRCNA Ministries	MPF Canada	ReFrame Ministries	World Renew	TOTAL
A. SHORT TERM CASH					
Bank Balance	9,574,799	5,666,561	2,452,349	6,773,464	24,467,173
Money Market	2,748,075	-	-	-	2,748,075
CDs	-	-	-	100,000	100,000
B. EXCESS SEASONAL FUND					
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	-	-	-	-	-
C. INTERMEDIATE-TERM FUNDS					
CRCNA LLC Liquidity Fund	-	-	-	-	-
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	-	-	-	-	-
D. LONG-TERM FUNDS					
CRCNA LLC Balanced Fund	-	-	-	-	-
Publicly traded common, preferred, and convertible preferred stock	-	81,786,090	-	-	81,786,090
Equity mutual funds	11,695,055	-	-	-	11,695,055
U.S. treasuries or Canadian gov't bonds	10,332,430	-	-	2,000,000	10,332,430
Publicly traded bonds and notes (investment grade, at least A-rated)	8,540,216	13,332,331	-	-	21,872,547
Bond mutual funds	-	-	-	-	-
Bank overdraft accounts	(30,113,069)	-	-	-	(30,113,069)
Real Estate	-	-	-	-	-
Other Alternatives	-	-	-	-	-
Private equity/hedge funds	-	-	-	-	-
Life Insurance cash value	-	-	-	-	-
E. FUNDS HELD FOR SPECIFIC DENOMINATIONAL PROGRAMS (i.e., Barnabas Foundation, grants)					
Beneficial Interest	-	-	-	-	-
Interagency Investments (Obligations):					
Loans to CRCNA (Denom. Services)	-	-	-	-	-
Total	12,777,506	100,784,982	2,452,349	8,873,464	124,888,302

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
Investment Policy Review
US Investment Summary (in US\$)
As of December 31, 2025

Categories Specified by Investment Policy:

	CRC	MPF US	ReFrame Ministries	World Renew	Calvin University*	Calvin Seminary	Loan Fund	TOTAL
A. SHORT TERM CASH								
Bank Balance	1,843,549	1,610,240	780,537	5,288,140	28,339,000	2,219,823	101,526	40,182,815
Money Market	6,096,399	7,481,412	-	1,000,988	-	3,186,117	825,054	18,589,970
CDs	414,644	-	-	178,140	-	-	-	592,784
B. EXCESS SEASONAL FUND								
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,375,882	3,375,882
C. INTERMEDIATE-TERM FUNDS								
CRCNA LLC Liquidity Fund	3,650,116	-	2,081,609	-	-	-	-	5,731,725
Fixed Income Mutual Funds	122,492	-	-	-	-	3,397,481	-	3,519,973
D. LONG-TERM FUNDS								
CRCNA LLC Balanced Fund	11,082,213	-	7,074,807	1,461,000	-	-	-	19,598,020
Publicly traded common, preferred, and convertible preferred stock	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equity mutual funds	333,003	84,117,367	-	7,638,840	135,588,000	46,744,741	-	286,450,108
U.S. treasuries or Canadian gov't bonds	-	-	-	73,050	-	3,381,242	-	7,971,843
Publicly traded bonds and notes (investment grade, at least A-rated)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bond mutual funds	-	5,529,334	-	-	101,903,000	-	-	107,432,334
Real Estate	14,414	17,423,115	-	4,561,680	-	1,304,071	-	5,865,751
Common stock - non-listed	71,531	-	-	-	-	1,278,117	-	414,644
Other Alternatives	9,789	5,137,848	60,584	-	-	19,012	-	60,584
Private equity/hedge funds	-	10,829,887	-	-	17,115,000	-	-	22,271,860
Life Insurance cash value	104,437	-	773,624	-	66,528,000	12,251,063	-	89,606,950
E. FUNDS HELD FOR SPECIFIC DENOMINATIONAL PROGRAMS (i.e., Barnabus Foundation, grants)								
Beneficial Interest	3,317,834	-	1,873,457	-	-	-	-	3,317,834
Interagency Investments (Obligations):								
Loans to CRCNA (Denom. Services)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 27,040,421	\$ 132,129,203	\$ 12,644,618	\$ 20,201,838	\$ 349,471,000	\$ 73,781,667	\$ 4,302,452	\$ 601,188,887

* Calvin University Investment values are as of June 30, 2025

AGENCY, INSTITUTION, AND MINISTRY SUPPLEMENTS

Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents this supplement of additional matters relating to the seminary from its May 2026 meeting.

I. Academics

A. Graduates

On May 16, 2026, Calvin Theological Seminary conducted its commencement ceremony to honor ninety-eight students who completed certificate or degree programs. This graduate group included students from the following countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, South Korea, United States, Ukraine, and Venezuela. A viewing of the ceremony can be found at calvinseminary.edu/commencement.

B. Distinguished Alumni Awards – 2026 – 150th-anniversary year

1. *Rev. Dr. James Allen De Jong* was recognized as a Distinguished Alumni Award recipient for 2026. He served as president of Calvin Theological Seminary from 1983-2001.

A native of Paterson, New Jersey, and the son and grandson of pastors in the Christian Reformed Church, James Allan De Jong graduated from Calvin College (1963), Calvin Theological Seminary (1966), and earned a Th.D. from the Free University of Amsterdam in 1970. He was ordained in 1970 and taught at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, and later Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa. An author and editor, he specialized in church history, particularly the history of Reformed theology and the history of missions.

De Jong's presidency spanned a period in the denomination's history filled with challenges such as academic freedom among seminary faculty, debate about the denomination's place amid a rapidly changing social environment, and the role of women in the church. During his tenure, De Jong focused on theology, stressing commonality—encouraging and guiding, for example, a booklet on women in office titled *A Cause for Division?* authored by CTS Professor John Cooper.

During his presidency the seminary building was enlarged and remodeled, a Ph.D. program was added to the curriculum, student housing facilities were acquired, and a student center was constructed. Dr. De Jong was an architect for developing leaders for global Christianity as especially seen through the beginning of the Ph.D. program in 1992.

2. *Rev. Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.* was also recognized as a Distinguished Alumni Award recipient for 2026. He served as president of Calvin Theological Seminary from 2001 to 2011.

Dr. Neal Plantinga earned an A.B. degree from Calvin College (1967) and a B.D. from Calvin Theological Seminary (1971) followed by a Ph.D.

from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1982. He was ordained in the Christian Reformed Church in North America in 1971 and served as the pastor of Webster (N.Y.) CRC from 1971 to 1975.

Plantinga is a writer, preacher, and theologian who not only is a president emeritus of Calvin Theological Seminary but is also an emeritus senior research fellow at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship for his service there following his time as president. His prior roles within the Calvin community include service as professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary (1979–1996) and dean of the chapel at Calvin College, now University (1996–2001).

Plantinga is the author of several books, including *Gratitude* (2024), *Under the Wings of God* (2023), *Morning and Evening Prayers* (2021), *Reading for Preaching* (2013), *Engaging God's World* (2002), *Beyond Doubt* (2001), and *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (1996).

Plantinga's emphasis on the need for excellence in Reformed preaching led to the formation of the Center for Excellence in Preaching during his time as president. This resource, now led by Rev. Scott Hoezee, has become a global, top-notch Reformed preaching resource.

Videos on the ministries and testimonies of Rev. Dr. James De Jong and Rev. Dr. Neal Plantinga are available for viewing through the CTS website (calvinseminary.edu).

II. Board of Trustees matters

At its meeting on May 14-15, 2026, the board noted that the officers elected in February would continue to serve as officers for 2026-2027: Mr. Hessel Kielstra, chair; Rev. John Lee, vice chair; and Rev. Derek Buikema, secretary.

A. Board actions

At its May meeting, the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees took the following actions or took note of the following items for information:

1. The Board noted the appointment of Rev. Steve Van Zanen (formerly with Resonate Global Mission) as Distinguished Missionary in Residence for the upcoming (2026-2027) academic year. (This would be the first year of what is limited to a two-year appointment.)
2. The Calvin Theological Seminary Faculty and Board of Trustees interviewed and now recommends that synod interview and approve the appointment of Dr. Christopher Fantuzzo to a teaching position in Old Testament to begin in summer 2026. Dr. Fantuzzo's C.V. is provided in the appendix to this supplemental report.
3. Noted the upcoming retirement of Dr. Ronald Feenstra, acknowledging his years of faithful service to Calvin Theological Seminary (1992-2026), conferred on him the title of professor of systematic and philosophical theology, *emeritus*, effective upon his retirement, and recommends that synod

acknowledge this action with gratitude to God. A link to the “Last Lecture” of Dr. Feenstra can be found at youtube.com/live/JF-M3yMiYn4?feature=share.

4. Noted the upcoming work and self-study report to be developed for an Association for Theological Schools (ATS) re-accreditation visit in March 2028.
5. Noted that as of July 1, 2026, Dr. Danny Daley will serve as dean of the faculty and chief academic officer and Mr. Scott De Young will serve as the dean of academic programs and registrar. The Board of Trustees gave thanks for the three years of service of Dr. Yudha Thianto, who will step down from the chief academic officer role in order to step into the role of director of the Ph.D. program, previously held by Dr. Ronald Feenstra.
6. Adopted a fiscal budget for 2026-2027 and reviewed ongoing plans for the capital campaign while giving thanks for the support that has been received above and beyond our annual operating fund.
7. Received a report on the ongoing development of the Strategic Planning Overview and Operations document. The formation of this 2024-2028 plan contains significant goals related to our ongoing and deepening relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The focus of this strategic plan is summarized with these themes: compelling invitation, holistic learning journeys, organizational excellence, and cultivating abundance.
8. Discussions have taken place regarding the demonstration of confessional commitment by all CTS board members. It was noted that the current Board of Trustees handbook requires that all CTS board members be members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

In addition, the rubric for CTS board membership includes the following affirmation: “As a member in good standing in the CRCNA, I profess faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, acknowledge the divine inspiration and authority of the Word of God, and am committed to the confessional standards of the CRCNA as faithful reflections of the Word of God.”

In keeping with the board’s commitment, the Board of Trustees approved the following statement on May 15, 2026: “All incoming (and current) board members will be asked to sign a statement of confessional commitment.”
9. Received a report from the Professional Service Consultant that included a summary of the PSC mandate and authority, a report on contacts and conversations made to date, and provided input on items for board approval, including a Governance Committee mandate and a Nominating Committee mandate.
10. The board finalized the formation of the CTS Presidential Nominating Committee with an accompanying mandate consistent with the current CTS Board Handbook. Please be in prayer for the work of this committee and the identification of the next president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

11. The board approved the formation of a standing committee to fulfill a calling to provide integrity and wisdom across generations of leadership. The Governance Committee is to ensure that the Board of Trustees governs well and wisely, that trustees are well-prepared, and that governing structures are sound and current as we seek to prepare well for the next president of Calvin Theological Seminary even as we look forward to honoring and celebrating the final year of service (16th year) of President Jul Medenblik.

12. Gave thanks for the various Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary events, gatherings, and celebrations for these institutions' 150th anniversary, which in some ways concludes with Synod 2026. (Synod 1876 appointed Rev. Geert Egberts Boer as a leader for a new school that became Calvin.) May we join together in giving thanks to God for his ongoing faithfulness as we enter a 151st year of service!

B. Board appointments

1. Nominees

The board recommends the individuals identified in the Nominations section of the Agenda Supplement for appointment or reappointment to a three-year term on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees (see Recommendation C).

2. Concluding service

Concluding service on the CTS Board of Trustees in June 2026 are the following members:

- Scott Greenway (Region 11)
- David Morren (at-large)
- Susan Keesen (at-large)

The CTS board recommends that synod express its gratitude to these members for their faithful service and their significant contributions to the denomination during their tenure on the CTS Board of Trustees (see Recommendation D).

III. Recommendations

A. That synod, with gratitude to God, acknowledge the years of faithful service of Dr. Ronald Feenstra and note the title conferred upon him by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees: professor of systematic and philosophical theology, *emeritus*, effective upon his retirement.

B. That synod interview the faculty candidate, Dr. Christopher Fantuzzo, presented by the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees for approval of their appointment to the faculty in the area of Old Testament. His curriculum vitae is presented in the appendix to this report.

C. That synod by way of the ballot appoint, reappoint, or ratify the election and reelection of trustees from the slates of nominees presented in the Nominations section of this Agenda Supplement.

D. That synod express gratitude to the members concluding service on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Rev. Derek Buikema, secretary

APPENDIX

Curriculum Vitae: Christopher J. Fantuzzo, Ph.D.

Objective: To obtain a full-time academic post in Old Testament. I am prepared to teach courses in the Old and New Testaments and related languages, biblical interpretation, and biblical theology. Service to students and colleagues will be accomplished through a life of humility, integrity, and self-giving love.

Education

Ph.D., Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, 2012, Univ. of Gloucestershire, England (UK)

Supervisors – Prof. J. Gordon McConville, Ph.D., Professor of OT Theology, Univ. of Gloucestershire

Mark J. Boda, Ph.D., Professor of OT, McMaster Univ. and Divinity College

Examiners – Prof. H. G. M. Williamson, Ph.D., Regius Professor of Hebrew, University of Oxford

S. Briggs, Ph.D., Director, Biblical Studies and Hermeneutics, Durham University

Dissertation – *Torah in Servant-Form: Torah, Servant, and Disciples in the Book of Isaiah*

My dissertation addresses a debate in Isaiah scholarship about the nature and role of *torah* in the book of Isaiah. An examination of Isaiah's use of this concept showed a close relationship to the book's central theme regarding the role of an innocent suffering servant (variously conceived as an individual prophetic figure, 'an Israelite servant,' or a collective entity, 'Israel as servant'). I concluded that *torah* does not refer to Mosaic Torah but to prophetic revelation/instruction concerning Israel's servant nature and vocation; hence, its title, *Torah in Servant-Form: Torah, Servant, and Disciples in the Book of Isaiah*. I put forth a construal of what literary critic Umberto Eco has called the *intentio operis*, understood (in this case) as the model author's aim to produce model readers who are servant-disciples.

- Graduate studies toward Ph.D., Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa.

Supervisors – J. Alan Groves (deceased) and Douglas J. Green.

Grade point average: 3.89

Doctoral Level Coursework: Theological Bibliography and Research Methods; Philosophical Hermeneutics; Interpretation in the Second Temple Period; Hermeneutics in the New Testament Period; History of Interpretation; Critical Methodologies; Hebrew Text-Linguistics; Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Poetry; Book of Exodus; Deuteronomistic History; Book of Isaiah; Old Testament Motifs; Old Testament Theology; Biblical Theology Seminar; Trinitarian Theology: Ancient and Modern; Readings in New Testament Intro and Theology; Readings in Old Testament Intro and Theology.

- M.Div. (First Honors), 2001, Westminster Theological Seminary
- Graduate Studies, School of Medicine and Dentistry, S.U.N.Y. Buffalo, 1994-1996 Buffalo, N.Y.
- B.A. Biology, University of Rochester, 1994, Rochester, New York
- Webster High School (Regents), 1990, Webster, N.Y.

Teaching Experience

- Lecturer in New Testament, The Wilberforce School, Princeton, N.J., 6-9th grades, spring 2024.
- Adjunct Prof. of Old Testament, Missio Seminary (Bib. Theo. Sem.), Philadelphia, Pa., Spring 2021

Th.M. level: Old Testament Prophets; Prophets Book Study: Isaiah

- Adjunct Prof. of Christian Studies, Eastern University, St. David's, Pa., 2013 – May 2020

Undergraduate level: The Nature and Meaning of the OT; The Nature and Meaning of the NT

- Visiting Prof. of OT, Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine, Kyiv, June 2018

Graduate level: Old Testament Interpretation: Joshua-Esther (with Russian translator)

- Adjunct Prof. of OT, Redeemer Seminary, Dallas and Austin, Tex., 2015 – 2016

Master's level: Songs and Wisdom; OT Historical Theology II: Joshua-Esther; Prophets and Daniel.

- Lecturer in Old Testament, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., 2009 – 2014

Master's level: Biblical Hebrew 2 and 3; Old Testament Introduction (ANE backgrounds, canon, textual criticism, critical methodologies); Old Testament History and Theology 2 (Deuteronomy-Esther); Prophetic Books and Daniel.

Doctoral level: Book of Isaiah; Book of Lamentations; The Suffering Servant: Innocent Suffering in the OT and Early Judaism; Restoration in Old Testament Interpretation.

- Teaching Fellow, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., 2002 – 2006
Master's Level: The New Testament for Ministry; Biblical Hebrew 1, 2, 3 (ea. 2x/year); New Testament Greek 1, 2, 3.
- Teaching Assistant, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., 2000 – 2005
Master's Level: Prophetic Books and Daniel (M. Kelly); Poetry and Wisdom Books (P. Enns); Biblical Hebrew 1, 2, 3 (P. Enns, D. J. Green, J. Alan Groves); New Testament Greek 1, 2, 3 (A. Smith, S. Taylor)
- High School Teacher, Pembroke Christian School, Pembroke, N.Y., 1996 – 1997
9-12th grade: Earth Science, Biology, Algebra, Trigonometry, and Business Math, chapel once/month.

Ecclesiastical Affiliation and Service

- Ordained teaching elder, Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), 2020 – present.
- Ministerial and Candidates Committee, Presbytery of the East (EPC)
- As ruling elder, 2017 – 2020; as teaching elder, 2024 - present
Helping congregations and supervising and assessing candidates for ministry in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
- Pastor, Bellevue Presbyterian Church (EPC)
810 Newport Avenue, Gap, PA 17527,
2024 - present
- Pastor, Living Word Church (RCA/EPC)
21 Pleasant View Drive, North Haledon, NJ 07508,
September 2020 – 2023 (OOB), 2023 - 2024 (church joined EPC)
- Director of Lifetime Discipleship, Oreland (Pa.) Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 2017 – 2020
Discipling, equipping, and supporting the members, leadership, and staff of Oreland EPC to fulfill their callings by building, cultivating, and enhancing the church's ability to provide lifetime Christian education and consistent, reliable, pastoral care.
- Ruling elder, Oreland Evangelical Presbyterian Church (OEPC), Oreland, Pa., 2014 – 2020
Vision Team elder representative, Christian Education Team leader, Discipleship Team leader. Elder liaison to World Outreach and Worship Teams. Activities included regular Sunday school teaching (youth and adult), aiding with Youth Group and its Parent Advisory Team. I also led worship, preached, and officiated at the Lord's Table occasionally (with Session approval). I was a regular delegate to the Presbytery of the East (EPC).

- Pastoral Internship, Park Avenue Community Church (EPC), Somerdale, N.J., 2017

A mission congregation of the EPC with members below poverty level, others struggling with addictions and/or mental illness. I preached sermons from various biblical genres (OT and NT) with weekly assessment by the Rev. Glenn Marshall and the Session.

Academic Service

- Student Representative, Inter-Seminary/Inter-Faith Dialogue 1997-1999

Weekly meetings of student and faculty reps in which papers about aspects of faith and life were presented and discussed from Christian and Jewish faith traditions. Participation included Princeton, Westminster, Lutheran, St. Charles Borromeo, and Moravian Seminaries and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

- Advisor to Students (WTS), 2009-2014
- Hermeneutics Field Committee (eval. Th.M. and Ph.D. students, WTS), 2009-2014
- Referee for Westminster Theological Journal, 2009-2014
- Westminster Academic Assessment Committee (M.Div.), 2010-2014
- Faculty-Student Prayer Group Leader (WTS), 2003-2004; 2009-2014
- Residence Director for International Student Dormitory (WTS), 1998-2003

I served students from over thirty different countries who came to WTS for the M.A.R., M.Div., Th.M., Ph.D., and D.Min. programs. In addition to administration and maintenance, my role involved orientation, coordinating social and educational opportunities, weekly prayer meetings, and advising and counseling.

Languages (professional proficiency)

Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Greek, Biblical and Targumic Aramaic, German, French

Awards

Edward J. Young Memorial Fund (grant for Old Testament research), 2001
Alumni Scholarship, University of Rochester, 1990-1994

Professional memberships

Society of Biblical Literature, 2002-present

Institute for Biblical Research, 2002-2016; 2025-present

Evangelical Theological Society, 2002-2016

Research interests

Isaiah and Prophetic Literature, theology of evil and suffering in the OT and Early Judaism, NT use of the Old

Publications

"True Israel's 'Mother and Brothers': Reflections on the Servant(s) and Servanthood in Isaiah." Pages 106-24 in *Ears to Hear, Eyes to See: Essays in Memory of J. Alan Groves*. Edited by Peter Enns, Douglas J. Green, and Michael B. Kelly; Philipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 2010.

"Acrostic" Pages 1-4 in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*. Edited by Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity, 2008.

Presentations

"'Gospel-Centered Community': The Restoration Vision of Isaiah 56-66." Five lectures for Trinity Rye, Rivertowns, and Bronx churches, Camp Brookwoods, Alton, N.H., 2016.

"In the Sanctuary with God: Towards Singing Psalm 73 with Jesus." Redeemer Seminary Fall Lecture, Dallas, Tex., 2015.

"David's Rise and the Ark Narrative in Chronicles." Eastern University, OT Historiography Lecture, St. Davids, Pa., 2014.

"'Out of Mesopotamia I Called My Servant': Israel's Abrahamic Identity and Calling in Isaiah 41:8-16." Institute for Biblical Research/Society of Biblical Literature, Baltimore, Md., 2013.

"'The Covenantal Womb of Repentance': Separation Eschatology and the Import of Isaiah 59:21." Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., 2009.

Thesis supervision

Xu, Ying. "From the Lament of David to the Prayer of Christ in his Passion: A Canonical-Process Approach to Psalm 3" (2012, Ph.D., WTS, 2nd reader)

Cook, Greg. "The Process of Vengeance in Nahum" (2014, Ph.D., WTS, 2nd reader)

Park, Duk Joon. "YHWH is a Gardener and Zion His Garden: A Study of the Garden Metaphor in the Book of Isaiah" (2015, WTS, Ph.D., external reader)

Chow, Caleb. "The Legacies of Sargon and Joshua: An Archaeological and Historiographical Comparison" (2012, WTS, Th.M., 2nd reader)

Professional development

- "Challenging Conversations Toolkit" – Christian Reformed Church in North America, Sept 8, 2021.
Training event for helping small groups engage with the Human Sexuality Report of Synod 2021*
- "Worship," Pathway Learning – John Frame and Steve Childers, June 2021.

Principles and practices needed to help develop biblical, God-honoring private and public worship.

- “The Bible in Light of the Ancient Near East” – Nili Samet, Bar Ilan University, 2020.

An online intro to the cultures of the ancient Near East and the ‘comparative research’ that examines the Bible’s relation to them. (Educational opp. during first summer of COVID-19 pandemic).

- “Get Real! Evangelism Workshop” with the Rev. John Leonard, PhD, October 2018.

The evangelism training tool of Mission to the World (PCA).

- “G.O.1 Seminar (The Go Center),” EPC teaching elder, Bob Stauffer, 8 June 2019, Orelan, Pa.

“Building Your Church’s Great Commission Matrix” – Missional Vitalization and Church Revitalization

- “Transitional Ministry Development Training,” February 22-23, 2019, Bethany EPC

Introduction to Transitional Ministry and Pastor Training. Led by EPC teaching elders Ken Priddy and Bob Stauffer

- “A Guide to Gospel Neighboring,” Redeemer City-to-City, June 5-Aug. 30, 2019

The mandate, magnitude, and call to love neighbors/neighborhoods through personal and corporate prayer, discovery, connecting, serving, partnering with organizations, and justice and mercy ministries, video lessons led by Al Santino, Timothy Keller, and Bryan Stevenson.

- “Historical Geography of the Holy Land,” January 2001, Jerusalem University College

January intensive study in Israel and Jordan, Prof. David Wright

Other experience

Assistant to Robert L. McNeil, Jr.; Executive, McNeil Pharmaceuticals/Venture Capitalist, 2006-2009

Library Reserves Coordinator and Textbook Manager, Westminster Library and Bookstore, 1999-2003

Vice president of Sales, Client Services, and Metex Systems, Inc. (Toronto, Ont.; Buffalo, N.Y.), 1996-1997

Calvin University Supplement

I. Introduction

The Calvin University Board of Trustees met April 29-30, 2026, and presents this supplemental report to synod. The board had a successful meeting and completed its scheduled work for committee and plenary sessions. During its April meeting, the board thanked three members whose terms are ending—Edward Wayne Coleman, Lambert Kamp, and Carl Triemstra—for their diligent work on the board and for their service to Calvin University.

II. Finance

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved the 2026-2027 budget proposal.

III. Academic

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved tenure and six-year faculty appointments, and an academic strategic finance proposal. They ratified or endorsed curricular program revisions, new faculty appointments, faculty retirements, and recognition of faculty who are completing their service. They also ratified mandate and policy decisions approved by the following university committees: the committee on governance, the undergraduate studies committee, the graduate and continuing studies committee, the professional status committee, the faculty senate, and the faculty assembly.

IV. Board matters

A. Board membership

The Calvin University Board of Trustees recommends that synod appoint new trustees, reappoint existing trustees for subsequent terms, ratify the results of elections held in classes, and ratify the appointment of a 2025 trustee for membership on the Calvin University Board of Trustees. These recommendations are presented in detail in the Nominations section of this Agenda Supplement.

B. Board officers

The Calvin University Board of Trustees appointed the following officers of the board for 2026-2027: Perrin Rynders, chair; Carolyn Van Allen, vice chair; Gene Miyamoto, secretary; and Dirk Pruis, treasurer (vice president for finance and administration and chief financial officer at Calvin University).

V. Other

The Calvin University Board of Trustees approved the recommendation for board chair Perrin Rynders to grant degrees, honors, and certificates upon those recommended by the faculty at the 2026 commencement ceremonies.

The Calvin University Board of Trustees ratified the February 2, 2026, decision of the executive committee of the board to submit to Synod 2026 the report requested by Synod 2025.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod appoint new members, reappoint existing members for subsequent terms, and ratify the result of the Region 3 classes election for membership on the Calvin University Board of Trustees.

B. That synod approve the report from the Calvin University Board of Trustees submitted in response to the request from Synod 2025.

Calvin University
Greg Elzinga, president

Appendix: Comments on Overtures 16-17

I. Introduction

Calvin University values its covenantal partnership with the Christian Reformed Church in North America and is grateful for our mutual interest in sustained and serious dialogue about the university's mission.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to select overtures received by Synod 2026. This communication is submitted to synod per the "Right of Comment" protocols that guide the processes by which staff and boards respond to an overture or report on synod's agenda in keeping with the principles established by the Rules for Synodical Procedure and other governance documents.

Overtures 16 and 17 (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 368-71) concern expectations of confessional subscription for university trustees and for employees who sign the Covenant for Faculty Members. We trust this response will assist with synod's discernment in the matters addressed by these overtures.

II. Update on implementation of commitments to Synod 2025

Given the aims of these two overtures, we ask that the comments below be taken alongside a close reading of both our report to Synod 2026 (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 146-47) and last year's special report to Synod 2025 (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 155-73). In addition to clarifying conduct expectations for all trustees and employees, the 2025 report described and made a case for our new developmental approach to confessional commitment and differences, including a three-year onboarding period for new faculty. We also introduced two new practices meant to align more closely with the Church Order: active annual reaffirmation of the Covenant for Faculty Members and a multiyear period of mentoring and discernment for faculty who submit a confessional difficulty.

This year we have invested in operationalizing and implementing these commitments throughout the university. In response to a commission by Calvin's Professional Status Committee, our Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom Committee, Senior Academic Leadership Team, and

others have developed fresh guidance for hiring, a revised approach to confessional education and formation for first- and second-year faculty, an active annual reaffirmation process, a multiyear mentoring and discernment framework for faculty with confessional difficulties, and faculty handbook revisions reflecting the details of our report. At the same time, our trusteeship committee has developed and clarified its review process for trustee nominees in ways that are consistent with our commitments to Synod 2025.

III. Comments on Overtures 16 and 17

In the midst of this work, we have received Overtures 16 and 17, both of which would require confessional subscription—without exception on any confessional teaching—of all Calvin trustees and employees who sign the Covenant for Faculty Members, from the start of trusteeship or employment. We have multiple significant concerns with both overtures.

A. Short-circuited process

We have procedural concerns with both overtures. Synod 2025 received Calvin's report positively and asked the university to respond to two specific prompts in a report back to Synod 2026 (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613):

- “Consider a higher level than a simple majority of confessional alignment, and report back to Synod 2026.”
- “Further define ‘indefinite exceptions’ to confessional subscription (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 156) and the reasons that these may be granted, and report back to Synod 2026.”

Overtures 16 and 17, which touch on these matters, were submitted, adopted, and added to the *Agenda for Synod 2026* before Calvin's responses were submitted to and considered by Synod 2026. This seems premature. Specifically, the process seems to short-circuit one in which the university would first be given the opportunity to offer its responses to Synod 2026.

We aim to engage in good faith, and it seems right that our responses should be fully considered before churches and classes reengage on the same topics. If, however, our responses to synod may not even be received before we are challenged again on the same questions, that creates uncertainty about the purpose and value of our engagement with synodical questions. Mutual trust benefits from orderly discernment in which one party's rebuttals do not get ahead of the other's responses.

B. Synodical consistency and institutional integrity

We also have concerns with the overtures' consistency with what we understand to have been the response of Synod 2025. Synod commended our report as “both thorough and robust . . . [going] a long way in affirming trust in the board and institution” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613). It also “[affirmed] the Calvin University Board of Trustees' ongoing efforts to live into a robustly Reformed set of standards for the board, faculty, and administration as servant-leaders in the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613). In this context of otherwise positive reception, Synod 2025 asked only for the two

clarifications specified above, and it did not question or challenge any other aspect of the report.

Overtures 16 and 17 take a fundamentally different approach, challenging what Synod 2025 received positively, seeking to overturn corresponding board commitments, and proposing changes to subsequent operational changes that are already under way. Examples include the following:

1. Overture 16 would eliminate the three-year period in which an employee with faculty status would need to affirm only the ecumenical creeds. This component of our report to Synod 2025—designed to strengthen Reformed commitment and onboard with integrity new faculty with minimal past exposure to the Reformed tradition—was not challenged or questioned, and we have taken steps to implement this practice over the past year.
2. Overture 16 would permit zero confessional exceptions among Calvin faculty. Not only does the university couple more than a century of precedent for confessional exceptions with the rationale offered in its 2025 report, but the university's 2025 report commits to honoring past gravamina as a matter of institutional integrity. The intentions and purpose behind this approach were shared transparently with Synod 2025 and its relevant advisory committees. Our framing of this commitment as a matter of institutional integrity was not questioned or challenged, and our 2025 delegation recalls only sympathetic, understanding, and accepting responses on this point.

Notably, Overture 17 not only challenges what went unchallenged by Synod 2025, but it explicitly rejects what Synod 2025 specifically commended and encouraged. By insisting upon the full alignment of every trustee, it contradicts Synod 2025, which “commend[ed] Calvin University for their high-level majority of confessional alignment in the Board of Trustees and encourage[d] them to continue the good work of *two-tier application*” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613, emphasis added). This encouragement of the university's two-tier application of trusteeship, in which a majority of trustees may not hold a confessional difference while a minority may, cannot be squared with an overture that seeks to eliminate that same practice. On this point, the university is making a good-faith effort to meet the expectations of Synod 2025, while the overture is simply at odds with Synod 2025.

Calvin's Board of Trustees values its covenantal partnership with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, but both partners would benefit from predictable and consistent expectations. When synod commends the university's path and the university responds in good faith to further inquiry, it should not, at the same time, be expected to meet the expectations of new overtures that are inconsistent with synod itself.

C. Inaccurate grounds

The background and grounds specified for both overtures rest upon material inaccuracies that undermine their own arguments.

Citing the *Acts of Synod 1967*, both overtures claim synod has asserted that the church “does indeed adequately and directly supervise and operate the College” (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 97). While this may have been an accurate description of governance realities in 1967, it is currently both legally inaccurate and inconsistent with more recent synodical decisions. Moreover, if it were true, it would raise substantial accreditation concerns.

Legally, Calvin University is incorporated as a nonstock, directorship non-profit corporation under Michigan’s Nonprofit Corporation Act. In this form of organization, the Board of Trustees—and not the CRCNA—supervises and operates the university. Thus, some grounds offered in Overtures 16 and 17 are legally inaccurate. While synod has the responsibility to appoint university trustees nominated by means specified in the university’s bylaws, the trustees are fiduciaries of the university, responsible for governing the institution according to its Articles of Incorporation. The covenantal partnership between the CRCNA and the university provides a relational framework of mutual accountability in which synod is only responsible for setting the university’s purpose and appointing trustees, and only those trustees are responsible for supervising the university.

The grounds are also inconsistent with the governance arrangements and board structure adopted and endorsed by synod itself. The current arrangements and structure were adopted by Synod 1991 after several years of careful review, and an extensive study of proposed governance models for Calvin College and Seminary resulted in the adoption of separate boards for the college and the seminary, each empowered to govern the institution and populated in ways appropriate to their institutional needs. An excerpt from the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Governance (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, p. 31; *Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 734) explained how a new structure supported the board in its essential work of supervising the institution:

For the college, the increasing complexity of operations and relationships in the college require more diversity in governance. The proposal:

1. Enables the college (and the church) to attract diverse leadership to its governing board while still retaining ultimate control over the character and direction of the college.
2. Enables leaders with varied experience and influence to be attracted to the college by opportunity to serve on the governing board.
3. Benefits the college by making available needed expert advice from outside professionals and leaders, and assists the college in projecting a national and international presence.

4. Assists the college in generating new contacts and networks for fund-raising and, thus, enhances fund-raising capabilities of the college.
5. Affords an increasing role in college governance for parents, alumni, and other constituents of the college (those whose role in funding of the college has been increasing).
6. Conforms to more cost-effective and more efficient denominational models of governance already in existence.

In 2015, the denominational Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture recognized that the benefits of the Calvin board structure described by Synod 1991 still existed. The task force recommended that Calvin's board structure would remain the same, explaining: "The boards of World Renew, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary would remain the same, *due to requirements for recognition and accreditation in their respective fields of endeavor, ability to receive grant funding, and ability to do ministry in contexts where churches are not welcome*" (*Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 375, emphasis added).

The reasons for adopting the current governance arrangements and board structure are as strong today as they were in 1991 and 2015. Diverse board leadership has allowed Calvin to navigate the challenges of the shifting higher-education environment and to attract more diverse students and additional funding. Such a structure, developed after extensive study, has allowed Calvin to attract the board talent it needs in order to thrive while still ensuring CRCNA representation (more than 80% of current trustees are members of CRCNA churches). These arrangements do not warrant a change.

Finally, direct supervision and operation of the university by synod is not only an inaccurate description of present arrangements but could generate substantial accreditation concerns. Calvin University's accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), like other accreditors, requires the university's board to have adequate autonomy. Direct supervision of the university by the church would risk significant concern on the part of the HLC.

D. Inapt analogies

The grounds also include inapt analogies. For example, Overture 16 rests in part upon the assumption that faculty either are or are like officebearers in a congregation. However, Church Order does not include university faculty among officebearers. Moreover, there are not only differences in calling between congregational officebearers and university faculty, but there are other key distinctions between the two upon which our developmental approach to confessional commitment is built.

- The typical nominee to the office of elder or deacon will almost always have had experience in that congregation and—by virtue of

that experience, at least—in the Reformed tradition. They are therefore likely to understand already the creedal and confessional documents the Covenant for Officebearers requires them to affirm.

- In contrast to nominees to the office of elder or deacon, some faculty candidates come without meaningful experience in the Reformed tradition. In fact, while they are always sincere Christians, they sometimes come from traditions and institutional contexts that have no role for the confessions. They are therefore far less likely to understand what the Covenant for Faculty Members requires them to affirm. Our three-year onboarding period—including our two-year faculty development sequence—is meant to address this challenge. While such a period may be unnecessary or inappropriate for a church officebearer, we believe it is quite appropriate and helpful for a university faculty member.

Importantly, this aspect of our developmental approach is meant to strengthen our Reformed identity and commitments. Ensuring that all faculty signatories are familiar with the Reformed tradition and its confessional commitments before they sign the Covenant for Faculty Members is in the interests of both the university and the CRCNA. It is a developmentally appropriate investment in formation that reflects the church's historic practice of catechesis before profession, and it may be more enriching and demanding than the formation experienced by many officebearers. As such, it is an excellent example of the ways in which alignment in purpose is often stronger—and more meaningful—than alignment in process. It is a strength to be celebrated, not a weakness to correct.

IV. Conclusion

Again, we are grateful for the invitation to respond to these overtures, and we welcome further opportunities to inform relevant discussions about the work of the university. We understand that this matter may require further conversation with an advisory committee during synod's upcoming meetings. In the interest of deepening trust in our covenantal partnership and further strengthening Calvin's Reformed identity and commitments, we stand ready to supply further information or perspective. In the meantime, we will keep the Synod 2026 deliberations in prayer.

Calvin University Board of Trustees
Perrin Rynders, chair

Pensions and Insurance Supplement

I. Introduction

The Canadian and U.S. Pension Trustees present this supplement in order to forward the recommendations/decisions from their April meetings to synod for ratification, to note the completion of efforts to address Synod 2024's assignments, to provide a nominee for one open position on the U.S. Pension Trustees board, and to express gratitude recognizing the longtime service of a retiring trustee.

The pension trustees met April 16-19, 2026, and submit this report as a supplement to the Pensions and Insurance report in the *Agenda for Synod 2026*. The Ministers Pension Fund (MPF) Trustees forward the following matters to synod for approval. This report reflects the extensive and careful consideration and work of the trustees in attending to their responsibilities to the Ministers Pension Plan. In addition to the matters listed below, the trustees have taken formal actions to address risk management and mitigation and to address and decide on other matters forwarded to the board.

II. Plan review

Synod 2024 received two overtures (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 420-25) requesting changes to the pension plans and the method by which benefits are calculated. In response to those overtures, synod instructed the pension trustees to explore a broader retirement benefit and obtain feedback on the risks and concerns in our current plans (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 811-12). The MPF Trustees therefore propose the following three sets of changes for the pension fund:

A. Binational Plan changes

Plan language changes: The MPF Trustees forward the following recommendation concerning a definition of adequacy regarding the benefits provided by the MPF, noting multiple factors that affect the results of the Ministers Pension Plan in both countries, and with the intention of addressing equity across borders (revising the definition presented in the *Acts of Synod 1999*, p. 569). Additionally, the Funding and Benefits Policy (below) was developed to provide guidance for future plan changes that will maintain good stewardship of plan resources (see *Agenda for Synod 2005*, pp. 206-8) and respond to the concerns raised at Synod 2024. The MPF Trustees ask that synod approve the addition of the following to the MPF plan documentation:

1. **Adequacy:** "The U.S. and Canadian plans will be designed to provide a target replacement ratio at retirement, including retirement income expected to be received from government-sponsored sources, of between 75-85% for a member of the plan with 30 years of service at retirement."
2. **Funding and Benefits Policy:** "The Trustees will consider making benefit improvements when the plan's funded ratio is greater than 110% and the plan's transfer ratio is greater than 100%. When considering making

benefit improvements, the Trustees will consider the long-term sustainability of those improvements. The Trustees shall not make improvements to benefits where those improvements would result in a greater than 25% chance that the projected transfer ratio at 5 and 10 years is less than 90% (i.e., the 75th percentile of the projected transfer ratios at years 5 and 10 must be greater than 90%).”

B. U.S. Plan changes

1. 2027 church and participant contribution amounts

Revised in April (see section V, 3 in the *Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 164), the amount of the assessment for 2027 remains at \$37.20 per member in the U.S., and direct costs have been increased to \$8,400. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

It is noted that the U.S. churches have not seen an increase in contribution rates since 2011, but the final average salary (FAS) used to calculate benefits paid to retiring pastors has been adjusted during this same time. The investments in the U.S. plan have performed strongly and have covered the increases to date, but the Trustees have calculated a necessary adjustment to the contribution amounts this year. (*Note: If contributions had been increased at 1 percent per year since 2011, the churches would have been contributing \$9,034 in 2027.*)

2. 403(b)(9) defined-contribution plan

The trustees reviewed the existing 403(b)(9) plan and are recommending the following changes:

- changing plan providers, allowing for some increased options within a defined contribution plan
- changing to an opt-out default for churches
- understanding that the 403(b)(9) provides a defined-contribution retirement-savings vehicle for commissioned pastors who would not normally be able to access the MPF. This addresses concerns arising from Synod 2024.
- understanding that this plan allows a church to provide for the rest of their staff a retirement-savings benefit that they might not normally be able to provide

3. 2027 pensioner adjustments

Upon careful review of two different dynamic pensioner adjustments, similar to the forwarded changes for the Canada Plan, and utilizing the principles of the Funding and Benefits Policy noted above, the trustees determined that the U.S. Plan would be at risk if mirrored changes were applied. There is anticipation of possible U.S. adjustments in the future.

C. Canada Plan changes

The Canadian Pension Trustees have reviewed the financials in consideration of the MPF mandate of Synod 1982 regarding Contingency Reserves

and Surplus (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 447) and are forwarding the following three changes, addressing the three stakeholders of the plan, as one recommendation to synod. As a test of the Funding and Benefits Policy as defined above, it was determined that these changes will be sustainable.

1. **Final average salary adjustment:** To be applied to retiring pastors active in the MPF until January 16, 2027, the final average salary (FAS) calculation will be amended from 75% of the reported average salary to 85% of the reported average salary each year. This will increase the benefit amounts for these retiring pastors. This will be a go-forward adjustment and will not be applied retroactively.
2. **Dynamic pensioner adjustment:** a dynamic adjustment for pension beneficiaries will be applied at the rate of 1.5% per year of retirement. This calculation will consider prior benefit adjustments to ensure that the plan remains compliant with regulatory requirements.
3. **Contribution holiday:** A one-year contribution holiday will be applied to assessments for Canadian CRC churches only. Self-paid accounts will continue to be assessed at the contribution amount of \$7,704 per year.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Updated portfolio balances and performance

Synod has previously requested that the pension plans provide an actuarial valuation every three years (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 47). The plan valuations were completed as of December 31, 2025, and the updated numbers are provided here (for further information, see section V, A, 1 of the Pensions and Insurance report in the *Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 162-63).

The plan's actuaries have informed us that as of the date of the plan's last valuation (Dec. 31, 2025), on a going-concern basis, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$134.6 million (USD) for the U.S. plan and approximately \$59 million (CAD) for the Canadian plan.

B. Final average salaries

Annually, pastors serving in congregational ministry are asked to report compensation information. This information provides the basis for the determination of an "average salary" amount that, in turn, is used by the Ministers Pension Plans to calculate amounts used by the pension plans' benefit formula, using the methodology developed by the Pension Trustees (*Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 49-51, 406). The trustees forward the following as the final average salary (FAS) amounts used in the calculation of benefits and request that synod receive this for information: the U.S. FAS is \$67,835 (USD), and the Canadian FAS is \$79,262 (CAD).

IV. CRCNA staff health and welfare plan

The Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) was established by the CRCNA and the Reformed Church in America in 2013 as an independent 501(c)3 organization for joint provision, management, and administration of health and welfare benefit plans for ministers, lay employees, and retirees of the

denominations, their agencies, and participating churches and other assemblies. Its mission is to provide personalized insurance service to churches and to CRC employees, managing contracts and vendor relationships on behalf of congregations and agencies. As a nonprofit born from within the church, RBA has a grasp of the church's mission and can provide access to benefits that reflect ministry values. RBA operates in the U.S. only; in Canada, the Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) plan is available to supplement health benefits available through government health programs (see *Agenda for Synod 2013*, p. 172; *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 446).

Currently, RBA and CGI both remain formally under the authority of the Pension Trustees, which has the authority to take action on "general policy issues and significant changes in the insurance and benefit provisions of the programs." In addition, "fiduciary responsibility for the trust fund supporting the self-funded insurance program" is specifically assigned to the U.S. Pension Trustees on the basis of an earlier decision, which assigned them responsibility for the governance of the insurance program (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 38; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 668). However, on a practical level the Pension Trustees are not able to provide a level of engagement that is required to manage these programs when they are already providing oversight to complex pension plans, and the dual oversight has led to confusion about the role played by the RBA board, by the Pension Trustees, and by the COD and synod in providing oversight and support.

In Canada, CGI has already been subsumed into the "non-retirement employee benefits programs" managed within the Canadian ministries organization. In the U.S., however, RBA has both employee and church services components. Thus it cannot simply be managed as an employee benefits program. For this reason the trustees recommend that even as the oversight and administration of the U.S. and Canada staff health and welfare plans be removed from the oversight of the MPF board and moved to the oversight of the U.S. and Canada ministry offices, respectively, the COD ensure that appropriate measures for reporting and administration are taken by the executive leaders of each ministry office and their relative governance structures.

V. Recognition of service

As noted in the *Agenda for Synod* (p. 161), U.S. trustee Lloyd Bierma is completing his service for the MPF and retiring from his position. The combined U.S. and Canada MPF Trustees want to make special note of his service and contributions.

Lloyd Bierma initially served as a trustee for six years, completing two three-year periods in a midcycle vacancy. After serving the requisite waiting period, he then returned to the Trustee board for a second full set of periods, serving for a total of nine years in that cycle. Completing one more waiting period, he went on to serve for a complete third cycle of nine years. His combined service of 24 years to the Ministers Pension Fund receives our

deep gratitude and appreciation. The MPF Trustees recommend that synod extend appreciation and thanks to Lloyd Bierma for his dedicated service (see Recommendation F, *Agenda for Synod*, p. 167).

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod receive and affirm the following binational plan changes as forwarded by the MPF Trustees (Section II, A):

1. The action of the pension trustees to establish the target for a combination of governmental benefits and the amount provided by the plans as “full benefit” for a “normal career” to be approximately 75-85 percent of the sum of the final average salary and the average housing allowance applicable in the year of retirement.

Grounds:

- a. This level of income replacement is judged by actuaries and others knowledgeable in the field as the level needed to sustain a reasonable level of postretirement needs.
 - b. The recommended percentage is consistent with the norms generally accepted by professional advisers practicing in the area of retirement planning.
2. The action of the pension trustees to establish a funding and benefits policy and definition.

Ground: This recognizes the principles that have long guided the pension trustees in their assessment of the plan’s operations.

B. That synod receive and affirm the U.S. Pension Plan changes as forwarded by the U.S. MPF Trustees, including the *revised* 2027 church and participant contribution amounts and the changes to the 403(b)(9) plan as described (Section II, B).

C. That synod receive and affirm the Canada Pension plan changes as outlined, including final average salary adjustment, dynamic pensioner adjustment, and contribution holiday (Section II, C).

D. That synod accept the above actions (Recommendations A-C) as fulfilling the requests of Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 811-12).

E. That synod receive for information the updated portfolio balance valuations as of December 31, 2025 (Section III, A).

F. That synod receive for information the decision of the pension trustees regarding the final average cash salaries to be used in the year 2027 by the pension plans in the application of its benefit formula (Section III, B).

G. That synod reassign oversight of the employee benefits programs available through Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) and the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) to the respective national ministry organizations, and instruct the Council of Delegates to make appropriate arrangements with the U.S. Ministry Board for attending to the CRC’s interest in RBA relative to its work with church-support services in the United States (Section IV).

Grounds:

1. Functionally, the pension trustees and insurance programs have operated under this understanding for some time (see *Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 44, 204; *Agenda for Synod 2013*, p. 172; *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 446), though synod has never taken formal action to amend its earlier instruction assigning governance of the CRC's insurance program to the Pension Trustees (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 38; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 668).
2. Employee benefits programs are a function of human resources management that do not require the organizational involvement of synod (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 204).
3. The CRC has a significant investment in RBA as one of its founding members (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 446), and it is vital that a CRC entity exercise "fiduciary responsibility" for the denominational assets invested in RBA as well as for the ways RBA's policies and practices affect CRC ministries.
4. A clear reporting structure within the COD framework provides better support to RBA in its mission to support churches with insurance services and advice that reflect the ministry commitments of CRC congregations and agencies.

Pensions and Insurance

Roberta Vriesema, director of partnership administration

Resonate Global Mission Supplement: Ten-year Strategic Plan for Church Planting in the CRCNA

I. Mandate and background

“We cannot stay where we are.” This was the overwhelming sentiment at Synod 2025 on church planting and our denomination’s future.

After decades of membership decline in the CRCNA, Synod 2025 had a passionate conversation about the future of our denomination. Something needs to change. A renewed sense of mission. Unity around a denominational identity. A vision and strategy for growth.

While the language was not used, delegates were collectively naming the reality that the CRCNA is in the midst of an inflection point. What is an inflection point? In short, a time of significant change.

We have weathered a lot together over the past many years. We long to see the narrative about the CRCNA shift. We named our growing desire for God to bring renewal and to see a renewed passion for church planting continue to grow in our denomination.

This passionate conversation led Synod 2025 to make this decision in response to a floor motion (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 709):

Instruct the Office of General Secretary to coordinate with agencies and the classes to develop a vision, plan, strategy, and financial proposal for church planting for the CRCNA for the next decade. This plan should specify the number of churches we aspire to plant, the strategy necessary to raise up leaders for this movement, and the resources necessary to carry out this plan (specifically financial but also otherwise). This plan should contemplate and propose how we as a denomination will secure the resources necessary to carry out this plan. The general secretary shall publish and set this plan before the churches by the time of next year’s synod.

The following report is the response to this request.

II. Methodology

Before we continue, we want to share a brief summary about the methodology used to develop this report and the work done by the more than 20 people involved in its creation. First, Resonate Global Mission engaged in extensive consultation to develop an initial strategic-planning framework for this project. We consulted with staff from our denominational agencies, members of the COD from all of our CRCNA classes, members of our denominational leadership team, and agency and institutional leaders who make up our Ministries Leadership Council in order to discern that the following areas would be critical for our long-term strategic work to grow our church-planting efforts:

- an intentional foundation of prayer and fasting

- a plan to multiply disciples and leaders in every congregation and classis
- strengthening our support for diaspora and diverse church-planting leaders
- identifying clear roles and responsibilities between denominational agencies, CRCNA classes, and supporting churches to provide strong support and collaboration for church planters
- a robust and intentional strategy to engage churches nearing the end of their life cycle
- a plan to deepen connections with the global church and international church planting
- a sustainable financial plan to fund church planting

We assembled work groups in each of these seven areas, composed of leaders from across North America who have expertise and passion in these areas. These groups received direction on critical outcomes to accomplish and had four to five months to complete their work. Each of these groups produced a report of their findings, which have helped to shape this report and its recommendations.

A denomination-wide gathering called the Multiply Conference, led collaboratively by leaders from Classis Southeast U.S. and Resonate Global Mission, took place in late 2025 and provided additional opportunities for leaders from over 100 congregations and 38 classes to engage with these elements of the strategic-planning framework.

As the seven work groups carried out their research, they provided classis leaders of the COD, the shepherding team, and denominational agency staff with updates, noting additional opportunities to engage.

After each of the work groups completed their reports, leaders and key representatives from each group, alongside other denominational staff, gathered for two days in Chicago on April 13-14, 2026. This gathering was facilitated by Catapult, a consultant group that specializes in strategic planning. Our time together in Chicago helped us distill what we learned from each group and to prioritize and shape the strategic plan in this report.

III. *Why plant churches?* Starting with the gospel

Before we talk about vision and strategy, we need to clarify the reason for this plan. *Why plant churches?* As with all things in the Christian life, we must begin our practice and our thinking with the gospel. We must start with the good news, the main events of the biblical story centered on Jesus:

- Jesus' life
- Jesus' death
- Jesus' resurrection
- Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

What is the meaning of these events? What is at the heart of the gospel? It is the good news that God is acting to bring the kingdom of God into the

midst of history! Jesus' own words at the beginning of Mark's gospel declare: "The time has come. . . . The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15).

The kingdom of God—this is the biblical image that describes nothing less than God's redemptive purposes for the whole of creation: the renewal of all things and all of life from the power and effects of sin.

This gospel is centered on King Jesus.

And this gospel is meant to be embodied by a community of people commissioned and sent by the risen Jesus to make disciples of all nations as they are being transformed by the Holy Spirit to bear witness to this good news with the entirety of their lives.

We long to see this good news saturate every community and every crack and crevice of society. In obedience to our commission from the risen Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20), we are committed to work tirelessly toward this end until King Jesus returns and makes all things well.

What would this kind of gospel saturation look like? It would become a reality when every woman, man, and child has repeated opportunities to encounter someone whose life has been transformed by the gospel and to see the gospel on display in a local community that embodies it in a holistic way.

At its very heart, church planting is the planting of this gospel and the forming of new worshipping communities that announce, demonstrate, and embody this good news together as they put it on display.

These new communities are called to bear witness to this good news: the kingdom of God has come! The renewal of the whole creation from the power and effects of sin is now present—in Jesus and by the presence and power of the Spirit! These new communities take up their place in the biblical story as they participate in God's mission to renew all things under the lordship of Jesus Christ—in their local neighborhoods and cities and to the ends of the earth. These are new communities in whom and through whom God will accomplish his purposes for the whole world, new communities that are blessed to be a blessing, new communities planted "for the sake of the world."

With King Jesus at the center, these communities are set in the midst of a growing variety of contexts and cultures in which they bear witness to the kingdom of God. They invite people to experience the healing and transformative power of the gospel. They invite all people to find their place in this story of God's purposes for the whole world and to join in making disciples of all nations.

IV. "Project Antioch"—Laying a foundation of prayer

As the biblical story unfolds in Acts 13, it is apparent that prayer and fasting play an essential role in the life and mission of the church. As we see in this text, it was in the context of worship, prayer, and fasting that God's call

came to the leaders in Antioch. Through concerted and intentional times of worship, prayer, and fasting, the church received guidance from the Holy Spirit for mission—particularly the sending out of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). After receiving guidance, the church continued in worship, prayer, and fasting, followed by the laying on of hands and the sending out of those commissioned (Paul and Barnabas). Acts 13 shows that prayer is a catalyst for mission and the launching of new works of evangelism, including the work of church planting.

Inspired by this text, we are calling this “Project Antioch”—in which we recognize the importance of laying an intentional foundation of prayer and fasting for this CRCNA church-planting strategic plan.

Throughout the history of the church, extraordinary prayer and fasting have been an integral part of God’s people uniting together for renewed passion for God’s mission. As we seek to catalyze the CRCNA for renewal and for growing our church-planting efforts for the next decade and beyond, we believe it is critical to have a clear plan to embed prayer and fasting as an integral part of our shared long-term strategy. We believe it is critical to continue to catalyze and connect a growing movement of prayer in the CRCNA.

Therefore we recommend the following to Synod 2026:

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to work with each of the CRCNA classes to accomplish the following:
 - a. Encourage each classis to identify and activate a prayer coordinator for their classis.
 - b. Develop ways to connect, equip, and encourage these prayer coordinators so that they might lead their classis into regular, intentional times of prayer and fasting for God to multiply disciples, leaders, and churches in our classes. These times of prayer and fasting should also include prayer support for church plants in the region and for parent churches supporting church plants in the region.
 - c. Invite each of our CRCNA classes to report back to Synod 2027 with an update on their intentional prayer and fasting strategy for their classis.
2. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to take responsibility for identifying, curating, and publishing resources that will support the efforts of congregations and classes in the area of prayer and fasting.
3. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to take responsibility to discern, plan, and publish opportunities for CRCNA congregations and members to gather corporately together for prayer: online, larger in-person retreats and prayer gatherings, and smaller, in-person regional gatherings.

V. Strategic plan summary

If we could imagine what might be possible if we pursued a shared vision for church planting together, what might we see? What kind of big-picture, rallying cry for our congregations, classes, denominational agencies, and staff might connect all of us to a larger purpose where church planting became a denominational priority? What might a preferred picture of our future look like? Here is our aspirational ten-year vision:

By 2036, the CRCNA will become a multiplying denomination where every classis mobilizes their churches to participate in God's mission by making disciples, developing leaders, and planting churches across North America.

How can we get there? Ten years is a long time from now. To help us know that we are making progress toward this vision and to clarify what we need to do in order to get there, we need "vision with teeth" for the next five years, followed by a strategic "reset" for the five years after that. The focus for these first five years will be to build the foundation, to gain clarity on ownership for the five core strategies that make up this strategic plan, and to test and learn from pilot projects to discover what works and is scalable. It will be primarily in the second five years that we anticipate seeing exponential growth as these core strategies scale and multiply across our denomination.

For the first five years, we need vision that includes indicators of success. We need something that is specific and time-bound. We need a measurable slice of this vision that will give us strategic focus. We need something that will stretch us toward our ten-year vision while at the same time being achievable and reasonable for us to go after together. As the visionary-leadership consultant Michael Hyatt has put it, "Vision must be big enough to stretch people but not so gigantic that it feels absurd."

What could provide this kind of strategic focus for the next five years? We believe an aspirational vision to plant 150 new worshipping communities across North America by 2031 will hit that sweet spot of stretching us without feeling unreasonable.

To put this into a strategy statement for the next five years, we offer the following:

If every classis in the CRCNA has a sustainable church multiplication pathway in place that helps local churches make disciples, develop leaders, equip planters, and plant new churches, **then** 150 new worshipping communities will be established across the U.S. and Canada by 2031.

Notice the logic: "**If** every classis in the CRCNA has a sustainable church multiplication pathway in place that helps churches make disciples, develop leaders, equip planters, and plant new churches . . ." This will be our strategic focus for the next five years—to work toward a future where this

“if” becomes true. And “if” this becomes true, we believe it is “then” possible for 150 new worshiping communities to be planted by 2031.

How are we going to get there in five years? We will need to prioritize the following five strategic areas:

- Discipleship multiplication
- Leadership development
- Church-planting pathways
- Legacy pathway
- Funding and capacity development

In the remainder of this section of the report, we want to lay out why these five areas are critical for our denominational church-planting strategy, share insights from work done over this past year, and introduce critical three-year milestones for each of these areas.

A. Discipleship multiplication

If we are going to see growth in church planting in the CRCNA, it is essential that we work to develop a denomination-wide culture of disciple-making. The church of Jesus Christ is most faithful to its identity when it is making disciples and reproducing itself. Without disciple-making we will wither, but with the intentional multiplication of disciples, the church is able to thrive.

The decline in membership that many denominations experience, including the CRCNA, is at a deeper level a decline in discipleship. Discipleship is not an optional program of the church but the very essence of the Christian life. We have been sent to the ends of the earth and commissioned by Jesus to “make disciples of all nations” as we go (Matt. 28:19), until King Jesus returns.

As the working group tasked with exploring this topic pointed out, there are principles that we can identify from Jesus’ own pattern of disciple-making in the New Testament. As the group summarizes here, we see in Jesus’ pattern the following principles at work:

- Disciple-making begins with intentional relationships. It requires believers who are willing to invest deeply in a small number of others.
- Discipleship grows most powerfully through shared life.
- Disciple-making therefore cannot be reduced to the transfer of information. It involves the formation of lives shaped by Christ and is both Word-centered and a lifelong journey of step-by-step sanctification.
- True disciple-making always depends on the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.
- Disciples often learn more from watching mature believers live out their faith than from listening to formal instruction. Discipleship is often caught before it is taught.
- Growth occurs when disciples are trusted with meaningful responsibility.

- Disciple-making includes coaching, encouragement, and accountability.
- The final test of disciple-making is not knowledge but multiplication; disciples make other disciples.

As the working group discovered, there is a current pattern of weak or inconsistent practices and commitments to discipleship across CRCNA congregations and classes. Disciple-making is not broadly embedded in congregational life at present. This needs to change.

An intentional plan for disciple-making in every congregation and every classis will be required for us to see the kind of multiplication we long to see. It is imperative that every congregation and classis have a defined process and support system to help its members become competent in disciple multiplication.

Following the principles summarized above, we will need to establish clear, shared definitions of what it means and what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to make other disciples. We will need to develop denominational metrics on disciple-making as well as a method to collect and report those metrics for shared encouragement and mutual accountability between classes.

We will need to build together principles for disciple-making that can be shared across our classes and congregations and adapted to the unique contextual realities that each community is facing. Particular emphasis needs to be placed upon learning from the global church as disciple-making movements multiply across the globe and as the church, particularly in the global south and east, becomes stronger. Particular efforts also need to be made to resource and learn from the growing ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of churches in our denomination.

We will need to shift from clergy-driven to every-member disciple-making, renewing our practices of the priesthood of all believers. For disciple multiplication to flourish, a paradigm shift must occur. While pastors must lead and model disciple-making within their congregations, the majority of disciple-making must occur through the laity. When ordinary believers learn to walk alongside others in the way of Christ—reading Scripture together, praying together, obeying the Word together, and sharing the gospel together as they live on mission together—the church begins to function not merely as an institution but as a multiplying movement. We are all engaged in the call to make disciples in the places and among the people with whom we work, live, and play.

Discipleship is essential to this entire strategic plan. Without it, church planting remains limited and unsustainable.

Where do we need to be in three years to make progress toward our five-year strategic focus? Here is what needs to be true in three years:

The CRCNA has developed clear discipleship principles for the denomination that can be contextualized across different church settings, and 20 percent of classes are piloting this effort and have seen “two generations of reproduction” (i.e., disciples who have made disciples who have made disciples).

