

## **Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice**

### *A. Materials*

Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice report, pp. 322-32

### *B. Privilege of the floor*

Team members Drew Sweetman (chair) and Joshua Christoffels (reporter)

### *C. Recommendations*

1. That synod take note of the challenge of maintaining trust in the churches in our present cultural context, recognize the inadequacy of administrative categories to maintain harmony in our collective ministry as a church, and encourage all churches, officebearers, and individual members to seek those things which lead to peace and mutual edification (Zech. 8:16; Rom. 14:19).

—*Adopted*

*Note:* Regarding the following revised Recommendation 2—A **minority report** was presented for information by Rev. Brian Bolkema on behalf of several members of Advisory Committee 3 in favor of the Team’s original recommendation (see *Agenda for Synod 2025*, p. 330). Following the presentations of both the majority and minority reports, synod returns to consideration of the advisory committee’s majority report Recommendation 2, in keeping with the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

2. That synod adopt the following recommendation as revised from the report of the Team to Clarify Distinctions in Synodical Pronouncements, Decisions, Reports, Positions, and Advice:

Recognize four broad categories—confessional interpretations, doctrinal affirmations, adjudicatory decisions, and doctrinal applications—as defined below and encourage future synods to utilize these categories:

- a. Confessional interpretations: Official statements or declarations made by synod that clarify which doctrines are contained in the creeds and confessions of the church. By definition, confessional interpretations require officebearers to agree that the doctrines fully agree with the Word of God, or to file a gravamen.
- b. Doctrinal affirmations (sometimes called pronouncements, positions, decisions, or deliverances): Official statements or declarations made by synod that express decisions on matters of doctrine, ethics, church policy, or other important issues. Doctrinal affirmations are authoritative and are meant to guide the beliefs and practices of the church community.
- c. Adjudicatory decisions: Decisions that arise from particular disputes coming from the churches in response to appeals or protests or when the Judicial Code is invoked. Synod may decide that an adjudicatory decision has a universal and binding application.

- d. Doctrinal applications (including what synod has called guidelines for further study, contemporary testimonies, or pastoral advice): Decisions that apply Scripture and the confessions to contemporary contexts or situations. Doctrinal applications are ways of further expressing the faith of the church but are not considered additions to the confessions. They are settled and binding but allow for discernment in the way they are applied in local contexts.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod receive this report and its definitions, commend these items to the churches as a faithful explication of the various categories of synodical pronouncements, and dismiss the team with thanks.

—*Adopted*

## ARTICLE 67

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 continues from Article 56.)

Advisory Committee 4, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Matthew Haan reporting, presents the following:

### **I. Calvin Theological Seminary**

#### *A. Materials*

1. Calvin Theological Seminary report, pp. 129-44
2. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, pp. 481-99

#### *B. Privilege of the floor*

Dave Morren, chair, and Julius Medenblik, president

#### *C. Recommendations*

1. That synod express gratitude for the work of Calvin Theological Seminary to train pastors and church leaders in the CRCNA to uphold the fullness of God's Word and wholeheartedly support and fully defend without exception the creeds and confessions for the benefit of the church.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod celebrate with Calvin Theological Seminary the representation of 30 nations in the student body, seeking training and education in all degree programs. For approximately 50 percent of the students English is a second language.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod celebrate the 150th anniversary of Calvin Theological Seminary!

—*Adopted*

4. 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*