Strategically, we will need to develop denominational discipleship principles that are able to be contextualized across different church settings. We will need at least 20 percent of classes identified and engaged as beta groups for pastor training. We will need to codify our learning from these classes and to share this vision and learning with other classes for integration across our entire denomination and remaining classes.

Therefore we recommend the following to Synod 2026:

1. That synod affirm that disciple-making lies at the heart of the church’s identity and mission and is essential to this entire strategic plan. Synod therefore calls every congregation, classis, and denominational ministry to prioritize the multiplication of disciples who make disciples, consistent with the biblical pattern reflected in Matthew 28:18–20 and 2 Timothy 2:2.
2. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary, in collaboration with Thrive and Resonate, along with additional leaders in discipleship in the broader CRC family, to accomplish the following toward the three-year milestone:
 - a. Update the *Our Journey* ministry plan to ensure it addresses disciple-making in its four milestones.
 - b. Implement denominational discipleship principles that can be contextualized across different church settings, including diaspora and culturally diverse communities. Particular attention should be given to learning from discipleship movements in the global church and from opportunities through Resonate Global Mission to connect more deeply with international church-planting movements and the global church.
 - c. Identify and engage at least 20 percent of current CRCNA classes as beta groups for pastor training in these discipleship principles.
 - d. Gather learning and feedback from these groups, begin to codify the learning, and share the learning and vision with remaining CRCNA classes for rollout and implementation.
 - e. Develop tools capable of assessing the following disciple-making activity metrics across CRCNA congregations, collecting the data, and reporting it annually to future synods for the duration of this ten-year plan, beginning with Synod 2027:
 - the percentage of CRCNA members intentionally discipling others

- the percentage of CRCNA members equipped for disciple-making
- the percentage of CRCNA pastors engaged in relational disciple-making

B. Leadership development

Developing leaders is mission critical for the future of our denomination. Without leaders, church planting will not be able to scale and grow in the CRCNA. This will need to include a broad vision to develop young adult leaders, informal leaders serving in a variety of ministries, and more formal licensed and ordained leaders. All of these types of leaders will be required to plant and lead new worshipping communities.

As the working group tasked with developing this area discovered, there are significant leadership gaps in our denomination at the present time. Across North America many denominations are discovering that their traditional leadership pipelines are no longer sufficient. For generations, the path to pastoral leadership often followed a relatively predictable pattern: individuals sensed a call to ministry, left their local context to attend seminary, and later returned to serve churches. While this pathway continues to serve the church well in many cases, it has also become increasingly difficult for many potential leaders to pursue. Financial barriers, geographic limitations, family responsibilities, and vocational commitments often prevent gifted leaders from leaving their communities to pursue residential theological education.

At the same time, many congregations have unintentionally weakened their own leadership pipelines by failing to identify and mentor emerging leaders early in their development. The result is a growing leadership gap.

In order to fill this gap, we will need to recover a high level of intentionality to develop leaders. This will require us to establish a clear, shared definition of what we mean by “leader.” As in the case of disciple-making, with leadership development we will need to build together pathways for leadership development in each of our congregations and classes. We will also need to develop denominational metrics on leadership development as well as a method to collect and report those metrics for shared encouragement and mutual accountability between classes.

We will need staffing resources to help provide guidance to classes, and we will need support to help each of them develop leadership development goals and practices. We see the need to collect these goals from each classis and to compile them into a future report for a future synod. We see the need to track progress toward these goals on at least an annual basis. We see the need to help connect classes with training resources and leadership development pathways. Partnerships between our classes, congregations, and Calvin Theological Seminary will be critical to these efforts. The recently developed Empower Program through Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) may prove to be particularly effective to develop future leaders who

remain in their ministry contexts as they develop and demonstrate ministry competencies in critical areas. Other distance-learning programs are also available through CTS.

Specific attention must be given to resourcing and supporting the growing number of leaders from diaspora communities across North America and leaders from a growing diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Future church-planting growth in the CRCNA has the potential to be significantly driven by leaders from these communities. However, current systems are not built to support them effectively.

Significant gaps identified for leaders from these communities have been identified and must be overcome as we move into the future. Many leaders experience isolation and systemic barriers. The following are some of the most critical issues identified by one of our working groups:

- Financial and long-term support challenges—Many church planters experience ongoing financial pressure, often needing bivocational work, which limits ministry time and can affect both family life and pastoral well-being.
- Bivocational/covocational work—Some church planters choose bivocational work as a mission strategy, while others do it out of financial need.
- Neglecting 1.5- and second-generation immigrants—Leaders who come from immigrant backgrounds but were raised in North America often experience a sense of being between cultures.
- Training for churches that are planting and those that are being planted—When both communities are equipped and aligned, partnerships are stronger, expectations are clear, and both can find solutions that work for them.
- Assessments and internship opportunities—Some non-Anglo church planters are uncertain about available pathways for assessments and ministry internships.
- Strategic commitment—Church planters often need continued encouragement and guidance beyond the initial launch phase.
- Accessible discipleship resources and materials in different languages—Many discipleship and training materials are primarily available in English.
- Recognizing the diversity within diaspora communities—Diaspora ministry includes an extremely wide range of nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, and subcultures.

We have a major growth opportunity before us if we are able to build holistic, culturally responsive support systems and strengthen coaching, partnerships, and contextualized training for the development of leaders from diaspora and culturally diverse communities in our midst.

As with our discipleship efforts, there is also a massive opportunity before us for deeper engagement with the global church to embrace mutuality,

partnership, and shared learning. These global partnerships have real potential to catalyze our own leadership renewal in the CRCNA, particularly as we connect with and learn from the global church in the area of church planting.

Where do we need to be in three years to make progress toward our five-year strategic focus? Here is what needs to be true in three years:

Every classis, supported and resourced by denominational agencies, has a clear and contextual leadership development pathway with identified ownership, aligned resources, and an active team guiding the process.

If we are going to see this become a reality, we will need our denominational agencies to provide clear guidance, tools, and resources for leadership development to our classis leadership bodies. We will need every classis to identify a leadership development team with clear ownership for the leadership development pathway. We will need every classis to produce a clear and contextual leadership development pathway, as well as an aspirational goal of how many leaders they aim to develop in the next five to ten years.

Therefore we recommend the following to Synod 2026:

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary, in collaboration with the Candidacy Committee, Calvin Theological Seminary, Thrive, and Resonate, to ensure that every classis is supported and resourced to develop a clear and contextual leadership development pathway with identified ownership, aligned resources, and an active team guiding the process. This should include the following:
 - a. Provide clear guidance, tools, and resources for leadership development that can be made available to every CRCNA classis. Connect classes with these leadership development resources and work to ensure that they are accessible to all leaders, including those from diaspora and culturally diverse communities.
 - b. Identify a leadership development team (e.g., Classis Ministerial Leadership Team [CMLT]) in each classis with clear ownership for the leadership development pathway in their classis.
 - c. Within the next year, resource and encourage every classis so that they are able to complete the following and report back to Synod 2027:
 - 1) Assess opportunities for leadership development within their congregations.
 - 2) Consider strategies for strengthening disciple-making cultures in the churches of the classis.
 - 3) Identify mentoring and training environments for emerging leaders within the classis.

- 4) Determine how many leaders each classis believes God may enable it to develop within the next decade. Once all classes have reported, the combined total of these commitments will become the CRCNA's denominational leadership multiplication goal.
- 5) Describe how the classis plans to address the gaps identified by the diaspora and diversity working group's report, as noted above in the summary.
- d. Track progress toward these classis goals and provide annual reports to synod, for the duration of this ten-year plan and beginning with Synod 2027.
2. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to develop a plan to address the following challenges raised by the growing number of leaders from diaspora and diverse communities and report back to Synod 2027:
 - a. Assist classes to improve language accessibility and translation in classis meetings.
 - b. Clarify the role and participation of church planters in classis.
 - c. Provide clear and accessible credentialing pathways for diaspora leaders, ensuring that the credentialing processes are clearly explained and easily accessible for leaders coming from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
 - d. Provide ecclesiastical and cultural orientation for new leaders within the CRCNA to assist church planters entering the CRCNA who are unfamiliar with denominational structures, postures, and expectations.
 - e. Provide accessible resources in multiple languages to help strengthen leadership development and discipleship within multi-cultural congregations.
3. That synod instruct the Candidacy Committee, in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary and Resonate Global Mission, to create an agreed-upon "Church-Planting Commissioned Pastor Certificate" program with the potential to earn seminary credits (to encourage further learning that may lead to a master of divinity degree toward ordination as a minister of the Word). Most importantly, though, start by developing a set of unified subjects that apply specifically to church planters. As it exists right now, the commissioned pastor certificate is very broad and not area/focus specific, so it would be helpful to have one for church planters, one for ministry associates, one for chaplains, and so on. This way, church planters would learn what is relevant and important and necessary for church planters to learn, such as fundraising and other subjects that pertain to church-planting work.
4. That synod encourage congregations and classes to strengthen leadership pipelines through mentoring, theological education, and ministry

formation. Special attention should be given to expanding leadership development pathways that allow emerging leaders to remain embedded within their ministry contexts. Synod would therefore affirm the importance of the following:

- mentoring relationships within local churches
 - classis-based leadership development environments
 - church-planting residencies and leadership cohorts
 - competency-based theological education and distance programs such as those offered at CTS
5. That synod commend to the churches of the CRCNA the opportunities for leadership development and formation available by partnering with Resonate Global Mission to connect more deeply with international church-planting movements and the global church.

C. Church-planting pathways

Church-planting effectiveness can be hindered by unclear and overlapping partner roles. This is one of the core insights from the working group tasked with clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various partners necessary to support a strong denominational ecosystem of support for church planting.

At times in our current reality, there is confusion and lack of clarity about what it takes from local churches, classes, and denominational agencies to support church planting in the CRCNA. Two common failures need to be addressed: (1) the failure of neglect where there is no clear local ownership for church-planting pathways and (2) the failure of overloading too many expectations on local and regional partners for church planting to succeed. We need to clarify and simplify roles and responsibilities for all of the partners that are needed along the church-planting pathway for our church plants to be resourced and supported well. Resonate Global Mission has done good work this past year to clarify best practices and principles that can serve local partners to do this well. We commend Resonate's expertise to all of our classes, churches, and agencies.

Local partnership teams are vital to gather and align all of the local partners around the shared goal of supporting a church plant and seeing it flourish. What is a "local partnership team"? A team that includes at least one representative from each of the following: the church plant's supporting churches, classis, Resonate Global Mission, and other local supportive ministry partners and agencies. This team provides collaborative oversight, prayer, life-giving encouragement, and helpful accountability for the church plant.

Given the denomination's dramatic growth in cultural diversity, as well as leaders planting among a variety of diaspora communities, it will be just as vital to identify and build a team of "Barnabas Advocates" in each of our classes that can bridge and support church plants locally, with all of the resourcing and support coming from the region and through denominational

agencies. What is a “Barnabas Advocate”? Just as Barnabas advocated for and encouraged the apostle Paul, removing barriers and helping him succeed in Jesus’ mission (Acts 9:27; 11:25-26; 12:25-14:28), the Barnabas Advocate is a local leader invested in church planting who will help bridge new planters into the culture of the classis and the denomination, connect to resources, cheer on the church planter and church planting in the classis, and be part of a larger regional group of advocates, who can best be the local conduit for—and feedback into—Resonate’s church-planting training and resources. The Barnabas Advocate is defined by their function, not necessarily by any particular role. For example, they may be a local pastor, classis leader, retired pastor, or someone else with this passion.

Church-planting strategists embedded in each classis will provide even more lift to this strategic plan and could play a critical role in helping classes develop and implement a strategic church-planting pathway for the congregations in their classis.

If we are going to achieve our five-year aspirational outcome, we will need to identify classes that are willing and able to collaborate with Resonate Global Mission to design a contextualized church-planting pathway, clarify the core components of the pathway for their context, and begin to identify potential leaders, advocates, and support roles that are needed to begin piloting a church-planting pathway for their classis.

Where do we need to be in three years to make progress toward our five-year strategic focus? Here is what needs to be true in three years:

Forty percent of CRCNA classes have an active church-planting pathway with identified ownership, equipped leaders, supporting churches, and at least two church planters moving through assessment, coaching, and preparation.

We believe that 40 percent is a meaningful proportion of our classes that would be willing over the next three years to be actively engaged as pilot sites, helping to test a pathway, train leaders, surface obstacles, and generate learning that can shape a broader rollout across all classes.

For this to become true in three years, we need church-planting strategists to be identified by 40 percent of our classes and gathered into a team of strategists who can be resourced and supported in their roles. We will need 40 percent of our classes to be willing to have their church-planting strategist collaborate with Resonate Global Mission to develop and implement a church-planting pathway that is owned and operated by the classis. We will need each of these classes participating as pilot sites to set an aspirational goal of identifying and beginning to work with at least two church planters/teams over the next three years.

Therefore we recommend the following to Synod 2026:

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary, in collaboration with Resonate Global Mission, to accomplish the following toward the three-year milestone:

- a. Work with all CRCNA classes to identify a “Barnabas Advocate,” as described in this report, for each classis and to connect that person to Resonate Global Mission for equipping, connection to other “Barnabas Advocates,” and support.
 - b. Work with all CRCNA classes to identify a church-planting strategist, with a goal of identifying one in at least 40 percent of CRCNA classes. This church-planting strategist, once identified, should be connected to Resonate Global Mission for equipping, support, and collaboration.
2. That synod commend the work of Resonate Global Mission to partner with churches and classes of the CRCNA. Resonate’s partnership agreement framework provides clear roles and responsibilities, along with best practices, for collaborative partnership to support CRCNA church plants.
3. That synod commend the work of Resonate Global Mission to help churches, classes, and agencies of the CRCNA to discover helpful ways in which our church-planting pathways can learn from and be connected to what God is doing in the global church today in the area of church planting.

D. Legacy pathway

If we are going to lean into a future of multiplication and church planting together as a denomination, we need to face honestly the reality of decline and contraction within our denomination. One of our working groups did some research to develop a snapshot of some of our current realities. Here are some things they discovered about the CRCNA at present:

- Between 2015-2025, 169 congregations have disbanded and closed their ministries. During that same period, 94 churches were planted, for a net loss of 75 congregations.
- Between 2020-2025, 604 congregations are experiencing a measurable decline in membership (over 10% decline). During that same period, 60 congregations are experiencing more significant decline (over 25% decline).
- Currently 97 congregations have fewer than 45 professing members.
- Currently 23 percent of declining congregations are without a lead pastor.

A significant and growing number of congregations in the CRCNA are at or nearing what can begin to feel like the end of their life cycle as a congregation. Membership decline reaches a point where the long-term sustainability and viability of the ministry comes into question. This is a painfully difficult time for a congregation. Many congregations facing this reality feel added burdens of grief and shame. It becomes increasingly difficult to make decisions about the future. Many congregations facing such realities find it difficult to renew their outward mission focus. Congregations need

help to recover a sense that their final chapter of ministry can be outwardly significant for the sake of the gospel.

When churches end their ministries, classes are often the recipients of significant funds generated by the closure of churches, but sometimes organizations outside the CRC are the primary beneficiaries. Further, within many classes, the vision and opportunity for planting new churches does not match the availability of funds. Some classes have significant funds in reserve but little vision and opportunity to plant. Those funds sit and wait for a rainy day. Other classes have significant vision and opportunity to plant but few funds. Presently there is no consistent way for classes in these mismatched situations to identify each other and work together.

It is our conviction that end-of-life-cycle churches are not a problem to be managed but a legacy to be stewarded. A church that closes its doors can still open new ones—if the denomination is equipped, coordinated, and committed to making that possible.

Unfortunately, added to these realities is the fact that there is currently a lack of clear pathways for legacy-making decisions. We need to move toward an intentionally sequenced, broad pathway that incorporates distinct tracks for congregations to take, including the following:

- Triage—an initial step to determine a congregation’s likely trajectory and appropriate pathway
- Palliative care—to accompany congregations through a dignified, missional closure
- Active treatment—to bring intensive renewal engagement for viable candidates
- Lifestyle change—to provide ongoing support for congregations requiring modest adjustment and monitoring

There is a need to assess current denominational efforts and capacity in an effort to develop a renewed and strong legacy pathway for the future. This pathway can provide the strategic direction and support necessary for congregations to consider replanting, merging, or transferring assets to new church plants. If we are going to see the long-term vision for church planting realized in the CRCNA, we will need to find a way to normalize church planting as the preferred legacy outcome for churches that reach the end of their current life cycle.

Alongside these opportunities are challenges of some historic realities as well. It has long seemed that the Center for Church Renewal (CCR), an independent Reformed organization serving CRCNA churches near the end of their life cycle, and CRC agencies could complement each other in serving Christian Reformed congregations. Resonate, Thrive, and CCR have all provided support for churches at the end of their life cycle. All have a stated interest in renewal and new church development. Unfortunately, the history of working alongside each other has been complicated and unsatisfying. A future with one pathway and one set of resources led by Thrive

would be preferred. For this to be possible, some attention will need to be given to address past hurts as experienced by all groups.

The recommendations from the working group that looked into this aspect of the strategic plan are comprehensive and describe the need for establishing denominational metrics, increasing staffing and coaching capacity, improving resource effectiveness, establishing a Church-Planting Legacy fund, and exploring a preferred future with one pathway led by Thrive. We commend this work to the COD and to the leadership of Thrive to assist in reviewing the current Crossroads Discernment process and in building a stronger legacy pathway in the CRCNA for churches nearing the end of their life cycle.

Where do we need to be in three years with this priority in order to make progress toward our five-year strategic focus? Here is what needs to be true in three years:

Every classis has access to an endorsed process and trained facilitators to help congregations facing decline to discern renewal, multiplication, or faithful legacy decisions.

This objective will require Thrive to develop a shared and unified renewal and legacy pathway for CRCNA congregations. We will need to identify, train, endorse, and match facilitators to each classis that needs these facilitators to accompany declining congregations in their classis. We will need every classis to have access to a Thrive endorsed facilitator who will be able to guide them through the legacy pathway.

Therefore we recommend the following to Synod 2026:

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to develop a denominational network of regional facilitators to support the discernment process for churches that fit the criteria found in Church Order Supplement, Article 38-d, and that have a sustained membership decline of more than 10 percent over the past five years, in order to provide a coordinated response for helping such churches discern whether God may be leading to renewal, closure, or other kingdom-focused options, and to report to synod annually over the next ten years on the progress of this initiative.
2. That synod instruct the COD to commission an assessment of Thrive's Crossroads Discernment Process examining staffing capacity, completion rates, quality of legacy decisions made by participating congregations, adequacy of triage and pastoral care components, and the degree to which church planting is featured as a legacy priority; and present a report to Synod 2027 indicating ways to support and encourage smaller, declining congregations to look for God's presence and leading in their situations.
3. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to develop clear, accessible guidance for end-of-life-cycle congregations on how to designate financial and physical assets for church-planting legacy purposes, and to

provide agency support for classes to redistribute such funds according to opportunities for church planting.

E. Funding and capacity development

The current reality within the CRCNA is that the funding model is far too fragmented and insufficient to support the kind of growth in church planting that we aspire to over the next ten years. As the working group tasked with exploring this aspect of the strategic plan discovered, there is a lack of clarity and consistency across funding sources and no unified strategy across churches, classes, and denominational agencies to sufficiently fund the support needed for church-planting growth. In order to scale church planting in the future, system-wide financial alignment is necessary, not just more giving.

We need to move toward an integrated, shared funding model across all of our classes and congregations. We need to establish classis-level church-planting funds in order to support local and regional church-planting efforts. We need to clarify the financial commitments necessary for church planting to succeed. This will include funding commitments from supporting congregations, regional funding from classes, denominational funding to support the staffing and infrastructure necessary to support classes and congregations, and increased capacity among church planters to engage in effective fundraising efforts.

The current state of the CRCNA ministry-share program is another factor that needs to be addressed. While broader engagement with this program is vital to provide the financial foundation for denominational support services for churches and church planters, additional avenues to raise funds dedicated to support church-planting infrastructure are necessary in order to secure the funding necessary to scale church-planting growth in the CRCNA.

Where do we need to be in three years with this priority in order to make progress toward our five-year strategic focus? Here is what needs to be true in three years:

The CRCNA has established the funding, staffing, and volunteer support structure needed to sustain the planter pathway, with a church-planting fund, clear staffing roles, and a sequenced capacity plan across denominational, classis, and local church levels.

We will need a denominationally aligned funding and capacity plan to be approved, including denominational and classical church-planting funds, a denominational staffing structure, and a classis volunteer support model. We will need each classis to have identified the key volunteer roles needed to support the planter pathway, as well as denominational staffing roles defined and aligned with these volunteer classis roles. A critical next step in this strategic plan implementation is to clarify the full support structure needed for the planter pathway, including denominational staff roles and classis volunteer roles.

Therefore we recommend the following to Synod 2026:

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to encourage all classes, in partnership with Resonate Global Mission, to ensure that the following is in place for all future church plants:
 - a. Every parent church and classis partner has created a partnership agreement that clearly defines financial expectations for the church(es), classis, and planter(s) involved in a church plant.
 - b. Every church planter has developed a personal funding plan that defines the pathway they will take to meet the church plant's defined financial needs.
 - c. Each classis is encouraged to clearly define the terms of support it is able to give to church plants annually and to make recommendations for each congregation in their body for the support of church planting locally.
 - d. Each classis has established a "Church Plant Fund" to be managed by the local classis or has collaborated with neighboring classes to create a regional fund for the purpose of supporting church planting in their region. This fund could also serve as the holding place for estate and major gifts for church planting in the classis/region.
2. That the CRCNA, via Resonate Global Mission, increase our catalytic support services for church plants through ministry shares, and, as needed, an annual giving campaign that will allow Resonate to increase support for church planters across the continent. In specific, we recommend the following:
 - a. That every organized CRCNA congregation commit to giving to the ministry share program as prescribed annually by synod. This will provide the financial foundation for these catalytic support services for church planters.
 - b. That every CRCNA church plant and emerging (unorganized) congregation commit an annual gift to the ministry share program. This will establish a healthy foundational financial commitment to our covenantal denominational partnership.
3. **Conclusion: What needs to be true in one year?** As we conclude this summary describing our strategic vision, we look ahead to the next twelve months. In our present moment, we do not have clear ownership for each stage of the church-planting journey that is so critical to this strategic plan. Who will own each step of the church-plant journey, from discipleship multiplication to leadership development to equipping planters to launching, resourcing, and multiplying church plants?

We also do not have the staffing structure and capacity, nor the committed funding, to support the implementation of this strategic plan. Without these, this strategic plan will struggle to be implemented and executed. So we must ask a critical question: "What is one primary objective that must be

true by Synod 2027 but is not true today, yet is so critical that achieving it would make a massive difference in this strategic plan?”

Within twelve months, the CRCNA will have designed and aligned an ideal church-plant journey, with clear ownership across denominational agencies, classes, and congregations for each stage from disciple to leader to church planter to launch, along with a funding plan to support implementation.

For this denomination-wide strategic plan to succeed, this clarity is needed. And for the next ten years we need this plan to be a central part of every synod as we learn, grow, and multiply together.¹

Therefore we recommend the following to Synod 2026:

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to design and align an ideal church-plant journey, with clear ownership for each stage from disciple to leader to church planter to launch, along with an agreed staffing structure and committed funding plan to support implementation.
2. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to provide an annual update on progress achieved in this strategic plan on an annual basis for the next ten years. Particular focus for the next five years, at Synods 2027-2031, should be on progress made toward the three-year milestones for each of the strategic categories identified in this report and the five-year aspirational outcome described in this report.

VII. Recommendations

This report’s recommendations to synod are gathered here from the various sections within, as noted:

Laying a foundation of prayer and fasting (section IV)

- A. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to work with each of the CRCNA classes to accomplish the following:
 1. Encourage each classis to identify and activate a prayer coordinator for their classis.
 2. Develop ways to connect, equip, and encourage these prayer coordinators so that they might lead their classis into regular, intentional times of prayer and fasting for God to multiply disciples, leaders, and churches in our classes. These times of prayer and fasting should also include prayer support for church plants in the region and for parent churches supporting church plants in the region.

¹To make clear what is assumed throughout this strategic plan: it is CRCNA churches that we desire to plant together. Given our CRCNA theology and polity, this will require that *all* of us work together in strong collaboration and with clear ownership of the various steps involved in the church-planting journey.

3. Invite each of our CRCNA classes to report back to Synod 2027 with an update on their intentional prayer and fasting strategy for their classis.
- B. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to take responsibility for identifying, curating, and publishing resources that will support the efforts of congregations and classes in the area of prayer and fasting.
- C. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to take responsibility to discern, plan, and publish opportunities for CRCNA congregations and members to gather corporately together for prayer: online, larger in-person retreats and prayer gatherings, and smaller, in-person regional gatherings.

Discipleship multiplication (section V, A)

- D. That synod affirm that disciple-making lies at the heart of the church's identity and mission and is essential to this entire strategic plan. Synod therefore calls every congregation, classis, and denominational ministry to prioritize the multiplication of disciples who make disciples, consistent with the biblical pattern reflected in Matthew 28:18–20 and 2 Timothy 2:2.
- E. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary, in collaboration with Thrive and Resonate, along with additional leaders in discipleship in the broader CRC family, to accomplish the following toward the three-year milestone:
 1. Update the *Our Journey* ministry plan to ensure it addresses disciple-making in its four milestones.
 2. Implement denominational discipleship principles that can be contextualized across different church settings, including diaspora and culturally diverse communities. Particular attention should be given to learning from discipleship movements in the global church and from opportunities through Resonate Global Mission to connect more deeply with international church-planting movements and the global church.
 3. Identify and engage at least 20 percent of current CRCNA classes as beta groups for pastor training in these discipleship principles.
 4. Gather learning and feedback from these groups, begin to codify the learning, and share the learning and vision with remaining CRCNA classes for rollout and implementation.
 5. Develop tools capable of assessing the following disciple-making activity metrics across CRCNA congregations, collecting the data, and reporting it annually to future synods for the duration of this ten-year plan, beginning with Synod 2027:
 - the percentage of CRCNA members intentionally discipling others

- the percentage of CRCNA members equipped for disciple-making
- the percentage of CRCNA pastors engaged in relational disciple-making

Leadership development (section V, B)

- F. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary, in collaboration with the Candidacy Committee, Calvin Theological Seminary, Thrive, and Resonate, to ensure that every classis is supported and resourced to develop a clear and contextual leadership development pathway with identified ownership, aligned resources, and an active team guiding the process. This should include the following:
1. Provide clear guidance, tools, and resources for leadership development that can be made available to every CRCNA classis. Connect classes with these leadership development resources and work to ensure that they are accessible to all leaders, including those from diaspora and culturally diverse communities.
 2. Identify a leadership development team (e.g., Classis Ministerial Leadership Team [CMLT]) in each classis with clear ownership for the leadership development pathway in their classis.
 3. Within the next year, resource and encourage every classis so that they are able to complete the following and report back to Synod 2027:
 - a. Assess opportunities for leadership development within their congregations.
 - b. Consider strategies for strengthening disciple-making cultures in the churches of the classis.
 - c. Identify mentoring and training environments for emerging leaders within the classis.
 - d. Determine how many leaders each classis believes God may enable it to develop within the next decade. Once all classes have reported, the combined total of these commitments will become the CRCNA's denominational leadership multiplication goal.
 - e. Describe how the classis plans to address the gaps identified by the diaspora and diversity working group's report, as noted above in the summary.
 4. Track progress toward these classis goals and provide annual reports to synod, for the duration of this ten-year plan and beginning with Synod 2027.
- G. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to develop a plan to address the following challenges raised by the growing number of leaders from diaspora and diverse communities and report back to Synod 2027:

1. Assist classes to improve language accessibility and translation in classis meetings.
 2. Clarify the role and participation of church planters in classis.
 3. Provide clear and accessible credentialing pathways for diaspora leaders, ensuring that the credentialing processes are clearly explained and easily accessible for leaders coming from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
 4. Provide ecclesiastical and cultural orientation for new leaders within the CRCNA to assist church planters entering the CRCNA who are unfamiliar with denominational structures, postures, and expectations.
 5. Provide accessible resources in multiple languages to help strengthen leadership development and discipleship within multicultural congregations.
- H. That synod instruct the Candidacy Committee, in partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary and Resonate Global Mission, to create an agreed-upon “Church-Planting Commissioned Pastor Certificate” program with the potential to earn seminary credits (to encourage further learning that may lead to a master of divinity degree toward ordination as a minister of the Word). Most importantly, though, start by developing a set of unified subjects that apply specifically to church planters. As it exists right now, the commissioned pastor certificate is very broad and not area/focus specific, so it would be helpful to have one for church planters, one for ministry associates, one for chaplains, and so on. This way, church planters would learn what is relevant and important and necessary for church planters to learn, such as fundraising and other subjects that pertain to church-planting work.
- I. That synod encourage congregations and classes to strengthen leadership pipelines through mentoring, theological education, and ministry formation. Special attention should be given to expanding leadership development pathways that allow emerging leaders to remain embedded within their ministry contexts. Synod would therefore affirm the importance of the following:
- mentoring relationships within local churches
 - classis-based leadership development environments
 - church-planting residencies and leadership cohorts
 - competency-based theological education and distance programs such as those offered at CTS
- J. That synod commend to the churches of the CRCNA the opportunities for leadership development and formation available by partnering with Resonate Global Mission to connect more deeply with international church-planting movements and the global church.

Church-planting pathways (section V, C)

- K. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary, in collaboration with Resonate Global Mission, to accomplish the following toward the three-year milestone:
1. Work with all CRCNA classes to identify a “Barnabas Advocate,” as described in this report, for each classis and to connect that person to Resonate Global Mission for equipping, connection to other “Barnabas Advocates,” and support.
 2. Work with all CRCNA classes to identify a church-planting strategist, with a goal of identifying one in at least 40 percent of CRCNA classes. This church-planting strategist, once identified, should be connected to Resonate Global Mission for equipping, support, and collaboration.
- L. That synod commend the work of Resonate Global Mission to partner with churches and classes of the CRCNA. Resonate’s partnership agreement framework provides clear roles and responsibilities, along with best practices, for collaborative partnership to support CRCNA church plants.
- M. That synod commend the work of Resonate Global Mission to help churches, classes, and agencies of the CRCNA to discover helpful ways in which our church-planting pathways can learn from and be connected to what God is doing in the global church today in the area of church planting.

Legacy pathway (section V, D)

- N. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to develop a denominational network of regional facilitators to support the discernment process for churches that fit the criteria found in Church Order Supplement, Article 38-d, and that have a sustained membership decline of more than 10 percent over the past five years, in order to provide a coordinated response for helping such churches discern whether God may be leading to renewal, closure, or other kingdom-focused options, and to report to synod annually over the next ten years on the progress of this initiative.
- O. That synod instruct the COD to commission an assessment of Thrive’s Crossroads Discernment Process examining staffing capacity, completion rates, quality of legacy decisions made by participating congregations, adequacy of triage and pastoral care components, and the degree to which church planting is featured as a legacy priority; and present a report to Synod 2027 indicating ways to support and encourage smaller, declining congregations to look for God’s presence and leading in their situations.
- P. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to develop clear, accessible guidance for end-of-life-cycle congregations on how to designate financial and physical assets for church-planting legacy purposes, and to

provide agency support for classes to redistribute such funds according to opportunities for church planting.

Funding and capacity development (section V, E)

Q. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to encourage all classes, in partnership with Resonate Global Mission, to ensure that the following is in place for all future church plants:

1. Every parent church and classis partner has created a partnership agreement that clearly defines financial expectations for the church(es), classis, and planter(s) involved in a church plant.
2. Every church planter has developed a personal funding plan that defines the pathway they will take to meet the church plant's defined financial needs.
3. Each classis is encouraged to clearly define the terms of support it is able to give to church plants annually and to make recommendations for each congregation in their body for the support of church planting locally.
4. Each classis has established a "Church Plant Fund" to be managed by the local classis or has collaborated with neighboring classes to create a regional fund for the purpose of supporting church planting in their region. This fund could also serve as the holding place for estate and major gifts for church planting in the classis/region.

R. That the CRCNA, via Resonate Global Mission, increase our catalytic support services for church plants through ministry shares, and, as needed, an annual giving campaign that will allow Resonate to increase support for church planters across the continent. In specific, we recommend the following:

1. That every organized CRCNA congregation commit to giving to the ministry share program as prescribed annually by synod. This will provide the financial foundation for these catalytic support services for church planters.
2. That every CRCNA church plant and emerging (unorganized) congregation commit an annual gift to the ministry share program. This will establish a healthy foundational financial commitment to our covenantal denominational partnership.

Looking ahead to the next twelve months (section VI)

- S. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to design and align an ideal church-plant journey, with clear ownership for each stage from disciple to leader to church planter to launch, along with an agreed staffing structure and committed funding plan to support implementation.
- T. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to provide an annual update on progress achieved in this strategic plan on an annual basis for the next ten years. Particular focus for the next five years, at Synods

2027-2031, should be on progress made toward the three-year milestones for each of the strategic categories identified in this report and the five-year aspirational outcome described in this report.

Resonate Global Mission
Tim Sheridan, director of church planting

Thrive Supplement: Thriving Congregations—A Pathway for Church Renewal

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has been engaged in an ongoing conversation regarding congregational renewal for decades. The CRCNA's most recent journey began with the Healthy Church strategy in 2005. Several additional initiatives were offered to CRC leaders and churches including Ridder Church Renewal beginning in 2012, the Church Renewal Lab launched by Calvin Theological Seminary in 2013, and the Vibrant Congregations collaboration between the CRC and the Reformed Church in America in 2018. Congregations that engaged the renewal offerings report mixed outcomes as a result of the programs. Churches that experienced some measure of growth from the programs attribute the success to intentionally engaging a process of discernment to define their mission, clarify their vision, and implement their commitments through a renewed ministry plan.

The church renewal mandate from Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 975-76) and the church-planting mandate from Synod 2025 (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 707-9) provide a renewed invitation for congregations to prioritize activities that nurture the spiritual growth and missional engagement of their members and align ministry with God's invitation to participate in his mission. Dallas Willard, philosopher and Christian spiritual formation author, explains in *The Great Omission* (p. xvi):

The mission [of God] naturally flows from the [Christian] life. Mission is not an afterthought, or something we might overlook or omit as we live the [Christian] life itself. The eternal life, from which many profound and glorious effects flow, is an interactive relationship with God and with his special Son, Jesus, within the abiding ambience of the Holy Spirit. Eternal life is the Kingdom Walk, where, in seamless unity, we 'do justice, love kindness, and walk carefully with our God' (Micah 6:8). We learn to walk this way through apprenticeship to Jesus. His school is always in session.

Local congregations are in the best position to disciple their members in deepening their relationship with God and widening their witness of the transforming power of the gospel. The various CRCNA ministry agencies (especially Thrive and Resonate) can provide support, resources, and coaching that will help congregations grow in faithful, holistic, missional discipleship, which tends to lead to numeric growth over time. However, Thrive and Resonate cannot do for the local church that for which the local church was designed by God to do. Thrive's role is one of equipping and encouraging congregations and their ministry leaders who have the relationships and responsibility to cultivate discipleship and kingdom growth in partnership with the Holy Spirit within their respective local contexts.

That being said, Thrive is eager and well positioned to work alongside congregations towards renewal. Trained coaches and experienced consultants will help assess the vitality of your congregation and recommend a personalized renewal pathway. Wherever your congregation is in its lifecycle, the Thriving Congregations renewal pathway invites your church on a journey to discern a missional path forward and supports your congregation's commitment to walk the path God has laid out for you.

II. Theology

The theological foundation for congregational renewal begins not with human strategy, but with a return to the mission of God, recognizing that mission is a fundamental attribute of the triune God. This theocentric and trinitarian framework shifts the focus from the church as the primary agent of activity to God as the initiator of all redemptive work. In this paradigm, renewal is defined as the church's committed participation in the Father's mission to reconcile all things through the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the work of the local congregation is to continually orient itself toward discerning what the Spirit is already doing in its midst and responding to the invitation to join God in his redemptive work.

This movement toward renewal is anchored in the central events of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. At the heart of this gospel is the inauguration of the kingdom of God, a reality that signals the renewal of all things and the creation's liberation from the systemic effects of sin. To seek the renewal of a congregation is to replant this gospel, forming communities that serve as both a sign and a foretaste of the coming kingdom. This requires a holistic fusion of the cultural mandate to care for the world with the commission to make disciples, recognizing that the gospel is meant to be embodied by a community whose collective life announces and demonstrates the lordship of King Jesus across every social, political, and psychological dimension of society.

Ultimately, the goal of congregational renewal is gospel saturation, a state in which the church serves as a kingdom of priests within its local context. This identity compels the gathered community to move beyond its own walls, ensuring that every individual has repeat opportunities to encounter the transformative power of the gospel through a community that is "blessed to be a blessing." By situating its life within the grand arc of Scripture—from creation and fall to redemption and the final consummation—the renewed congregation finds its true identity as a missionary people. We work tirelessly toward this end, participating in God's redemptive purposes for the sake of the world until the return of King Jesus, when all things are made new.

III. Context

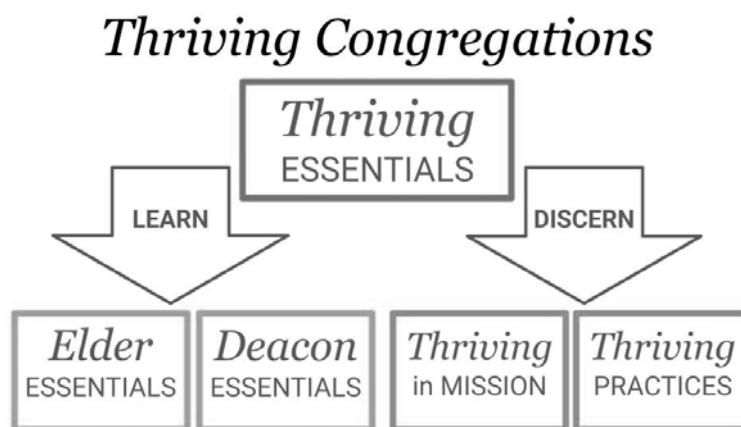
The Gather initiative (2024–2025) served as the critical listening and discernment exercise that provided the empirical and spiritual foundation for Thrive's renewal plan. The results from Gather show that there is a strong

correlation between the milestones of the *Our Journey* ministry plan and the practices of congregations experiencing renewal. This is not surprising since the milestones were informed by CRCNA members through the yearly denominational survey. Churches experiencing renewal are seeing growth in prayer and spiritual practices (milestone 1), increasing discipleship and ministry engagement between generations (milestone 2), a deepening commitment to be welcoming to diverse community members, including immigrants (milestone 3), and passion for the congregation's holistic gospel mission to its local community and across borders (milestone 4). The Thriving Congregations pathway does not replace the ministry plan but appropriately supports congregations who discern the need and opportunity to grow in the milestone areas as part of their renewal journey.

Data from Gather highlighted significant gaps in congregational health, revealing that only 24 percent of participants felt their church programs flowed from a clear mission, and a mere 12 percent reported having a clear disciple-making process. One of the most pervasive disappointments identified was a severe lack of leadership and volunteerism, with many churches struggling to retain pastors and lay leaders who often felt they lacked proper theological training. Participants expressed a strong desire for more connection and cooperation with other local churches. They also admitted that their outreach was often ineffective, with many congregations becoming inwardly focused "spiritual country clubs" where only 11 percent believed the church had a hands-on commitment to the unchurched. Denominational data also showed that while ethnic, diaspora, and multilingual communities are the fastest-growing demographics, they often feel un-integrated or face significant cultural barriers. Additionally, the context is defined by a struggle to retain younger generations and the unique challenges faced by aging congregations navigating legacy and transition.

IV. Pathway

The Thriving Congregations renewal pathway is a relational and ongoing process grounded in the principles of intentional discernment, personal spiritual renewal preceding congregational renewal, and walking together in shared ministry.



Thrive provides tailored support for congregations at the beginning and the end of their life cycle. Emerging churches refine their purpose and build leadership capacity. Aging congregations can explore their mission and legacy, navigating significant transitions that may include the decision to replant or restart their ministries with the help of specialized assessment and coaching.

The journey begins with **Thriving Essentials**, a one-day course designed to align leaders on the four key paradigms of mission, discipleship, discernment, and leadership, emphasizing that mission is participation in God's work. Thriving Essentials is designed for everyone who cares about the life and vitality of their congregation. Whether they are a pastor, elder, volunteer, or active member, they will walk away with focused clarity, shared language, and practical tools to help your church flourish. Churches that have completed Thriving Essentials say it sparked new energy, led to deeper conversations, and instilled a stronger sense of unity in their ministry.

From there, congregations can focus on leadership development through the Elder Essentials and Deacon Essentials workbooks to unpack the "why" behind the council's charge to oversee congregational ministry.

- **Elder Essentials** provides a theological and practical framework for elders, emphasizing their calling as spiritual shepherds who participate in God's redemptive mission. Through six distinct lessons, the material outlines core responsibilities such as overseeing worship and sacraments, fostering hospitality, and ensuring robust faith formation for all ages. It also offers detailed guidance on sensitive tasks like pastoral care, visitation, and the restorative purpose of church discipline. By integrating scripture, the Belgic Confession, and Church Order, the workbook aims to cultivate leaders who are both spiritually mature and practically prepared. Ultimately, the sources serve as a roadmap for nurturing healthy congregations through gospel witness and principled, Christlike leadership.
- **Deacon Essentials** trains and inspires deacons through five core lessons that move from the biblical and confessional foundations of the office toward practical engagement in stewardship, mercy, biblical justice, and community partnership. Rather than viewing deacons as mere administrative functionaries, the workbook emphasizes their primary role as visionary leaders who equip and mobilize the entire congregation to participate in God's redemptive mission. By shifting from a scarcity mindset to one of abundance, the course encourages deacons to identify unique assets within their local contexts and to address the root causes of suffering through systemic change and relational benevolence. Ultimately, the workbook serves as a spiritual and strategic guide to help leaders embody Christlike service while pursuing the holistic restoration of their communities.

Congregations thrive when they have an intentional process for developing missionally engaged congregation members, acknowledging that discipleship is a lifelong endeavor that requires the ongoing transformation of both character and competency. The renewal path prioritizes the continuous development of leaders—from ordained officebearers to lay volunteers—by equipping them to own their influence and grow in their capacity to discern and participate in God's mission. Consequently, the strategy supports churches in the creation of a robust discipleship pathway through the assessment of a variety of programs to find one that fits the local context and the implementation of the congregation's preferred program to build a sustainable leadership culture.

Alternatively, **Thriving in Mission** is a 9-12 month facilitated process to help churches define and live out their missional mandate. Rooted in God's redemptive story, the church identifies a guiding Scripture passage that stirs the hearts of their people and sparks a missional imagination. The process invites the church to envision its missional impact shaped by Acts 1:8 and our commitment to bear witness to the gospel “in Jerusalem” (locally), “in all Judea and Samaria” (regionally), and “to the ends of the earth” (globally). The creation of a five-year ministry plan integrates the mandate into the life of the congregation. Following the Thriving in Mission process, Thrive coaches congregations as they implement the plan and navigate the dynamics of change.

For collaborative growth, **Thriving Practices** cohorts allow groups of three to eight congregations to learn together on topics like intercultural ministry, parenting a church plant, community development, or creating a discipleship pathway. Drawing on extensive research and decades of grant work, Lilly Endowment Inc. reports that congregational vitality is significantly enhanced when faith communities move beyond isolation to embrace congregation-based learning. Research has demonstrated that creating learning communities allows congregations to navigate rapid cultural shifts more effectively by sharing wisdom, mission clarity, and adaptive practices.¹ The CRCNA's findings through Gather suggest that walking together helps leaders step back from daily busyness to gain new perspectives. By learning from one another's ministry contexts, congregations can move from simply surviving to thriving, sparking the creativity necessary to discover their missional mandate within their local communities and the world.

Throughout the renewal process, Thrive acts as a general practitioner for church health, maintaining the primary relationship while referring congregations to specialists like Resonate Global Mission, Reframe, or World Renew when expertise is needed.

Congregations need new ways of functioning that end the separation and compartmentalizing of mission tasks, such as outreach, evangelism, wor-

¹ lillyendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/thriving-2023-rfp.pdf

ship, preaching, faith formation, and more. To be God's covenant community in the world today, everything we do must be oriented toward proclaiming and demonstrating the good news of Jesus Christ concretely in a world alienated from God. The Thriving Congregations renewal pathway invites churches on a journey of growth and transformation as they align themselves with God's redemptive work.

Thrive

Elaine May, congregational renewal consultant

World Renew Supplement

I. Board matters

A. Executive director, World Renew-Canada

Peter Timmerman was hired to serve as executive director, World Renew-Canada, effective October 27, 2025.

B. Board of Delegates - Canada

The board reports the following new members to the Canadian Board of Delegates for a first term of three years:

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Glenn Minnesma is a member of Immanuel CRC in Calgary, Alberta, where he has served as an elder and a deacon. Glenn uses his experience and skills as a retired home builder and contractor to serve on the building and grounds committee of his church. He was also able to use his gifts to give oversight during a building renovation. Glenn served as a youth leader for many years and has led four mission trips to Mexico. He is excited to learn and share about the opportunities God places in our path, and he trusts that God will lead him to where he can make a difference.

Member at large

Steve Morris is a member of ClearView CRC in Oakville, Ontario (Classis Toronto), where he has served as a deacon, on the building committee, as a youth leader, and as a small group leader. He has also led the Alpha course at his church. Steve is a senior managing director, portfolio manager, for a large financial institution. He has a strong passion for serving in a role that provides assistance in developing countries. He has been involved with mission initiatives and has supported the work of World Renew in various ways for many years. He hopes to apply his knowledge and experience to help bring God's desire for justice to vulnerable people around the world.

C. Board of Directors - Canada

Jeffrey Adams, president (member at large)

John Bandstra, vice president (Classis B.C. South-East)

Darryl Beck, treasurer (member at large)

Margaret Hoogland, secretary (Classis Alberta North)

Cari Fydirchuk, pastoral adviser (member at large)

Gordon Van Vliet, board director (member at large)

Steve Morris, board director (member at large)

D. Reappointment of Canadian delegates

The following Canadian delegates are completing their first term on the board and are reappointed to a second three-year term: Jeffrey Adams (member at large), Nell Vrolyk (Ontario Southwest).

E. Canadian board members completing terms

World Renew would like to recognize and thank the following board members for completing service on the board: John Batterink (Classis Quinte), Jane VanderVelden (member at large), and Harry Bergshoeff (vice president, member at large).

F. Executive director, World Renew-U.S.

The Joint Ministry Council recognized and gave thanks to Carol Bremer-Bennett on her ten-year work anniversary: "We want to recognize and thank Carol Bremer-Bennett, U.S. executive director, for her competence, steadiness, and perseverance over the past ten years. . . ."

G. Board of Delegates - U.S.

The board reports that the following will serve as U.S. delegates for a first term of three years:

Member at large

Lauren VanEnk attends Grace Meridian Hill Church in Washington, D.C., which has deeply influenced her spiritual life, helping her stay grounded in community. She was raised in the CRC tradition, and that early formation continues to inform her values. Lauren studied international development and public health at Calvin College and has spent her career in NGO operations, strategy, and institutional donor engagement. She currently serves as a senior technical adviser for a global NGO. Her professional experience, combined with her personal connection to the CRC community, positions her well to contribute thoughtfully and constructively to governance conversations with World Renew.

Classis Rocky Mountain

Randy Courduff is a member of Cragmor CRC in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he serves his council as a deacon and has served as administrative chair. His career in the military has honed his skills in project management, organization, and community planning. He looks forward to applying his gifts to coordinating events and advocating on behalf of World Renew.

Classis Red Mesa

Darlene Silversmith is a dedicated servant leader with extensive experience in church governance and ministry, having served as an ethnic adviser to synod, as council president at Crownpoint (N. Mex.) CRC, and on the CRCNA Worship Ministries advisory board. A follower of Christ since her early teens, she brings personal resilience, a deeply rooted faith shaped by decades of ministry, and a calling to support and uplift others. Darlene is a member of Crownpoint CRC and serves as office manager for Classis Red Mesa. Having overcome significant life challenges, Darlene is committed to using her experience, wisdom, and spiritual gifts to faithfully serve and strengthen the church in its decision making and mission.

H. Board of Directors - U.S.

Donn Hansum, president (member at large)
Graham Seel, vice president (member at large)
Kenneth MacBain, treasurer (Classis Hackensack)
Beverly Abma, secretary (Classis Grandville)
Emmett Harrison, pastoral adviser (member at large)
Adejoke Ayoola, board director (Classis Thornapple Valley)
Kimberly Starkenburg, board director (Classis Heartland)
Ben VanderWindt, board director and legal adviser (member at large)
Emily Boldenow Fortuna, board director (Classis Atlantic Northeast)
Paul Vliem, board director (Classis Lake Superior, U.S.)

I. Reappointment of U.S. delegates

The following U.S. delegates are completing their first term on the board and are reappointed to a second three-year term: Donald Waterlander (member at large), John Van Schepen (Classis Columbia), Beverly Abma (Classis Grandville), Kimberly Starkenburg (Classis Heartland), Ronald Vos (Classis Iakota), Paul Vliem (Classis Lake Superior, U.S.), Jared Yaple (Classis Northern Michigan)

J. U.S. board members completing terms

World Renew would like to recognize and thank the following board members for completing service on the board:

Jeff Banaszak, president, member at large
Charles Udeh, member at large
Bonny Mulder-Behnia, pastoral adviser, member at large
James Zwier, Classis Red Mesa
Linda German, Classis Northern Cascades
Gerald Van Wyke, Classis Lake Erie

II. Thriving Congregations renewal strategy

World Renew affirms the Thriving Congregations renewal strategy and the invitation it extends to the Christian Reformed Church in North America to deepen spiritual vitality, clarify mission, and realign congregational life with God's redemptive work in the world. We share this conviction that renewal flows not from technique but from discerning participation in the mission of the triune God—expressed through worship, discipleship, leadership, and embodied witness in local and global contexts.

Within this renewal pathway, World Renew brings particular value, expertise, and momentum in areas where congregations long to move from discernment into lived practice. Our experience in holistic mission, diaconal leadership, community development, and justice-centered engagement aligns closely with the strategy's emphasis on gospel integration, Deacon Essentials, and Acts 1:8 imagination—locally, regionally, and across borders. World Renew is well positioned to be a trusted partner, supporting churches and deacons as they engage their communities with dignity, build

cross-cultural relationships, walk alongside neighbors who experience vulnerability, and participate in God's work of restoration in practical, faithful, and sustainable ways. World Renew offers understanding and lived experience in community-led partnerships and cultural competence. World Renew's support could take shape through cohort learning, deacon-focused formation, community engagement coaching, and global-local partnerships that help congregations translate vision into action and sustain missional momentum over time.

III. Recommendation

That synod receive this supplemental report for information.

World Renew

Carol Bremer-Bennett, executive director, World Renew-U.S.

Peter Timmerman, executive director, World Renew Canada

STANDING COMMITTEES

Candidacy Committee Supplement

I. Candidates for minister of the Word

A. Candidates for ministry

Each year it is a privilege to meet and interview the applicants for candidacy. The interviews for these candidates were conducted this year by teams of four persons. The Candidacy Committee is pleased to recommend for candidacy the thirty-six individuals listed below. These persons include those who graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) and from other accredited seminaries. Those attending seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary have completed the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). Biographical details for each of the thirty-six candidates can be found in the Candidate Booklet, available for download at crcna.org/candidacy.

The following motion will allow their names to be approved by synod:

That synod declares the following thirty-six individuals as candidates for ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all remaining (if any) requirements (the list of candidates eligible for call is available on the Candidacy Committee website: crcna.org/candidacy).

Laurel Ackerman-Lindholm	Amanda Mason
Arthur Agu	Curtis Meliefste
Jason Blunt	Grant Mensonides
Bryan Branderhorst	Samuel Moon
Kwangjun (KJ) Choi	Trevor Mouw
Jihoon (Daniel) Choi	Karlos Palacios
Victor Chua	Sungjin (Tim) Park
Jonathan Coupal	Jin Soo Park
Brady DeBoer	Frank Quijada
Travis Deur	James Reed
Joshua Dykstra	Justin Roukema
John Hall	Dai (Luke) Shi
Caleb Horjus	Aaron Solomon-Mills
Nathan Jansen	Jacob Toman
Yexiang (Debbie) Jin	Joey Tuttle
James Kostelyk	Nick Vander Ploeg
Devin Lunshof	Zihan Xu
Eric Lynch	Jared Yapple

B. Extension of candidacy

The rules of synod require that someone declared a candidate by one synod must request an extension of candidacy status at the following synod if a call has not been accepted. The Candidacy Committee communicates with such persons to determine the validity of their extension and to offer words of encouragement.

The Candidacy Committee recommends the following persons for approval of candidacy extension:

Julia Gho
Charles Mutinga
Peter Kranenburg
Rachel Park

Christopher Smid
Jonathan Sturru
Lorinda VanderWerp

C. Reinstatement of candidacy

Jelle Koersen was declared a candidate in 2022. He decided to withdraw his candidacy in February of 2024 due to very difficult, unforeseen personal circumstances. He wisely recognized that ministry would have been unsustainable at that time. Since then, with the support and guidance of trusted leaders and his church community, Jelle has discerned a renewed sense of call to ordained ministry. He now desires to reinstate his candidacy. We are pleased to affirm his request for reinstatement of candidacy, and we recommend that synod approve this request.

II. Article 8 – need established

Our process for guiding pastors ordained in other denominations who wish to become ordained in the CRC is described in Church Order Article 8. Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E directs the Candidacy Committee to be intimately involved in this process and to submit for synod’s review the names of those approved for Article 8 process. The Candidacy Committee has concurred on the need for the following persons in the past year. In each case the appropriate documents are on file with the Office of Candidacy.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Ordination Denomination</i>
08/13/2025	Hyun-il Kim	Hanmi	Evangelical Church Alliance
08/14/2025	Chang Yoon	Hanmi	Full Gospel World Missions
08/27/2025	Shawn Gerbers	Georgetown	Reformed Church in America
09/4/2025	Derek Noorman	Georgetown	Reformed Church in America
09/04/2025	Cheul Woo Choi	Columbia	Korean Methodist
09/15/2025	Giwoong Kwak	Niagara	Presbyterian Church of Korea
10/06/2025	Anel Becker-Ferreira	Eastern Canada	Dutch Ref. Church of S. Africa
11/20/2025	Jin Wook Ryoo	KoAm	Presbyterian Church of Korea
11/20/2025	Sanghoon Lim	KoAm	Presbyterian Church of Korea
01/14/2026	Justin Njikeu	Hackensack	Evang. Church of Cameroon
01/16/2026	Ryan Landt	Central Plains	Reformed Church in America
03/03/2026	Luke Johnston	Iakota	Evang. Presbyterian Church
03/24/2026	Jihyung Kim	Eastern Canada	Presbyterian Church of Korea
04/27/2026	Samuel Kaha	Hackensack	Presb. Church of W. Indonesia
05/13/2026	Seong In Chin	Alberta North	Presbyterian Church of Korea

III. Nominations

Rev. Moon Bae Kim is completing his second term on the committee and is not available for reappointment. Rev. Lora Copley would have completed

her first term this year but she withdrew mid-year to take on the responsibilities of interim editor of *The Banner*. Thus the Candidacy Committee submits to synod two slates of nominees for appointment to fill two vacant positions, as presented in the Nominations section of the Agenda Supplement.

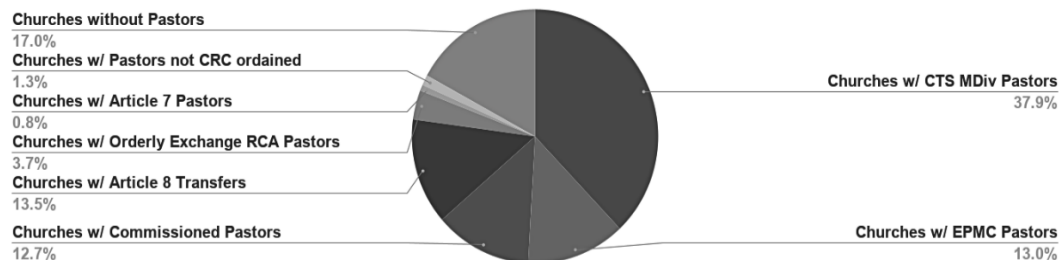
IV. Statistics regarding the theological training of CRCNA ministers

As was articulated in the first portion of the Candidacy Committee report to Synod 2026 (see *Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 198-99), the Christian Reformed Church in North America has a long history of ensuring that its ministers are theologically trained. We continually hold a deep appreciation for the foundational role that Calvin Theological Seminary has played in the theological training and formation of CRCNA ministers for 150 years. This grounding has contributed significantly to the theological and cultural unity of the CRC. For most of our history, one could walk into any Christian Reformed church and expect to find a pastor who had been trained at Calvin Theological Seminary and formed to share a common set of core values and liturgical practice.

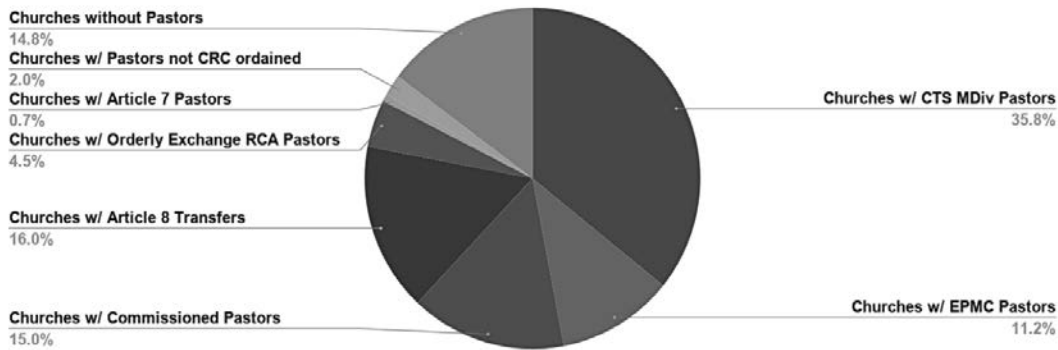
In more recent decades, the CRC has approved more flexible training pathways for those who desire to serve as pastors of Christian Reformed churches. We rejoice that this increased flexibility has made a positive impact on our denomination through increasing the diversity of our leadership and providing additional pastoral leadership for our churches. However, the gradual increase in leaders using alternate pathways to ministry has also led to a decrease in our educational standard for ministers, theological unity, Reformed “accent” or identity, and sense of connectedness to each other. Continued attention should be given to balancing the needed flexibility with our commitment to ensuring that all CRCNA ministers receive excellent formation, thorough theological training, and ample opportunities to build deep connections within their classis and denomination.

The Candidacy Committee is grateful for the efforts of Holly Small, Associate Director of Admissions at Calvin Theological Seminary, for researching the training pathways of all the ministers currently serving as a lead pastor at our 915 organized, emerging, and multisite CRC churches. Mrs. Small created a map of the churches of the CRCNA, categorizing and color-coding each by the source of the minister’s theological training. The following charts portray the statistics revealed by the research.

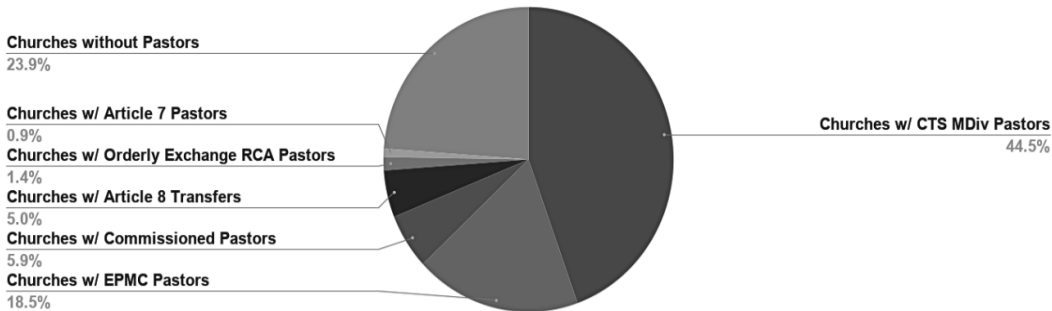
All Christian Reformed Churches in North America



All Christian Reformed Churches in the United States



All Christian Reformed Churches in Canada



Breakdown of charts

Ministers educated at Calvin Theological Seminary: 50.9%

- 37.9% received their MDiv from CTS
- 13% gained substantial exposure to CTS through the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy's required 9 credits at CTS

Ministers with ordinations in other denominations: 17.2% (completed M.Div. at a different seminary)

- 13.5% transferred their ordination into the CRCNA from another denomination through Church Order Article 8-c
 - 76% of these ministers completed the Korean Institute in Ministry (KIM) training program (Until recently the KIM program consisted of only 10 days of study. Currently, participants complete a more extended video and book curriculum while guided by a mentor.)
 - 24% of these ministers completed an independent learning plan or four to five courses at CTS through the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC)
- 3.7% are Reformed Church of America ministers serving orderly exchange (Article 8-b)

Ministers with little/no/unknown levels of seminary-level training: 14.8%

- 12.7% are commissioned pastors, an ordination that does not require seminary training
- 1.3% are individuals who have no CRCNA ordination (This demographic exists only in the U.S., not in Canada.)
- 0.8% came in through an “exceptional giftedness” route (Article 7; no M.Div. required, some may have completed MEPMC courses at CTS)

Finally, approximately 17% of churches currently have no pastor.

The Candidacy Committee presents these statistics to synod for information along with an encouragement to classes to keep the following factors in view as they work to identify, guide, and equip emerging leaders.

- Training routes that were once the exception have gradually become more of the norm throughout recent decades (this has had both positive and negative impacts, as noted above).
- Since a larger percentage of our leaders are being trained through classis-designed learning plans (commissioned pastor and Art. 8-c), it would be beneficial for Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams to ensure that these plans are appropriately thorough and formative, including elements that will foster the individual’s knowledge of Reformed theology and sense of connection to the classis and denomination.
- Calvin Theological Seminary has worked with the CRCNA to provide additional flexibility in the standard M.Div. training pathway. They have made both distance and competency-based learning possible and have created a Commissioned Pastor Certificate program. It would be beneficial for classes to encourage emerging leaders to utilize these CTS programs.

V. Correction to Candidacy Report in *Agenda for Synod 2026*

It was noted, after the publication of the Candidacy Committee’s report in the Synod 2026 agenda, that an oversight was made in failing to include Rev. Aaron Vriesman’s name in the list of current EPMC Facilitation Team members. Rev. Vriesman is a general member of the committee from Classis Zeeland.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod declare those listed in section I, A as candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

B. That synod approve the extensions of candidacy as recommended in section I, B.

C. That synod approve the reinstatement of candidacy recommended in section I, C.

D. That synod approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of need for those listed in section II for affiliation under Church Order Article 8.

E. That synod elect one of the nominees from each slate presented in the Nominations section of the Agenda Supplement to fill two open positions on the Candidacy Committee.

F. That synod encourage classes, and particularly Classis Ministerial Leadership teams, to keep the factors outlined in this report in view as they work to identify, guide, and equip emerging leaders.

Candidacy Committee

Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy

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)

OVERTURE 37

Reject the Defining Membership Task Force Report

I. Background

The Defining Membership Task Force report contains many valuable insights and reflections on the comparison between officebearers and other members in relationship to the confessions of the church. The report notes Synod 1975's pronouncement that "full agreement with the confessions is expected from all members of the church" (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 257) and recommends that churches "develop and use membership and profession of faith classes that foster a commitment to the Reformed confessions" (p. 268). The report ultimately concludes that the CRCNA "permit consistories a wider latitude for membership acceptance than some past synodical statements have suggested" (p. 258) and recognize "the validity of CRC professing membership rooted in alignment [only] with the ecumenical creeds" (p. 268) in contrast to a profession that also affirms "that the confessions of the church 'faithfully reflect' the truths of Scripture" (p. 258, quoting the *Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 353).

II. Overture

Classis Minnkota overtures Synod 2026 to do the following:

1. Reject the Defining Membership Task Force report.

Grounds:

- a. The report recommends that consistories continue to reflect upon "the balance between confessing membership rooted in the ecumenical creeds and an approach rooted in the Reformed confessions" (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 268). This so-called "balance" introduces a two-tiered membership level inconsistent with Church Order, which stipulates that the Christian Reformed Church—both members and officebearers alike—confesses its "complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word" (Church Order, Art. 1). The report introduces a functional distinction in which some members are subject only to the ecumenical creeds while others are subject to both the creeds and the confessions.
- b. The Church Order indicates that the process for becoming a confessing member of the Christian Reformed Church is the public profession of faith, which includes "a commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church" (Church Order, Art. 59-b). The Church Order provides neither a definition of, nor

provision for, a “confessing membership rooted . . . [only] in the ecumenical creeds.”

- c. The task force report exceeds its mandate. Synod 2024 recognized that “‘commitment’ to the creeds and confessions is understood to mean increasing submission to the spiritual guidance of the church in a spirit of Christian love during the sanctification process” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 866). Synod simply charged the task force with clarifying “the difference in the relative commitment to the confessions between a member and an officebearer” (p. 867), not the introduction of a novel membership category whose commitment “aligns more closely with the ecumenical creeds than with some elements of the Reformed confessions” (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 259).
 - d. A prospective member’s profession that the confessions of the church faithfully reflect Scripture should not be construed as a burdensome barrier to entry. It ought to be considered a privilege of ministry. Accordingly, denominational resources and reports ought to equip and encourage consistories to fulfill their calling to “promote and defend doctrine” (Covenant for Officebearers), rather than prioritizing increased “latitude” (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 258).
2. In lieu of this report, respond to Synod 2024’s request for clarification by adding a supplement to Church Order Article 59-b:

“A commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church” means the following:

Members shall affirm that the confessions of the church faithfully reflect Scripture and promise to be formed and governed by our creeds and confessions, which together summarize the teaching of Scripture and place the church within the historic Christian faith, including that which synod has declared to have confessional status.

A member does not need a full “doctrinal understanding and competence” (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 22) to initially make this commitment but must demonstrate a desire and willingness to increasingly grow in this knowledge under the consistory’s discipleship. Members promise to submit to the instruction and discipline of the church. Consistories must build up members (1 Thess. 5:11) throughout their lives by robustly promoting and defending confessional doctrines in a way that increasingly fosters “a commitment to the Reformed confessions” (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 268).

Grounds:

- a. This definition of “commitment” is consistent with the requirement that all members be in “complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word” (Church Order, Art. 1), while allowing for the reality “that when a person

makes profession of faith, they have not fully comprehended all the nuances of the creeds and confessions” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 866).

- b. This definition appropriately distinguishes the duties of members who, although under the authority of the creeds and confessions, simply commit to “increasingly grow” in their knowledge, whereas officebearers commit to “heartily believe and . . . promote and defend” confessional doctrines (Covenant for Officebearers).
- c. Including this distinction in a short supplement makes this important information easily accessible to consistories when they need it.

Classis Minnkota

Ryan A.K. VanderWees, stated clerk

OVERTURE 38

Preserve the Original Authority of the Council in Multisite Congregations

I. Background

We are grateful for the work done in the report of the Task Force to Study Multisite Churches. The report reflects careful and commendable work, particularly its theological grounding in the Belgic Confession, its attentiveness to the marks of the true church, and its exploration of the history of ecclesiastical networks from the Reformation to today. We also recognize that this is an important report for our moment, as multisite churches become more common and experience great success. As radio ministry, televangelism, and megachurches transformed the ecclesiastical landscape, we recognize that multisite congregations represent another tectonic shift that we do well to consider carefully, thoughtfully, and biblically.

While the report recognizes that “certain multisite arrangements risk unintentionally reversing the proper ecclesiastical order” (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 277), we fear that the proposed supplement to Church Order Article 35 does not sufficiently protect the principle of the original authority of the local council. The proposed supplement permits site churches to retain organized status—and the full classical representation that accompanies it—even when those congregations have, in practice, surrendered their self-governing authority to the leadership of the multisite network. We believe this is a vital gap that synod must address before adopting any proposed supplements to the Church Order.

II. The principle at stake: original authority of the council

Reformed polity is distinguished by the conviction that ecclesiastical authority finds its original and primary expression in the local council—the body of ministers, elders, and deacons who together carry out the ministry

of the local congregation. This is not merely an administrative agreement but a theological commitment rooted in Christ's headship over each gathered congregation. Broader assemblies—classis and synod—possess authority that is derivative and delegated, arising from what the local churches refer upward, not descending from above onto congregations below.

This was a very particular choice on the part of the Reformation churches, pushing back against the magisterium of Rome, which taught that original authority was given by Christ not to local leaders but to the institution of the papacy. The pope was seen as the true human representative of Christ on earth, and all authority in the church derived from his office. In contrast, the Reformers emphasized the "priesthood of all believers," rooted in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in each believer's heart (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 4:6), the unique gifts of grace poured out on each member of the body (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4, 7; Eph. 4:7), and the authority of Christ expressed in various leadership positions (Eph. 4:11, etc.). It has been our conviction that the Reformed expression of this theological truth in our practical exercise of polity is the truest to this biblical principle.

III. A concern not fully addressed

This principle has practical consequences. An organized congregation in the CRCNA is defined not simply by numerical or financial thresholds but by its ability to elect a self-governing council—officebearers elected by the congregation who exercise original spiritual authority over the spiritual life, discipline, worship, and membership of the body. Such self-governance distinguishes an organized congregation from an emerging one, and it entitles such congregations to full representation in classical assemblies.

Church Order Article 35-a presents the responsibilities of the council, including "those tasks which belong to the common administration of the church, such as promoting its mission, calling a pastor, approving nominations for church office, mutual censure, meeting with church visitors, and other matters of common concern." In many multisite arrangements, significant portions of these responsibilities, if not all, are surrendered to network leadership.

The task force report helpfully distinguishes between organized and emerging congregations. We appreciate this, and we feel strongly that this distinction must be applied consistently to congregations that join a multisite network. The proposed supplement as written nevertheless allows congregations in which an elected council of officebearers have *surrendered authority* over part or all of the church's vision, mission, and ministry to retain the status and privileges of an organized church. We believe this to be inconsistent and ripe for exploitation.

It is not difficult to imagine a scenario in which a thriving congregation with a gifted and charismatic pastor establishes a multisite network by

adopting several declining churches as campus sites. Each adopted congregation may retain its formal designation as an “organized” congregation—and with it, full delegation rights to classis. Yet in practice, the council of each site may operate as an extension of the network’s central leadership rather than as a body exercising original authority over its own congregation. The officebearers of each site, however sincere and capable, may receive their direction from the senior pastor or network council, effectively relocating original authority from the local council to the network’s center.

Or imagine a scenario in which the leadership of a church plant that is part of a multisite network begins to ask questions about matters that our denomination has given local councils authority over. Suppose a site pastor adopts a different stance from the network’s stance on women in ecclesiastical office, children at the Lord’s table, consumption of alcohol, or some other matter. It is not difficult to imagine a network’s leadership, concerned primarily with the mission and unity and “brand” of the network, removing such an individual from leadership rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue about appropriate and faithful practices and leadership at the local level.

What results, in effect, is an ecclesiological model that more closely resembles an episcopacy (in which a bishop-like figure exercises authority over multiple congregations) or a presbyterian connectionalism (in which authority is concentrated at the regional level) in comparison to the Reformed polity the CRCNA confesses and practices. The Church Order has historically guarded against both of those tendencies. The proposed supplement, as written, does not provide sufficient protection against the emergence of those tendencies in multisite form.

The ecclesiological consequence is significant: a multisite network that absorbs multiple organized congregations may, over time, exercise a degree of influence and authority that no single congregation was ever envisioned to hold under Reformed polity. This is not necessarily the result of bad faith. Leaders who are deeply committed to their multisite model, and who have seen it bear genuine fruit in revitalization and growth, may not perceive the structural drift that has occurred. But the absence of malicious intent does not diminish the polity concern.

IV. A proposed solution: emerging status for site churches

We propose that the remedy lies within the framework that the task force has already established. The organized/emerging distinction already recognizes that a congregation that lacks a fully self-governing council ought to be classified as emerging. We simply propose that this classification be applied consistently, including to established congregations that enter into a multisite network and thereby place themselves under the governance of network leadership.

Specifically we recommend that synod require organized congregations entering into multisite arrangements to *revert to emerging status* and to retain

that status for the duration of the multisite arrangement. This proposal is not punitive. It does not question the legitimacy or the fruit of multisite ministry, which we affirm. It does not even strip congregations of their participation in or delegation to classis, as the Church Order allows for councils to delegate officebearers from the emerging churches under their care (see Supplement, Article 40-a, d.). It simply insists that ecclesiastical status reflect ecclesiastical reality in the present, rather than historical designation. A congregation that has entrusted its original authority to a neighboring council or regional network—however temporarily and however fruitfully—is, in that season, functioning as an emerging congregation under Reformed polity. Recognizing it as such is not a demotion but an honest and pastorally appropriate description of where it stands, and this situation provides both the congregation and the classis with a clear and accountable pathway forward.

This approach also aligns with the safeguards the task force itself recommends in section V, E of its report, where it recognizes that “emerging congregations should be understood as temporarily lacking local officebearers, not as permanently dependent communities” and that “multisite structures should include clear pathways for leadership development and, where feasible, movement toward greater local governance.” We ask only that these safeguards be applied with equal care to existing organized congregations that enter a state of network dependency.

V. Recommended alternative supplement to Article 35

Supplement, Article 35

Multisite congregations

- 1. Classical oversight:** When one or more churches enter into a multisite arrangement—defined as any structure in which a congregation cedes or shares governing authority described in Article 35 to another council or centralized leadership body—the approval of classis is required, in keeping with the principles of Church Order Articles 38-a and -e.

Classis shall ensure that appropriate church visitors—and, where applicable, church counselors—are assigned to each campus or worshiping community within a multisite structure. Church visitors should regularly inquire into the formal arrangements governing multisite congregations and their campuses to ensure continued ecclesiastical clarity and accountability.

- 2. Ecclesiastical status:** In keeping with the Church Order’s principle of the local council’s original authority, churches that enter into a multisite arrangement shall be considered emerging churches under the care and leadership of the council providing oversight, according to Church Order Article 38, until such a time as the congregation both meets the requirements for organization laid out in Church Order Supplement, Article 38-b and is ready to resume local self-

governance by electing a council of officebearers to oversee the tasks required by Church Order Article 35. Classis shall regularly review the progress that site churches are making toward organization, and shall continue to encourage the formation of a self-governing local council as the truest expression of the headship of Christ over his church. Site churches within a multisite network may continue to delegate officebearers to classis under the provisions for emerging congregations in Church Order Supplement, Article 40.

- 3. Membership records and pastoral accountability:** The council of a multisite congregation shall maintain clear and accurate membership records for each campus or worshiping community. This practice serves pastoral care, discipline, and ecclesiastical accountability and assists both council and classis in discerning the health, development, and status of each community within the multisite arrangement.

VI. Overture

Classis Muskegon therefore requests that Synod 2026 do the following:

A. Commend the Task Force to Study Multisite Churches for its careful and theologically grounded work, and receive its report as a valuable resource for congregations and classes navigating multisite expressions of church life.

B. Amend the proposed changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 35, prior to adoption, to include a provision requiring that any organized congregation entering a multisite arrangement be recognized by classis as an emerging congregation for purposes of ecclesiastical status, until such a time as the congregation has developed and elected a self-governing council of ministers, elders, and deacons capable of exercising original authority over all responsibilities articulated in Church Order Article 35-a.

C. Adopt the proposed changes to the Church Order Supplement presented in this overture to further specify that classes, in their regular review of multisite arrangements, reaffirm the Reformed principle of the original authority of the local council of officebearers as the truest expression of the headship of Christ over his church, and encourage congregations and networks to work toward local self-governance as part of their vision and strategic plan.

Grounds:

1. The principle of the original authority of the local council is a foundational commitment of Reformed polity, rooted in the confessional conviction that the church “ought to be governed according to the spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his Word” (Belgic Confession, Art. 30).
2. The Church Order’s existing organized/emerging distinction, which the task force affirms, is theologically well-grounded and practically useful. Consistent application of this distinction to reflect the reality

of a congregation's self-governance through locally elected officers closes a significant gap in the proposed supplement without requiring revision of the report's broader framework.

3. Without such a provision, the changes to the supplement proposed by the task force permit a configuration in which multisite networks may adopt models that conflict with or even subvert the proper role of the regional classis and/or local council.
4. The task force itself acknowledges the risk that multisite arrangements may concentrate authority in a central figure or network structure in ways that undermine local ecclesiastical accountability, even unintentionally. A clear requirement for churches submitting to the authority of a network's leadership to revert to emerging status provides a concrete safeguard against this risk.
5. Emerging status is not a permanent condition but a transitional one, with the goal being local self-governance. Furthermore, emerging status is not punitive but reflective of a congregation's ecclesiastical reality. The Church Order allows for the delegation of officebearers from emerging congregations under the authority of a neighboring council. The proposed supplement encourages movement toward self-governance without demanding it, retaining flexibility for congregations to exist indefinitely within multisite agreements under emerging status if that is appropriate to the ministry context.

Classis Muskegon
Drew Sweetman, stated clerk

OVERTURE 39

Response to the Defining Membership Task Force Report

I. Background

The report of the Defining Membership Task Force offers reflection on the biblical, theological, and pastoral dimensions of church membership within the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The report rightly seeks to address real pastoral and missional challenges faced by local consistories as they receive individuals into confessing membership. At the same time, the report introduces language and categories that raise important questions regarding the nature of confessional commitment in the church.

In particular, the report suggests that confessing membership may, in some cases, be "rooted in alignment with the ecumenical creeds" while being distinguished from full alignment with the Reformed confessions. This introduces a conceptual distinction that does not clearly align with the historic understanding of membership in the CRC.

Historically the church has understood a distinction between confessing members and officebearers—not in the substance of their faith but in their role and responsibility. While officebearers are called to a greater measure of knowledge, discernment, and teaching responsibility, the core commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, as articulated in the Reformed confessions, is shared by all confessing members of the church.

Furthermore, the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions serve different but complementary purposes. The ecumenical creeds articulate foundational doctrines such as those focusing on the Trinity and the person of Christ, while the Reformed confessions give fuller expression to the doctrine of salvation and the gospel of grace. Accordingly, the confessions have functioned not as optional or secondary standards but as essential expressions of the church's shared faith.

In recent years, some approved liturgical forms for profession of faith have expressed confessional commitment in less explicit ways, emphasizing agreement with the teachings of the church without always clearly naming the Reformed confessions. While often motivated by pastoral and missional concerns, such developments have introduced a measure of ambiguity regarding what is affirmed in a profession of faith. The present report appears to build upon and extend this lack of clarity, making it especially important for synod to provide guidance regarding the nature of confessing membership.

The concern, therefore, is not limited to particular recommendations within the report but extends to the underlying framework by which confessional commitment is being described. The introduction of categories such as "alignment," "rootedness," and "balance" between creeds and confessions introduces ambiguity into the nature of confessing membership and its relationship to the confessions.

This lack of clarity risks creating inconsistency in practice across consistories, confusion for those making profession of faith, and a gradual weakening of the confessional identity of the church.

II. Overture

The council of Hillcrest CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan, overtures Synod 2026 to do the following:

- A. Decline to adopt the Defining Membership Task Force report and dismiss the task force with appreciation for its work.
- B. Direct consistories and future synods to continue to include the confessional nature of professing membership in accordance with the Church Order.

Grounds:

1. The report introduces ambiguity into the nature of confessional commitment for confessing members.

The report's use of categories such as "alignment," "balance," and "rootedness" in relation to the ecumenical creeds and Reformed confessions introduces a category shift in how confessional commitment is understood. This departs from the historic clarity that confessing members affirm the doctrine of Scripture as summarized in both the creeds and confessions.

2. The report creates tension with the established teaching of the Church Order regarding confessional commitment.

Church Order Article 1 states that the Christian Reformed Church confesses "its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word."

Church Order Article 59-b states that a public profession of faith includes a "commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church."

This language describes not varying degrees of alignment but a shared confessional posture of the church. The framework presented in the report introduces categories that suggest differing kinds or levels of commitment not reflected in the Church Order.

3. The report risks redefining the distinction between confessing members and officebearers in a way that implies a difference in kind rather than role.

Historically the distinction between confessing members and officebearers has been one of responsibility, calling, and depth of understanding—not a difference in the substance of their shared faith.

While officebearers are expected to demonstrate greater knowledge, wisdom, and ability to teach and defend the faith, the core commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, as articulated in the Reformed confessions, is shared by all confessing members.

The report's framework risks introducing a two-tiered understanding of doctrinal commitment within the church.

4. The report's treatment of the relationship between the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions obscures the centrality of the gospel.

The ecumenical creeds were formulated to address trinitarian and Christological controversies, while the Reformed confessions provide a fuller articulation of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

To suggest that confessing membership may be adequately grounded in the ecumenical creeds apart from a clear commitment to the Reformed confessions risks diminishing the clarity with which the gospel is confessed in the life of the church.

5. The report's framework introduces practical ambiguity for consistories and congregations.

By introducing flexible and undefined categories of confessional alignment, the report risks inconsistent standards for profession of faith across consistories, confusion among those seeking membership, weakened catechetical expectations, and diminished clarity in the church's teaching and discipleship.

6. The concerns raised are not limited to isolated recommendations but arise from the report's underlying framework.

While specific recommendations within the report reflect these concerns, the issues are more fundamental. The ambiguity present in the report's conceptual approach to membership and confessional commitment cannot be adequately addressed through partial revision or selective adoption.

For this reason, it is most appropriate for synod to decline adoption of the report in its entirety.

Council of Hillcrest CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan
Randall Plaisier, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Georgetown for consideration at its May 14, 2026, classis meeting but was not adopted.

OVERTURE 40

Reject Recommendations A, B, and D of the Defining Membership Task Force Report

I. Background

Christian Reformed churches are for people who identify as Reformed Christians, just as Roman Catholic churches are for people who identify as Roman Catholics. Now, this does not mean that every confessing member in the CRC is able to understand every aspect of Reformed theology. But this does mean that every confessing member in the CRC has heard what Reformed theology is and has chosen to commit to it.

The chief thing that marks the CRC out as distinct from other denominations is our commitment to the Reformed confessions (the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort). This commitment to the Reformed Confessions is made by confessing members (see Church Order, Article 59-b) and officebearers who are elected to their office from among the confessing members (see Church Order, Article 3-a). Article 1-a of our Church Order says forcefully that the Christian Reformed Church confesses "its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds."

Our Reformed confessions are significant and precious to us for many reasons, but especially because they articulate the Reformed understanding of

the gospel (salvation by grace alone), which is not shared by every ecclesiastical body. For example, the Roman Catholic Church rejects the Reformed conviction that a person is saved by grace alone apart from works, and instead teaches that a person is saved by grace and cooperating with grace.

What concerns us about the Defining Membership Task Force report is that it separates the ecumenical creeds from the Reformed confessions and suggests that confessing membership in the CRC could be grounded in a commitment to the ecumenical creeds but not necessarily the Reformed confessions.

Notice what the task force report says: “It seems possible, then, that a consistory may admit an individual to confessing membership whose commitment aligns more closely with the ecumenical creeds than with some elements of the Reformed confessions” (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 259). This notion appears again in Recommendations B and D on page 268.

We believe that Recommendations A, B, and D of this task force report depart from the historic and current understanding of confessing membership in the CRC.

Recommendation A asks Synod 2026 to note “the distinction in confessional commitment required of officebearers in comparison to that of confessing members” (p. 267). But our Church Order does not expect confessing members to be less committed to the confessions than officebearers, as is made clear both by Church Order Articles 1-a and 59-b. The actual distinction our Church Order makes between confessing members and officebearers in relation to the Reformed confessions is that officebearers are expected to “promote and defend” the Reformed confessions on top of committing to them (see Covenant for Officebearers, Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a), whereas it is sufficient for confessing members to commit to the Reformed confessions without necessarily having the capacity to promote and defend them. This distinction is clear when the Covenant for Officebearers is compared side by side with Church Order Article 59-b, which spells out the confessional expectations for confessing members.

Recommendation B asks Synod 2026 to urge consistories to think “about the balance between confessing membership rooted in the ecumenical creeds and an approach rooted in the Reformed confessions” (p. 268). This statement is not totally clear, but in light of the clearer remark found on page 259 (quoted above), this recommendation seems to be saying that there is an approach to membership “rooted in the ecumenical creeds” that stands apart from the Reformed confessions. This is out of step with Church Order Article 1-a and 59-b.

Recommendation D then asks Synod 2026 to recognize “the validity of CRC professing membership rooted in alignment with the ecumenical creeds” (p. 268). Notice that Recommendation D does not say “rooted in alignment with the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions.” Recommendation D goes on to mention the Reformed confessions, but not in the same

breath as the ecumenical creeds, giving us the impression that the task force thinks a commitment to the Reformed confessions is certainly ideal for new confessing members but not essential. This is also out of step with Church Order Article 1-a and 59-b.

In contrast to this task force report, Synod 1975 rightly and plainly said, “Full agreement with the confessions is expected from all members of the church” (*Acts of Synod 1975*, pp. 44, 601). This declaration from Synod 1975 simply echoes the spirit and design of the Reformed confessions themselves. The Belgic Confession begins all of its articles with expressions like “We all believe” (Art. 1) or “We confess” (Art. 3), and this “we” found throughout the Belgic Confession is the voice of the whole congregation, not merely the voice of the officebearers. The Heidelberg Catechism is similar in its deployment of personal pronouns, which are intended for the whole church to take upon its lips as the catechism is confessed together (see, for example, the personal pronouns in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 26, 60).

In summary, the Defining Membership Task Force report recommends making the Reformed confessions nonessential and secondary to the ecumenical creeds when it comes to confessing membership in our churches. This is clear from the statement found on page 259 of the report, which we quoted earlier, as well as from the report’s pushback against Synod 1975’s statement, which is found on page 257 of their report.

The Council of Zutphen CRC finds both of these things problematic—that is, no longer requiring a commitment to the Reformed confessions from confessing members and making the Reformed confessions secondary to the ecumenical creeds when it comes to confessing membership.

We do not believe that a mere commitment to the ecumenical creeds apart from the Reformed confessions is satisfactory for confessing membership in the Christian Reformed Church, because while the ecumenical creeds lay out the orthodox position concerning the Trinity and the person of Christ, they do not explicitly lay out the Reformed understanding of the gospel. The ecumenical creeds were written in large part to combat trinitarian and Christological heresies in the ancient church, but they were not written to combat counterfeit gospels. The debate regarding the gospel itself happened years later at the time of the Protestant Reformation. It was in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation that our Reformed confessions were written. And our Reformed confessions lay out with clarity and force the true gospel—that a person is saved by grace alone apart from works rather than by grace and cooperating with grace.

With this difference in mind (that the ecumenical creeds lay out the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ while the Reformed confessions lay out the proper understanding of the gospel) we believe that every confessing member in the CRC should continue committing to both the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions. Of course, this does not mean that every confessing member understands every aspect of the

creeds and confessions, but it does mean that they have heard the doctrine contained in the creeds and the confessions and desire to commit to it. The Reformed confessions are as significant for confessing membership as the ecumenical creeds because the Reformed confessions explicitly state how a person can be saved—and there is nothing more essential to know, commit to, and confess than that.

II. Overture

In light of this background, the Council of Zutphen CRC of Hudsonville, Michigan, overtures Synod 2026 to do the following:

A. Reject Recommendations A, B, and D in the Defining Membership Task Force report.

Grounds:

1. These task force recommendations are out of step with Church Order Articles 1-a and 59-b.
2. The ecumenical creeds alone are insufficient for confessing membership in the Christian Reformed Church since they do not explicitly lay out the Reformed understanding of the gospel.
3. Making the Reformed confessions secondary to the ecumenical creeds puts the CRC at risk of losing sight of the gospel of salvation by grace alone apart from works.
4. Congregational unity is enhanced when we commit to the Reformed confessions together rather than having one doctrinal expectation for officebearers and another expectation for confessing members.
5. The Reformed confessions have always been at the heart of who we are as the Christian Reformed Church.

B. Reiterate that confessing membership in the CRC is for people committed to the ecumenical creeds (Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed) and the Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort).

Grounds:

1. Since the CRC's current position has been challenged in the Defining Membership Task Force report, it should be reiterated by synod, in order to avoid confusion and guide the future practice of our churches.
2. Our Church Order says that confessing membership is for people committed to both "the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church" (see Church Order Art. 59-b).
3. Pastors and elders are a true blessing to people interested in confessing membership when they patiently work with these individuals to help them understand not only the doctrine of God and the person of Christ prior to their reception as confessing members, but also the gospel itself. A wise person once said, "What we win them with, is

what we win them to.” The Christian Reformed Church should continue winning people to the wonderful message that a person is saved by grace alone through faith alone apart from works, as the apostle Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2:8-9.

Council of Zutphen CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan
Joel VanNoord, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Georgetown for consideration at its May 14, 2026, classis meeting but was not adopted.

APPEALS

APPEAL 1

John Shaw, Elder at Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon

Note: This confessional-revision gravamen was submitted to the council of Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon, on July 10, 2025, but was defeated by the council. It was then submitted to the October 4, 2025, meeting of Classis Columbia but was defeated. According to Church Order Supplement Article 5, C, 4, this gravamen is now being submitted to synod for adjudication.

I. Background

Regarding my gravamen concerning the Heidelberg Catechism's interpretation of the second commandment, classis argued that my understanding of Q&A 96 in the catechism was within the breadth of understanding of the CRC. The fact that the CRC's Sunday school curriculum includes drawings of Jesus provides evidence that this is likely true. In this case, my disagreement is not with the CRC practice. The drawings of Christ in the CRC curriculum tell me that the CRC and I are in basic agreement, and that we both disagree with the catechism—that is to say, drawings of God (Christ) are not forbidden. I also suspect that we would agree that Michaelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel of God (the Father) reaching out to Adam is not sinful precisely because it is not worshiped. The commandment speaks against the making of idols, which by definition are objects of worship. God in the Sistine Chapel, and Jesus in Sunday school materials, are not objects of worship and thus not idols. Therefore images of God are allowed as long as they are not idolized.

My concern is what the catechism says and whether it fully agrees with what the Bible says. I do not believe they are in full agreement. What does "fully agree" mean as used in the Covenant for Officebearers?

Consider the following: A man meets two people and asks them both if they support laws restricting gun ownership. One says yes, and the other does not answer but shifts the conversation to another topic. Would we say they fully agree? No! This is similar to my case.

The catechism says that making images of God is wrong, whereas the Bible makes no such statement. Thus they do not fully agree. Hence, we should alter the catechism to reflect our beliefs and bring it more in line with God's Word, or the Covenant for Officebearers should be changed (see my overture to that end).

II. Overview

As officers in the CRC, we are bound by the Covenant of Officebearers (2012). It states the following:

... We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them. . . .

The Covenant for Officebearers goes on to discuss the procedure for handling concerns that may arise over the above statement.

My concern arises over the fact that we do not believe that Q&A 96-98 of the Heidelberg Catechism agree with the Word of God; in particular, we do not believe the second commandment teaches that images of God are forbidden.

III. Notes from Scripture

The second commandment as stated in Exodus 20:4-6 (ESV) reads:

“⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

If we read verse 4 alone, it would forbid any likeness of everything in heaven, on earth, and in the waters. This would forbid essentially any recognizable image of anything, thus forbidding carvings, castings, paintings, photographs, movies, etc. But hardly any Christian would hold to this.

Thus, verse 5 must qualify verse 4. Verse 5 says you cannot bow down to or serve the images. This clearly shows that the problem is in using them to displace the proper worship of God alone.

In whatever way we choose to interpret verse 5, it must apply to all images listed in verse 4. We cannot separate out images of God from images of everything else. Thus, if we forbid images of God, we must forbid images of lakes, mountains, our children, etc. If we allow images of trees, flowers, or angels, we must allow images of God. If we forbid worship of images of God, we must forbid worship of images of people, animals, etc. We must interpret consistently. The reasonable interpretation is that the worship of images is the heart of the matter. This simply flows from and expands upon the first commandment (Ex. 20:3):

“You shall have no other Gods before me.”

A few examples will help illustrate the point.

- God commanded that images of cherubim be made on the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:18).
- God commanded that lampstands be made with images of almond blossoms (Ex. 25:33).
- God commanded that cherubim be worked into the tent curtains of the tabernacle (Ex. 26:1).
- God commanded Moses to make a snake and put it on a pole (Num. 21:8). Later the snake was destroyed because people made offerings to it (2 Kings 18:4).

These passages indicate that God commanded various images be made for various purposes other than worshipping them, and that if they are worshipped, it is wrong to do so. Thus the heart of the matter is not the making of the image but the worshipping of the image.

Turning now to the catechism questions, they consistently forbid making images of God, but the second commandment does not forbid this. It forbids the worship of images, not the making of them as noted above. Some would argue that Leonardo da Vinci’s painting *The Last Supper*, or the drama series *The Chosen* about the life and ministry of Jesus, or nativity scenes depicting Christ, who is God, are therefore forbidden. But the second commandment forbids the worship of them, not the making or viewing of them.

Much more could be said on these topics, but this summarizes the matter.

IV. Proposed Alternate Answers of the Heidelberg Catechism

(~~Strikethrough~~ denotes deletions, and underline denotes additions.)

Question and Answer 96

Q. What is God’s will for us in the second commandment?

A. That we in no way ~~make any image of God nor worship him in any other way than has been commanded in God’s Word~~ worship or serve images but, rather, that we worship and serve God only.

Question and Answer 97

Q. May we then not make any image at all?

A. ~~God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Although creatures may be portrayed, yet God forbids making or having such images if one’s intention is to worship them or to serve God through them.~~ Yes. We may make images of any kind, but we may not serve or worship them.

Question and Answer 98

Q. But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?

A. ~~No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word not by idols that~~

~~cannot even talk.~~ Yes, images may be used in the church even as God commanded images to be used in the tabernacle, but they must not be worshiped in any way.

V. Summary

The Word teaches that we are to worship God and are not to replace worship of him with the worship of images of any kind. Further, it does not forbid the making of images unless they are being made in order to be worshiped. Hence, we cannot agree that images of God stand separate from other images as stated in Q&A 96-98 of the Heidelberg Catechism, or that the catechism agrees fully with the Word of God on this issue.

As a final note, I believe images may adorn the church, may be used in entertainment, may be used for instruction, and may be used for other purposes with the exception of being worshiped or served.

Elder at Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon
John Shaw

A P P E A L 2

John Shaw, Elder at Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon

Note: This confessional-revision gravamen was submitted to the council of Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon, on September 18, 2025, but was defeated by the council. It was then submitted to the October 4, 2025, meeting of Classis Columbia but was defeated. According to Church Order Supplement Article 5, C, 4, this gravamen is now being submitted to synod for adjudication.

I. Background

Regarding the office of pastor (minister of the Word), I do not believe this office is taught in the Word. My gravamen spells out the reasons. Other arguments note that Roman Catholics have priests who offer the bread and the cup as sacrifices. But we no longer have the need of priests, for we are a nation of priests. Priests were intermediaries between humans and God. Christ is now our intermediary. Communion is not the offering of bread and the cup as sacrifices. Hence, it does not need a priest (or pastor) to offer it. We don't need pastors to replace priests. These arguments provide biblical reasons against having an office of pastor.

I set forth this gravamen because the Covenant for Officebearers requires affirming that the Bible and the confessions fully agree. And what does the phrase "fully agree" mean?

Consider the following: A man meets two people and asks them both if they support laws permitting unrestricted gun ownership. One says yes, and the

other does not answer but shifts the conversation to another topic. Would we say they fully agree? No! This is similar to my case.

The confession promotes pastors, but the Bible is silent on the subject. They do not fully agree.

This lack of agreement presents a significant problem to some of us who would be officers in a CRC church and who want to be absolutely faithful to the Word. Do we ignore the problems and sign the Covenant for Officebearers? Or do we address the problems and risk losing our standing as officers and as faithful students of the Word? Either the confession should be changed, or the Covenant for Officebearers should be changed (see my overture to that end).

II. Overview

As officers in the CRC, we are bound by the Covenant for Officebearers (2012). It states the following:

. . . We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them. . . .

The Covenant for Officebearers goes on to discuss the procedure for handling concerns that may arise over the above statement.

My concern arises over the fact that we do not believe that Articles 30-31 and a related part in Article 34 in the Belgic Confession agree with the Word of God. In particular, I do not believe the Word of God teaches that there is to be an office of pastor separate from the offices of elder and deacon; this therefore is an addition to the Word of God that diminishes the role of elder as set forth in the Word.

III. Notes from the Word

A. The word “pastor”

In the ESV translation, the word “pastor” never occurs. In most other modern translations, “pastor” occurs only in Ephesians 4:11. We believe it to be a mistranslation there, for the underlying Greek word is “shepherd,” and in every other passage it is translated into the English word “shepherd.”

When the Greek was translated into Latin, the word for “shepherd” was correctly translated to “pastor.” But when the translations from Latin to English began, there was confusion. In early English Bibles, “pastor” was left untranslated, resulting in many passages using the Latin word “pastor” rather than the English term “shepherd.” Most modern translations translate

“pastor” to “shepherd,” except in the Ephesians passage. So why leave the Ephesians word “shepherd” as the Latin term “pastor”? This was because the Reformers created the office of pastor, and subsequently the church has chosen to retain that office.

B. The overseer

Some suggest that the office of pastor stems from 1 Timothy 3:1-2, where the qualifications of an overseer are addressed. To determine whether this passage is referring to a distinct office, we should let Scripture interpret itself.

The word for “overseer” (*episkopos*) occurs seven times in the New Testament. Acts 20:17-28 (ESV) clearly identifies the role of overseer with that of elder.

¹⁷Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the **elders** of the church to come to him. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them: . . . ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Elders are the overseers of the church.

Titus 1 (ESV) again clearly identifies elders as overseers.

⁵This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint **elders** in every town as I directed you — “if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an **overseer**, as God’s steward, must be above reproach.

The 1 Timothy 3 list of qualifications for overseers is essentially a repeat of those in Titus.

In 1 Peter 5 (ESV) the Bible again connects elders and oversight.

¹So I exhort the **elders** among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising **oversight** . . .

Philippians 1:1 also identifies the officers of the church as “the overseers and deacons.” Clearly, the officers of the church include elders and deacons, and, as we have seen already, elders and pastors are synonymous.

The remaining two references to “overseer” refer to Christ (1 Pet. 2:25) and to a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:20), where the term is used in a more generic sense.

Thus we see that the office of overseer is not distinct from that of elder but, rather, that on some occasions “overseer” is used as an alternate name for “elder.”

C. The office of elder

The word for “elder” (*presbuteros*) occurs many times in the New Testament, where it has several different meanings. In the gospels it primarily refers to the elders of the Jews, most often occurring in the phrase “chief priests and the elders” (as in Matt. 21:23). In the rest of the New Testament it primarily refers to the elders of the church. In a few places, it refers to elderly people. In this use, it appears 17 times in Acts and the letters.

If there is no office of pastor, then who is to function in this capacity? The Word of God is clear; it is the duty of elders to shepherd the flock (1 Pet. 5:2) and manage the church (1 Pet. 5:1-4; Titus 1:5-9; etc.). By maintaining the office of pastor, we have diminished the proper role of elders. Consequently, we accept much lower standards in choosing elders than what the Word specifies. Elders are to be able to teach, to preach (1 Tim. 5:17), to defend sound doctrine, be examples to the flock, etc. But many no longer meet these requirements, and the churches suffer for it. Thus the preaching and sacramental duties have been taken from the elders and given to the pastor. We see no warrant for this in the Word.

As to how the office of pastor came about, we believe it is based on an incorrect interpretation of Paul’s list of gifts given to the church in Ephesians 4:11. John Calvin said that this list is intended to be a list of offices (*Institutes*, 4.3.4), hence the office of pastor is retained in many translations. But in Ephesians 4:7 Paul is talking to all believers when he says, “Grace was given to each one of us” (ESV). This leads to verse 11, which then says that he (God) “gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers . . .” (ESV).

Consider each of these gifts. Apostles and prophets were directly chosen by God. Their importance was entirely due to their intimate relationship with God. They had firsthand communications with God and were duly respected because of it, not because they held an office. Do we still have apostles today? None we know of. Jesus certainly could choose a new apostle as he chose Paul, but he apparently has not done so. Thus this gifting appears to have disappeared. Similarly with prophets. But why would these be considered offices? Where is the list of qualifications? What are the duties?

Who approves them? This seems more appropriately a gifting or calling than an office.

How about the gift of evangelists? Calvin argued that this office has essentially disappeared but may appear as needed to establish churches where there are none. Thus, are most missionaries evangelists? Again, who appoints evangelists to their office? What are their qualifications? But are not all who share the gospel evangelists? Is this not a common gifting rather than an office?

Finally, we have shepherds and teachers. The Word tells us that shepherding, preaching, and teaching are duties of elders. Why would we need a separate office for these? And can one not have these gifts and use them with-

out being appointed to an office? In many ways we all do these things. And where does the Word say that there is an office in which preaching and the dispensing of the sacraments is separate from the office of elders? In fact, where does the Word say who can and cannot preach and perform the sacraments? The Word plainly teaches that there are two offices, one of elders and one of deacons, but nowhere does it teach about an office of pastor as described in the Belgic Confession.

I believe the list in Ephesians 4 is just what it says it is: a list of gifts given to God's people, not a list of offices distinct from elders and deacons.

D. Elder centrality and apostles

Perhaps the strongest evidence against the office of pastor comes from bigger-picture arguments. When we look at the council of Jerusalem, we see the decision against requiring circumcision was made by the apostles and elders (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4). Paul, in his letters, often speaks to or about elders (Acts 11:30; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; Heb. 11:2; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1; 5:5) but never pastors. Where are the pastors? If pastor is the prominent office set forth by the Reformers, where are the pastors in the New Testament, and why is it that elders are always mentioned? This alone should be sufficient to establish that the primary office of church government is the elder and that pastors either don't exist or don't merit any significance.

Much more could be said on these topics, but this summarizes the matter.

IV. Proposed alternate articles for the Belgic Confession

The following are my recommendations for confessional revision. They all involve striking certain phrases, and in one case adding a few words to make the remaining text grammatically correct. (~~Strikethrough~~ denotes deletions, and underline denotes additions.)

Article 30

We believe that this true church ought to be governed according to the spiritual order that our Lord has taught us in his Word. ~~There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments.~~ There should also be elders and deacons, ~~along with the pas-tors,~~ to make up the council of the church. By this means true religion is preserved; true doctrine is able to take its course; and evil people are corrected spiritually and held in check, so that also the poor and all the afflicted may be helped and comforted according to their need. By this means everything will be done well and in good order in the church, when such persons are elected who are faithful and are chosen according to the rule that Paul gave to Timothy.

Article 31

We believe that ~~ministers of the Word of God,~~ elders, and deacons, ought to be chosen to their offices by a legitimate election of the church, with prayer in the name of the Lord, and in good order, as the Word of God teaches. So

all must be careful not to push themselves forward improperly, but must wait for God's call, so that they may be assured of their calling and be certain that they are chosen by the Lord. ~~As for the ministers of the Word, they all have the same power and authority, no matter where they may be, since they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal bishop, and the only head of the church.~~ Moreover, to keep God's holy order from being violated or despised, we say that everyone ought, as much as possible, to hold the ~~ministers of the Word~~ and elders of the church in special esteem, because of the work they do, and be at peace with them, without grumbling, quarreling, or fighting.

Article 34

~~... So ministers, as far as their work is concerned, give us the~~We receive the sacrament and what is visible, but our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies—namely the invisible gifts and graces; washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls of all filth and unrighteousness. . . .

V. Summary

The Word teaches that the elders are to minister the Word (teaching and preaching) and to shepherd the flock. I just do not see anywhere in the Word that the church is governed and served by someone holding the separate office of pastor as described by the Belgic Confession. Hence I cannot agree that Articles 30, 31, and 34 of the Belgic Confession fully agree with the Word of God.

As a final note, I am not opposed to churches having “pastors.” I am not proposing changes to the Church Order. I simply do not believe the Bible sets forth an office of pastor, and thus the confession should not do so either (or the Covenant for Officebearers should not say they “fully agree”).

Elder at Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon
John Shaw

A P P E A L 3

**Members of Sovereign Grace Community Church,
Moreno Valley, California**

Personal appeal (not printed)

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION 2

Classis Columbia—Response to Appeals 1-2

In October 2024, Christ Community Church wrote a letter to our classis and shared that two of their officebearers could no longer sign the Covenant for Officebearers after Synod 2024's revision to the Church Order Supplement regarding gravamina (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 867-71, 875-80). They asked us to consider ways we could permit nonessential differences. Christ Community included the traditional understanding of what is permitted by the second commandment, and the proper number of biblical offices, as examples of these differences. We established a committee and invited John Shaw to participate because he was one of these officebearers. This committee wrote Classis Columbia's confessional-submission gravamen overture that was sent to synod in 2025 (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 376-78).

Since Synod 2025 did not accede to our overture, John Shaw, an elder at Christ Community Church (Tualatin, Ore.) communicated two gravamina to his council in June 2025. These confessional-revision gravamina concerned the traditional understanding of what is permitted by the second commandment, and the proper number of biblical offices. Furthermore, an overture was submitted, requesting that synod establish a list of acceptable alternative viewpoints on confessional matters.

On July 10, 2025, Christ Community Church voted not to accede to the overture, and they did not sustain the gravamen on the second commandment. On the gravamen concerning the number of offices, they decided that they were unable to judge the gravamen and submitted the matter to classis for examination and judgment.

Our classical interim committee (CIC) consulted Church Order, synodical decisions, and denominational leadership and determined that John's views were considered acceptable interpretations of our confessions. CIC members met with John on August 20 and communicated this to him. John indicated that if his views were affirmed as acceptable by the CRC by a broader assembly, he would withdraw his overture and gravamina.

On August 29, the CIC communicated in writing to John that his views were indeed considered within the acceptable interpretations of the confessions. On September 6, our CIC sent a letter to Christ Community's council that stated, "It is our determination that John's views are within the breadth of the CRC's interpretation and that these revision gravamina are unnecessary. John should be able to sign the Covenant for Officebearers with a clear

conscience. Thus we recommend that you withdraw both gravamina. We believe that the overture is unnecessary.”

In spite of the assurances by John that he would withdraw his overture and gravamina if his views were deemed acceptable, John communicated on September 15 that he had “decided to continue with both the overture and gravamina.” These three documents were forwarded on to classis for consideration.

On September 18, 2025, the Council of Christ Community Church passed a motion that it concurred “with the recommendation of the Classical Interim Committee as outlined in the ‘CIC Response to John Shaw’ document sent on September 6, 2025, in regard to the ‘Two Office Gravamen’ and that it rejected John’s “office confessional-revision gravamen on the ground that it is unnecessary.”

At the classis meeting on October 4, Classis Columbia considered the two confessional-revision gravamen and the overture sent by John. John was given the opportunity to speak, and delegates were given the opportunity to ask questions. A committee of preadvise also addressed the classis, summarizing reasons why classis should not adopt the overture and the gravamina.

The reasons given were as follows:

- A. Since classis received the letter from Christ Community Church in fall 2024, the CIC, church visitors, and other leaders worked with John and Christ Community’s council to understand the issues that kept John from being able to sign the Covenant for Officebearers. Upon consultation of synodical decisions and denominational staff, it was clearly communicated that these views were deemed to be in line with the confessions. John presented his second commandment gravamen to the classis as a confessional-revision gravamen, which is a request to change the confessions. However, since his viewpoints were already in alignment with the CRC understanding, the gravamen was deemed moot. Additionally, the grounds given in the gravamen were based on what we judged to be an inaccurate understanding of the biblical texts.
- B. Concerning the gravamen on the number of officebearers, we pointed out that synod has allowed a considerable amount of flexibility in determining the appropriate number of offices within the church. We also pointed out that acceding to his request would have the effect of removing the distinction between the work of ministers of the Word and elders. The Synods of 1973 and 2001 both affirmed that ministers play a unique ecclesiastical role. Additionally, John acknowledged later that he was unaware of previous synodical decisions and reports concerning the offices of elder and minister. We judged that his gravamen lacked engagement and understanding of the CRC’s historical reasons for the distinctions of office and that therefore it would be unwise to sustain the gravamen.

- C. Finally, concerning the overture, we pointed out to the classis that, while there may be some wisdom in allowing for some flexibility in accepting different viewpoints on certain confessional matters, Synod 2025 had already rejected a similar request from Classis Columbia, and thus his overture would likely not be accepted by synod. We also pointed out that the overture lacked strong argumentation necessary for making a change to the Church Order.

Upon deliberation, Classis Columbia overwhelmingly defeated each of the three requests. We wish to make synod aware that our classis worked diligently with John to answer his questions and to resolve his concerns. Members of our classis met with him on a number of occasions, and we did our best to offer helpful guidance to him. We note as well that the spirit of these interactions was good, and that the tenor of the classis meeting was good. John expressed that he did feel as though he had been heard, even though the outcome was not what he had desired. Classis Columbia recommends that synod not sustain John's appeals.

Classis Columbia
Brad Vos, stated clerk

NOMINATIONS

Nominations to Boards and Committees

I. Introduction

Each year, one of the tasks of synod is to “appoint representatives to denominational boards, committees, and other working groups” (Rules for Synodical Procedure I, A, 1, e). This process is governed by a complex set of regulations adopted by synod and various CRCNA organizations over the years, and it reflects the differing relationships between synod and the institutions connected to the CRC.

For many positions, synod has established the expectation of multiple nominees (Rules for Synodical Procedure VII, D, 2). However, for positions in which a nominee serves on behalf of a classis or a group of classes, a single nominee is presented for ratification because a choice between nominees has already been made at the classis or regional level. In addition, individuals reappointed to a second term are normally presented as single nominees.

Synod 2025 instructed the Office of General Secretary to request rubrics listing the qualifications and giftedness expected of board and committee nominees, to ensure that the rubrics are made publicly available, and to make biographical summaries of all nominees available (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76). The rubrics are included in Appendix J to the Council of Delegates Supplement.

Below is a list of this year’s nominees to the CRCNA’s various boards and committees. Biographical summaries are included for each new nominee. Each board has reviewed the nominees’ biographical information, which includes their stated commitment to Jesus Christ and to the confessional standards of the CRCNA as requested by Synod 2025. Each board has a corresponding recommendation within their report to approve, by way of the ballot, new members. In addition, boards and committees attempt to provide nominations that represent the diversity of the CRCNA, in keeping with the past instructions of synod (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 513).

The final list of board and committee members will be published in the *Acts of Synod 2026* after synod acts on these nominations.

II. Council of Delegates

A. Interim appointments

The Council of Delegates approved interim appointments to fill vacancies on the COD that have occurred since Synod 2025. These delegates are now being presented to serve a first term, ending June 30, 2028. See Recommendation FF in the COD Supplement.

Classis Southeast U.S.

Rev. Felix Fernandez is the pastor at South Kendall Community Church in Miami, Florida. He has previously served on the Candidacy Committee, the Classical Renewal team, and the Classis Leadership Team for Classis Southeast U.S.

Classis Lake Erie

Rev. Alex Snider is the lead pastor at Imlay City (Mich.) CRC. He serves as the stated clerk of Classis Lake Erie and has served as classis president and as a synodical delegate. He is a team player with a strong commitment to, and awareness of, CRC opportunities and challenges.

B. Nominees

The COD presents single nominees for classis positions to a first term, ending June 30, 2029. See Recommendation FF in the COD Supplement.

Classis Arizona

Rev. Brian Tarpy is a pastor at Christ's Community Church in Chandler, Arizona. He was ordained in 2016 and has served his current congregation since 2020. He served as the Calvin Theological Seminary student body president while studying there. He has also served as a synodical delegate, as classis president, as president of the church council for eight years, and vice president of the church council for two years. He loves Jesus and helps to introduce others to the Lord as well. He has the demeanor of a servant and works well with others.

Canada at-large

David van der Woerd is a member of Immanuel CRC in Hamilton, Ontario (Classis Hamilton). He has a legal background and presently serves as deputy judge after retiring in December 2025. He has served on many synodical committees, including the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force (2021) and the committee reporting on End of Life Issues (2000). He previously served as legal counsel for the CRCNA in Canada and for its agencies and ministries. His area of legal practice is in not-for-profit and charitable organizations. He has experience serving as an elder in his local council and as an elder delegate to synod.

Canada at-large

Rev. Ken Benjamins is the pastor at Riverside CRC in Wellandport, Ontario (Classis Niagara). He has earned the master of divinity and master of theology degrees, and he has served in various churches across southern Ontario since his ordination in 1992. He has served on a variety of CRCNA committees and boards, including the Living Word Committee, Christian Reformed Home Missions, the classical interim committee, and ministry teams. As a pastor, he has been involved in council and has served classis as a synodical deputy.

Classis Grand Rapids East

Cindy VanderKodde is a retired, active member of Classis Grand Rapids East. She currently attends Madison Square CRC - North Campus in

Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has served as an elder in her church, and she served as an elder delegate to Synod 2024. She has experience on various boards and committees, including the Calvinette Board, Legal Aid of West Michigan, and the Grand Rapids Christian Schools Board. She is currently serving as the secretary of Legal Aid of West Michigan. She also serves on the Patient and Family Advisory Council of University of West Michigan hospital, the executive team for Classis Grand Rapids East, and the classis Racial Justice Team (as leader). She has experience and interest in serving with sensitivity in multicultural settings.

Classis Grandville

David Bouwkamp is a retired middle-school teacher. He also worked as driver-education instructor and still has a connection to driver education. He currently attends Lee Street CRC in Wyoming, Michigan. He previously served as an elder at Calvary CRC, Wyoming, Michigan, and has served multiple terms as elder at Lee Street CRC. He has also served as clerk of council, preparing agendas and minutes in a way to increase accountability and action. He worked as well with a team to create and process a mission and vision proposal for Lee Street CRC. He currently serves on the Lee Street Church Centennial Planning Team and has served as a delegate to synod for Classis Grandville.

Classis Greater Los Angeles

Rev. Fernando Valencia currently serves as the pastor of Hispanic ministries at Rosewood CRC in Bellflower, California. He earned a master of divinity degree and has been serving the CRCNA since 2010. He has served on the Candidacy Committee and the Classis Ministry Leadership Team, working with candidates for minister of the Word. He served as a delegate synod in 2013 and 2016 and believes that his calling is to help individuals discover hope and purpose through the Word of God.

Classis Illiana

Gerritt Wierenga is a lawyer in Munster, Indiana, currently attending Munster CRC. He earned a juris doctorate degree from DePaul University College of Law and is currently serving as senior counselor at Whirlpool Corporation. He has served on both the Highland Christian School and Illiana Christian High School Board of Directors and currently serves as chair of the CRCNA Judicial Code Committee. He has previous experience as a deacon at Lake Worth (Fla.) CRC. He also serves on the safe church team for Classis Illiana.

Classis Muskegon

Rev. John Huyser serves as the pastor of Fruitport (Mich.) CRC. He received his master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and has continued his education in chaplaincy coursework through the Trinity Health medical system. He is a second-career pastor and has been serving as a pastor since his ordination in 2010. He has served on

the councils of Fruitport CRC; Ebenezer CRC, Jarvis, Ontario; and Godwin Heights CRC, Wyoming, Michigan. He also has significant experience serving classical and local committees, classical interim committees, the Fruitport Michigan Area Pastors Association, and Adoni Contract Packaging. John aims to be pastoral in all of his ministry roles.

Classis Northern Illinois

Craig Buma is a retired supervisor air-traffic control specialist who currently attends Wheaton (Ill.) CRC. He earned a bachelor of sociology degree and was trained in air-traffic control for the (U.S.) Federal Aviation Administration. He has served as a member of the Timothy Christian Schools board in Elmhurst, Illinois, and he currently serves as chair of the Wheaton CRC Missions Committee. He has been involved in his church as a cadet counselor, Sunday school teacher, and elder. He served as a delegate to synod in 2007, 2023, and 2024 and loves and appreciates the CRCNA denomination.

Classis Red Mesa

Gregory Morris is a fourth-grade teacher in Tohatchi, New Mexico, where he attends First Navajo CRC. He has a bachelor of science degree in elementary education. He has served on the Cottonwood Pass Bible Conference Committee in Classis Red Mesa, and he has recently begun service as an elder in his church. While still learning about being an officebearer, he has worked on scheduling preachers and handles the pulpit with confidence. Greg is skilled at administration, listening, and note taking. He is willing to learn and be available as needed.

Classis Yellowstone

Rev. Clair Vander Neut is a retired minister of the Word who is currently a member at Life in Christ CRC in Salt Lake City, Utah. Ordained in the CRC, he earned a master of divinity degree and a doctor of ministry degree. Though retired, he is still active in local ministry and serves on the Classis Yellowstone Interim Committee. He has experience serving on many classical boards, including the classical interim committee and home missions committees. He has also served as the stated clerk of Classis Hackensack. He has often served as the chair of council in the local churches he has pastored. With experience as a church planter, pastor, and counselor, he is a compassionate person who desires to serve.

U.S. at-large

Rev. Aleah Marsden has served as the pastor of formation at Christ Church in Davis, California, since October 2022. She earned a master of divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and is currently working on a doctor of ministry degree at Western Theological Seminary. She served as a delegate to synod in 2024 and 2025 and has served on various boards and committees, including the classis ministerial board, the local council, and the Redbud Writers Guild. She currently

serves as a facilitator for the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). She is committed to her local congregation and to the CRCNA. She is deliberate, careful, pastoral, and empathetic along with being open to the counsel of others.

C. Second term

The COD presents the following delegates for reappointment to a second term, ending June 30, 2029. See Recommendation FF in the COD Supplement.

Classis

B.C. North West
B.C. South East
California South
Grand Rapids North
Hackensack
Lake Superior
Niagara
Ontario Southwest
Quinte
U.S. at-large

Member

Hyung-Jun Kim
Andre Van Ryk
John Jansen
Ron Karelse
Joyce Jackson
Willy Krahne
Janet de Vries
Phil Apoll
Ron Van Auken
Christian Sebastia

D. Extended term

Due to an unexpected vacancy in the Classis Ko-Am delegate position in 2021, Jonathan Kim was appointed to fill the remainder of the term, which ended in 2023, and was reappointed to a second full term, originally scheduled to conclude in 2026. The Council of Delegates recently worked with the classis and the COD Governance Committee on the length of term for this position and recommends that synod appoint Jonathan Kim to an additional one-year term on the COD, by exception, to end June 30, 2027. See Recommendation FF in the COD Supplement.

III. Calvin University

A. Interim appointment

At its October 2025 meeting, the Council of Delegates approved the interim appointment of Nancy Schoonmaker to serve a three-year term as an at-large trustee, to begin in October 2025, on the Calvin University Board of Trustees. See Recommendation XX in the COD Supplement.

At-large trustee

Nancy Schoonmaker is the senior vice president of Global Finance/Chief Financial and the operating officer at Our Daily Bread in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She earned a bachelor of science degree in accounting from the University of Virginia, a master of business administration degree from Cornerstone University, and a business administration doctorate in accounting from Indiana Wesleyan University. Prior to returning to Grand Rapids in 2023, Nancy served as the executive vice president and chief financial officer at Indiana Wesleyan University for nine years. She held a similar position at Cornerstone University from 2008 through

2014. The bulk of her career has been in the leadership of financial aspects to schools of higher education. She knows the Christian higher education world intimately and is familiar with Calvin University. She has shared she has no confessional difficulties with any of the denomination's creeds and confessions. She is a member of Calvary Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

B. Regional nominees

The classes from the following regions present single nominees for regional positions to a first term, ending June 30, 2029, on the Calvin University Board of Trustees. See Recommendation A in the Calvin University Supplement.

1. The Calvin University Board of Trustees recommends James Lee to begin a three-year term in 2026 to replace Edward Wayne Coleman, who is completing his second and final three-year term as the trustee elected by the classes of Region 3.

Region 3

Rev. James J. Lee is a pastor currently serving Christ Community Church of East Islip, New York (Classis Hudson). He has been pastoring this congregation for the past seven years while serving as chair of the council. He has served on a number of search teams for the denomination, including the search committees for general secretary and director of ecclesiastical governance. He has also served on the advisory committees for Worship Ministries and the Calvin Alumni Association Board. In addition, he served on the Advisory Council for the Spiritual Services Department for South Shore University Hospital in Bay Shore, New York. He currently serves on the steering committee of the CRCNA Korean Council. He is a graduate of Calvin University with a passion for the institution and for working across cultural boundaries.

2. Regional vacancy
Nathan DeJong-McCarron submitted his resignation as a Region 4 at-large trustee in September 2025. The board is in the process of filling this vacancy.

C. At-large nominees

In keeping with the bylaws of Calvin University (*Minutes of the Special Meeting of the COD 2021*, p. 561), the Board of Trustees presents the following single nominations to fill two at-large positions on the university board for a first term, ending June 30, 2029. See Recommendation A in the Calvin University Supplement.

The board recommends Jori Brink to begin a three-year term in 2026, to replace Lambert (Bert) Kamp, who is completing his third and final three-year term as an at-large trustee.

Jori Brink is a member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Illinois. She works for Trinity Health medical system as the vice president

of accounting and reporting for Service Area West. She earned a bachelor of science degree from Calvin University and a master of public health degree from DePaul University. She has worked as a health-care auditor and has held senior finance roles such as corporate controller. She has served on the finance committee of the Loyola Physician Partners Board, the Calvin Alumni Board, the Board of Directors of Near North Health Services Corporation, and the Board of Directors of Bethshan Association. She has also served as the chair of the Mission Committee at Bethel CRC in Lansing, Illinois. She believes in Calvin's mission, noting that its excellent scholastic rigor and thoughtful action-orientated faith education are both needed in our world.

The board recommends Kyle Yonker to begin a three-year term in 2026, to replace Carl Triemstra, who is completing his third and final three-year term as an at-large trustee.

Kyle Yonker is a business leader and community advocate based in Illinois. He serves as vice president of Homewood Disposal, a family-owned company in which he plays a key role in operations, strategic growth, and maintaining strong relationships throughout the communities the company serves. Kyle is a graduate of Calvin University, where he developed a foundation in leadership and service that continues to shape his professional and personal life. In addition to his work in the waste and recycling industry, he is actively involved in nonprofit leadership. He currently serves on the board of Providence Life Services. Known for his steady leadership and commitment to community impact, Kyle balances his professional responsibilities with a strong dedication to family. He and his wife, Heather, are raising their four children and are actively engaged in their local community and church.

D. Alumni nominee

In keeping with the bylaws of Calvin University (*Minutes of the Special Meeting of the COD 2021*, p. 561), the Board of Trustees presents the following single nomination to fill an alumni position on the university board for a first term, ending June 30, 2029. See Recommendation A in the Calvin University Supplement.

Pamela Marmon is an entrepreneur, change leader, speaker, and author. She is a graduate of Calvin University (2005) with a business administration degree, a graduate of Seattle Pacific University (2011) with a master of business administration degree, a Cornell University-certified organizational designer, and a PROSCI-certified change manager, with over twenty years of experience in leading enterprise initiatives, mergers and acquisitions, organizational design, and large-scale technology implementations. She works with Fortune 500 clients across diverse industries such as aerospace and defense, technology, biotech, insurance, health care, food and beverage, banking, higher education, nonprofit, engineering, retail, construction, and manufacturing. She has proven

ability to align people, processes, and systems to deliver performance improvements. She founded a church-consulting practice to support the mission of the church through strategic-growth initiatives. She is a trusted adviser to executive leadership with a track record of driving operational efficiency, culture change, and sustainable growth. Pam has experience serving nonprofit organizations including the Association of Change Management Professionals TN Board, the Calvin University Alumni Board, and the Seattle Pacific University Strategic Alumni Group Board. She and her family live in Franklin, Tennessee, and chase adventure while schooling their three children wherever the road takes them.

E. Trustee reappointments

The board recommends the following current trustees for reappointment for the terms noted. Perrin Rynders completed his second three-year term as an alumni trustee this year and will begin a two-year term (replacing Craig Lubben, who served one year, and his term ended).

Region 1, elected: Jack Beeksma, second term

Region 5, at-large: Adam Ramirez, second term

Alumni: Jim Valk, second term

At-large: Tony Brookhouse, second term

At-large: Moses Chung, second term

At-large: Perrin Rynders, third term

IV. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Regional nominees

The classes from the following regions present single nominees for regional positions to a first term, ending June 30, 2029, on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. See Recommendation C in the Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement.

Region 2

Rev. Gary Van Leeuwen is the pastor at Nobleford (Alta.) CRC (Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan). This is the fourth church Gary has served following his graduation from the master of divinity program at Calvin Theological Seminary. He has also earned a doctorate of ministry degree and is currently working on a master of theology degree through Trinity Western University, focusing on Old Testament studies. He has served on various boards and committees within the churches and classes he has served, including the classis ministry leadership team, classis interim committee, and campus ministry committee. He has been delegated to synod six times, including service as second clerk at Synod 2025. He has served as a synodical deputy, a church visitor, a church counselor, and a mentor to new pastors. He has a clear grasp of Church Order and aims to serve with patience in his various roles.

Region 3

Heidi Blokland is an elementary school principal who plans to retire in June 2026. She earned a bachelor's degree at Calvin University and completed a master's degree in educational leadership in May 2026. She is a member of Dixons Corners Community CRC in Brinston, Ontario. In her many years as a school principal, she has served on the local school board as an ex-officio member, submitting reports and supporting the board chair. She has been approached as having the gifts of an elder but has been called to keep previous commitments to serving the school community. Having grown up with a CRC minister for a father, Heidi has built her career on Christian schooling opportunities and is honored to have the opportunity to serve as a member of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees.

Region 11

Rev. Paul De Vries is the lead pastor at Brookside CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan (Classis Thornapple Valley). He earned a master of divinity degree at Calvin Theological Seminary and was ordained in 1989. Paul has served on many boards and committees, including many school boards and various denominational committees, such as the Grand Rapids Christian School Board, the CRCNA Board of Trustees, and the CRCNA Council of Delegates. He has also served as the stated clerk of Classis Hackensack and of Classis Thornapple Valley. He is known for his experience serving the CRCNA in a variety of capacities and for his involvement within the denomination.

B. At-large nominees

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents single nominees for two at-large positions. Synod has approved that Calvin Theological Seminary is permitted to present a single nomination for an at-large trustee position where a region has multiple trustee positions. See Recommendation C in the Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement.

1. Position 1

Rev. Dr. Edward Gerber earned a bachelor of arts degree at Calvin College, a master of divinity degree at Regent College, and a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies at the University of Wales - Trinity Saint David. He is a minister of the Word and currently serves as the university chaplain and director of campus ministries at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia. Prior to this role, he pastored churches in British Columbia and New York. He holds the St. Peter Fellowship at the Center for Pastor Theologians.

2. Position 2

Ronald Baylor earned a bachelor of arts degree at Calvin College and a juris doctor degree at Wayne State University. In 2024 he retired after 45 years of practicing general civil law and transitioned to retired of counsel status at his firm. He has served on several boards, including the

Bloomington Telephone Company board, the Kalamazoo Christian Schools Foundation, the Calvin College Alumni Association, the Calvin College Board of Trustees, and the Pine Rest Counseling Center of Kalamazoo board. He received the Calvin College Distinguished Service Award in 2013. As a member of Third CRC of Kalamazoo, Michigan, he has served as chair of elders, as a shepherding elder, as adult education director, as chair of the endowment fund, as a Sunday school teacher, and as an Alpha Bible study leader.

C. Subsequent term

Trustee Christian Oh (at-large) is completing a second term on the Board of Trustees and is eligible for a third three-year term. The board recommends that synod reappoint him for an additional three-year term. See Recommendation C in the Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement.

V. Judicial Code Committee

A. Nominees

The Judicial Code Committee has three current or upcoming vacancies. The COD recommends that synod, by way of the ballot, elect one new member from each category to a first term of three years. In some cases, the COD has been unable to identify a second candidate for a given position and so presents only a single nomination by way of exception. See Recommendation VV in the COD Supplement.

1. Nonordained with no legal training

Andrew Diemer is a member of Kelloggsville CRC in Kentwood, Michigan, and works as a land surveyor and crew chief. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in history at Calvin University and a bachelor of arts degree in English at Grand Valley State University. He has served multiple terms as a deacon and elder at his church, including the roles of deacon and council president, and as a board member of AnchorPoint Christian School in Wyoming, Michigan.

2. Minister of the Word

Rev. Todd Zuidema is a minister of the Word and a member of First CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. He has four units of clinical pastoral education in addition to a master of divinity degree. He currently serves as director of church relations at Dordt University. Todd has been the pastor of two churches and has served as a synodical deputy, a delegate to synod, a member of the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team of Classis Grand Rapids North, and a member of the classis interim committee of Classis Heartland. He currently serves on the board and steering committee of the Church Ambassador Network in Iowa.

Karlos Palacios is a commissioned pastor serving Iglesia Cristiana Reformada Comunidad de Fe Poinciana in Poinciana, Florida, a congregation he planted in 2008. He also serves as a college professor in linguistics.

He has served as a member of Classis Southeast U.S. and Consejo Latino, and he has been very active in the areas of church planting and leadership development in the CRC.

3. Person trained in law

Henry Lane is a member of Fairlawn CRC, Whitinsville, Massachusetts. He is an attorney who earned a bachelor's degree at Calvin College, a juris doctor degree at Suffolk University Law School, and a master of laws degree at Boston University Law School. He has served on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees as well as on a number of municipal, community, and political boards and committees. He has served on a synodical study committee and as a deacon and elder on his church council. Henry currently serves on his church council, as the Council of Delegates member for Classis Atlantic Northeast, and as the elected moderator of the Town of Northbridge, Massachusetts (presiding officer of the town's legislative assembly).

B. Subsequent Terms

Heidi de Vries and Gerritt Wieringa are completing a first term on the Judicial Code Committee and are eligible for a second three-year term. The JCC recommends that synod reappoint them for an additional three-year term.

VI. Candidacy Committee

Nominees

The Candidacy Committee presents the following slate of names for two open positions. The committee recommends that synod elect one of the nominees from each slate to fill the two open positions on the Candidacy Committee. See Recommendation E in the Candidacy Supplement.

1. Position 1

Rev. Gil Suh is currently a senior pastor at San Jose (Calif.) CRC (Classis Central California). He was ordained in March 2000 and graduated from Veenstra Theological Seminary in Nigeria. Upon graduation he worked at San Jose New Hope CRC, a Korean congregation in Santa Clara, California. He served in both Cambodia and Nigeria with Resonate Global Mission. He also served as a missionary in residence at Calvin Theological Seminary. He served as a leader for strategic review teams of Romania and China, and he currently serves as the coordinator for Korean pastors in Classis Central California. He would bring much cultural awareness and many diverse experiences to the Candidacy Committee.

Rev. Moses Kang is the pastor of Faith Community Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey (Classis Hudson). He was ordained in September 2017 and served on loan for Kingsway-Lambton United Church of Canada for two years. He also served on the Global Vision Team and on the Classis Hudson executive committee. He has experience as a youth pastor and as an adjunct seminary teacher. He would connect well with young pastors and people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

2. Position 2

Rev. Rebecca Bokma is the pastor at Calvary CRC in Ottawa, Ontario (Classis Eastern Canada). She was ordained in November 2024 after completing a master of divinity degree at Calvin Theological Seminary. Her previous experience includes interning at Meadowlands Fellowship in Ancaster, Ontario, and working as the faith formation coordinator at New Life CRC in Guelph, Ontario. She also served as pulpit supply for Classes Huron, Niagara, and Toronto. In 2019 and 2022 she attended synod as a young adult representative, and she returned to Synod 2025 as a delegate from Classis Eastern Canada, serving on the advisory committee for Candidacy. She would bring a unique and fresh perspective to the committee as she strives to help young candidates navigate the candidacy process.

Rev. Paula Seales is a retired minister of the Word who leads Kavod Fellowship, a network of microchurches. She was ordained in 2016 and worked at Madison Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan (Classis Grand Rapids East). She earned a master of theology degree and is presently pursuing a doctorate in ministry at Calvin Theological Seminary. She served as a member of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality, and she served two terms on the executive committee of Grand Rapids Classis East. She would bring a desire to make the CRC a place for all people as she draws on her relationally driven ministry experiences.

VII. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

Second terms

William Krahne (USA Central), Joshua Johnson (Canada West), and Sheila Holmes (USA East) are completing a first term on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee and are eligible for a second three-year term. The EIRC recommends that synod reappoint them for an additional three-year term (see Recommendation C, EIRC report, *Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 221).

VIII. Historical Committee

The Historical Committee presents the following nominees for three open positions on the committee. The committee recommends that synod elect three members, each to a first term of three years (see Recommendation B in the Historical Committee report, *Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 235).

1. Position 1

Rev. Dr. Jay Shim is a retired minister of the Word, with credentials held at Anaheim (Calif.) CRC. He earned an undergraduate degree in philosophy at Calvin University and a Ph.D. in systematic and historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. Throughout his academic career, he consistently engaged with issues and documents central to the development of Christian theology, including the question of what it means to be Reformed in the modern context. He is deeply interested in identifying, interpreting, and preserving significant issues and documents in the

life of the church. Rev. Shim has served on several CRC synodical committees, including the committee on Inclusive Language for God and the committee on Women in Office. He has also served on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee and the Candidacy Committee. He served as director of the Korean Institute for Ministry (KIM), which parallels the EPMC in preparing Korean-speaking ministers for service in the CRC. Additionally, he has served as a liaison between the CRC and the Presbyterian denominations in Korea, and he translated all three confessions, as well as *Our World Belongs to God*, into Korean. Since retiring from Dordt University in 2023, he has been serving a Korean-speaking congregation in southern California and teaching master of divinity courses online for international students.

2. Position 2

Rev. John Greydanus is a retired minister of the Word, and worships at Cragmor CRC in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He earned a bachelor of arts degree at Dordt University and a master of divinity degree at Calvin Theological Seminary, as well as a four-unit Clinical Pastoral Education certificate as a clinical and pastoral counselor. He has served as stated clerk for Classis Red Mesa for over twenty-five years. As part of his role, he encourages and assists churches with sending documents to the archives each year. He also serves as a synodical deputy and teaches monthly in the Classis Red Mesa Leadership Development Network.

Lois Harvey is a member and deacon at Rehoboth (N.Mex.) CRC. She is a retired elementary school teacher (Rehoboth Christian School), whose passion was teaching social studies at the grade 4-5 level. She earned a bachelor of arts degree at Calvin University. She has always had an appreciation for history, and in 1983 she completed a history of the Southwest Bible and Missionary Conference (Flagstaff, Ariz.), which was an annual Bible conference involving missionaries from various denominations serving the Navajo people in New Mexico and Arizona. She has also written historical articles for her city magazine, and she serves on the museum committee at Rehoboth Christian School.

3. Position 3

Rev. Dr. Kyle Dieleman is a minister of the Word, with credentials held at Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in theology at Dordt University, a master of divinity degree at Calvin Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in religious studies from the University of Iowa. He currently serves as professor of theology and history at Dordt University, teaching a variety of courses on church history and historical theology. His research focuses on the Dutch Reformed tradition in the 1500s-1600s. Kyle has published widely on the Dutch Reformed tradition, including two academic books, articles in *The Banner*, and entries on the online *Reformed Journal* blog.

Rev. Jose Rayas is a minister of the Word and serves as the pastor of Valley Ridge Community Church in Socorro, Texas. He earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a master of divinity degree at Westminster Seminary, and he served as the director of adult educational services for Texas A&M University in El Paso, Texas. He is bilingual and has served three times as an officer at synod. He has served on several denominational committees, including those on Liturgical Positions and the Form of Subscription, as well as the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. He has also served as stated clerk for Classis Arizona. He is currently a board member of Consejo Latino, and he teaches Reformed polity and the Reformed creeds and confessions at Revelation Seminary in Florida.

IX. Loan Fund

Second term

Dale Burghgraef and Wayne Postma are completing a first term on the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., board and are eligible for a second three-year term. The Loan Fund recommends that synod reappoint each to an additional three-year term (see Recommendation C in the CRC Loan Fund report, *Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 160).

X. Pension Trustees

The U.S. Pension Trustees board recommends the following single nominee for election to a three-year term beginning July 1, 2026 (see Recommendation E in the Pensions and Insurance report, *Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 167).

David Schutt is a licensed certified public accountant responsible for managing the financial and administrative functions at Barnabas Foundation (including financial statements, tax returns, human resources, and office management). Before working in his current position, he served as division controller for Republic/Allied Waste Services in the Chicago area; senior staff accountant for Lafaye, Brock, and Associates; and financial analyst for Gottlieb's Financial Services in Jacksonville, Florida. Additionally, he has served as treasurer for churches in Florida and Indiana. He earned a bachelor of science degree in accountancy at Calvin College. He is an active member of the American Institute of CPAs, and he serves as an elder at First CRC in Crown Point, Indiana, and as a board member for Elim Christian Services.

XI. Synodical deputies

The following classical appointments of synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies are presented for approval*:

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Deputy</i>	<i>Alternate</i>	<i>Term</i>
Central Plains	Rev. B. Ochsner	Rev. D. Swinney	2029/1
Illiana	Rev. J. Christoffels	Rev. C. Parsels	2029/1
Ko-Am	Rev. D. Yi	Rev. S. Soo Lim	2029/1
Rocky Mountain	Rev. C. Sebastia	Rev. P. Jordan	2029/1

*Terms of alternate synodical deputies run concurrent with those of the synodical deputies.

REPORT OF SYNOD 2026

SERVICE OF PRAYER AND PRAISE

Covenant Fine Arts Center, Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan

June 14, 2026

5:00 p.m.

(Asterisk [] indicates worshipers may rise in body or in spirit.)*

Call to Worship: Psalm 150

Welcome

*Opening Song: "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord, God Almighty"

Psalm of Praise: Psalm 30

*Song: "Behold Our God"

Scripture reading: Luke 13:18-20

Sermon: "The Incommensurability of the Kingdom"

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Communion Songs:

"Holy God, We Praise Your Name"

"There Is a Redeemer"

"Come, Behold the Wondrous Mystery"

"Before the Throne of God Above"

*Closing Song: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"

*Benediction

Convening Church: Second Christian Reformed Church of Grand Haven,
Michigan

Minister: Rev. Tim Blackmon

Liturgist: Rev. Jay Knochenhauer

Organ: Cathy Schaaf

Piano: Rachel Bouwkamp

Brass: Paul LaMaire, Jeff Erickson, Chris Hordyk, Dennis Schaaf

Voice: Bethany Besteman, Roberta Vriesema, Harold Winter, and
J.P. Trabbold

MINUTES OF SYNOD 2026

WEDNESDAY EVENING, May 27, 2026

First Session

ARTICLE 1

Synod 2026 convenes at 7:00 p.m. (EDT) via videoconference. Ashley Medendorp, coordinator for synodical operations, provides announcements regarding the use of interpretation and technology and notes that the meeting is being livestreamed and recorded.

Rev. Jon Hoekema, prayer shepherd for the CRCNA, introduces Rev. Tim Blackmon, president pro tem and pastor of Second CRC, Grand Haven, Michigan, and together they lead the assembly in opening prayer and a time of devotions.

Rev. Blackmon reads Philippians 4:4 and offers a reflection on the challenges that were faced at the time of Paul's letter, and the joy expressed as an act of resistance. The delegates then view a recording of "All That Have Life and Breath," performed in September 2025 by the combined choral and instrumental ensembles of the Calvin University music program. This piece, written by music department chair Dr. Forrest Wakeman in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary, incorporates the hymns "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" and "All Creatures of Our God and King."

Rev. Hoekema concludes with prayer.

ARTICLE 2

The president pro tem calls the assembly to order and welcomes the delegates, advisers, staff, and other guests to Synod 2026.

ARTICLE 3

The president pro tem asks the general secretary, Rev. Zachary J. King, to call the roll of delegates listed on the credentials of the forty-nine classes:

Delegates to Synod 2026

Alberta North

Minister – Tomas Axeland
Minister – Andrew Aukema

Elder – Jon W. Vanden Dool
Deacon – Daniel K. Harder

Alberta South/Saskatchewan

Minister – Gary van Leeuwen
Minister – Henry J. Veldboom

Elder – Peter F. de Jonge
Deacon – Jeremy N. Williamson

Arizona

Minister – Jose Rayas
Minister – Andrew W. Littleton

Elder – Samuel S. Sanchez
Deacon – Kevin Copp

Atlantic Northeast

Minister – Daniel J. Vos
Minister – Willard H. Barham

Elder – Jeffrey J. Harp
Elder – David E. Dill

B.C. North-West

Minister – Willem J. Delleman
Minister – Michael Yang

Elder – Davi-Andrea Drummond
Deacon – Robin de Haan

B.C. South-East

Minister – Shaun Jung
Minister – Justin Roukema

Deacon – Winnifred D. Langelaar

California South

Minister – José G. Piñero

Elder – Ralph E. Mack

Central California

Minister – Josiah J. Gorter
Minister – Joel Renkema

Elder – Joao Pedro Macimiano
Trabbold
Deacon – David L. Roos

Central Plains

Minister – Darren C. Kornelis
Minister – Gary W. Brouwers

Elder – Drew Ryder
Deacon – Nohn E. Wheagar

Chicago South

Minister – Derek Buikema
Minister – William R. Sytsma

Elder – Thomas L. Van Engen
Deacon – Matthew D. Ipema

Columbia

Minister – Rob Toornstra
Minister – Benjamin E. Petersen

Elder – Renee C. Gillenwater

Eastern Canada

Minister – Benjamin R. Gresik
Elder – Jeff W. Bokma

Elder – Cornelis Rystenbil
Deacon – Clarence P. Dijkema

Georgetown

Minister – David C. Ten Clay
Minister – Mark D. Elffers

Elder – Brandon J. Seaver
Deacon – Mason Witte

Grand Rapids East

Minister – Brian White
Minister – Joy D. Bonnema

Elder – Ryan J. VanderKamp
Elder – Jeffrey A. Fisher

Grand Rapids North

Minister – Jeremy J. Scripps
Minister – Joshua L. Grimes

Elder – Brittany A. Clark
Deacon – Ronald L. Karelse

Grand Rapids South

Minister – Joshua VanDrunen
Minister – Ronald G. Kool

Elder – Gary J. Bekker
Elder – Randall J. LeFebre

Grandville

Minister – Brandon L. Haan
Minister – Jean Gomes

Elder – Mark Meyering
Deacon – Dennis R. Hughey

Greater Los Angeles

Minister – Rob Golding
Minister – Fernando Valencia

Elder – Brian C. Hibma
Elder – Isadore C. LaBrosse

Hackensack

Minister – YooJeung Victor Kim
Minister – Matt Lin

Elder – Bethany Besteman
Deacon – Joe Sanderlin

Hamilton

Minister – Mark Verbruggen
Minister – Douglas J. Nieuwstraten

Elder – Julius de Jager
Elder – Adrian Guildemon

Hanmi

Elder – Joseph H. Kim
Deacon – Al D. Mondragon

Deacon – Jeehee G. Mondragon

Heartland

Minister – Brian R. Dunn
Minister – Keith A. Hoekstra

Elder – Dan Tracy
Deacon – Phil Elgersma

Holland

Minister – Chad M. Steenwyk
Minister – John R. DeVries

Elder – Aaron T. Locke
Deacon – Lucas C. tenBrink

Hudson

Minister – Timothy McHugh

Minister – Lloyd K. Hong

Huron

Minister – Cameron W. Oegema
Minister – Jason D. Crossen

Elder – Jim A. Broekema
Elder – Wilmar J. Bakker

Iakota

Minister – Matthew A. Haan
Minister – John R. Lee

Elder – Ben Saarlos
Elder – Nicolas R. Van Engen

Illiana

Minister – Jim Hollendoner
Minister – Cedric W. Parsels

Elder – Joshua D. Dykstra
Elder – Richard G. VanderWoude

Kalamazoo

Minister – Mike D. Koetje
Minister – Changho Ahn

Elder – Seth Koerner

Ko-Am

Minister – Kyungho Park
Minister – Edward W. Yoon

Elder – Jenny U. Yoon

Lake Erie

Minister – Joseph Hun-Suk Bae
Minister – Alex D. Snider

Elder – Robert W. Ettema

Lake Superior

Minister – David M. Dick
Minister – Marg Rekman

Elder – Tony A. Krossman
Deacon – Brandon C. Vaags

Minnkota

Minister – Joshua T. Carpenter
Minister – John A. Bothof

Elder – Roy W. Duininck
Elder – Richard J. Steenstra

Muskegon

Minister – John S. Huyser
Minister – Jeffery Anton Hough

Elder – Schuyler T. Pike
Deacon – Dennis Gene Jager

Niagara

Minister – Timothy L. Raakman
Minister – Ken F. Benjamins

Elder – Bill Hoogland
Deacon – Peter Kralt

North Cascades

Minister – Rebecca J. Steiger
Minister – Russell Kent

Elder – Josiah B. Keen
Deacon – Miles R. Davis

Northcentral Iowa

Minister – Stewart de Jong
Minister – Kevin Boss

Elder – Joel A. Copley
Deacon – Christopher G. H. 't Hoen

Northern Illinois

Minister – Moises Pacheco
Minister – Ezra Jang

Elder – Earl W. Nicodem
Deacon – Jessica L. Brouwer

Northern Michigan

Minister – Mitchell J. Leach
Minister – Ashley Bonnes

Elder – Nate J. Beelen
Elder – Craig A. Pollington

Ontario Southwest

Minister – Harold A. Winter
Minister – Ralph S. Wigboldus

Elder – Margriet L. Linker
Elder – Jack A. Van Marum

Pacific Northwest

Minister – Aaron C. Gonzales
Minister – Douglas E. Fakkema

Elder – Eliot L. Blom
Deacon – Merick A. Roragen

Quinte

Minister – John VanderWindt
Minister – Martin E. Spoelstra

Elder – Patrick Bigelow
Elder – Ryan Nirula

Red Mesa

Minister – Caleb N. Dickson
Elder – Janelia Smiley

Deacon – Mitzie Begay
Deacon – LaVias Natewa

Rocky Mountain

Minister – Will Brouwers
Minister – Christian Sebastia Almenar

Elder – Mary L. Gallegos
Deacon – Randy L. Courduff

Southeast U.S.

Minister – Chris N. Cassis
Minister – Scott Vander Ploeg

Deacon – Michael C. Cassis
Deacon – Diego Granada Jr

Thornapple Valley

Minister – Paul R. De Vries
Elder – Ralph R. Mueller

Elder – Ren G. Tubergen
Deacon – Kevin P. Bos

Toronto

Minister – Richard E. Grift
 Elder – Anders Blaauwendraat

Deacon – Madison Alexander

Wisconsin

Minister – Jim C. Kirk
 Minister – Gregory D. Schuringa

Elder – Terry A. Katsma
 Elder – Zack T. Flipse

Yellowstone

Minister – Andrew Sytsma
 Elder – John Sinnema

Deacon – Caleb J. Sinnema

Zeeland

Minister – Aaron J. Vriesman
 Minister – Dirk M. Koetje

Elder – Bill Lyzenga
 Deacon – Andy P. Visser

The roll indicates that the following delegates are absent: José Piñero (California South), Ralph Mack (California South), Jeff Bokma (Eastern Canada), Kees Rystenbil (Eastern Canada), Jean Gomes (Grandville), Mark Meyering (Grandville), Fernando Valencia (Greater Los Angeles), Brian Hibma (Greater Los Angeles), Adrian Guldemon (Hamilton), Mark Verbruggen (Hamilton), Phil Elgersma (Heartland), Joseph Hunsuk Bae (Lake Erie), Marg Rekman (Lake Superior), Tim Raakman (Niagara), Jack Van Marum (Ontario Southwest), Michael Cassis (Southeast U.S.), and Anders Blaauwendraat (Toronto).

The president pro tem declares that a quorum of the membership is present and that the assembly of Synod 2026 is duly constituted. He also notes that because this session is taking place virtually, faculty advisers, young adult representatives, and denominational staff will be introduced when synod convenes in person.

ARTICLE 4

After participating in a practice election, the assembly proceeds to elect officers, following the collection of nominations gathered from delegates according to the established procedures (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 533). The following are elected:

President: Chad Steenwyk (Holland)
 Vice president: Derek Buikema (Chicago South)
 First clerk: Jose Rayas (Arizona)
 Second clerk: David Ten Clay (Georgetown)

Rev. Blackmon offers congratulations and a prayer for the newly elected officers.

ARTICLE 5

President Steenwyk offers a welcome and makes opening remarks.

ARTICLE 6

The general secretary presents the schedule for synod and reminds delegates of the social media and audio/video policies (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 9-10).

ARTICLE 7

The general secretary calls attention to the program committee report and makes note of the following:

A. The program committee report will be approved as one of the first items of business in the June 12 session of synod.

B. Advisory committee membership, and any changes to the membership assignments due to chairs or reporters being elected as officers of synod.

ARTICLE 8

The general secretary notes that the Agenda Supplement for Synod 2026 will be available soon, and an alphabetical list of delegates and advisers is now posted on the site.

He encourages delegates to take note of Rev. Jon Hoekema's document on the spiritual discernment aspects of synod, available on the synod site, and calls attention to prayer opportunities and resources available prior to and during synod.

ARTICLE 9

The general secretary notes that the assembly will reconvene on Friday, June 12, at 8:15 a.m. at Calvin University, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

ARTICLE 10

President Steenwyk leads in closing prayer. Synod recesses at 9:20 p.m.

FRIDAY MORNING, June 12, 2026

Second Session

ARTICLE 11

The session opens in worship, with Rev. Tim Blackmon (Second CRC, Grand Haven, Mich.) reading from Psalm 149. Delegates Ashley Bonnes (Northern Michigan), Ralph Mueller (Thornapple Valley), and Tim McHugh (Hudson) lead the delegates in singing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," accompanied by organist Cathy Schaaf (Second CRC, Grand Haven). After a prayer of confession, the assembly responds by singing "Holy Forever," accompanied on the piano by synod worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp, and receives God's greeting. Participants exchange mutual greetings and prepare to receive God's Word, singing "Speak, O Lord." Rev. Blackmon reads Matthew 13:44-46, Jesus' parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value. Through these parables, Jesus reveals the supreme value of the kingdom of heaven, and Rev. Blackmon encourages

delegates to focus on one thing: treasuring the gospel of Jesus Christ. The assembly responds by singing “Be Thou My Vision.” The Prayers of the People are offered, and the service closes with the singing of “All People That on Earth Do Dwell.”

ARTICLE 12

President Steenwyk thanks Second CRC of Grand Haven for leading synod in worship. He welcomes delegates and advisers to the first in-person session of Synod 2026 and asks delegates to complete the roll call.

Adrian Guldemon (Hamilton), Ben Sarloos (Iakota), José Piñero (California South), and Mitzie Begay (Red Mesa) are arriving later today. Robert Ettema (Lake Erie) is no longer able to attend.

ARTICLE 13

President Steenwyk introduces the president of Calvin University, Greg Elzinga, who welcomes synod to the campus and highlights the 150th anniversary of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University. President Elzinga closes with the words of Our World Belongs to God, paragraph 12, citing its reminder of God’s faithfulness and the assurance that our future is secure because our world belongs to God.

ARTICLE 14

The president of synod invites delegates to rise to express their agreement with the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, as he reads it aloud. The delegates respond by saying “We do, God helping us.”

ARTICLE 15

The president introduces the officers. The general secretary, Rev. Zachary J. King, welcomes and introduces the faculty advisers who are present: Dr. Wilson de Angelo Cunha, Dr. Yudha Thianto, Dr. Gabriela Tijerina, and Dr. Jeffrey Weima.

The general secretary also welcomes and introduces to synod the young adult representatives who are present: Kyle Hoekema, Benjamin Haan, Kaitlyn Hofsink, Cruz Menchaca, Nathan van der Meer, Kyle Vannus, and Corey Viss.

The general secretary introduces the president of Calvin Theological Seminary, the president of Calvin University, the parliamentarian, the synod news staff, the *Banner* staff, the synod office staff, the IT staff, the worship committee convener, the prayer shepherd, the Calvin University events staff, the denominational staff consultants, the Council of Delegates chair and vice chair, interpreters, and directors of agencies and ministries who are present.

ARTICLE 16

The general secretary presents the day’s schedule for information: morning prayer, 7:00-7:30 a.m.; morning session, 8:15-10:00 a.m.; breakout session,

10:00-11:00 a.m.; advisory committee meetings, 11:00-12:00 p.m.; 1:00-5:00 p.m.; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

ARTICLE 17

The general secretary reminds the delegates of the confidentiality and audio/video recording policies, and he reads the social media guidelines (*Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 811-12).

ARTICLE 18

The president introduces the *Power and Privilege* training, provided by Rev. Joel Vande Werken, director of ecclesiastical governance. Synod 2019 mandated that future synods "incorporate biblically and theologically grounded training and orientation for delegates to better understand the power with which they are privileged, especially with regard to gender, ethnicity, position, and age" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 815).

Rev. Vande Werken reads from Ephesians 4:17-32, where Paul instructs Christians how to conduct themselves in their words and actions toward each other. He encourages the delegates to pay attention both to what Paul calls us to do and what Paul calls us to refrain from, with the help of God's Spirit, and to be thankful for God's grace. What is experienced at synod is how people experience the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He closes with the words of Thrive ministry consultant Rev. Sean Baker: "We need each other."

ARTICLE 19

The president makes the following announcements on behalf of the officers of synod:

- A. A communication from Classis Minnkota was submitted late and was ruled to be not legally before synod.
- B. The officers allowed supplementary reports from Thrive, Resonate Global Mission, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, the Candidacy Committee, the Canadian and U.S. Pension Trustees, and the Council of Delegates, as well as several overtures addressing matters in the *Agenda for Synod 2026*.
- C. The officers reviewed Resonate Global Mission's background reports on church planting and requested that these be shared with the advisory committee addressing church planting.
- D. The officers reviewed several handouts from Thrive and Resonate related to church planting and renewal conversations happening today.
- E. Only materials that are an approved part of the agenda may be distributed at synod. No other materials should be shared with an advisory committee or otherwise distributed to delegates at synod.

ARTICLE 20

The general secretary presents the report of the Program Committee and notes the membership, materials, and meeting rooms provided for each advisory committee within the report.

A. The following advisory committees are recommended for Synod 2026:

Committee 1—Synodical Services I

Chair: Gary van Leeuwen; **reporter:** Alex Snider; **members:** Patrick Bigelow, Jeff Bokma, Ashley Bonnes, Gary Brouwers, Chris Cassis, Randy Courduff, Robin de Haan, Paul De Vries, Douglas Fakkema, Matthew Ipema, Ronald Kool, Andrew Littleton, Doug Nieuwstraten, Moises Pacheco, Cedric Parsels, Schuyler Pike, Timothy Raakman, Rebecca Steiger, Christopher 't Hoen; **faculty adviser:** Wilson de Angelo Cunha; **staff consultant:** Al Postma.

Committee 2—Synodical Services II

Chair: Willem Delleman; **reporter:** John Lee; **members:** Will Brouwers, Jason Crossen, Mark Elffers, Renee Gillenwater, Daniel Harder, Darren Kornelis, Jeehee Mondragon, Craig Pollington, Kees Rystenbil, Gregory Schuringa, Jeremy Scripps, Martin Spoelstra, Richard Steenstra, Brandon Vaags, Ryan VanderKamp, Mark Verbruggen, Daniel Vos; **young adult representative:** Corey Viss; **staff consultant:** Dan DeKam.

Committee 3—Church Order

Chair: Rob Toornstra; **reporter:** Harold Winter; **members:** Brittany Clark, Kevin Copp, John DeVries, Joshua Dykstra, Jean Gomes, Brian Hibma, Keith Hoekstra, Michael Koetje, Mitchell Leach, Randall LeFebre, Ryan Nirula, David Roos, Merick Roragen, Brandon Seaver, Nicolas Van Engen, Jon Vanden Dool, Michael Yang; **faculty adviser:** Jeff Weima; **staff consultant:** Zachary King.

Committee 4—Education and Candidacy

Chair: Joshua VanDrunen; **reporter:** Richard Grift; **members:** Tomas Axeland, Joseph Hun-Suk Bae, Bethany Besteman, Joshua Carpenter, Julius de Jager, David Dill, Zack Flipse, John Huyser, Tony Krossman, Isadore LaBrosse, Winnie Langelaar, Aaron Locke, Mark Meyering, Benjamin Petersen, Samuel Sanchez, Aaron Vriesman, Nohn Wheagar, Brian White; **young adult representative:** Kaitlyn Hofsink; **staff consultants:** Susan E. LaClear, Greg Elzinga, Jul Medenblik.

Committee 5—Agencies

Chair: Scott Vander Ploeg; **reporter:** Dirk Koetje; **members:** Andrew Aukema, Willard Barham, Kevin Boss, Jessica Brouwer, Miles Davis, Clarence Dijkema, Josiah Gorter, Jeffery Hough, Dennis Hughey, YooJeung Kim, Peter Kralt, Al Mondragon, Kyungho Park, Marg Rekman, Justin Roukema, Dan Tracy, Thomas Van Engen; **young adult representative:** Benjamin Haan; **staff consultants:** Kurt Selles, Carol Bremer-Bennett, Peter Timmerman.

Committee 6—Mission and Congregations

Chair: Jim Kirk; **reporter:** Ralph Wigboldus; **members:** Changho Ahn, Madison Alexander, Mitzie Begay, Joy Bonnema, John Bothof, Jim Broekema, Peter de Jonge, Andrea Drummond, Brian Dunn, Mary Gallegos, Lloyd Hong, Ron Karelse, Joseph Kim, Matt Lin, Joao Pedro Macimiano Trabbold, José Piñero, Ben Saarloos, Andrew Sytsma, Mason Witte; **young adult representative:** Cruz Menchaca; **faculty adviser:** Gabriela Tijerina-Pike; **staff consultants:** Kevin DeRaaf, Lee Carter.

Committee 7—Ecumenical and Historical Matters

Chair: Jim Hollendonner; **reporter:** Ren Tubergen; **members:** Stewart de Jong, David Dick, Roy Duininck, Adrian Guldemon, Bill Hoogland, Dennis Jager, Josiah Keen, Margriet Linker, Earl Nicodem, Cameron Oegema, Joel Renkema, Christian Sebastia Almenar, Janelia Smiley, Lucas tenBrink, Fernando Valencia, Andy Visser, Jeremy Williamson, Jenny Yoon; **young adult representative:** Kyle Hoekema.

Committee 8—Administration and Finance

Chair: Ken Benjamins; **reporter:** Benjamin Gresik; **members:** Nate Beelen, Anders Blaauwendraat, Eliot Blom, Kevin Bos, Caleb Dickson, Jeffrey Fisher, Diego Granada, Matthew Haan, Jeff Harp, Ezra Jang, Shaun Jung, Terry Katsma, Bill Lyzenga, Ralph Mack, Timothy McHugh, Joe Sanderlin, Henry Veldboom, Edward Yoon; **young adult representative:** Kyle Vannus; **staff consultant:** Roberta Vriesema.

Committee 9—Task Forces

Chair: William Sytsma; **reporter:** Richard VanderWoude; **members:** Wilmar Bakker, Gary Bekker, Michael Cassis, Joel Copley, Phil Elgersma, Rob Golding, Aaron Gonzalez, Joshua Grimes, Brandon Haan, Russell Kent, Seth Koerner, Ralph Mueller, LaVias Natewa, Drew Ryder, John Sinnema, Jack Van Marum, John VanderWindt; **young adult representative:** Nathan van der Meer; **faculty adviser:** Yudha Thianto; **staff consultant:** Zachary King.

B. Parliamentarian: Rev. Michael Winnowski

C. The president presents the following recommendation on behalf of the officers of synod:

That synod approve the report of the Program Committee as presented.

—*Adopted*

(The report of the Program Committee continues in Article 28.)

ARTICLE 21

The president notes the following:

The materials in the consent agenda are listed in the Program Committee report, and these items have been assigned to individual advisory committees for a brief review. If any matter is to be removed from the consent

agenda, the specific matter and page numbers should be brought to the attention of the officers by 5:00 p.m., Friday, June 12. Voting on the consent agenda will take place on Saturday morning. The Program Committee (officers of Synod 2025) designated the following as consent agenda items:

- COD overview and membership (COD report, sections I-II; no committee assignment)
- Bible Translations Committee report (COD report, section III, C; Committee 6)
- Denominational survey (COD report, section III, D; Committee 1)
- Nicene Creed resources (COD report, section III, E; Committee 6)
- Convening church for Synod 2027 (COD report, section IV, A, 1; Committee 1)
- Ministries Leadership Council Charter updates (COD report, section IV, E; Committee 5)
- Financial reports (COD report, section V, A and Supplement, section V, E-F; Committee 8)
- Offering schedule (COD report, section V, D; Committee 8)
- EIRC term adjustments (EIRC report, sections II-III; Committee 7)
- Interim appointments (COD Supplement, section IV, L; Committee 2)

ARTICLE 22

The president announces the following appointments on behalf of the officers of synod:

Minutes Review Committee:

First clerk: Rev. Jose Rayas
Second clerk: Rev. David Ten Clay
Minister delegate Rev. Mark Elffers
Minister delegate Rev. Cedric Parsels

Worship Planning Committee:

Minister delegate Bethany Besteman
Minister delegate Jean Gomes
Minister delegate Ben Gresik
Young adult representative Corey Viss

Sergeant at Arms:

Minister delegate Moises Pacheco

Hospitality Committee:

EIRC members Bill Wilton and Shirley Roels

ARTICLE 23

The president makes the following announcements on behalf of the officers of synod:

- A. The Rules for Synodical Procedure limit floor speeches to three minutes. The time clock will be monitored by the officers but will not be displayed.

- B. The officers have ruled that if requests to record a negative vote are received, the delegate's name, classis, and grounds will be read by the clerks, and only the name and classis will be included in the minutes. The form will allow for 100 characters maximum. Negative votes should be received prior to the start of the next session after the decision to which the negative vote applies (i.e., no later than the end of the coffee/meal break).
- C. The officers note the following protest: According to the decision of Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 925), we note that the delegates from Classis Minnkota (Joshua Carpenter, Roy Duininck, Rick Steenstra, and John Bothof) and two delegates from Classis Georgetown (Mark Elffers, Brandon Seaver) protest the seating of women delegates.
- D. Ballots for denominational board and committee elections will be presented later in the week. If delegates wish to voice a concern regarding the inclusion of any individual whose name is currently on the ballot, they should approach the officers before Saturday evening at 5:00 p.m. This will ensure enough time to address any concerns and to prepare for an executive session (if necessary) when the ballot is presented.
- E. Anyone who wishes to voice a concern about any individual throughout the sessions of synod should inform the officers so that we can handle the matter with sensitivity to the individual named.
- F. In response to Synod 2019's instruction to make prayer "a more intentional feature of synod's work sessions" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 803), the president will announce regular prayer breaks during plenary sessions. The president also notes the presence and availability of 15 prayer intercessors from six classes in both Canada and the United States. Intercessors are also available to pray with committees, those giving leadership to committees, and anyone else. Written prayer requests may be submitted via the delegate page online or on sheets on classis tables or at the prayer table in the chapel lobby.
- G. Regarding attendance: "While synod is in session, its members may not leave the assembly without permission from the chair; neither is it permissible for any member to withdraw from the assembly and return home without the consent of the assembly" (Rules for Synodical Procedure, section I, E).
- H. The president notes that delegates will convene in Church Renewal and Church Planting breakouts immediately after dismissal. The assembly will reconvene at 8:15 a.m. on Saturday morning.

ARTICLE 24

The president leads in closing prayer. The session recesses at 9:57 a.m.

SATURDAY MORNING, June 13, 2026

Third Session

ARTICLE 25

The session opens with a time of worship. Rachel Bouwkamp leads the assembly in exchanging mutual greetings in English, Spanish, and Korean. Delegates Jean Gomes (Grandville), Bethany Besteman (Hackensack), Matt Lin (Hackensack), Ben Gresik (Eastern Canada), and staff member Roberta Vriesema (director of partnership administration) lead delegates in singing “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” and “I Depend upon Your Faithfulness.” Prayer shepherd Rev. Jon Hoekema reads Psalm 62:1-7 and allows space for quiet reflection. The assembly responds by singing “My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone.” Rev. Hoekema offers a blessing, and the worship time concludes with the singing of “All People That on Earth Do Dwell.”

ARTICLE 26

The president welcomes delegates, advisers, other guests, staff, and people viewing online. Adrian Guldemon (Hamilton), José Piñero (California South), Ben Sarloos (Iakota), and Mitzie Begay (Red Mesa) are now present, and they rise to affirm the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

ARTICLE 27

The president presents the following on behalf of the officers of synod:

All requests for privilege of the floor by the Council of Delegates, CRC agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, task forces, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to synod are granted. The privilege of the floor is also granted to Tim Sheridan for Resonate Global Mission, Elaine May for Thrive, Reggie Smith for matters related to diversity, and Jul Medenblik and Zachary King for the Defining Membership Task Force.

The vice president presents the following on behalf of the officers:

- Delegates are reminded to sign in on roll call.
- There will be a rotation of opening and closing prayers by classis.

ARTICLE 28

(The Report of the Program Committee is continued from Article 20.)

The president presents the consent agenda.

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (sections I-II), pp. 21-24
2. Council of Delegates report (section III, C), p. 25
3. Council of Delegates report (section III, D), p. 25
4. Council of Delegates report (section III, E), p. 26
5. Council of Delegates report (section IV, A, 1), p. 28

6. Council of Delegates report (section IV, E and Appendix D), pp. 32, 91-93
7. Council of Delegates report (section V, A and Appendix F), pp. 32, 113-24
8. Council of Delegates report (section V, D), p. 33
9. EIRC report (sections II-II), pp. 215-16
10. Council of Delegates Supplement (section IV, L), pp. 433-34
11. Council of Delegates Supplement (section V, E-F and Appendix O), pp. 434, 480-88

B. Recommendation

That synod approve or receive for information, as appropriate, all of the matters designated as “consent agenda” by the Program Committee of synod, including the following:

1. That synod note the COD’s action in appointing Roberta Vriesema to the position of director of partnership administration.
2. That synod take note of the fulfillment of synod’s instruction to provide curated resources related to the Nicene Creed, including worship service resources, to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the creed (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 651).
3. That synod approve Cascade Fellowship CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.) as the convening church of Synod 2027.
4. That synod receive as information the updated Ministries Leadership Council charter as presented in the COD report, Appendix D.
5. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements of the agencies and educational institutions (COD report, Appendix F), the work on budgets for the fiscal year 2026-2027 for the agencies, institutions, and ministries (COD Supplement, Appendix O), and the summary of denominational investments and compliance with investment policy (COD Supplement, Appendix O).
6. That synod, in addition to approving the requests for special offerings contained in the Resonate Global Mission and World Renew reports, recommend that the churches receive one or more offerings for the following denominational agencies, institutions, and ministries: Calvin Theological Seminary, Calvin University, Canadian Justice Ministries, ReFrame Ministries, and Thrive.
7. That synod take note of the updated terms of the EIRC members rebalanced according to the interim positions that were vacated, and of the exception granted by the COD to the regional balance requirement, allowing Rev. Dr. Marno Retief (formerly representing Canada West, and now representing Canada East) to complete his first term ending in 2027.
8. That synod ratify the COD’s work with regard to interim appointments.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 29

The morning session recesses at 8:45 a.m. so that delegates can work in advisory committees. Jose Rayas (Arizona) prays in Spanish and English to close. The assembly will reconvene in the evening at 6:30 p.m.

SATURDAY EVENING, June 13, 2026

Fourth Session

ARTICLE 30

After some brief announcements, the session opens in worship with worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp, delegates Jean Gomes (Grandville), Bethany Besteman (Hackensack), Matt Lin (Hackensack), Ben Gresik (Eastern Canada), and staff member Roberta Vriesema (director of partnership administration) leading the delegates in singing “My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone.” Delegate Caleb Dickson (Red Mesa) reads excerpts from Psalm 62 in the First Nations Version: Indigenous Bible Translation and offers a prayer.

President Steenwyk outlines the schedule for the evening.

ARTICLE 31

Rev. Dr. Elaine May, Thrive consultant for church renewal, presents an overview of the five-year initiative toward church renewal (*Acts of Synod 2026*, pp. 540-45). This renewal pathway began with a mandate from Synod 2023 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 975-76), listening at Gather events, discernment, the drafting of a renewal strategy, and experimentation and implementation that are ongoing. She lists the principles for renewal and describes the resources and workshops developed by Thrive that are available to all congregations.

Rev. May highlights the partnership between Thrive and Resonate on the strategies for church renewal and church planting and closes with several illustrations of the kinds of congregations that are capable of church planting.

President Steenwyk thanks Rev. May and expresses commitment on behalf of the church to pray for Thrive in their work.

ARTICLE 32

Rev. Tim Sheridan, Resonate Global Mission director of church planting, presents a ten-year plan for church planting (*Acts of Synod 2026*, pp. 514-39). He notes that this plan was already anticipated by Resonate’s response to an overture sent to Synod 2023 (see *Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 758-69). Resonate’s response at that time stated that renewal can take place only through the power and work of the Holy Spirit and pointed to opportunities unfolding in the growth of diaspora communities and cultural diversity in the

CRCNA. Rev. Sheridan notes that this ten-year plan responds to those two main issues.

The methodology for the plan included broad consultation, work groups for critical areas, the Multiply Conference in November 2025 (collaboratively designed and led by Classis Southeast U.S. and Resonate), and regular updates and ongoing engagement with stakeholders. In March 2026, the CRCNA was invited to apply for a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant to support denominational church planting and renewal. This resulted in a two-day gathering facilitated by consultants and paid for by Lilly.

Rev. Sheridan outlines a church-planting strategy centered on the gospel, emphasizing that the gospel is intended to be lived out within a community of believers. He emphasizes that church planting must begin with a foundation of prayer and fasting, and he challenges delegates to consider their personal response to the vision. The plan is structured in five-year phases and focuses on five strategic priorities: discipleship multiplication, leadership development, church-planting pathways, legacy pathways, and funding and capacity development. He acknowledges that the organization currently lacks the staffing and financial resources needed to fully implement the plan. He calls attention to the fact that this plan requires all of us to be “all in” and that it requires us to cry out to the Lord together in unison and in desperation. He concludes by describing his own ministry journey and shares his gratitude for the gospel.

President Steenwyk thanks Rev. Sheridan for his work and presentation.

ARTICLE 33

Rev. Dr. Zachary J. King, general secretary, presents his state of the church address to the assembly. He describes the CRCNA as being at an “Antioch moment,” a pivotal time similar to that faced by the early church in Antioch as described in Acts 11:19-21. Despite challenges such as congregational disaffiliations, leadership shortages, cultural shifts, and internal divisions, he says, he sees the Holy Spirit leading the denomination toward renewal through four key pivots.

First is the Spirit’s call to communal prayer and spiritual practices, says Rev. King, emphasizing that transformation begins when believers seek God together. Second is the need for intergenerational discipleship, where mature believers intentionally mentor younger Christians and emerging leaders. Third, the CRCNA needs to embrace a biblical vision of ethnic diversity, recognizing the denomination’s increasingly multicultural identity and the opportunity to reflect God’s diverse family. Fourth, he says, is the call for a renewed commitment to holistic mission, combining gospel proclamation with acts of mercy, service, church planting, and community engagement.

Drawing parallels to the church in Antioch, which flourished despite persecution, conflict, and diversity challenges, Rev. King asserts that God can similarly renew the CRCNA. He points to encouraging examples of prayer

movements, mentoring relationships, multicultural leadership, and local mission initiatives already taking place. Concluding with an appeal to hope, he challenges congregations to embrace these Spirit-led pivots and to trust God to accomplish far more than they can imagine through faithful obedience.

President Steenwyk gives thanks for Rev. Dr. King and his work as general secretary, and the delegates offer their assent with applause.

ARTICLE 34

The president introduces Rev. Michael Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates (COD), who outlines the role and work of the COD as the 55-member binational board that serves as synod's interim committee between annual meetings. The COD oversees the implementation of synod's decisions, facilitates communication between classes and the denomination, and conducts its work through nine committees covering governance, finance, ministry, communications, and leadership.

Rev. Ten Haken highlights the breadth of the COD's work, noting that numerous recommendations have been brought to synod for approval, all aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and trust within the denomination. Recent highlights include recommending a new editor for *The Banner* and new directors for Thrive and ReFrame Ministries; reviewing a proposal to reduce governance costs by holding synod biennially; implementing Church Order changes; and supporting a collaborative vision for church planting and church renewal developed by Resonate Global Mission and Thrive.

This year the COD has been encouraged by the fact that ministry pledges exceed projections by approximately \$500,000, with most of the increase designated for church planting and renewal. While acknowledging ongoing challenges facing the denomination, it will be important to emphasize optimism, unity, and a renewed commitment to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In closing, Rev. Ten Haken reflects on five years of service, expresses gratitude for the opportunity to lead, introduces incoming chair Andre Van Ryk and vice chair Chuck Adams (in absentia), and affirms God's faithfulness in raising up leaders to serve the church. The address ends with a call for wisdom, prayer, and dedication to Christ's mission, giving glory to God for the church's future.

President Steenwyk gives thanks for the service of Michael Ten Haken and Andre Van Ryk on the COD and for the COD's work. Zachary King offers a prayer of thanks for Rev. Ten Haken and Mr. Van Ryk.

ARTICLE 35

Gary Van Leeuwen (Alberta South/Saskatchewan) closes in prayer. The assembly adjourns at 8:25 p.m.

MONDAY MORNING, June 15, 2026

Fifth Session

ARTICLE 36

The morning session opens in worship, with worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp and delegates Seth Koerner (Kalamazoo), Ashley Bonnes (Northern Michigan), Moises Pacheco (Northern Illinois), and Timothy McHugh (Hudson) leading the assembly in singing “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” After reading Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism, participants respond by singing “Be Still and Know” in Spanish and in English. Rev. Jon Hoekema, prayer shepherd, reads Psalm 46:1-3, 10-11, and offers some questions that facilitate quiet reflection and prayer. The delegates view a video about the ministry at Geneva Campus Church in Madison, Wisconsin. Rev. Hoekema offers a blessing, and the worship time closes with the assembly singing “He Will Hold Me Fast.”

The roll call indicates that all are present.

ARTICLE 37

The president of synod presents the following on behalf of the officers:

A. For all appeals, the officers have ruled the following:

- Church Order Article 34 indicates that delegates may not vote on a matter in which they or their church is particularly involved. The officers therefore rule that when a classis is party to an appeal, the delegates from that classis will not vote on the matter.
- Because the Church Order supplement dealing with appeals (Supplement, Art. 30-a, C, 4) provides that each appellant and respondent may be provided a single representative to present their case, the officers have ruled that delegates from a classis that is party to a personal appeal should recuse themselves from the discussion of the appeal. They may remain in the room but should move to the gallery.

B. With regard to plenary sessions, the officers have ruled the following:

- Speeches are to be no longer than three minutes.
- When delegates speak, they are to state their name and classis, address the chair, and speak to the motion being discussed.
- The Rules for Synodical Procedure indicate that a member of an advisory committee may not speak against the committee’s recommendations unless he or she has secured the chair’s permission for a *minor* point of disagreement (Rules for Synodical Procedure, VII, B, 2, e).

C. The president introduces the following ecumenical guests:

- Rev. Philip Peacock, general secretary for the World Communion of Reformed Churches
- Pastor Bernardino Wilson, president of the executive board for the CRC of the Dominican Republic

The president notes that Rev. Dr. Laura Osborne, coordinator for Ecumenical Relations and Disability Concerns for the Reformed Church in America, is arriving later today.

ARTICLE 38

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Richard Grift reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Materials

1. Calvin Theological Seminary report, pp. 127-44
2. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, including Appendix, pp. 491-500

B. Recommendations

1. That synod thank God with Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) for his provision for the training, teaching, and formation of students for ministry for 150 years since 1876, and celebrate the growing diversity of students preparing for ministry at CTS.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod join Calvin Theological Seminary in giving thanks for the ministry of President Jul Medenblik, who embodies what it means to be “called to serve” and to pray for the search process to lead us to the next president of CTS.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod celebrate with Calvin Theological Seminary its facility, programming, staffing, and board member additions that are helping CTS fulfill its strategic plan and calling.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod give thanks for the ministries of Calvin Theological Seminary that connect churches with student interns and provide many continuing education opportunities for churches and their leaders, and that synod encourage the churches to take greater advantage of these opportunities.

— *Adopted*

5. That synod, with gratitude to God, acknowledge Dr. Ronald Feenstra’s thirty-four years of faithful service at Calvin Theological Seminary and note the title conferred upon him by the CTS Board of Trustees: professor of systematic and philosophical theology, *emeritus*, effective upon his retirement.

— *Adopted*

6. That synod, upon a successful interview, appoint Dr. Christopher Fantuzzo to the CTS faculty in the area of Old Testament.

— *Adopted*

7. That synod appoint Rev. Aaron Vriesman to interview Dr. Christopher Fantuzzo for twenty to thirty minutes, followed by up to thirty minutes of questions from the floor.

—Adopted

8. That synod express gratitude for the members of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, with a special note of thanks for those members concluding their terms of service: Scott Greenway, David Morren, and Susan Keesen.

—Adopted

II. Calvin University

A. Materials

1. Calvin University report, pp. 145-52
2. Calvin University Supplement, pp. 501-2

B. Recommendations

1. That synod celebrate with Calvin University its 150 years of providing Christ-centered education, shaped by the Reformed tradition, to bring gospel-centered truth, belonging, purpose, and hope to students so that they might learn to serve Christ in the world with wisdom, courage, and love.

—Adopted

2. That synod take note of and rejoice in Calvin University's many local and global off-campus educational programs for undergraduate and graduate students.

—Adopted

III. Kuyper College

A. Materials

Kuyper College report, pp. 322-23

B. Recommendations

1. That synod thank God with Kuyper College for his abundant blessings, including steady enrollment, a diverse student body, resources for unexpected maintenance needs, the balancing of its operating budget, remaining debt free, and students who are flourishing inside and outside of the classroom.

—Adopted

2. That synod take note of and rejoice in this year's Kuyper College Campus theme to follow the call of Matthew 6:33, to "Seek First" God's kingdom and his righteousness.

—Adopted

3. That synod give thanks to God and offer appreciation for Kuyper College President Patricia R. Harris on the occasion of her retirement after 13 years of service to the mission of Kuyper College.

—Adopted

4. That synod pray for Kuyper College's ongoing mission to champion "its identity as a Bible college within the Reformed tradition."

—*Adopted*

IV. Redeemer University

A. Materials

Redeemer University report, pp. 324-25

B. Recommendations

1. That synod celebrate with Redeemer University its record-breaking increase in overall enrollment with a total of over 1,100 students, the launch of Canada's only Reformed Christian Master of Education degree, and Redeemer's conference celebration of the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod pray for Redeemer University's 2035 strategic plan for continued undergraduate growth, for its expansion into graduate programs and professional studies, and for its ongoing mission of preparing students to reflect the love of Jesus Christ in every career and calling.

—*Adopted*

V. Trinity Christian College

A. Materials

Trinity Christian College announcement, p. 326

B. Recommendations

1. That synod join Trinity Christian College in mourning the end of its 66-year history of providing a biblically informed liberal arts education in the Reformed tradition and rooted in the historic Christian faith, striving to prepare students for academic excellence, professional success, and Christlike service.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod pray for Trinity Christian College as it seeks to provide advice, support, and resources to help students complete their academic pursuits at other academic institutions, and as it seeks to help faculty and staff transition to new professional opportunities.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod thank God for the impact of Trinity Christian College on generations of students through its faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and dedicated board members, and that synod pray that the legacy of Trinity Christian College will continue to bear fruit for many years to come.

—*Adopted*

The president asks all those who have attended or worked at Trinity Christian College to stand. The vice-president offers prayers for the various educational institutions.

VI. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Materials

1. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement (section II, B, 1), p. 494
2. Nominations to Boards and Committees (section IV, A, Region 3), p. 599

B. Recommendation

That synod approve Heidi Blokland as a provisional appointment, starting July 1, 2026, to the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees for Region 3, pending the completion of the voting process in the classes of that region.

Grounds:

- a. Because of the timing of the submission of Ms. Blokland's name to the classes by the CTS board, one of the classes in the region has not yet held a formal vote on this nomination.
- b. This provision would allow Ms. Blokland to begin her service on the board while awaiting the formal completion of the ballot process at Synod 2027.

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 56.)

ARTICLE 39

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order, Rev. Harold Winter reporting, presents the following:

I. Judicial Code Committee

A. Materials

Judicial Code Committee report, pp. 236-37

B. Recommendation

That synod accept the Judicial Code Committee report with thanks.

— *Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 13: Church Order Changes Pertaining to Classis Red Mesa

A. Materials

Overture 13, pp. 360-61

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overture 13 and remove the supplements to Church Order Articles 4 and 7 that pertain to Classis Red Mesa, but maintain Supplement, Article 40-a and -c as written (deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~).

Supplement, Article 4-a

~~Modification for Churches of Classis Red Mesa~~

~~In calling to an office, the council shall present to the congregation a nomination of one or more persons for each position to be filled.~~

~~(Acts of Synod 1983, p. 660)~~

Use of Lot in Elections

The use of the lot in the election of officebearers is permitted when a congregational vote is part of the process.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 609)

Supplement, Article 7

[sections A-B remain unchanged]

C. Special Advice for Classis Red Mesa

1. ~~That the following be the method by which the ordination of native workers is to be effected:~~
 - a. ~~That capable persons, who feel the call to the gospel ministry, be encouraged to pursue the regular course of study for ordination.~~
 - b. ~~That those who are not able to pursue that course, and who possess exceptional gifts, be advised to seek ordination under the pattern prescribed by Article 7 of the Church Order, and make known their desire to their council, the classis, and the Candidacy Committee.~~
2. ~~For those seeking ordination by way of Article 7 of the Church Order, the following procedure is recommended:~~
 - a. ~~The written credentials of the council and the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team concerning the required qualifications stated in Article 7 are to be forwarded to the Candidacy Committee.~~
 - b. ~~Upon receipt of application, together with the recommendation of the council and the Classis Ministerial Leadership Team, the Candidacy Committee shall determine whether it considers the applicant eligible for further consideration to become ordained under Article 7.~~
 - c. ~~If the preliminary judgment is favorable, the Candidacy Committee is authorized to issue the applicant a preaching license so that the applicant can preach at several of the churches in the classis.~~
 - d. ~~All other procedures of the Candidacy Committee (as approved by Synod 2006) shall apply.~~
 - e. ~~The examination for ordination follows later according to existing rules, except in the classical languages.~~

(Adapted from *Acts of Synod 1958*, pp. 87-88)

(*Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 663)

— Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 72.)

ARTICLE 40

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services I, Rev. Alex Snider reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (section IV, A, 2), p. 28
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, G), p. 428

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod express its gratitude to members finishing their tenure on the Council of Delegates and its advisory committees.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod not adopt the schedule changes proposed by the COD for Synod 2027 but instead retain the current meeting schedule (convening in person on Friday morning and adjourning no later than mid-afternoon on the fourth day of plenary sessions).

Grounds:

- a. The current synod schedule serves the delegates well, giving a sabbath break between committee work and plenary sessions.
- b. Beginning synod on Saturday carries the potential pressure of using time on Sunday to work instead of rest.
- c. There is a lack of concrete data that changing the schedule would make a significant difference in availability for elders and deacons.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 6: Confessional Integrity of Denominational Employees, Writers, Boards, and Agencies

A. Materials

1. Overture 6, p. 340
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (section IV, G and Appendix M), pp. 432, 475-76

B. Recommendations

1. That synod affirm the work of the COD as referenced in its Church Membership and Confessional Conformity for Personnel policy as it applies to denominational employees.

Ground: The policy distinguishes between direct ministry positions and support ministry positions.

—*Adopted*

2. That this be synod's response to Overture 6.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 67.)

ARTICLE 41

Advisory Committee 7, Ecumenical and Historical Matters, elder delegate Ren Tubergen reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 24: Establish Ecclesiastical Relations with the National Presbyterian Church in Mexico

A. Materials

Overture 24, p. 387

B. Recommendation

That synod refer Overture 24 to the general secretary and the Ecumenical Interchurch Relations Committee for ongoing work concerning this request.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 25: Affirming the Traditional Reformed Understanding of Church and State

A. Materials

Overture 25, pp. 387-92

B. Recommendations

1. That synod reaffirm that the Christian Reformed Church's confessional teaching on church and state, as articulated in Belgic Confession Article 36 and its synodical interpretations in 1910, 1938, and 1958, rejects the conflation of the spheres of church and state assigned by God in his Word.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod commission a two-year study committee reporting to Synod 2028 that defines the parameters of Christian nationalism, describes its cultural appeal in the North American context, provides an account of its historical iterations worldwide, explores its doctrinal relationship to the Three Forms of Unity and a Reformed approach to Scripture, and provides a pastoral response and guidance. The committee, at a minimum, should consist of one faculty member from Calvin Theological Seminary and have bi-national representation.

Grounds:

- a. The intersection of politics and Christianity has created a theological climate in which reaffirmation of Belgic Confession Article 36 and its synodical interpretations is vital.
- b. Christian nationalism is extremely difficult to define. The overture's definition is too narrow, and instead a description of the scope of Christian nationalism is needed.
- c. Declaring a contemporary ideology "theologically incompatible" with our confessions is a weighty ecclesiastical action that demands careful deliberation.
- d. The broad scope of Christian nationalism is an influencing ideology in the churches of North America, including the CRCNA.

- e. The CRCNA would benefit from deeper study on the effects of the conflation of church and state throughout Christian history as well as within the history of the Dutch Reformed experience.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote is registered: Brandon Seaver (Georgetown).

The chair invites delegates to suggest nominees for this study committee to Advisory Committee 7 for presentation according to the Rules for Synodical Procedure (section VII, D, 1).

3. That this be synod's response to Overture 25.

—*Adopted*

III. Historical Committee

A. Materials

Historical Committee report, pp. 229-35

B. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of the activities on which the committee has embarked and encourage leaders and churches to offer the committee suggestions and information related to them.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod recognize with appreciation the service of retiring members Stanley Jim, Christian Oh, and Janet Sheeres, and of curator William Katterberg and the Heritage Hall staff, student worker, and volunteers.

—*Adopted*

IV. Response to Overture 33: Appoint a Study Committee on Reformed Ecclesiology

A. Materials

Overture 33, pp. 411-14

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overture 33 and appoint a four-year study committee on Reformed ecclesiology that will do the following:

- Articulate and explain the necessary theological center of Christian Reformed congregations as understood in the light of the Holy Scriptures and the confessional Reformed tradition.
- Explain and show how this theological vision of the church is still relevant today and applicable to ministry in a North American context and can lead to fruitful homiletical, missional, communal, and liturgical life within our congregations.
- Evaluate and synthesize the work of the task forces and committees named in the overture in the light of this ecclesiological center.
- Offer clear commentary about the nature of the churches our denomination is called to plant.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2025 expressed the need for a deeper theological study of the nature of the church in relationship to the work of the Virtual Church Task Force, stating that 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” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 699).
2. The lack of clarity in ecclesiastical functioning from a congregational to denominational level merits being addressed with the full weight of a study committee. The work of individual task forces over the past half decade should be synthesized and explicitly grounded theologically.
3. Only a theological vision for the Christian Reformed Church can sustain a flourishing diversity in the church ethnically, regionally, and missionally. Unity does not mean uniformity but requires clarity about what it means to be the one body of Christ with many members (1 Cor. 12).
4. The fruitful work of church planting to which the denomination is being called depends upon having theological clarity on the nature of the church.

—*Defeated*

The following positive vote is recorded: Ben Gresik (Eastern Canada).

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 44.)

ARTICLE 42

Advisory Committee 8, Administration and Finance, Rev. Benjamin Gresik reporting, presents the following:

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

A. Materials

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., report, pp. 157-60

B. Recommendation

That synod ratify the amendment to the CRC Loan Fund’s Articles of Incorporation.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued in Article 85.)

ARTICLE 43

Advisory Committee 5, Agencies, Rev. Dirk Koetje reporting, presents the following:

Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section IV, D and Appendix C), pp. 31-32, 44-45, 80-90

B. Recommendations

1. That synod adopt the name “CRC Governance Handbook,” replacing the title of the current Council of Delegates Governance Handbook, and recognize the distinction between portions under the authority of synod and aspects of the handbook that describe the work of the ministry boards or that of the COD itself.

Grounds:

- a. The COD Governance Handbook was previously adopted in its entirety by synod (*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 641).
- b. The Governance Handbook contains significant elements concerning the operation of the ministry boards, which are technically distinct from the work of the COD (see *Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 926-31).

— Adopted

2. That synod adopt proposed changes to the portions of the Governance Handbook that represent synod’s mandate to the Council of Delegates (chap. 1, II, B) in keeping with Church Order Article 33-b, and other portions requiring synod’s approval as indicated in Appendix C; and that synod acknowledge those portions of the mandate that reflect the legal and organizational structure of the ministry boards and related organizations (chap. 1, II, C and D).

Grounds:

- a. This builds on the work done in the 2017 edition of the Governance Handbook by incorporating material from the mandate given by synod to the CRC’s Board of Trustees (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 536, 620-33), which has been done in practice but has never been formally incorporated into a mandate for the COD.
- b. Church Order requires that committees of the assemblies (such as the COD) “shall be given well-defined mandates and shall submit all their actions to the next meeting of the assembly for approval” (Article 33-b).
- c. This clarifies the status of materials related to the COD Governance Handbook that were presented in draft form (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 633-34, 913, and 982), with multiple revisions approved by synod (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 803; *Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 607), though not formally adopted with the handbook in its entirety.
- d. Although not all portions of the COD Governance Handbook are directly tied to synodical regulation (and some functions are restricted by national laws), ministry board members and the entire denomination would benefit from synod’s formal acknowledgment of the primary responsibilities and work of a ministry board.

— Adopted

3. That synod note for information the list of changes adopted by the COD in the portions of the Governance Handbook under its authority (see pp. 88-90 in Appendix C).

— Adopted

4. That synod note that the section of the CRC Governance Handbook relating to the organization and function of the ministry boards is still under development and will be presented to synod for information upon completion.

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 49.)

ARTICLE 44

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 41.)

The president of synod vacates the chair due to his membership on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee. The vice president assumes the chair.

Advisory Committee 7, Ecumenical and Historical Matters, elder delegate Ren Tubergen reporting, presents the following:

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

A. Materials

1. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee report, pp. 215-28
2. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee Supplement, pp. 559-61

B. Recommendation

1. That synod gratefully receive the positive response from the Alliance of Reformed Churches regarding the CRC's invitation to be a *church in communion* with the CRCNA, and offer a prayer and communication of thanksgiving for this decision.

— *Adopted*

Rev. Hollendonner, chair of Advisory Committee 7, offers a prayer of thanksgiving.

2. That synod offer a public prayer for the leaders and congregations of our three historic mission-partner denominations in Nigeria who have experienced upheaval, displacement, and violence over many years, and especially in the past two years.

— *Adopted*

John VanderWindt (Quinte), John DeVries (Holland) and Jeremy Williamson (Alberta South/Saskatchewan) offer a prayer for our mission-partner denominations in Nigeria.

3. That synod commend Shirley Roels for her work on the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, her clarity of thought, and focus on the kingdom.

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 48.)

ARTICLE 45

The morning session recesses at 12:00 p.m. Christian Sebastia Almenar (Rocky Mountain) leads in closing prayer in English and Spanish.

MONDAY AFTERNOON, June 15, 2026

Sixth Session

ARTICLE 46

The afternoon session begins with Josh Van Drunen (Grand Rapids South) and worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp leading delegates in singing “The Church’s One Foundation” and “Yet Not I but through Christ in Me.”

The president resumes the chair and delivers announcements for the afternoon session.

ARTICLE 47

Dr. Shirley Roels, chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, gives a short overview on the work of the EIRC.

Dr. Roels introduces Rev. Philip Peacock, general secretary for the World Communion of Reformed Churches, who addresses synod. The CRCNA general secretary expresses thanks to Rev. Peacock and prays for him.

Dr. Roels introduces Pastor Bernardino Wilson, president of the Executive Board for the CRC of the Dominican Republic, who addresses synod (with translation by Rev. Daniel Roels). The general secretary expresses thanks to Pastor Wilson and offers a prayer.

Dr. Roels introduces Rev. Dr. Laura Osborne, coordinator for Ecumenical Relations and Disability Concerns for the Reformed Church in America, who addresses synod. The general secretary expresses thanks to Rev. Osborne and prayers for her.

President Steenwyk thanks Dr. Roels and the ecumenical guests for their remarks.

ARTICLE 48

The vice president assumes the chair.

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 44.)

Advisory Committee 7, Ecumenical and Historical Matters, elder delegate Ren Tubergen reporting, presents the following:

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

A. Materials

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee report, pp. 215-28

B. Recommendation

That synod extend and affirm a relationship with the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken as a *church in cooperation*.

Grounds:

1. There is a strong historic ecumenical connection to approximately one third of the churches (the former Nederlandse Gereformeerde

Kerken; see *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 62) that now are part of this new denomination.

2. The new denomination affirms the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism, as does the CRCNA. This basis supports cooperation in dialogue, relationships, and the shared use/development of ministry resources.
3. The time is not right to extend *church in communion* status, given the direction being charted by this new denomination regarding some matters concerning human sexuality. The new NGK polity allows local congregations to hold varied positions about the full inclusion of Christians in active same-sex relationships.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Ben Petersen (Columbia), Darren Kornelis (Central Plains), Brandon Seaver (Georgetown), Mark Elffers (Georgetown).

A delegate presents the following motion:

That synod direct the EIRC to address the following in their Memorandum of Understanding with the NGK:

- Recognize that the NGK is currently struggling with issues regarding human sexuality, and clearly inform the NGK of the CRCNA's position.
- Provide the NGK with all the resources available on the CRCNA's position on human sexuality, including a copy of the Human Sexuality Report (*Agenda for Synod 2022*, pp. 313-487).
- Describe the CRCNA's intent to see the NGK come into agreement with the CRCNA's position on human sexuality.
- Convey the CRCNA's willingness to guide, mentor, and disciple the NGK on the issue of human sexuality, and its hopes that alignment with this and any other issues identified by the EIRC could occur and lead to a *church in communion* relationship with the CRCNA.

Grounds:

1. The EIRC report states, "The time is not right to extend *church in communion* status, given the direction being charted by this new denomination regarding some matters concerning human sexuality. The new NGK polity allows local congregations to hold varied positions about the full inclusion of Christians in active same-sex relationships" (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 222). So it seems that the intent of the request from the NGK was to enter into a *church in communion* relationship.
2. We want to encourage other ecclesiastical bodies to be in a position where we can come into communion together, and it is our hope that the greater church would teach what we hold to believe to be right doctrine.

3. Having gone through a decades-long struggle ourselves over human sexuality, the fatigue and weariness to battle this topic further is real and evident throughout the denomination. As such, we do not wish to put ourselves in a situation where we may be enticed into inflaming past tensions or temptations. Ensuring that guardrails are in place in the MOU ensures that the NGK is aware that this is not a “discussion” we wish to reopen on our end.
4. “Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18, ESV).
 “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41, ESV).
 “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:14, ESV).

— *Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered: Renee Gillenwater (Columbia), Christopher ‘t Hoen (Northcentral Iowa).

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 90.)

ARTICLE 49

The president resumes the chair.

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 43.)

Advisory Committee 5, Agencies, Rev. Dirk Koetje reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (section III, F, 5), pp. 27, 34
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (sections I, D, 1 and Appendix G), pp. 427, 434, 438-40

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod discontinue the formal use of the denominational mailing list policy and assign this matter to the general secretary’s discretion for implementation in keeping with the principles expressed in past directives regarding the sharing of contact information for individual members within the CRCNA.

Grounds:

- a. Changes in the nature of communication, as well as in the collaboration among CRCNA agencies, have rendered this policy obsolete

since it was first developed and even last updated, and synod no longer needs to be directly involved in managing such a policy.

- b. The mailing list policy requires revision regardless of its official status because of changes in charitable law in several jurisdictions in which the CRCNA operates.

— *Adopted*

Note: Prior to synod's discussion of the following recommendation, Dan DeKam, director of U.S. ministry operations, introduces Rev. Darrell Delaney and outlines the search process for the position of ReFrame Ministries director. Rev. Delaney describes his spiritual and vocational journey, highlighting the words *moment*, *meaning*, and *message*.

2. That synod ratify the appointment of Rev. Darrell Delaney as director of ReFrame Ministries.

— *Adopted*

Al Postma, executive director-Canada, prays for Rev. Delaney and the work of ReFrame Ministries.

II. ReFrame Ministries

A. Materials

ReFrame Ministries report, pp. 168-72

B. Recommendations

1. That synod receive the report of ReFrame Ministries with thanks.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod express gratitude to Kurt Selles, upon his retirement, for his fourteen years of service as ReFrame director.

— *Adopted*

Rev. Dirk Koetje offers a prayer of thanksgiving for Rev. Selles.

III. Canadian Ministries

A. Materials

Canadian Ministries report, pp. 153-56

B. Recommendation

That synod receive the report of Canadian Ministries with thanks.

— *Adopted*

IV. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report (section III, F, 2), pp. 26-27
2. Council of Delegates Supplement Report (section I, D, 3 and Appendix I), pp. 427, 434, 447-48

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod, following a successful interview, appoint Rev. Lora Copley to serve as the editor in chief of *The Banner*.

—Adopted
2. That synod conduct an interview for Rev. Lora Copley to proceed as follows:
 - a. Elder delegate Dan Tracy will introduce Rev. Lora Copley to synod and interview her for a maximum of thirty minutes.
 - b. Delegates will be permitted to ask questions for a maximum of thirty minutes.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 55.)

ARTICLE 50

Rev. Ralph Wigboldus, reporter for Advisory Committee 6, Mission and Congregations, introduces Kevin DeRaaf, director of Resonate Global Mission, who briefly addresses the delegates. He reports an increase in giving to Resonate, a sense of encouragement over the church-planting plan, and the opportunity to be featured on an upcoming PBS *All Access* episode with Andy Garcia (allaccessptv.com/1198551327-2/).

Reporting for Advisory Committee 6, Rev. Wigboldus presents the following:

Resonate Global Mission

A. Materials

1. Resonate Global Mission report, pp. 173-79
2. Resonate Global Mission Supplement, pp. 514-39

B. Privilege of the floor

Kevin DeRaaf, director of Resonate, and Tim Sheridan, director of church planting

C. Preamble

Synod 2025 instructed the Office of General Secretary to coordinate with agencies and classes to develop a vision, plan, strategy, and financial proposal for church planting for the CRCNA for the next decade. The plan was to specify the number of churches we aspire to plant, the strategy necessary to raise up leaders for this movement, and the resources necessary to carry out this plan (specifically financial but also otherwise). Synod also stated that “this plan should contemplate and propose how we as a denomination will secure the resources necessary to carry out this plan.” The general secretary was also instructed to “publish and set this plan before the churches by the time of next year’s synod” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 709).

The committee received Resonate’s report with thanksgiving to God for a comprehensive, timely, and necessary plan for planting new churches. The motivation for this work is nothing less than the power, beauty, and central message of the gospel as “the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16, ESV).

As this plan recognizes, church planting is not something that can be accomplished through human ingenuity or strategy alone. This task, like all of the church's ministry, depends on the power of God's Spirit working through his Word. Therefore, while the plan includes many details of organizational change, at its heart is a change of culture that puts renewal in the gospel at the center of our life together. This will only happen as we repent of an inward-oriented concern only for our own life and recognize that the church also exists for the sake of those who are not yet members. While our denominational agencies and staff have a role to play, the successful implementation of this plan requires ownership by the classes, congregations, and officebearers of the CRCNA.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, encourage all Christian Reformed congregations to recognize the following Sundays as significant opportunities to pray for and to receive an offering for Resonate Global Mission: Easter, Pentecost, the second Sunday in September, and the fourth Sunday in November.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod adopt the Ten-year Strategic Plan for Church Planting in the CRCNA, in its entirety.

Grounds:

- a. The gospel calls us to a wholehearted commitment to make disciples and gather them into the church.
- b. Multiplication of gospel witness is a foundational principle for both disciples and congregations. Living things grow and multiply.
- c. The plan is a comprehensive and interconnected strategy that can bring alignment and direction to the CRCNA.
- d. The plan includes provisions for regular review and updating based on changing circumstances and assessment of goals.

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 53).

ARTICLE 51

The delegates sing the doxology "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow," and the afternoon session recesses at 5:03 p.m. The assembly will reconvene in the evening at 6:30 p.m.

MONDAY EVENING, June 15, 2026

Seventh Session

ARTICLE 52

The evening session begins with delegates singing “He Will Hold Me Fast” led by Seth Koerner (Kalamazoo), Ashley Bonnes (Northern Michigan), Moises Pacheco (Northern Illinois), Tim McHugh (Hudson), and worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp. Delegates recite the Apostles’ Creed with several languages projected on the screen. Jeffery Hough (Muskegon) closes in prayer.

ARTICLE 53

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 50.)

Advisory Committee 6, Mission and Congregations, Rev. Ralph Wigboldus reporting, presents the following:

I. Resonate Global Mission

A. Materials

1. Resonate Global Mission report, pp. 173-79
2. Resonate Global Mission Supplement, pp. 514-39

B. Recommendations

1. That synod take special note of the timeline in the following Resonate recommendations (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 538-39):

- a. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to design and align an ideal church-plant journey, with clear ownership for each stage from disciple to leader to church planter to launch, along with an agreed staffing structure and committed funding plan to support implementation.
- b. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to provide an annual update on progress achieved in this strategic plan on an annual basis for the next ten years. Particular focus for the next five years, at Synods 2027-2031, should be on progress made toward the three-year milestones for each of the strategic categories identified in this report and the five-year aspirational outcome described in this report.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod commend the Office of General Secretary, Resonate Global Mission, and the other ministry agencies and staff for their diligent and faithful response to the direction of Synod 2025.

— *Adopted*

Rev. Jim Kirk, chair of Advisory Committee 6, prays and gives thanks for the work of Resonate, including staff, missionaries, campus pastors, and church planters.

II. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section IV, B), pp. 28-29

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendation

That synod receive the Council of Delegates report on advisers to synod for information.

—*Adopted*

III. Thrive

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Supplement (sections I, D, 2 and III, I, including Appendix H), pp. 427, 430, 434-35, 440-47
2. Thrive report, pp. 180-84
3. Thrive Supplement, pp. 540-45

B. Privilege of the floor

Rev. Elaine May, Thrive consultant for church renewal; Michael Ten Haken, COD chair; Andre Van Ryk, COD vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

Note: Prior to synod's discussion of the following recommendations, Al Postma, executive director-Canada, gives an overview of the hiring process of the Thrive director, and how Dr. Lee Carter was chosen as the candidate.

Dr. Carter shares quotes from the Belgic Confession, Westminster Confession, and several Scripture passages that have shaped his faith and Reformed worldview. He expresses his deep commitment to the local church, and his gratitude and hope for the work of Thrive.

1. That synod ratify the appointment of Lee Carter to the position of director of Thrive.

—*Adopted*

Dan DeKam, U.S. director of ministry operations, offers a prayer of commissioning and thanks for Dr. Carter.

2. That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, remind all Christian Reformed congregations that Thrive exists "to provide expertise, wisdom, and compassionate support to congregations while remaining attentive to a wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the church today" (*Agenda for Synod 2023*, p. 78); and that synod encourage ministry leaders and CRC members to reach out to Thrive for support.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod invite the churches to review Thrive's renewal materials and to offer feedback to Thrive, based on their context and needs.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod note the reports about Thrive's ongoing efforts to work with classes and churches to address membership decline (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 975-76) and their efforts to coordinate these church renewal plans with the church-planting strategy being developed by Resonate Global Mission.

— *Adopted*

5. That synod receive the Thrive report for information.

— *Adopted*

Rev. Elaine May briefly addresses the delegates, noting the need for a church and its members to understand who they are. She affirms that it is essential for each congregation to know who they are and why they exist, and to be able to articulate that in a way that connects with their local context. She reminds delegates that Thrive offers a facilitated process for congregations to discover their mission (*Thriving Essentials*).

6. That synod instruct the Council of Delegates, when presenting candidates for ratification or approval, to provide the complete job posting for the position being filled, along with written grounds for their endorsement of this candidate, so that synod can make an informed decision when asked to ratify the appointment.

— *Adopted*

7. That synod express gratitude to Rev. Lesli van Milligen upon her retirement for her years of service as Thrive director and codirector.

— *Adopted*

Rev. Wigboldus gives thanks in prayer for the work of Thrive and for the service of Rev. Lesli van Milligen.

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 59).

ARTICLE 54

General secretary Zachary King offers an overview and history of the rotating annual reviews of ministries. The rotation of ministry reviews was paused during the work of the Structure and Leadership Task Force, and this year's review of World Renew is the first that follows the revised review process. Ministry reviews are not focused on structure or policy but on how the agency or institution is completing their synodical mandate, how their work intersects with the CRCNA ministry plan, and how they are serving the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

World Renew codirectors Carol Bremer-Bennett and Peter Timmerman present a report on World Renew's work in the past year. Referencing Colossians 3 and using the image of "clothing ourselves" for ministry in a broken world, they reflect on global challenges such as displacement, hunger, and

vulnerability while emphasizing opportunities for the church to be present, trusted, and a faithful witness.

Through World Renew, the Christian Reformed Church in North America carries out its mission in communities around the world. Both codirectors describe how their work is rooted in partnerships with local churches and local leaders and is strengthened through trips, international workshops, and storytelling.

They share stories from recent work in Syria and northern Nigeria illustrating the impact of their ministry and its alignment with the four milestones of the *Our Journey* ministry plan. The codirectors express realism about global suffering with hope for transformation, and they conclude with gratitude for the ongoing partnership and support of the CRCNA and its congregations.

Rev. Dirk Koetje prays for Carol Bremer-Bennett, Peter Timmerman, and the work of World Renew.

ARTICLE 55

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 49.)

Advisory Committee 5, Agencies, Rev. Dirk Koetje reporting, presents the following:

I. World Renew Review

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Supplement (section III, K and Appendix L, pp. 431, 465-74)

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; members of the CRCNA executive staff as needed; and Carol Bremer-Bennett and Peter Timmerman, World Renew codirectors

C. Recommendations

1. That synod receive the report of the World Renew review team for information in fulfillment of Synod 2025's instructions regarding the regular review of CRCNA agencies (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 455-56; *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 601-2).

— *Adopted*

Roberta Vriesema, director of partnership administration, offers a prayer of commissioning for Peter Timmerman, director of World Renew-Canada.

2. That synod endorse and recommit to its covenantal relationship with World Renew.

— *Adopted*

3. That CRC congregations give serious consideration to supporting the work of World Renew, which is intended to be an extension of the natural work of the local churches and classis.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod encourage congregations and classes to be intentional in making reporting opportunities available for World Renew.

Ground: These opportunities will be inspirational and mutually beneficial for visiting missionaries and World Renew staff, and for the congregations and classes.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod urge local congregations to be encouraged and inspired by the example of World Renew to engage similarly with their communities.

Ground: World Renew has many resources and ideas and would welcome invitations from CRCNA churches to come and share their stories.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod urge churches to encourage their younger members to explore opportunities to serve with and support World Renew.

—*Adopted*

II. World Renew

A. Materials

1. World Renew report, pp. 185-94
2. World Renew Supplement, pp. 546-49

B. Recommendation

That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by World Renew and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 68.)

ARTICLE 56

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 38).

Advisory Committee 4: Education and Candidacy, Rev. Richard Grift reporting, presents the following:

I. Candidacy Committee

A. Materials

1. Candidacy Committee report, pp. 197-214
2. Candidacy Committee Supplement, pp. 553-58

B. Privilege of the floor

Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy

C. Recommendations

1. That synod declare those listed in the Candidacy Committee Supplement (section I, A) as candidates for the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Their names are as follows: Laurel Ackerman-Lindholm, Arthur Agu, Jason Blunt, Bryan Branderhorst, Kwangjun (KJ) Choi, Jihoon (Daniel) Choi, Victor Chua, Jonathan Coupal, Brady DeBoer, Travis Deur, Joshua Dykstra, John Hall, Caleb Horjus,

Nathan Jansen, Yexiang (Debbie) Jin, James Kostelyk, Devin Lunshof, Eric Lynch, Amanda Mason, Curtis Meliefste, Grant Mensonides, Samuel Moon, Trevor Mouw, Karlos Palacios, Sungjin (Tim) Park, Jin Soo Park, Frank Quijada, James Reed, Justin Roukema, Dai (Luke) Shi, Aaron Solomon-Mills, Jacob Toman, Joseph Tuttle, Nick Vander Ploeg, Zihan Xu, Jared Yaple.

— *Adopted*

The following negative vote is recorded: Isadore LaBrosse (Greater Los Angeles).

2. That synod approve the extensions of candidacy as recommended in the Candidacy Committee Supplement (section I, B). Their names are as follows: Julia Gho, Charles Mutinga, Peter Kranenburg, Rachel Park, Christopher Smid, Jonathan Sturru, and Lorinda VanderWerp.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod approve the reinstatement of candidacy for Jelle Koersen as recommended in the Candidacy Committee Supplement (section I, C).

— *Adopted*

4. That synod approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of need for those listed in its Supplement (section II) for affiliation under Church Order Article 8. Their names are as follows: Hyun-il Kim, Chang Yoon, Shawn Gerbers, Derek Noorman, Cheul Woo Choi, Giwoong Kwak, Anel Becker-Ferreira, Jin Wook Ryoo, Sanghoon Lim, Justin Njikeu, Ryan Landt, Luke Johnston, Jihyung Kim, Samuel Kaha, and Seong In Chin.

— *Adopted*

5. That synod, keeping in mind the factors outlined in the Candidacy Committee Supplement (section IV), encourage all classes to work, in consultation with their Classis Ministerial Leadership Teams, to develop clear pathways to identify, guide, and equip emerging leaders; and that synod note how this recommendation supports Resonate's leadership development proposals in the Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Church Planting in the CRCNA (Recommendations F, H-I, Agenda Supplement, pp. 535-36).

— *Adopted*

6. That synod affirm the theological framework for the office of commissioned pastor as articulated in the report of the Commissioned Pastor Study Team (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 202-11) and instruct the Office of General Secretary to ensure that this framework is added to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook and other related commissioned pastor resources.

— *Adopted*

7. That synod affirm the Commissioned Pastor Study Team's clarifications to Church Order Article 23 regarding categories and training guidelines for the office of commissioned pastor (see Candidacy Committee report, Appendix, pp. 210-11).

— *Adopted*

8. That synod adopt the Candidacy Committee's proposed changes to Church Order Article 23 and its supplement, as amended by the advisory committee, to be presented for final approval at Synod 2027 (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~).

Article 23

a. The ~~task~~calling of the commissioned pastor is to equip the church through a specialized pastoral role that is strategic for the church's well-being and witness. A commissioned pastor is commissioned to a specific job description, which has been approved by classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, to determine whether or not the position fits synodical guidelines for that particular role~~bear witness to Christ through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, church education, pastoral care, evangelism, and other ministries in order that believers may be called to comprehensive discipleship and unbelievers may be called to faith.~~

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-a

b. *[unchanged]*

c. ~~Commissioned pastors shall be acknowledged as such in their calling churches. Normally, their work on the church council shall be limited to the ministries in which they serve as commissioned pastors.~~

~~d.~~*[unchanged, but Art. 23-d becomes Art. 23-c]*

—Cf. Supplement, Article 23-~~dc~~

Grounds:

- a. This wording better expresses the specialized nature of the office of commissioned pastor and its distinction from the office of minister of the Word.
- b. Preaching and administration of the sacraments is sometimes, but not always, included in commissioned pastor job descriptions, so these are removed from the article itself and mentioned within the supplement instead.
- c. This highlights the important fact that a commissioned pastor is ordained to a particular job description requiring the approval of synodical deputies, rather than confining this information to the regulations in the Supplement.
- d. Article 23-c is redundant and covers no more than what is covered by Article 24-c.

Supplement, Article 23-a

The office of commissioned pastor is applicable to a variety of ministries, provided that these ministries fit the following guidelines adopted by Synod 2001:

A. General Characteristics

The job description of a commissioned pastor should reflect the following considerations about the nature of this office:

1. Ordination to this office is appropriate when the church has recognized the strategic value of ministry extension in specific ways that enhance the public witness of the church, as well as the gifting of an individual who can serve in that role so that God's people may be built up for service. These officebearers of evangelist[*] may be understood to have the character of pastoral extension. Evangelists extend the work of pastoral leadership by founding and working in new congregations; and by extending the ministry of organized congregations into specialized areas, including, but not limited to, youth ministry, education, pastoral care, worship, and evangelism; and by extending ministry into noncongregational settings, such as chaplaincy or missions.
2. ... By the broader application of the office of evangelist, with its existing regulations, to a variety of ministry positions, the church avoids the multiplication of offices and provides a way of recognizing and regulating a variety of pastoral positions in our churches. These positions may be identified by titles that indicate their ministry distinctiveness such as chaplain, missionary, pastor of education, pastor of youth, minister of congregational life, and so forth.

(Acts of Synod 2001, p. 506)

[*Note: In 2001 the office was known as *evangelist*. The title was changed to *ministry associate* by Synod 2003 and to *commissioned pastor* by Synod 2012.]

3. These roles should have a primary function of equipping the body of Christ for the work of ministry.
4. The job description should make clear that the role is "pastoral" and "representative" for the congregation, often (but not always) involving pastoral actions traditionally identified as "official acts of ministry" as described in Supplement, Article 18.

B. General Categories of Commissioned Pastors

There are three general categories of commissioned pastor roles, each of which requires its own unique pathway of preparation.

1. Specialized congregational ministry: A commissioned pastor may be called to serve in a position whose primary responsibilities are in an area of specialized focus (e.g., youth, children, discipleship, worship, etc.). Those called to such roles should exhibit gifts and competency in their area of specialized ministry focus, as well as a general understanding of CRC doctrine, perspective, and practice. Their learning plan should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for commissioned pastors, as well as training with a Reformed focus in their area of specialty.

2. Church planting: A commissioned pastor may be called by a congregation to serve as a church planter or solo pastor of an emerging congregation, with primary responsibilities focused on evangelistic preaching, outreach, and community engagement. Those called to such roles should have evangelistic gifts and experience in leadership, as well as a general understanding of CRC doctrine, perspective, and practice. Their learning plan should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for commissioned pastors, as well as church-planting training endorsed by Resonate Global Mission.
3. Noncongregational role: A commissioned pastor may be called by a congregation to serve in a noncongregational setting, such as chaplaincy or missions. Those called to such roles should exhibit gifts and competency in their area of specialized ministry focus, as well as a general understanding of CRC doctrine, perspective, and practice. They must be called and supervised by a congregation. Their learning plan should include a basic knowledge of the prescribed subjects for commissioned pastors, as well as any training required for endorsement by Thrive's chaplaincy consultant or Resonate Global Mission. The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define noncongregational ministers ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to commissioned pastors ordained to noncongregational roles under Article 23.

~~All commissioned pastor positions must be approved by classis, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, to determine whether or not the position fits these guidelines adopted by Synod 2001. All commissioned pastors must demonstrate through an examination their ability to function in the ministry to which they are being called.~~

Examinations for the office of commissioned pastor must follow the guidelines established by synod as described and recorded in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

The Commissioned Pastor Handbook shall be consulted regularly, as it offers guidelines and regulations approved by synod. These include the protocol for examination, the creation of job descriptions, and the standards and qualifications to be met by those seeking to be ordained as commissioned pastors.

(Acts of Synod 2019, p. 783)

~~The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define noncongregational ministers ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to commissioned pastors ordained to noncongregational roles under Article 23. Commissioned pastor job descriptions related to the ministry of chaplaincy must be approved in consultation with Thrive.~~

(Acts of Synod 2003, p. 613)

(Amended Acts of Synod 2025, p. 659)

Grounds:

- a. Removing the reference to decisions of Synod 2001 recognizes the ongoing development in the denomination's thinking about the office of commissioned pastor.
- b. Separating "general characteristics" of commissioned pastors (which in the current Supplement are largely related to character) from the "general categories" of commissioned pastors provides classes and synodical deputies with greater clarity about what "pastoral extension" means, so that those tasked with approving commissioned pastor job descriptions are aided in their ability to discern whether a job description "meets synodical guidelines."
- c. The material related to "general categories" gathers synodical regulations found elsewhere and collects them in a central place for easy reference.

—*Adopted*

9. That synod thank the Commissioned Pastor Study Team for their work.

—*Adopted*

II. Dordt University

A. Materials

Dordt University report, pp. 317-19

B. Recommendations

1. That synod commend Dordt University for valuing its longstanding relationship with the CRCNA and for sharing our commitment to Christ-centered higher education rooted in Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod celebrate with Dordt University God's faithfulness as Dordt continues to grow while anchored in its mission to equip students for Christ-centered renewal in all areas of contemporary life.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod take note of and pray for Dordt University's recent refreshment of its Task and Framework documents built on the foundation of Scripture and applied to a changing cultural context.

—*Adopted*

The chair notes that Rev. Todd Zuidema, director of church relations at Dordt University, was present earlier and met with the advisory committee, as did Dr. Patricia Harris, president of Kuyper College.

III. The King's University

A. Materials

The King's University report, pp. 320-21

B. Recommendations

1. That synod receive The King's University report with thanks.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod cordially invite The King's University to send a representative to the next synod in order to discuss their ministry report in person and reconnect.

Ground: Synod has not hosted a representative from The King's University since 2019. Synod values in-person connection with affiliated institutions.

—*Adopted*

Rev. Grift prays for the educational institutions.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 61.)

ARTICLE 57

Rev. Edward Yoon (Ko-Am) closes in prayer, and the evening session recesses at 8:33 p.m. The assembly will reconvene in the morning at 8:15 p.m.

TUESDAY MORNING, June 16, 2026

Eighth Session

ARTICLE 58

The morning session begins with Rachel Bouwkamp, worship committee convener, leading delegates in a responsive greeting in English, Spanish, and Korean. The assembly is called to worship with words from Psalm 131, and all respond by singing "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty," accompanied by Alexis Van Zalen (organ, CICW staff). Delegates read Psalm 131 and view a video on the Gather initiative. Rev. Ben Van Arragon (Thrive) offers a blessing, and worship concludes with the assembly singing the 150th anniversary hymn of Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University, "O God, beyond All Knowing."

The roll indicates that Ken Benjamins (Niagara) and José Piñero (California South) are absent.

ARTICLE 59

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 53.)

Advisory Committee 6, Mission and Congregations, Rev. Ralph Wigboldus reporting, presents the following:

That synod revise its decision regarding the offering schedule for Resonate Global Mission (*Acts of Synod 2026*, Art. 50, D, 1, p. 643) to the following (with addition indicated by underline and deletion by ~~striketrough~~):

Recommendation

That synod, along with the Council of Delegates, encourage all Christian Reformed congregations to recognize the following Sundays as significant opportunities to pray for and to receive an offering for Resonate Global Mission: Easter, Pentecost, the ~~third~~second Sunday in September, and the fourth Sunday in November.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 81.)

ARTICLE 60

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services II, Rev. John Lee reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overtures 1-2 regarding the Transfer of Orange Korean Church from Classis California South to Classis Ko-Am

A. Materials

Overtures 1-2, pp. 331-32

B. Recommendations

1. That synod permit the transfer of Orange Korean Church from Classis California South to Classis Ko-Am.

Grounds:

- a. Orange Korean Church's newly called pastor, Rev. You Sung Jung, already has established relationships within Classis Ko-Am. These existing connections will greatly facilitate the training, mentoring, and integration of Orange Korean Church leaders into the regional and collegial life of the classis.
- b. Rev. You Sung Jung desires to actively network and collaborate with fellow pastors in Classis Ko-Am and believes he can contribute meaningfully to the shared ministry and mission within the Korean-American ecclesiastical context of the classis.
- c. The congregation of Orange Korean Church has reached a stage in its ministry where connection with a Korean-speaking classis is more appropriate and beneficial than continued participation in a primarily English-speaking classis. Alignment with Classis Ko-Am is expected to result in greater engagement at the classis level, as well as more effective pastoral care, counsel, mutual accountability, and encouragement among colleagues who share a common language and cultural context.
- d. This transfer has been approved by both Classis California South and Classis Ko-Am.

—*Adopted*

2. That this be synod's answer to Overtures 1-2.

—*Adopted*

II. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Supplement (section IV, I, pp. 432, 436)

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendation

That synod suspend the practice of holding a noon luncheon to honor retirees and recognize special achievements (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 534) and instead direct the Office of General Secretary to work with the officers of synod each year to identify the best way to accomplish these purposes within synod's schedule.

Ground: This change would allow greater flexibility in making decisions about how to accomplish these important purposes within the time frame and financial constraints under which synod needs to work each year.

— *Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 10: Set Aside Time to Celebrate Retiring Ministers

A. Materials

Overture 10, pp. 355-56

B. Recommendations

1. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to encourage each classis to set aside time to give thanks for and celebrate ministers entering retirement.

Grounds:

- a. As important as it is to begin well, it is even more important to end well. A lifetime of ministry in devotion to Christ, his people, and the Christian Reformed Church is extremely significant and worth a classis' time and effort.
- b. An in-person classis celebration would be more meaningful and cost-effective than a synodical celebration for most retiring ministers.
- c. We are elsewhere encouraging the program committee of synod to honor retiring ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors alongside other denominational retirees at synod.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to work with the officers of synod each year to identify the best way to celebrate retirees, including ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors.

— *Adopted*

3. That this be synod's response to Overture 10.

— *Adopted*

IV. Response to Overture 3: Amend the Rules for Synodical Procedure regarding Overtures and Communications

A. Materials

Overture 3, pp. 332-36

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 3.

Grounds:

1. The proposed amendments unnecessarily complicate the process of appeal for both parties.
2. Broader assemblies already have the prerogative to send a communication to explain their rationale for not acceding to an overture or communication.

—*Adopted*

V. Response to Overture 4: Establish a Common Format for Reports to Synod

A. Materials

Overture 4, pp. 336-37

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 4.

Grounds:

1. While we appreciate the value of brevity, binding all study committees to the same maximum length does not provide needed flexibility, especially for weighty or complex topics.
2. The CRCNA is blessed with committees tasked with theological reflection involving deep thinking, theological rigor, and pastoral warmth. Preemptively limiting their final output risks compromising those values.
3. The vast majority of recent task force reports and many study reports are already under 5,000 words.
4. We should trust synods to give appropriate guidance in the mandates given during the appointment of study committees or task forces.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 93.)

ARTICLE 61

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 56.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Richard Grift reporting, presents the following:

Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (Section IV, C, 1, b), p. 29

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Background

Synod 2024 proposed changes to Church Order Article 24 and its supplement with regard to commissioned pastors who have been formally released (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 815-16). These changes were inadvertently overlooked in the Church Order updates presented to Synod 2025. The changes to Church Order Articles 24-e and 24-f and their supplements are therefore presented here for ratification.

D. Recommendation

That synod ratify the following changes proposed by Synod 2024 to Church Order Articles 24-e and 24-f and their supplements, as amended by the advisory committee to remove the “note” originally proposed in the *Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 42, which the committee judged redundant and possibly confusing.

Article 24

[The following new Article 24-e and its supplement are proposed. The current Article 24-e will become Article 24-f, and the current Supplement, Article 24-e will become Supplement, Article 24-f.]

e. A former commissioned pastor who was released from office must receive approval of the classis by which such action was taken in order to be reexamined for commissioned-pastor ordination by the classis of the calling church.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 24-e

Supplement, Article 24-e

In the following cases, the former classis shall also conduct an interview that examines the circumstances surrounding the release and the renewed desire to serve in ministry:

- if the commissioned pastor was released to enter a nonministerial vocation or to serve in ministry outside the denomination
- if a substantial amount of time has passed since the individual served as a commissioned pastor
- if the former classis deems further conversation with the individual helpful or necessary to their discernment regarding approval
- if there are reasons for release other than the pursuit of another call

Upon approval of the former classis, followed by approval of the position with synodical deputy concurrence, the individual shall complete any additional candidacy requirements not in place when last ordained; then, after a successful examination in the classis of the calling church, the individual may be reordained.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 63.)

ARTICLE 62

The president of synod welcomes the candidates for ministry to Synod 2026. Rev. Susan E. LaClear, director of Candidacy, presents the 2026 candidates for ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (names in bold print indicate those present at Synod 2026): **Laurel Ackerman-Lindholm, Arthur Agu, Jason Blunt**, Bryan Branderhorst, Kwangjun (KJ) Choi, Jihoon (Daniel) Choi, Victor Chua, Jonathan Coupal, Brady DeBoer, Travis Deur, **Joshua Dykstra**, John Hall, **Caleb Horjus, Nathan Jansen**, Yexiang (Debbie) Jin, James Kostelyk, **Devin Lunshof, Eric Lynch**, Amanda Mason, Curtis Meliefste, Grant Mensonides, Samuel Moon, **Trevor Mouw**, Karlos Palacios, Sungjin (Tim) Park, Jin Soo Park, Frank Quijada, James Reed, **Justin Roukema**, Dai (Luke) Shi, **Aaron Solomon-Mills, Jacob Toman, Joseph Tuttle, Nick Vander Ploeg**, Zihan Xu, and Jared Yapple.

Rev. LaClear acknowledges guests and delegates who have provided support and encouragement for the candidates. The assembly responds by singing “Before the Throne of God Above.” Rev. LaClear, Rev. Moon-Bae Kim, Rev. Shaun Jung, Rev. Andy Sytsma, Rev. Mike Koetje, Pastor Caleb Dickson, and Rev. Zachary King lead the candidates in a Litany of Celebration and Dedication.

Rev. Julius Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, offers words of encouragement to the candidates, thanking them for their responses to God’s call. Families and supporting churches of candidates are invited to come forward to lay hands on the candidates as President Steenwyk leads in a time of prayer. The assembly responds by singing “There is One Gospel.”

President Steenwyk offers a closing blessing.

ARTICLE 63

José Piñero (California South) is now present.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 61.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Richard Grift reporting, presents the following:

Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Materials

Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement (Section II, A, 2 and Appendix), pp. 492, 495-500

B. Interview and executive session

President Jul Medenblik introduces Dr. Christopher Fantuzzo and offers an overview on the interview process. Rev. Mark Verbruggen offers remarks as a member of the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Aaron Vrieseman (Zeeland) interviews Dr. Fantuzzo, who also responds to questions from the floor according to the established procedure (see Art. 38, I, B, 7).

Following the interview, synod enters into executive session to discuss the recommendation concerning Dr. Fantuzzo's appointment.

Synod returns to open session.

C. Recommendation

That synod ratify the appointment of Dr. Christopher Fantuzzo as professor of Old Testament effective July 1, 2026.

—*Adopted*

Rev. John Lee (Iakota) prays for Dr. Fantuzzo and his wife, Emily.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 79.)

ARTICLE 64

Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy, shares with delegates about the recent passing of Pastor Bosco Jen of Hyde Park Christian Reformed Church, who was scheduled to be a candidate for ministry. Rev. Tom Van Engen (Chicago South), who served as Pastor Jen's assigned mentor, offers some reflections about Pastor Jen's ministry, and Rev. Derek Buikema prays for Hyde Park CRC and the Jen family.

ARTICLE 65

Joseph Bae (Lake Erie) closes in prayer in English and Spanish, and the morning session recesses at 11:49 a.m. The assembly will reconvene in the afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, June 16, 2026

Ninth Session

ARTICLE 66

To open the afternoon session, Catheryn Jo (Office of General Secretary), Chris Choe (Thrive), Yohan Cho, Chris Kim, and Yoojin Song, along with Korean delegates, lead the assembly in singing "Blessed Assurance" and "Waymaker." Ms. Jo offers prayer.

ARTICLE 67

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 40.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services I, Rev. Alex Snider reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Appeal 1: J. Shaw, Elder at Christ Community Church, Tualatin, Oregon

A. Materials

1. Appeal 1, pp. 578-81
2. Communication 2, pp. 587-89

B. Preamble

In order to come to our decision, the committee heard from both Mr. Shaw and a representative from Classis Columbia. We then went into deep discussions with assistance from Calvin Theological Seminary faculty advisers so that we might understand the biblical teaching regarding the second commandment. Our discussions acknowledged Mr. Shaw's reading of Exodus 20:3-5 and noted that, by itself, his interpretation of that text has merit. The second commandment in Exodus 20:3-5 is very clear that no images may be made of other gods. However, Deuteronomy 4:15-19 provides an important clarification to this matter: the prohibition against images specifically extends to images of Jehovah God, whom no one has seen, when made for the purposes of worship. Mr. Shaw did not handle the Deuteronomy passage in his gravamen.

We also noted that Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 96-98, when read in its context, is not offering a universal philosophical statement about all images in every context but is addressing the use of images in the worship and teaching life of the church. In our opinion, this was also not considered in the appeal.

We also considered the implication of this discussion around images of Jesus used in a Sunday school context. These are allowable due to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, though even in this case, images will never capture the precise human nature of the Son of God as no one living today has seen him with their own eyes. Yet people throughout history have indeed seen him in his humanity, opening the door to use images in an educational context.

In an effort to offer a pastoral response to Mr. Shaw, our faculty adviser, Dr. Wilson de Angelo Cunha, will be reaching out to Mr. Shaw to offer a more extended discussion of these issues.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod not sustain Appeal 1.

Ground: Textual revision of the historic catechism is not necessary to address the concerns raised.

— *Adopted*

Rev. Snider offers a prayer of thanks for Mr. Shaw.

2. That synod thank John Shaw and Classis Columbia for the thoughtful gravamen and affirm the underlying biblical concern for fidelity to a scriptural understanding of the second commandment.

— *Adopted*

II. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Supplement (section II, E and Appendix J), pp. 427-28, 449-56

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Preamble

Our advisory committee is grateful for the work done by the Office of General Secretary with the various boards and committees of denominational organizations to collect, prepare, and publish rubrics for use when selecting board members. We acknowledge that the prospective board members will be vetted at more than one level with regard to their various qualifications, including their commitment to Jesus Christ and the confessions of the CRCNA. Further, we understand that each board's work may demand different levels of subscription to the CRC standards of belief (i.e., the COD requires a more robust agreement on the part of their members than does the CRC Loan Fund, U.S.).

D. Recommendation

That synod take note of the work done by the Office of General Secretary and the various boards and committees of denominational organizations to fulfill the request of Synod 2025 regarding the creation and presentation of rubrics for board membership (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 675-76) .

Ground: The questions stated in the rubrics are sufficient enough to determine whether or not a prospective member's commitment to Jesus Christ and the confessions of the CRCNA are appropriate for that particular board.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 5: Conform COD Membership to Article 30 of the Belgic Confession (majority report)

A. Materials

Overture 5, pp. 338-39

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 5.

Grounds:

1. What the overture is asking for is redundant, given the current COD membership processes.
2. In CRC polity, former officers are no longer considered officebearers and thus would be disqualified.
3. The COD does not function as an ecclesiastical body like the council, classis, and synod do.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report regarding the response to Overture 5 is presented as information, Rev. Doug Fakkema reporting:

Response to Overture 5: Conform COD Membership to Article 30 of the Belgic Confession (minority report)

A. Materials

Overture 5, pp. 338-39

B. Recommendation

That synod direct the Council of Delegates (COD) to revise its membership requirements so that, moving forward, all new members shall be either current or former officebearers.

Grounds:

1. Although the COD is not an assembly of the church, the COD is, at its core, a body of ecclesiastical leadership within the CRCNA.
2. Christ has established the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon to provide for the government of the church (Belgic Confession, Art. 30).
3. Permitting former officebearers to serve on the COD acknowledges that there is some difference between the leadership of the COD and the leadership of the church assemblies.
4. Having served on a local council gives an important perspective of how COD decisions may be received by our churches.
5. The COD's name presupposes officebearers, given the synodically tied word of *delegates* (not *trustees*, *commissioners*, etc.).
6. There is wisdom in Abraham Kuyper's insight on sphere sovereignty—we don't run a church like a corporation. In an age of ever-growing corporatization, the church must resist the trend and renew the biblical modes and models of leadership.
7. While we are always seeking to reform our church in line with God's Word, this is not a matter that we judge demands the expulsion of any present nonconforming board members. Implementing it as the standard moving forward seems prudent.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendation of the advisory committee's majority report.

While discussing the majority report recommendation, synod decides to table the matter and moves to discuss the minority report recommendations, which are then voted on and defeated.

Synod returns to consideration of and decision regarding the majority report recommendation:

Response to Overture 5: Conform COD Membership to Article 30 of the Belgic Confession (majority report)

A. Materials

Overture 5, pp. 338-39

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 5.

Grounds:

1. What the overture is asking for is redundant, given the current COD membership processes.
2. In CRC polity, former officers are no longer considered officebearers and thus would be disqualified.
3. The COD does not function as an ecclesiastical body like the council, classis, and synod do.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote is recorded: Mason Witte (Georgetown).

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 73.)

ARTICLE 68

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 55.)

Advisory Committee 5, Agencies, Rev. Dirk Koetje reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 20: Update the Vision and Mission Statements of the CRCNA

A. Materials

Overture 20, pp. 375-77

B. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to form a committee of various voices from across the denomination to update the vision and mission statements of the CRCNA and give an initial report to Synod 2027.

Grounds:

- a. The vision statement was last updated in 2005 (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 745), and the mission statement was last updated in 1997 (*Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 45, 630).
- b. The new vision and mission statements should emphasize the work of the triune God—revealed in Christ, proclaimed in the gospel, and lived out through the Great Commission—in keeping with our Reformed identity.
- c. The Office of General Secretary is best suited to articulate a vision and mission statement that inspires and focuses the work of the entire denomination for the glory of the triune God in our day.

—*Adopted*

2. That this be synod's response to Overture 20.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 77.)

ARTICLE 69

Advisory Committee 9, Task Forces, elder delegate Richard VanderWoude reporting, presents the following:

I. Task Force to Study Multisite Churches; Response to Overture 38

A. Materials

1. Task Force to Study Multisite Churches report, pp. 272-92
2. Overture 38: Preserve the Original Authority of the Council in Multisite Congregations, pp. 565-70

B. Recommendations

1. That synod commend this report to the churches as a resource for discernment and guidance regarding multisite expressions, particularly as a resource for congregations considering disbanding, and encourage councils and classes to make use of the report's definitions, roadmaps, and ecclesiological principles as they consider multisite developments in their contexts.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod encourage classes to recognize multisite expressions as a potential pathway for growth, revitalization, and church planting, and to cultivate a deeper sense of shared ownership for the health and mission of the churches within a classis.

Ground: This provides one more avenue for churches and classes to consider toward church planting and congregational renewal as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod instruct classes to work with new and existing multisite churches to provide a clear ministry plan to classis when forming or significantly restructuring a multisite arrangement (see appendix to the Task Force to Study Multisite Churches report, *Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 290-92). Such a plan should address, at minimum, how the worshipping communities will fulfill the marks of the true church in their context, including preaching, sacraments, discipline, pastoral care, and clear lines of accountability.

Ground: Such accountability is essential to the health of multisite churches and their members and is a key element of Reformed church polity.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to develop and implement a method for collecting and reporting membership and leadership data by campus or worshipping community in multisite arrangements (as distinct from only aggregated reporting), in order to support pastoral accountability, ecclesiastical transparency, and accurate denominational understanding.

Ground: Providing a standardized way of reporting membership and leadership data promotes clear expectations for multisite congregations and their individual campuses.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod encourage classes to ensure that emerging worshiping communities are appropriately recognized, supported, and — where consistent with classis rules and Church Order provisions — represented in broader assemblies, and to develop or clarify classis policies regarding delegation from emerging congregations where such policies do not yet exist.

Ground: This provides support and accountability for multisite churches and their campuses within the broader framework of the church assemblies.

— *Adopted*

6. That synod adopt the proposed supplement to Church Order Article 35 (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 281-82) included in the task force report with the goal of providing clear ecclesiastical guidance regarding governance, classis approval and discernment of status, representation in broader assemblies, and membership recordkeeping for multisite arrangements.

Supplement, Article 35

Multisite congregations

1. Forms of governance

Multisite congregations may be organized in various ways, including as a single congregation governed by one council, as a network of congregations each governed by its own council, or as a combination of these arrangements. In all cases, the ordinary provisions of the Church Order apply with respect to the calling and election of officebearers and the matters for which the judgment of the congregation is required (see Art. 4, 25, 35–37). Multisite structures do not suspend or replace these ecclesiastical responsibilities but must give them appropriate local expression.

2. Establishment, merger, and classical oversight

When one or more councils enter into a multisite arrangement — whether by merging congregations, adopting another congregation, or establishing a new campus — the approval of classis is required, in keeping with the principles of Church Order Articles 38-a and -e.

In granting such approval, classis shall discern and record the ecclesiastical status of each campus or worshiping community. This includes determining whether a campus functions as an organized congregation with its own council of elders and deacons, or as an emerging congregation under the care of a broader council. In making these determinations, classis shall consider factors such as leadership capacity, numerical and financial viability, and long-term sustainability and shall take into account relevant synodical guidance.

Church visitors should regularly inquire into the formal arrangements governing multisite congregations and their campuses to ensure continued ecclesiastical clarity and accountability.

3. Representation in broader assemblies

For purposes of delegation to classis, individual campuses of multisite congregations may be represented in accordance with their recognized ecclesiastical status as determined by classis. Organized congregations shall be represented in the ordinary manner prescribed by the Church Order, while emerging congregations may be represented according to the classis' organized provisions for emerging churches.

Regardless of status, classis shall ensure that appropriate church visitors and, where applicable, church counselors are assigned to each campus or worshipping community within a multisite structure.

4. Membership records and pastoral accountability

The council of a multisite congregation shall maintain clear and accurate membership records for each campus or worshipping community. This practice serves pastoral care, discipline, and ecclesiastical accountability and assists both council and classis in discerning the health, development, and status of each community within the multisite arrangement.

Ground: The proposed regulations provide consistent and clear pathways for recognizing multisite arrangements within the framework of Reformed church polity.

— *Adopted*

7. That synod add an additional point to the supplement to Church Order Article 35 to include the appendix from the report as a guide for churches entering into a multisite agreement:

5. The following resource is made available to churches entering into multisite arrangements with the approval of their classes.

MULTISITE CAMPUS GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIP DESCRIPTION

This document describes the formal relationship between

_____ (original campus)

and _____ (new campus),

which together function as campuses within the _____ multisite network. Where this template is used as a partnership between two existing congregations, both sites should complete this document.

Note: This is a template intended to identify a number of issues common in multisite arrangements. It may be edited and adapted as necessary. It should be noted that any appeals of a decision of a council (either of a local campus or of an entire network of churches) will be taken to the classis; where a local campus is considered an “organized” congregation by its classis, appeals may not be made to the network council because it is not “the assembly next in order” (Church Order, Art. 30-a). No provisions in this document should be construed as superseding the CRCNA’s Church Order and/or synodical

regulations. A regular review of these arrangements is recommended every three to five years, with updates shared with the classis.

A. Campus identity and context

Describe the basic identity and ministry context of this campus.

- Name of campus:
- Physical location and ministry context (neighborhood, city, region):
- Regular worship/gathering times:
- Campus pastor(s) and primary ministry leaders:

B. Nature of church governance

1. Membership

Describe how church membership is held within this multisite arrangement. Clarify whether membership is held at the network level, the local campus level, or in another configuration. Indicate how membership statistics are recorded and reported for denominational purposes.

2. Council oversight and organization

Describe whether this campus is considered an organized congregation with its own council of elders and deacons, or an emerging campus under the supervision of another council.

- If the campus is emerging, identify the supervising council and explain how oversight is exercised (including any council members specifically assigned to this campus).
- If the campus is organized, describe the relationship between the local council and the multisite network, including how authority, accountability, and mutual submission are practiced.

3. Congregational voice and decision making

Describe how members of this campus participate in significant decisions, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Election of elders and deacons
- Approval of budgets
- Calling of pastors
- Major ministry or property decisions

Explain whether this participation occurs through joint congregational meetings, local campus meetings, delegated representation, or a combination of these methods.

4. Network-level decision making

If a multisite or network council exists, describe the following:

- Its composition and authority
- Which decisions (if any) are binding on local councils
- How local campuses participate in or consent to network-level decisions
- Any defined exceptions or limits to network authority

5. Recordkeeping

Describe how official records (minutes of council meetings, congregational meetings, etc.) are maintained and where they are filed (locally, centrally, or both).

C. Pastoral care and tasks of the church

Describe how the following responsibilities are carried out and who holds oversight in each area:

- Pastoral care, supervision, and church discipline
- Preaching and administration of the sacraments
- Shared or network-wide ministries
- Campus-specific or contextual ministries
- Benevolence and mercy ministries

Clarify how coordination and accountability are maintained across campuses.

D. Financial and legal arrangements

1. Budgeting and financial oversight

Describe how budgets are developed, approved, and monitored, including the roles of local campus leadership and any network-level bodies.

2. Ministry shares

Explain how denominational ministry shares are calculated and paid (e.g., based on local campus membership, network-wide membership, or another method).

3. Legal incorporation

Describe whether each campus is incorporated separately or under a shared legal entity, and explain the rationale for this arrangement.

4. Property ownership and control

Describe how property is owned and governed, including the following:

- Whether property is held by the network or the local campus
- What approvals are required for purchase, sale, or transfer
- Any restrictions or covenants related to property use

5. Financial liabilities

Explain how debts, liabilities, and financial obligations are allocated between the local campus and the multisite network.

6. Employment, pension, and benefits

Describe how ministers and staff participate in pension, insurance, and benefit programs, and which entity serves as the employer of record.

E. Dissolution or transition of the multisite relationship

Describe the process by which this multisite arrangement may be modified or dissolved, including the following:

- Required congregational approvals

- Voting thresholds
- Number and timing of meetings
- Notification of classis
- Disposition of property, staff, and financial obligations

F. Schedule for review

This document will be reviewed by the multisite network leadership and the individual campus again and will be shared with the classis in (date) _____.

— *Adopted*

8. That synod dismiss the Task Force to Study Multisite Churches with thanks for its work.

— *Adopted*

9. That synod declare the committee's recommendations to be its response to Overture 38.

Ground: The concerns of Overture 38 are sufficiently addressed by the report of the Task Force to Study Multisite Churches.

— *Adopted*

Josh Van Drunen (Grand Rapids South) offers a prayer for a delegate who departed because of an urgent need.

II. Defining Membership Task Force; Response to Overtures 37, 39-40

A. Materials

1. Defining Membership Task Force report, pp. 255-71
2. Overture 37, pp. 563-65
3. Overture 39, pp. 570-73
4. Overture 40, pp. 573-77

B. Preamble

"As for those who can belong to the church, we can recognize them by the distinguishing marks of Christians: namely by faith, and by their fleeing from sin and pursuing righteousness, once they have received the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. They love the true God and their neighbors, without turning to the right or left, and they crucify the flesh and its works" (Belgic Confession, Art. 29).

The advisory committee considered the objections that the task force minimized the value of the Reformed confessions and diminished the requirement that members of the CRC commit to the confessions. The committee was persuaded that the language objected to was actually a description of the current state in some of our congregations and neither a prescription for the denomination going forward nor an endorsement that membership is based solely on agreement with the creeds.

The committee concurred with the task force's view that (1) the confessions are central to our identity as a Reformed denomination, (2) becoming a professing member is a continuum from agreement with to full understanding

of the confessions, under the guidance and instruction of the local council, and (3) that officebearers have additional obligations to defend and teach the confessions.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod commend to the churches the reflections and advice on the historical, biblical, and theological aspects of membership identified in this report, noting again the distinction in confessional commitment required of officebearers in comparison to that of confessing members.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod again remind consistories of the privilege and responsibility of discerning how to invite believers to membership and disciple them faithfully toward a deeper understanding of the gospel as articulated in the Reformed confessions (including, if necessary, discipline of erring members) in keeping with the principles previously established by our denomination.

Grounds:

- a. The local consistory is the body charged with evaluating membership decisions within the framework established by Scripture and our denominational standards (see Church Order, Art. 59, 78-81; Supplement, Church Order, Art. 67).
- b. Our profession of faith practices assume that there is no “disjunction” between a Christian confession and a Reformed confession: “A Christian confession is by implication a Reformed confession and vice versa” (*Acts of Synod 1959*, pp. 21-22, 373).
- c. A number of denominations in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition base confessing membership in an embrace of the ecumenical creeds, embracing the Reformation-era confessions as the framework for the “spiritual guidance of the church” to which members also assent.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod encourage churches to use our approved liturgical forms, or adaptations of them that conform to synodical guidelines (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 493-94), in the administration of the sacraments or in celebrating public profession of faith; and instruct the Office of General Secretary to make progress toward providing translations of all of these forms in the languages used in the churches.

Grounds:

- a. The use of these liturgical forms will foster a greater shared understanding of membership across the denomination.
- b. “The consistory shall see to it that the principles and elements of worship approved by synod are observed, including the use of liturgical forms If liturgical forms are adapted or additional psalms,

hymns, and spiritual songs are used in worship, these elements should conform to synodical guidelines” (Church Order, Art. 52-b).

- c. Translating our liturgy into the languages used in worship across the church will provide ways to communicate expectations about membership in communities where English is not widely spoken.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod encourage churches to develop and use membership and profession of faith classes that foster a commitment to the Reformed confessions, and to reflect on the ways in which this goal might require adaptation of programs developed in other theological traditions when our churches make use of these programs, especially in those churches who utilize membership processes that align more specifically with the ecumenical creeds than with the Reformed confessions.

Grounds:

- a. Membership or profession of faith classes provide a means for churches to establish a baseline of expectations for persons committing to the life of a local CRC congregation.
- b. “Commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church” is a basic expectation of professing membership (Church Order, Art. 59-b; see also Profession of Faith forms—1976, 2013, 2016).
- c. A number of churches are using resources developed outside the Reformed theological tradition to invite people to membership in their congregations. While these resources have been beneficial to many churches, many of them also contain theological convictions about the nature of salvation or the role of the church and sacraments that undermine important insights of the Reformed understanding of Scripture. Discernment is important both to identify teachings that connect us to the wider Christian tradition and to recognize teachings that may tend to undermine our understanding of Scripture.

— *Adopted*

5. That synod declare its decisions regarding the work of the task force to be its response to Overtures 37, 39, and 40.

— *Adopted*

6. That synod declare the mandate of this working group complete, noting the responses to Overtures 17 and 32 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 866-67, 941-42), with thanks for the reflections provided by those who participated in its discussions.

— *Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 84.)

ARTICLE 70

Christopher 't Hoen (Northcentral Iowa) closes in prayer in English and Dutch, and the afternoon session recesses at 5:13 p.m. The assembly will reconvene in the evening at 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY EVENING, June 16, 2026

Tenth Session

ARTICLE 71

The evening session begins with delegates Greg Schuringa (Wisconsin), Ben Gresik (Eastern Canada), Jean Gomes (Grandville), and Ryan Nirula (Quinte) leading in the singing of “In Christ Alone” and in the recitation of the Nicene Creed in English, Spanish, and Korean. Ryan Nirula offers a prayer.

The roll call indicates that all delegates are present.

ARTICLE 72

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 39.)

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order, elder delegate Brandon Seaver reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 23: Replace Church Order Article 52 and Its Supplement

A. Materials

Overture 23, pp. 381-86

B. Preamble

In considering this recommendation, we wish to remind synod that because this recommendation represents a change to Church Order, it will be necessary for Synod 2027 to ratify these changes. This allows the churches an opportunity to consider and respond to these proposed changes.

We further note that the authors of Overture 23 point out the following:

The proposed replacement of Article 52 and its supplement does not introduce any new requirements or prescriptions for corporate worship. Rather, it seeks to clarify, summarize, and make accessible the principles, decisions, and guidelines for corporate worship that have already been adopted by synod. (Agenda for Synod 2026, p. 382)

C. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overture 23 and adopt the proposed replacement of Church Order Article 52 and its supplement as amended by the advisory committee, and submit the revised article and its supplement to the churches for consideration, with ratification by Synod 2027. (Additions are indicated by underline, and deletions are indicated by ~~strikethrough~~.)

Article 52

a. The consistory shall regulate the worship services in such a way that God is not worshiped in any other way than has been commanded in his Word (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 96), rejecting “all human innovations and all laws imposed on us, in our worship of God, which bind and force our consciences in any way” (Belgic Confession, Art. 32), and utilizing the means of grace he has prescribed (Canons of Dort, Point 5, 14).

b. The consistory shall see to it that the principles and elements of worship approved by synod are observed, including the use of liturgical forms, songs, and synodically approved Bible versions. If liturgical forms are adapted or additional psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are used in worship, these elements should conform to synodical guidelines. ensure that all psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, liturgical forms, and resources used in public worship are biblically sound and confessionally faithful according to our governing principles of worship. Churches are encouraged to emphasize Psalm singing.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 52-b

c. Corporate worship services shall be a covenantal meeting between our triune God and his people that is structured by and saturated with the Bible. It shall be ordered as a dialogue in which God speaks through his Word and sacraments (when they are administered), and the congregation responds in confession, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, offerings, and obedient faith.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 52-c

Supplement, Article 52-b

A. Governing principles of worship

Worship is a microcosm of the entire gospel, of the whole life of a gospel people, and of life in Christ, in which God himself meets with, speaks with, transforms, and sends out his people. The liturgy shapes us into the very image of Christ, by the Spirit, to the glory of the Father, who alone is worthy to be worshiped.

Worship is covenant dialogue

Worship is a **dialogue between God and his people**, in which God speaks and acts and the congregation responds in faith, obedience, praise, and prayer.

God is the primary actor in worship

Worship begins with **God’s gracious initiative**: his Word proclaimed, his promises announced, his sacraments administered. Human response is real and necessary but is always secondary and responsive.

Worship is corporate action

Worship is the act of **the gathered congregation**, not a performance by clergy or a private devotion carried on in parallel. The whole people of God participate as priests before him.

The Word of God is central

Scripture—read, sung, preached, and prayed—forms the **structural backbone of worship**. Preaching is not an add-on but the defining element of the church’s liturgical life.

Sacrament completes the dialogue

The sacraments are not separate from the Word but bring the dialogue to a **visible and enacted convergence**, where proclamation and response occur together in faith-filled action.

Edification governs order and freedom

The Spirit grants freedom in worship, but that freedom is exercised within **order aimed at edification**, intelligibility, and congregational participation.

Corporate worship is distinct but tied to all of life

While all of life is lived before God, corporate worship is a **distinct, irreplaceable act** of the gathered church.

B. ~~Bible versions~~ **Bible versions** recommended by synod for use in worship services are listed online at crna.org and include the King James Version (KJV), the American Standard Version (ASV), the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New International Version (NIV), the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Today’s New International Version (TNIV), the English Standard Version (ESV), and the New Living Translation (NLT, for use only alongside other approved translations).

— ~~Liturgical forms, songs, and elements of worship~~ approved by synod are contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination’s *Psalter Hymnal*. Forms, subsequent revisions of forms that are synodically approved, and other such resources are made available on the denomination’s website (crna.org) under “Synod Resources.”

— Synodical guidelines pertaining to the ~~adaptation of liturgical forms~~ are found in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, pages 493–94, and in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*.

— Materials on the ~~principles of, elements of, and guidelines for worship and music~~ are found in the “Introduction to the Psalms, Bible Songs, and Hymns” contained in the latest edition (currently 1987) of the denomination’s *Psalter Hymnal*, pages 11–13; in the *Acts of Synod*

1997, pages 664-68; and in the 1997 Committee to Study Worship Report available on the denomination's website (crena.org) under "Synod Resources."

- C. "Just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments" (Canons of Dort, Point 5, 14).
- D. "The music of the church should be appropriate for worship—that is, it should be liturgical and have aesthetic integrity. The music of worship should serve the dialogue between God and his people. It must be true to the full message of the Scriptures and reflective of biblical Christian experience. Along with the biblical motif, the music of worship should give expression to the other motifs of liturgy: the catholic, the confessional, and the pastoral. The music of worship should satisfy the aesthetic laws that are conditions of good art, such as imaginative craftsmanship and seriousness of expression. It should reflect the church at worship today and throughout the ages in ways that are relevant, enduring, festive, and dignified" (Psalter Hymnal, Statement of Principal, revised from the 1959 edition and adopted by Synod 1979; for more details, see the full "Introduction to the Psalms, Bible Songs, and Hymns" in the Psalter Hymnal, pp. 11-15).
- E. "The celebration of the sacraments shall be done in accord with the confessions of the CRC and include at least the following elements:
- a. For baptism—the scriptural words of institution, the baptismal covenant (including God's promises and our promises), and the act of baptism with water and in the name of the Trinity.
 - b. For the Lord's Supper—the scriptural words of institution (with actions of breaking and pouring), the thanksgiving and consecration, and the communion with bread and cup (approved by Synod 1994).

Supplement, Article 52-c

Ordinary Elements of Public Worship

These are the recurring elements found consistently in biblical, early church, and Reformed worship patterns:

God speaks to his people

- Call to worship, God's greeting and blessings
- Declaration of God's commands, promises, and grace
- Reading and proclamation (preaching) of his Word

The people respond

- Congregational singing (psalms and hymns drawn from Scripture)
- Confession of sin
- Prayer (including thanksgiving, intercession, supplication)
- Confession of faith
- Offerings for the ministry of the church and care of the needy

God and his people act together

- Administration of the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper)

God sends his people

- Pronouncement of God's blessing (benediction)
- God's people respond with songs of glory (doxology)

Sources: 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee (*Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 134-98)
1997 Committee to Study Worship Report (*Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 93-144)

Grounds:

1. Article 52, as it is currently written, indicates that "the consistory shall regulate the worship services" but inadequately describes how to do so. Since corporate worship is a central task and activity of the church, as indicated by Article 51, the Church Order ought to clearly, yet succinctly, communicate our rich, Reformed theology of worship for pedagogical and regulative purposes.
2. The current Article 52-b and its supplement reference "liturgical forms" and "synodical guidelines" that are difficult to utilize. For example, the "synodical guidelines pertaining to the adaptation of liturgical forms are found in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, pages 493-94, and in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*." These *Acts of Synod* must be accessed either in a printed version, or through Calvin's Hekman Library online synod portal, which only offers access to a scanned copy of the entire 578-page *Acts of Synod* combined with the *Agenda* for that year (and the PDF page numbers do not correspond to the printed page numbers). The "1997 Committee to Study Worship Report" is one of dozens of reports that must be located on the "Synod Resources" page. It weighs in at over fifty pages of difficult-to-read scanned documents. Since this is critical knowledge for worship planners, the primary points of these documents should be included in the Church Order article and its supplement.
3. The latest synodically approved *Psalter Hymnal* was published in 1987, nearly four decades ago. Since then, excellent song books like *Lift Up Your Hearts* (produced by Faith Alive), the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* (produced as a joint effort between the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church), *SING!* (produced by the Gettys through Crossway), and many others have been published. While the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal* continues to

serve the church well, most congregations now supplement it with additional resources that are published far faster than synod can approve them. Consistories need a more robust Church Order article and supplement to evaluate songs sung in their services. The current Article 52 and its supplement do little to emphasize Psalm singing, which historically has always been, and ought to be, a robust part of our repertoire.

4. All of the principles contained in the proposed Article 52 and supplement are sourced directly from our confessions and synodically approved reports, documents, and decisions. Everything proposed reflects guidelines that are already currently normative in the CRCNA. No new prescriptions or restrictions on how local congregations exercise corporate worship are proposed in them.
5. The proposed Article 52 and supplement do not mandate a uniform style, order, cultural, or musical expression. The proposed material only clarifies the theological boundaries within which contextualization takes place.
6. The proposed Article 52 and supplement, while longer than the current version, succinctly summarize the biblical, confessional, and historical principles of worship the CRCNA holds to and adequately convey these principles to consistories, pastors, worship committees, and planners. They provide a solid guideline and criteria for the ongoing development of curricula and training materials.

— Adopted

Rev. Jon Hoekema, prayer shepherd, offers a prayer for the work of the assembly.

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 78.)

ARTICLE 73

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 67.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services I, Rev. Alex Snider reporting, presents the following:

Response to Appeal 2 and Communication 2 (majority report)

A. Materials

1. Appeal 2, pp. 581-86
2. Communication 2, pp. 587-89

B. Preamble

In order to come to our decision, the committee heard from both Mr. Shaw and a representative from Classis Columbia. We then went into deep discussions with assistance from Calvin Theological Seminary faculty advisers so that we might understand the biblical teaching regarding the New Testament about offices.

Mr. Shaw did correctly identify a genuine exegetical and historical tension that deserves careful attention. The New Testament does indeed emphasize elders (πρεσβύτεροι) who are called to shepherd (ποιμαίνω) the church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; Titus 1:5-7). The title “pastor” as a formal office designation is rare, and the consistent pattern in the early settled churches is two primary offices: elders and deacons. However, the biblical data is more nuanced than suggested by a flat “two-office only” reading. First Timothy 5:17 states that elders who rule well are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. These are not two completely separate offices but a clear functional distinction within the one office of elder: all elders lead and shepherd, yet some are recognized and supported for the demanding work of the public ministry of the Word. The Belgic Confession picks up on this when it simply names this settled, post-apostolic reality in clear ecclesiastical terms. It does not contradict Scripture; it reflects the church’s orderly application of the New Testament pattern.

Mr. Shaw is mistaken when he asserts that the Reformers created the office of pastor on their own. The Reformers recovered and reformed this office according to Scripture, rejecting medieval corruptions and restoring the centrality of the ministry of the Word. The Belgic Confession is in continuity with this teaching. As such, Mr. Shaw has a high burden of proof when claiming that Belgic Confession Article 31 is in error. That burden of proof is not met. In fact, the Belgic Confession stands in continuity with that recovery by the Reformers, not as an innovation.

In an effort to offer a pastoral response to Mr. Shaw, our faculty adviser, Dr. Wilson de Angelo Cunha, will be reaching out to Mr. Shaw to offer a more extended discussion of these issues.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod not sustain the appeal.

Ground: Mr. Shaw has not demonstrated that Belgic Confession Article 31 is in error; the article is consistent with the full New Testament witness when the functional trajectory within the elder office (1 Tim. 5:17) and the church’s historic practice are taken into account.

2. That synod thank John Shaw and Classis Columbia for the thoughtful gravamen and response and affirm the underlying biblical concern for fidelity to the New Testament pattern of church offices.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report regarding the response to Appeal 2 and Communication 2 is presented as information, Rev. Cedric Parsels reporting:

Response to Appeal 2 and Communication 2 (minority report)

A. Materials

1. Appeal 2, pp. 581-86
2. Communication 2, pp. 587-89

B. Summary

According to Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, Christ has established for us in Scripture a normative structure for church government. This structure consists of three permanent offices: pastors, elders, and deacons. To each of these offices Christ has assigned specific tasks. Ministers are to preach the Word and administer the sacraments. Elders, with the ministers, are to supervise the churches and maintain church discipline. Deacons are to help and comfort the poor and all the afflicted. According to Belgic Confession Article 32, this is the order that “Christ, our only master, has ordained for us” and, therefore, is one “which [we] ought always to guard against deviating from.” This interpretation is supported by standard English commentaries on the Belgic Confession, including those by Dr. P. Y. De Jong, Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Dr. Eugene Oosterhaven, Dr. Daniel Hyde, and Dr. David Engelsma.

Mr. Shaw’s gravamen argues that the Belgic Confession’s description of the order of church government that Christ has established for us is incorrect. Specifically, Mr. Shaw argues that Christ has not established a permanent office of pastor tasked with preaching the Word and administering the sacraments.

Ordinarily, Mr. Shaw would bear the burden of proof to demonstrate that our confession is in error (cf., Suppl., Church Order Art. 5, C, 1). In this case, however, past synodical reports have already done that for him. Furthermore, Synod 2001 adopted the substance of Mr. Shaw’s basic conclusion in its ‘settled and binding’ guidelines for how our churches ought to think both about the nature of church offices and the tasks assigned to them (*Acts of Synod 2001*, Art. 53, Guideline c, 1; Art. 56, Guideline e, 1). Therefore, in our opinion, it would be dishonest of Synod 2026 and a violation of our Covenant for Officebearers if Synod 2026 were to dismiss Mr. Shaw’s gravamen as not having met the burden of proof. If we are not going to accede to Mr. Shaw’s appeal, then we must have the humility and courage to examine the conclusions of our past synodical reports and the synodical guidelines based on them.

The three synodical reports that support Mr. Shaw’s gravamen include the 1973 report on “Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination,” the 2001 report on “Ordination and ‘Official Acts of Ministry,’” and the 2015 report on the “Offices of Elder and Deacon.” While there are some differences between the reports, they are all agreed on three important points.

First, contrary to the Belgic Confession, all three reports agree that Christ has not established a normative, permanently fixed, structure for the church’s government. According to the 1973 report, “[the New Testament writings] do not present a definitive church-organizational structure to which the church must remain bound for all time” (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 539). According to the 2001 report, “Christ mandated no detailed system of church government” (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 289). According to the 2015 report, “The New Testament does not present us with a normative and

rigid pattern of church leadership—institutionalized offices that must be scrupulously maintained at all times and in all places” (*Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 382).

Second, contrary to the Belgic Confession, all three reports agree that Christ has not instituted three permanent offices that the church must maintain. According to the 1973 report, “[The New Testament writings do not] describe the offices of the church with such finality that no changes may be permitted in their number or in their functioning” (*Agenda for Synod 1973*, p. 673). The 2001 report agrees: “The [universal] church has chosen on the basis of biblical example and for the purposes of good order to recognize certain offices. These offices or ministries vary with the needs of the church at different times and places” (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 297; *Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 506). Likewise, the 2015 report argues: “The New Testament reveals permanent dimensions of leadership, not precise and specific offices for all time” (*Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 383). Indeed, the 2015 report goes on to argue that “[this is] why the current Church Order of the CRCNA does not speak of Scripture *requiring* the existence of certain offices and those offices only, but states that at this time in the denomination’s history we *recognize* [certain] offices . . .” (*Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 385, emphasis original).

Finally, contrary to the Belgic Confession, all three reports agree that Christ has not assigned specific tasks to the office of pastor, elder, or deacon. According to the 1973 report, “in the Scriptures [the tasks of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments] are not explicitly limited to special office-holders. . . .” Instead, “the church assigns these functions to certain individuals . . . with a view to maintaining good order in the church so that it may carry out its ministry most effectively” (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 714). According to the 2001 report, “[‘official acts of ministry,’ including the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments] are entrusted to the congregation and, within the congregation, to its ordained leaders, not to a specific office” (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 296). [Note: This conclusion was adopted by Synod 2001 (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 504).] Instead, “the assignment of primary responsibility for [the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments] to one office rather than another is a matter of tradition and good order” (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 286). The 2015 report agrees: “The assignment of specific tasks to distinct offices is for the church to sort out in its context in every new age” (*Agenda for Synod 2015*, p. 384).

In summary, contrary to the Belgic Confession, all three reports agree (1) that Christ has not established a normative structure of church government, (2) that Christ has not established permanent offices which the church must maintain, and (3) that Christ has not assigned specific tasks or functions to any particular office. In short, the reports are in complete agreement with Mr. Shaw on his main point—namely, that there is no biblical “must” or “should” about the office of pastor. Indeed, these reports would go further than Mr. Shaw is willing to go. According to the logic of these reports, there

is also no biblical “must” or “should” about the offices of elder or deacon either. If the church someday decides to give the tasks of preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, and overseeing the spiritual life of the congregation entirely to the deacons and to abolish the offices of pastor and elder, the church would be entirely within its rights to do so. Although this might be true, it is not what the confession teaches.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod appoint a three-person task force consisting of three theologians with backgrounds in the field of Reformation and Post-Reformation theology with the following mandate:

- a. Provide Synod 2028 with a historically informed interpretation of Belgic Confession Article 30.
- b. Assess whether Belgic Confession Article 30 is compatible with the conclusions that past synodical study committees have reached since 1973 regarding the nature of church office and official acts of ministry.
- c. If Belgic Confession Article 30 is incompatible with the conclusions of those past synodical study committees, provide recommendations to Synod 2028 on how it might respond with integrity to Mr. Shaw’s confessional-revision gravamen.

Grounds:

- 1) There is an apparent contradiction between Belgic Confession Article 30 and the reports submitted to Synods 1973, 2001, and 2015 on the nature of church office and official acts of ministry.
- 2) Synod 2001 adopted the conclusions of the 2001 report as synod’s “settled and binding” guidelines for how the church should think about both the nature of church office and official acts of ministry — acts which include the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (*Acts of Synod 2001*, pp. 502-8).
- 3) The reports submitted to Synods 1973, 2001, and 2015, along with the guidelines that Synod 2001 adopted, appear to support Mr. Shaw’s conclusion that the New Testament does not require the church to have an office of pastor (*Acts of Synod 2001*, Guideline e, 1, p. 506).
- 4) The reports submitted to Synods 1973, 2001, and 2015 also appear to support Mr. Shaw’s conclusion that Christ has not tasked the office of pastor with the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (*Acts of Synod 2001*, Guideline c, 1, p. 504).
- 5) Since Synods 1973, 2001, and 2015 commended the biblical and theological work of the above-mentioned reports, it would be dishonest for synod not to sustain Mr. Shaw’s gravamen without first investigating whether its own thoughts and actions have been consistent with Belgic Confession Article 30.

2. That synod task the officers of synod with appointing the members for this task force in consultation with the members of the minority report, the Office of General Secretary providing administrative support as needed (Rules for Synodical Procedure, VII, D, 1).

3. That synod encourage classes, councils, and all church members to study, examine, and discuss Belgic Confession Article 30 until synod adjudicates Mr. Shaw's confessional-revision gravamen.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee's majority report.

While discussing the majority report recommendations, synod decides to table them in order to discuss the minority report recommendations, which are voted on and defeated.

Synod returns to consideration of and decision regarding the majority report recommendations.

Response to Appeal 2 and Communication 2 (majority report)

C. Recommendations

1. That synod not sustain the appeal.

Ground: Mr. Shaw has not demonstrated that Belgic Confession Article 31 is in error; the article is consistent with the full New Testament witness when the functional trajectory within the elder office (1 Tim. 5:17) and the church's historic practice are taken into account.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Brittany Clark (Grand Rapids North), Cedric Parsels (Illiana), Isadore LaBrosse (Greater Los Angeles).

2. That synod thank John Shaw and Classis Columbia for the thoughtful gravamen and response and affirm the underlying biblical concern for fidelity to the New Testament pattern of church offices.

—*Adopted*

President Steenwyk offers a prayer for Mr. Shaw.

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 80.)

ARTICLE 74

Jean Gomes (Grandville) closes in prayer in English and Portuguese, and the evening session recesses at 9:00 p.m. The assembly will reconvene in the morning at 8:15 a.m.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, June 17, 2026

Eleventh Session

ARTICLE 75

The morning session begins with worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp leading delegates in a responsive greeting in English, Spanish, and Korean. Delegates are called to worship with the words of Psalm 104:24-31, and all respond by singing “Rejoice in All Your Works,” led by Bethany Besteman (Hackensack), Harold Winter (Ontario Southwest), Patrick Bigelow (Quinte), and Zack Flipse (Wisconsin). The assembly reads Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 26-27 aloud and sings “Children of the Heavenly Father.” Rev. Jon Hoekema, prayer shepherd, reads Psalm 127:1-2 and offers reflective prompts for prayer. The delegates view a video featuring Pastor Mac Soré and Vive Church Milwaukee. Rev. Hoekema offers a blessing, and the worship time closes with the singing of “I Surrender All.” The roll call indicates that all delegates are present.

ARTICLE 76

The general secretary presents the ballot for denominational board and committee elections and offers a prayer for the process. The delegates vote electronically. The ballot results (boards and committees lists) will be presented for ratification by synod prior to the adjournment of synod (see Article 104).

ARTICLE 77

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 68.)

Advisory Committee 5, Agencies, Rev. Dirk Koetje reporting, presents the following:

Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Supplement (section I, D, 3 and Appendix I), pp. 427, 434, 447-48

Note: Prior to synod’s discussion of the following recommendation, Dan Tracy (Heartland) outlines the hiring process for the appointment of the new editor of *The Banner* and interviews Rev. Lora Copley, who also responds to questions from the floor.

Synod enters into executive session to discuss the recommendation.

Synod returns to open session and gives Rev. Copley a standing ovation.

B. Recommendation

That synod ratify the appointment of Rev. Lora Copley as editor in chief of *The Banner*, effective July 1, 2026.

—*Adopted*

Joel Copley (Northcentral Iowa) prays for Rev. Lora Copley.

ARTICLE 78

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 72.)

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order, Rev. Harold Winter reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (sections IV, C, 1, a; IV, C, 5), pp. 29, 30-31, 36-42, 44

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the following updates to Church Order Supplement, Article 8, as amended by the advisory committee. (Additions are indicated by underline, and deletions are indicated by ~~striketrough~~.)

Supplement, Article 8

[sections A-D unchanged]

E. Calling Ministers Ordained Outside of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

1. *[unchanged]*
2. A minister ordained outside of the CRCNA desiring to be declared eligible for a call to a Christian Reformed church shall make application to the Candidacy Committee, which shall work with the candidate and the classis to ensure that. ~~Once the application has been filed,~~ the procedures prescribed by ~~the Candidacy Committee synod~~ in the Journey Toward Ordination document shall be followed.
3. A council shall not nominate a minister ordained outside of the CRCNA for a call without the approval of its classis and the Candidacy Committee. ~~Key elements of the discussion are to involve the “need” criteria included previously in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E, 4, and now presented in the Journey Toward Ordination document in the section on Article 8.~~ Synod directs all parties to take specific and special note of the requirement to establish a “need” when calling ministers ordained outside the CRCNA or in declaring ministers ordained outside the CRCNA eligible for call in the Christian Reformed Church at their own request (Journey Toward Ordination III, C, 1). Once the council, pastor, classis, and Candidacy Committee all agree to the proposed call, the affiliation process and procedures prescribed by synod in the Journey Toward Ordination document shall be followed.
4. *[unchanged]*

5. [unchanged]

F. Determination of Need

1. ~~Synod directs the Candidacy Committee to take specific and special note of the “need” factor when requested to give their advice to the councils and/or classes in the calling of ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA and in declaring ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA available for call in the Christian Reformed Church at their own request.~~
2. ~~Synod calls all parties concerned to review the criteria for “need” offered in the Journey Toward Ordination document (section III, C, 1).~~

[Section G will become section F but will not otherwise be changed.]

— Adopted

2. That synod approve the following update to Church Order Supplement, Article 30-a (deletion indicated by ~~strike through~~).

Supplement, Article 30-a

A. Appeal by a Member (Appellant) from a Decision or Action of a Council (Respondent)

1. [unchanged]
2. [unchanged]
3. *Appeal Process in Situations of Abuse That Are Appealed to Classis*

[first paragraph unchanged]

Orientation and Training. Before handling an appeal involving abuse allegations against a church leader ~~that have been taken up by an advisory panel process~~, classis delegates will participate in a 60-minute safe church orientation and training from Thrive on due process, abuse awareness, and response.

[remainder of this supplement unchanged]

— Adopted

3. That synod approve the following updates to Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, pending the corresponding changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure (additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~strike through~~). (Note: The corresponding changes have been adopted by synod; see Art. 99 of these minutes.)

Supplement, Article 30-c

Note: The entire Judicial Code document appears in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, and sections 8-9 of the Judicial Code (in a different form) appearing in the Rules for Synodical Procedure. The text in the Church Order Supplement should be amended to harmonize the two versions, as reflected below. Pursuant to a full review of the Rules

for Synodical Procedure, the COD is also recommending the removal of the Judicial Code text from that document.

Sections 1-7 [unchanged]

Section 8: The Judicial Code Committee of Synod

- a. Original hearings and appellate hearings before synod shall be referred to a Judicial Code Committee appointed by synod. This committee meets between synods as frequently as its business requires and presents its recommendations to synod in writing. ~~Although there are some separate regulations regarding this committee in the Rules for Synodical Procedure, Except as noted here,~~ the committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.
- b. *[unchanged]*

Section 9: Hearing and Appeal Procedures before the Synod Acting in Its Judicial Capacity

[subsections a-d unchanged]

- e. Individual delegates to synod shall not have the privilege of addressing the Judicial Code Committee as is normally permitted with other advisory committees.

[current subsection e becomes subsection f but text is unchanged]

- g. During synodical discussions, the committee shall be represented by up to two spokespersons who will have the privilege of the floor. These spokespersons shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches.
- fh. Upon receipt of the written report or prior to, both the complainant and respondent may request the opportunity to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee shall make a recommendation to the officers of synod as soon as possible based on ensuring due process (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 2, g) and on the benefit synod would derive from such an address, and communicate the decision immediately to both parties (even if only one has made such a request).
- i. If synod permits the complainant or respondent to address synod, after the reporter provides the recommendation(s) of the Judicial Code Committee (and if there are majority and minority reports/ recommendations, after both have been presented), the complainant and/or respondent shall be given opportunity for summarizing their positions, not unlike provided in the hearing (Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c, section 5, a, vii), except that no opportunity for rebuttal will be allowed. Addresses shall be no more than five (5) minutes. If both parties have requested to address synod, the complainant shall be given no more than five (5) minutes to address synod first, and then the respondent shall be given no more than five (5)

minutes to address synod. The Judicial Code Committee chair or the general secretary shall be responsible for providing these instructions to each party, stressing that the function of addressing synod is to provide their personal summaries to synod, not to retry the case. After addressing synod, neither party may provide additional comments to synod, nor may synod ask for either or both parties to return to the speaker's podium for further questions, comments, or discussion.

- gj. The Judicial Code Committee may provide the officers of synod appropriate written advice on Judicial Code matters.
- hk. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
 - i) by deciding the matter;
 - ii) by deferring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;
 - iii) by remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or council;
or
 - iv) by referring the matter back to the Judicial Code Committee for a rehearing before the initial hearing body; or
 - iv) by conducting its own original judicial or appeal hearing.
- il. Unless synod conducts its own original judicial or appeal hearing, synod shall give deference to the factual findings made by the Judicial Code Committee. Synod should accept the findings of fact as presented by the Judicial Code Committee unless synod conducts its own original judicial or appeal hearing because it is persuaded that
 - i) one or more parties were not given the opportunity by the hearing body to present important and relevant evidence, or
 - ii) after the Judicial Code Committee hearing, new evidence which is important and relevant has been discovered by one or more parties.
- jm. If synod conducts its own judicial or appeal hearing, it shall follow Judicial Code procedures set forth herein.
- n. Procedure for requesting rehearing under sections k through m above
 - i) Any party who seeks to have synod conduct its own hearing or refer the matter back for a rehearing should submit such request in writing to the general secretary for distribution to the delegates of synod with a copy to the Judicial Code Committee. The writing should include a summary of the evidence which that party was not allowed to present at the evidentiary hearing and a short statement of how this opportunity was denied, or the statement should include a summary of the newly discovered evidence and an explanation of why it was not discovered earlier.

ii) All parties and the Judicial Code Committee representative(s) should be allowed a very brief time to address synod on such request.

o. When recommendations involve interpretations and applications of governing principles, such as the Church Order, to the facts involved in the matter, synod should allow the parties and representatives of the Judicial Code Committee a reasonable amount of time, set by the president of synod upon recommendation of the Judicial Code Committee, to argue for or against such interpretations and applications.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod take note that the adoption of Overture 23 (see Art. 72 in these minutes) renders moot the COD's proposed changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 52-b (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 41).

—*Noted*

5. That synod approve the following update to Church Order Supplement, Article 32-d, section D.

Supplement, Article 32-d, section D

D. Model General Operating Bylaw Number 1 for Churches in Canada

A model bylaw for churches in Canada has been prepared and approved by synod. A copy may be obtained from the Office of General Secretary or from the CRC website—crcna.org and search "Bylaw Canada."

—*Adopted*

Note: Due to formatting issues, the above motion did not accurately reflect the recommendation from the COD report (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 41) when presented for synod's approval. The assembly later passed a revised motion to correct this matter (see Article 100).

6. That synod grant the general secretary authority in the future to update the Introduction to the Church Order, as well as the Commissioned Pastor Handbook, the Journey Toward Ordination, the doctrinal and ethical position statements, the Affiliation Process and Procedure, the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations against a Ministry Leader, and the Manual for Synodical Deputies, in keeping with any changes in synodical regulations, and to report those updates to synod, for information rather than requesting synod's approval. Such reporting will cite the *Acts of Synod* decisions correlating to the changes made and will be released to the churches by December 1 for review prior to synod.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 14: Establish a Standing Committee to Advise the COD and Synod on Church Order Matters

A. Materials

Overture 14, pp. 361-63

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 14.

Grounds:

1. The Office of General Secretary has means to provide advice.
2. The process for changing Church Order allows for churches to send overtures and have the right to respond before changes are implemented (Church Order, Article 47).
3. Any perceived inconsistencies do not rise to the level of needing a standing committee to correct them.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 86.)

ARTICLE 79

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 63.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Richard Grift reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin Theological Seminary; Response to Overture 15

A. Materials

1. Calvin Theological Seminary report (sections II, XII), pp. 127-131, 144
2. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement (Section II), pp. 492-94
3. Overture 15: Require the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees and Faculty to Sign a Covenant of Confessional Commitment, pp. 363-68

B. Privilege of the floor

Hessel Kielstra, chair; Julius Medenblik, president; CTS board members who are present

C. Recommendations

1. That synod receive the report of the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees and thank them for their work.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod not accede to Overture 15.

Grounds:

- a. The requests of Overture 15 have been already fulfilled.
- b. All CTS board members are CRC members.
- c. All those with faculty status have and must sign the Covenant for Officebearers.
- d. The confessional alignment of faculty is specified on page 129 of the *Agenda for Synod 2026*; the alignment for others, including adjunct faculty, is specified on pages 130-31.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 18: Proactively Articulate Qualities Desired in Our Next Seminary President

A. Materials

Overture 18, pp. 371-72

B. Recommendation

That synod instruct the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to receive Overture 18 and forward it to the nominating committee for their prayerful consideration.

Ground: The CTS Board of Trustees shared about the formation of the nominating committee and the mandate they already have been given, which is consistent with material in Overture 18.

— *Adopted*

III. Calvin University; Response to Overture 17

A. Materials

1. Calvin University report (section II), pp. 145-47
2. Calvin University Supplement (sections V; VI, B; Appendix), pp. 501-7
3. Overture 17: Require Full Confessional Alignment for Trustees at Calvin University, pp. 370-71

B. Privilege of the floor

Perrin Rynders, chair of the board; Greg Elzinga, president

C. Background

The reporter introduces the material and invites President Greg Elzinga to provide an overview of faculty hiring processes.

Note: The recommendations presented in sections III-IV (regarding Calvin University and Overtures 16-17) were considered together and approved by a single vote at the end of the discussion.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod recognize the Calvin Board of Trustees for its progress toward full confessional alignment.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod encourage Calvin University to continue to pursue full confessional alignment of its Board of Trustees going forward.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod affirm the Calvin University Board of Trustees' commitment to disclose to future synods, for synodical approval, any nominees who have confessional exceptions, and rationales for trustee appointments.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod consider this to be its response to Overture 17 and to the communications from Calvin University on this matter.

Grounds:

- a. These recommendations balance the desire to ensure that the vast majority of Calvin University nonclassical trustees are confessionally

aligned while also providing some flexibility in unique and exceptional circumstances.

- b. Calvin University's report to synod reflects their work in good faith in response to Synod 2025's instruction and encouragement "to continue the good work of two-tier application and consider a higher level than a simple majority of confessional alignment" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 613).
- c. Calvin University's report to Synod 2026 indicates that "no trustee presented for appointment since Synod 2022 has expressed a confessional difficulty," and that the "vast majority of trustees" are in full confessional alignment (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 146).
- d. It would be premature to introduce new and different expectations as Calvin University's Board of Trustees operationalizes the higher confessional alignment commended by Synod 2025.

— *Adopted*

The following negative vote is recorded: Dirk Koetje (Zeeland).

IV. Calvin University; Response to Overture 16

A. Materials

- 1. Calvin University report (section II), pp. 145-47
- 2. Calvin University Supplement (sections V; VI, B; Appendix), pp. 501-7
- 3. Overture 16: Require Full Confessional Alignment for Faculty at Calvin University, pp. 368-69

B. Recommendations

- 1. That synod recognize that all Calvin University faculty must conform their teaching, conduct, and scholarship to the creeds and confessions of the CRCNA.

— *Adopted*

- 2. That synod recognize that all faculty must annually reaffirm their commitment to the Covenant for Faculty Members.

— *Adopted*

- 3. That synod recognize that Calvin University is committed to the creeds and confessions of the CRCNA, including its interpretation of "unchastity" in the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 41).

— *Adopted*

- 4. That synod recognize that Calvin University has been explicit in its view on marriage and sexuality with all faculty.

— *Adopted*

- 5. That synod instruct the Calvin University Board of Trustees to work through Calvin University processes on "indefinite exceptions" and report back to synod in 2028 (see *Agenda for Synod 2026*, p. 146).

— *Adopted*

The following negative vote is registered: Matthew Haan (Iakota).

6. That this be synod's response to Overture 16 and the communications from Calvin University on this matter.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 2025 recognized the progress that has been made by the Calvin University Board of Trustees in clarifying faculty expectations related to confessional alignment.
- b. Calvin's increased emphasis on faculty development regarding confessional alignment serves as a model from which all churches could benefit (see Appendix A for the Calvin University syllabi for first- and second-year faculty, p. 757).
- c. The process for long-term faculty appointments emphasizes confessional understanding and alignment, with the expectation that "indefinite exceptions" will be rare, theologically rooted, and subject to approval by the Calvin University Board of Trustees.
- d. The Calvin University Board of Trustees needs more time to implement its new development process for confessional alignment by its faculty, as outlined by Calvin University and commended by Synod 2025 (see Appendix B, p. 761).

—*Adopted*

Rev. Josh Van Drunen, chair, prays for Calvin Theological Seminary and Calvin University and their presidents.

ARTICLE 80

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 73.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services I, Rev. Alex Snider reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overtures 7-9

A. Materials

1. Overture 7: Restore the Previous Gravamen Policy, pp. 340-42
2. Overture 8: Concerning Confessional-Revision Gravamina, pp. 342-44
3. Overture 9: Amend Gravamen Regulations to Clarify Confessional Difficulty, pp. 344-55

B. Preamble

Our committee was very aware of the need for churches to have a wise pastoral response on behalf of councils toward members who are uncertain about the CRC's expectations for confessional alignment and where they fall within those expectations. However, we do not believe that reverting back to a previous process or changing the current reading of Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a, as suggested, would add clarity. In fact, doing so might introduce more questions.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod remind councils and classes of their call to discern each case as it comes to them, using good, pastoral wisdom as well as resources that

already exist, including Thrive, the Office of General Secretary, and Appendix N of the Council of Delegates Supplement for Synod 2026 (pp. 477-80).

— *Adopted*

2. That synod amend Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

Guidelines and Regulations re Gravamina

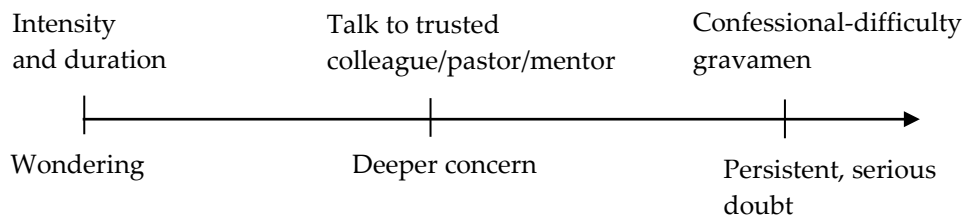
Synod declares that gravamina fall into two types:

1. A *confessional-difficulty gravamen*: a temporary gravamen in which an officebearer, subsequent to their ordination, develops and then expresses a ~~personal difficulty with~~ persistent, serious doubt regarding a point of doctrine/teaching contained in the confessions but does not have a settled conviction contrary to and does not call for a revision of the confessions.
2. A *confessional-revision gravamen*: a gravamen in which an officebearer expresses a settled conviction and makes a specific recommendation for revision of the confessions.

Ground: This clarifies the decisions and amendments made by Synod 2025 (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 671-72).

— *Adopted*

3. That synod adopt the following figure as advice to churches, councils, and individuals struggling in the discernment process.



— *Adopted*

4. That synod clarify that when we say the confessions “fully agree” with Scripture, we mean that all of the doctrines contained within the three forms of unity are a faithful teaching of God’s Word (see Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a).

— *Adopted*

5. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to update existing gravamen documentation to reflect the new information presented here.

— *Adopted*

6. That synod revise Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a, section C, 4-5 as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

4. If the gravamen is rejected by the classis, it may be ~~appealed~~ sent to synod; and when the constituted synod declares the matter to be legally before it for action, all the signers of the Covenant for Office-

bearers shall be free to discuss it together with the whole church until adjudicated by synod.

5. ~~Since the subscriber has the right of appeal from the judgment of a council to classis and from classis to synod,~~ The mere fact that the matter is being appealed ~~sent to a broader assembly~~ shall not be a reason for suspending or otherwise disciplining an officebearer, provided other provisions of the Church Order are observed.

Ground: This clears up some ambiguity as to how these matters should be handled when they come to synod.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 7, 8, and 9.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 81

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 59.)

Advisory Committee 6, Mission and Congregations, Rev. Ralph Wigboldus reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 21: Do Not Recognize Exclusively Digital Ministries as Churches

A. Materials

Overture 21, pp. 377-78

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to the overture to not recognize, at present, exclusively digital ministries as churches.

Note: Synod considers the possibility that this motion is out of order, and the assembly decides by vote to proceed with consideration of the above recommendation (Rules for Synodical Procedure III, A, 7).

Grounds:

1. Referring to exclusively digital ministries as churches has the potential to cause confusion among members and the public.
2. Synod has a responsibility to maintain the confessional understanding of the church and to guard the use of the term “church” within the CRCNA.
3. Synod 2025 indicated the following: "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" (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 699). In connection with this matter, Classis Wisconsin submitted an overture requesting a biblical and confessional study on the nature of a true church (Overture 33, pp. 411-14). Synod 2026 declined to appoint such a study (see Article 41 in these minutes). This indicates that Synod 2026 disagrees that further confessional study is

necessary. Therefore, this overture is in order, even though it addresses a topic addressed by last year's synod.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 91).

ARTICLE 82

Janelia Smiley (Red Mesa) prays in English and Navajo, and the morning session recesses at 12:31 p.m. The assembly will reconvene in the afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, June 17, 2026

Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 83

The afternoon session begins with Christian Sebastia (Rocky Mountain) and Rachel Bouwkamp, synod worship committee convener, calling delegates to worship with a reading of Revelation 5:13 in Spanish and English. They, along with Patrick Bigelow (Quinte), Ben Gresik (Eastern Canada), Caleb Dickson (Red Mesa), Matt Lin (Hackensack), and Melody Van Arragon (Office of General Secretary), lead delegates in singing "I Worship You," "Worthy," "I Surrender All," and "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" in Spanish and English.

ARTICLE 84

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 69.)

Advisory Committee 9, Task Forces, elder delegate Richard VanderWoude reporting, presents the following:

I. Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers; Response to Overtures 34-36

A. Materials

1. Report of the Task Force to Develop Church Order Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, pp. 293-314
2. Overture 34: Ensure Task Force Recommendations Do Not Conflict with Federal, Provincial, or State Laws, pp. 414-16
3. Overture 35: Defer Consideration of the Task Force Report on Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, pp. 416-20
4. Overture 36: Do Not Adopt Recommendations D and E of the Report on Procedures to Discipline Officebearers, pp. 420-23

B. Privilege of the Floor

Ken Benjamins, chair of the task force, and Barb Bulthuis, reporter

C. Preamble

We thank the task force for its work. For the church to function well, it requires a basic sense of trust, respect, and love by all. While the task force's mandate was to "develop Church Order procedures to discipline office-

bearers,” the deeper concern is how to sustain our covenantal relationships among local churches, classes, and synod. Discipline and accountability are not merely procedural but expressions of our shared covenant identity within the CRCNA.

As a covenant community within the kingdom of God, the CRCNA exists in the world but is not of it. Synod’s role is to shepherd the church’s ecclesiology—offering guidance, encouragement, and oversight—without becoming entangled in civil disputes. Because legal contexts vary across jurisdictions, each church and classis must assess how any recommendations intersect with local laws, a task beyond the scope of this report but essential to faithful covenant life.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod recommend the task force report to the churches as a helpful guide in the application of discipline by the major assemblies.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod affirm that although Synod 2024 made decisions regarding “limited suspension” (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 891-93), that precedent should not be deemed to create a new category of discipline (“limited suspension”) in addition to the already established categories of suspension and deposition.

Ground: The measures taken by synod were under unusual circumstances, in which the aspect of “limited” suspension was intended to implement a measure of grace, considering the short time frame within which decisions with major consequences for officebearers, councils, and congregations had been proposed and implemented. Continuing to maintain a category of “limited suspension” beyond the time frames set out by Synod 2024 would needlessly complicate the procedures of discipline available in the existing categories of suspension and deposition.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod add the following proposed supplement to Church Order Article 27-b (which reads, “The classis has the same authority over the council as the synod has over the classis”) to be ratified by Synod 2027:

Supplement, Article 27-b

When necessary for the well-being of the churches, classes, or the denomination at large, classes and synod may guide procedures of discipline at the levels of local councils and classes, respectively, even if not requested by the minor assembly. Major assemblies are expected to hold councils or classes within their constituency accountable to the ecclesiastical covenant implied in denominational membership.

The means of maintaining accountability may include the steps of special discipline described in Church Order Articles 82-84 and their supplements.

If a council chooses not to follow the decisions of classis or synod within a period of time determined by classis or synod, that assembly may declare the church as having de facto disaffiliated from the denomination. In this case, the steps described in Supplement, Article 38-f should be applied as closely as possible.

Grounds:

- a. Although the authority of the local council is original, the delegated authority of classis and synod carries weight and must be allowed to be used for purposes of accountability to our shared covenant.
- b. Accountability is one of the primary values of working together rather than solely as independent local churches. Councils accept this accountability when they choose to join the denomination.
- c. Councils that are not willing to live within the bounds of our shared covenant cannot rightly remain part of that covenant.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod adopt the following amendments to Church Order Article 83 and to Supplement, Articles 82-84 so that they read as follows (with additions indicated by underline), with changes to be ratified by Synod 2027:

Article 83

a. Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.

— Cf. Supplement, Article 83

b. In exceptional circumstances, when necessary for the well-being of a congregation, that congregation's classis or synod may suspend and depose officebearers even when such action has not been initiated by the council.

Supplement, Articles 82-84

The Admonition and Discipline of Officebearers

- a. An administrative leave may be imposed without prejudice by ~~the council~~ an assembly (ordinarily the council) in order to investigate allegations of deviation from sound doctrine or godly conduct. Compensation and benefits would continue, and any duties to be performed during the leave would be specified by the council. All suspensions and administrative leaves are temporary.
- b. *[unchanged]*
- c. *[unchanged]*
- d. *[unchanged]*
- e. Suspension/deposition of elders, deacons, and commissioned pastors
 - 1) The suspension or deposition of an elder, deacon, or commissioned pastor shall ordinarily be imposed by the council with the

concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.

2) *[unchanged]*

3) *[unchanged]*

f. Suspension/deposition of ministers

1) The suspension of a minister of the Word shall ordinarily be imposed by the council of the minister's church with the concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.

2) *[unchanged]*

3) *[unchanged]*

g. *[unchanged]*

h. *[unchanged]*

i. The ~~council of the church~~ assembly which deposed the minister shall declare the deposed minister eligible to receive a call upon the affirmative judgment of the classis which approved the deposition, together with the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Upon acceptance of a call, the previously deposed minister shall be reordained.

j. *[unchanged]*

Grounds:

- a. Officebearers have a high level of responsibility to the church and therefore a high level of accountability as well. In situations where officebearers are violating the covenant they agreed to follow, they must be held accountable for the good of the church.
- b. Leadership comes with the temptation to abuse power, as has often been demonstrated in churches across the world. Sometimes the dynamics are such that the officebearers inside a church are not able to see or appropriately address such situations.
- c. If the accountability of the local leadership is not addressed at the local church level, the broader assembly has an obligation to step in for the good of the congregation to avoid the perpetuation of neglect, abuse, or heresy.

— *Adopted*

5. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of this task force and dismiss the task force with thanks.

— *Adopted*

6. That synod declare its decision on the work of the task force to be its response to Overtures 34, 35, and 36.

— *Adopted*

The following negative vote is recorded: Kees Rystenbil (Eastern Canada).

The president asks Barb Bulthuis (reporter), Ken Benjamins (chair), Petr Kornilov (member), and Al Postma (staff adviser) to stand and be recognized for their work and assistance with the task force and advisory committee. Rev. William Sytsma, chair of the advisory committee, offers a prayer of thanks.

II. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section IV, C, 3), pp. 30, 43

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendation

That synod declare complete the Office of General Secretary mandate to prioritize resources to help classes and churches navigate the process of limited suspension (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 892), and that synod remove the requirement that classes report on the progress of such conversations.

Ground: Continuing to maintain the practice of “limited suspension” beyond the time frames set out by Synod 2024 would needlessly complicate the procedures of discipline available in the existing categories of suspension and deposition.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 75 (*Deferred from Synod 2025*): Evaluate Polity to Clarify Relationship of Assemblies (*Deferred from 2023*)

A. Materials

Overture 75, p. 329

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 75 (deferred originally from Synod 2023), which requests the appointment of a study committee to evaluate church polity in light of Scripture, theology, and history and to clarify the relationship between councils, classes, and synod.

Grounds:

1. The Church Order and Its Supplements already provide a comprehensive description of the authority and responsibilities of councils, classes, and synod, as well as the relationships among the broader assemblies.
2. Synod has addressed numerous polity questions in recent years through decisions related to confessional accountability, church discipline, disaffiliation, and ecclesiastical authority. These decisions provide substantial guidance for the denomination and should be allowed time to be implemented and evaluated before undertaking another denomination-wide study.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 85

The vice-president assumes the chair.

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 42.)

Advisory Committee 8, Administration and Finance, Rev. Benjamin Gresik reporting, presents the following:

COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs; Response to Overtures 26-29, 31, and Communication 1

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (section IV, F and Appendix E), pp. 32, 46-47, 94-112
2. Overture 26: Do Not Adopt Biennial Synod Proposal, pp. 392-93
3. Overture 27: Do Not Adopt Recommendation to Have Biennial Synods, pp. 393-96
4. Overture 28: Do Not Adopt Recommendation for Biennial Synod, p. 397
5. Overture 29: Reject Proposal that Synod Meet Biennially, pp. 398-99
6. Overture 31: Develop Resources to Facilitate Classis Mergers, p. 405
7. Communication 1, p. 424

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of executive staff as needed

C. Preamble

We recognize the recent decline in ministry-share revenue and the desire for better stewardship of the denomination's resources. There is a need to balance costs and revenue. The report of the COD task force gives us two recommendations to respond to this.

With respect to classis mergers or reorganization, Overture 31 describes an immediate need for resources around classis restructuring. The COD's report describes a broader restructuring that requires extensive and careful work. We recognize both of these needs.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod continue to meet annually.

Grounds:

- a. As our broadest assembly, synod has an important function in our ministry together.
- b. The potential cost savings of biennial synods balanced with the impact on synod's work are not enough to justify that change.
- c. It is a significant time in the life of our denomination when unity and strengthening are needed. Having synod continue to meet annually at this time is wise.
- d. Reformed polity is based on assemblies of delegated officebearers. Moving more responsibility onto the COD, where not all delegates are officebearers, would move further away from this.

- e. It is already difficult to cover the entire business of annual synods. Meeting less frequently would either require longer synods or diminish the quality of the work that synod can accomplish.

—Adopted

The president resumes the chair.

2. That synod establish a two-year task force to review the current classis structure and make recommendations about consolidations and/or overall restructuring to Synod 2028. The primary goal of any restructuring should be to ensure a healthy classis. The task force would consider multiple aspects of what makes a healthy classis, including geography, number of churches, overall membership metrics, ethnic-background considerations, and financial resources. This task force should consist of at least nine members, including someone from each of the six classical regions, classis leaders, someone with extensive synodical experience, someone with experience in organizational leadership, someone with a legal and/or financial background, a member of the COD Synodical Services Committee, and appropriate CRCNA staff, while also honoring the diversity of the denomination (age, gender, ethnicity).

Grounds:

- a. Any change to classis structure requires careful consideration and input from the classes. While the Church Order says that synod must approve the organization and redistricting of classes (Church Order, Art. 39), it does not outline how to do so. A task force is necessary to give this the proper attention and broadest perspective. Two years provides sufficient time to gather this input and complete the large scope of this work.
- b. Many classes are currently struggling to fill important roles and to engage in new ministry opportunities. Having fewer classes would increase the pool of resources (people and financial) for those roles and ministries, such as church planting and leadership development.
- c. While restructuring classes may reduce costs, the focus of restructuring should be on classis health.
- d. Several classes are already in the process of restructuring or considering doing so.

—Adopted

3. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to promptly work with classes to facilitate mergers or reorganization.

—Adopted

4. That this be synod's response to Overtures 26-29, 31, and Communication 1.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued in Article 87.)

ARTICLE 86

Synod enters into executive session.

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 78.)

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order, Rev. Harold Winter reporting, presents the following:

Response to Appeal 3

A. Materials

Appeal 3: Members of Sovereign Grace Community Church, Moreno Valley, California (not published), p. 586

B. Recommendation

Note: The following action is adopted for the public record:

That synod not sustain the appeal of the members of Sovereign Grace Community Church.

Ground: The appellants' case did not adequately show that Classis California South violated Church Order procedure or biblical foundations for ecclesiastical justice in the deposition of Pastor Gabriel Colangelo as set out in Supplement, Articles 82-84, e.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote is recorded: Tim Raakman (Niagara).

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 92.)

ARTICLE 87

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 85.)

Advisory Committee 8, Administration and Finance, Rev. Benjamin Gresik reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 30: Improve Financial Transparency and Clarity for Ministry-Share Funding Priorities

A. Materials

Overture 30, pp. 399-404

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, COD chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of executive staff as needed

C. Preamble

Overture 30 brings up conversation about the financial health of the denomination and the allocation of ministry shares. We recognize that this overture seeks to rebuild trust that has been lost as it relates to the ministry-share system and the way those funds are allocated.

In the present system of pledges for ministry shares, churches want to understand how their pledges are allocated and how effectively they are being used. While some financial information is available through the annual

Church Administration and Finance Guide (crcna.org/resources/church-resources/church-administration-finance) and through the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod*, more and clearer information is needed to answer some of the general questions of churches.

The ministry-share system provides an efficient way of raising funds and doing ministry together among churches of different sizes and in different places. Ministry-share funding also makes up part of the covenant relationship we have among churches. Churches need to be able to trust that those funds are used well. Improved transparency and communication will help churches increase trust.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to provide to the stated clerks of each classis complete financial statements and explanatory materials for the preceding fiscal year along with multiyear trend data by November 1 for distribution to the churches. This data would include, but is not limited to, the number of full-time equivalent employees by agency over time and the head count. The Office of General Secretary would also provide the current fiscal-year budget along with budgetary assumptions used.

Grounds:

- a. Financial transparency helps to build trust. Some of this information is already provided in the Church Administration and Finance Guide and in the *Acts of Synod*, but more information would create more transparency.
- b. Having all of this information before the end of the year would help councils to make decisions about their upcoming ministry-share pledges.
- c. Full-time equivalents together with a head count provide valuable metrics that help to evaluate the approximate size of the denominational offices.
- d. There are privacy concerns about disclosing individual salaries, but salary ranges will be shared.
- e. Work has been and is being done to make the denominational agencies more efficient, and this information would make that good work clearer.

—Adopted

2. That synod not accede to recommendation B of Overture 30.

Grounds:

- a. Allocating 50 percent of ministry shares “to be devoted to missions” (15 percent to ReFrame and 35 percent to Resonate) does not accomplish the goal of rebuilding trust.
- b. Each agency of the denomination has its own synodical mandate, which is intended to support the shared ministry of the gospel and

complement the milestones described in the *Our Journey* Ministry Plan.

- c. The structure of ministry shares among the revenue streams of the denomination has changed over our history. Designated giving now represents a much greater percentage of total denominational revenue than does ministry-share funding. While Resonate and ReFrame received 19.3 percent of ministry-share revenue, they received more than 50 percent of total revenue donated to the denomination and its agencies.
- d. If we devoted 50 percent of ministry-share dollars to Resonate and ReFrame, it would eliminate most of the other work we do as a denomination, including the shared services that Resonate and ReFrame rely on, which would greatly hinder their ministry.

—*Adopted*

3. That this be synod's response to Overture 30.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 32: Revise Ministry-Share Program to a Two-Tier System with Flexible Giving Options

A. Materials

Overture 32, pp. 406-10

B. Preamble

Since implementing "Ministry Shares Reimagined" in 2019 (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 110-18; *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 789-90), some issues regarding this program have appeared: churches are unsure of how much they should pledge, there is no accountability for church participation, and there are frustrations with denominational agencies and institutions. As giving to ministry shares has declined, those issues have been amplified. We appreciate the desire of the overture to address those issues and to ensure governance is properly funded. We do not believe the proposed two-tier system for ministry shares is the right decision, but we do believe those issues should be addressed.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod not accede to Overture 32.

Grounds:

- a. This proposed system would constitute a return to an earlier system that has proven to be ineffective (*Acts of Synod 1939*, pp. 71-72).
- b. A two-tier system does not reflect our covenantal way of working as a denomination or our polity.
- c. It is difficult to distinguish what are "essential denominational functions" and what are not.
- d. Reasons given for the decline in ministry shares do not necessarily require a new system of receiving ministry shares.

- e. Average attendance is not a good metric for determining financial ability.
- f. A required assessment unnecessarily penalizes a classis for an individual church that may not be able to come up with the proposed amount.
- g. The accountability is unnecessarily punitive rather than restorative.

— Adopted

2. That synod adopt, for organized churches, a range of 6-12 percent of their annual operating budget as guidance for their ministry-share pledge, keeping in mind the individual financial situations of churches.

Grounds:

- a. This provides a workable guidance for churches on how much to pledge.
- b. Percentages are positive because they reflect the way the Lord has blessed each church uniquely.
- c. A church deciding on a percentage gives them the ability to hold themselves accountable.
- d. Church plants, emerging churches, and organized churches with fewer than 45 members may have unique financial situations and should develop their own pledge amounts.

— Adopted

III. Pensions and Insurance

A. Materials

- 1. Pensions and Insurance report, pp. 161-67
- 2. Pensions and Insurance Supplement, pp. 508-13

B. Privilege of the floor

Roberta Vriesema, director of partnership administration, and John Bolt, executive director of CEB Services

C. Recommendations

1. That synod transfer oversight and administration of the retirement plans for unordained employees to the respective national ministry organizations, and authorize the Office of General Secretary to make any necessary changes to the regulations of the Ministers Pension Plan mandates to implement these decisions.

Grounds:

- a. Pension boards are primarily structured to oversee defined-benefit plans, not participant-directed defined-contribution plans such as the U.S. Employee Savings Plan and the Registered Retirement Savings Plan in Canada. The current structure has limited the CRCNA's ability to implement plan improvements and adapt to employee needs.

- b. Transitioning governance to the national ministry organizations would allow for more timely plan enhancements, stronger fiduciary oversight, and improved alignment with regulatory requirements.
- c. This change would bring our accountability structures into formal alignment with our current practices and eliminate confusion about reporting and authorization of changes to the retirement programs.
- d. This request recognizes synod's previous decisions regarding retirement plans for unordained employees of the CRCNA (*Acts of Synod 1951*, p. 69; *Acts of Synod 1964*, p. 21; *Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 685).

— *Adopted*

2. That synod thank Lloyd Bierma for his time of dedicated service with the Ministers Pension Plan.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod receive and affirm the following binational plan changes as forwarded by the MPF Trustees:

- a. The action of the pension trustees to establish the target for a combination of governmental benefits and the amount provided by the plans as "full benefit" for a "normal career" to be approximately 75-85 percent of the sum of the final average salary and the average housing allowance applicable in the year of retirement.

Grounds:

- 1) This level of income replacement is judged by actuaries and others knowledgeable in the field as the level needed to sustain a reasonable level of postretirement needs.
- 2) The recommended percentage is consistent with the norms generally accepted by professional advisers practicing in the area of retirement planning.
- b. The action of the pension trustees to establish a funding and benefits policy and definition.

Ground: This recognizes the principles that have long guided the pension trustees in their assessment of the plan's operations.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod receive and affirm the U.S. Pension Plan changes as forwarded by the U.S. MPF Trustees, including the revised 2027 church and participant contribution amounts and the changes to the 403(b)(9) plan as described.

— *Adopted*

5. That synod receive and affirm the Canada Pension plan changes as outlined, including final average salary adjustment, dynamic pensioner adjustment, and contribution holiday.

— *Adopted*

6. That synod accept the above actions (Recommendations 3-5) as fulfilling the requests of Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 811-12).

— *Adopted*

7. That synod receive for information the updated portfolio balance valuations as of December 31, 2025.

— *Adopted*

8. That synod receive for information the decision of the pension trustees regarding the final average cash salaries to be used in the year 2027 by the pension plans in the application of its benefit formula.

— *Adopted*

9. That synod reassign oversight of the employee benefits programs available through Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) and the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA) to the respective national ministry organizations, and instruct the Council of Delegates to make appropriate arrangements with the U.S. Ministry Board for attending to the CRC's interest in RBA relative to its work with church-support services in the United States.

Grounds:

- a. Functionally, the pension trustees and insurance programs have operated under this understanding for some time (see *Agenda for Synod 2001*, pp. 44, 204; *Agenda for Synod 2013*, p. 172; *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 446), though synod has never taken formal action to amend its earlier instruction assigning governance of the CRC's insurance program to the Pension Trustees (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 38; *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 668).
- b. Employee benefits programs are a function of human resources management that do not require the organizational involvement of synod (*Agenda for Synod 2001*, p. 204).
- c. The CRC has a significant investment in RBA as one of its founding members (*Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 446), and it is vital that a CRC entity exercise "fiduciary responsibility" for the denominational assets invested in RBA as well as for the ways RBA's policies and practices affect CRC ministries.
- d. A clear reporting structure within the COD framework provides better support to RBA in its mission to support churches with insurance services and advice that reflect the ministry commitments of CRC congregations and agencies.

— *Adopted*

The assembly expresses thanks to Roberta Vriesema, director of partnership administration, and to the finance staff for their work.

ARTICLE 88

Mitzie Begay (Red Mesa) prays in English and Navajo, and the afternoon session recesses at 5:05 p.m. The assembly will reconvene in the evening at 6:05 p.m.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 17, 2026

Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 89

To open the evening session, Cedric Parsels (Illiana), Bethany Besteman (Hackensack), Rachel Boukamp (worship convener), Brandon Haan (Grandville), Dennis Hughey (Grandville), and Jean Gomes (Grandville) lead the assembly in singing “How Great Is Our God” and in the reading of Belgic Confession Article 1. Rachel Bouwkamp offers a prayer.

ARTICLE 90

The vice president assumes the chair.

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 48.)

Advisory Committee 7, Ecumenical and Historical Matters, deacon delegate Lucas tenBrink reporting, presents the following:

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (majority report)

A. Materials

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee report (section V, A and Appendix), pp. 219, 223-28

B. Privilege of the floor

Shirley Roels, chair of the EIRC

The chair also grants Rev. Philip Peacock, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the privilege of addressing synod.

C. Preamble

Until recently in the history of our denomination, the approach to ecumenicity has been to seek relationships primarily with those most similar to us in biblical theology and Reformed confessions. Synod 2000 adopted a new ecumenical charter, which was revised in 2006 and 2010, with the approach toward a broader approach to these relationships. This was to allow learning from and collaboration with other Christian churches at home and abroad. In 2010 the CRCNA was instrumental in the creation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), a merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). In response to Overture 24 (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, pp. 388-92), the EIRC was prompted by Synod 2025 to evaluate our status in the WCRC.

The CRCNA is not required to hold and promote the positions of the WCRC. However, we are a paying member within this group, and our membership here may be misleading others by lending credibility to it. The core of ecumenical relationships is as noted in the EIRC charter, that “Passion for the truth of Christ calls us to reject all forms of unity that compromise unequivocal witness to Jesus Christ.”

The WCRC in its materials shares some troubling perspectives in what it sees as justice issues:

- The WCRC undermines the infallibility of Scripture when in the 2024 Gender Justice Audit (wcrc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Gender-Audit-2024-Report-2.pdf), on pages 11-12, they write about 1 Corinthians 11:7, “Pauline interpretation is not a reflection of divine truth, but rather a social construction rooted in the cultural patriarchy of Paul’s Greco-Roman context. [A writer] states, ‘Paul’s perception . . . excludes a woman from God’s image . . . a social construction that distorts the perception of imago Dei’ (Mwaniki, 2009:2). In other words, Paul’s cultural influences—such as Greek philosophy and Roman familial structures—led him to interpret women’s identity and worth through a subordinate lens, rather than the egalitarian vision of Genesis.”
- In the 2021 Gender Justice Policy statement (wcrc-webserver.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GenderJusticePolicy-web.pdf), on page 14, the WCRC makes a recommendation: “For Member Churches: We invite member churches to share custodianship and the responsibility for implementing the Gender Justice Policy and call upon them to act by: . . . Commit [*sic*] to a process of study and discernment over the issues of sexuality, sexual pleasure, fertility, reproductive rights, and the right to choose.” The WCRC is promoting the practice of abortion.
- In the 2025 Public Witness Report (wcrc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Public-Witness-Report-Final.pdf), on page 4, among other points, the WCRC articulates abortion as a justice issue: “Reproductive rights are an essential dimension of the integrity of human life. Within the broader framework of reproductive justice, these rights affirm the sacredness of bodily autonomy and the well-being of families and communities. Limited access to contraception, safe abortions, education, and accurate information, along with a lack of health resources and denial of care during pregnancies and postpartum, lead to preventable deaths. These factors reinforce systemic inequities in reproductive health.”
- In “From Hegemony to Partnership” (wcrc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/From_Hegemony_to_Partnership.pdf), the unbiblical position is shared that God is only fully represented in the diversity of religious experience: “The implication being that God is best represented by diversity, the whole diversity of the world in terms of different cultures, genders, races, castes, sexual orientation and religious experience only can represent who God is. This means that no culture, gender, race, caste, sexual orientation or religious experience can claim superiority over another. It is only together that all of them represent who God is.”

This is not the full extent of concerns that we have discovered in regard to the WCRC; these are only a representative sample.

Some have argued that our membership in the WCRC gives us a presence in the worldwide conversation of Christians, and that if we leave the WCRC, we will lose our witness on the broader stage and will be voiceless before the world. However, we are not here for our place among the world, we are here to serve the glory of God, with our eyes on him.

It is written in 1 Corinthians 5:11-13:

But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”

And written in 2 John 7, 10 (ESV) we have the following:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. . . . If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

These passages and others contribute to the principle of separating in communion from those who continue in unrepentant sin and false teaching. While there are a number of faithful churches in the WCRC with whom we’d like to maintain a relationship, the organization as a whole promotes many unbiblical positions.

This body is called the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The positions and the materials promoted by this organization are not Christian. Let us depart from them.

D. Recommendation

That synod *not* affirm the continued membership of the CRCNA in the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Grounds:

1. The EIRC subcommittee themselves raised the following concerns about continued membership in the WCRC:
 - There appears to be less emphasis within the WCRC on the importance of the Reformed confessions, raising questions about confessional accountability.
 - Some concern was expressed about a reduced focus on clear gospel proclamation, emphasizing the saving work of Christ on the cross, received by faith alone through grace alone to the glory of God alone.
 - There is a perception that confessional Reformed perspectives may not always have adequate space in certain theological or ethical discussions within the WCRC.

- The justice issues highlighted in WCRC statements were viewed as appearing selective, arbitrary, or shaped by ideological frameworks rather than a consistently articulated Reformed theological rationale.
 - The WCRC's participation in and endorsement of certain ecumenical agreements raised questions about potential tensions with the CRCNA's confessional commitments.
 - The financial cost of membership was noted as a practical concern.
2. We are already members of the World Reformed Fellowship, a worldwide Reformed ecumenical body of churches from 61 countries.
 3. Some of the WCRC's stated views on justice issues are contrary to Scripture and compromise our witness and mission.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report is presented as information, elder delegate Ren Tubergen reporting:

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (minority report)

A. Materials

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee report, pp. 215-228

B. Recommendations

1. That synod affirm the continued membership of the CRCNA in the World Communion of Reformed Churches for the next three years, evaluating our leavening influence among the communion of churches.
2. That synod communicate the goal to minimize the financial cost of membership during the time of discernment to its lowest amount allowed.
3. That synod instruct the EIRC to report back to Synod 2029 with a recommendation to remain with or leave the WCRC, with grounds.

Grounds:

- a. The EIRC did their own evaluation of "pros" and "cons" on remaining in the WCRC and came to the conclusion that staying was the better choice. We agree but want to guide and hold accountable this relationship for the coming years.
- b. The WCRC provides the broadest worldwide level of ecumenical engagement with Reformed denominations, many of whom are already ecumenical partners of the CRCNA.
- c. Continued participation in the WCRC allows the CRCNA to offer a distinct confessional voice, influence, and contribution to and among the denominations in the WCRC.
- d. The CRCNA has contributed significantly to the membership and worship planning of this ecumenical body since the creation of the WCRC in 2010.

- e. The WCRC provides an important Reformed Christian forum in which to hear and respond to worldwide needs for Christian witness, cooperation, and mutual support.
- f. The WCRC is currently experiencing a season of transition under new leadership. We also recognize the turnover of new members in the EIRC over the past year, after the overture from Classis Illiana in 2025 (*Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 389-92) was presented.
- g. Allowing additional time for the recently appointed general secretary of the WCRC to establish priorities and direction provides a prudent opportunity to assess whether meaningful reform and influence remain possible.
- h. The EIRC has itself experienced significant renewal in membership and has expressed a desire to engage the WCRC intentionally as a faithful confessional Reformed presence within the communion.
- i. Remaining within the WCRC enables the CRCNA to continue serving as a leavening influence among member churches by offering a biblically grounded and confessionally Reformed witness. Withdrawal would remove that voice from ongoing conversations and relationships at a time when faithful engagement may be most needed.
- j. A three-year period of continued membership provides a reasonable time frame for the CRCNA to evaluate whether its participation is bearing fruit and whether its influence within the WCRC is advancing the purposes for which membership is maintained.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendation of the advisory committee's majority report.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (majority report)

C. Recommendation

That synod *not* affirm the continued membership of the CRCNA in the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Grounds:

1. The EIRC subcommittee themselves raised the following concerns about continued membership in the WCRC:
 - There appears to be less emphasis within the WCRC on the importance of the Reformed confessions, raising questions about confessional accountability.
 - Some concern was expressed about a reduced focus on clear gospel proclamation, emphasizing the saving work of Christ on the cross, received by faith alone through grace alone to the glory of God alone.
 - There is a perception that confessional Reformed perspectives may not always have adequate space in certain theological or ethical discussions within the WCRC.

- The justice issues highlighted in WCRC statements were viewed as appearing selective, arbitrary, or shaped by ideological frameworks rather than a consistently articulated Reformed theological rationale.
 - The WCRC's participation in and endorsement of certain ecumenical agreements raised questions about potential tensions with the CRCNA's confessional commitments.
 - The financial cost of membership was noted as a practical concern.
2. We are already members of the World Reformed Fellowship, a worldwide Reformed ecumenical body of churches from 61 countries.
 3. Some of the WCRC's stated views on justice issues are contrary to Scripture and compromise our witness and mission.

—Adopted

After the discussion, the first clerk offers a prayer in English and Spanish regarding the vote.

The following negative votes are registered: Bethany Besteman (Hackensack), Jeff Fisher (Grand Rapids East), Willem Delleman (British Columbia Northwest), Andrew Aukema (Alberta North), Kees Rystenbil (Eastern Canada), Jason Crossen (Huron), Christopher 't Hoen (Northcentral Iowa), and Gary van Leeuwen (Alberta South/Saskatchewan).

The president resumes the chair, extends his thanks for Rev. Peacock's presence at synod, and offers a prayer.

ARTICLE 91

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 81.)

Advisory Committee 6, Mission and Congregations, Rev. Ralph Wigboldus reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section III, G; Appendix A), pp. 28, 34-36, 47-55

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod not accede to the COD's recommendations E-G (pp. 34-36), but instead dismiss the Dignity Team and the review team with thanks for the work done in response to instructions from previous synods.

Ground: There is no need for additional bodies that duplicate the functions of other denominational groups.

—Adopted

The following negative votes are registered: Jason Crossen (Huron), Kevin Boss (Northcentral Iowa), Merick Roragen (Pacific Northwest), and Doug Fakkema (Pacific Northwest).

2. That synod remind all of our church assemblies, committees, and boards of the principles of responsible use of authority that ought to shape our ministry and actions, especially as they relate to shaping a culture of dignity and respect, and to take greater responsibility for these matters.

Ground: The assemblies are the rightful place for such leadership in the denomination, as embodied in the ideals for godly use of authority identified in our Covenant for Officebearers and our Code of Conduct for Ministry Leaders.

— *Adopted*

II. Addressing Accountability in Pastoral Misconduct

A. Materials

Addressing Accountability in Pastoral Misconduct report, pp. 241-54

B. Recommendations

Note: Recommendations 1-6 were considered and approved together by a single vote.

1. That synod not adopt the proposed changes to the Church Order Supplement and related documents at this time, and instead instruct the Office of General Secretary, working with Thrive, to report back to Synod 2027 with *only* those recommended changes that are mere circumstantial updates to documentary language, including updates needed to reflect current terminology, denominational structures, and agency assignments.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 2024 directed the Office of General Secretary to study these matters and report to Synod 2026 on how they may be addressed *within* Reformed polity. However, the proposed solutions do not adequately conform to the principle reflected in Church Order Article 27-a—namely, that the authority of local councils is original while the authority of major assemblies is delegated. By requiring local councils to establish new standing practices not clearly grounded in Scripture, the Church Order, or demonstrated historic Reformed ecclesiastical practice, the recommendations exceed what may properly be imposed upon councils by a broader assembly.
- b. The proposed changes to the Church Order Supplement and other documents vary substantially in nature. Some are minor circumstantial updates to documentary language in order to reflect current terminology and agency assignments or simple reminders, while others would significantly affect the CRCNA's Reformed polity practices. These materially distinct matters should not be combined into a single recommendation but should be separated so that synod may deliberate and vote on each according to its own merits.

- c. While there is much merit in the proposed recommendations, there are inconsistencies between the wording of the recommendations and the edits of the supplements in appendices A and B (e.g., the proposed addition of “ungodly conduct” is too ambiguous).
- d. The task force addressed matters that went beyond the scope of their mandate.
- e. Precision and consistency in language and processes are essential for protecting the safety and dignity of everyone involved.

— Adopted

2. That synod remind churches holding the credentials of noncongregational ministers (including chaplains, missionaries, professors, pastors loaned to other congregations, and those in other specialized ministry positions) that the councils of those churches hold primary responsibility for supervising the doctrine and life of such pastors (Church Order, Art. 13-b), and that synod call particular attention to the requirement that the supervising council has a duty to respond to allegations of abuse even if those allegations arise in the context of another institution or denomination (see Church Order Supplement, Art. 8, D, 9; Supplement, Art. 13-b, B; Supplement, Art. 42-b, b). While such a response may take place in coordination with the other institution or denomination, ultimate responsibility for decisions of discipline lies with the CRC assemblies.

Ground: A council that accepts this responsibility must ensure it possesses the means to provide the oversight promised.

— Approved

3. That synod encourage churches, as part of their pastoral search process, to conduct a background check on pastoral candidates before presenting a nomination to the congregation for approval.

— Approved

4. That synod remind churches of the resources available through the denomination, particularly through Thrive, to support the assemblies’ response to allegations of abuse, and that synod strongly advise councils and classes to make use of these resources when dealing with such matters.

— Approved

5. That synod express its deep appreciation for the councils and classes who have sought to faithfully address allegations of abuse against a church leader under their supervision, and that synod pray for the Spirit’s wisdom and clear guidance for all officebearers who may find themselves confronting such difficult situations in the future.

— Approved

6. That synod thank Thrive staff for their work in supporting churches and classes as they seek to prevent and respond to incidents of abuse by church leaders, and that synod accept this response as a fulfillment of the instruction of Synod 2024.

— Approved

ARTICLE 92

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 86.)

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order, Rev. Harold Winter reporting, presents the following:

Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Supplement (sections IV, J, 1; IV, K, 2), p. 433, 436-37

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod no longer require the COD and the Office of General Secretary to produce a *Yearbook* in printed form and focus instead on alternate ways to make the material available electronically.

Grounds:

- a. The growing availability of digital materials no longer makes it financially viable or practically necessary to continue the publication of an annual resource such as the *Yearbook*, which was first mandated in 1880 and adopted as an official publication of the CRC in 1930 (*Acts of Synod 1880*, p. 463; *Acts of Synod 1930*, pp. 17-18).
- b. The responsibility for overseeing the publication of the *Yearbook* was given to the Synodical Interim Committee, the predecessor of the COD (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 75; *Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 620-22).

—*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to provide for the public distribution of denominational statistics formerly collected in the *Yearbook* by requesting that churches continue to provide membership information as well as records related to churches, ministers, classis personnel, institutions approved for offerings, and classis funding for counseling services for abuse survivors; and that synod authorize the Office of General Secretary to make this data available to the churches in methods that support reasonable access and timeliness.

Grounds:

- a. Churches are already required to keep complete records of membership statistics (Church Order, Art. 68), so requesting that this information be collected for denominational uses places only a minimal reporting burden on councils.
- b. Past synods have specifically requested that statistical information on churches, classes, and other denominationally related materials be made available publicly (*Acts of Synod 1898*, p. 40; *Acts of Synod 1910*, p. 59; *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 797), while also recognizing that de-

cisions about the specific information to be included in such publications are not matters that should concern our highest ecclesiastical assembly (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 11; *Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 582).

- c. Such membership records continue to be actively used in informing denominational conversations and in decision making.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod assign responsibility for the nominations of Judicial Code Committee members to the JCC rather than to the COD, and authorize the general secretary to update any governance documents to reflect this change in procedure.

Grounds:

- a. This would bring the JCC's practice into alignment with that of the other standing committees and would remove the extra step of COD approval for JCC nominees.
- b. Synod 1990 removed this responsibility from the JCC because the committee met only infrequently at the time (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 633). However, the availability of online meetings now allows the JCC to meet at least annually.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 100.)

ARTICLE 93

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 60.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services II, Rev. John Lee reporting, presents the following:

Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates Supplement (section III, M), pp. 431-32

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Background

Synod 2024 approved the recommendations of the Global Vision Team report (*Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 807-9), which provided vision and advice for churches and classes that are engaging with leaders and congregations outside North America. An implementation team, chaired by Rev. John C. Medendorp, is currently working on an inventory of resources and is discussing with various stakeholders within and outside the CRC how to assess the barriers and opportunities to implement this vision. Through the general secretary, the team has been providing updates on its work to the COD and intends to bring recommendations to the COD by the time of its February 2027 meeting for potential adoption by Synod 2027.

D. Recommendation

That synod take note of the ongoing work of the Global Vision Implementation Team, a report from which is expected before Synod 2027.

Ground: This work will not be processed by the COD until February 2027.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 101.)

ARTICLE 94

A delegate introduces the following motion from the floor:

That synod instruct the COD to work with the Dignity Team over the next year to bring all of the ongoing work of the Dignity Team to a conclusion.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 95

A delegate introduces the following motion from the floor with regard to Appendix E: COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 94-112) and the report from Advisory Committee 8, Administration and Finance:

That synod instruct the COD to provide a report to Synod 2027 that proposes ways in which our denominational agencies (Thrive, ReFrame Ministries, Resonate Global Mission, etc.) could further reduce costs.

Grounds:

- a. The COD has pointed out that our costs need to be reduced (*Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 474-78).
- b. Synod 2027 would benefit from seeing cost-saving recommendations as these relate to our denominational agencies (Thrive, ReFrame, Resonate, etc.) just as Synod 2026 benefitted from seeing cost-saving recommendations as these related to governance costs (*Agenda for Synod 2026*, Appendix E: COD Task Force to Review Governance Costs, pp. 94-112).

—*Tabled*

Note: Synod returns to this motion the next day (see Article 99), but it is not taken from the table.

ARTICLE 96

Patrick Bigelow (Quinte) closes in prayer in English and French, and the evening session recesses at 8:45 p.m. The assembly will reconvene in the morning at 8:15 a.m.

THURSDAY MORNING, June 18, 2026

Fourteenth Session

ARTICLE 97

To open the morning session, synod worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp leads delegates in a responsive greeting in English, Spanish, and Korean. Psalm 150 is read, and delegates respond by singing “All Creatures of Our God and King” and “Rejoice in All Your Works,” led by Ralph Mueller (Thornapple Valley), David Dick (Lake Superior), Zack Flipse (Wisconsin), Ben Gresik (Eastern Canada), Roberta Vriesema (director of partnership administration), and Melody Van Arragon (Office of General Secretary). Rev. Jon Hoekema, prayer shepherd, reads from Psalm 8 and offers reflection questions for silent prayer. The assembly views a video about Mosaic House church in Edmonton, Alberta, receives a blessing, and sings “Lord, Our Lord, Your Glorious Name” to close the worship time.

The roll call indicates that all are present.

ARTICLE 98

The president offers the following on behalf of the officers of synod:

- The officers express their thanks for the synod office staff.
- A note is read from Veenstra Theological Seminary in Donga, Nigeria (seminary of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, a church in communion with the CRCNA), expressing appreciation for prayers for the churches in Nigeria and wishing the CRCNA good deliberations at synod.

The vice president reports on a meeting following the previous evening’s session with Rev. Philip Peacock (WCRC), in which the vice president apologized on behalf of synod for the ways it may not have done all it could to guard and protect Rev. Peacock’s good name. Rev. Peacock graciously accepted the apology and told the vice president that while we are no longer in communion, we will always be in fellowship. Any breach that may be presently experienced will forever be resolved as we dwell forever with the Lord.

ARTICLE 99

A delegate moves that synod take the motion from Article 95 off the table.

—Motion to remove from the table defeated

ARTICLE 100

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 92.)

Advisory Committee 3, Church Order, Rev. Harold Winter reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section IV, C, 1, a), pp. 29, 41-42

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendation

That synod rescind its decision on Recommendation 5 in Article 78 of these minutes (*Acts of Synod 2026*, p. 689) and take up the following motion in its place from the *Agenda for Synod 2026*, pp. 41-42:

That synod approve the following updates to Church Order Supplement, Article 32-d, section D and Supplement, Article 38-c.

Supplement, Article 32-d, section D

~~*D. Model General Operating Bylaw Number 1 for Churches in Canada*~~

~~A model bylaw for churches in Canada has been prepared and approved by synod. A copy may be obtained from the Office of General Secretary or from the CRC website—crena.org and search “Bylaw Canada.”~~

Supplement, Article 38-c

~~Synod 2016 endorsed a revised Affiliation Process and Procedure for congregations that desire to affiliate with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The process and procedure document for such affiliation as described in the Candidacy Committee’s “Journey Toward Ordination” document is included in the “Manual for Synodical Deputies” and has been provided for every stated clerk of classis.~~

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 101

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 93.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services II, Rev. John Lee reporting, presents the following:

I. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section IV, C, 2 and Appendix B), pp. 29-30, 42-43, 55-80

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Background and overview of changes

Synod 2025 approved a review of the Rules for Synodical Procedure with regard to “shifts in the nature of study committees, the role of the convening church of synod, the duties of officers, and issues of consistency between the Rules for Synodical Procedure and other governance documents” (*Acts of Synod 2025*, p. 608).

The Office of General Secretary conducted this review in the summer and fall of 2025, inviting COD members to provide further input as well. A number of changes have been proposed to the document, including the following:

- Elimination of the expectation that synod provide opportunity for ministry-related learning (Introduction, A, 2, c)
- Clearer explanation of the role of the convening church and the process for electing officers (II, B)
- Updated description of the work of the clerks of synod (III, C)
- Reorganization of the material related to advisers to synod (IV, B)
- Removal of the parliamentary position (IV, B, 2, h)
- Reordering of the material related to matters legally before synod (former section VI), including the adjustment of deadlines for the submission of study reports
- Clarification of the status of the Program Committee report (former section VII, A, 5)
- Updated description of the work of the advisory committees (former section VII, B)
- New procedures for the appointment and work of study committees (former section VII, D)
- Removal of the Judicial Code from the Rules for Synodical Procedure (former section VII, F)
- Removal of various references to past synodical decisions supporting particular rules

Some of the updates propose a shift in practices previously mandated by synod. Thus, adoption of the revised Rules for Synodical Procedure as currently proposed would, in effect, also revise some existing instructions of synod, as noted below with grounds for revision.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod modify the COD's proposed amendments to the Rules for Synodical Procedure as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

- a. Amend Section II, B, 3 to read as follows:

Plan and lead the Sunday Synodical Worship Service with support from the Office of General Secretary and other denominational agencies. This should use local congregations as much as possible in the planning and implementation of the service, reflecting our ~~diversity~~ unity in Christ from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9). This service will include communion and an offering for denominational ministries and will be held at a location determined by the Office of General Secretary dependent on the location of synod for any given year. All members of synod are expected to attend this worship service.

Grounds:

- 1) We value both unity and diversity.
 - 2) We are restoring the expectation of attendance at the Sunday Synodical Worship Service from the original version, noting the importance of worshiping together on this day of rest.
- b. Amend Section IV, B, 1 to read as follows:
1. Classifications of Advisers to Synod
 - a. Ordinarily, up to seven faculty advisers, but no less than five, shall be selected from among the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary. The primary criteria for the selection of all faculty advisers shall be their knowledge and expertise as it pertains to the issues on the agenda of a particular synod. The following general appointment procedures shall be followed:
 - 1) The general secretary shall, in consultation with the Program Committee of synod, at the earliest possible date determine the theological expertise that will be needed for any given year, and in consultation with the administration of Calvin Theological Seminary, select faculty members with the particular expertise needed for that year. The administration of Calvin Theological Seminary shall, in consultation with the general secretary of the CRCNA, identify the faculty members from among available faculty. ~~available to serve as advisers to synod in a particular year, depending on the needs of synod and the expertise of the faculty members.~~

Grounds:

- 1) The amendment provides needed flexibility to synod in determining the number of necessary faculty advisers.
 - 2) The amendment eliminates wordiness.
- c. Eliminate references to “Task Forces” throughout the Rules for Synodical Procedure (I, A, 1, d; title of VI, E; VIII, L, 1).

Ground: The designation of “Task Forces” is eliminated by the proposed changes.

- d. Amend Section VI, A, 1, a:

The Program Committee shall be composed of the officers of the previous synod, and the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church, ~~and~~ the director of ecclesiastical governance shall serve as an ex officio, nonvoting member.

Grounds:

- 1) The director of ecclesiastical governance plays a vital role in formulating the agenda for synod, and this work would be enhanced by the official addition of this role to the Program Committee.

- 2) This creates consistency with the essential supportive role of the director of ecclesiastical governance at synod.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod adopt changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure as presented in Appendix B and amended by the advisory committee above, noting that these changes effectively revise the following earlier synodical decisions:

- a. That synod no longer be served by a parliamentarian appointed each year (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 810).

Grounds:

- 1) Changes at Calvin Theological Seminary have resulted in there no longer being a “faculty adviser for church polity,” requiring additional time and expense from what was originally envisioned in the annual appointment of a parliamentarian.
- 2) Although past parliamentarians have provided helpful advice on procedural matters, such a role is not strictly necessary “to assist synod in doing its work efficiently” (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 810).
- 3) Since 2019, when the parliamentarian position was first adopted, other staff roles in the Office of General Secretary have taken on some of the responsibilities initially covered by the parliamentarian.

- b. That the deadline for distribution of study committee reports be December 1 rather than November 1 (see *Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 444).

Ground: A later deadline would give study committees more time to complete their work without significantly affecting the opportunity of churches to comment on such materials. The distribution date was December 1 prior to 1989, and advances in digital communication make it easier to forward study committee reports to the churches today than in previous years.

- c. That synod clarify the nature of the Program Committee report in keeping with recent practice regarding its use as a confidential document prior to its consideration by synod. This change would protect the deliberative nature of synod in line with concerns about pressure on delegates in the forms of outside lobbying and social media (see *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 811, 816).

Ground: In keeping with concerns expressed by Synod 2019 about pressure on delegates in the forms of outside lobbying (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 816) and social media (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 811), such a step would help to protect the deliberative nature of synod.

- d. That synod no longer distinguish between study committees and task forces but, rather, specify the nature of each study committee membership and timeline (see *Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 827-29).

Ground: Recent synods have taken an increasingly flexible approach to the appointment of study committees, task forces, teams, and staff consultations, rendering these rules difficult to apply. This change would allow synod greater latitude in determining the composition and rules under which the groups it commissions to study a certain subject ought to function, as was the case in our earlier history as a denomination.

- e. That synod remove the text of the Judicial Code that currently appears in the Rules for Synodical Procedure. The complete Judicial Code is included in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c (see *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 55).

Ground: This change would reduce the potential for duplication or conflict with the full version of the Judicial Code provided in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c.

A motion is made and adopted to table the above discussion in order to consider the following motion presented by a delegate:

That synod strike the removal of the parliamentary from the proposed update to the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

—*Adopted*

Synod then returns to the revised main motion:

2. That synod adopt changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure as presented in Appendix B (ed. note: *with the exception of those related to the removal of the parliamentary*) and amended by the advisory committee above, noting that these changes effectively revise the following earlier synodical decisions. . . .

[*Note:* See 2, b-e above for the remaining recommended changes.]

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 12: Remove Mention of Contemporary Testimony from the Covenant for Officebearers (majority report)

A. Materials

Overture 12, pp. 357-59

B. Preamble

This overture names two areas of possible confusion surrounding the mention of Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony in the Covenant for Officebearers. First, it contends that referring to this contemporary testimony in the same document as the binding creeds and confessions creates misunderstanding of its place in our communal covenant. Second, the overture contends that there is additional confusion related to the fact that both Our World Belongs to God and the Belhar Confession are classified as contemporary testimonies (*Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 699-700).

While we are not convinced by its arguments regarding the first confusion, we judge that the second confusion is real. Multiple synods have consistently, as recently as 2025, said that the Belhar Confession does not belong in

the Covenant for Officebearers. They have also consistently affirmed that Our World Belongs to God does. This creates confusion as to why two documents in the same category serve different functions. Our World Belongs to God and the Belhar Confession are also documents with very different historic provenance, theological nature, and ecclesiastical function. Unfortunately, Overture 12 presents the wrong solution. Rather than remove Our World Belongs to God, we believe that a better solution would be for a future synod to reconsider the wisdom of Synod 2017's linking of the two documents in the same category of contemporary testimony.

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 12.

Grounds:

1. The overture provides insufficient new grounds to warrant the reversal of previous synods' inclusion of Our World Belongs to God in our Covenant for Officebearers.
2. Paragraphs 4 and 5 of the current Covenant for Officebearers sufficiently distinguish the different function of Our World Belongs to God in comparison to that of the Three Forms of Unity.
3. It is appropriate for the Covenant for Officebearers to include the confessional documents that bind us, as well as a testimony that inspires us.
4. Recommendation B of Overture 12 is out of order. Synods cannot bind future synodical decisions.
5. Overture 12 names a real confusion related to the function of contemporary testimonies in the CRCNA. Unfortunately Overture 12 presents the wrong solution. Removing Our World Belongs to God from the Covenant for Officebearers would be a remedy that would unnecessarily diminish its vital, widely shared, and longstanding role in our congregations and witness.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report regarding the response to Overture 12 is presented as information, Rev. Rob Golding reporting.

Response to Overture 12: Remove Mention of Contemporary Testimony from the Covenant for Officebearers (minority report)

A. Materials

Overture 12, pp. 357-59

B. Preamble

The minority committee values Our World Belongs to God (OWBTG) and does not want to reduce its status or use. We encourage local churches and councils to continue to use OWBTG as a valuable discipleship tool and an influential ecumenical and communal witness. Nothing that follows suggests or recommends the reduction of its practical use.

C. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overture 12, Recommendation A. Recommendation B, as noted in the majority report, is out of order.

Grounds:

1. The inclusion of Our World Belongs to God (OWBTG) in the Covenant for Officebearers (CFO) has confused ordinands as well as new members to the CRCNA. The CFO says that OWBTG is “a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context” (Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a, “Covenant for Officebearers”). The distinction between this “Reformed expression” that “forms and guides us” is insufficiently distinguished from our confessions, which are also said to be “Reformed expressions” that “direct the way we live in response to the gospel” (*Ibid.*). There is no legitimate semantic difference between a “current Reformed expression that forms and guides” and a “historic Reformed expression” that “direct[s].” We may classify these as different documents, but they are described using virtually the same terminology, causing confusion as to their authority.
2. The Belhar Confession is also classified as a contemporary testimony (*Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 699-700). However, it is not included in the Covenant for Officebearers. There is no stated reason for this. The fact that synod deliberately chose not to include the Belhar Confession in the CFO makes it seem to be in a category different from that of OWBTG, even though both are contemporary testimonies. This creates further confusion as to what exactly these documents are and how they function. This has led to many members’ erroneously thinking there are three categories of documents when there are only two—confessional and contemporary testimony.
3. Many CRC congregations are seeking to reorient their congregants toward a healthy appreciation of the Three Forms of Unity, which often fall into disuse. The inclusion of OWBTG may produce “information overload” to our congregations, who would benefit from having simple and succinct confessional documents to assist their growth in godliness.
4. This precedent could lead to the inclusion of other documents, to which officers are not required to subscribe, in the CFO.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to consideration of the recommendation of the advisory committee’s majority report.

Response to Overture 12: Remove Mention of Contemporary Testimony from the Covenant for Officebearers (majority report)

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 12.

Grounds:

1. The overture provides insufficient new grounds to warrant the reversal of previous synods' inclusion of Our World Belongs to God in our Covenant for Officebearers.
2. Paragraphs 4 and 5 of the current Covenant for Officebearers sufficiently distinguish the different function of Our World Belongs to God in comparison to that of the Three Forms of Unity.
3. It is appropriate for the Covenant for Officebearers to include the confessional documents that bind us, as well as a testimony that inspires us.
4. Part B of Overture 12 is out of order. Synods cannot bind future synodical decisions.
5. Overture 12 names a real confusion related to the function of contemporary testimonies in the CRCNA. Unfortunately Overture 12 presents the wrong solution. Removing Our World Belongs to God from the Covenant for Officebearers would be a remedy that would unnecessarily diminish its vital, widely shared, and longstanding role in our congregations and witness.

A motion passes to table the majority report and take up the minority report.

—*Adopted*

Response to Overture 12: Remove Mention of Contemporary Testimony from the Covenant for Officebearers (minority report)

C. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overture 12, Recommendation A. Recommendation B, as noted in the majority report, is out of order.

Grounds:

1. The inclusion of Our World Belongs to God (OWBTG) in the Covenant for Officebearers (CFO) has confused ordinands as well as new members to the CRCNA. The CFO says that OWBTG is “a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context” (Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a, “Covenant for Officebearers”). The distinction between this “Reformed expression” that “forms and guides us” is insufficiently distinguished from our confessions, which are also said to be “Reformed expressions” that “direct the way we live in response to the gospel” (*Ibid.*). There is no legitimate semantic difference between a “current Reformed expression that forms and guides” and a “historic Reformed expression” that “direct[s].” We may classify these as different documents, but they are described using virtually the same terminology, causing confusion as to their authority.
2. The Belhar Confession is also classified as a contemporary testimony (*Acts of Synod 2017*, pp. 699-700). However, it is not included in the Covenant for Officebearers. There is no stated reason for this. The

fact that synod deliberately chose not to include the Belhar Confession in the CFO makes it seem to be in a category different from that of OWBTG, even though both are contemporary testimonies. This creates further confusion as to what exactly these documents are and how they function. This has led to many members' erroneously thinking there are three categories of documents when there are only two—confessional and contemporary testimony.

3. Many CRC congregations are seeking to reorient their congregants toward a healthy appreciation of the Three Forms of Unity, which often fall into disuse. The inclusion of OWBTG may produce "information overload" to our congregations, who would benefit from having simple and succinct confessional documents to assist their growth in godliness.
4. This precedent could lead to the inclusion of other documents, to which officers are not required to subscribe, in the CFO.

—Adopted

The chair rules that these alterations to Church Order Supplement, Article 5-a, will need to be ratified by Synod 2027, since they represent a substantial change to the Covenant for Officebearers.

III. Response to Overture 19: Amend Church Order to Include Prayer in Description of Ministerial Calling

A. Materials

Overture 19, pp. 373-75

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to Overture 19 and present the following changes to Church Order Articles 11, 12-a, and 25-b to Synod 2027 for ratification (additions indicated by underline).

Article 11

The calling of a minister of the Word is to be devoted to prayer and to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and equip the members so that the church of Jesus Christ may be built up.

Article 12-a

a. A minister of the Word serving as pastor of a congregation shall pray, preach the Word, administer the sacraments, conduct public worship services, catechize the youth, and train members for Christian service. The minister, with other officebearers, shall supervise the congregation and fellow officebearers, exercise admonition and discipline, see to it that everything is done decently and in order, exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism and diaconal outreach.

Article 25-b

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall pray for the congregation, shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fel-

low officebearers, shall provide counsel and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith. As shepherds of the church, they shall encourage and support the members in their Christian life. The elders also shall nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation in the Lord's Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

Grounds:

1. Biblical precedent

In the beginning of the life of the church, when the disciples were increasingly pressured from busier ministry, they focused on their responsibilities: they devoted themselves "to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). It is the calling of pastors and leaders today to do the same.

2. Historical precedent

The original Dort Church Order, Article 16, used in the CRC before 1965, included prayer as part of the description of the calling and responsibility of the minister:

The office of the Minister is to continue in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to watch over his brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well and the Congregation, and finally, with the Elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

3. Pastoral expectation

The primacy of prayer has been an expectation for pastors in the ordination forms for the minister of the Word.

The 1959 ordination form states:

It is the office of the ministers publicly to call upon the Name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; for what the apostles say in Acts 6:4, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word," these pastors have in common with the apostles; to which St. Paul alludes what he speaks thus to Timothy: I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

The Form for the Ordination/Installation of Ministers (1986) states:

In all this work, the minister proclaims, explains, and applies Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the church of Jesus Christ. For this work, the minister devotes himself to the ministry of prayer, joining all Christians in confession, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.

—Adopted

IV. Response to Overture 22: Revise Church Order Language and Process for Tracking Membership

A. Materials

Overture 22, pp. 378-81

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 22.

Grounds:

1. We appreciate Overture 22's emphasis on the covenantal nature of membership and recognize confusion around the word "lapse" in relation to our ecclesiology, increasingly ecumenical contexts, and changing cultural understanding of membership. This overture, however, proposes a potentially problematic term: "archive." Covenantal membership *papers* can be "archived." Covenantal memberships cannot.
2. The overture presents an unhelpful dichotomy between relationship and polity. Good polity is not opposed to healthy relationships; it supports them.
3. While the presented case studies are helpful, they point to the need for clearer communication from councils, not necessarily changed verbiage.
4. The overture replaces the clarity and mutual accountability of a two-year time frame with the uncertain burden that a council must have "made every good faith effort to establish communication with the person." Such a subjective standard could increase, not decrease, confusion for councils in tracking membership.

—*Adopted*

V. Council of Delegates

A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates report (section IV, C, 4), pp. 30, 43-44
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (sections III, H, 3-4), pp. 429-30, 435

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael Ten Haken, chair; Andre Van Ryk, vice chair; and members of the executive staff as needed

C. Recommendations

1. That synod note the work done by the Office of General Secretary (in coordination with Thrive) to develop materials to guide churches and classes through issues related to the supervision and release of CRCNA pastors, as noted in recommendations from the task force reviewing Church Order Articles 12-17 (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 137-39), and acknowledge these tasks as complete.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod approve the addition of the following paragraph to section III, G of the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting* to help identify the church visitors' role in situations where conflict is present.

G. When conflict is present, Church Order Article 42-b urges that churches call on the church visitors "whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice." While church visitors do not have the authority to require that councils take certain courses of action, they should recognize the importance of providing wise advice and supportive guidance for councils walking through a season of crisis. Likewise, churches should recognize the value and importance of having the wisdom and guidance available to them through the church visitors, as they address serious challenges.

Grounds:

- a. Such a resource makes clear that church visitors have a mandate to identify and work through conflict between churches and pastors (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 138).
- b. The text of the *Guide for Conducting Church Visiting* has prior synodical approval (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 633).

— Adopted

3. That synod revise its previous instructions concerning diversity reporting to ask that the general secretary facilitate the collection and reporting of data related to diversity in the CRCNA as deemed most appropriate, while ensuring that information about the diversity of board composition is still reported annually and that the growth of our churches and agencies in the area of diversity (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 907) remains part of that information.

Ground: Centralizing this data collection reduces duplicative efforts and provides the broader CRCNA a more complete picture of this important work.

— Adopted

4. That synod instruct the general secretary to work with the COD to report on diversity efforts each year in such a way that provides recognition of the good work done by churches and leaders in the area of diversity and provides avenues for accountability for such work, especially as it relates to the work of formal and informal networks that exist among ethnic-minority communities within the CRCNA. This may be in the form of an in-person report from an individual from these communities, but this is not required. It is understood that this instruction replaces synod's encouragement for Resonate Global Mission to serve as the avenue for reporting by groups such as Consejo Latino (*Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820).

Grounds:

- a. The Office of General Secretary is the most natural hub for this widely embedded denominational initiative.

- b. While providing flexibility, this provides broad access to in-person testimonies from our diverse communities.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod take note of the reports provided by representatives of the major ethnic groups within the CRCNA and make space to hear about and celebrate the work God’s Spirit is doing within these communities.

Ground: This fulfills the request of Synod 2024 to create a pathway for Consejo Latino and other groups to “report on their work and to share resources with the CRCNA” (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, p. 419; *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 820).

—*Adopted*

Note: A presentation fulfilling this request is noted in Article 102.

6. That synod take note of the COD’s intention to review the work of the Diversity Connection Advisory Committee at the two-year mark instead of this year (see *Acts of Synod 2025*, pp. 600-1) due to the brief time in which the group has been able to begin its work.

—*Adopted*

VI. Response to Overture 11: Appoint a Task Force to Amend Church Order Article 38

A. Materials

Overture 11, pp. 356-57

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 11.

Grounds:

1. Church Order Supplement, Article 38 currently provides a helpful pathway of classical accountability in the process of congregational affiliation and disaffiliation. Thrive also offers extensive additional denominational resources for congregations and classes to navigate these processes.
2. The Church Order already provides for the possibility of appeal, providing access to review by a assembly broader than classis. Introducing the concurrent work of synodical deputies at the classical level would risk the impartiality of future synodical involvement.
3. Requiring the involvement of synodical deputies would risk further taxing already overburdened synodical deputies, especially if that would involve their presence at prescribed congregational and classis meetings.
4. We agree that there is no difference of importance between congregations and pastors, but note that congregations and ministers are not identical in the eyes of the Church Order.

—*Adopted*

VII. Ministerial and commissioned pastor retirements

A. Ministers of the Word

Synod has received notice of the following ministerial retirements:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Effective Date</i>
Daniel Ackerman	Holland	May 27, 2026
Darwin Glassford	Holland	September 30, 2025
Eric Groot-Nibbelink	Toronto	October 31, 2025
Bernard Haan	Iakota	January 4, 2026
David Heilman	Iakota	December 31, 2025
Patrick Hennen	Wisconsin	September 30, 2025
Gregory Kett	Holland	March 5, 2026
Rita Klein-Geltink	Quinte	May 31, 2026
William Koopmans	Hamilton	June 30, 2025
Joseph Keonsup Kwak	Ko-Am	September 23, 2025
Geok Keng (Faith) Lim	Greater Los Angeles	March 31, 2026
Tony Maan	Alberta North	July 4, 2025
Jin Namkoong	Columbia	September 7, 2025
Roger Nelson	Chicago South	August 20, 2025
Han Gyu Park	Ko-Am	February 24, 2026
John Ritsema	Central Plains	April 30, 2026
Vern Swieringa	Holland	August 29, 2025
Kevin teBrake	Huron	December 31, 2025
Peter Tuininga	Niagara	September 1, 2025
Jacob Van de Hoef	Eastern Canada	April 26, 2026
Ronald Vanden Brink	Hamilton	November 23, 2025
Michael Vandyk	Niagara	October 10, 2025
Lesli van Milligen	Toronto	May 29, 2026
Gilbert Varela	Atlantic Northeast	May 31, 2026
Harold Veldman	Zeeland	December 31, 2025
Norman Visser	Ontario Southwest	May 1, 2026

B. Commissioned pastors

Synod has received notice of the following commissioned pastor retirements under Church Order Article 24 (emeritation noted).

<i>Name</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Effective Date</i>
Angela Elliott, emeritated	B.C. North-West	October 21, 2025
Franklin Engelage, emeritated	Niagara	December 31, 2025
Cisco Gonzalez, emeritated	Grandville	September 18, 2025
Rodney Hugen, emeritated	Arizona	December 31, 2025
Danny Skelton, emeritated	Rocky Mountain	March 4, 2026
Chava Vang, emeritated	Lake Erie	October 31, 2025

C. Recommendation

That synod recognize with gratitude the faithful gospel ministry of the retired ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors listed above.

— Adopted

Rev. Willem Delleman, chair, offers a prayer of gratitude for ministers and pastors entering retirement.

VIII. Work of the synodical deputies

Preamble

Synodical deputies function on behalf of the synod of the CRCNA to provide attention and oversight whenever classes make decisions with impact on the broader body. We witness in their work items of shared celebration and lament as we “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2, ESV). Even as we recognize the joys of welcoming new people into ministry, we also recognize the unique pastoral and institutional weight of congregational and ministerial disaffiliations and separations as well as the burden this adds to the already extensive portfolio of work assigned to synodical deputies. As we carefully worked through each item of their work, we note that this weighty charge may at times have contributed to some minor issues of nonstandard process.

For example:

- Indications of Article 12 covenants of joint supervision are frequently missing.
- Insufficient numbers of synodical deputies are often present.
- Frequently, learning plans are missing.
- Some reports are unsigned and undated.

We encourage classes and synodical deputies to continue to work with both pastoral care and good order.

A. Church Order Article 8-c: Declaration of eligibility for call

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Anel Becker-Ferreira	Eastern Canada October 24, 2025	J. Tuininga (Quinte) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest)
<i>Calling church:</i> Barrhaven Fellowship CRC of Ottawa, Ontario		
Yordanys Diaz Arteaga	Southeast U.S. February 25, 2026	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
<i>Calling church:</i> Iglesia Buenas Nuevas CRC of Miami, Florida		
Shawn Gerbers	Georgetown February 26, 2026	T. Slachter (Zeeland) S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
<i>Calling Church:</i> Bauer CRC of Hudsonville, Michigan		
Samuel Kaha	Hackensack May 12, 2026	M. Saville (Atlantic Northeast) P. Vos (Chicago South) J. Sideco (Hudson)
<i>Calling church:</i> Grace Indonesian CRC of Silver Spring, Maryland		
Kenneth P. Labbe	Huron September 24, 2025	P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)
<i>Calling church:</i> Palmerston CRC of Palmerston, Ontario		

Samuel Lim	Hudson January 31, 2026	M. Saville (Atlantic Northeast) P. Kornilov (Hackensack) R. Engle (Lake Erie) <i>Calling church: Grace Community Chapel of Teaneck, New Jersey</i>
Justin Njikeu	Hackensack May 12, 2026	M. Saville (Atlantic Northeast) P. Vos (Chicago South) J. Sideco (Hudson) <i>Calling church: Silver Spring CRC of Silver Spring, Maryland</i>
Derek Noorman	Georgetown February 26, 2026	T. Slachter (Zeeland) S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South) <i>Calling church: The Refuge (Trinity CRC) of Grandville, Michigan</i>
Chang Yool Yoon	Hanmi September 9, 2025	H. Caicedo (California South) D. Koll (Greater Los Angeles) D. Yi (Ko-Am) <i>Calling church: All Nations Church of San Antonio, Texas</i>

B. Church Order Article 10: Admission of candidate who has completed the requirements for the ministry of the Word

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Peter Urie Bae	California South March 5, 2026	J. Rayas (Arizona) B. Persenaire (Central California) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Joseph Bartels	Greater Los Angeles September 23, 2025	J. Rayas (Arizona) B. Persenaire (Central California) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
*Jeremiah Basuric	Alberta North October 17, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
<i>*Deputies' comments: A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.</i>		
Tha Bawi	Thornapple Valley February 17, 2026	J. Scripps (Georgetown) D. Fauble (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Kyle Beckrich	Illiana September 17, 2025	J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) C. Huizenga (Wisconsin) P. Vos (Chicago South)
Rylan Brue	Zeeland July 24, 2025	J. Scripps (Georgetown) D. Fauble (Grandville) D. Glassford (Holland)
Melissa J. Burmaster	Huron September 24, 2025	P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)
Josiah Chapman	Atlantic Northeast March 6, 2026	R. Engle (Lake Erie) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Raymond D. Evans	Huron September 24, 2025	P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)

Masao Fujishima	Hudson September 18, 2025	P. Kornilov (Hackensack) R. Britton (Grand Rapids North) M. Saville (Atlantic Northeast)
David Kerkstra	Grand Rapids North February 10, 2026	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) D. Fauble (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Dylan Kern	Southeast U.S. September 4, 2025	M. Kang (Hudson) W. Sytsma (Chicago South) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Kyochan (David) Koo	Hudson May 14, 2026	P. Guarracino (Atlantic Northeast) P. Kornilov (Hackensack) R. Engle (Lake Erie)
Israel Ledee	Chicago South September 17, 2025	J. Christoffels (Illiana) J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) C. Huizenga (Wisconsin)
Young Geol Lee	Northern Illinois November 4, 2025	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) G. Schuringa (Wisconsin) S. Mulder (Northcentral Iowa)
Kevin Lobert	B.C. South-East October 21, 2025	D. Fakkema (Pacific Northwest) M. Bouma (B.C. North-West) B. Lanting (North Cascades)
Caley Meza	Chicago South July 8, 2025	J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) G. Schuringa (Wisconsin) S. Tuin (Kalamazoo)
Matt Mulder	Northern Michigan March 3, 2026	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) D. Glassford (Holland)
Matthew Sun	Thornapple Valley October 21, 2025	J. Scripps (Georgetown) R. Vanderwal (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)

C. Church Order Article 12-c: Calling a minister to a specialized ministry

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Thomas Bomhof	B.C. North-West March 3, 2026 Position: Lead Pastor, Elim Village, Surrey, B.C.	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) H. Newhouse (Lake Superior) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Daryl DeKlerk	B.C. South-East March 3, 2026 Position: Chaplain at Mountainview Village	A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) M. Borst (Pacific Northwest) B. Lanting (North Cascades)
Masao Fujishima	Hudson September 18, 2025 Position: Missionary to Japan	P. Kornilov (Hackensack) R. Britton (Grand Rapids North) M. Saville (Atlantic Northeast)
Edward Gerber	B.C. South-East March 3, 2026 Position: Chaplain at Trinity Western University	A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) M. Borst (Pacific Northwest) B. Lanting (North Cascades)
John Y. Kim	Northern Illinois September 17, 2025 Position: Regional Director, Church Engagement (Samaritan's Purse)	J. Christoffels (Illiana) C. Huizenga (Wisconsin) P. Vos (Chicago South)

Jason Ruis	Wisconsin September 20, 2025 Position: Chaplain and Secondary Bible Teacher	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) J. Hollendoner (Illiana) H. Newhouse (Lake Superior)
John T. Wildeboer	Quinte September 27, 2025 Position: National Director, Diaconal Min. Canada	J. Klingenberg (Niagara) S. Couperus (Huron) R. Grift (Toronto)

D. Church Order Article 12-d: Loaning a minister to a church outside the CRCNA

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Samuel Kim	Hudson May 14, 2026 Church: Sojourner Presby. Church, Paramus, N.J.	P. Guarracino (Atlantic Northeast) P. Kornilov (Hackensack) R. Engle (Lake Erie)
Matt Mulder	Northern Michigan March 3, 2026 Church: Midland Ref. Church, Midland, Mich.	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) D. Glassford (Holland)
Kathy Vana	Northern Michigan March 3, 2026 Church: Lucas Reformed Church, McBain, Mich.	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) D. Glassford (Holland)

E. Church Order Article 12-d: Extension of loan of a minister to a church outside the CRCNA (Supplement, Article 12, C, 2, b)

<i>Minister</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Timothy Holwerda	Grandville January 15, 2026 Church: Heliopolis Community Church of Cairo, Egypt (until Jan. 1, 2028)	J. Scripps (Georgetown) T. Slachter (Zeeland) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Anthony Meyer	Grandville September 17, 2025 Church: Mountainview International Church of Madrid, Spain (until Sept. 17, 2027)	J. Scripps (Georgetown) T. Slachter (Zeeland) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Zeke Nelson	Central California October 7, 2025 Church: Antwerp Intl. Protestant Church of Antwerp, Belgium (until Oct. 7, 2027)	H. Caicedo (California South) E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)

F. Church Order Article 14-b: Release from office to enter a ministry outside the CRCNA

<i>Minister (status)</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Matthew Ackerman Honorably Released	Lake Erie October 4, 2025	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) J. Brower (Kalamazoo) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Sheri Admiraal Honorably Released	Rocky Mountain March 4, 2026	M. Bentley (Central Plains) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa) S. Muilenburg (Minnkota)
Amanda Bakale Honorably Released	Holland October 2, 2025	D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) J. Scripps (Georgetown)
Samuel Boldenow Honorably Released	Chicago South February 21, 2026	J. Hollendoner (Illiana) J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) G. Schuringa (Wisconsin)

Craig Broek Honorably Released	Rocky Mountain October 11, 2025	S. Mulder (Northcentral Iowa) C. VanderNeut (Yellowstone) C. Hoekstra (Iakota)
Calvin Chen Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Adrian de Lange Honorably Released	Alberta S./Sask. March 6, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Steven Dykstra Honorably Released	Hamilton February 21, 2026	S. Couperus (Huron) J. Klingenberg (Niagara) R. Grift (Toronto)
Richard Ebbers Honorably Released	Rocky Mountain March 4, 2026	M. Bentley (Central Plains) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa) S. Muilenburg (Minnkota)
Derek Elmi-Buursma Honorably Released	Northern Illinois September 17, 2025	J. Christoffels (Illiana) C. Huizenga (Wisconsin) P. Vos (Chicago South)
Marcia Fairrow Honorably Released	Lake Erie March 7, 2026	D. Glassford (Holland) M. Saville (Atlantic Northeast) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Cari Fydirchuck Honorably Released	Alberta S./Sask. March 6, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Jae James Kim Honorably Released	Atlantic Northeast October 1, 2025	R. Engle (Lake Erie) J. Sideco (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Elizabeth Guillaume-Koene Honorably Released	Quinte May 26, 2026	S. Couperus (Huron) J. Klingenberg (Niagara) R. Grift (Toronto)
Katherine Hirschberg Honorably Released	Grand Rapids North September 16, 2025	D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Michael Hoogeboom Honorably Released	Lake Erie October 4, 2025	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) J. Brower (Kalamazoo) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Siang Hup Honorably Released	Chicago South February 21, 2026	J. Hollendoner (Illiana) J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) G. Schuringa (Wisconsin)
Travis Jamieson Released	Central California March 3, 2026	E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles) H. Caicedo (California South) D. Yi (Ko-Am)
Gregory Janke Released	North Cascades February 26, 2026	J. Van Schepen (Columbia) G. Kamps (Yellowstone) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Michelle Kool Honorably Released	Alberta North October 17, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
<i>Deputies' comments:</i> A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.		
John Luth Honorably Released	Alberta North March 6, 2026	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)

Jessica Maddox Honorably Released	Grand Rapids South March 5, 2026	D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Brower (Kalamazoo) T. Slachter (Grandville)
Dale Melenberg Honorably Released	Alberta North October 17, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
<i>Deputies' comments:</i> A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.		
Summer Mohrlang Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Michael Moore Honorably Released	Chicago South September 17, 2025	J. Christoffels (Illiana) J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) C. Huizenga (Wisconsin)
Joseph Nasvytis Honorably Released	California South March 5, 2026	J. Rayas (Arizona) B. Persenaire (Central California) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning Honorably Released	Alberta North October 17, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
<i>Deputies' comments:</i> A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.		
J. Scott Roberts Honorably Released	North Cascades February 26, 2026	J. Van Schepen (Columbia) G. Kamps (Yellowstone) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
William Roelofs Honorably Released	Northern Illinois September 17, 2025	J. Christoffels (Illiana) C. Huizenga (Wisconsin) P. Vos (Chicago South)
D'Vante Rolle Released	Pacific Northwest October 2, 2025	A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) B. Lanting (North Cascades) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Kyle Sandison Honorably Released	Lake Superior September 16, 2025	S. Muilenburg (Minnkota) S. de Jong (Northcentral Iowa)
<i>Deputies' comments:</i> A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.		
Jay Stringer Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Juli Stuelpnagel Honorably Released	Lake Erie October 4, 2025	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) J. Brower (Kalamazoo) G. Bakker (Grand Rapids South)
Everett Vander Horst Honorably Released	Hamilton February 21, 2026	S. Couperus (Huron) J. Klingenberg (Niagara) R. Grift (Toronto)
Mark Mohrlang Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Kory Plockmeyer Honorably Released	Holland March 5, 2026	M. Kang (Hudson) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) J. Scripps (Georgetown)
Eric Snyder Honorably Released	Rocky Mountain March 4, 2026	M. Bentley (Central Plains) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa) S. Muilenburg (Minnkota)
Loretta Stadt Honorably Released	Alberta North March 6, 2026	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)

Mark Van Andel Honorably Released	Lake Erie March 7, 2026	D. Glassford (Holland) M. Saville (Atlantic Northeast) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Ashley Van Dragt Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Geoffrey Van Dragt Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Thyra VanKeeken Honorably Released	Toronto October 23, 2025	P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest) S. Couperus (Huron) D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton)
Paul Verhoef Honorably Released	Alberta S./Sask. March 6, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
David Vroege Honorably released	Eastern Canada October 24, 2025	J. Tuininga (Quinte) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest)
Aaron Walters Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest October 2, 2025	A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) B. Lanting (North Cascades) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Derek Zeyl Honorably Released	Kalamazoo March 10, 2026	J. Scripps (Georgetown) J. Vanderhooft (Gr. Rap. South) M. Vande Zande (Zeeland)

G. Church Order Article 14-c: Release from office to enter a nonministerial vocation

<i>Minister (status)</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Bailey Sarver Attema Honorably Released	Lake Erie October 4, 2025	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) J. Brower (Kalamazoo) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Andrew Carlson Honorably Released	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Jesse Eng Dismissed	Hudson May 14, 2026	P. Guarracino (Atlantic Northeast) P. Kornilov (Hackensack) R. Engle (Lake Erie)
Jonathan Kim Honorably Released	Northern Illinois September 17, 2025	J. Christoffels (Illiana) C. Huizenga (Wisconsin) P. Vos (Chicago South)
John Moelker Honorably Released	Ontario Southwest May 26, 2026	S. Couperus (Huron) J. Klingenberg (Niagara) R. Grift (Toronto)
Kristen Pikaart Honorably Released	Red Mesa January 17, 2026	B. Persenaire (Central California) D. Koll (Greater Los Angeles) J. Van Schepen (Columbia)

H. Church Order Article 14-d: Release from office of one whose vocation is judged to be nonministerial

<i>Minister (status)</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
James R. DeZeeuw Released	Northern Michigan September 30, 2025	J. Scripps (Georgetown) T. Slachter (Zeeland) D. Glassford (Holland)

Noah Kruis Released	Grand Rapids North January 20, 2026	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) D. Fauble (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)

I. Church Order Article 14-e: Former minister declared re-eligible for call

<i>Minister (status)</i> Luke Wynja Eligible for Call	<i>Classis (date)</i> Heartland September 17, 2025	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i> S. de Jong (Northcentral Iowa) C. Hoekstra (Iakota) J. Steenholdt (Minnkota)

J. Church Order Article 17-a: Release from a call

<i>Minister</i> Rodolfo Galindo <i>Church:</i> South Grandville CRC	<i>Classis (date)</i> Grandville March 26, 2026	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i> T. Slachter (Zeeland) J. Scripps (Georgetown) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Gregory Janke <i>Church:</i> Sonlight Church	North Cascades January 7, 2026	J. VanSchepen (Columbia) G. Kamps (Yellowstone) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
John Moelker <i>Church:</i> Covenant CRC	Ontario Southwest September 23, 2025	S. Couperus (Huron) D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)
Chad Pierce <i>Church:</i> Faith CRC	Holland March 5, 2026	M. Kang (Hudson) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) J. Scripps (Georgetown)
Kent Sanders <i>Church:</i> Southern Heights (serving in Lakeland Reformed Church)	Kalamazoo October 14, 2025	R. Vanderwal (Grandville) J. Scripps (Georgetown) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Christopher Schievink <i>Church:</i> Kanata Community CRC	Eastern Canada June 21, 2025	S. Couperus (Huron) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest)
Duane Vanderlaan <i>Church:</i> Drayton CRC (serving in Drayton Reformed Church)	Huron May 20, 2026	J. Tuininga (Quinte) J. Klingenberg (Niagara) P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest)
Thomas VanderPloeg <i>Church:</i> Fellowship CRC	Grandville January 15, 2026	J. Scripps (Georgetown) T. Slachter (Zeeland) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)

K. Church Order Article 17-c: Extension of eligibility for call

<i>Minister of the Word</i> Peter Byma	<i>Classis (date)</i> Grand Rapids North January 20, 2026	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i> S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) D. Fauble (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Robert Gruessing	Georgetown February 26, 2026	T. Slachter (Zeeland) S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Todd Hilkemann	Rocky Mountain March 4, 2026	M. Bentley (Central Plains) S. Muilenberg (Minnkota) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Gregory Kett	Holland October 2, 2025	J. Medendorp (Muskegon) D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Scripps (Georgetown)

Philip Leo	Chicago South February 21, 2026	J. Hollendoner (Illiana) J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) G. Schuringa (Wisconsin)
Daniel Meyer	Alberta North October 17, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
<i>Deputies' comments:</i> A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.		
Peter Oh	Central California March 3, 2026	E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles) H. Caicedo (California South) D. Yi (Ko-Am)
Greg VanderHorn	Grandville January 15, 2026	J. Scripps (Georgetown) T. Slachter (Zeeland) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Mark Van Drunen	Grandville May 21, 2026	T. Slachter (Zeeland) J. Scripps (Georgetown) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)

L. Church Order Article 17-c: Release from the office of minister of the Word

<i>Minister of the Word</i> Woodrow Dixon	<i>Classis (date)</i> Niagara October 22, 2025	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i> M. Bootsma (Hamilton) S. Couperus (Huron) P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest)
Marc Holland	Central California October 7, 2025	H. Caicedo (California South) E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Brian Kornelis	Minnkota March 5, 2026	P. Westra (Heartland) C. Hoekstra (Iakota) H. Newhouse (Lake Superior)
Marcel Kuiper	Ontario Southwest September 23, 2025	S. Couperus (Huron) D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)
Adam Stout	Lake Superior September 16, 2025	S. Muilenburg (Minnkota) S. de Jong (Northcentral Iowa)
<i>Deputies' comments:</i> A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.		
Brian Tebben	Yellowstone November 15, 2025	B. Persenaire (Central California) C. Hoekstra (Iakota) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Maurice (Reese) Vander Veen	Central California October 7, 2025	H. Caicedo (California South) E. Westra (Greater Los Angeles) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)

M. Church Order Article 23-a: Declaration that a commissioned pastor's position fits synodical guidelines

<i>Commissioned Pastor (Church)</i> Scott Branderhorst Imlay City CRC	<i>Classis (date)</i> Lake Erie October 4, 2025	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i> W. Sytsma (Chicago South) J. Brower (Kalamazoo) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)

Position: Pastor, The Way (emerging church) in Aliquippa, Pa.

Michael Cassis The Source Church <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	Southeast U.S. February 25, 2026	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Debra Chee Window Rock CRC <i>Position: Solo/Lead Pastor</i>	Red Mesa January 17, 2026	D. Koll (Greater Los Angeles) B. Persenaire (Central California) J. Van Schepen (Columbia)
Bill Craig Faith Community Fellowship <i>Position: Associate Pastor</i>	Pacific Northwest October 2, 2025	A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) B. Lanting (North Cascades) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Nick Crespo Sunlight Ministries <i>Position: Pastor of Evangelism</i>	Southeast U.S. February 25, 2026	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Ronald deVries Covenant CRC <i>Position: Interim Pastor</i> <i>Deputies' comments: A third synodical deputy was unable to attend the meeting.</i>	Alberta North October 17, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Donald Dunne All Nations Church – SA (Onnuri) <i>Position: Lost and Found Youth Pastor</i>	Hanmi March 26, 2023	H. Caicedo (California South) D. Koll (Greater Los Angeles) D. Yi (Ko-Am)
John Dwyer First Artesia CRC <i>Position: Assistant pastor</i>	Greater Los Angeles February 24, 2026	H. Caicedo (California South) B. Persenaire (Central California) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Shawn England Celebration Fellowship CRC <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	Grand Rapids East January 15, 2026	R. Britton III (Grand Rapids North) S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Russ Fuller Crosspoint CRC <i>Position: Pastor of Care Ministries</i>	California South March 5, 2026	J. Rayas (Arizona) B. Persenaire (Central California) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Kaitlin Givens Resurrection Church <i>Position: Lead Pastor of Preaching, Mission, and Vision</i>	Atlantic Northeast October 1, 2025	R. Engle (Lake Erie) J. Sideco (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Jonathan Gonzalez Lee Street CRC <i>Position: Youth Pastor</i>	Grandville May 21, 2026	G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South) J. Scripps (Georgetown) T. Slachter (Zeeland)
Luis Gonzalez The Source Church <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	Southeast U.S. February 25, 2026	W. Sytsma (Chicago South) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Stefan Human Aylmer CRC <i>Position: Director of Youth and Worship Ministries</i>	Ontario Southwest September 23, 2025	S. Couperus (Huron) D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)
Nupur James The Tapestry <i>Position: Pastor</i>	B.C. North-West October 22, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East) H. Newhouse (Lake Superior)

Zachariah Johnson Encounter Church <i>Position: Worship Pastor</i>	Thornapple Valley May 19, 2026	J. Scripps (Georgetown) D. Fauble (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Wes Jones Lake City CRC <i>Position: Next Generation Pastor</i>	Northern Michigan September 30, 2025	J. Scripps (Georgetown) T. Slachter (Zeeland) D. Glassford (Holland)
A.L.* Faith CRC <i>Position: Church-planting Missionary</i> * Record is protected; actual name not to be published due to safety concerns (see <i>Acts of Synod 2019</i> , p. 785; <i>Agenda for Synod 2020</i> , pp. 237-38).	Iakota September 16, 2025	S. de Jong (Northcentral Iowa) S. Muilenburg (Minnkota) H. Newhouse (Lake Superior)
Mitchell Leach Prosper CRC <i>Position: Solo/Lead Pastor</i>	Northern Michigan March 3, 2026	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) D. Glassford (Holland) J. Medendorp (Muskegon)
John Li Crosspoint CRC (Chino, CA) <i>Position: Chinese Congregation Discipleship Pastor</i>	California South March 5, 2026	J. Rayas (Arizona) B. Persenaire (Central California) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Scott MacDougall New City Church <i>Position: Pastor of Discipleship and Community Engagement</i>	Heartland September 17, 2025	S. de Jong (Northcentral Iowa) J. Steenholdt (Minnkota) C. Hoekstra (Iakota)
Van Par Mi Encounter Church <i>Position: Assistant Pastor</i>	Thornapple Valley May 19, 2026	J. Scripps (Georgetown) D. Fauble (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Hugo Morales Immanuel CRC, Burbank <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	Chicago South February 21, 2026	J. Hollendoner (Illiana) J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois) G. Schuringa (Wisconsin)
Jonathan Norder Kelloggsville CRC <i>Position: Pastor of Discipleship and Missional Living</i>	Grand Rapids South March 5, 2026	T. Slachter (Zeeland) D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Brower (Kalamazoo)
Julian Ochoa Iglesia Hispana Goshen <i>Position: Lead Pastor of Evangelism and Missions</i>	Atlantic Northeast October 1, 2025	R. Engle (Lake Erie) J. Sideco (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
John Park All Nations Church - SA (Onnuri) <i>Position: Acts Ministry Pastor</i>	Hanmi March 26, 2023	H. Caicedo (California South) D. Koll (Greater Los Angeles) D. Yi (Ko-Am)
Janis Persenaire <i>Position: Program Manager for Global Coffee Break</i>	Holland October 2, 2025	D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Medendorp (Muskegon) J. Scripps (Georgetown)
Josh Sinnema Manhattan CRC <i>Position: Youth Director</i>	Yellowstone November 15, 2025	B. Persenaire (Central California) C. Hoekstra (Iakota) J. Greydanus (Red Mesa)
Joshua Sweetman Water Street CRC <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	Huron February 18, 2026	P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest) R. Grift (Toronto) M. Bootsma (Hamilton)

Jorge Tellez Iglesia Hispana Goshen <i>Position: Church-planting Pastor</i>	Atlantic Northeast October 1, 2025	R. Engle (Lake Erie) J. Sideco (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Joel Trinidad East Martin CRC <i>Position: Solo/Lead Pastor</i>	Kalamazoo May 19, 2026	D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Scripps (Georgetown) S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley)
Bailey Towne Oak Harbor CRC <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	Pacific Northwest March 5, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) V. Michael (Columbia) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Joshua Van Til <i>Position: Classical Church Coach</i>	Columbia February 28, 2026	B. Lanting (North Cascades) B. Persenaire (Central California) G. Kamps (Yellowstone)
Carlos Villarreal The Source Church <i>Position: Church Planter</i>	Southeast U.S. September 4, 2025	M. Kang (Hudson) W. Sytsma (Chicago South) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
Joey Wright Goshen CRC (Goshen, N.Y.) <i>Position: Pastor</i>	Atlantic Northeast January 29, 2026	R. Engle (Lake Erie) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
To Be Determined Compass Community Church <i>Position: Ministry Coordinator</i>	Ontario Southwest January 27, 2026	S. Couperus (Huron) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)
To Be Determined Discovery Church <i>Position: Church Planter, Peterborough, Ont.</i>	Quinte September 27, 2025	J. Klingenberg (Niagara) S. Couperus (Huron) R. Grift (Toronto)
To Be Determined Forest City Community Church <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	Ontario Southwest January 27, 2026	S. Couperus (Huron) M. Bootsma (Hamilton) R. Grift (Toronto)
To Be Determined Hebron CRC <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor Youth and Counseling</i>	Quinte May 27, 2025	J. Klingenberg (Niagara) S. Couperus (Huron) R. Grift (Toronto)
To Be Determined Hebron CRC <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor Youth and Worship</i>	Quinte May 27, 2025	J. Klingenberg (Niagara) S. Couperus (Huron) R. Grift (Toronto)
To Be Determined Nelson Avenue CRC <i>Position: Commissioned Pastor</i>	B.C. North-West March 3, 2026	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East) H. Newhouse (Lake Superior)

N. Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a: Commissioned pastors filling previously approved positions

The following commissioned pastors have been examined by the classes indicated for positions previously approved by synodical deputies (in addition to those listed above in the synodical deputy reports for Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a):

<i>Commissioned Pastor</i>	<i>Classis</i>	<i>Date</i>
Nikita Abraham	Quinte	September 27, 2025
Debbie De Vries	Ontario Southwest	May 26, 2026
Abigail Jallim	Quinte	September 27, 2025
Pierre La Claire	Southeast U.S.	September 4, 2025
Andres Sancho	Southeast U.S.	September 4, 2025
Rowan Scott	Ontario Southwest	May 26, 2026

O. Church Order Article 24-a: Service of a commissioned pastor in an organized church as a solo pastor or in a senior leadership position

<i>Commissioned Pastor (Church)</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Mitchell Leach Prosper CRC	Northern Michigan March 3, 2026	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) D. Glassford (Holland) J. Medendorp (Muskegon)
Eleanor Sarkany First CRC	Toronto October 23, 2025	P. Apoll (Ontario Southwest) S. Couperus (Huron) D. Nieuwstraten (Hamilton)
Micah Shin Lowell Calvary CRC	Thornapple Valley October 21, 2025	J. Scripps (Georgetown) R. Vanderwal (Grandville) G. Bekker (Grand Rapids South)
Joel Trinidad East Martin CRC	Kalamazoo May 19, 2026	D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Scripps (Georgetown) S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley)
Joey Wright Goshen CRC (Goshen, N.Y.)	Atlantic Northeast March 5, 2026	R. Engle (Lake Erie) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)
To Be Determined Christ Community CRC	B.C. North-West October 22, 2025	G. van Leeuwen (Alberta S./Sask.) H. Newhouse (Lake Superior) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)

P. Church Order Supplement, Article 24-a/b: Commissioned pastor exam for lead role in an organized church

<i>Commissioned Pastor (Church)</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
Mitchell Leach Prosper CRC	Northern Michigan March 3, 2026	S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley) D. Glassford (Holland) J. Medendorp (Muskegon)
Nick Rosas New Hope Fellowship	Pacific Northwest October 2, 2025	A. Beunk (B.C. North-West) B. Lanting (North Cascades) W. Brouwer (B.C. South-East)
Joel Trinidad East Martin CRC	Kalamazoo May 19, 2026	D. Fauble (Grandville) J. Scripps (Georgetown) S. Van Zanen (Thornapple Valley)
Joey Wright Goshen CRC (Goshen, N.Y.)	Atlantic Northeast March 5, 2026	R. Engle (Lake Erie) M. Kang (Hudson) P. Van Dyken (Hackensack)

Q. Church Order Article 38-h: Designation that multiaffiliation of a congregation fits synodical guidelines

Synodical deputies J. Huizinga (Northern Illinois), G. Schuringa (Wisconsin), and S. Tuin (Kalamazoo), having examined the written materials submitted by the council of **First Reformed Church, South Holland, Illinois**, regarding affiliating with another denomination in communion, concur that the decision of Classis Chicago South, in session on July 8, 2025, is in keeping with synodical guidelines regarding multiaffiliation as outlined in Church Order 38-h and its supplement.

R. Church Order Articles 82-83: Deposition of a minister of the Word

<i>Minister of the Word (status)</i>	<i>Classis (date)</i>	<i>Synodical deputies and classes</i>
John Cleveringa	Zeeland	D. Fauble (Grandville)
Deposed	May 21, 2026	A. Van Wolde (Muskegon)
		J. Vanderhooft (Grand Rapids South)

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

— *Adopted*

Rev. John Lee, reporter, offers a prayer of gratitude for the synodical deputies and their work.

ARTICLE 102

The president welcomes Rev. Reggie Smith, Thrive ministry consultant for diversity, to the floor to present the Diversity Connections Advisory Committee report. In keeping with the earlier decision of synod (Art. 101, V, C, 5; p. 733) each of the following individuals offers a brief report to delegates:

- Korean Ministers Association—Rev. Joseph Bae (Lake Erie)
- Consejo Latino—Rev. Jose Rayas (Arizona)
- Native/Indigenous/Red Mesa—Pastor Caleb Dickson (Red Mesa)
- Southeast Asian/Pacific Islander—Rev. Reggie Smith
- Black and Reformed—Rev. Reggie Smith

The general secretary offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the work being done; he also prays for the family of recently deceased Resonate staff member Deibi Kapojos Lapian (Global Coffee Break coordinator).

ARTICLE 103

The president invites the reporters of Advisory Committees 7 and 8 to read aloud the names of potential members of task forces and study committees being appointed by Synod 2026, in keeping with Rules for Synodical Procedure (VII, D, 1).

Recommendations

1. That synod defer the appointment of the study committee on Christian Nationalism to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and Stewart de Jong (member of the advisory committee), to be completed within one month of the conclusion of synod.

— *Adopted*

2. That synod defer the appointment of the task force on Classis Reorganization to the officers of synod, the chair and reporter of the advisory committee, and Shaun Jung (member of the advisory committee), to be completed within one month of the conclusion of synod.

— *Adopted*

Delegates are encouraged to continue to submit names.

ARTICLE 104

Appointments, officers, and functionaries that follow are presented by the general secretary for review and ratification. This listing reflects the results of the synodical elections and appointments by way of the Denominational Boards and Committees ballot on Wednesday morning (see Art. 76) and includes the current study committees synodically approved.

I. Officers, functionaries, and convening church for Synod 2027

A. Officers

1. General secretary: Zachary J. King
2. Director of partnership administration: Roberta Vriesema
3. Director of ecclesiastical governance: Joel Vande Werken

B. Functionaries

Arrangements for Synod 2027: Calvin University Conference and Events Services

C. Convening church

Convening church for Synod 2027: Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan

II. Synodical deputies

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Deputy</i>	<i>Alternate</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Alberta North	Vacant	Vacant	
Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Rev. Gary van Leeuwen	Vacant	2027(1)
Arizona	Rev. Jose Rayas	Rev. Jeff Dykema	2028(1)
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. Michael Saville	Rev. Patrick Guarracino	2027(1)
B.C. North-West	Rev. Andrew E. Beunk	Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma	2027(2)
B.C. South-East	Rev. Wout Brouwer	Vacant	2027(2)
California South	Rev. Harold Caicedo	Rev. Scott Elgersma	2028(1)
Central California	Rev. Bruce Persenaire	Rev. Al Schaap	2027(1)
Central Plains	Rev. Brian Ochsner	Rev. David Swinney	2029(1)
Chicago South	Rev. Bill Sytsma	Rev. Peter Vos	2028(1)
Columbia	Rev. John Van Schepen	Rev. Virgil Michael	2029(2)
Eastern Canada	Rev. C. Gregg Lawson	Rev. Benjamin Gresik	2028(2)
Georgetown	Rev. Doug Kamstra	Rev. Jeremy Rhodes	2029(1)
Grand Rapids East	Vacant	Vacant	
Grand Rapids North	Rev. Richard Britton III	Vacant	2028(1)
Grand Rapids South	Rev. Gary Bekker	Rev. Jeffrey Vander Hooft	2029(2)
Grandville	Rev. Douglas R. Fauble	Rev. Rick Vanderwal	2028(1)
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. David Koll	Rev. Erick D. Westra	2028(1)
Hackensack	Rev. Petr Kornilov	Rev. Paul Van Dyken	2027(2)
Hamilton	Rev. Michael W. Bootsma	Rev. Doug Nieuwstraten	2028(2)
Hanmi	Vacant	Vacant	
Heartland	Rev. Phillip Westra	Rev. Stephen Terpstra	2028(2)
Holland	Rev. Darwin Glassford	Vacant	2027(1)
Hudson	Rev. Moses Kang	Rev. Albert (John) Sideco, Jr.	2028(1)
Huron	Rev. Sidney Couperus	Vacant	2028(2)
Iakota	Rev. Clifford D. Hoekstra	Rev. Steve Zwart	2027(2)
Illiana	Rev. Josh Christoffels	Rev. Cedric Parsels	2029(1)
Kalamazoo	Rev. Jeff Brower	Rev. Simon Tuin	2027(1)

Ko-Am	Rev. Daniel D. Yi	Vacant	2028(2)
Lake Erie	Rev. Randall D. Engle	Rev. Christopher Lanham	2027(1)
Lake Superior	Rev. Brian Bolkema	Rev. Brad Bierma	2029(1)
Minnkota	Rev. Scott M. Muilenburg	Rev. Joseph Steenholdt	2027(1)
Muskegon	Rev. John C. Medendorp	Rev. Art Van Wolde	2028(1)
Niagara	Rev. Bob Loerts	Rev. Ken Benjamins	2029(1)
North Cascades	Pastor Bryan Lanting	Rev. Donald L. Recker	2028(2)
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. Steve Mulder	Rev. Stewart DeJong	2027(1)
Northern Illinois	Rev. Timothy H. Douma	Rev. John R. Huizinga	2029(2)
Northern Michigan	Rev. Mark Bonnes	Rev. Todd Kuperus	2027(2)
Ontario Southwest	Rev. Philip A. Apoll	Rev. Tim Luimes	2027(2)
Pacific Northwest	Rev. Doug Fakkema	Rev. John Knoester	2028(1)
Quinte	Rev. Joshua C. Tuininga	Vacant	2028(2)
Red Mesa	Rev. John J. Greydanus	Pastor Caleb Dickson	2027(2)
Rocky Mountain	Rev. Christian Sebastia	Vacant	2028(1)
Southeast U.S.	Vacant	Vacant	
Thornapple Valley	Rev. Steve Van Zanen	Rev. Scott Greenway	2028(1)
Toronto	Rev. Richard E. Grift	Vacant	2027(2)
Wisconsin	Rev. Greg Schuringa	Rev. Chadd Huizenga	2027(1)
Yellowstone	Rev. Gilbert J. Kamps	Rev. Clair Vander Neut	2027(1)
Zeeland	Rev. Terry D. Slachter	Rev. Mark Vande Zande	2029(2)

III. Denominational boards

A. Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term ends</i>
Alberta North	Wendy Werkman	2028(1)
Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Lee Himbeault	2028(1)
Arizona	Brian Tarpy	2029(1)
Atlantic Northeast	Henry Lane	2028(1)
B.C. North-West	Hyung-Jun Kim	2029(2)
B.C. South-East	Andre Van Ryk	2029(2)
California South	H. John Jansen	2029(2)
Central California	Mark VanDyke	2027(2)
Central Plains	Erik Kamp	2028(2)
Chicago South	Chris Pedersen	2027(1)
Columbia	Rob J. Toornstra	2027(2)
Eastern Canada	Joan DeVries	2027(1)
Georgetown	Jeanne Kallemeyn	2027(2)
Grand Rapids East	Cynthia VanderKodde	2029(1)
Grand Rapids North	Ronald L. Karelse	2029(2)
Grand Rapids South	Willem de Vries	2027(1)
Grandville	David Bouwkamp	2029(1)
Greater Los Angeles	Fernando Valencia	2029(1)
Hackensack	Joyce G. Jackson	2029(2)
Hamilton	Mike Bekendam	2028(1)
Hanmi	Vacant	
Heartland	Loren Veldhuizen	2028(2)
Holland	David Spoelma	2027(1)
Hudson	Roy G. Heerema	2027(2)
Huron	Peter Meerveld	2027(2)
Iakota	Robert Drenten	2027(1)
Illiana	Gerritt Wieringa	2029(1)
Kalamazoo	Jeff Blamer	2028(1)
Ko-Am	Jonathan J. Kim	2027(2)

Lake Erie	Alex Snider	2028(1)
Lake Superior	Willy Krahnke	2029(2)
Minnkota	Eric Van Dyken	2027(1)
Muskegon	John Huyser	2029(1)
Niagara	Janet deVries	2029(2)
North Cascades	Bryan Dick	2028(1)
Northcentral Iowa	Herbert W. Schreur	2028(2)
Northern Illinois	Craig Buma	2029(1)
Northern Michigan	Jim Winkel	2028(2)
Ontario Southwest	Phillip Apoll	2029(2)
Pacific Northwest	Douglas Fakkema	2027(1)
Quinte	Ronald Van Auken	2029(2)
Red Mesa	Gregory Morris	2029(1)
Rocky Mountain	Mike Johnson	2028(2)
Southeast U.S.	Felix Fernandez	2028(1)
Thornapple Valley	Vacant	
Toronto	Michael Irshad	2027(2)
Wisconsin	Charles Adams	2027(1)
Yellowstone	Clair Vander Neut	2029(1)
Zeeland	Lloyd Hemstreet	2027(1)
Canada at-large	Ken Benjamins	2029(1)
	Gregg Lawson	2028(1)
	Linda Van Sligtenhorst	2028(1)
	A. Henry Eygenraam	2027(2)
	David van Der Woerd	2029(1)
United States at-large	Christian Sebastia	2029(2)
	Aleah Marsden	2029(1)
Ex officio	Zachary J. King, general secretary	

B. COD Advisory Committees

1. Bible Translations Committee

William Krahnke, Wendy Werkman, Benjamin Ribbens, Michael Williams, Gabriela Tijerina-Pike, Susan Medendorp, William Koopmans (chair), Joel Vande Werken (staff convener)

2. Banner Advisory Committee

Mark VanDyke (chair, 2027/2), Ron Van Auken (2029/2), Michelle vander Wal (non-COD), Sarah Timmer (non-COD), Dan DeKam (ex officio), Dean Heetderks (ex officio), Al Postma (ex officio), Roberta Vriesema (ex officio)

3. Reformed Benefits Association Board (CRC representatives)

Trevor Deters (2027/2), Karen Walker (2027/2), Joel Sheeres (2028/1), Carol Koppenaar (ex officio, CRC staff)

C. Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees

Note: Members of the Calvin Theological Seminary regional board are elected from the following twelve regions:

Region 1—Classes B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East

Region 2—Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan, and Lake Superior (Canadian congregations)

Region 3—Classes Eastern Canada, Quinte, and Toronto

Region 4—Classes Hamilton, Huron, Niagara, and Ontario Southwest

Region 5—Classes Columbia, North Cascades, Pacific Northwest, and Yellowstone
Region 6—Classes California South, Central California, Greater Los Angeles, Hanmi, and Ko-Am
Region 7—Classes Arizona, Red Mesa, and Rocky Mountain
Region 8—Classes Central Plains, Heartland, Iakota, Lake Superior (U.S. congregations), Minnkota, and Northcentral Iowa
Region 9—Classes Chicago South, Illiana, Northern Illinois, and Wisconsin
Region 10—Classes Georgetown, Holland, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Northern Michigan, and Zeeland
Region 11—Classes Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Lake Erie, and Thornapple Valley
Region 12—Classes Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson, and Southeast U.S.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Region 1	E. Alan van der Woerd	2028(2)
Region 2	Gary Van Leeuwen	2029(1)
Region 3	Heidi Blokland*	2029(1)
Region 4	Mark Verbruggen	2028(2)
Region 5	Sue Imig	2028(2)
Region 6	Julius Umawing	2027(2)
Region 7	Daniel Bud	2027(1)
Region 8	John Lee	2027(1)
Region 9	Derek Buikema	2027(1)
Region 10	Arthur J. Van Wolde	2027(2)
Region 11	Paul DeVries	2029(1)
Region 12	Kris J. Vos	2028(2)

Regional at-large (eligible for two 3-year terms)

Region 4	Brian Verheul	2027(2)
Region 8	John Wesselius	2027(1)
Region 10	Grace Kreulen	2027(1)
Region 11	Tom Nobel	2027(1)
At-large	Ronald Baylor	2029(1)
At-large	Christian Oh	2029(3)
At-large	Henry Doorn	2028(1)
At-large	Ed Gerber	2029(1)
At-large	Hessel Kielstra	2028(3)

*Provisionally ratified pending classical action

D. Calvin University Board of Trustees

Note: Members of the Calvin University regional board are elected from the following six regions:

Region 1—Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/Saskatchewan, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East, and Lake Superior (Canadian)
Region 2—Classes Eastern Canada, Hamilton, Huron, Niagara, Ontario Southwest (formerly Chatham), Quinte, and Toronto
Region 3—Classes Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson, and Southeast U.S.

Region 4—Classes Georgetown, Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Holland, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie, Muskegon, Northern Michigan, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland

Region 5—Classes Central Plains, Chicago South, Heartland, Iakota, Illiana, Lake Superior (U.S.), Minnkota, Northcentral Iowa, Northern Illinois, Wisconsin, and Yellowstone (Montana congregations)

Region 6—Classes Arizona, California South, Central California, Columbia, Greater Los Angeles, Hanmi, Ko-Am, North Cascades, Pacific Northwest, Red Mesa, Rocky Mountain, and Yellowstone (Utah congregations)

<i>Region</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Region 1	Jack Beeksma	2029(2)
Region 2	John Valk	2028(1)
Region 3	James J. Lee	2029(1)
Region 4	Tyler Wagenmaker	2027(1)
Region 5	Kathleen Ridder	2028(2)
Region 6	Gary D. Bos	2027(2)
Regional at-large (up to ten total)		
Region 2	Lambert (Tony) Kamphuis	2028(2)
Region 4	Eugene (Gene) Miyamoto	2028(2)
Region 4	Carolyn Van Allen	2028(2)
Region 4	vacant	2029(1)
Region 4	James Zwiers	2027(1)
Region 4	Shirley Hoogstra	2027(1)
Region 5	Adam Ramirez	2029(2)
Region 5	Brian Boomsma	2027(2)
Region 6	Kevin Adams	2027(2)
Region 6	Cathy Van Donselaar	2028(1)
Alumni trustees		
Alumni	Bryan Dik	2028(1)
Alumni	Pamela Marmon	2029(1)
Alumni	James Valk	2029(2)
At-large trustees		
At-large	Niala Boodhoo	2027(2)
At-large	Jori Brink	2029(1)
At-large	Jonathan (Jona) Eigege	2027(2)
At-large	Andrew Elliot	2027(3)
At-large	Perrin Rynders	2028(1)
At-large	Nancy Schoonmaker	2028(1)
At-large	Heather Van Vugt Ramirez	2027(3)
At-large	Leslie VanderGriend	2028(1)
At-large	Mindy Vanden Bosch	2028(2)
At-large	Kyle Yonker	2029(1)
At-large	Anthony (Tony) Brookhouse	2029(2)
At-large	Moses Chung	2029(2)

E. World Renew Board

<i>Classis</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Term Ends</i>
Alberta North	Margaret Hoogland*	2027(2)
Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	Glenn Minnesma	2029(1)
Arizona	Vacant	

Atlantic Northeast	Vacant	
B.C. North-West	Fred Reitsma	2028(1)
B.C. South-East	John Bandstra	2028(1)
California South	Donald Waterlander	2029(2)
Central California	Vacant	
Central Plains	Vacant	
Chicago South	Donald Waterlander	2029(2)
Columbia	John VanSchepen	2029(2)
Eastern Canada	Vacant	2027(2)
Georgetown	Vacant	
Grand Rapids East	Teresa Kelly	2028(1)
Grand Rapids North	Vacant	
Grand Rapids South	Vacant	
Grandville	Bev Abma*	2029(2)
Greater Los Angeles	Tae Kim	2028(1)
Hackensack	Kenneth McBain*	2028(2)
Hanmi	Vacant	
Hamilton	Steve McKnight	2028(1)
Heartland	Kimberly Starkenburg*	2029(2)
Holland	Dwayne Nienhuis	2028(1)
Hudson	Linda Van Lenten	2028(1)
Huron	Evelyn Knetsch	2028(1)
Iakota	Ronald Vos	2029(2)
Illiana	Vacant	
Kalamazoo	William Fernhout	2027(1)
Ko-Am	Vacant	
Lake Erie	Vacant	2029(1)
Lake Superior (Canada)	Dianne Heerema	2028(1)
Lake Superior (U.S.)	Paul Vliem	2029(2)
Minnkota	Rick Fey	2027(1)
Muskegon	Donald Byker	2028(1)
Niagara	Lawrence DeGraaf	2028(1)
North Cascades	Vacant	
Northcentral Iowa	Vacant	
Northern Illinois	Donald Van Beek	2028(1)
Northern Michigan	Jared Yapple	2029(2)
Ontario Southwest	Nell Vrolyk	2029(2)
Pacific Northwest	Vacant	
Quinte	Vacant	2029(1)
Red Mesa	Darlene Silversmith	2029(1)
Rocky Mountain	Vacant	
Southeast U.S.	Aury Florez	2028(1)
Thornapple Valley	Adejoke Ayoola	2028(1)
Toronto	Vacant	
Wisconsin	Christine Jeske	2027(1)
Yellowstone	Vacant	
Zeeland	Cindra Dozeman	2028(1)
Pastoral adviser (U.S.)	Emmett Harrison	2029(1)
Pastoral adviser (Can.)	Cari Fydirchuk*	2027(1)
At-large Canada	Jeffrey Adams*	2029(2)
	Darryl Beck*	2027(2)
	Harry Bergshoeff*	2028(2)
	Steve Morris	2029(1)
	Gordon Van Vliet*	2027(1)
	Jane VanderVelden	2026(2)

At-large U.S.	Donn Hansum*	2027(1)
	Graham Seel*	2027(1)
	Krystle Sanders	2028(1)
	Bishop Lawrence Dena	2028(1)
	John Hoekwater	2028(1)
	Benjamin VanderWindt*	2028(1)

* Also a member of the Board of Directors

Joint Ministry Council = 7 members from U.S. Board, 8 members from Canada Board

IV. Standing Committees

A. Candidacy Committee

Andrew Beunk (chair, 2027/2), Paula Seales (2029/1), Caleb Dickson (2027/2), Moses Kang (2029/1), Henry Kranenburg (2028/2), Andy Sytsma (2028/2), Mark Bennink (2028/1), Michael Koetje (2028/1), Shaun Jung (2028/1), Susan LaClear (staff), Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), Zachary King (ex officio, as general secretary)

B. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. Committee

Dale Burghgraef (chair, 2029/2), Jeffrey DeYoung (2027/1), Carl Kromminga (2028/2), Wayne Postma (2029/2), Michael Westra (2027/1), Ray Slager (2028/1), Layla Kuhl (ex officio member)

C. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

Jake Bentum (2028/2), Marno Retief (2027/1), Eleanor Boersma Sarkany (2027/1), Ryan Braam (2027/1), William Krahne (2029/2), Shirley Roels (chair, 2028/2), Joshua Johnson (2029/2), Sheila Holmes (2029/2), William Wilton (2028/1), Chad Steenwyk (2028/1), Zachary King (ex officio, as general secretary), Al Postma (ex officio, as executive director-Canada)

D. Historical Committee

John Greydanus (2029/1), Rich Sytsma (chair, 2028/1), Jessica Joustra (2028/1), Jay Shim (2029/1), Donald Sinnema (2027/1), Jose Rayas (2029/1), William Katerberg (ex officio, as curator of Heritage Hall), Greg Elzinga (ex officio, as Calvin University president), Zachary King (ex officio), Jul Medenblik (ex officio, as Calvin Theological Seminary president)

E. Judicial Code Committee

Richard Bodini (2027/2), Andrew Diemer (2029/1), Heidi de Vries (2029/2), Robert D. Drenten (2028/2), Henry Lane (2027/1), Sarita Vandernaalt (2028/2), Gerritt Wieringa (chair, 2029/2), Randall Engle (2028/1), Justin Snyder (2028/1), Jill Friend (2028/1), Leah Nieuwstraten (2028/1), Todd Zuidema (2029/1), Zachary J. King (adviser)

F. Ministers' Pension Funds committees

Canadian Pension Trustees

Daryl DeKlerk (chair, 2028/2), Hessel Kielstra (2027/2), Jacob Vanden Pol (2027/2), Dick Vreugdenhil (2028/3), Janet Baird (2028/1)

U.S. Pension Trustees

Darrel Raih (2027/3), David Schutt (2029/1), Drew Sweetman (chair, 2028/2), Alan Van Dyke (2028/3), Luke Kloosterman (2028/1)

V. Synodical study committees and task forces

A. Committee to Study Christian Nationalism

Membership to be determined by the officers of Synod 2026

B. Task Force on Classis Restructuring

Membership to be determined by the officers of Synod 2026

VI. Recommendation

That synod ratify the above changes to the lists of synodical deputies, denominational boards, and committees.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 105

The general secretary presents final announcements and expressions of appreciation. He expresses the gratitude of synod to the four officers of synod and presents them with gifts.

The president expresses appreciation for the delegates for their service to the church, and he thanks worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp and the delegates who led in worship.

ARTICLE 106

To begin the closing worship service, the assembly sings “He Will Hold Me Fast,” led by synod worship committee convener Rachel Bouwkamp, Ralph Mueller (Thornapple Valley), David Dick (Lake Superior), Roberta Vriesema (director of partnership administration), Ben Gresik (Eastern Canada), and Zach Flipse (Wisconsin). The parliamentarian, Rev. Michael Winowski, offers words of thanks for Rev. Jon Hoekema and the prayer intercessors, the musicians, and the readers. He invites delegates to “ask the Lord” (Psalm 2:8) and makes space for prayer. Delegates respond by singing “Spirit of the Living God.” The president of synod, Rev. Chad Steenwyk, reads Psalm 89:1-8, and offers a message. The passage ends in lament, but the psalmist first recites and declares the faithfulness of God. The president urges delegates not to forget the visions and hopes expressed during the first days of synod, emphasizing that these are sustained by remembering and resting in God’s faithfulness. He states that even though faithfulness was synod’s theme, the word “gospel” came through again and again. He concludes with confidence in God’s ongoing mercy and faithfulness. The assembly receives a blessing and closes by singing the doxology “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow.”

ARTICLE 107

Synod 2026 adjourns at 12:16 p.m.

APPENDIX A

Calvin University Faculty Development Plans

Kuiper Seminar for New Faculty
Faculty Development for the 1st Year
Syllabus: Schedule and Content



Meeting Time (typically weekly)	Content	Primary focus area			
		Teaching and Learning	Christian Teaching	Reformed Perspectives and Forebearers	Theology
August Workshop (1/2 day)	Introductions. Mission and Calling—Calvin's Reformed Christian Project			X	
FALL SEMESTER					
1	Continuation of August 20 workshop				
2	Designing Assignments	X			
3	Exams Assessment	X			
4	Workshop 1—John Calvin+			X	
5	Engaging Scripture				X
6	Covenant, Baptism, and the Church				X
7	Who are Calvin Students?	X			
8	A Model for T&L	X			
9	Model Applications	X			
10	Engagement and Discussions	X			
11	Memory Retrieval	X			
12	Workshop 2—Abraham Kuyper+			X	
SPRING SEMESTER					
1	Regathering				
2	Christian Teaching I – Community		X		
3	Christian Teaching II - Perspective		X		
4	Christian Teaching III – Contemplation		X		
5	Christian Teaching IV - Hope		X		
6	Christian Teaching V - Formation		X		
7	Teaching Workshop – Applications from Christian Teaching I - V		X		
8	Workshop 3—Jonathan Edwards			X	
March 25	Election				X
April 2	FEN ¹ and Reformed Commitments				X
April 9	Scholarship—perspectives and paradigms			X	
April 16	Workshop 4--Augustine			X	
April 23	CCAF ²			X	X
May	Celebration Lunch				

¹FEN is Calvin University's *From Every Nation* ([From Every Nation | Calvin University](#))

²CCAF is Calvin University's *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom* ([Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom | Calvin University](#))



DE VRIES INSTITUTE

FOR GLOBAL FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

an institute of Calvin University

Faith and Learning Fellowship

2nd Year Faculty Members

Spring, 2026

Fellowship Facilitator

Matt Lundberg
De Vries Institute director

Goals for the Fellowship

Long-Term Goals:

- To deepen your capacity, as a *person* and *scholar*, to connect Reformed Christian faith to your academic work in meaningful and compelling ways.
- To strengthen your *community* of support at Calvin University.
- To help you to become a *long-term contributor* to the Reformed identity and mission of Calvin University.

Short-Term Goals (i.e., main tasks for the fellowship) :

- *To read* important writings on faith and learning in general, including the Reformed confessions, and writings related to your particular academic discipline.
- *To converse* about faith and learning in your discipline and across disciplinary borders.
- *To write* about the theory and practice of linking Reformed Christian faith and academic work from your own perspective. You will write a draft faith and learning integrative essay for your next reappointment.

Time Expectations

You are receiving four hours of teaching release time in the spring semester. Accordingly, you are expected to take the amount of time you would have spent teaching that four-hour course and devote it to activities related to the connection between Christian faith and learning in your work as a Calvin faculty member.

In addition to time for cohort activities, this teaching release includes significant time for *independent* reading and study, as well as for meetings with your companion scholar. You will need to be organized and intentional to make sure you prioritize time for this fellowship; otherwise, the time will inevitably be swallowed up by other responsibilities you have.

Companion Scholar

You have been assigned a senior faculty member to provide mentorship during your Faith and Learning Fellowship. You will meet three times per month during the spring semester. Your conversations should be on the *faith* dimension of Calvin's identity and

mission, especially how your work at Calvin—teaching, scholarship, advising, service—intersects with and contributes to that mission. In these conversations, please remain mindful of that intended focus on *faith and learning*.

Final Writing Assignment

Write an essay (2000 words minimum) that demonstrates how Reformed Christian faith grounds and informs your work in higher education. Give attention to how faith commitments (theological, philosophical, and practical) intersect with the assumptions, methods, subject matter, and implementation of your vocational field(s).

Note: This writing prompt is the prompt for the integrative essay required for re-appointment. Note: Early in the summer you will be invited to participate in a workshop focused on the reappointment process. Significant time in the workshop will be devoted to peer review of your revised paper drafts.

Give your essay to your Companion Scholar and Matt Lundberg for comment and feedback. Due: May 15.

Funds for Books and Conferences

As part of your participation in this Faith & Learning Fellowship, the de Vries Institute will provide up to \$600 for: (1) reading material related to Christian faith and your academic work; (2) help with registration or travel costs for conferences related to faith and learning. Process your expenditures through Workday using Program worktag “DVI Faith & Learning Fellowships.” If you're unsure whether an expenditure qualifies for these funds, please talk to Matt Lundberg beforehand.

Schedule of Cohort Gatherings

All sessions are from 1:30-3:00pm, with one cohort meeting on Wednesdays (Hie-menga Hall 320) and another cohort meeting on Thursdays (Hekman Library 406C—Sandbox classroom).

- **January 21/22: Re-Introductions and Introduction to the F&L Fellowship**
- **February 4/5: Christian Convictions and Academic Life**
 - Reading assignment: chapters 4 and 5 of George Marsden’s book, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*.
 - Discussion of how Christian convictions can inform how we approach our academic areas (including both teaching and scholarship)
 - Informal writing assignment: 1 page “stream of consciousness” reflection on how Reformed Christian faith matters for your work in higher ed (e.g., how your academic discipline works, teaching, scholarship, professional practice, whatever applies to your appointment at Calvin). Email to Matt by February 6. The purpose: to get some preliminary thoughts onto paper.
- **February 11/12: Reformed Resources: The Belgic Confession**
 - Reading assignment: Carefully read the *Belgic Confession* (found in the *Our Faith* book you were given during the Kuiper Seminar).

- We will discuss sections you note as particularly fertile for faith integration in your disciplinary area, as well as sections you note as prompting questions for you.
- **February 18/19: Reformed Resources: The Heidelberg Catechism**
 - Reading assignment: Carefully read *The Heidelberg Catechism* (also found in the *Our Faith* book).
 - We will discuss sections you note as especially generative for faith integration in your disciplinary area and sections you note as raising questions for you.
- **February 25-26: Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom Interlude on Election and Reprobation**
 - Reading assignment: *Belgic Confession*, art. 16; the *Canons of Dordt* (in the *Our Faith* book), pp. 119-130; *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom*, pp. 9-38.
 - The doctrine of election is an area of Reformed theology in which some Calvin faculty members have historically had questions and/or expressed some disagreement. We will discuss this topic with an eye to (1) what the doctrine teaches; (2) what objections are sometimes made; (3) promising answers to those objections; and (4) the university's policies and expectations regarding faculty responsibilities vis-à-vis confessional differences.
 - With this meeting, we will also kick off a three week online Reflecting Faith course [requiring approximately 10 hours of work, which will be *paused* during Spring Break!] on what it means that humanity is created in God's image. You will receive a specific schedule for this course, as well as regular email reminders of your upcoming tasks. We will debrief this RF course, its readings, and your final activity, at the next cohort meeting.
 - Though it will be a month until our next meeting (due to Spring Break and Advising Break), we will be engaging with one another through the LMS for this Reflecting Faith course. You will also continue with your independent work and your regular meetings with your companion scholar.
- **April 1-2: Faith Integration in Action**
 - The three week Reflecting Faith course illustrates a reliable method/approach for faith integration—starting with biblical *roots*, developed further in conversation with *reflections* from contemporary scholarship, and culminating in practical *application* specific to the questions, methods, and challenges of particular academic disciplines.
 - Reading assignment: Texts included in the Reflecting Faith course on *Humanity in God's Image*.
 - We will debrief this exercise in faith integration by discussing the activities you complete for the final forum in the course.
- **April 15-16: Theological Anthropology: Students and Scholarship**
 - Reading assignment: Selections from James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*.

- We will discuss how Christian theology and philosophy, especially perspectives from the Augustinian tradition, can inform how we think about the human beings we work with in the scholarly life—first and foremost our students, but also the human beings we sometimes interact with and study in our research.
- Writing assignment: Bring a brief outline of your final paper; be ready to give a brief summary to the members of your cohort.
- **April 29/30: Final Presentations**
 - You will each give a 5-8 minute oral presentation of the topic you are writing about in your final paper. There will then be 5-8 minutes for questions and critique of each presentation.
 - Final papers are due to Matt Lundberg and your companion scholar by May 15.

APPENDIX B

Calvin University Faculty Handbook Excerpts on Confessional Alignment

3.5 / FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES, EXPECTATIONS, AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

3.5.1 / *Commitment to the Mission of the University*

Calvin University has a long tradition of thought and exposition concerning its mission. In its briefest form, the university's mission statement reads as follows:

Calvin University equips students
to think deeply,
to act justly,
and to live wholeheartedly
as Christ's agents of renewal in the world.

Beyond this and other concise mission statements, the university community has published comprehensive statements of purpose, most notably the *Expanded Statement of Mission* (1992, rev. 2004), *From Every Nation: The Revised Comprehensive Plan for Racial Justice, Reconciliation and Cross-Cultural Engagement at Calvin College* (2004), and *Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom: Principles and Practices at Calvin College* (2016). Faculty members of the university are expected to become familiar with the content of these documents and to accept and work in accordance with these statements of the university's commitments, outlook and aims. These documents are important to any faculty member seeking to know the current collective mind of the university and to commit to Calvin's mission. They are attempts to interpret the Word of God, the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions and apply their truths to contemporary educational

purposes. These documents therefore are derivative in nature, subject to revision or replacement, and are not confessional.

More foundational to the university's mission is its identity as a confessional Christian institution. It seeks to carry out its mission in fidelity to the Word of God as interpreted in the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions. Membership in the Calvin University teaching faculty therefore requires adherence to these standards of faith and engagement in the ministry of God's people who gather under them. This adherence serves not only as a bond in forming the academic community but also as a basis for the responsibilities of the faculty. This adherence is part of what is expected of faculty in the Reformed Christian Commitment category of reappointment but is elaborated here, given its foundational nature.

3.5.1.1 / Affirming the Ecumenical Creeds and Signing the Covenant for Faculty Members

Prior to the time of hire and throughout their employment at Calvin, enfranchised faculty members are required to affirm the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds and affirm the mission of Calvin University. They must also agree to align personal and professional conduct, including teaching, scholarship, advocacy, public pronouncements, advising, and mentoring with the CRCNA's confessional standards and synodical interpretations thereof. Additionally, faculty are expected to model faithfulness, including teachability and humility, even in disagreement, and to honor the university's denominational relationship. Teaching must authentically represent CRCNA teachings while fairly and respectfully engaging differing perspectives, without advocating positions that contradict denominational standards. Further aspects of faculty conduct with respect to Christian community are described in [section 3.5.2](#).

At the time of their first reappointment, enfranchised faculty members are required to sign the *Covenant for Faculty Members*, in which they affirm the three historic Reformed forms of unity—the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*—and pledge to teach, speak, and write in harmony with the confessions.

Normally, faculty and administrators with faculty status (e.g., provost, deans, university pastor) who supervise the confessional alignment of employees with faculty status must sign the *Covenant for Faculty Members* immediately upon taking the role.

The current *Covenant for Faculty Members* reads as follows:

We, [the undersigned], believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Athanasian Creed*—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In

doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, whose doctrines fully agree with the Word of God. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them. We heartily believe and will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is not the teaching of God’s Word, we will communicate our views to the Board of Trustees, according to the procedures prescribed by the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty*. If the board asks, we will give a full explanation of our views. Further, we promise to submit to the board’s judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This *Covenant for Faculty Members* is based on the *Covenant for Officebearers* in the Christian Reformed Church adopted by Synod in 2012,¹ but clearly spells out that the university’s Board of Trustees, rather than a faculty member’s church council, is the body charged with confessional oversight for teaching, scholarly activities, and other university-related work.

Faculty members who are also church officebearers sign a slightly different covenant with respect to their service as officebearers which names the church council as the oversight body. In this situation, the faculty member serves under the authority of two complementary oversight bodies: the university’s Board of Trustees provides oversight for the teaching, scholarly activities and other university-related work of the faculty member; the congregation’s council provides oversight for service related to the life of the local congregation. At the same time, the university recognizes that while

¹ Adapted from the *Covenant for Officebearers in the Reformed Church* (2012)
<http://www.crcna.org/resources/church-resources/liturgical-forms/ordination-installation/covenant-officebearers>.

these functions may be distinguished, they are also difficult to separate. For this reason, the Board of Trustees requests that when a faculty member who is also an officebearer has “a difficulty with these doctrines or reaches views differing from them,” that this concern be disclosed both to the church council and to the Board of Trustees. The board commits to work with the church council to maintain the authority that is appropriate to each body.

While Calvin models its understanding of affirming the *Covenant for Faculty Members* in part on *Church Order*, the university’s understanding of affirming the *Covenant for Faculty Members* also takes into account its identity as an academic institution.

For officebearers in the church, the meaning of affirming the confessions is described in the church order of the Christian Reformed Church (e.g., *Church Order*, Article 5, and its supplements), which currently reads:²

1. The person signing the *Covenant for Officebearers* affirms without reservation all the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions of the church as being doctrines taught in the Word of God.
2. “Without reservation” means that an officebearer does not have—to the best of their knowledge—either a persistent serious doubt or a settled conviction contrary to any of the doctrines contained in the creeds and confessions. This includes what Synod has declared to have confessional status.
3. “Without reservation” does not mean that a signatory has an exhaustive knowledge of confessional Reformed theology. Nor does it mean that a signatory does not struggle emotionally with some doctrine. Nor does it mean that a signatory fully understands some doctrine.
4. The signatory does not by affirming the confessions declare that these doctrines are all stated in the best possible manner, or that the standards of our church cover all that the Scriptures teach on the matters confessed. Nor does the signatory declare that every teaching of the Scriptures is set forth in our confessions, or that every heresy is rejected and refuted by them.
5. A signatory is bound only to those doctrines that are confessed, and is not bound to the references, allusions, and remarks that are incidental to the formulation of these doctrines, nor to the theological deductions that some may draw from the doctrines set forth in the confessions. However, no one is free to decide for oneself or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine confessed in the standards. In the event that such a question should arise, the decision of the assemblies of the church shall be sought and acquiesced in.

² *Church Order and Its Supplements 2025* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2025), pp. 14–15, *Church Order 2025*

The university's understanding of affirming the confessions and signing the *Covenant for Faculty Members* is consistent with the CRCNA position described in *Church Order* but emphasizes that good-faith affirmation of the covenant may come in the context of doubt, especially as that relates to a scholar's calling to serious inquiry. A settled conviction incompatible with or contrary to a confessional teaching or synodical interpretation requires submission of a confessional difficulty or exception gravamen.

The confessions are documents that belong to the church. For the ongoing life and work of the CRC and its agencies and educational institutions, the authority to make binding judgments about the meaning and implications of the confessions is assigned to synod. Under the authority of synod, the church assigns authority for the life of the university to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees, in turn, assigns authority within the university's governance system, in which decisions about personnel and confessional interpretation are assigned to the Professional Status Committee (PSC).

When the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has issued a formal interpretation of the confessions, that interpretation shall be binding for Calvin University. When a disagreement about confessional interpretation arises, PSC may, after reviewing prior synodical action on the topic and in consultation with experts in confessional interpretation, theology and church polity, recommend to the Board of Trustees (a) that the board issue a judgment about the meaning and implications of the confessions for the work of the university on the topic in question, and (b) what that judgment should be. PSC shall seek to make a recommendation that is consistent with the Christian Reformed Church's approach to affirming the confessions in general and to the issue at hand. Any judgment of the Board of Trustees is in turn subject to the judgment of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

3.5.1.1.1 / Procedure for Expressing Confessional Differences

3.5.1.1.1.1 / Procedure for Expressing Confessional Difficulty Gravamina

The *Covenant for Faculty Members* and section 3.5.1.1 of the *Handbook for Teaching Faculty* specify that faculty members who do not agree with a portion of the confessions or synodical interpretations of the confessions are required to communicate their views in writing to the Board of Trustees, either at the time they sign the *Covenant for Faculty Members* or at any later time when a disagreement arises. The Board of Trustees assigns to PSC the duty to receive these communications, following appropriate consultation with the faculty member, and to advise the board about the appropriate action. PSC will ordinarily include a member of the Board of Trustees in its deliberations on these communications.

A confessional difficulty gravamen will be evaluated for Biblical engagement and grounding in the Reformed confessions, as well as relevant scholarship, if included. The individual's role at the university and record of

aligning conduct with university expectations will also be reviewed at this time. On these bases, the PSC determines whether the difference is a) disqualifying for continued employment, or b) should initiate a 2-3-year period of study, mentorship, and discernment for the faculty member. Recommendations go to the Board of Trustees for approval. PSC will inform the faculty member and the department chair of its recommendation.

If the gravamen is approved by the Board of Trustees, the faculty member will be paired with a mentor designated by the Board of Trustees for a period of study and discernment that privileges the position of the CRCNA and aims for alignment, even while being open to a possible confessional exception in the end. Faculty with approved exceptions must adhere to all university conduct requirements, in addition to possible role-specific guidelines for teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and public speech. During the time of study and discernment, the university will also provide structured opportunities to understand better the university's relationship to the CRCNA and the university's related expectations of institutional citizenship. If, at any time, the faculty member finds that they agree with the confessions, the formal period of mentorship and discernment may end. If the faculty member reaches the end of their discernment period and still has a settled conviction incompatible with or contrary to a confessional teaching or synodical interpretation thereof, then they may either submit a confessional exception gravamen or resign from the university (subject to the customary terminal year—see [section 3.5.1.1.1.2](#)).

3.5.1.1.1.2 / Procedure for Expressing Confessional Exception Gravamina

At the six-year reappointment review or a later time for faculty who expressed a confessional difficulty gravamen after the tenure or six-year-term reappointment, faculty who have completed the prescribed period of study, mentorship, and discernment and retain a settled conviction incompatible with or contrary to a confessional teaching or synodical interpretation thereof must submit a confessional exception gravamen to the Board of Trustees via the PSC.

The PSC will assess whether the difference is substantial and either a) disqualifying for continued employment or b) permissible as an indefinite exception. Approval requires strong biblical engagement and grounding in Reformed confessions, as well as relevant scholarship, if included. Recommendations are sent to the Board of Trustees, which may approve, revise, or reject them. PSC will inform the faculty member and the department chair of its recommendation. Faculty with approved exceptions must adhere to all university conduct requirements, in addition to possible role-specific guidelines for teaching, scholarship, advocacy, and public speech.

Confessional difficulties that were approved prior to the 2025-2026 academic year will be considered to be like approved confessional exception gravamina.

Faculty whose confessional differences are not approved will normally be granted the conventional “terminal year” of employment, which will last for a full academic year after the decision is made. At the Board of Trustees’ discretion a terminal year may not be granted for a difficulty with a doctrine taught in or foundational to the ecumenical creeds, or if the employee has not met the university’s expectations for alignment of personal and professional conduct.

3.5.1.1.1.3 / Procedures for Appealing PSC and Board Decisions Related to Gravamina

Faculty members who disagree with PSC’s recommendation may (a) request that PSC reconsider or clarify its recommendation in light of additional information, or (b) request that the Board of Trustees not accede to PSC’s recommendation.

If the president disagrees with PSC’s recommendation, the president may (a) request that the board ask PSC to reconsider its recommendation in light of additional information, or (b) ask the Board of Trustees not to accede to the recommendation.

If the Board of Trustees disagrees with PSC’s recommendation, the board may (a) request PSC to reconsider its recommendation in light of additional information, or (b) decline to accede to its recommendation. If the board does not accede to the recommendation of PSC, the matter may be referred back to PSC for PSC to develop an alternate recommendation prior to the next regularly scheduled board meeting. If an alternate recommendation is not subsequently approved by the board or if PSC does not offer an alternative recommendation, the board could choose to develop its own judgment for the topic or position at hand.

The board shall communicate both its decisions and supporting rationale to PSC and to the faculty member in question. During all deliberations, the president and provost serve the Board of Trustees by ensuring the best possible expertise is available to the board and by being present during its deliberations.

If the faculty member disagrees with the board’s decision, he or she may (a) request that the board reconsider or clarify its decision in light of additional information, or (b) appeal the board’s decision to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, through the appropriate procedures described in the *Rules for Synodical Procedure*.

Copies of both the original communication related to the confessional disagreement and the board’s response shall be retained in the faculty member’s personnel file.

In all these matters, PSC and the Board of Trustees should be governed by a desire to promote confessional integrity, due process, and the kind of constructive engagement with difficult issues that will serve the Christian community at large.

In addition to these university procedures, faculty members may use the formal procedures designated by the Christian Reformed Church for expressing a difficulty with the confessions (a confessional difficulty *gravamen*) or proposing a change to the confessions (a confessional revision *gravamen*) as described in the church order of the Christian Reformed Church. Faculty members who do so should inform PSC of their intent. In some circumstances, PSC may also request that a faculty member pursue these processes.

3.5.1.1.2 / Annual Reaffirmation of Previous Commitments

Each year all enfranchised faculty are required to actively reaffirm the commitments they have previously made. All faculty and administrators with faculty status will be required to affirm the three ecumenical creeds, support for the mission of the university, and commitment to alignment in action with the standards of the CRCNA. All who have signed the *Covenant for Faculty Members* will also reaffirm their commitment to that covenant.

3.5.2 / Faculty Conduct

Calvin University expects every employee to become part of a Christian community in which we are accountable to and responsible for each other. An essential element of our responsibility to the community and to one another is to strive always to “lead a life worthy of God, who has called you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12).

Theological affirmation entails moral commitment. The *Heidelberg Catechism*, which is formally endorsed by each member of the regular faculty, describes the normal rhythm of Christian life as “dying away” and “coming to life.” When our old self dies away, we grieve our sin, hate it, and flee from it. When our new self comes to life, we take wholehearted joy in God through Christ, and we delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to. The good that God wants has been expressed in the moral teachings of the Scriptures, explained in the Catechism’s elaboration of the Ten Commandments, epitomized in the words and deeds of our Savior, and taught to the church by the apostles and by the theologians who have served the church in every age.

Faculty members at Calvin University are therefore expected to exemplify personal integrity, honesty, respect, humility, courage, liberality, gratitude, gentleness, kindness, patience and self-control in their words and actions. Many of these qualities are identified by the apostle Paul as the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5), and faculty members strive with God’s help to demonstrate these virtues both in their professional activities and in their personal lives. In this way they invite others to know the reconciliation that is offered by God in Christ and to live up to God’s demand for justice in society. It is part of the calling of the faculty to speak out against wickedness and injustice in society and in the world and to be agents of God’s righteousness and peace. Members of the Calvin faculty are called to build one another up in faith and in virtue and to serve others as citizens of God’s kingdom.

Implementation of these standards and expectations is both a communal and an individual responsibility, and each member of the Calvin faculty is accountable to his or her colleagues in matters of ethical conduct no less than in scholarship and teaching. Alignment of personal and professional conduct with the CRCNA's confessional standards and synodical interpretations thereof is described in section 3.5.1.1.

DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARE SYSTEM

Ministry Shares Pledge Process

1 Pledging Package
You'll receive a helpful package by mail to guide your church in determining your annual pledge amount. (Expect this in August!)

6 Honor Your Pledge
Your pledged amount has been communicated to the denomination and used to create budgets for ministries in the coming year. Now it is time for your church to give and support our shared ministries. If you need videos or other resources to encourage your congregation, visit crcna.org/MinistryShares.

5 Pledge Cycle Options
While the denomination operates on a fiscal year from July to June, your church may have a different fiscal year. The specific dates are not significant. Just remember to pledge for a 12-month cycle.

4 Submit Your Pledge
Please submit your church's pledge to the stated clerk or treasurer of your classis. Kindly ensure that the denominational Director of Advancement is included in your communication.

2 Determine Your Pledge
As a member of the CRCNA, your church's pledge towards denominational ministry shares is crucial for budget decisions and supporting our shared ministries. Please ensure your council prioritizes pledging to ministry shares as part of your budget discussion.

3 Discuss Your Pledge
Ministry shares are a part of our covenant relationship with other CRC congregations. As part of this commitment to each other, classes will discuss ministry share pledges and giving at their fall meetings. Regardless of your congregation's budget cycle, expect to participate in a discussion about why ministry shares matter and what your church's participation will be.



crcna.org/MinistryShares



ORGANIZATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Denominational agencies, institutions, and ministries recommended to the churches for one or more offerings

Synod 2026 recommends the following denominational agencies and institutions for one or more offerings (*Acts of Synod 2026*, pp. 622, 648, 654).

Canadian Business Number

1. *The Banner*..... 856901285 RR0002
2. Calvin Theological Seminary (per Schedule VIII)
3. Calvin University—above ministry-share needs..... (per Schedule VIII)
4. Thrive 856901285 RR0002
5. Canadian Justice Ministries 856901285 RR0002
6. ReFrame Ministries 13240 2090 RR0001
7. Resonate Global Mission..... 856901285 RR0002
8. World Renew—four offerings per year because the agency
receives no ministry-share support..... 118857366 RR0001

Note about Recommended Organizations

Synod 2023 decided to discontinue the practice and policy of reviewing and recommending charitable organizations to CRC churches for offerings (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 986). The Church Administration and Finance Guide (crcna.org/resources/church-resources/church-administration-finance) includes guidelines from the Office of General Secretary to assist churches in considering charitable organizations for offerings.

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